**Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board held on March 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Spanish Springs Library.

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

PRESENT – Bonnie Billings, Bradley Young, Brandon Partain, Shannon Martell, 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 -**

Caitlin Vong expressed concerns regarding property taxes in light of the City of Sparks' budget deficit. She noted that many of her neighbors share similar concerns and are wondering if a property tax increase is being considered. While she was unsure if anyone present could provide an answer, she wanted to bring the topic to the board’s attention as it has been a frequent subject of discussion in her community. She was also informed that the CAB cannot respond to public comments that are not agendized. She can however provide information for a member of the CAB to contact them.

Paul Augustini voiced concerns about the increasing commercial development in the area over the past 10 to 15 years. He noted that many residents originally moved to the community expecting a residential environment but have instead seen an influx of commercial construction, particularly warehouses. He expressed frustration over the impact of these developments, including the presence of large trucks in residential neighborhoods. While acknowledging property owners' rights to develop their land, he urged representatives, including city council members, to implement measures that mitigate the visual and environmental impact of such developments. He specifically suggested requiring the planting of evergreen trees around warehouses to provide year-round screening. He encouraged community members to engage with local officials and advocate for more thoughtful and acceptable development practices.

Dan Ross raised concerns about the deterioration of Springs Canyon, a BLM-owned open space south of Golden Eagle Park. He has been biking in the area since 2005 and has observed an increase in target shooting, which has led to significant trash accumulation and safety hazards.

Ross noted that while he does not oppose target shooting when done safely and responsibly, the current situation has become dangerous and unsustainable. The area is littered with debris, including shooting-related trash and discarded appliances, which have spread onto bike trails. He reported that shooters are firing across roads and trails, sometimes in close proximity to homes and recreational areas, including new housing developments and softball fields. He shared an alarming personal experience where a ricochet bullet passed close to his head and highlighted that people are shooting just 4,000 feet from residential areas. Ross also recounted a recent encounter with shooters firing across a roadway, despite the presence of off-road vehicles and cyclists. Expressing frustration with the recklessness and environmental degradation, he urged officials to take action to improve safety and prevent further pollution of the area.

Jon Belfort stated that he and another individual, Mr. Wilson, have filed a $5 million claim against Washoe County, alleging public corruption and racketeering related to the Nevada Lands Bill and real estate development in the Palomino Warm Springs area. He claimed that he has faced retaliation for exposing and reporting alleged criminal activities, which were documented in a 1,500-page complaint detailing misconduct by former officers of the Wilcox Ranch Property Owners Association and current and former Washoe County employees. He also accused his County Commissioner of having a conflict of interest in the matter. Belfort further alleged that unpermitted grading and alterations to a waterway took place on a property adjacent to his, without necessary permits or environmental studies, while he himself was being targeted by code enforcement. He asserted that Washoe County would have to pay $1.8 million if they intended to acquire his property, stating that he would not be forced out. He announced an upcoming Board of Adjustments meeting at the County Commission Chambers and shared that Washoe County has refused to extend his remaining building permits, which were impacted by COVID-19. He invited others to review the materials he has disseminated on social media and at the meeting.

Jeffrey Wilson supported Jon Belfort’s claims and elaborated on alleged corruption related to the association and Washoe County. Wilson reported that a waterway near his property had been illegally obstructed, a situation he personally inspected earlier in the day. He also alleged financial misconduct within the Wilcox Ranch Property Owners Association, stating that upon reviewing the association’s financial records, he discovered at least $50,000 in unaccounted funds. In 2020, he reported the issue to the sheriff’s department, the district attorney, and other state authorities, but he claims no action was taken. Following his reporting, Wilson stated that he was threatened by another association member, who allegedly warned that he and Belfort would be "buried" for uncovering these issues. He was then accused of a felony but successfully defended himself. He alleged that former officers of the association, along with a county employee who served as the association's vice president, engaged in fraudulent activity, including a perpetuity vote that he claims was invalid. Wilson further accused local attorneys of improperly recording liens on properties, effectively taking ownership from residents. Despite filing a habeas corpus petition in federal court and presenting verified evidence, he stated that the Secretary of State has refused to investigate the matter. He invited officials to contact him for further details and evidence.

1. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE** **MEETINGS OF** February 5, 2025 -

\*\*This items was done after Item 5, Public Safety Updates with the Washoe County Sheriff's Office.

Brandon Partain motioned to approve the minutes from the February 5th Spanish Springs CAB meeting and Bradley Young seconded the motion. The minutes were passed unanimously.

1. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES –**

Washoe County Sheriff's Office
Sergeant Whitmore provided a public safety update, beginning with an overview of crime statistics from Washoe County’s monthly scorecard. He highlighted that traffic accidents in Spanish Springs are concentrated around Highland Ranch Parkway, Pyramid, and La Posada, with many occurring during late hours, correlating with the county’s steady DUI arrest numbers. This month, there have been 22 reported DUI cases, resulting in 21 arrests. He explained that the one discrepancy could be due to various factors, such as an abandoned vehicle suspected of being involved in a DUI. The Sheriff's Office is prioritizing proactive enforcement of DUI laws to deter dangerous driving behavior. He acknowledged that staffing levels remain low due to hiring freezes, retirements, and turnover, but deputies continue to focus on crime prevention. Drug-related offenses have led to 35 arrests this month, involving cases of methamphetamine and fentanyl possession or overdoses. Burglaries remain a concern, with 18 reported incidents but only four arrests, often due to lack of video evidence. He encouraged residents to install security cameras, as video footage significantly increases the likelihood of prosecution. Regarding robberies, he clarified that no cases were reported this month, emphasizing the difference between burglary and robbery, with the latter involving the use of force. He also addressed the ongoing concerns about target shooting near Golden Eagle Park, noting that it continues to be a problem due to the area's proximity to homes and sports fields. Deputies frequently respond to reports of shooting, but by the time they arrive, the individuals have often left. Shooting across roadways is illegal, and shooters must be at least 1,000 feet from an occupied structure. He urged residents to document violations, provide vehicle descriptions, and be willing to sign complaints to assist law enforcement in holding offenders accountable. Illegal dumping, often linked to target shooting, remains an issue. He encouraged residents to report suspicious activity, such as people bringing large amounts of trash into open spaces, which can lead to both littering and unsafe shooting practices. By reporting these incidents as they happen, deputies can respond more effectively. Sergeant Whitmore concluded by stressing the importance of community involvement in crime prevention. He acknowledged that it can be intimidating to report and testify against offenders but emphasized that standing up for accountability is essential to maintaining public safety.

A resident asked if illegal dumping could be reported through the county’s app by submitting pictures. Sergeant Whitmore confirmed that it could and emphasized that photo evidence strengthens law enforcement's ability to hold offenders accountable. He explained that if someone denies being at a reported location, but photographic evidence contradicts their statement, it provides grounds for further investigation and potential charges. Catching a suspect in a lie increases the likelihood of prosecution, as it demonstrates deceitful intent. He encouraged residents to use the app and submit evidence to support enforcement efforts.

1. **PRESERVING THE PAST AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTUTRE OF THE RENO-SPARKS INDIAN COLONY –**

Daryl Gardipe, representing the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, spoke about the tribe’s land holdings in Hungry Valley, downtown Reno, and across from the grass area. He expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be present and recalled the tribe’s past partnership with the community in the early 2000s against the Oil-Dri Company, which had proposed building a mining pit in the valley that would have resulted in heavy truck traffic near local high schools.

