



## **Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board**

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board held on April 21, 2022, at the Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood, Gerlach, NV 89412, and via teleconference.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM** – Elisabeth 'Schatzi' Gambrell, Tina Walters, Andy Moore, Kristy Evans, Allen Nash

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** – The Pledge was recited.

**3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** –

Wendy Leonard, a Candidate running for Washoe County Commission District 5, introduced herself and provided her background. She said she is a retired lieutenant from Washoe County. She said she worked closely with the County identifying issues and finding solutions. She said more information is on [electwendyleonard.com](http://electwendyleonard.com). She said she is available after the meeting to answer questions.

**4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF [MARCH 17, 2021](#)** (for Possible Action) – Elisabeth Gambrell moved to approve the minutes from March 17, 2022. Andy Moore seconded the motion which carried unanimously in favor.

**5. WASHOE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE** –

Deputy Burns, Washoe County Sheriff's Office, was available to answer questions. In response to Ms. Gambrell's inquiry, Deputy Burns noted his lieutenant said the system is back up; he said they will compile a speed data report for the next meeting.

Ms. Gambrell inquired about the 24/7 coverage. Deputy Burns noted that he and Deputy Fox had submitted a proposed schedule but don't know its status. He said it would be nice to be paid to stay out here while on duty, but he said he would go to work when his phone rings. He said he has 1-1.5 years left out here. Ms. Gambrell thanked him for his work.

**6. PUBLIC SAFETY POLL** –

Kristy Evans, Gerlach CAB Member, introduced the item and spoke about possible survey questions to poll the community to inform Washoe County Sheriff's Office regarding community concerns surrounding special events.

She read the proposed survey. She requested feedback from the CAB members.

Ms. Gambrell asked if they could be dropped off at the GID offices. Ms. Gambrell asked if people could propose additional questions for the poll. Ms. Evans said yes. A public member suggested putting it in the GID bill. Ms. Evan said she would like to have it back in a month so we can review this at the CAB, but the deadline could be pushed out.

A public member asked if a relevant question would be 'how do you feel about your EMS services? Or the level of service on a scale.'

Ms. Gambrell said she would like a question on how well you feel Washoe County communicates with you about the permit process of special events or projects in Gerlach. She said we aren't looped into the permit process of special events. 'How well do you feel the County communicates with you' and 'how would you like to be notified.'

Ms. Ramos said we could create a poll through Nextdoor, ZenCity, and survey monkey. We can work with the board to ensure we are getting the information you are seeking to find, so the County and other agencies are doing what we need to do. Ms. Ramos encouraged the community members to join the new Nextdoor page for Gerlach.

## **7. NV ENERGY REGIONAL UPDATE – Christina Bailey Shaver, Sr. Government Affairs Adviser & Laney Elmore, Regional Engineer, NV Energy. (Non-Action Item)**

Christina Bailey Shaver provided an update. She said she understands reliability concerns, and we take it very seriously. Research shows us that there were 16 total outages in the area. Of those 16 outages, only 4 impacted less than five customers, and none of the outages lasted more than 5 hours.

Laney Elmore, Regional Engineer, provided information regarding the transition lines exposed to such long lines. She spoke about potential future relocation to help with reliability. The transmission has an aging infrastructure. She said they look to fix priority one issues. She spoke about the outages – 3 outages were related to the distribution line out of Empire. She said distribution outages could switch to other distribution sources, so the outages are shorter for those.

Ms. Gambrell asked when the last time was they came out to measure the power out here. There are a lot of home devices and appliances items that are failing before the warranty. She asked if we have a three-phase power. Ms. Shaver said we have phase 1. Ms. Gambrell asked if we have enough power to grow and expand residential. Ms. Elmore said she wasn't aware of power quality issues. She said we can test the voltage issues. She said geothermal is also on that line. She said we export and sometimes import energy. She said she could look at the power quality. She confirmed it is a single-phase line. She said we intend to rebuild the line to accommodate a 3-phase line. We don't have plans to add an immediate 3-phase to the area. She said she understands the concern of businesses who want to come in. She thinks repairs are supposed to be conducted within the next couple of weeks. She said there would be new insulators within a month. She said we are doing everything to support the area and community and appreciate the feedback and questions.

