Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board held on September 3, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Spanish Springs Library.

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

PRESENT – Bonnie Billings, Jason Evans, Bradley Young, Renate York

ABSENT – Brandon Partain, Shannon Martell

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**

Janet Butcher expressed appreciation for information on disaster readiness but emphasized the need to address infrastructure concerns in Spanish Springs. She shared her experience of a lengthy commute to the airport, noting that traffic congestion on Pyramid Highway contributes to dangerous driving behaviors and accidents. She questioned how an evacuation would be managed in the event of a disaster and urged decision-makers to halt new development until infrastructure improvements are made. She stated that the quality of life in Spanish Springs has declined and estimated that daily commuters lose significant personal time each year due to traffic delays. Additionally, she requested transparency regarding the status of the two large logistics centers near the Spanish Springs Library, citing rumors that they may not be occupied.

Joni Hammond announced a new group called *Our Community Talk Lunch*, which meets on the third Monday of each month at the Elks Lodge. She noted the next meeting is scheduled for September 15, with a $25 lunch cost and attendance open to non-Elks members. The featured speaker will be Interim County Manager Kate Thomas, and Hammond encouraged community members to attend and bring questions. She also shared that flyers would be available at the front.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINTURES FOR THE MEETINGS OF** July 2, 2025

Bradley Young motioned to approve the July 2nd Spanish Springs CAB minutes. Jason Evans seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
2. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES**

**Washoe County Sheriff’s Office**
Sergeant Jeff West provided the quarterly crime and statistics update for the Spanish Springs area. Overall, most crime categories are consistent with or lower than the three-year averages. He reported 17 assaults compared to the average of 21, six burglaries compared to eight, and 20 vandalism incidents compared to 18. Many of the vandalism calls were tied to juveniles throwing rocks at cars, and arrests have been made. Disorderly conduct and DUIs were higher than average, though West explained that the increase in DUI numbers is due to proactive enforcement. A recent fatality on Winnemucca Ranch Road may have involved impairment and remain under investigation. The Sheriff’s Office recently expanded its A-Ride DUI task force from one deputy to two, which has increased arrests, particularly connected to gatherings at Moon Rocks. Proactive policing overall has led to an increase in self-initiated calls for service, which rose to 2,080 from 1,605. Property crimes showed improvement, with fraud dropping from 22 to 19 cases, larceny and theft decreasing from 19 to 7, and motor vehicle theft falling from 4 to 1. West credited community members installing home security cameras, which have aided in identifying suspects and making arrests. Other offenses included three sex offenses, the same as last quarter, four trespassing cases compared to three, and two weapons violations compared to the average of three. West also addressed community safety concerns around Golden Eagle, where unsafe target shooting has been an issue. The Sheriff’s Office is issuing citations in congested areas and has assigned additional overtime deputies to enforce rules and improve fire safety. He emphasized the importance of community cooperation, proactive enforcement, and safe practices, especially regarding youth behavior, DUI prevention, and recreational shooting.
3. **HARDENING YOUR HOME AGAINST WILDFIRE AND PREPARING YOUR OWN ‘GO-BAG’ FOR WHEN EMERGENCY STRIKES -**

Micaela Truslove presented on wildfire preparedness through the UNR Extension’s Living with Fire program. She emphasized the three pillars of readiness: home hardening, defensible space, and evacuation planning and encouraged residents to use guides provided at the meeting. She highlighted that Spanish Springs is at higher wildfire risk than 98 percent of U.S. communities, and that many homes are lost due to lack of defensible space or hardening. Residents often have 15 minutes or less to evacuate, making preparation critical. Truslove explained the main ways homes ignite during wildfires: ember intrusion, direct flame contact, and radiant heat from nearby burning structures or vegetation. She detailed defensible space zones, stressing that the first five feet around a home are the most important and should be kept clear of combustibles. Zone one should be maintained lean, clean, and green, and zone two requires fuel reduction, often in neighboring yards, which underscores the need for community-wide participation. Home hardening measures include vent screening, fire-rated roofs, enclosed soffits, and other retrofits to prevent ember entry. She also discussed the importance of driveway access and secondary exits for emergency responders, as well as visible, reflective, non-combustible address signage. Preparation should be ongoing, not reactionary, and residents were urged to sign up for Smart911 to ensure first responders are aware of any special evacuation needs. She advised residents to routinely inspect and clean their properties, focusing first on the immediate five-foot zone. Finally, Truslove invited community members to participate in updating the county’s wildfire protection plan and to attend an upcoming preparedness event at Lazy 5. She also promoted the Living with Fire Neighborhood Ambassadors program, which connects residents passionate about wildfire preparedness to share strategies and host neighborhood events. She closed by encouraging everyone to pick up available guides and ask questions after the meeting.

