



South Truckee Meadows/Washoe Valley Citizen Advisory Board
Minutes of the regular meeting of the South Truckee Meadows/Washoe Valley Citizen
Advisory Board held on October 2, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. at South Valleys Library

1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Present – Wesley Mewes, Penny Brock, Thomas Gauthier, Brad Stanley, Marge Frandsen
Absent –

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge was recited

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT – Comment heard under this item will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The Citizen Advisory Board will also hear public comment during individual action items marked as “For Possible Action,” with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to Board as a whole. [Non-Action Item]

Cynthia Reed expressed her concern to the South Valley’s Phase 3 designs from 2015, as it is almost 2025. She asked for an update on the timeline and an interest of having a dog park with a fence, as many get older dogs that require boundaries for training and because the park has recently been opened for shared use with the soccer field. A fenced area would also provide a safe place for both seniors and children to play with dogs.

John Zurwell expressed opposition to the stadium. He inquired about a 20 year lease the developer obtained for about \$10-\$20.

Grace Zurwell wrote in a comment in opposition to the stadium.

John Irvin also expressed opposition to the soccer stadium. He also commented on the traffic being jammed during the fire along Wedge Parkway to Arrow Creek. He also thanked the fire department for their job but that some emergency planning would be helpful going forward to alleviate the traffic issue.

Elaine Fox expresses concern about the ongoing discussion of the soccer stadium, as she believed the issue had already been resolved by the Parks and Open Spaces department, with the decision not to move it forward to the Board of Commissioners. She is frustrated that the topic is being revisited, especially when she thought the meeting was meant to focus on the South Valleys Park Trail extension. Fox questions the transparency of the decision-making process, pointing out that local citizens have voiced opposition, yet the issue keeps resurfacing. She accuses behind-the-scenes manipulation and calls for more openness and transparency in the process.

Ingrid Lovers strongly opposed the stadium due to concerns about traffic, noise, and its location. She criticized the decision-making process, stating that public input should have come earlier. She also objected to the stadium’s potential for private profit, arguing the land was donated with different intentions. She requested an update on the project’s status and feared it might be reintroduced without proper notice.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF August 7, 2024 – [For Possible Action]

Thomas Gauthier moved to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2024 meeting and the motion was seconded by Marge Frandsen. The motion carried and minutes were approved.

Jason Mewes provided an update on a the stadium project being discussed during general public comment, stating that it was not moving forward at this time. The Parks Commission voted against the project, halting its progress at the first step of the approval process. While the project could still be refiled or reconsidered, the public comments, which totaled over 117, clearly indicated that the project is unpopular in the community. Mewes suggested reviewing the public comments and agenda online for further details. Penny Brock also mentioned that there are rumors the project may be appealed to the County Commission after the election, urging the public to stay vigilant.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE - General Community Update from Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and/or Washoe County Sheriff's Office. [Non-Action Item]

Washoe County Sheriff's Office

Lieutenant J Armando Avina provided an update on the recent fire response, explaining that while the sheriff's patrol division handled the situation, there were challenges, including traffic disruptions and citizens blocking emergency routes. He emphasized the importance of quick responses, especially when fire and emergency vehicles needed to get through. Avina acknowledged the learning experience from handling the situation, including the need for better traffic information and coordination. He thanked the community for their patience and cooperation, noting that the fire response involved multiple agencies working together. Despite the difficulties, Avina expressed gratitude for the collective effort, which helped manage the crisis efficiently.

A resident expressed appreciation for the open exit on 580 during the fire, which allowed access to Mt Rose Highway and North Reno, preventing traffic backups on other routes. Avina emphasized the importance of clear communication, especially for those without social media, like their spouse, who may have difficulty staying informed in these situations. The resident suggested improving communication methods, such as using apps, radio updates, and maps, as these were crucial for staying informed during the fire. They highlighted that digital communication was a key challenge, especially when traditional methods like radio were unreliable.

A resident asked Lieutenant Avina about how evacuation notices are given when communication systems like Wi-Fi or cell service are down. Specifically, they wanted to know how notifications are handled in such situations. Lieutenant Avina explained that the Sheriff's Office uses search and rescue volunteers to help with evacuations. These volunteers are trained and work from a command post where they can access a database of residents. In cases of urgent evacuations, such as during a fast-moving fire, volunteers go door-to-door to inform residents. While electronic communication methods like reverse 911 are available, the need for immediate action often means there isn't time to explain in detail. Volunteers are crucial in ensuring that everyone is evacuated, even when resources are stretched thin.

