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**Warm Springs/Rural Minutes of the regular meeting of the Warm Springs/Rural Citizen Advisory Board held on July 9, 2025, at 6:00 P.M. via ZOOM**

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

Present – Larry Chesney, Kevin Cook, Jan Mortensen, Carolyn White
Absent – Hugh Ezelle

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

 The pledge of allegiance was recited.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dr. Jennifer Fitzpatrick, veterinarian and director of Community Medicine and Surgery for the Nevada Humane Society, introduced herself in her new role and spoke about pet overpopulation issues affecting both domestic and wild animals in Washoe County. She shared that the Nevada Humane Society received a grant from the Washoe County Community Reinvestment program to expand community spay and neuter services across the county, now available seven days a week. She highlighted the addition of a mobile spay and neuter van that can travel to different areas, helping reduce barriers such as cost, time, and transportation for residents. She concluded by expressing excitement about joining the community and bringing these expanded services to the county.

Pam Roberts stated that she continues to live in the valley temporarily and cares deeply about the community. She referenced an agenda item concerning a subdivision application within the specific plan area and noted that a loosely formed group of Palomino residents has been working with county staff to share concerns about the potential impacts of development. While the current application is for 34 homes, she cautioned that it could open the door to more extensive development. She explained that the group has already been successful in delaying hearings on the application, now pushed to September. Roberts emphasized the importance of community involvement, encouraging residents to attend a workshop on July 26 at the restaurant center to organize, gather facts, and demonstrate strong turnout to show the community’s commitment. She highlighted water availability as a key issue, citing declining wells and the problem of more paper water rights being granted than actual water supply. She concluded by noting her role as chair of the Washoe County Senior Advisory Board and made herself available for questions about senior issues.
2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF** May 14, 2025Larry Chesney recommended that Carolyn White and Jan Mortensen abstain as they were not at the previous meeting. Kevin Cook motioned to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2025, Warm Springs CAB meeting. Larry Chesney seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.
3. **ELECTION OF CAB OFFICERS**Jan Mortensen nominated Larry Chesney for CAB Chair and Kevin Cook as Vice-Chair of the Warm Springs CAB. Carolyn White seconded the nominations. All CAB members were in favor and Larry Chesney and Kevin Cook were elected as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.
4. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE**

Fire Chief Richard Edwards introduced himself as the new chief of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, expressing pride in leading what he described as a phenomenal organization in Washoe County. He shared that he brings nearly 30 years of fire service experience, including 25 years with the City of Stockton, California, where he served the last five and a half years as fire chief. Edwards noted that he and his family are now Nevada residents and excited to be part of the community. He emphasized his eagerness to engage with residents, encouraged them to reach out with questions, and expressed his commitment to being a strong community partner.

**Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District**Division Chief of Operations Joe Schum provided a public safety update, noting that call volume in Palomino Valley is slightly down compared to last year, with 83 calls so far this year versus 93 during the same period last year. In June there were 13 calls, including seven medical calls, one motor vehicle accident, and the remainder being good intent or false calls, with no fires reported. He added that the Fourth of July holiday at Moon Rocks passed without major incidents. Schum cautioned that wildfire risk remains high with red flag conditions expected, urging residents to take precautions with towing, outdoor equipment, and barbecues. He also reminded the community to stay vigilant about heat illness by staying hydrated, seeking shade, and avoiding overexertion. Finally, he provided lightning safety tips, advising residents to seek shelter indoors, wait 30 minutes after the last thunderclap before resuming outdoor activities, and avoid using plumbing during lightning storms, as strikes can travel through water systems.Larry Chesney noted that a “Living with Fire” prevention and reclamation meeting would be held on Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon, offering resources on open space management, creating defensible space around property, and other fire safety topics. In response, Casey confirmed that the group has been presented at several CAB meetings and is willing to attend others, adding that their information is readily available and past presentations can be viewed in recorded CAB videos.

