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**Warm Springs/Rural Minutes of the regular meeting of the Warm Springs/Rural Citizen Advisory Board held on November 13, 2024, at 6:00 P.M. via ZOOM**

1. **CALL TO ORDER/DETERMINATION OF QUORUM** [Non-Action Item]

Present – Larry Chesney, Marshall Todd, Kevin Cook, Hugh Ezelle
Absent – Pam Roberts

A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE [Non-Action Item]**

 The pledge of allegiance was recited.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** – [For Discussion Only]

There was no general public comment.
2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF September 11, 2024** [For Possible Action]

Martial Todd motioned to approve the minutes and Hugh Ezelle seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

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

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District
Joe Schum, Division Chief for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, provided an update on public safety. In the Warm Springs area, there was an average of 17 calls per month in September and October. October included 2 fire calls, 7 medical calls, 2 motor vehicle crashes, and 6 public assist calls. Schum recommended chimney cleaning and proper disposal of ashes to prevent fires as the weather cools. Despite the colder temperatures, the region remains in fire season due to dry conditions, with recent fires, including one near Callahan Road that destroyed a home. He also announced that 6 new recruits are being trained and will start in January to fill positions left by retirements.

Marshall Todd thanks the fire fighters for their hard work on the Callaghan fire along with the Washoe Valley fire.

Hugh Ezelle asked what started the fire and was informed that it is still pending an investigation. He also asked about NV energy cutting power during high winds and Schum responded that they must do this to prevent power lines from knocking over and starting fires. He was unsure if they can expect similar precautions in Warm Springs but informed Hugh that NV energy sends notices in advance the best they can. Larry Chesney confirmed that NV energy will indeed shut them down if necessary.

\*\*this part of item 5 came after item 6.
Washoe County Sheriff’s Office
Lieutenant Armando Avina provided an update on issues related to emergency dispatch in rural areas. He discussed the challenges residents face when calling for emergency services, especially due to the need for multiple transfers during urgent situations. He suggested that dispatchers should be trained to ask specific questions about the distance of a residence from the road or gate, and other relevant details that could affect response time, such as lighting and accessibility. Avina emphasized that these factors are crucial, especially in areas with long driveways and remote locations. He also highlighted the importance of driving safely in adverse weather conditions, particularly on unpaved roads that can become muddy after rain. He warned residents about the risks of driving too fast, regardless of the vehicle type, and advises caution during the upcoming winter months when snowy or slippery conditions are expected. He encouraged residents to drive slower and make others aware of these conditions, especially those unfamiliar with the area, to avoid accidents and ensure safety.

Greg Dennis raised a concern about the lack of clear boundaries and mechanisms for setting speed limits on certain roads, especially in rural areas. He pointed out that despite law enforcement's ability to enforce traffic laws, there is no clear process for implementing and enforcing speed limits on roads like Ironwood, where speeding is a significant safety issue. He compared the situation to Oregon, where property owners maintain rights to the land under roads but still enforce speed limits. Dennis questioned how this issue will be addressed in the long term without legislation, emphasizing that while speed limit signs can be posted, enforcement remains a challenge.

Larry Chesney explained that the issue is that they are private roads with public access. Palomino Valley won’t get law enforcement unless they come under the jurisdiction of Washoe County. Avina added that by just having an officer in the area patrolling it can help the area remain safer.

George Boyce questioned why the sheriff's office doesn't use electronic systems to track speeding vehicles, suggesting the use of technology that could capture a vehicle's speed and license plate, automatically issuing tickets. He specifically mentioned the possibility of electronic systems that could track speed and photograph license plates for enforcement. In response, Lieutenant Armando Avina explained that speed limits are set for ideal driving conditions, but factors like snow and wildlife can complicate enforcement. He mentioned that current trailers used by the sheriff's office may not be equipped to take pictures of license plates, and specialized systems like the "BART" system would be needed for that. He also emphasizes the importance of reporting vehicles with license plate information for follow-up by law enforcement.