Ms. Evans asked how to measure outage; is there a minimum outage time? She said it's not uncommon for the power to go out for less than 60 seconds. Ms. Elmore said those are called 'momentary'; if there is a fault on the line, it interrupts the fault, which causes you to see the blink. Ideally, the fault will clear, but if it's sustained fault and not going away, a wire may be down and a permanent outage. Maybe the wind or rain affected it. The momentary isn't counted as an outage. The power quality and momentary interruptions sound like there are issues out there. Ms. Evans said we do have momentary ones which shut down the computers. Ms. Shaver said we could take a look at that. The momentary is hit and miss. To document those, we need new equipment that helps communicate. We often don't know when they happen. We don't have them well documented since Gerlach's communication system isn't great.

There was a question Ormat plant to benefit improved quality for Gerlach and where we can leverage that progress. Ms. Elmore said when those geothermal plans go in, we have a lease cost option to provide. The existing line that is there would not be adequate for what they are looking to produce, so what will end up happening is build a generator, 120 Kb that will feed into Fallon. Ms. Gambrell clarified that it's the proposed site, not the existing in Empires. She said it would be dependent on the amount of energy they plan to generate. It may be able to go on the 60kb line. We do have the 660 lines as another option to export the generation. She said we don't have a specific answer; it depends on the number of generations. A public member requested contact information.

## **8. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOR GROWING THE COMMUNITY –**

Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager, Washoe County, provided insight into how the Gerlach/Empire area may be able to facilitate housing development for the growing community.

**9. INTRODUCTION TO NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT MEETING HUB** – Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager, Washoe County, provided a powerpoint presentation and shared how constituents may use the new Neighborhood Meeting online hub to find and participate in upcoming meetings to speak directly with developers about potential projects.

Ms. Gambrell said at the last meeting we talked to you about the 14-acre lot and that we will work on that. She asked how will this help the current unhoused families?

Mr. Nash asked other than the statutory requirements for noticing; no notification will go out from this hub unless you are signed up to receive an email. Mr. Solaro said you wouldn't know something was on the hub unless you included your email to get notified of the development. Mr. Nash asked if the same email be used for different districts. Mr. Solaro said yes, you would click multiple boxes to be notified for the different districts.

Ms. Gambrell asked if the CABs would still get Special Use Permit applications? Mr. Solaro explained the developer would have a neighborhood meeting. The CAB members have attended the neighborhood meeting, and the CAB could request the developers to attend their meeting. We think the developer will be more likely to come to the CAB as we get this going.

Mr. Solaro spoke about what kind of applications would be on the HUB site.

Wendy Leonard said the County is doing a great job with this process as some public members don't feel their voices are heard. However, you are getting the developer's side of the story with this process. With the Ormat project, she said if you have a company coming in making millions in the area and saying 'sorry, we can't help improve the power in the area' and NV Energy is saying 'sorry, that isn't us,' this falls under community concern. She said she understands what you are trying to do, but we hear that citizens aren't feeling like they are being heard.

Jason Walters seconded Wendy's comment. He said he attended the Ormat meetings, and we are at the most risk and get nothing. We risk our water sources, water table, and natural resources. It doesn't contribute anything financially. He said he doesn't see how it benefits Gerlach.

**10. CONCIERGE PLANNING FOR GERLACH/EMPIRE** – Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager, Washoe County, spoke about a concierge plan. He answered questions pertaining to requested concierge planning services for Gerlach/Empire rural residents.

Felicia explained her situation where she had been waiting to get a permit to build a house on her land. She was told she needed a pre-development meeting but has not been able to get a response from the planning or building department. She said she wasn't being directed in the right place. She said she is getting a manufactured home, but the County has regulations about it being 1,200 feet, six years old or newer. That makes it over \$200,000. She said she had contacted architecture companies. We are too far away, which is a hardship. She said live on other people's land while we wait to build on our own land. She said we have a power pole on our property. She heard she cannot get a utility permit without a building permit. She said she could not stay where she is currently for very long. Mr. Solaro said he would have to research this to see if it's county code or State law. He said he believes it's County Code. He said we treat the County the same with some area plans. This is one of the cases where the

development code causes a problem for some of the rural areas. We are trying to get creative as we can. We are trying to update the Master Plan and Area Plans. He said we could do some cool and creative things. State Law does get involved and puts us in some weird loopholes. He said this is a great example.

Mr. Nash said when you have a large developer; they are getting paid to talk to you. Individuals are just trying to build their home. It would be helpful if they are pointed in the right direction. A department needs to help a non-professional navigate the process to help make the County better. Mr. Solaro said you should be able to contact someone in planning or building and zoom-meet with them, so you don't have to drive down there. There is a business and development website with information. There is a planning, building, engineering, and business license person of the day available to answer calls and emails. We put this in place during covid, and we are trying to keep that level of service going. He showed contact information for 'Expert of the Day on the website.' Mr. Nash said these don't address the fact that the person does not know where to start in the process. Mr. Solaro said he recommends people call 311. They will let you know where to start with their knowledge base.