A resident asked about how power outages may affect their ability to be notified and was told that will be the next thing that they cover.

A resident shared their experience of trying to get fire information during an event by tuning into a weather band radio, but only receiving weather updates, not fire details. They questioned why fire information wasn't included in the emergency weather band. In response, Lieutenant Avina explained that they do not control radio stations but work with local media. He suggested reaching out to

emergency planning officials to discuss communication protocols, including how fire information is broadcast on emergency channels.

Penny Brock recommend a possible study by Washoe County for what can be done to improve traffic flow during an evacuation in the South Valleys area.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

Division Chief Joe Schum provided an update on recent fire response efforts, specifically focusing on the Davis Fire. He shared that in the past two months, South Valley had an above-average number of calls, especially due to fires and medical incidents. Schum described the Davis Fire as one of the most intense he's seen in his 30-year career, emphasizing the coordinated response of over 30 entities, including local agencies, schools, and parks. He detailed the fire's rapid spread, including its impact on infrastructure, power lines, and communications, which led to power outages and cell tower failures. Despite these challenges, Schum praised the swift response of firefighters, with 47 engines, 6 bulldozers, and 350 firefighters arriving in less than 24 hours. Evacuations were prioritized, with over 8,000 homes eventually evacuated. He explained the challenges faced during the evacuation process, including unexpected traffic issues and communication breakdowns. The response involved extensive use of resources, including night-flying helicopters and hand crews, and Schum highlighted the impressive collaboration between multiple agencies. Schum also noted the use of the Perimeter app for evacuation notifications, which saw millions of visits during the fire. He acknowledged challenges in predicting evacuation routes due to unexpected traffic and non-residents clogging routes. On day two, challenges arose as fire spread in an area known as Division Alpha, where engines and bulldozers couldn't easily operate. Crews relied heavily on hand crews (CRWs) to dig containment lines using only hand tools and chainsaws. Unfortunately, the fire crept beyond the handline due to underground root systems, causing the fire to breach the containment. The response involved extensive air support, with over 1 million gallons of water and retardant dropped on the fire, mostly from fixed-wing and rotary aircraft. Crews worked tirelessly to manage the fire's spread, including the use of 17 miles of hoses along the perimeter. However, a significant wind shift on the third night caused the fire to spot across the highway, requiring additional burn operations to protect key areas. At one point, the situation escalated into a particularly dangerous situation, prompting a full staffing call, with even employees on light duty coming in to assist. In anticipation of further danger, 25 engines were deployed to protect neighborhoods. Fortunately, the fire was kept under control thanks to vigilant crews and lookout teams. Despite the extensive efforts, 14 primary buildings were lost, including homes, a church, and businesses. Schum expressed his sympathy for those affected, acknowledging the emotional toll of losing homes and belongings. The fire season was mitigated by a rain event, although it came too late to prevent all damage. Schum concluded by noting preparations for potential winter flooding due to the fire's impact on the soil, emphasizing the community's collective efforts and resilience.

Thomas Gauthier asked Division Chief Schum about the presence of firewise organizations within the community. Schum responded that there are several firewise communities in the area, with Brett Taylor, the new Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator, doing an excellent job in increasing community engagement. Schum also mentioned a significant \$3 million grant, announced by the fire chief, which is a joint effort between BLM and Truckee Meadows. This grant will help reduce fuel loads and create fuel breaks around East Lake in the coming years, which is expected to be a major improvement for fire prevention.

A resident shared their experience with Schum, mentioning that they are part of Greening Country Estates, which became a Firewise USA community through Truckee Meadows Fire four years ago. They emphasized the importance of getting involved in fire prevention efforts, suggesting that even if a community doesn't have an HOA, residents can create their own groups to follow Firewise USA recommendations. The resident highlighted the wealth of resources available, like workshops on

communication and fire preparedness. Schum acknowledged that while information is available, it requires effort to stay connected and informed, especially when busy with daily life.

A resident asked for an update into the fire but Chief Schum was unable to provide one at this point. He was only able to point out that the fire originated in Davis Creek park and that multiple agencies are working together and asking for tips.

