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**Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board held on October 2nd, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the Spanish Springs Library.

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

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

ABSENT – Bonnie Billings

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**

Chris from Shadow Ridge expressed concerns about the Donovan Tentative proposal. He argued that the new development plan is inconsistent with the existing 390-home neighborhood, particularly regarding the proposed extension of Hacienda Ridge, which would increase traffic on narrow residential streets that aren't designed for thoroughfares. Chris highlighted safety concerns for current homeowners and pedestrians, citing potential traffic noise and hazards. He requested that Hacienda Ridge not be turned into a thoroughfare to protect the neighborhood's integrity and quality of life. He urged consideration of alternatives to avoid compromising the safety and well-being of families in the area.

Lois Kolbert raised concerns about environmental and parking issues in Spanish Springs. She highlighted problems with older septic systems, which are causing nitrates to contaminate the water table and leading to well shutdowns. Kolbert proposed that accessory dwelling units should not be allowed on lots smaller than one acre to prevent further nitrate pollution. Additionally, she criticized parking recommendations, arguing that the suggested requirements for residential units are unrealistic, especially given the lack of public transportation in the area. She noted that most households have more than one car, contrary to the proposed parking guidelines.

Kent Knobelauch expressed several grievances regarding community planning and safety in Spanish Springs. He sought clarification on the purpose of certain red-marked areas on a map near Horizon View and Pyramid, suspecting they might be for apartments or gas stations. He requested an update on the timeline for an additional southbound lane on Pyramid and questioned the status of a proposed fire station in the area, which he felt had been overlooked in favor of rapidly constructed warehouses. Kent brought up the ongoing development by Donovan, calling it chaotic and detrimental to the community's quality of life, including issues related to common areas, water, and sewer services. He raised concerns about a rumored moratorium by the EPA on sewer hookups and emphasized the dangers of having only one access road in emergencies, citing tragic incidents from past wildfires in California as a warning of potential consequences.

Michael Brooks echoed concerns raised by Kent regarding potential development at the bottom of a hill in Shadow Ridge, specifically questioning whether apartment complexes or a gas station would be built there. He said that such developments would significantly impact the 390 homes in the area, especially given the existing limited access points. He urged the planning commission to clarify their plans, highlighting the issues of overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure with multiple developments occurring in a confined space.

Janet Richmond raised concerns about canceled meetings and worsening traffic on Pyramid. She criticized the disconnect between the planning commission and commissioners, urged for more frequent CAB meetings, and expressed a desire to learn about the new CAB member’s backgrounds and ties to Spanish Springs.

Krista Gomez addressed the rapid development in Spanish Springs, expressing concern over approved changes that increase traffic and water usage without proper community engagement. She highlighted a recent road rage incident as a sign of escalating tensions and noted that public input sessions are failing to inform residents. Krista mentioned an upcoming appeal hearing on November 12 and the need for legal funds to challenge these developments. She emphasized the risks of a declining water table and potential double taxation on larger properties, urging the county to take community concerns seriously.

Olson from Citizens for Spanish Springs expressed concerns about rapid development in the area, highlighting increased truck traffic and its impact on safety. She criticized the lack of resources, particularly water, to support new multi-family housing projects. She mentioned ongoing sewage reclamation efforts that could further strain local water supplies and emphasized the need for community action to address these issues before it’s too late. She urged residents to attend an upcoming commission meeting on November 12 to voice their concerns.

Melanie shared that she has created a website to help residents stay informed and connected. She encouraged interested individuals to reach out to her via email at c4spanishsprings@hotmail.com for the website link and details about community meetings.

1. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS [CHAIR/VICE-CHAIR] FOR 2024-25**

There was a motion by Brandon Partain to nominate Bonnie Billings as the CAB Chair. The motion was seconded by Shannon Martell. (Motion approved 5-0) Shannon Martell nominated Bradley Young to Vice-Chair and Brandon Partain seconded the motion. (Motion approved 5-0)

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF August 7, 2024**

Jane Butcher commented that there were two corrections on the spelling of a commenter’s name and the wrong pronouns for another commenter from the previous CAB in August. Bradley Young motioned to approve of the August 7th minutes, Brandon Partain seconded the motion and the minutes were approved. (5-0)

1. **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Abbe Yacoben, the Chief Financial Officer for the County, presented an overview of the budget process and major funding sources. She emphasized the importance of the general fund, which covers essential services like public safety and human resources, accounting for about $504 million of the total budget. Key revenue sources include property tax and consolidated tax, with property tax capped at 3% for primary residences and 8% for commercial properties. Yacoben encouraged community engagement in the budget process, highlighting resources available on the county’s website for further information and participation in upcoming public hearings.

