**Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board held on December 4th, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Spanish Springs Library.

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

PRESENT – Bonnie Billings, Bradley Young, Shannon Martell, Brandon Partain, Jason Evans, Renate York

ABSENT –

A quorum was established, and the meeting was brought to order.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

A CAB member read a comment written by Jan Butcher. Janet Butcher asked about how the other CABs have monthly meeting, with as full as their agenda is, why Spanish Springs CAB couldn’t also meet monthly. She also asked for people to be more mindful when citing “the law” and to state the NRS or acting statute.

Bruce Parks expressed concerns about overdevelopment in the valley, highlighting that the sewer system is at or beyond capacity. He criticized uncontrolled development, particularly apartment buildings and distribution centers, which he believes contradict the valley's master plan. He requested that a representative from the Planning Commission attend the next CAB meeting to address these issues, particularly regarding infrastructure needs and the burden placed on residents when developers are not required to pay for necessary infrastructure improvements.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF** April 3, 2024, AND October 2, 2024

Bradley Young motioned to approve the minutes from April 3, 2024, and October 2, 2024, CAB meeting and Shannon Martell seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

1. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES**

Washoe County Sherriff Depart

Lieutenant Armando Avina reported an increase in property destruction and vandalism, particularly in new construction areas, with individuals causing damage at night. DUI incidents have slightly risen, likely due to higher traffic during the holiday and football seasons, and residents are urged to use responsible transportation options. He also highlighted a rise in fraud scams, where scammers impersonate people in distress. The Sheriff's Office advises residents not to share personal information over the phone, as they will never call regarding arrest warrants or financial demands. Porch piracy remains a concern, with thieves targeting packages. Residents are encouraged to use cameras, have packages delivered to neighbors, or arrange for pickup if they will be away. Lieutenant Avina emphasized that the Sheriff's Office will submit evidence to the District Attorney for prosecution in porch piracy cases, but the DA's office ultimately decides whether to pursue the case. He reminded residents to stay vigilant and report any suspicious activity.

A resident asked if delivery companies like UPS, Amazon, and FedEx could be instructed to place packages in less visible areas, rather than in the middle of driveways where they are easily seen and targeted by thieves. Lieutenant Avina responded that the Sheriff's Office holds yearly orientations with FedEx and UPS to communicate the importance of secure package placement. However, due to the volume of deliveries, it's difficult to control every driver’s actions. While the message is continuously shared, it remains a challenge to enforce uniform practices across all drivers.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District
Joe Schum, Division Chief for Truckee Meadows Fire and Rescue, provided an update on the department's operations. Over the past two months, there has been an increase in call volume, with 235 calls last month—185 in Truckee Meadows jurisdiction and 49 in Sparks, as part of their automatic aid agreement. This collaboration ensures resources are efficiently shared between both areas. The department responded to five fires, including a home fire caused by a pellet stove, where crews successfully contained the fire and salvaged belongings. There was also an uptick in motor vehicle crashes, with 10 incidents last month. Schum highlighted the presence of interns at the Spanish Springs fire station, gaining hands-on experience as part of their training. He also discussed open burning regulations and safety, urging residents to follow guidelines to prevent fire hazards. Safety tips for Christmas tree care were shared, including keeping trees watered and properly disposing of them after the holiday. Schum announced that construction has begun on Fire Station 37 in Hidden Valley, which will improve coverage in the area. The station will house a four-person crew and modernize facilities that have been using temporary structures for years. Schum also mentioned that six new recruits are in training, preparing for retirements next year. Finally, he touched on the Hexagon project, a regional computer-aided dispatch system that will improve coordination between police, fire, and EMS. The system is on track to go live in January 2026 after extensive training for responders.

1. **TRUCKEE MEADOWS WATER AUTHORITY (TMWA)**Danny Rotter provided an overview of how the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) planned for water resource management and growth in the region. He emphasized the importance of strategic planning in managing water demand, infrastructure, and growth projections. TMWA served over 465,000 people, relying mainly on the Truckee River and groundwater, with a significant amount of imported water. The presentation also touched on the complexities of maintaining water systems, including over 270 pressure systems, 97 tanks, and 381 pump stations. The key points of the water planning process included the development of long-term resource and facility plans, the importance of reliable water supply, and addressing future infrastructure needs to accommodate growth. TMWA updated its plans every five years and accounted for growth patterns in different areas of the community, using data from regional planning. These plans guided the allocation of funds for infrastructure improvements, which amounted to approximately $420 million over 20 years, with a substantial portion dedicated to growth-related projects. Rotter concluded by explaining that developers contributed to funding through connection fees, which helped support the expansion and maintenance of the water system to meet future demands.

