

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

MONDAY

8:30 A.M.

JANUARY 12, 2015

**CONCURRENT MEETING**

PRESENT:

**Marsha Berkgigler, Chair**

**Kitty Jung, Vice Chair**

**Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner**

**Jeanne Herman, Commissioner**

**Bob Lucey, Commissioner**

**Nancy Parent, County Clerk**

**John Slaughter, County Manager**

**Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel**

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 8:34 a.m. in concurrent session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada, with Chair Berkgigler presiding. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

**15-0019      AGENDA ITEM 4 – PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Agenda Subject: "Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to three minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Commission agenda. The Commission will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Commission, Reno City Council, Sparks City Council, and Washoe County School District Board of Trustees as a whole."**

Sam Dehne said it was important to remember to protect the citizens of the area.

Cathy Brandhorst spoke about matters of concern to herself.

Jeff Church provided some handouts, which were placed on file with the Clerk. He urged everyone to look at his website at RenoPublicSafety.org. He implored the County to stop subsidizing \$1.4 million per year to the City of Reno for crime lab services. He commented about other issues in Reno including high taxes, police and fire department compensation, the drug and alcohol policy for firefighters and the lack of automatic aid.

Victoria Edmondsdson said she represented the Senior Services Advisory Boards for the City of Reno and Washoe County. She provided a handout, which was placed on file with the Clerk, and encouraged Board members to keep seniors in mind as they conducted business. She talked about the increase in the County's aging population and reported some statistics regarding the percentage of seniors who were suffering from poverty, functional limitations, and disease. She said Board members had an opportunity to set provisions in place that would care for the aging.

**15-0020      AGENDA ITEM 5 – APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Agenda Subject: “Approval of the Agenda. (For Possible Action)”**

The Reno City Council, the Sparks City Council and the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees voted in favor of approving the agenda.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Lucey, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 5 be approved.

**15-0021      AGENDA ITEM 6 - PRESENTATION**

**Agenda Subject: “Washoe County School District presentation and discussion on economic development, enrollment growth, and capital funding.”**

Pete Etchart, Washoe County School District (WCSD) Chief Operating Officer, gave a presentation regarding economic development, enrollment growth and capital funding. He said the WCSD was very excited about Tesla and Panasonic moving into the region because they would create increased opportunities for students. He reported students of the Academy of Arts Careers and Technology won first place in the International High School Division of the NASA Mars Rover Competition and said the students gave a presentation to Tesla and Panasonic about it.

Mr. Etchart reported WCSD elementary schools increased by 562 students in the previous year and said there were more kids staying in high school due to a decrease in the number of drop-outs. He said the WCSD changed the way they calculated school utilization. He explained in the past it was done by multiplying the number of classrooms by the number of students per classroom. He said that method did not take into account the fact that class sizes varied, so it was determined the better approach was to look at the number of classes versus the number of classrooms. He noted that enrollment was near or above capacity levels at all education levels and said schools were being maintained through the use of portable classrooms and team teaching. He said some schools were utilizing libraries, teacher's lounges and cafeterias as classrooms and there were some requests to use mail rooms, storage rooms and other types of rooms, which could not be approved because of safety concerns. He said most of the School District's 213 portable classrooms were over 30 years old and adding more portables did not solve capacity issues because they did not resolve the need for additional cafeterias and office space. He said portable classrooms were also very expensive to maintain and schools were running out space to put them.

Mr. Etchart reported the WCSD's most crucial need was for new schools in Damonte Ranch, Sun Valley and Spanish Springs. He said there were some relief options to consider including moving sixth grade students from the elementary schools into the middle schools, changing the makeup of the elementary schools to include students from kindergarten through eighth grade or building more elementary schools or high schools. He explained Brown Elementary and Double Diamond Elementary were both designed to hold approximately 600 students; however, each of them currently held approximately 900 students. He reported both schools were surviving with portable classrooms and through team teaching, but said there were enough students in the portable classrooms to potentially fill another elementary school. He stated there were 900 homes under construction in the Palisades and Bella Vista areas and said that was where the need was most critical. He said the WCSD had the land for new schools, but did not have funds to build them.

Mr. Etchart talked about growth, including how many new students would be coming into the WCSD, where they would be living, and when to expect them. He said there were a number of agencies that were working on the growth forecast and he reported that the WCSD had entered into a work program with the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA) to conduct a residential land study.

Mr. Etchart said, based on forecast projections, the County could expect 22,993 new residents and 3,500 new students by the year 2018, which he thought was conservative because those numbers were calculated before the Tesla announcement. He stated the impact of that projection created the need for three new elementary schools, one new middle school and one high school. He said when the WCSD added the growth forecast to existing needs they determined they would need four elementary schools, three middle schools and one and a half high schools by the year 2018. He approximated the cost for the new schools at about \$340 million dollars, which did not include the purchase of land and water. He said he did not realize the WCSD had to purchase the land that the developers set aside for schools and talked about the estimated time it would take to build new schools.