**Washoe County Sheriff’s Office**
Sergeant Gomez was online but due to technical difficulties was unable to deliver an update. Gomez said they will send over a report via email to be shared with CAB members.
5. **SEPTIC SYSTEMS IN RELATION TO THE PALOMINO FARMS DEVELOPMENT**Latricia Lord, Senior Environmental Specialist with Northern Nevada Public Health, gave an overview of septic systems and a recent variance request related to lot sizes. She explained the differences between standard septic systems, which use perforated pipes or chambers that allow effluent to leach into the soil, and engineered sand filter systems, which use specially graded sand to treat wastewater more effectively before it reaches the soil. Engineered systems can remove up to 90 percent of nitrogen and allow for reduced separation from groundwater, but they are generally more expensive and require pumps or siphons. She noted that soils in certain valley areas, such as Pleasant and Washoe Valleys, present challenges due to high groundwater or fractured rock, requiring alternative designs or mounded systems. Regulations typically require new subdivisions on septic to have lots of at least five acres, though variances can be requested. A recent request sought to reduce lot sizes to 2.5 acres while designating the remaining land as open space, much of it located in a flood zone. While the configuration maintained the same total number of lots as a five-acre layout, it raised concerns about groundwater and flood impacts. Lord explained that such variances are reviewed first by the Sewage Wastewater Advisory Board, made up of industry professionals, before being referred to the District Board of Health, which includes representatives from Washoe County, Reno, and Sparks, and holds the final decision-making authority.

Chesney asked who determines whether each 2.5-acre parcel being built on requires its own percolation test. Lord explained that the process starts with a test trench inspection. Sometimes builders bring in an engineer immediately, so they don’t have to wait for the county’s determination, since leaving an open trench poses safety risks. In practice, the county can review the trench and decide whether a perk test is necessary, but often the builder already has an engineer perform the perk test regardless.

Keven Cook asked if owning 40 acres would allow someone to put multiple septic systems on their property and whether the rules were based on acreage or dwellings, including accessory units. Latricia Lord responded that Health Department rules allow one septic per acre per dwelling, while county planning rules govern how many dwellings and accessory units are permitted. She noted that additional systems, such as for a barn or shop, may be allowed if acreage and requirements are met. Cook then asked if each septic would require its own perk test, and Lord explained that typically yes, although in some cases prior results may be honored depending on soil conditions. When Cook asked whether rising groundwater or neighbors’ water tests showing higher nitrates could trigger new requirements, Lord said residents can bring concerns to the Health Department at any time, but existing systems are not usually required to upgrade. However, in areas known for high nitrates, new systems may be required to include denitrification technology.

Carolyn White asked who determines whether nitrate levels in an area are high enough to require special septic considerations and whether a variance for 2.5-acre parcels dictates the type of septic system installed. Latricia Lord responded that her department makes those determinations under regulations that address nitrates, and that the variance only waived the 5-acre minimum and everything else, including test trench inspections and percolation tests, still applies to decide the type of system needed. White then asked if similar variances would be required for future subdivisions, including in the critical flood zone, and Lord explained that variances are parcel-specific but could be considered elsewhere, with engineered systems required as appropriate. White also raised concerns about soil conditions, noting a neighboring subdivision that failed due to a clay layer. Lord confirmed that clay creates extremely slow percolation, essentially trapping wastewater, and in such cases, builders must excavate the clay and install engineered septic systems. She added that test trench inspections look for groundwater evidence and soil conditions, but deep clay layers may not be visible without additional excavation, and if widespread, the cost of engineered systems could be prohibitive for development.

A resident noted that the applicant’s area had experienced two major floods in the past eight years and asked whether the Board was aware of that history when approving the variance, and if it might have changed their decision. They also questioned the protocol for notifying nearby residents about variance requests, stating that they received notice from the Planning Commission but not from the Public Health Board. In response, Latricia Lord said she did not know whether the Board had been aware of the flooding and explained that meeting notices follow minimum legal requirements, which are posted in advance, typically more than the required 72 hours before Board of Health meetings.

Larry Chesney asked whether the Board of Health’s meeting notifications are separate from the county’s and therefore not included in the county’s regular postings. In response, Latricia Lord clarified that while the Health District is a separate entity, its website is hosted by the county and uses the same listserv system. Residents must opt in to receive updates on specific topics, such as public health, and while notices are usually issued as press releases, she was unsure if one was sent for this variance but offered to find out.

Zane Vaughn asked whether the Board’s recommendations to the higher decision-making body are part of the public record and accessible. The response confirmed that the board’s meetings are public, agendized, and posted like other government meetings, with recommendations made in advance of the District Board of Health meetings. The recommendation for this case was likely made in January, and links can be provided for public access.
6. **REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF CAB STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE**

Larry Chesney discussed the role and purpose of the Brooke Springs Citizens Advisory Board, noting questions about its reliability, sustainability, and meeting frequency. He explained that while some suggested holding a meeting for every new development, in practice it is difficult to find enough subject matter for monthly meetings, which is why the board follows a bimonthly schedule. Chesney referenced the updated Citizens Advisory Board Handbook, which clarifies that County Commissioners, such as Commissioner Jeannie Herman, can call community meetings outside the regular CAB schedule if needed. He emphasized the importance of maintaining regular participation, using community meetings for urgent issues, and continuing to build attendance and engagement under the current structure.