Ms. Evans said our needs out here are different than Reno/Sparks. To have someone who understands Gerlach in planning and building. Is there someone who understands the rural part of the County? Someone we can talk to who understands our needs or different standards. We are subject to the same rules. We aren't Incline Village; why are we treated the same as Incline Village.

Carl said many of the houses are single-wide homes. The majority are dilapidated. Manufactured houses fall apart out here in the weather. Given the zoning, it puts us in a narrow situation. It's difficult to replace that housing stock unless we rebuild with stick-built or change the zoning. It's difficult to find labor with stick building. He said he has to sell his lot for another house because it is falling apart.

Ms. Ramos offered her assistance to help get answers.

Jason Walters said many of you sat in this room with me a few years ago when we had a Washoe County meeting. He said we were told by a County representative that there is no difference between your community and the community at stateline. It's one of the poorest communities, and that is the richest. The census shows we are middle class. There are some affluent who bring up the average. He said he has a county horror story. He said he spent a lot of money on a Special Use Permit. He said he has 55 acres and a storage container that needs to be stored behind the slope in the back of the property. He said you have to go to the Board of Adjustment to get a variance. He said it's a system for payments for permits. It's ten times higher for the rural area. He said the county representative told him it costs more than Sparks or Reno. It needs to be easier for those with limited needs. He said half of us work for Burning Man, and the other half go to Burning Man. He said scarcity is space to live, and work in. There is one group in town who can buy everything. It's creating a situation that's not apparent to outsiders. If you feel like talking to us, you are missing some people. He said it's a different world out here. There is one player with the resources. Part of the puzzle; we cannot be an economic monoculture. We need to be economically diversified. Creating jobs not revolving around Burning Man is difficult. It's about the County getting out of the way. We need 800-1000 to be viable.

A public member said people out here would start a business tomorrow if they had a place to do business.

Ms. Evans said she has a business but cannot get commercial property. She said we are struggling to grow under the rules. We don't have the same reality.

Kenji Otto, a candidate for County Clerk, asked about the possibility of a commercial district.

Suzi Jackson said the GID has 14 acres of land where people could put a business in. She said we would like a subdivision project. We are dead in the water until 2023 since the County changed the laws about subdividing property. She would like to discuss this. Mr. Solaro asked Candee to set up a meeting with Mr. Young and the GID.

The CAB members thanked Mr. Solaro.

#### **11. WASHOE COUNTY COMMISSIONER UPDATE-**

Commissioner Herman was available. She complimented the board and community for being engaged.

#### **12. BOARD MEMBER ITEMS —**

Ms. Gambrell said she is disappointed to hear that the Pyramid Fire contract didn't get signed. She said she heard it was about insurance and other small items. She is looking forward to it being at a future Commission meeting. She said she would zoom in during the next meeting and hope to light a fire under some people.

Ms. Evans said she received a call from the Community Service department about recruiting for the Planning Commission.

Ms. Gambrell requested NV Energy, Fire, and Sheriff update are on the agenda for May.

#### **13. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT —**

Don Pelt, Fire Chief of Pyramid Fire, said we had a hiccup and almost have that minor hiccup worked out and will have it on the next tribal and Commission agenda. He said it's not a deal killer. He said we are taking this cautiously. We want to make sure this passes on a first run and runs smoothly by working the minor issues out in advance. He said he understands you are anxious about that. You aren't left alone. We are still here for you. He said Mr. Solaro has been fantastic on this project.

Kenji Otto, County Clerk Candidate, said it was his first time out here. He said it's an interesting, wonderful community. He said he searched on the internet about underserved communities by the business community. He said he would do some research. He said he lives in Cold Springs and has lived in small towns. He said he would be doing the business licenses as the County Clerk and could help the small businesses. We need to preserve the small businesses. Please consider me for your vote. He said he would be happy to come out here.

Carl thanked the Commissioner and Mr. Solaro. He spoke about a television satellite for broadcast television. He said people used to have a large antenna. He said PBS has translators in every town except for Gerlach and Empire. He asked if we could get one of those.

Alissa Adams said Burning Man is doing a greater workforce development. There are great classes you can take. She said it's her job to buy the properties. She said she is trying to make them look better. She said if you have a great idea about buying the properties, please let her know.

ADJOURNMENT – the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

CAB Program [CAB@WashoeCounty.gov](mailto:CAB@WashoeCounty.gov)

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