Michael Large, Deputy District Attorney from the District Attorney's office, presented land use regulations, emphasizing the balance between property rights and governmental regulations. He highlighted key legal frameworks, including the Fifth Amendment, which protects private property from being taken without compensation. Large explained the two types of property takings: direct condemnation and regulatory takings, the latter occurring when regulations significantly diminish property value. He noted that while the government can restrict property use, overreaching regulations can lead to costly litigation for the county. He stressed the importance of fairness and justice in regulatory decisions, particularly when zoning changes are proposed. DDA Large urged community members to engage in the process, assuring them their voices are heard, while also explaining the limitations the government faces in denying development requests based on public sentiment. He concluded by reinforcing the need for smart planning to avoid costly legal consequences.

Jeremy Smith, Director of the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA), outlined the agency's role in regional planning for the Truckee Meadows area, which includes most of Washoe County. He explained that TMRPA, established in 1989, operates similarly to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, focusing on collaboration among various jurisdictions and entities to address regional growth and development. Smith emphasized that TMRPA was created to foster cooperation among local jurisdictions and includes a governing board of elected officials and a Regional Planning Commission for technical oversight. Under Nevada law, the regional plan must be updated every five years to adapt to changing conditions, addressing challenges like population growth, natural resource conservation, and urban sprawl. He highlighted the significant revisions made to the regional plan in 2019, which emphasized a unified regional approach to planning rather than strict jurisdictional boundaries. New land designations were introduced to guide development density across the region. TMRPA also established criteria for assessing changes in master plans, ensuring that proposed developments align with public service standards (e.g., water, transportation, schools) before approval. Data-driven decision-making is a priority for the agency, which utilizes geographic information systems and modeling to predict future growth and assess potential impacts. Smith concluded by discussing TMRPA's commitment to promoting collaboration among various entities, including local governments and economic development authorities, to ensure coherent planning and information sharing.

Eric Young, Senior Planner from the Washoe County Planning Department, explained that all jurisdictions, including Washoe County, are mandated to have a master plan to manage expected population growth and resource conservation. This requirement fosters collaboration among different agencies to create comprehensive plans that address housing, land use, public services, and facilities. Young noted the significance of a unified data approach, allowing various agencies to work from the same demographic information. This collaboration is essential for future planning and ensuring that all entities align their strategies, including transportation and infrastructure, with the regional master plan. Young emphasized accessibility and openness in communication, inviting community members to engage in planning efforts and providing resources for further information. The speaker also mentioned the role of the University of Nevada Reno in providing valuable demographic data to inform planning. Overall, the focus was on fostering community involvement and collaboration for effective regional planning.

Rob Pierce, the chairman of the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustments, detailed the role and responsibilities of the Planning Commission in Washoe County. He explained that the commission reviews staff reports, ensuring that proposed developments align with community needs and comply with regulations. Pierce emphasized the thoroughness of the commission's work, mentioning that they scrutinize agenda items and findings prior to meetings. He outlined the types of applications they consider, including master plan amendments, special use permits, and subdivision maps. He also highlighted the importance of public input in the planning process. Pierce urged community members to engage with the findings outlined in meeting agendas and provide public comments focused on those points. He reassured attendees of his commitment to represent community interests, emphasizing the significance of public feedback in shaping development decisions. Overall, his message stressed collaboration and informed participation in the planning process.

Trevor Lloyd, Planning Manager with Washoe County, presented an overview of the planning process and current development in Washoe County, particularly focusing on Spanish Springs. He began by sharing fun facts about the county, including its size, population, and unique planning agencies. Lloyd explained the planning hierarchy, which starts with the master plan and includes zoning maps and development codes, emphasizing that all developments must align with these plans. He noted that the county has responsibilities such as updating the master plan, processing development applications, and enforcing codes. He addressed community concerns about recent developments in Spanish Springs, he clarified that much of the growth reflects decades-old planning decisions, and new high-density projects are primarily within Sparks, not under county jurisdiction. He noted that public engagement is vital in the planning process and highlighted extensive community input during the latest master plan updates. He described the steps for pre-development, including neighborhood meetings where community feedback can influence project designs. Lloyd also discussed the application process, which requires thorough reviews by planning staff and public hearings, allowing for community commentary. He stressed the importance of timely compliance with state laws governing application reviews. Finally, he encouraged community members to reach out with questions or concerns, emphasizing the accessibility of planning staff and resources.

