

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

MONDAY

9:00 A.M.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

PRESENT:

**Vaughn Hartung, Chair**  
**Bob Lucey, Vice Chair**  
**Marsha Berkbigler, Commissioner**  
**Jeanne Herman, Commissioner**  
**Kitty Jung, Commissioner**

**Jan Galassini, Chief Deputy County Clerk**  
**Dave Solaro, Interim County Manager**  
**Paul Lipparelli, Deputy District Attorney**

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 9:00 a.m. in special session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

**19-0759      AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.**

On the call for public comment, Ms. Carole Black submitted documents to the Board, copies of which were placed on file with the Clerk. Ms. Black spoke about the Tahoe area plan development and short-term rentals. She requested the Board reconsider some of the restrictions, which she felt had been defined too narrowly. She knew residents were required to follow the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's (TRPA) rules but opined the TRPA had been flawed since its inception. She then spoke about explicit zone changes, saying she simply did not see how they could be avoided. She said she supported bans on short-term rentals despite hearing they did not work. She noted the documents she had submitted to the Board included references to data which showed their effectiveness. Finally, Ms. Black called for a work group to allow residents to provide input on these and other matters.

Mr. Roger Edwards said he had been a resident of Washoe County for nearly 50 years and was currently a member of the North Valleys Citizen Advisory Board (CAB). He opined selecting a new County Manager was an important process. Although he had seen many Managers over the years who had little direct impact on residents, he expressed concern that more recent management had impacted the voice of the citizens by placing limitations on the CABs. Mr. Edwards then spoke about the impact of California residents relocating to Washoe County. He stated he could not support any candidate who came from California, regardless of qualifications. He noted another of the County Manager candidates had previously worked for the City of Reno and suggested the Board recall her past problems; in his opinion, Washoe County had already faced too many

lawsuits and needed no exposure to more. Mr. Edwards concluded that, as a veteran who was familiar with the requirements and conditions of military command, Mr. Jon Hager would be the best candidate for County Manager.

Ms. Susan Ambrose stated she also supported candidate Hager and suggested it might not be best for Washoe County to promote from within at this time. She noted all three County Manager candidates had impressive skills and backgrounds, but only one of them had experience that could really set Washoe apart from its peers. She said the position would be a liaison between the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and department directors, governmental jurisdictions, community and business groups, employees, and County customers. She opined Mr. Hager would work regionally to provide a safe and healthy community, and could lead the County successfully into the future with a new perspective. She believed he was a true leader, and his military resume alone depicted an individual well-versed in planning, strategy, fiscal responsibility, and personnel support.

Mr. Gordon Gossage spoke in support of candidate Kate Thomas, who he felt was an experienced manager familiar with local issues. He noted she had spent nine years with the City of Reno and she understood numbers as the former head of the City's budget office. He felt she had worked tirelessly to confront the housing crisis by helping transfer services for vulnerable individuals to the Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services (NNAMHS) campus. The next County Manager would face many challenges and fostering agreement between the Cities and the County would be essential. In his opinion, Ms. Thomas could bring the different municipalities together and make Washoe the lead agency on many issues. Mr. Gossage also spoke about climate change, flooding, and poor water quality in the North Valleys. He said the issues would be difficult to remedy, but not impossible. He believed the North Valleys was the logical place to build affordable housing and spoke in support of further development there. He concluded Ms. Thomas understood the environment, finances, and regional decision makers, and he supported her for County Manager.

Ms. Denise Ross said the County should ask what could be done differently; new ideas were needed on flooding issues and she felt promoting from within would not expand Washoe County's horizons. She believed a candidate with military experience could take charge and maintain control. She also opined it would be unwise to take on any candidate with liabilities and a history of involvement in difficult situations. Ms. Ross concluded by asking Commissioners to select candidate Hager.

Ms. Lori Beach echoed other commenters who said Washoe County needed new ideas and a new direction. She opined the County would not be experiencing some of the problems it was facing if it were not for current staff. She noted her own experience working within the military and believed candidate Hager's training would allow him to lead, listen, and have not only a strategic plan, but likely multiple contingency plans as well. One of the greatest skills military officers possessed was the ability to manage those above them, Ms. Beach said, and this ability would help Mr. Hager with the councils and

commissions. She said a fresh perspective might inspire renewed faith in the Board and County leadership as a whole.

Chief Deputy County Clerk Jan Galassini noted correspondence had been received in relation to the County Manager recruitment; a letter and attachments from Ms. Beth Dory were placed on the record.