Michon Eben, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, provided an overview of the tribe’s history, land, and governance. She emphasized the deep ancestral connections of Native people to the region, explaining that traditional society did not have boundaries or property lines as introduced through colonization. The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony represents members of the Washoe, Paiute, and Shoshone tribes, and is one of 28 federally recognized tribes in Nevada. Eben discussed the establishment of the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, noting that in 1917, the federal government purchased 20 acres in downtown Reno for homeless Native people. Initially, this land was considered undesirable, located in a swampy, garbage-filled area, but over time, the community grew. Additional land was acquired in 1926, and since then, the tribe has expanded its land holdings, including properties along the Truckee River, which play a critical role in both the tribe’s cultural traditions and its health services for urban Native populations. She highlighted the significance of the Truckee River, explaining that before it was named by settlers, different sections had traditional names tied to Native history. The river has always been central to survival, and the tribe remains actively involved in conservation and cleanup efforts to protect it for future generations. Eben also shared the history of the tribe’s housing and community development, explaining that members adapted over time, building homes with limited resources. Today, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony includes a mixture of residential, administrative, and community buildings, with additional lands in Hungry Valley. The tribe received 1,900 acres in 1986 and later secured over 13,000 more acres in 2016, providing space for growth and protection of their community. The tribal government consists of a nine-member council, including a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer. The tribe operates much like any other government, providing essential services such as police, fire, housing, social services, and healthcare. The tribe owns over 15,000 acres, has more than 1,300 enrolled members, and employs 386 people, including both tribal and non-tribal members. Economic development efforts include businesses like smoke shops and the Walmart on Second Street, generating revenue for the community. Eben described the extensive collaboration between the tribe and federal, state, and local agencies. She works closely with organizations such as the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Nevada Department of Transportation on cultural resource protection. Her role involves reviewing, monitoring, and responding to projects that may impact tribal lands, ancestral sites, and cultural traditions. Finally, she acknowledged the importance of maintaining strong relationships with the broader community, including participation in local organizations such as One Truckee River, the Regional Transportation Commission, Washoe County School District, and civic groups. While the tribe had not attended Spanish Springs CAB meetings recently, she expressed a commitment to ongoing collaboration and engagement with local partners.

Candace Stowell provided an update on several key issues affecting the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, with a focus on Hungry Valley. She discussed access management and evacuation routes for both community members and the general public. Housing challenges remain a significant issue, as many tribal members struggle to afford housing in the Reno market due to limited availability within the colony. Additionally, hazard mitigation is a priority, as Hungry Valley is in a high-risk area with a volunteer fire department relying on interlocal agreements with regional fire agencies for emergency response. She highlighted concerns about off-highway vehicle (OHV) use in Hungry Valley, noting that illegal routes have contributed to erosion, landscape degradation, and safety hazards, including fire risks. A revised access management plan has been developed to restrict OHV traffic to designated routes, ensuring that large groups do not disrupt residential areas. While peaceful activities such as hiking and biking are welcome, unauthorized OHV activity must be managed to protect the environment and public safety. Stowell emphasized the cultural and historical significance of the Pah Rah Mountains, stating that their preservation is essential not just for the tribe but for all Americans. The rapid population growth and increased land use pressures necessitate stronger protections. She expressed support for the Truckee Meadows Public Land Management Act, advocating for a more comprehensive conservation approach beyond an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation, ideally transitioning into a National Conservation Area with greater oversight. She also introduced the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony’s new comprehensive plan, which is being updated for the first time since 2000 and is expected to be adopted by the Tribal Council in the coming months. The plan covers land use, housing, transportation, public safety, cultural resource conservation, and parks. The data collected allows for informed decision-making and strategic recommendations to address key community needs, including housing for elders and transportation safety. A significant milestone for the tribe was the recent adoption of its own building code, moving away from defaulting to regional standards. Although the tribe does not have its own building department, consulting services are being used to ensure improved safety standards for the community. The comprehensive plan also includes a future land-use map for Hungry Valley, guiding development efforts. While new housing is needed, the current focus is on a 25-lot subdivision near the community center, with plans for future infill housing and potential agricultural initiatives. She highlighted the importance of land redevelopment along the Truckee River, where the colony has acquired former industrial parcels. This effort has significantly reduced industrial use along the river and increased access to a critical natural resource. Stowell concluded with an example of successful community collaboration in addressing illegal dumping. A resident reported an individual dumping green waste on tribal land, providing a license plate number. Tribal police investigated, confronted the individual, and ensured they cleaned up the site. She encouraged continued coordination between residents, local agencies, and law enforcement to address illegal dumping, target shooting, and other issues, noting that the colony has an online reporting system for such concerns.