1. **FIRE SERVICE REGIONALIZATION** – Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District’s Chief Charles Moore and Division Chief Joe Schum will provide information about the regionalization of fire service and answer community questions. [For Discussion Only]

TMFPD Chief Charles Moore discussed the challenges of regionalization in emergency response systems, particularly in Washoe County, where dispatch centers in Reno, Sparks, and Truckee Meadows struggle to communicate seamlessly. Unlike Southern Nevada, where agencies work together smoothly, Washoe faces difficulties due to outdated technology. To address this, a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is being implemented to help dispatchers send the closest agency to emergencies, regardless of jurisdiction. However, Moore highlighted the obstacles to creating a unified fire district across Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County, particularly the financial and legislative hurdles. The combined budgets of these agencies require a substantial tax increase, which he argued may not justify the cost, especially if the service levels remain the same. Moore emphasized that instead of focusing on consolidation, regionalization efforts should prioritize improving dispatch technology, which could enhance efficiency without raising taxes.

Larry Chesney praised Charlie Moore for successfully managing the aftermath of a failed regionalization effort between Reno and Sparks 15-20 years ago. Moore highlighted the challenges, including establishing the Department in 90 days, and emphasized that regional dispatch should be the first step in a broader regionalization process, rather than focusing on the fire department.

Joe Schum discusses the upcoming implementation of a regional CAD (Computer-Aided Dispatch) system, with dispatcher training starting in December and the system going live between January and March 2026. This system integrates fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies, streamlining processes from call tracking to court systems. It aims to improve efficiency by providing better tracking of incidents and resources, enhancing responder safety, and reducing unnecessary responses, like sending a fire truck to a minor medical issue. Ultimately, the goal is to improve the region's emergency response times and resource allocation.

Greg Dennis asks Charles Moore about the potential issue of fairness and resource allocation, especially with the overlap of service areas between Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County. He questions whether this overlap might lead to responders being sent to calls in other districts more frequently, potentially causing inequities or inefficiencies. Moore acknowledges the challenge, especially in the first year and a half, but suggests that once the new CAD system is in place, the focus will be on sending the closest resource to life-threatening emergencies (e.g., fires, accidents, cardiac arrests). For lower-priority calls, the system may limit response to essential resources and avoid sending larger, more costly units.

Kevin Cook asked how the system stays connected while in an area with no service and Joe Schum explained that the system uses both cellular and satellite to detect a location so even if someone is out of the cell range, they will still be able to detect them.

Greg Dennis asked Joe Schum if the new system will be integrated with emergency management, particularly in situations like storm damage where contractors are needed immediately for tasks like removing fallen trees. He wanted to know if the system will allow dispatchers to easily contact contractors and manage these types of emergency situations efficiently. Joe Schum responded by explaining that the system includes a feature called the "invitational list," which allows for the inclusion of contractors, such as the Association of General Contractors. This list is programmed annually into the system, so dispatchers can quickly access contact information for contractors when needed. He highlighted the importance of this feature in ensuring efficient response during emergencies. Additionally, he explained that the system is designed to prioritize calls based on severity, integrating national dispatch protocols for medical, fire, and police services. The system also reduces unnecessary emergency responses, helping to manage resources more effectively and safely

George Boyce asked what happens if the system shutdowns or is hacked and Joe Schum responded that the system is designed for redundancy. He affirmed that everyone is being trained for this, so they can handle situations without relying on technology.

1. **UPDATE ON BROADBAND/ CELL PHONE ZONE IN WARM SPRINGS/ RURAL AREA** – Chief Information Officer for Washoe County, Behzad Zamanian, will provide an update regarding broadband internet capabilities and cell phone tower improvements for people within the Warm Springs/Rural area. [For Discussion Only]

Behzad Zamanian presented the progress of the broadband master plan for the county. The goal was to improve high-speed internet connectivity, with a focus on fiber-optic connections. The plan identified priority areas like Gerlach, North Valleys, Warm Springs, and Washoe Valley. Despite initial lack of funding, partnerships with the county, state, and tribal groups allowed the installation of 16 miles of fiber between libraries. After completing the project in 11 months, further projects focused on connecting county facilities and businesses in Gerlach and extending fiber to homes in Empire. By October 2023, 140 out of 156 homes were connected at an affordable rate of $49 per home. The next steps will focus on further expansion, despite funding challenges.

\*\* Due to audio issues, the CAB used a cell phone to communicate with Behzad making some of the post presentation inaudible and hard to decipher.