A public commenter raised concerns about discrepancies between the information presented by Tom Donovan at a community meeting and the actual plans submitted for a development project. They described Donovan's statements as deceptive, noting that he indicated Hacienda Ridge would be an emergency exit only, while the submitted plan shows it as thoroughfare. The resident questioned how these discrepancies would be addressed, expressing frustration over the conflicting information. Trevor Lloyd responded by stating that any inconsistencies would be recognized by planning staff and the planning commission, emphasizing the importance of community input in the review process. The resident was informed that the issue would be discussed at an upcoming planning commission meeting on November 14.

Michael Craig expressed concerns about a development plan that includes two access points, one of which is alarmingly close to his property—only five feet from his fence. He pointed out that he purchased his home under the impression that the land would remain open and highlighted that official documents indicate no public vehicle access was supposed to be allowed. He noted a discrepancy between what was discussed in meetings and the submitted plans, which have modified the road’s location. Craig emphasized his desire for clarity on the project's front end and stated he would follow up with officials to discuss the access point in person. Trevor Lloyd encouraged Michael to submit public comments regarding any discrepancies for them to be properly considered in the planning process.

A public commenter raised questions about two commercially zoned properties at the base of a hill. Trevor Lloyd clarified that they are not intended for apartments, as the maximum density is five units per acre. He speculated that the properties are likely to be used for commercial purposes, such as a gas station. Additionally, the resident inquired about the status of the fire station and was directed to contact Truckee Meadows Fire for more information, as he did not have details on that matter.

Matthew Charter expressed concerns about the bureaucratic nature of the planning process, which he believes is too top-down and speculative, often ignoring current community needs. He questioned how residents can amend these plans to better reflect their experiences and desires. Eric Young responded, explaining that master plans are regularly updated to align with regional needs, and community input is most valuable during these updates. He emphasized that while individual property owners can propose amendments, significant changes to the overall plan occur during these updates. Residents are encouraged to reach out to their commissioners if they feel the current plan does not meet their needs.

Joni Hammond raised two questions: first, about the expectations for phone communication from county planning staff, noting difficulties in getting responses. Trevor Lloyd assured Joni that calls should be returned within 24 hours and encouraged residents to reach out directly to him if they do not receive a response. The second question concerned the adequacy of the 750-foot notification radius for developments, as Joni feels it doesn't cover enough area to inform those impacted, especially with increased traffic. Trevor explained that the 750-foot limit is based on state law. Alexandra Wilson mentioned that her team (Communications division) also notifies a broader audience through Nextdoor, a social media platform, reaching 2,000 to 4,000 residents, ensuring that those affected by developments are informed. If the resident is not on the mailing list, they can request to be added.

Cindy Martinez inquired about the potential impact of the Truckee Meadows Land Act on future planning and zoning. Jeremy Smith explained that while a bill draft is currently in Congress, its passage would initiate a lengthy process for transferring federal land to private ownership, involving environmental checks and possible auctions. He noted that immediate effects might include tribal and local government land conveyances and conservation protections. For private development, parcels would require thorough assessment and integration into existing planning frameworks, including the Truckee Meadows Service Area. This would necessitate convincing arguments for why the land is needed and considerations of environmental impacts. Smith highlighted that even with the bill's passage, development would not happen quickly due to existing land constraints and that much planning would need to align with regional transportation and growth strategies. While there could be potential for expansion and alleviation of current issues, transportation plans have shown limited justification for new infrastructure developments based on projected traffic demands.

A public commenter expressed frustration about their perceived lack of influence over local development policies, which they believe are largely dictated by the state legislature. They highlighted concerns about inadequate contributions from developers to local infrastructure, noting that the financial burden falls heavily on residents. Despite the public’s efforts to facilitate public input, residents feel that their voices are often overlooked, as evidenced by developments proceeding against community wishes. The discussion also touched on the complexities of jurisdictional responsibilities, particularly regarding transportation and road management, which involve multiple agencies, including the RTC. Eric Young emphasized the importance of framing public comments effectively to ensure they are heard and considered. They encouraged community members to engage with specific agencies like RTC to voice concerns about development and transportation funding. Overall, Young reassured residents that their input matters, but it needs to be articulated within the legal framework that decision-makers operate under.