A resident asked if their website included boundaries and they answered that the planning department part of the website includes a link to their hub. The hub also includes a number of other valuable resources including an interactive map.

Joni Hammond asked about the difference between a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and a National Conservation Area (NCA), as the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony had expressed interest in transitioning the designation. The response explained that an NCA provides a higher level of management and protection, ensuring that no further easements or projects, such as fiber optic installations, would be allowed in sensitive areas. Over the past 20 years, multiple fiber optic projects have been approved, encroaching on culturally significant sites. While an ACEC recognizes environmental sensitivity, it still permits development and projects. The decision to establish an NCA would be made by Congress through the Truckee Meadows Public Land Management Act.

Janet Hand asked about the use of an emergency evacuation route in Hungry Valley by commuters from Lemon Valley traveling to Spanish Springs via OHV roads. The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony clarified that while they do not officially designate the route as an evacuation road, they recognize that many people use it. Tribal police aim to keep the east-west corridor as accessible as possible. However, their main priority is improving Big Dog Road, which is frequently used for north-south travel out of Lemon Valley. The road becomes hazardous during precipitation, holding rain and snow, making it unsafe for both community members and the general public. Plans are in place to enhance Big Dog Road to ensure its safety for both regular use and emergency evacuations.

Paul Augustini admitted that he was not very familiar with the area despite having lived there for over seven years. He recalled an experience while driving for Uber, where he ended up on a road above Spanish Springs High School and was surprised to discover a large housing development in the area. He asked if that was Hungry Valley, to which the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony confirmed that it was part of their community.

Jeremy Lynnes expressed frustration over a lack of cohesion between the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and local residents, particularly regarding issues like illegal dumping. He noted that dumping occurs behind his home on tribal land and, despite reporting it multiple times, it remains unaddressed. He has even offered to organize cleanup efforts but has not received a response. He urged for better collaboration between the colony and residents to address shared concerns.

The Reno-Sparks Indian Colony responded by encouraging residents to report such issues directly to them, assuring that they will follow up. They also mentioned that the tribe participates in cleanup efforts similar to Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful (KTMB) and suggested improving coordination and outreach so that residents are aware of scheduled cleanups. While these events only happen a few times a year, they acknowledged the need for more frequent efforts and agreed to explore ways to improve collaboration with the broader community.

1. **REPORT ON REQUESTS FOR SERVICE FROM PREVIOUS CAB MEEITNGS -**Bonnie Billings provided a report from the previous CAB meeting regarding emergency evacuation planning for Spanish Springs. In response to a constituent's question, Washoe County staff consulted with emergency management personnel and confirmed that there is no single evacuation plan for any area. Evacuations depend on the specific emergency, its type, and location. Residents are encouraged to have their own emergency plans, including designated meeting places, communication strategies, and provisions for pets and family members. Additionally, individuals should keep a "grab bag" with essential items like medications and water. She also reminded the community to keep their gas tanks full or, for electric vehicle owners, to ensure their vehicle is charged.
2. **CAB MEMBER/ COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/ REQUESTS -**

Bonnie Billings announced that the community will now meet monthly and encouraged residents to invite their neighbors to participate. She emphasized the importance of community engagement and introduced a QR code that allows attendees to submit ideas for future agenda topics and speakers. She outlined upcoming meeting topics, including public safety and emergency preparedness in April, library resources in May, and traffic updates from the Nevada Department of Transportation and the Regional Transportation Commission in June. In July, representatives from the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) will discuss emergency response training. September will focus on urban development and the Spanish Springs master plan, followed by additional updates from RTC in October. November’s meeting will explore educational opportunities at UNR and Truckee Meadows Community College, including programs for both youth and seniors. Other potential discussion topics include land use updates, homelessness, and traffic concerns, such as the La Posada intersection. Billings encouraged attendees to provide additional topic suggestions via the QR code and emphasized the value of community-driven input in shaping future meetings.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT –**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT –** The meetingadjourned at 7:06 p.m.