Mr. Kenji Otto noted he had been a Washoe County resident since 2011 and, though he did not know any of the candidates personally, he had reviewed their resumes. He admitted bias against anyone with dealings in California based on the corruption he had seen. For that reason, candidate Eric Brown was not his favorite. He said candidate Kate Thomas was a loyal County employee but he had observed a number of lawsuits during her tenure. He voiced concern about any candidate with connections to or history with Reno. Mr. Otto noted Washoe County included not just Reno and Sparks but also other areas whose residents had their own concerns and viewpoints. He mentioned he had recently joined the North Valleys CAB because he felt those residents' views were not being heard. As a retired military master sergeant who had worked with officers throughout his career, Mr. Otto encouraged the Board to consider candidate Hager.

**19-0760**      **AGENDA ITEM 4** Commissioners'/County Manager's announcements, reports and updates to include boards and commissions updates, requests for information or topics for future agendas.

Chair Hartung reminded Interim County Manager Dave Solaro about an open request for the two soccer fields in Lazy 5 Regional Park and asked that the request move forward.

**19-0761**      **AGENDA ITEM 5** Discussion and possible action to consider the following applicants, Brown, Eric, Hager, Jon, and Thomas, Kate, for the vacant Washoe County Manager position pursuant to NRS 244.125 to NRS 244.135 inclusive including interview of candidates, selection of the County Manager and possibly designating a second choice, and possible direction to staff regarding the negotiation of an employment contract. Human Resources. (All Commission Districts.)

Patricia Hurley, Director of Human Resources, explained each candidate would be given five minutes to make a presentation. Presentations would be made by candidates in alphabetical order, with a break after each if the Board desired. After introductory presentations, each candidate would be given 45 minutes to answer interview questions. Chair Hartung asked whether the other candidates would be present during interviews and Ms. Hurley advised they would wait in another room.

Chair Hartung explained the 5-minute time limit and welcomed candidate Eric Brown. Mr. Brown thanked the Board and stated he would like to be the next County Manager. He spoke about his educational background in political science with a focus on public administration, and said he had always been interested in local government despite

the fact that he had gone into corporate employment early in his career. He explained one of the great things about beginning his career at Proctor & Gamble (P&G) was the excellent training they provided on subjects such as professional etiquette, verbal and written communication, and conducting business meetings. The company also taught him to be able to jump into new roles and rapidly determine the most important elements to master in order to achieve success. He believed this experience had helped him quickly master new positions throughout his career, even when he had not been specifically trained for them.

Mr. Brown mentioned some of his experience running large-scale organizations. For example, as the Senior Vice President of Charter Communications, he had managed the company's western division, which had an annual revenue of \$1.2 billion, an operating budget of \$800 million, and served over a million customers in five states.

Mr. Brown felt a hallmark of his career had been his ability to urge collaboration amongst internal and external interests and, for this reason, he had done a lot of work in the government relations space. There were over 350 municipalities with whom Charter had business relationships and it had been his job to make sure those relationships were productive. Later, as President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the California Telehealth Network, he and his team had been able to bring together various entities and organizations, such as the University of California Health System and Kaiser Permanente, who competed for patients in certain markets. Similarly, the network had included managed care organizations such as the California Association of Health Plans, while the State department responsible for regulating those health plans held a place on the Telehealth Network's board of directors. Mr. Brown said he brought to the table his ability to work across various interests and help opposing parties cooperate in the interest of furthering their common goals.

Mr. Brown said he looked forward to the upcoming interview questions. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and exited the Chambers as candidate Jon Hager was brought in.

Chair Hartung explained the 5-minute time limit and welcomed Mr. Hager, who thanked the Board for the opportunity to interview. Mr. Hager said he was excited to be part of such an important decision. He felt there was no doubt the final candidates were all capable of being the County Manager, but only one would be the best at the job, able to transform the Board's visions into actionable and measurable initiatives while creating strategic relationships within the community and effectively leading the County's 2,700 employees.

Mr. Hager spoke about his experience in the naval academy, taking a full class load to get his Bachelor of Science in physics while being a midshipman. He added he took leadership courses and weekly ethics training courses which continued throughout his military career. He noted the main themes had been 'mission first,' 'take care of your people,' and 'always do the right thing'. As a pilot, he was taught to take care of emergencies even when his first priority was to fly the plane.

Mr. Hager explained that he had the opportunity while in the Navy to travel the world and live all over the country, but he and his wife chose to come back to northern Nevada. He believed it was the best place in the United States to live, work, raise a family, and hopefully someday retire. He moved to the state in 2006 to work as a chief financial officer, overseeing a budget of \$500 million and serving 72,000 active employees, retirees, and dependents. After this, as the Director of the Silver State Health Insurance Exchange, Mr. Hager said he and his team helped cut the uninsured rate in half. He gained experience in State government and learned how to support and report to a board. He also gained an understanding of the importance of communication with stakeholders, made many friends, and forged alliances.