Mr. Etchart stated there were 64,000 approved future housing units that were left incomplete due to the economic downturn and were ready to be built. He said the potential impact could result in more than 22,000 new students coming into the School District, which would create the need for 18 new elementary schools, four new middle schools and four new high schools. He said the cost for those new schools would amount to approximately \$800 million dollars, plus land and water. He did not know how fast those units would be developed, but said the projected growth impacts would be felt throughout the Truckee Meadows.

Mr. Etchart talked about funding that was received from the government service taxes and property taxes, which were the only two funding sources for the WCSD. He explained that every county in the State received money from those two sources, but unlike Washoe County, other Nevada counties had additional funding sources. He said the government service tax provided for about \$2.5 million in funding

per year and that money was used for emergency repairs, abatement programs and the facility conditioning information system. He explained the WCSD's main source of funding came from property taxes and those funds paid for capital renewal, school renovation and revitalization, and new schools. He said the WCSD determined that over the next ten years it would need \$200 million for capital renewal, \$50 million for renovation and revitalization, and approximately \$550 million to manage growth for a total of \$800 million.

Mr. Etchart said property taxes were a great funding source for the WCSD; however, they were currently facing a special situation. He explained the Legislature placed a three percent cap on property taxes during the economic boom which caused taxes to go up faster than people's salaries; however, no one predicted the unprecedented decline in property values that followed. He said it would take decades to make up for the loss of WCSD funding.

Lindsay Anderson, WCSD Government Affairs Director, talked about the "Christmas Tree" chart on page 12 of the presentation, which showed information about the capital funding sources for several Nevada Counties. She said the point of the chart was to show Washoe County was the only county in the State with only two sources of funding. She said the real estate transfer tax, residential construction tax, the lodging tax, and the infrastructure tax were only available in the Clark County School District and in some rural districts. She explained the 2002 rollover bond, which allowed the WCSD to bond against property taxes, expired in November of 2012, which meant that even if property taxes could generate additional revenue, it could not be used because they did not have voter approval. She said the WCSD had to find additional sources of revenue to deal with growth and, since property taxes would not support additional bonding until 2018, the WCSD would have to bond smaller amounts just to keep schools going.

Mr. Etchart said the WCSD was making an effort towards transparency and accountability for the public. He said he was excited about the Washoe County School District Data Warehouse Project, which was a continuation of the Transparent Checkbook that the Business and Finance Office put together. He said the public would have access to a lot of information and he thought local realtors and people who were interested in moving to the region would want to see that kind of data. He said the project would allow the public to look at how much money was spent at each school and would have specific information about school capital needs. He said all this information would hopefully move the conversation past accountability and transparency to a discussion about finding a new sustainable funding source so the WCSD could manage capital renewal, renovation and growth.

Ms. Anderson said State law did not provide any additional funding for capital projects and since tax caps and depreciation rates were limiting revenue increases, the WCSD needed to find alternatives. She said the WCSD was working with community groups and other local governments to find creative solutions and she hoped Reno, Sparks and the County would partner with the WCSD to represent them in the upcoming legislative session.

Mr. Etchart talked about the potential impacts to the WCSD if they did not find a solution. He said the current priority was based on “safe, warm and dry” standards and they could only do what was absolutely necessary, but he warned every dollar of deferred preventative maintenance would cost four dollars in reactive maintenance. He listed some of the limited options the WCSD had to deal with regarding overcrowding, including increasing class sizes, relocating special programs, adding multi-track and year-round school sessions, adding double sessions, increasing virtual schools, reducing student electives, and re-zoning. He said the WCSD was not supposed to re-zone students into a school that was over capacity by 85 percent, but none of their schools fit that criteria. He stated the WCSD provided development impact letters to the Planning Commission and had been asking for the ability to disclose to students that they might not be able to attend the schools they were zoned for. He said the bottom line was that academic outcomes might be compromised if the capital needs issue was not resolved.

Mr. Etchart said the WCSD’s focus was on academic outcomes and they had some success in graduation rates, honors degrees and (Advanced Placement) AP test scores, but they needed to find a solution in order to continue to work toward better outcomes. He talked about a June 25, 2014 article in the *Northern Nevada Business Weekly* which reported the results of a business poll. He said the poll showed Nevada scored well in the cost of doing business, work force, economy, infrastructure and transportation, but was hampered by the lowest score of any state for its education system. He reported the problem was a nationwide issue and hoped the community would come together to find a solution.