Kevin Cook asked about the role of the Citizens Advisory Board and how it should be defined or understood, referring to earlier comments by another member. In response, Larry Chesney explained that the duties and responsibilities of the CAB are clearly outlined in the updated handbook recently reviewed and approved by the entire County Commission. He noted that this is the most current guidance available to the public, and it provides the legal basis for the board’s work.

Pam Roberts asked whether the CAB handbook specifies that Citizens Advisory Boards can only discuss issues within Washoe County’s jurisdiction. The response confirmed that the language was recently amended; previously it was not stated that way, but now the rules clarify that CABs must limit their discussions to matters under county jurisdiction.

Carolyn White asked whether a community meeting carries the same advisory weight as an official CAB meeting, and if community meetings are recorded or generate minutes. She noted that while community meetings may allow more flexibility in discussion, they might lack the formal record and influence of a CAB meeting. In response, Larry Chesney confirmed that community meetings do not carry the same weight but emphasized that County Commissioners have the authority to call additional official CAB meetings if needed.

Julie Osborne asked if the CAB could call its own special meeting outside the regular bi-monthly schedule. The response clarified that they cannot call one independently; any special meeting would have to go through the County Commissioner, since additional preparation and administrative work is required behind the scenes.

Laurie Squartsoff commented that while CAB meetings have structure and limits, community or open meetings provide valuable opportunities for free conversation, broader participation, and follow-up on important issues like development and septic systems. She noted that some residents feel more comfortable in less formal settings and suggested a balance between official CAB meetings and additional open meetings, especially when timely topics arise. In response, it was agreed that such follow-up community meetings, particularly after major developments are proposed, would be appropriate and beneficial for keeping communication strong.

Larry Chesney raised Pam Roberts’ earlier request about whether there was a record of the applicant’s neighborhood meeting. Casey McDonald explained that no recording was made; instead, applicants were asked to submit a comprehensive written summary to be posted on the neighborhood meeting site. Chesney also asked about posting CAB vacancies on social media, and McDonald noted that outreach like that is handled more broadly by the county. Finally, regarding a request to have On Med present at a CAB meeting, McDonald said the topic was considered too general for a Palomino Valley agenda but provided flyers and printouts so residents could still access the information.

Jan Mortensen argued that information about On Med should be considered relevant to the Palomino Valley CAB, since the handbook defines CAB meetings as forums for input on county issues. She explained that On Med provides accessible, free healthcare options especially valuable for seniors—and can serve as an alternative when local clinics are too busy, making it pertinent for residents to learn about services available in Reno and Sparks.

Kevin Cook asked how the CAB can ensure its discussions such as concerns about county-issued special use permits are heard by the appropriate county departments, since without their participation it feels like members are just talking among themselves and the points don’t reach decision-makers. In response, Larry Chesney explained that a request had been made for planning, code enforcement, and permitting staff to attend a meeting and explain the special use permit process, but those departments declined, saying they had no interest in participating.

Laurie Squartsoff expressed frustration that county planning and development staff refused to attend CAB meetings to explain the special use permit process, calling it unreasonable and unacceptable. She urged that the public should help push for accountability and noted that Commissioner Jeannie Herman should be able to require staff participation. Larry Chesney agreed it was a serious problem, saying new county leadership might bring more pressure on departments to engage. He added that while the Health Department has been responsive, planning and development declined involvement, which he considered unacceptable and had already been raised with Commissioner Herman.

Kevin Cook asked whether the acting county manager could be invited to attend a CAB meeting to address concerns directly. In response, Larry Chesney explained that the county manager doesn’t oversee specific planning or permitting matters that fall under assistant county managers like Dave Solaro, who handle particular areas. He added that the CAB’s role is to bring concerns to their County Commissioner, who then elevates them to the County Commission and county management. Chesney acknowledged frustration that despite following this process, the CAB often doesn’t get meaningful responses from the county.

Jan Mortensen suggested writing a letter to county staff stating that their lack of participation was unacceptable. In response, Kevin Cook proposed a more formal approach: adding a standing agenda item at every CAB meeting requesting planning staff and special use permit representatives to attend. This way, the record will consistently show that the CAB is making the request. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to adopt this practice.