Jay Collins expressed gratitude to the fire and emergency responders for their efforts, highlighting the beavers' role in damming the outflow of Little Washoe Lake, which provided additional water. He also suggested expanding the water storage capacity in their area, which has a gravity-fed water system with a million-gallon tank, and adding fire hydrants to aid firefighters. Schum responded positively, encouraging Collins to approach the local water authority (TLA) about the idea. He acknowledged the challenges of power outages and the efforts to restore power to wells. Schum also praised community volunteers who helped with firefighting efforts, including passing hoses to neighbors without power. He further mentioned the support from Las Vegas fire crews who helped cover calls in Reno, giving local responders a break. Finally, Schum shared details of a community thank-you event on October 15th at Aces Ballpark to honor both first responders and volunteers, emphasizing the collective effort that made the response possible.

Penny Brock asked how the community can get an evacuation plan for areas like Mount Rose Highway. Chief Schum responded that the emergency manager has developed evacuation plans through FEMA resources, considering the number of people, available roadways, and evacuation routes. These plans are available on the county's emergency management website, which is currently being updated for various disasters, including fires, earthquakes, and floods. Schum suggested inviting the emergency manager to discuss these plans with the group in the future.

Brad Stanley asked Chief Schum several questions. First, he inquired about the methods used by firefighters to detect hot spots, specifically referring to infrared and a fire app used in Ontario. Schum explained that they use IR flights to map the fire's perimeter and identify heat, which is the most accurate method. They also use infrared drones sparingly, typically in wilderness areas. Additionally, they rely on satellite imagery from NASA, though it's less precise and updated every 4-12 hours. The final step involves firefighters on the ground checking for heat directly. Stanley also asked about communication tools, specifically whether Starlink or other systems are used in remote areas. Schum confirmed that Starlink is used by some firefighters. While cell service is often limited during fires, "cell on wheels" (COW) towers from Verizon, T-Mobile, or AT&T are sometimes brought in. These are portable cell towers that provide temporary coverage, although civilian access can be restricted to ensure data for fire operations.

A resident asked about the use of hand radios during the fire and the costs associated with the response. Chief Schum clarified that hand radios are not used for firefighting but can be employed for search and rescue operations. For communication during the fire, the fire trucks used radios connected to repeaters or relied on line-of-sight communication with basic AA batteries, which lasted 6-8 hours per day. Regarding the cost of the fire response, Schum estimated that the total cost was around \$12.5 million when the fire team left. After accounting for suppression repairs and ongoing efforts, he projected the final cost would be about \$4 million. He also explained that the Truckee Meadows Fire Department participates in the Wildfire Protection Plan, a state-funded pool used for such events, and that the federal government provided a Fire Management Assistance Grant, covering 75% of the fire costs due to the significant impact on homes and infrastructure.

Linda Bell shared her experience attending a meeting with NV Energy, where they discussed the Davis fire, their response, and the areas affected by power outages. She suggested that the board invite NV

Energy to share this information with the community. One key detail they shared was that a backup generator failed, causing a loss of cell service, and they recommended contacting cell companies and media outlets to raise awareness about the issue. Bell found the meeting helpful, as it also addressed power outages from earlier in the year and explained the different levels of de-energization, which could help the community better understand how the fire and power interruptions were managed.

6. NEVADA GREAT BASIN TRIBES - Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe representative James Phoenix will provide information regarding the Nevada Great Basin Tribes. [Non-Action Item]