Sparks City Councilperson Ron Smith asked what the capacity of Truckee Meadows Community (TMCC) High School was. Traci Davis, Washoe County Interim Superintendent, responded she did not know the answer, but said the program had been expanded to include sophomores. Councilperson Smith offered an idea to use existing buildings as schools to cater to students who were not interested in sports or extracurricular activities. He asked if parents had been surveyed to determine whether that was an option they would consider. Mr. Etchart replied that other academic opportunities had been discussed and the WCSD would continue to look at options. Interim Superintendent Davis replied there had not been a survey, but parents traditionally chose to keep their kids in their home schools. She said the WCSD was considering a variety of options including the conversion of existing buildings.

Sparks City Councilperson Ron Schmitt commended Mr. Etchart on his presentation and for the Data Warehouse. He said he would like the City of Sparks to take a look at the Data Warehouse platform because he thought it was important for citizens to have access to that kind of information. He asked Mr. Etchart if he could provide backup to support the number of approved unbuilt lots he referred to in his presentation because he thought the number was closer to 6,400, not 64,000. He said he believed voters could override State law and approve additional property taxes outside the existing cap.

Sparks City Councilperson Ed Lawson suggested turning the empty Lowes building on Oddie Boulevard into a school. Mr. Etchart said that option would cost money and the WCSD would still need to find a funding solution. He explained all the money the WCSD had was allocated through the year 2017, so they did not even have enough money to purchase a portable classroom. He said they were looking at every option, but they still needed a funding source. Councilperson Lawson encouraged Mr. Etchart to come up with a plan that could be sold to the voters because he thought that was how they would find the revenue they needed. He asked if the Data Warehouse was linked with Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency (TMRPA) and the Smarter Regions Program. Mr. Etchart said the Data Warehouse was specific to the WCSD, but they were working closely with TMRPA because they relied on them to forecast growth. Councilperson Lawson said he mentioned the Smarter Regions Program because he felt the purpose was for TMRPA to hold all the knowledge. He encouraged Mr. Etchart to provide a link to the TMRPA so they could put the information on their web site.

Reno City Councilperson Neoma Jardon thought the idea to incentivize local governments to repurpose some of the local box stores was a good idea. She wondered if the County had a program for estate contributions. Both Mr. Etchart and Interim Superintendent Davis said they were unaware of any existing programs for that. Councilperson Jardon said it might be time to have a conversation about it and Kristen McNiel, WCSD Chief of Staff, agreed with her.

Reno City Councilperson Jenny Brekhus commended the work the WCSD had done in getting their numbers out there and said she had faith that voters would give them the funding they needed. She suggested the WCSD adopt a school site planning policy because she thought some location decisions had been problematic. She said a site planning policy would help government representatives work with developers for better school locations.

Pete Etchart said he appreciated the comments and the cooperation between all the agencies. He said he was looking forward to continuing his work with TMRPA to determine where people would be living and the best location for schools. He said he confirmed with the TMRPA that the number of approved undeveloped lots was 64,000.

Commissioner Hartung said he noticed some school buses were not full and suggested charging students who were not utilizing the buses that were provided for them. Mr. Etchart said transportation was a huge part of what the WCSD did. He explained the WCSD was trying to expand their Signature Program so that every high school had a different focus and students would have a choice about which school they went to; however, he recognized transportation was an issue. He said the WCSD was working on different scenarios, but it all came down to money. He stated one solution they considered involved a hub and spoke type system in which students would go to their base high school and then travel to a central hub where they would catch a bus to their school of choice. He said the WCSD was also working with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) to see if there was potential for sharing transportation

costs. He stated that State law required the WCSD to transport special education students, but did not require them to transport general education students. Commissioner Hartung reiterated his concerns about bus ridership and restated his suggestion to charge students who did not ride busses that were provided for them.

Sparks City Councilperson Charlene Bybee wondered if the WCSD considered pursuing the real estate transfer tax during the upcoming legislative session. She suggested investigating the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) program in Colorado, which provided grant money for school capital needs.

Ms. Anderson said the WCSD considered asking to be included in the real property transfer tax and the lodging tax in past legislative sessions, but the idea lacked support. She said there might be a Bill Draft Request (BDR) to request it in the upcoming legislative session. She said if the WCSD gained access to that funding source it would generate approximately \$5 million dollars per year, which would not significantly impact the \$800 million the WCSD would need in the next 10 years. She said it was also not an easy thing to ask for because there were many people who were strongly opposed to allowing access to those funds. Councilperson Bybee asked Ms. Anderson if the WCSD would support the proposal for real estate depreciation, which would generate more money for schools and Ms. Anderson replied that it was being explored.

Reno City Councilperson David Bobzien talked about a conversation he had with a friend who was considering moving his family to Reno for a job opportunity. He said his friend asked for his opinion about the schools in the area and it was an uncomfortable discussion because of school rankings. He said the WCSD needed to deal with capital needs that already existed and then figure out how to deal with projected growth. He said he was encouraged about the Data Warehouse because it addressed the issue of transparency and he hoped the Data Warehouse could be added to a future agenda so the data could be explored. He asked when it would be available online.