Greg Pohll, a hydrogeologist, discussed the sources and uses of groundwater in the Spanish Springs area, focusing on the aquifer's recharge and pumping balance. He began by explaining how water infiltrates into the aquifer, starting with natural recharge from precipitation, which adds about 600 acre-feet per year, mainly in higher elevations. He also covered the Orr Ditch, a historical irrigation source, which now contributes around 300 acre-feet per year due to reduced surface water deliveries. Another significant source of recharge is excess irrigation, where over-irrigation of lawns and vegetation adds around 2,100 acre-feet per year to the aquifer. Pohll noted that septic systems in older developments contribute about 400 acre-feet per year, and that water delivery pipes leak about 500 acre-feet per year, which also seeps back into the ground. Additionally, ponds around the valley, particularly near golf courses, add around 300 acre-feet per year through seepage. In total, these various sources replenish the aquifer by about 4,200 acre-feet annually. On the usage side, Pohll explained that around 1,920 acre-feet of water is pumped annually from various wells, including municipal, domestic, and other smaller wells. This represents less than half the amount that is recharged, which is a positive sign for the sustainability of the aquifer. Pohll emphasized that the introduction of surface water from the Truckee River, particularly in winter months, has allowed for a reduction in groundwater pumping, ensuring that the aquifer remains sustainable in the long term. Finally, Pohll highlighted how groundwater levels are responding to these practices. In the central and western parts of the valley, the groundwater table is rising due to increased recharge, while the eastern part remains stable due to regular pumping and the injection of river water. This careful management ensures that the Spanish Springs aquifer continues to be a sustainable resource for the region.

Lydia Teel, who works in operations at TMWA, discussed the Advanced Purified Water (APW) program, a project focused on transforming wastewater into drinking water. While not directly related to Spanish Springs, it is an important regional initiative. The process involves treating wastewater to a high standard, beyond typical reclaimed water used for irrigation. This advanced treatment is necessary to produce water that meets drinking water quality standards and can be safely reintroduced into the aquifer. Teel explained that Nevada began exploring APW as a drought-proof water supply in 2016, and by then, regulations were created to ensure its safety. The water is treated through multiple steps to remove contaminants, including PFAS (forever chemicals) and pharmaceuticals, ensuring it meets stringent federal and state drinking water requirements. This process is already in place in other parts of the U.S., and the water produced is safe for consumption. She emphasized that APW is different from the reclaimed water used for irrigation, commonly known as "purple pipe water," and is not used in its raw form for drinking. Instead, it goes through extensive purification before being injected into the aquifer, where it is stored for a period to ensure its safety. This water can later be pumped out for use once it's been sufficiently buffered. The planned APW facility in the North Valleys will have a capacity of two million gallons per day and is currently in the design phase. It has been rigorously tested through pilot projects since 2008, and by 2022, the region received the first Category A+ permit for such a project in the state. The facility is a joint project between the City of Reno and TMWA, with funding from both entities as well as federal grants. Teel concluded by discussing the innovative and sustainable technology behind the project, including the use of biological treatment processes to reduce waste and energy consumption compared to traditional reverse osmosis. The project has been thoroughly tested and supported by public outreach and input from experts in the field, ensuring its safety and viability. She shared her personal confidence in technology, having even consumed water from the system herself. The project aims to enhance water security for the region while addressing environmental concerns.

Bruce Parks raised a concern regarding the water quality in Spanish Springs, particularly about potential contamination from homeless camps along the Truckee River, which is a major water source for Washoe County. He referenced a 2019 private test that showed extremely high coliform counts in the river, which couldn't even be measured with the testing equipment. His concern was whether there was ongoing testing in areas below these camps and how such contamination might be addressed in the treatment process. Lydia Teel responded by acknowledging the importance of monitoring and ensuring water quality. She explained that extensive testing is done regularly at the treatment facilities, including testing for coliform, E. coli, Giardia, Cryptosporidium, and other bacteriological contaminants. She assured that the treatment process effectively removes these contaminants and that the finished water does not contain coliform. Teel emphasized the rigorous safety protocols in place at the facilities, such as automatic shutdowns if contamination levels exceed certain thresholds. She also highlighted the state-of-the-art lab and equipment used for testing and noted that the lab is highly certified, with experts visiting to learn from their procedures.

