



MINUTES

Special Concurrent Hybrid Meeting Agenda

City of Reno Recreation and Parks Commission

City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission

Reno City Council Chamber

1 East First Street, Reno NV 89501

Thursday, June 26, 2025

5:00 P.M.

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commissioners

Neal, Chair
Tim Dake, Vice Chair
Chris Baker
Miles Gurtler
Sean Hill
Kevin Joell

Tracy Kuczenski
Lisa Rode (Zoom)

County Commission Liaison: Mariluz Garcia
Staff Liaisons: Eric Crump, Aaron Smith and
Stephanie D'Arcy.

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM by Reno RPC Chair Craig Bronzan.

2. Roll Call

City of Reno Recreation and Parks Commission (Reno RPC):

Present: Chair Craig Bronzan, Vice-Chair Marie Krueger, Ian Anderson, Tara Webster, Cheryl Guinan (via Zoom), Jerry Wager (joined online later)

Absent: Karla Werninghaus

Also Present: Council Liaison Miguel Martinez

City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission (Sparks PRC):

Present: Chair Megan Mentzer, Vice-Chair Tracy Gale, Sheena Harvey, Melanie "Jill" Short

Absent: Terry Frugoli, Bobby Michael, Matthew Robinson

Also Present: Council Liaison Donald Abbott

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission (Washoe County OSRPC):

Present: Chair Neal Jones, Vice-Chair Tim Dake, Sean Hill, Kevin Joell, Lisa Rode, Tracy Kuczenski, Miles Gurtler, Chris Baker

Also Present: Board of County Commissioners Liaison Mariluz Garcia

3. Public Comment – Public comment was opened by Chair Craig Bronzan. Multiple speakers addressed the commissions, expressing strong support for improved and sustainable funding for parks, open space, and regional recreational infrastructure.

- Ron Rangel, a City of Reno resident and economic development professional, emphasized the importance of outdoor recreation as a driver of quality of life and economic diversification. He spoke in support of efforts such as the proposed Pembroke Flatfields, which could generate tournaments, tourism, and economic benefits beyond reliance on declining casino revenues.
- Karen Mullen, former Washoe County Parks Director, thanked the commissions for convening jointly and revisiting regional parks planning. She highlighted the historic use of voter-approved bond initiatives to support regional parks and trail development and encouraged renewed efforts to align master plans with funding strategies.
- Iris Jehle-Peppard, Executive Director of One Truckee River, underscored the critical need for investment in the Truckee River corridor, including infrastructure such as riverbank stabilization and public restrooms. She expressed appreciation for the service plan process and supported funding options to move long-standing plans into implementation.
- Sonya Folsom, speaking as board president of One Truckee River (and identifying her employment at Truckee Meadows Water Authority), reinforced support for the proposed service plan. She praised the regional cooperation around the Truckee River and highlighted the role of volunteers and stakeholders in maintaining a safe and welcoming environment.

4. Approval of the Agenda (For Possible Action)

Chair Bronzan noted that Item 6.5 (Parks Foundation Funding Partnerships) was pulled from the agenda at staff request. Each commission voted separately.

City of Reno Recreation and Parks Commission (Reno RPC):

Motion by: Commissioner Marie Krueger

Seconded by: Commissioner Cheryl Guinan

Motion carried unanimously.

City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission (Sparks PRC):

Motion by: Commissioner Jill Short

Seconded by: Vice-Chair Commissioner Tracy Gale
Motion carried unanimously.

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission (Washoe County OSRPC):
Motion by: Commissioner Kevin Joell
Seconded by: Commissioner Lisa Rode
Motion carried unanimously.

5. Approval of the Joint Meeting Minutes (For Possible Action)

The commissions considered approval of the minutes from the previous joint meeting held on May 16, 2024.

City of Reno Recreation and Parks Commission (Reno RPC):
Motion by: Commissioner Ian Anderson
Seconded by: Commissioner Tara Webster
Motion carried unanimously.

City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission (Sparks PRC):
No vote taken, as the Sparks Commission did not have quorum at the May 16, 2024, meeting.

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission (Washoe County OSRPC):
Motion by: Commissioner Kevin Joell
Seconded by: Commissioner Lisa Rode
Motion carried unanimously.