Michael Dill discussed the importance of understanding the findings related to development projects. Each type of project has specific findings that must be met, and there's no master list available. Michael Large advised residents to refer to the Washoe County Development Code online for details on these findings. Michael Large also emphasized the need for early public engagement, suggesting residents participate in initial neighborhood meetings to influence outcomes effectively. By getting involved early, residents can make meaningful comments that may guide project modifications, even if they can't stop development entirely. Trevor Lloyd added that the staff reports detailing findings are published about a week before public meetings.

Jerry Young raised several concerns regarding local development and water issues. He highlighted problems with his well water, which is contaminated with black sand, and expressed frustration over new subdivisions being built nearby that he believes negatively affect water availability and quality downstream. Young also criticized traffic issues caused by increased development, noting accidents and speeding on local roads. He questioned how local planning allowed such developments, especially concerning water rights and infrastructure. Jeremy Smith mentioned potential annexation into Sparks, stating that while the cities aren't actively pursuing annexations, landowners can still petition for it.

Barbara Dunn expressed her frustration about traffic safety on local highways, particularly Pyramid Highway, despite years of planning and studies intended to improve the area. She noted that daily accidents make it dangerous to drive, and there are limited routes to major highways, resulting in congestion and angry drivers. Dunn questioned who is responsible for the current state of the roads. Jeremy Smith and Eric Young explained that the Regional Transportation Plan addresses these concerns and is updated every four years. They acknowledged the need for improvements and the funding challenges involved, emphasizing that while the plan is comprehensive, it has not yet been fully implemented due to budget constraints. Young encouraged community involvement in the planning process to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth. They noted that there is a funding lag for transportation improvements, which is contributing to the frustration expressed by residents.

A public commenter raised concerns about the rapid expansion in Spanish Springs outpacing infrastructure development, which is lagging by 10 to 12 years. They suggested limiting expansion until infrastructure catches up. In response, Jeremy Smith agreed and noted that a 2019 change to the regional plan introduced requirements for adequate infrastructure before development could proceed. This includes ensuring that essential services, like potable water, are available within a ten-year timeframe. Smith emphasized the importance of feasibility analyses for developments to demonstrate how infrastructure needs will be met and funded. He encouraged community involvement in the ongoing regional plan update, highlighting the introduction of a public infrastructure plan that will compile data on spending and development efforts. Residents were invited to join mailing lists and participate in public hearings to voice their concerns and stay informed about upcoming developments. Trevor Lloyd expressed agreement with Jeremy Smith about ongoing improvements, acknowledging that while progress is slow, it is happening. They highlighted issues related to the timing of funding, noting that impact fees and construction taxes are collected during the building permit phase rather than at the master planning stage. This means that construction does contribute to funding necessary improvements, including roadways and drainage systems. The member pointed out that significant investments have been made to enhance the area's floodwater management, a notable improvement compared to the issues faced in the 1990s. They affirmed that these developments have led to measurable benefits in the community, supported by the funds collected from construction-related taxes.

Nancy Dander expressed frustration with community meetings, feeling that decisions are often predetermined, and concerns are overlooked. She highlighted water scarcity for well users, criticized the rapid development in Highland Ranch, and noted that local roads can't handle the increased traffic. Dander also pointed out inadequate traffic signage and questioned local schools' capacity for new students. She expressed disbelief over the approval of a logistics center on Pyramid Highway, emphasizing ongoing infrastructure and resource issues amidst growth.

Victor expressed concern about ongoing rumors regarding potential developments, like a casino and Trader Joe's, in Spanish Springs. They requested a reliable source of information about planned, approved, and under-construction projects along Pyramid Highway. In response, Trevor Lloyd and Jermy Smith recommended visiting the Washoe County neighborhood meeting hub website, which lists upcoming projects. They also mentioned that the site does not speculate on unapproved developments but offers resources to confirm or dispel rumors. Additionally, a link in the meeting materials provides access to detailed maps showing active and approved development plans.

A public commenter asked Eric Young about the anticipated population growth by 2040 as laid out in his presentation. Young responded that this is more of a branding name for the Washoe County Master Plan. The resident asked about the source of the projected population growth in Washoe County. Jeremy Smith responded that the county conducts a biannual Washoe County Consensus forecast, using data from multiple independent sources to ensure accuracy. He explained that this forecast, which anticipates 93,696 residents by 2040, is essential for planning, especially in terms of sustainable water resources, as required by law. Smith clarified that while the county must plan for future growth, there is no legal obligation to project a specific population increase. He noted that discussions around population growth are preferable to dealing with zero growth, which would pose more significant challenges for economic development. He invited residents to discuss any concerns directly with him.