Bruce Parks asked whether the team had detected an apartment building discharging raw sewage into the Truckee River due to improper piping connections, as the building had connected to the stormwater system instead of the sewer system. He also shared that since 2018, they’ve participated in the Community Homeless Advisory Board (CHAB) discussions on the impacts of homeless camps, including their potential effects on water quality. He noted that their main intake is upstream in Verdi, but they do have a secondary intake in Glendale where they occasionally deal with contamination. Danny Rotter responded by confirming that the issue of raw sewage was indeed detected and addressed. He also explained that while their main water source comes from the Verdi area, they monitor water quality from the Glendale intake as well. Rotter mentioned that they’ve been involved in a pilot program with Washington County to install public restrooms along the river to reduce contamination, referencing a partnership that included grant funding and the installation of restrooms near the Aces stadium. The team has been able to track and quantify the reduction of fecal contamination through these efforts.

A resident asked Lydia Teel whether there have been long-term studies on the health effects of drinking advanced purified water, or if it was just based on personal experiences, like Lydia’s own consumption during pregnancy. The resident also inquired why further natural treatment is needed when the purified water seems already safe. Lydia Teel responded by explaining that extensive risk assessments have been conducted, including analyzing how the water treatment processes meet and exceed drinking water standards, even addressing the removal of pharmaceuticals and other contaminants. She mentioned that the purification process ensures a 99.99% removal of harmful pathogens like Giardia and viruses. Lydia also offered to provide the resident with additional resources on risk assessments and health studies. Regarding the natural treatment in the aquifer, Lydia explained that Nevada regulations require a period of underground storage for the water to receive additional "virus credits" from natural treatment. While purified water meets all standards before entering the aquifer, the underground process helps further ensure safety and adds an extra layer of protection.

A resident raised a concern about the reliability of water supply during emergencies, claiming an incident during the Davis fire when a neighbor had their water shut off for 30 hours to assist with firefighting efforts. They questioned whether the water system, which is being expanded, would be sufficient in the event of a large fire in the future. TMWA responded by clarifying that no one lost water during the Davis fire. They explained that the increased reliance on generators and emergency response planning had helped maintain service. In response to the question about water supply during future fires, TMWA highlighted the ongoing investments in backup power sources, such as $4 million allocated for generators and a $400,000 investment specifically for the Davis fire response. They also emphasized that redundancy is built into the system to ensure reliability, including backup generators for critical facilities. TMWA noted that challenges arise from power companies proactively shutting off power, a change in practice prompted by events like the California campfire but reassured the resident that they were prepared to handle these situations.

A resident asked about the timeline for expanding treated water use beyond the American Flats project, wondering how long it would take before the project reaches other parts of the community. Lydia Teel responded that the American Flats project is expected to break ground next year and will take several years to construct. Afterward, there will be additional years of testing and phased implementation, meaning the water might not serve the community until around 2030. At this time, the focus is solely on the American Flats site, as it is the model facility. Expansion beyond that will depend on finding suitable aquifers and locations near treatment facilities that align with current regulations, but no plans are in place for other areas at this time.

A resident asked about the process of using purple pipe water for irrigation and its eventual return to the aquifer, questioning whether this water would be re-contaminated or treated adequately before being pumped again. Lydia Teel explained that purple pipe water is used for irrigation and is not directly injected into the aquifer. However, when the water is eventually treated for potable use, it goes through additional purification steps before being injected into the aquifer. She also explained that areas like the American Flat Farm use soil moisture probes to ensure irrigation does not contaminate the aquifer. Additionally, natural filtration from the soil helps remove impurities as water percolates down to deeper water tables. Nevada regulations allow for natural treatment methods, such as allowing water to percolate into the ground, as long as it can be proven that this process effectively cleans the water.

Andrea Caldwell thanked TMWA for providing valuable information about water sustainability and the technologies being used. She then asked about the locations of the three hydroelectric plants mentioned earlier. TMWA explained that the hydroelectric plants are "run of the river" plants, meaning they don't extract all the water at once, allowing it to flow back into the river. The first plant, Flash, is located in the canyon just past Verdi, in Gold Ranch. The second plant is near Verdi, and the third is located south of Mogul at the Washoe hydroelectric plant. TMWA is also constructing a fourth plant at Chalk Bluff, which will generate power by using water from the river that would otherwise go to the treatment plant.

A resident asked if TMWA's Board of Directors is made up of elected officials by statute or design. TMWA responded that it is by design, though in the past there had been non-elected or appointed members. The board's current structure is outlined in the bylaws, and while it hasn't happened recently, a community might request an expert to join the board instead of an elected official.