6. Announcements, Presentations, Recognition and Items of Special Interest. (For Discussion Only)

6.1 Presentation, update, and discussion on Park District Service Plan (For Discussion Only)

Nathan Ulliot, Director of Reno Parks and Recreation, introduced the item and explained that the Park District Service Plan is a regional effort involving the City of Reno, Washoe County, and the City of Sparks to evaluate sustainable funding solutions for parks, recreation, open space, and trails across jurisdictions. He clarified that a service plan is a comprehensive analysis of current service levels, funding gaps, operational needs, and potential funding and governance models that can support long-term sustainability and equitable access to services.

Ulliot emphasized that the plan is exploratory in nature and does not presume a new tax or assessment but will outline a range of funding tools and options for further community and policy consideration. He stated that the service plan is being developed by PROS Consulting, Inc., a nationally recognized firm specializing in parks and recreation system planning.

The total project cost is approximately **\$200,000** and is being funded through a cost-sharing agreement among participating entities:

- **City of Reno:** \$100,000
- **Washoe County:** \$ 100,000
- **Reno Redevelopment Agency:** \$100,000

The City of Sparks is participating in the process but did not contribute financially to the plan's development.

Leon Younger, President of PROS Consulting, gave a formal presentation outlining the goals, process, and anticipated outcomes of the service plan. Drawing from his slide deck and oral presentation, he explained that the Park District Service Plan will:

- **Evaluate current service levels** for parks, facilities, trails, and programming across all three jurisdictions;
- **Benchmark funding gaps** in both capital and operational needs;
- **Establish equitable levels of service** by analyzing community demographics, income, and park proximity;
- **Develop sustainable funding options** such as special districts, dedicated revenues, and other non-tax strategies;
- **Assess governance and delivery models**, potentially including regional cooperation mechanisms;
- **Include community engagement** to ensure alignment with public values and priorities.

The work is structured in five phases, beginning with inventory and level of service analysis, followed by financial assessments, governance strategy development, community outreach, and final recommendations. The full project is expected to be completed by mid 2026.

Leon emphasized the role of equity mapping, noting that GIS-based tools are being used to identify underserved neighborhoods using factors like walkability, access to green space, and population demographics. He underscored that any proposed governance model or funding mechanism must directly address long-standing disparities in access and quality of service.

Younger clarified that the service plan will:

- Measure existing levels of service and compare across jurisdictions
- Provide an operational and capital funding gap analysis
- Recommend scalable governance and cost-recovery models
- Incorporate equity mapping to ensure underserved areas are prioritized
- Identify options for sustainable funding, including dedicated revenue mechanisms

Commissioner questions and discussion followed:

- **Commissioner Kevin Joell (Washoe County)** asked how the plan would address differences in rural versus urban service needs. **Younger responded** that the service model is being designed with multiple zones that reflect urban, suburban, and rural characteristics. Rural areas will not be benchmarked against inappropriate urban standards.
- **Commissioner Jill Short (Sparks)** asked whether staffing levels and operational capacity are part of the analysis. **Younger confirmed** that staffing needs and service delivery capacity are critical components of the operational funding assessment.

- **Commissioner Cheryl Guinan (Reno, via Zoom)** asked how the plan is accounting for park equity and access. **Younger explained** that demographic data, income levels, proximity to parks, and amenities per capita are being mapped to assess and prioritize gaps in equitable service delivery.
- **Commissioner Sean Hill (Washoe County)** stressed the importance of aligning any future asset development with guaranteed maintenance funding. **Younger agreed**, noting that lifecycle cost modeling is part of the plan and that recommendations will prioritize long-term sustainability over expansion for its own sake.

During Item 6.1, the consultant referenced several other communities that had previously undergone similar service plan processes.

1. **Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, North Carolina**

Scale & Impact: One of the most comprehensive park systems in the southeastern U.S.

Relevance: Leon Younger referenced this example to illustrate how large-scale jurisdictions can implement **regional governance structures** for equitable service delivery.

Key Takeaway: Their service plan emphasized **access equity**, greenway connectivity, and consistent funding through a combination of **bond programs and dedicated revenues**.

2. **Denver, Colorado**

Service Challenge: Aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance across its parks system.

Relevance: Leon highlighted Denver's use of **data-driven equity mapping** and lifecycle costing tools, similar to what will be applied in the Reno/Sparks/Washoe plan.

Key Takeaway: Denver implemented a **5-year capital reinvestment strategy** and introduced a parks mill levy to support long-term O&M funding.

