

MINUTES
Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission
November 19, 2025

The Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission met in a scheduled session on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, in the Washoe County Commission Chambers, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. The meeting was televised live and replayed on Washoe Channel at: <https://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/Communications/wctv-live.php>; also on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WashoeCountyTV>

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Chris Baker, Timothy Dake, Miles Gurtler, Sean Hill, Kevin Joell, Neal Jones, Tracy Kuczenski, Jennifer Uvira (Zoom), BCC Liaison Mariluz Garcia*

Absent: Lisa Rode

Staff Present: Brandon Roman, Stehpanie D’Arcy, Aaron Smith, Chaz Lehman, Eric Crump

* * * * *

Chair Jones recognized Commissioner Rode for her service on the Commission, noting that she is not considering reelection for another four-year term.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was led by Commissioner Dake.

3. Reading of Zoom Instructions

Deputy District Attorney Chaz Lehman read the Zoom instructions.

4. Public Comment

There was no response to the call for public comment.

5. Approval of the Draft Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of September 24, 2025.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Commissioner Dake moved that the September 24, 2025, meeting minutes be approved as written, seconded by Commissioner Baker.

The motion carried with a vote of eight for, zero against, with Commissioners Rode and Garcia absent.

6. Presentation of certificate of appreciation to Mr. Tim Torell for dedicated service to Washoe County by Ranger Nick Steuer.

Park Ranger Steuer conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Meet Tim Torell; Wildlife Photographer – Davis Creek (2 slides); Wildlife Photographer – Bowers (3 slides); Carving Artist – Rancho San Rafael (2 slides); Carving Artist – Bartley Ranch; Carving Artist – Galena Creek (3 slides); Carving Artist – Milling at Galena Creek; Carving Artist – Lazy 5 (3 slides); Carving Artist – Davis Creek (3 slides); and Benevolent.

Ranger Steuer discussed his friendship with Mr. Torell and how he used the photographer's pictures to create a bird guide for Davis Creek Park. He spoke about a bluebird box building workshop conducted by Mr. Torell.

***1:36 p.m. Commissioner Garcia arrived.**

Ranger Steuer said they submitted a photo of a striped skunk with a rubber boa snake wrapped around its neck to *Herpetological Review* as an example of anti-predatory behavior. He pointed out that Mr. Torell's wood carvings represent each of Nevada's 11 owl species and listed the specific locations of each of the carvings illustrated in the presentation. Wood from the Galena Creek milling project, he continued, will be used to rebuild the Eagle Meadow stage. He said Mr. Torell's goal is to inspire the inner child of adults and the younger generation, and he provided a certificate of appreciation to Mr. Torrell.

1:46 p.m. The Commission recessed.

1:48 p.m. The Commission reconvened with Commissioner Rode absent.

Chair Jones lauded Mr. Torell's talents on behalf of the Commission and said the County is indebted to him for his work.

7. Presentation, discussion, and possible recommendation to Board of County Commissioners to approve an easement deed between Washoe County (grantor) and Truckee Meadows Water Authority (grantee), a joint powers authority entity created pursuant to a cooperative agreement among the cities of Reno, Nevada, Sparks, Nevada and Washoe County, Nevada, pursuant to NRS chapter 277, to support the installation of a 10-inch water main to eliminate the existing dead-end distribution system and create a looped system per NAC 445A.6712 via a permanent Water Facilities Easement totaling ± 1,933 square feet on Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 083-024-06, part of Lazy 5 Regional Park; for no charge pursuant to NRS 277.053. The project will benefit Lazy 5 Regional Park by creating a looped water system for redundancy during maintenance or emergency work. (For Possible Action). Presentation, update and discussion on the off-leash dog, pilot program.

Park Planner Fay-Marie Pekar conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Location & Request; Background; Parkland Easement Application; Location of Proposed TMWA Water Main Easement (2 slides); and Parkland Easement Application (3 slides).