James Phoenix, a retired law enforcement officer and National Guard Lieutenant Colonel, gave a presentation on Native American history in the Great Basin, focusing on the Paiute, Shoshone, and Washoe tribes. He emphasized the importance of storytelling in Native culture, as stories are passed down to maintain connection with the community. He provided an overview of the tribes in the area, including the Paiute at Pyramid Lake, the Shoshone near Elko, and the Washoe around Lake Tahoe and Carson City. He also discussed the Great Basin, explaining its history and the nomadic lifestyle of Native peoples in the region. Phoenix pointed out significant archaeological findings, such as human remains and artifacts dating back 10,000 years, as evidence of the region's deep Native American roots. Located north of Reno, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe operates a museum showcasing its history, including the Pyramid Lake War of 1860 and oral traditions like the myths of the Stone Mother and Water Babies. Phoenix then discusses the Shoshone tribe, spread across Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming, with a population of about 6,000. Despite challenges, they maintain cultural heritage through various reservations. The Washoe tribe, native to the Lake Tahoe area, traditionally moved between the lake and desert for trade and hunting. With around 12,200 members, their communities are found in places like Carson City. Phoenix also covers the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, established in 1917, where Native Americans settled in search of work. The colony now owns federal trust land and provides housing, EMS, and community services. The Nevada Urban Indians organization, founded in 1975, supports 6,600 urban Native Americans in the Reno area, offering job placement, healthcare, and mental health services. Finally, Phoenix explains tribal sovereignty, which grants tribes self-governance under the U.S. Constitution. While tribes can make their own laws and hold elections, they must comply with federal and state regulations. He notes that Native Americans gained voting rights in 1924, but the complex legal framework remains challenging. Phoenix highlights the resilience of Native American tribes in Nevada, their cultural importance, and the lasting effects of historical trauma, as well as the ongoing support provided by organizations like Nevada Urban Indians.

A resident asked what tribe Sarah Winnemucca belonged to and Phoenix responded that she was part of the Washoe and Paiute tribe. The resident also clarified that she was the first woman enshrined in the Capitol Rotunda.

Richard Miller asked about what jurisdiction the tribe has over Walmart located near the GSR as it is located on tribal owned land. Phoenix explained that the lot is leased to Walmart and as such, they handle fines. It does however get tricky regarding disciplining Native Americans getting arrested or cited there. A few unnamed residents asked varying questions about if the taxes of that Walmart go to the tribe or state. A question was also raised about whether the tribe has accepted any reparations money for the diversion that was done at the Derby Dam and Phoenix responded that it was an ongoing legal battle.

7. SOUTH VALLEYS REGIONAL PARK UPDATE - Washoe County Division Director of Operations Aaron Smith will provide an update on the South Valleys Regional Park and take community questions. [Non-Action Item]

Washoe County Division Director of Operations

Aaron Smith provided an update on the development of the South Valleys Regional Park, covering its size, progress, and future plans. The park spans 105 acres, consisting of three parcels, with the northern parcel donated in 2009, prompting an update to the master plan. The design phase is currently underway, with phase one focusing on essential infrastructure like parking lots and traffic controls, funded by federal ARPA funds. Smith clarified that earlier proposals for a soccer stadium, which were explored through a public-private partnership process, have been put on hold after new information was discovered. The soccer stadium is no longer moving forward, and there are no current plans to present it to the Board of County Commissioners. The development of the park is part of a long-term effort, with funding sought for future phases. Smith noted that the county has multiple regional parks, but most are still in phased development due to the high costs of park construction. While demand for park spaces has increased, especially post-COVID, there are challenges in balancing resources to meet community needs while maintaining affordable tax rates. Smith emphasized the importance of preserving parks for their mental health and community benefits.

Penny Brock asked Aaron Smith several questions regarding park development. First, she inquired about the number of parking spaces in the current design and whether the park's ARPA funding of \$2 million would cover the cost of grading, infrastructure, and lighting. Smith confirmed that the \$2 million would indeed cover those expenses. Brock then asked how many parking spaces would be needed to complete the park and whether the design would meet that requirement. Smith acknowledged that the current design includes some parking but not enough for a large facility, such as one hosting concerts. He noted that the final design is still evolving. Lastly, Brock asked which exhibit from the 2015 master plan the current design aligned with. Smith pointed to a slide showing the design from the master plan, confirming that the current plans align with public input and the issues identified, such as drainage and access.

John Zurwell asked Aaron Smith about the contract status for the park development, referencing reports that the contract had been finalized and signed. Smith clarified that no contract had been signed yet, as contracts of this nature must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners, which has not yet seen the proposal. He confirmed that while a draft contract had circulated, nothing had been finalized or negotiated. Zurwell also asked about the bids for the park development, and Smith explained that the bids currently out are for the parking lot phase, funded by ARPA funds, with future phases still in planning. He noted that the full development could cost around \$15 million.