3. **Bozeman, Montana**

Smaller Jurisdiction Example: Cited to show how smaller or rapidly growing cities face unique pressures.

Relevance: Bozeman's plan focused on **growth-driven demand**, especially in trail connectivity and conservation area management.

Key Takeaway: Their master plan integrated public-private partnerships and an impact fee review process to support future funding.

4. **Washington, D.C.**

Complex Governance Model: Managed parks at the national and local level.

Relevance: Showed the importance of **interagency cooperation** and the challenges of overlapping jurisdictions.

Key Takeaway: Their service plan prioritized neighborhood-level analysis to ensure underserved wards received targeted investment.

5. Minneapolis, Minnesota

Equity-Based Budgeting: They pioneered a model for allocating park resources based on neighborhood need.

Relevance: Leon referenced Minneapolis as a leading example of applying **equity mapping** to operational budgeting.

Key Takeaway: They developed an 11-point equity matrix that influenced how capital dollars were distributed annually.

These examples were used to demonstrate scalable, proven models for funding, governance, and service-level planning that Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County can adapt to local needs.

Ulliyot concluded by stating that the public engagement phase will occur later in 2025 and 2026, with opportunities for commissioners and the community to provide input. Draft recommendations will be shared in a future joint session before final adoption is considered.

No Action.

6.2 Presentation and discussion on Stakeholder List for the Service Plan (For Discussion Only)

Parks and Recreation Director Nathan Ulliyott introduced the item, emphasizing that advancing a regional parks service plan will rely on strong community advocacy. A preliminary stakeholder list, drawn from the City of Reno's adopted PROS Plan, was shared to prompt input. Director Ulliyott noted the goal is to identify a broad group for public engagement and narrow it to about 40–50 individuals for direct interviews. Commissioners were encouraged to suggest community members with hands-on park involvement or expertise. Commissioner Joell raised concerns about the list's completeness, especially regarding Washoe County partners, and recommended each jurisdiction refine the list with staff support. Director Ulliyott confirmed the list was illustrative and intended to initiate discussion. Commissioner Garcia stressed the importance of including diverse recreation interests, while Chair Bronson proposed that each commission further develop the list and return with recommendations for the consultant team. Commissioners were in agreement.

It was reiterated that while the cost of stakeholder engagement and surveys is included in the current service plan agreement, any future ballot initiative would require separate funding and would occur only after a formal parks district is created. Public comment from Reno resident Connie Silvera suggested including Washoe County School District, given the regular use of school grounds as community parks; staff confirmed that WCSD was already on the list.

The Chair closed the item by thanking staff for their ongoing coordination efforts and reaffirming the process to develop a stakeholder list collaboratively with each commission and jurisdiction before final selections are made.

No Action.

6.3 Presentation, update, and discussion on the Nevada Legislature pertaining to Parks and Recreation. (For Discussion Only)

Parks and Recreation Director Nathan Ullyott presented an update on recent legislative activity affecting parks and recreation, focusing primarily on Senate Bill 303. He explained that the bill would have significantly reduced the liability protections currently in place for jurisdictions and private property owners who provide public access to recreational areas such as parks, trails, and open spaces. Ullyott read the official veto message from Governor Joe Lombardo, who rejected SB303 due to concerns that it overcorrected existing statutes and could unintentionally exclude landowners—especially those who live on the premises—from immunity. The bill also raised concerns about discouraging community-driven land use and deterring future recreational development due to increased liability exposure. Ullyott emphasized that the bill’s passage could have had major consequences for parks and open space access, including HOAs revoking public trail access or developers omitting recreational elements in future projects. He credited local commissioners and staff statewide for voicing opposition, contributing to the veto. He cautioned, however, that the issue may return in future sessions and encouraged continued awareness and advocacy. Commissioner Rode inquired whether counties or cities carry insurance for injuries in parks. Ullyott noted that the City of Reno does, while Washoe County Community Services Director Eric Crump explained that the County is self-insured and only liable in cases of gross negligence—defined as knowingly failing to act on a known hazard. Crump affirmed that public entities may still receive claims, which are reviewed by their risk management teams.

In response to a commissioner question about the original intent of the bill, Ullyott shared that it arose from an incident involving a cyclist injured due to unsafe construction conditions. The concern was that the recreational immunity statute had been used to shield liability even in such cases. While the motivation was reasonable, Ullyott said the bill’s broad language risked unintended consequences for parks.