Donnie Olson raised concerns about the potential impact of a proposed treatment facility at Palomino Farms on the water supply in Spanish Springs, particularly for those on wells. He worried that injecting treated water could affect the levels of private wells in the area. TMWA responded by clarifying that the facility at Palomino Farms has never been a confirmed project, but rather a possibility. The primary focus has been on addressing over pumped aquifers and using reclaimed water for irrigation. While the idea has been studied, it is not currently part of their funding plan.

Bradley Young expressed gratitude to TMWA for their dedication to water management and purification. He shared his experience coming from Southern California, where purified water has been successfully used for years, even in places like Disneyland and on cruise ships. He also mentioned how backup systems, like generators, are important during power outages to ensure water supply.

Jason Evans asked two questions. First, he inquired about the biological aspect of advanced water treatment, to which TMWA explained the use of ozone to weaken organic compounds, followed by carbon with microbes that further degrade these compounds, making the process more sustainable. His second question was for Greg, asking about the movement of water across fault lines. Greg explained that while water typically does not cross fault lines, it can in some cases, depending on the fault's structure, and clarified that faults may not affect water sources like East or domestic wells.

Jennifer Bought asked about the use of new technology at the American Flat facility, specifically whether it was a unique innovation or if other communities had already implemented similar systems. In response, TMWA explained that while the ozone and biological carbon treatment technology being used is newer and not as widely deployed as reverse osmosis, similar systems have been used elsewhere, such as in Virginia's Hampton Roads Sanitation District. However, TMWA emphasized that their system is designed to treat water to a higher standard, including PFAS treatment, making it more advanced than other existing systems.

Chris Bachman asked the average depth of the wells and TMWA informed that they go to about 600 to 700 hundred feet in depth.

Davy Burke raised a concern about the impact of the Donovan well on domestic wells in the Spanish Springs area. He noted that his well's water level had dropped over 100 feet in 30 years and asked what would happen if the Donovan well, once operational, negatively affected the local wells. Nate Allen from TMWA responded, explaining that the state regulates groundwater use and monitors the impacts on domestic wells. If any negative effects occur, residents should reach out to the state for recourse. He clarified that TMWA is responsible for managing its water resources within state guidelines, but the state is the authority for well-related issues. Burke also mentioned that the Donovan well has not been used in 30 years, and while TMWA has rights to the water, its actual impact on the community remains uncertain until it's used again. Allen informed Burke that because the state's review of the rights application is currently underway, he could not make any further comment.

Joni Hamund asked about water pressure fluctuations and water quality at the end of the distribution line compared to the plant. She wanted assurance that water quality is adequate in areas with varying pressure. TMWA responded that they actively address pressure issues in the system through planning and modeling, ensuring fire flow and proper pipe sizing. Regarding water quality, the primary difference between the plant and distribution lines is chlorine. TMWA adjusts chlorine levels near the plant to ensure water is adequately chlorinated by the time it reaches further parts of the system. In areas where water sits unused, they may flush tanks to prevent stagnation and chlorine depletion. TMWA maintains a balance to ensure both water pressure and quality are consistently managed.

Renate York asked about the type of water used in dialysis clinics and hospitals, given their significant water needs and secondary purification systems. She wanted to know if purple pipe water or advanced purified water would be used for healthcare facilities. TMWA responded that purple pipe water, which is used for irrigation, would not be introduced into the public drinking water supply due to strict backflow prevention. Hospitals and healthcare facilities would receive potable water, which could include water from the Truckee River, groundwater, or advanced purified water. The new purification technology is part of the advanced purified water process, but improvements to the purple pipe water system will also benefit irrigation customers.

1. **CAB MEMBER/ COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS**The Spanish Springs CAB members discussed potential topics for their February meeting, considering four options. These included a presentation on local wildlife, covering animals like beavers and deer, an update on the library program, a quick update on the Land Use Bill, and a discussion on public safety with input from the fire department and sheriff’s department. Board members showed interest in the land use update and wildlife topics. Some suggested moving the public safety presentation to May, possibly including equipment demonstrations. There was also general support for a brief update on the Land Use Bill to see if there were any significant changes to report.

Bruce Parks would like to hear from County officials on how they are handling homelessness along the Truckee river as laws and ordinances are in place but not being enforced.

A resident asked for the Planning Commission to come in and talk about the development in Spanish Springs. The CAB chair informed them that they were here in October but would add that to the list.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**There were no public comments.
2. **ADJOURNMENT –** The meetingAdjourned at 7:45 p.m.