A public commenter asked how the current population forecast compares to projections made 20 years ago. Jeremy Smith responded that the past forecasts were remarkably accurate, reflecting trends in population movement and growth. He emphasized that these predictions are based on historical patterns and trends, indicating that the methodology has been effective in anticipating future demographics.

Greg Stauffenbach expressed frustration about the poor condition of local streets in his neighborhood, which have been in disrepair for years. He noted that recent asphalt patches made the roads even worse, with large cracks that haven't been fixed in the five years he's lived there. He criticized the county for approving new subdivisions without maintaining existing infrastructure and highlighted the discomfort of driving over the damaged roads. Stauffenbach also pointed out that the intersection near his home, where new housing is being built, has become worse since a nearby road was constructed. He urged the county to prioritize maintaining current infrastructure before approving further development. Jeremy Smith explained that road maintenance is handled by the RTC (Regional Transportation Commission) through a pavement preservation program, and he was unsure why Stauffenbach's specific road hadn't been addressed. He offered to help investigate it further.

Jennifer Bach inquired about the county's water resources, particularly in relation to future growth. She asked whether the region would rely solely on water reservoirs or if the "One Water Nevada" initiative, which involves treating non-potable water for consumption, would play a role. Jeremy Smith responded that the advanced water purification process is mainly a solution for wastewater disposal rather than directly addressing the region's water demand. The treated water would be re-injected underground for future use, but it isn't currently necessary for meeting the region’s growing water needs. He explained that the region's sustainable water resources, based on current forecasts, are sufficient to support projected growth. Jennifer also raised concerns about the aging Sparks Sewer Treatment Plant and whether it could handle future growth. Smith acknowledged that the plant needs upgrades but assured that there are still several years of capacity available. However, wastewater treatment may become a more pressing issue in the near future, especially if federal and state regulations change, which could accelerate the need for improvements. Smith offered to look into specific timelines for the upgrades.

Janet Butcher expressed concerns about local laws and regulations affecting development and growth in Spanish Springs. She compared the situation to her past experiences in IT, where planning sometimes occurred before understanding the full implications. Janet shared frustrations about zoning decisions, citing an example where the Planning Commission's recommendations were overruled by commissioners, leading to more intense development. She further highlighted her concerns about the rising crime and homelessness in the area, noting a significant increase in crime over the years since she moved to Spanish Springs. Janet concluded by requesting more clarity on the laws and their impact on local growth and infrastructure.

Brandan Partain thanked the group for their participation and acknowledged the educational value of the meeting, especially in learning about the process for approving special use permits. He questioned how the Board of Adjustments evaluates applications and the importance of presenting measurable, data-driven arguments to address concerns such as public health or safety impacts. Trevor Lloyd suggested that if someone wanted to challenge a permit, they should provide concrete data, such as traffic accident or crime statistics, and consult experts (like traffic engineers) to support their case. Lloyd emphasized that emotional or opinion-based arguments would not carry as much weight as those backed by facts and expert confirmation. He recommended submitting concerns early in the process, ideally before the staff report is written, to ensure they are considered and integrated into the evaluation. Michael Large advocated that emotional responses such as saying I hate growth don’t help. They need measurable data. Eric Young advised engaging early with the case planner to raise concerns before the staff report is written. Providing relevant data, especially from experts, strengthens your case and helps ensure issues like traffic impacts are addressed. If concerns are overlooked in the staff report, express your disagreement at the public hearing, but do so cooperatively and professionally, noting that the information was submitted earlier.

Commissioner Clara Andriola thanked everyone involved in organizing and contributing to the meeting, highlighting the importance of collaboration and community engagement. She emphasized the value of public input, stating that everyone’s voice matters and that understanding where to make changes is crucial. Andriola also touched on the importance of complying with legal requirements, even when there are personal disagreements, and thanked Alexandra for handling logistics. She concluded by recognizing the caliber of talent present and thanked the board, chair, vice chair, and attendees for their commitment.

1. **CAB MEMBER/ COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS**

There were no requests made.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no general public comments

1. **ADJOURNMENT -** Adjourned at 8:53 p.m.