No Action.

6.4 Presentation and discussion on the Rails to Trails update. (For Discussion Only)

Donna Iverson, President of the Historic Virginia and Truckee Trails (HVTT), provided a comprehensive update on the ongoing efforts to develop a regional multi-use trail system along the historic rail corridor, with the goal of connecting communities from Tahoe Pyramid Trail through Carson City, Washoe County, and ultimately to Virginia City and Gardnerville.

Highlights included:

- **Signage Projects:** HVTT is partnering with Tahoe Pyramid Trail for co-branded wayfinding signage. A \$20,000 EL Cord Foundation grant is supporting this work, though additional funding is needed for signage on Veterans Parkway.
- **Trail Connections:** HVTT aims to connect the trail to open space, museums (including Sparks Museum), and other community destinations. They are working to update outdated kiosks and mapping panels.
- **Steamboat Valley:** A grant application was submitted to fund a paved multi-use path along a sewer easement through private land. HVTT is working with the Governor’s Office of Federal Assistance on alternative financing after an earlier federal grant denial.

- **Pleasant Valley:** Advocacy is underway to reduce Old 395 to two lanes to allow a dedicated path for bikes and pedestrians.
- **Washoe Valley:** HVTT is engaging with BLM and NDOT to pursue trail expansion through Winters Ranch and along Old 395, with support from Nevada Forestry and land trusts to protect sensitive species like the Steamboat buckwheat.
- **Trail Termini Reevaluation:** HVTT is reconsidering the trail's Reno endpoint from City Plaza back to the Amtrak Depot in light of evolving downtown redevelopment plans.
- **Trail with Rail Discussions:** HVTT is now a stakeholder in the future of the Virginia & Truckee tourist railway, exploring opportunities for trail development alongside or in place of the rail depending on legislative and funding outcomes.
- **Regional Vision:** The long-term goal is a connected trail from Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake, passing through Gardnerville and linking to Genoa. This vision could support extended walking/cycling tourism and connect major regional cultural and historical sites.

Commissioners expressed enthusiasm, asked about integration with Google Maps and TrailLink, trail difficulty ratings (noting most are under 4% grade), and connections to sites like the Sparks Museum. Iverson confirmed ongoing collaboration with Washoe County Parks staff and invited stakeholders to share events where HVTT should participate.

6.5 Presentation and discussion on Parks Foundation Funding Partnerships (For Discussion Only)

Removed from Agenda in Item 4. Approval of the Agenda.

7. General Business Items (For Possible Action)

None.

8. Public Comment (For Discussion Only)

8.1 Public Comment: None.

8.2 Comments from the Commission: Chair Bronson opened the floor to comments from each commission and any attending policymakers or staff.

City of Reno:

Councilmember Miguel Martinez expressed appreciation to all attendees for participating in the annual joint meeting. He encouraged commissioners to stay engaged in the regional parks service plan process and to continue supporting parks and recreation issues as they advance to policymakers. Martinez emphasized the importance of providing accurate and compelling information to support sound decision-making at the policy level.

Commissioner Cheryl Guinan, attending remotely, highlighted the success of the Junior Rangers program and encouraged broad participation from both youth and adults, noting it was a great asset to the community.

City of Sparks: Commissioners acknowledged the significant amount of work generated from the evening's discussion.

Washoe County:

Commissioner Neil Jones thanked staff from all participating jurisdictions for their efforts and gave special recognition to Director Nathan Ulliyott for coordinating the evening's presentations. He expressed optimism about the clear path forward and encouraged collaborative momentum to continue.

Commissioner Lisa Rode echoed the appreciation, reflecting that this was her third year on the commission and third joint meeting, which she described as consistently valuable. She emphasized the importance of maintaining the joint meeting tradition, regardless of progress on a formal parks district, as it fosters strong regional connections and shared understanding.

9. Adjournment (For Possible Action) – 7.57 PM

Each commission moved individually to adjourn the meeting:

- City of Reno: Commissioner Ian Anderson made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cheryl Guinan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with no opposition or abstentions.
- City of Sparks: Commissioner Jill Short moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Sheena Harvey. The motion passed with all in favor and none opposed.
- Washoe County: Commissioner Miles Gurtler moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Sean Hill. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at **7:57 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Brandon Roman

Neal Scott Jones, L.S.

Neal Jones - Chair