Laurie Squartsoff asked for clarification on the website where residents can look up their address to determine wildfire risk. The response confirmed that the correct site is wildfirerisk.com.

Commissioner Clara Andriola announced that the emergency preparedness event at Lazy 5 will take place on Saturday, September 20, at 9 a.m., and confirmed that everyone is invited to attend.

Darrell Billings explained the role of Washoe County Search and Rescue in home evacuations during fires, noting that their teams are often the ones knocking on doors and urging residents to leave for their safety. He stressed the importance of having a well-prepared go bag, which should contain enough essentials to sustain a person for at least 72 hours and advised community members to consider what items they would regret not retrieving if they could not return home for an extended period. Drawing from his background as a Navy Corpsman and his disaster response experience, Billings emphasized that a go bag provides comfort and readiness in moments of crisis. He recommended that each family member maintain their own bag, stocked with both personal essentials and survival basics such as water, food, clothing, medical supplies, and tools. He demonstrated practical items from his own kit, including fire-starting tools, filtration systems, ponchos, medical gear, communication devices, chargers, and small comforts like cards to pass time. He also highlighted the need for secure storage of critical documents, identification, medications, and digital backups to simplify recovery if a home is lost. Billings advised residents to build their go bags gradually rather than all at once, to keep them light enough to carry several miles if necessary, and to ensure communication plans are in place with family members. He closed by encouraging thoughtful preparation, noting that readiness not only improves survival but also eases the stress of evacuation when time is short.

A citizen asked whether storing data in a bank safe deposit box is secure. Darrell Billings responded that a safe deposit box should be safe, and an additional option is to use protective sleeves or bags designed to block data transfer from devices like laptops or drives. Using such a sleeve before placing items in storage provides extra security against data theft.

A citizen asked about securing important papers, such as bank account records, that are stored in filing cabinets at home and whether they should be taken during an evacuation. Darrell Billings advised that while digital copies on a USB drive are helpful, physical documents should be kept in locked filing cabinets if left behind. He explained that during evacuations, law enforcement and Search and Rescue teams actively patrol evacuated areas, block traffic, and remove unauthorized individuals to prevent looting. He emphasized that they remain vigilant and coordinate closely with law enforcement partners to protect evacuated neighborhoods. A citizen then brought up that California has experience looting during their fires. Billings responded with an anecdote from his personal experience in Galena and that they don’t go into people’s houses and will also make sure that no one else goes into your house either.

Commissioner Clara Andriola suggested that residents could use a fire safe to protect important documents and mentioned crank radios as another preparedness tool. In response, Darrell Billings agreed that fire safes can be useful but cautioned that most are only effective to a certain degree and may not withstand the extreme heat of large wildfires. He noted that high-quality fire safes that can survive such conditions are very expensive and typically small, and the best results he has seen come from placing a smaller fire safe inside a larger one.

A citizen reflected that the presentation raised preparedness issues they had not considered, and asked about challenges beyond fire, such as evacuating during earthquakes or power outages. They noted that while they know how to manually open a garage door, panic could cause them to forget and ask what to do if roads are damaged or cars can’t be used. Darrell Billings emphasized that each person must make personal decisions in such situations, and alternatives like walking, biking, or carrying pets should be considered. It was stressed that there is no single formula for evacuation, and preparation should include having a plan tailored to family needs, recalling an example of instructing a child during past emergencies to evacuate with pets and call relatives for safety.

A citizen expressed serious concerns about evacuation from the Eagle Canyon area, noting that thousands of residents live there but there are not enough roads to get out safely. They worried that in an emergency, traffic on Pyramid Highway would be impossible, making evacuation nearly unmanageable. In response, Darrell Billings acknowledged the concern, and suggested residents should plan ahead, consider alternate routes such as north versus south on Pyramid, or even using ATVs to cross over hills. He emphasized that there is no single solution, and each family must decide what works best for them. Billings admitted that traffic congestion and power outages, such as during the Galena fire, make evacuations even more difficult, and while there are no easy answers, the key is to plan now rather than during a crisis. He encouraged community members to think through options, advocate for infrastructure discussions with commissioners, and remain flexible depending on the direction and nature of a disaster.