A resident asked Behzad Zamanian about efforts to improve service in a "dead zone" area, where connectivity is poor. The resident mentioned a specific service provider and expressed frustration about the lack of maintenance or action. Behzad responded by explaining that a new cell site is planned to address the dead zone issue, with an expected completion timeline of 6 to 8 months after a final permit is issued. The project should resolve the connectivity problem by January.

Behzad Zamanian discussed efforts to improve communication infrastructure, highlighting collaboration with Verizon. They adjusted existing sites and worked together on integrating public safety radio systems. Behzad noted that their organization is building its own radio sites and can work with Verizon and other ISPs to enhance coverage, including installing their own equipment at these sites.

A resident asked Behzad about the broadband plans for Warm Springs, specifically regarding the use of fiber. They inquired if the upcoming broadband project, slated for a bid in February, would be entirely fiber-based. Behzad confirmed that the project would indeed be fiber-based, emphasizing that the state’s policy prioritizes fiber over wireless installations when it comes to broadband funding. However, he noted that due to the area's rough terrain, some fiber may be installed aerially rather than underground. The resident also asked if the fiber would extend directly to homes, which Behzad confirmed is part of the request, with the state requiring fiber connections as part of the project proposal.

1. **ROADS IN PALOMINO VALLEY/ WARM SPRINGS PVGID PRESENTATION -** Greg Dennis, Secretary of the Palomino Valley General Improvement District (PVGID), will provide information about the distribution of property taxes to provide road maintenance services, according to its charter. [For Discussion Only]

Greg Dennis's presentation discussed the financial and infrastructural challenges faced by the Palomino Valley General Improvement District (PVGID) in Nevada. He highlighted that the district's tax collection had increased from $650,000 in 2017-18 to around $898,000 by 2022, but this growth was insufficient to address the area's development and infrastructure needs. The county collected approximately $900,000 in taxes, but the GID only received about $400,000. The GID was primarily responsible for road maintenance, but issues like flood control and other infrastructure needs fell on the residents. Dennis criticized the county's management, noting that despite the taxes collected, the area did not receive sufficient services like road maintenance or flood control. He discussed the impact of a special plan area created in the 1990s, which allowed for significant development but failed to provide infrastructure improvements, particularly for roads, leaving the burden on the GID and residents. The presentation also emphasized the flooding risks, particularly the lack of adequate flood control infrastructure, and the potential for catastrophic damage to roads. Dennis advocated for the county to take responsibility for these issues, as the growing development in the area exacerbated traffic and infrastructure strain. The GID faced difficulties in maintaining roads and preparing for future flooding, and Dennis stressed the need for better planning and support from the county to address these challenges.

Hugh Ezelle expressed concerns about a shift from gas taxes to a vehicle mile traveled (VMT) tax, which would be based on the mileage driven and collected during vehicle registration. He argued that this change could disproportionately impact rural residents, who must drive longer distances to town, while those living in urban areas would pay much less. Ezelle also criticized the rise of electric vehicles, which do not contribute to gas tax revenue, and suggested that tracking mileage through vehicle registration could eventually lead to a mileage tax. He voiced opposition to such a tax system, pointing out that rural drivers already pay gas taxes but see little return from it.

A resident asked Larry Chesney if there had been any discussions about creating a working group involving the county and the General Improvement District (GID) to address the financial gap between the $400,000 that the GID receives and the $900,000 collected by the county. They suggested a more formal collaboration to find ways to bridge this gap and improve the working relationship between the two entities, which has historically been contentious. The resident emphasized the importance of cooperation, as everyone is affected by the issues at hand.

1. **PARKS IN WARM SPRINGS -**Faye-Marie Pekar gave a presentation about the current status of parks and development in the Warm Springs area. She highlighted that Warm Springs has one of the largest land areas but a low population, with many 40-acre parcels. The district includes a regional shooting facility, and two parks in Gerlach managed by the Gerlach GID. Pekar discussed the Residential Construction Tax (RCT) funds, which are a one-time fee collected from new development to fund park improvements. Currently, the RCT fund holds about $420,000, but there has been little demand for additional amenities due to the rural nature of the area. Previous public outreach in 2017-2018 showed that residents did not want more park facilities. Additionally, only 12% of the land in the area is owned by Washoe County, limiting potential park developments. The remaining land is owned by tribal or federal governments. Pekar mentioned the possibility of using funds for improvements at the Palmino open space but emphasized that any future use of the funds would depend on community needs. She opened the floor for further discussion and ideas.