Mr. Etchart explained the Data Warehouse project included a facility condition information system and that the WCSD had inspectors that looked at the building systems in all of the schools. He said the Data Warehouse would be updated on a quarterly basis and the goal was to go live with the project in February. He said he would be glad to come back to any group to present it.

WCS D Trustee Howard Rosenberg thought they needed to keep in mind how teachers would be affected by the placement of schools because there were teachers who did not want to teach in certain areas. He said all the impacts would have to be considered or their plans would not work. Mr. Etchart replied he had a lot of data he could share in regards to the negative impacts of deteriorated and overcrowded schools and the positive impacts of expending funds to renovate and build new schools.

Councilperson Jardon said she recently traveled to Washington DC and the Undersecretary of Transportation asked her how the regional transportation needs fit into "ladders of opportunity". She explained that he was seeking a connection between

transportation and educational needs. She wondered if there were some federal opportunities which could help with transportation and free up funding for school's capital needs. Ms. Anderson said that was a great opportunity to explore and the WCSD would pursue it. Councilperson Jardon stated she would like the name of someone in the WCSD she could contact in regards to the effort to raise money through planned giving with trusts, wills and estates.

WCSD Trustee Lisa Ruggerio responded to Commissioner Hartung's earlier question and said she would investigate the issue of busses not being fully utilized. She said she received a similar complaint from someone else and discovered the bus in question was a special education bus, so it was not always filled to capacity.

Mr. Etchart spoke about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistant Act which provided federal funding for programs that served homeless students. He said homeless children often moved from school to school and the WCSD program provided transportation to help keep those students in their base schools, which helped improve their academic outcomes.

Sparks Councilperson Julia Ratti said they did not need any more data or transparency to talk about short term needs. She said major businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, realtors and the Retail Association all looked very closely at the WCSD's plans and all of them agreed there was a need for another funding source. She thought all the jurisdictions could provide meaningful action immediately by directing their government affairs teams to work with the WCSD to provide whatever support they could. She also talked about the Washoe K-12 Foundation where the public could help by making donations.

Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve suggested it would be a good idea for Mr. Etchart to have a regular seat at the Reno City Council meetings because she thought it would be beneficial for him to participate when they were having conversations with developers. She commended Mr. Etchart for a great presentation.

Councilperson Brekhus said she was trying to gain understanding about the effect that the redevelopment district debt had on WCSD revenues and said she was not sure if tourism improvement districts were taking funds from the WCSD. She thought it would be a good idea to talk about those issues. She said the Reno City Council would be solicited for more economic partnerships as the economy continued to improve and they needed to understand how their decisions would impact the School District.

Commissioner Jung said property tax appreciation and limitations affected everyone. She asked staff to add an agenda item to a future Board of County Commissioners meeting to ensure the County government affairs representative would work with the WCSD to protect the interests of the County as well as the School District. She encouraged the other governing bodies to do the same.



Councilperson Ratti moved to direct the Sparks government affairs team to work with the WCSD to ensure support of their capital needs. The motion was seconded.

Councilperson Schmitt said he thought there was a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between all the local government agencies regarding the legislative process. Sparks City Mayor Geno Martini replied he did not think an MOU was signed and he thought the Regional Planning Governing Board decided not to put it forward. Councilperson Schmitt expressed concerns about making it clear that Sparks was not voting to support every legislative concern the WCSD had, but was supporting cooperation between all the legislative teams to solve a problem. Councilperson Smith requested a clarification of the motion.

Councilperson Ratti explained her motion was to work with the legislative affairs team to find a funding source for capital needs. She said that did not mean the Sparks City Council would support every idea the WCSD had, but meant they would move forward in good faith to get it done.

Mayor Martini said the motion sounded good to him. He also talked about Sales Tax Anticipation Revenue (STAR) bonds and said the School District had been in favor of them.

Councilperson Bybee said she understood the motion was that Sparks would support the legislative agenda of working to find capital funding for the WCSD. Councilperson Ratti confirmed that statement and suggested the effort should become one of their number one priorities.

Chair Berkbigler said she hoped all the elected bodies would make school needs one of their highest priorities because economic development would not happen without good schools.

Commissioner Hartung recognized the WCSD was putting a number of new measures into place that would show where and how money was being spent, but it had been an issue in the past. He thought the voters would be supportive if the WCSD could demonstrate good stewardship.

Mayor Martini thought it was up to the School Board to decide what to do with their budget and the other entities should advocate for them.

In response to the call for public comment, Cathy Brandhorst talked about matters of concern to herself.

Sam Dehne commented about the WCSD presentation, the students who won the Mars Rover Competition, Tesla and Elon Musk.