Commissioner Andriola emphasized the three key principles of disaster preparedness: build a kit, make a plan, and stay informed. She explained that Washoe County is currently conducting an evacuation study, with specific focus on Spanish Springs, but noted that every community in the county faces constraints when it comes to evacuations. She stressed that disasters rarely unfold smoothly and require reliance on professionals to guide residents. In some cases, especially when homes are well-prepared with defensible space and protective measures, residents may be instructed to shelter in place rather than evacuate. She concluded by reminding the community that preparedness is about anticipating these possibilities and being ready for both scenarios.

Darrell Billings advised that people who rely on electronic watches should have a backup, since batteries can quickly die during emergencies. He also stressed the importance of flashlights and especially headlamps, along with extra batteries, because hands-free lighting is invaluable in disaster situations. He closed by encouraging residents to use the provided handout as a guide for building their emergency kits properly.

1. **REPORT ON REQUESTS FOR SERVICE FROM PREVIOUS CAB MEEITNGS**Bonnie Billings explained that while public comments submitted during CAB meetings cannot be discussed if they are not on the agenda, the board reports back on them at the following meeting. She noted that at the July CAB, a question was raised about a man recording the meeting. He was identified as being with SoSu Productions, filming for possible promotional use of CABs, including highlighting them as an example of community involvement at the State of the County event on September 2nd.
2. **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES** –

Candee Ramos from Washoe County explained how residents can stay informed and get involved in local government. She demonstrated how to find upcoming neighborhood development meetings through WashoeCounty.gov, noting that while there are currently no new developments in Spanish Springs, residents can sign up for email updates to ensure they never miss a meeting in their area. She also highlighted the “Get Involved” page, which provides information about county commissioners, volunteer opportunities, and openings on boards and commissions. Ramos encouraged residents to use the Citizen Advisory Boards webpage, which contains agendas, minutes, PowerPoints, rosters, applications, and a portal for submitting community input. She noted there is currently an alternate position open on the Spanish Springs CAB and urged attendees to consider applying or submitting ideas for future agenda items. She closed by emphasizing that all meeting materials, including presentations and reports, are available online for public access.

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

Commissioner Clara Andriola thanked the board members and attendees, noting she felt it important to make introductions. She then introduced Wes Duncan, Sparks City Attorney, describing him as a longtime colleague and friend from their work together at the legislature, and invited him to share remarks if he wished.

Wes Duncan thanked Commissioner Andriola for the introduction and shared three updates from the Sparks City Attorney’s Office. First, he noted that Sparks, in coordination with the police department, is cracking down on unsafe e-bike use, particularly among juveniles riding modified electric bikes at dangerous speeds, which has already led to serious accidents. Second, he explained that Sparks was the first in the region to prohibit public camping, sidewalk blockages, RV living, and uncontrolled fires, and that the city recently expanded these ordinances to include Sparks Marina, public parking lots, Victorian Square, and parks, balancing enforcement with efforts to connect homeless individuals to services. Third, Duncan raised awareness about the prevalence of illicit massage parlors tied to human trafficking, where victims mostly women brought from Asian countries are exploited and forced to live and work under abusive conditions. He said his office, working with the regional Human Exploitation and Trafficking Team, is stepping up efforts to combat these operations by educating landlords and strengthening enforcement. Duncan closed by emphasizing the strong collaboration between the City of Sparks, Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, and regional law enforcement, crediting these partnerships with helping to stabilize crime trends. He invited the public to reach out to him directly with concerns and thanked the board for the opportunity to provide updates.

Commissioner Andriola praised City Attorney Wes Duncan’s work and shared her own efforts to better understand regional issues by participating in ride-alongs with HOPE teams in Sparks and Washoe County, with Reno scheduled next. She emphasized the importance of regional cooperation on ordinances and services, especially around homelessness, law enforcement, and fire response, given shared budget constraints. She also provided community updates, announcing that RTC has begun the long-planned $86 million Sparks Boulevard expansion project, funded primarily by federal transportation dollars, with construction running from October 2024 through mid-2027. She invited residents to attend a Veterans Day celebration on November 7 at the Sparks Senior Center, featuring speakers, music, and refreshments. She addressed a persistent rumor by firmly stating that Citizen Advisory Boards are not going away and praised the Spanish Springs CAB as one of the most active and effective. She encouraged residents to continue participating and offering feedback through the county’s input tools. As chair of TMWA, she clarified recent water restrictions, explaining they were due to turbidity and the need to let muddy floodwaters settle for treatment not because of a water shortage. She expressed excitement about future TMWA presentations and encouraged residents to use QR codes to suggest topics. Andriola closed by stressing the value of preparedness, noting that September is National Preparedness Month, and encouraged everyone to make a go kit, reminding the audience that trained professionals are equipped to guide the community through emergencies.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT –**

This item was skipped.

ADJOURNMENT – The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.