In response to Commissioner questions, Ms. Pekar stated both the temporary construction easement and the permanent easement will overlap within the 20-foot by 20-foot easement. A workaround will be put in place so traffic can still enter the park. She noted that the parking lot will be reverted to its existing state once the project is completed. She confirmed that the easement between the homes is a connection from the subdivision meant for bike and foot traffic; there are bollards preventing vehicles from using it.

1:59 p.m. Commissioner Garcia left the meeting.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Commissioner Joell moved to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners approve an easement deed between Washoe County (grantor) and Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) (grantee), to support the instillation of a 10-inch water main to eliminate the existing dead-end distribution system and create a looped system per NAC 445A.6712 via a permanent Water Facilities Easement totaling ± 1,933 square feet on Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 083-024-06, part of Lazy 5 Regional Park; for no charge pursuant to NRS 277.053. The project will benefit Lazy 5 Regional Park by creating a looped water system for redundancy during maintenance or emergency work, seconded by Commissioner Gurtler.

The motion carried with a vote of eight for, zero against, with Commissioners Rode and Garcia absent.

8. Park Program of the Month - presentation on the May Museum including most recent and upcoming exhibitions and future plans by Curator, Wes Jahn.

2:01 p.m. Commissioner Garcia returned.

Curator Wes Jahn extended his appreciation to Tim Torell for his carvings. He spoke about his own history with Washoe County and the Wilbur D. May Museum. He conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Permanent Collection; Projects in Progress; Art Gallery; Indoor Garden Court; Infrastructure; Community Connections; Park Hub; and All that...

Mr. Jahn noted the museum is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. He spoke about finding new antique items through an archival process and adding them to the museum's exhibits. In storage are more than 100 Polynesian masks which have never been exhibited, and he expects to display them in the atrium, providing something new for previous visitors. He discussed using GIS data to pinpoint the exact location of Wilbur May's Double Diamond Ranch and how this will be presented in the museum.

Mentioning his efforts to network with local artists, Mr. Jahn indicated there are no openings for new art for 18 months. He mentioned some of the exhibits that will be displayed in the near future. He felt the art gallery is serving a community need and opening accessibility for creativity. He noted that the museum offers its art exhibits at no cost to the public.

Mr. Jahn commented that an exhibition about the history of toys is expected to take place in the indoor garden court. Of the entities who held events at the museum, he continued, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and Washoe County more than doubled their usage of the building over the last year. He discussed staff's outreach in disseminating information about the Arboretum's garden rentals, the ranch house, and other park facilities, all of which create revenue for the General Fund. He described some of the infrastructure projects that have taken place, including updating the indoor garden court, restoring supplementary lighting, updating security systems, repopulating the coy ponds, and replacing artificial plants with live greenery.

Mr. Jahn described the types and number of volunteers taken on each semester as interns and some of the benefits they receive for doing so. The time invested in these students, he noted, results in them coming back as volunteers or seasonal staff. He spoke about the museum's status as a voting site as well as some of its philanthropy initiatives, including food drives, toy drives, and school fundraisers. He discussed ways in which the museum connects people to park rangers regarding programming and park needs. He valued the collaboration between the museum and park staff. He added that the gift shop now offers snacks and drinks.

Chair Jones expressed pride that nearly 9,000 people have attended museum events.

9. Update on PROS Consulting's work to develop a Service Plan for the possible creation of a Park District.

Community Services Director Eric Crump reminded the Commission of a 2017 act passed by the Nevada State Legislature allowing for the formation of park districts in the state. He discussed the history of this item and the involvement of PROS Consulting to conduct a feasibility study on the matter. The County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks meet weekly with the consultant, who he noted conducted more than 80 interviews with key stakeholders, elected and appointed officials, and key staff members. Staff is working on a statistically valid survey which is expected to go out to the community in the beginning of December. Each jurisdiction will work with their communications teams to encourage people to take the survey so they can obtain feedback about the community's desire for a park district.

Chair Jones voiced concern about the survey going out during the holiday season.

Mr. Crump thought the beginning of December would be far enough removed from holidays that it would work, but if it cannot go out then, it will not go out until the beginning of 2026.