In the discussion between Marshall Todd and Faye-Marie Pekar, Todd suggested using park funds to maintain roads instead of developing new park facilities, pointing out that the regional shooting facility has become more of a commercial operation than a park. Pekar responded that park funds are specifically designated for park development, which excludes road maintenance. She noted that if a new park is needed, such as for a growing number of children in the area, it could be explored with community input. However, she emphasized that the current RCT funds of $420,000 are limited and not sufficient for large park projects, as building a small park could cost around $1 million. Pekar explained that while the funds could be used for matching grants or smaller improvements, they would not cover the full cost of major park amenities.

Hugh Ezelle expressed strong opposition to using any of the $420,000 for the regional shooting facility, criticizing it as not a true park. He pointed out that the City of Reno and other cities use the facility for their officers, but residents are inconvenienced by the noise from machine guns. Ezelle argued that the money should be used for actual parks, not the shooting facility, and suggested that the cities should fund the facility themselves. He also expressed frustration over the park tax being collected through building permits, yet the money is restricted in ways that do not benefit the local community. He proposed that the county should lobby the legislature to allow the funds to be used more constructively for the valley, including potentially transferring the funds to GID for better local use.

Faye-Marie responded to Hugh Ezelle by acknowledging his perspective but highlighting the complexity of the situation. Ezelle pointed out that while there is a need for park amenities, the available $420,000 is insufficient to build even a small park, as the cost of such a project could exceed $1 million. Pekar emphasized that the funds could be used creatively, such as for matching grants, but stressed that the process requires community input to determine how the funds should be used. Regarding the potential transfer of funds to the GID, she clarified that she couldn't provide specific answers without more information, and that any changes would need further exploration.

The CAB discussed with Faye-Marie that if the community wants to develop a park, the funds available could potentially be used for matching grants. However, they clarified that the process of finding and applying for these grants is handled by the county's planners, not the community directly. While the community's role is to provide input on what they would like to see as park amenities, the county takes the lead in seeking grants and developing proposals based on that feedback.

1. **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB -** [Non-Action Item]

There was no update.

1. **WASHOE COUNTY COMMISSIONER UPDATE –**There was no update by Jeane Herman
2. **CAB MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS –**Larry Chesney thanked a few members of the community for helping put up new signs for the CAB meetings within a week.

Marshall Todd expressed his desire to have a discussion with commissioner Herman on Burning Man and dealing with their trash by increasing dump site capacity.

Hugh Ezelle brought up wanting to get notifications for the community for when the open burning is reinstated. Larry Chesney answered that they can use social media platforms such as Nextdoor to inform the community. Greg Dennis informed them that they can call a number to figure out the status for open burning. They are trying to open it on Dec 1.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** – Limited to no more than three (3) minutes. Anyone may speak pertaining to any matter either on or off the agenda. The public are requested to submit a Request to Speak form to the Board Chairman. Comments are to be addressed to the Board as a whole. [Non-Action Item]

JJ Phoenix emphasized the importance of collaboration and narrowing down key issues through a working group to make progress on local concerns, especially considering the challenges with current county processes. He said that the community should focus on finding practical solutions, such as pushing for law changes and advocating for support from county representatives to drive efforts forward. Greg Dennis highlighted the struggles of working as volunteers and suggested that having a dedicated advocate from the county could help push initiatives along. Chesney noted that past attempts to address issues at the county level have often been thwarted by bureaucratic priorities, and he stressed the need to reestablish the CABs with more decision-making power.

George Boyce asked about the possibility of getting a park and recreation fund proposal on the ballot for Palomino Valley. Larry Chesney explained that this would require a change in Nevada state law, which would be a complex process involving a bill draft request to the legislature. Chesney acknowledged the difficulty of reallocating park funds, as it would be a challenging legal and political process, influenced by the construction industry's power in legislation. He also explored the idea of using a community vote to apply pressure, like what the CAB (Community Advisory Board) used to do in the past.

**ADJOURNMENT -** The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.