A resident asked Aaron Smith about the role of the Parks and Open Spaces Commission, questioning why it matters if the Board of County Commissioners can override their recommendations, especially if influenced by outside factors like financial contributions. Smith explained that the commission is advisory to the Board of County Commissioners, and while he couldn't speak to the structure of government or its historical reasoning, he acknowledged that the current system allows the Board to have the final say. He suggested that Eric, with more experience in parks, might provide further insight into the matter. Eric Crump explained that the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission is advisory to the Board of County Commissioners, a structure common to various boards, including those in Reno and Sparks. In his 19 years with the county, he has only seen the BCC vote differently from the Park Commission's recommendation once, and generally, the Board listens to the Commission's advice. Aaron Smith noted that the BCC, being elected officials, holds the final authority, while the Parks Commission is made up of volunteers who represent the best interests of parks.

Nicole Harris asked several questions about the park development plan. First, she inquired whether the money for building the parking lot was based on the 2015 master plan or current community feedback. Aaron Smith confirmed it was based on the 2015 feedback but noted that updates could be made through a new master planning process, though it would be expensive and time-consuming. Harris also asked

about recent adjustments to the plan, specifically regarding the stadium, and how new information, such as deed restrictions and public sentiment changed the original assessment, leading to a decision not to move forward with the stadium. Lastly, she asked about the total cost of the project, to which Smith responded that the rough estimate for developing the entire undeveloped area, including infrastructure and amenities, is around \$15 million.

Ingrid Lovers asked about the amenities planned for the park, as she was unsure about the visual representation. Aaron Smith clarified that the plan includes four softball fields, additional parking, a dog park (with areas for both small and large dogs), communal fields, and three flat sports fields, along with an emergency access road. Lovers then asked about the community park commission's vote, suggesting there were five people in the community park commission and 11 in another group, and that they voted unanimously against the soccer field.

A resident asked about the undeveloped area shown on the map, noting that it is white and asking about the ARPA-funded phase one area (yellow). The resident also inquired about the potential for changes after the November election, specifically if the Board of County Commissioners might approve a soccer stadium despite previous opposition from the Parks and Open Spaces Commission. Aaron Smith explained that if the Board of Commissioners decides to move forward with the project, it would go through several stages, including public review, staff time for due diligence, and community input at various points, particularly during County Commission meetings and the planning and permitting process. The final decision would involve multiple votes and public input, ensuring a thorough review process.

A resident asked whether the Damonte group is still seeking backchannel access to get approval for the project, whether they are in talks with the county, and whether any legal meetings are taking place regarding the deed restrictions. They also asked if the proposal would need to restart the approval process if the group modified the stadium to hold only 3,000 people. Eric Crump responded that there have been no staff-level conversations with the Damonte group, though they may be in talks with Commissioners. He explained that there are several deed restrictions tied to the property, which were previously misunderstood. The legal change occurred when the donor's daughter raised concerns, which could prevent the project from moving forward if the deed restrictions aren't addressed. If the project moves forward despite these issues, it will still require full approval from the Board of Commissioners.

John Irvin asked whether there is a specific process or trigger that would cause the soccer stadium project to move forward after being halted. The response clarified that the Open Space Parks Commission's feedback has made the project seem unfeasible for now, and there are no immediate plans to move it forward. However, if the Board of County Commissioners decides to revisit the project and gives staff direction, it could move forward. There is no formal "trip wire" or automatic process to restart only a decision by the Commissioners to bring it back. Additionally, the unsolicited proposal process is a public record and can be accessed by anyone interested.

8. **NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING HUB** – Washoe County staff will share the latest community information on neighborhood development meetings. [Non-Action Item]

This item was skipped.

- 9. CAB BOARD MEMBER' BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS** - This item is limited to announcements by CAB members, Washoe County Leadership, and Washoe County Commissioner Mike Clark. [Non-Action Item]

Washoe County Commissioner Mike Clark announced that starting next Monday, he will begin holding community meetings to listen to the concerns and opinions of residents in District Two. These meetings will allow residents to share their views on local issues, as many people can't attend daytime County Commission meetings. He emphasized that his role is to represent the opinions of his constituents, not just his own. The meetings will be held monthly, and each person will have four minutes to speak. The goal is to gather input to better serve the community and relay those concerns to the County Commissioners.

- 10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** - Comments heard under this item will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The Citizen Advisory Board will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Board as a whole [Non-Action Item]

There was no general public comment.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.