George Boyce asked whether the CAB would be making any recommendations on the proposed development project. Larry Chesney explained that the CAB no longer handles building or development issues, a change made by the county and not by choice of the board. He said those matters now go through the required neighborhood meetings, which serve as the public’s opportunity to give input. Chesney noted that while turnout for the recent meeting was strong, the developer chose not to record it, leaving little official record beyond meeting notes.

Pam Roberts stressed the importance of recording neighborhood meetings, noting that without a record developers can misrepresent community input to planners. She warned this undermines the purpose of the process, which is to let developers hear concerns early and adjust their plans. Carolyn White agreed and gave an example: residents had emphasized preserving dark skies and limiting lighting, but the applicant’s documentation instead claimed the community wanted more lighting for security. She said this showed how easily feedback can be mischaracterized when meetings aren’t recorded.

1. **REPORT ON REQUESTS FOR SERVICE FROM PREVIOUS CAB MEETINGS** This item was combined with item 8.
2. **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**Casey McDonald explained how residents can use the Neighborhood Development Hub on the Washoe County website to track development projects, sign up for notifications, and view applications by district. He also highlighted the county’s community input engagement surveys, available online and via QR codes at meetings, which allow residents to share feedback outside of CABs or Commission meetings. McDonald noted that input is reviewed monthly and shared with Commissioners, sometimes prompting additional community meetings. He promoted the upcoming “Washoe Checkbook” budget workshop as a new transparency tool and encouraged residents to participate by submitting questions. He also mentioned current board and commission openings, reminded attendees about new federal accessibility requirements limiting what outside documents can be posted online, and offered to provide printed copies of materials instead. Finally, he said public health and law enforcement reports can be sent out by email and invited residents to forward additional questions for follow-up at future CAB meetings.
3. **CAB MEMBER/COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCMENTS/REQUESTS**

Jan Mortensen reminded everyone about the upcoming July 12 meeting at the equestrian center and then formally requested that someone from the senior center come to a future CAB meeting to discuss both the senior center and the On Med program. She clarified it didn’t have to be the head of the senior center specifically, just an appropriate representative.

Carolyn White, noting she is new to the process, said the master plan update includes a proposal to revise the Warm Springs Palomino Valley water budget, which sets how much water is allocated per new parcel to balance rights with groundwater supply. She suggested inviting someone involved with the water budget update, likely from Planning and Development, to present to the CAB so members can stay informed and provide better recommendations.

Kevin Cook emphasized the need to have Planning and Development staff attend CAB meetings to answer questions, particularly about special use permits, which frequently affect the area with activities like horse racing. He said it would be valuable to have ongoing discussions with them and supported making this a standing request on the record. It was agreed that the request would continue to be made formally, and if staff fail to attend, the CAB’s records will reflect that.

Larry Chesney said he has recently received several calls from residents asking why the CAB can’t intervene on special use permit issues, such as dust from a speed line or a property being used to park dozens of RVs. He explained that the CAB is not an enforcement body and cannot act as “neighborhood police.” Instead, residents should first try to resolve concerns directly with their neighbors; if that fails, they should contact the appropriate agencies, such as the Air Quality Board for dust complaints or Code Enforcement for unpermitted uses. Chesney emphasized that while people should have freedom on their own property, problems must be addressed through the proper channels, not through the CAB.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT –**Pam Roberts commented that the usual sign announcing the public meeting was missing and asked that responsibility for posting it be clarified and followed up on, since it helps remind the community. She also suggested having someone knowledgeable come to explain the new One Med health station, noting it provides free services such as vitals checks and virtual doctor consultations. She emphasized its value as the first of its kind in Nevada, available to all Washoe County residents, even though it requires a 40–45-minute drive.

Laurie Squartsoff thanked the CAB members for fostering open conversations and listening to residents’ concerns, noting this helps ensure that the county is aware of local issues. She said she attends other CAB meetings where attendance is also small and often the same people but emphasized that CABs remain an important avenue for community participation. She expressed appreciation for the time and effort the board dedicates to serving the community.

Casey McDonald welcomed two new CAB members and shared an update from the Raftelis report, noting that the Commission Support Team has been reorganized under Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro and the County Manager’s Office. He said this shift could strengthen relationships with code enforcement and planning, though the full impact won’t be clear until a permanent county manager is in place. Casey expressed optimism that the change will improve communication between commissioners and CABs and encouraged members to contact him directly if they feel issues are stalling, emphasizing his commitment to making CAB meetings productive and effective.

**ADJOURNMENT** - The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.