In response to Commissioner questions, he defined a statistically valid survey as one that is randomized but based on the demographics of the community. He offered to provide copies of the draft survey to the Commissioners. The survey will be mailed out, and people will be incentivized to fill it out with a chance to win gift cards. He added that there will be multiple options for how people could respond to the survey.

Commissioner Hill expressed appreciation for recurring item placed on Commission agendas so the Commission can receive updates on this matter.

Citing the service plan required as part of the legislation, Mr. Crump said the formation of a park district is predicated on the level of community interest. Park districts can be as small as a couple of homes but can be large enough to incorporate multiple counties. The current vision is for a Truckee Meadows-based district which will include Spanish Springs, Stead, Sun Valley, and the Cities of Reno and Sparks, but likely not Incline Village. If formed, he continued, the district would be an entirely new entity with its own elected board, which would focus on bringing parks, recreation, and trails to the community.

Chair Jones noted some of the current commissioners may remain involved during the transition period, but ultimately the new board members will be elected by citizens.

10. Parks Reports

Park Operations Superintendent Stephanie D’Arcy reviewed the materials included in the agenda packet for this item, highlighting the Day of Play event held at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park and the playground itself, which includes inclusive elements and sensory zones; the Meet the Turkeys event on November 8; and the annual Christmas Trees for Special Families event, adding that trees will be presented to families on December 4.

Ms. D’Arcy noted the Dragon Lights exhibit will only be at the Wilbur D. May Arboretum until the end of the month and encouraged people to attend. She spoke about a donation of 150 trees from Moana Nursery, which were then planted in Davis Creek Regional Park by volunteers. She brought up a notice of intent to award, which was issued to Kimley-Horn for the Lazy Five Regional Park Master Plan update. She thanked staff and leadership for their support.

Responding to Commissioner queries, Ms. D’Arcy indicated that staff is working to reopen the Davis Creek Campground as quickly as possible. Water and power systems need to be restored first, and construction is expected to begin in the summer, so the campground will likely not be opened in time for next year’s camping season. She offered to give a presentation on the issue at a future meeting.

Commissioner Joell spoke about the insurance implications and asked whether Washoe County has an emergency fund for such matters.

Community Services Director Eric Crump replied that the County has a contingency fund as well as unobligated funds within the Capital Improvement Plan. He did not feel that insurance was holding up the process as the design phase is currently underway. The funds he described could be used once design is completed if insurance issues become a barrier.

11. Director’s Report

Community Services Director Eric Crump stated that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved the grant of a trail easement from the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) at its October 21 meeting. This will allow for the continuation of the County’s trail system through TMWA’s parcel. At yesterday’s BCC meeting, the Commission approved the agreement for new County Manager Kate Thomas.

Mr. Crump noted the County's budget cycle just kicked off, and a more significant item regarding budgets will be placed on this Commission's January meeting agenda. The financial outlook for the County remains consistent with past years, with costs expected to exceed revenues. He anticipated that uncomfortable decisions will need to be made in the short term to prevent difficult decisions in the future. He said General Fund performance for fiscal year (FY) 2025 was better than projected, and its FY 2026 performance is being closely monitored. One-time resources may be available over the next fiscal year to streamline processes.

Chair Jones hoped to be able to maintain the budget planned for this fiscal year.

12. Commissioner Request for future agenda items.

Chair Jones requested that an agenda item be placed on January's agenda to elect a new chair and vice chair.

Commissioner Garcia announced that she allocated some of her discretionary funds to sponsor the painting of a mural by Autumn Harry on the TMWA parcel mentioned by Community Services Director Eric Crump during the previous item. The mural should be completed by December 1, and she would provide the other Commissioners with more details once it is done.

Commissioner Joell wondered about the most recent Galena Creek Regional Park Master Plan revision.

Community Services Director Eric Crump believed that a partial master plan update was completed when the Galena Creek Visitor Center was constructed, but he would provide the Commissioner with confirmation of that and any plans for an update to it.

Commissioner Hill reiterated Commissioner Joell's previous request for an item about plans for the Davis Creek Campground.

13. Public Comment

There was no response to the call for public comment.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Derek Sonderfan

Neal Scott Jones, L.S.

Chair Neal Jones