In 2014, Mr. Hager moved to the private sector as the Director of Planning and Performance at Hometown Health, where he learned how to fight for every dollar in a very competitive market. His team acted as internal consultants, provided resources, and managed projects by translating their vision into constructive, actionable, and measurable strategic initiatives. He felt one of his most satisfying jobs was cultivating future leaders by hiring creative people, exposing them to multiple areas of the organization, and mentoring and pushing them into leadership positions. He also spoke about cultivating relationships with the CEOs of health plans, Medicaid managed care organizations, hospitals, local business associations, realtors, brokers, and even radio stations. He reiterated his mantras.

He opined Washoe County as an organization appeared to be doing well, with a good bond rating, cash reserves, and plenty of assets. However, Mr. Hager noted the County's needs were growing faster than its tax revenues, and there were still many infrastructure issues which needed to be addressed. He did not claim to have solutions to all of these problems, but felt he could help lead the County to become a social, economic, and political leadership force in Nevada and the western United States. Mr. Hager thanked the Board and said he looked forward to answering more questions soon. He exited the Chambers as Ms. Thomas was brought in.

Chair Hartung reminded Ms. Thomas she had five minutes to speak. Ms. Thomas stated Washoe County needed a Manager who understood local government, could communicate on all levels, possessed an understanding of the County budget, and could lead through teambuilding and compassion. She said she was that candidate. Her interest in government began in 1996 when she worked for the City of Thousand Oaks, California. She noted she learned a lot about local government during her time there. She mentioned she earned her Masters of Business Administration (MBA) while working in California.

Ms. Thomas stated she moved to northern Nevada in 2001 and began working as the Assistant to the Reno City Manager in 2004. After three years, she was asked to join the Secretary of State's executive staff team as the Deputy Secretary for Operations. She explained that during that time she was exposed to the internal workings of the State system, biennial budgeting, and the legislative process. Among her achievements there were developing the Nevada Domestic Partnership Registry, establishing the Living Will Lockbox as a statewide advanced directive database, and

working on the SilverFlume portal. She said she returned to the City of Reno in 2011, where she was the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. She developed the budget guiding principles for the organization.

Ms. Thomas indicated she utilized her MBA and State experience in an approach to budgeting that was hailed as inclusive. She said she was appointed as Assistant City Manager in 2015 and she reviewed some of the functions she oversaw in that position. She remarked she joined Washoe County as an Assistant County Manager (ACM) in 2017, listing some of the department heads she worked with since then. Some of the efforts she led were the Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services (NNAMHS) campus homelessness project, the Truckee Meadows Public Lands Management Act, and programs associated with affordable housing issues. She noted she worked for 15 years in the highest executive levels of local government agencies in northern Nevada. This included participating in tough decision making and risk taking, which informed her to be an agile, communicative, and thoughtful leader.

Ms. Thomas summarized she had a deep understanding of what it took to be a County Manager who would further the objectives of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). She was dedicated to the employees of the organization while providing a culture which inspired a healthy workforce. She pointed out she had been a resident of unincorporated Washoe County for 15 years and she wished to create a community in which her children would want to remain. She said she took pride in the relationships she fostered in both the private and non-profit sectors. She indicated the region faced significant issues which would take true leadership and collaboration to solve. She concluded her commitment, relationships, experience, and knowledge would provide the foundation for an organization of excellence.

Chair Hartung thanked Ms. Thomas, who exited the Chambers. The Chair then asked Interim County Manager Dave Solaro to explain the next steps. Mr. Solaro advised candidates would be brought back individually in random order and given 45 minutes each to answer interview questions; a break could be taken between candidate interviews if desired. He suggested public comment be opened at the end of the interviews, after which the Board could deliberate before providing direction to staff. Chair Hartung suggested the Board recess briefly prior to commencement of the interview portion of the meeting.

**9:44 a.m.** The Board recessed.

**9:51 a.m.** The Board reconvened.

Candidate Eric Brown took the podium. Chair Hartung advised he would be given 45 minutes to answer a series of 15 questions and could divide his time however he wished. Commissioners' time spent asking questions would not be subtracted from Mr. Brown's 45-minute time limit. The questions would be presented in numerical order by district, beginning with District 1. Chief Deputy County Clerk Jan Galassini advised she had distributed the list of interview questions to the Board and placed a copy on file.

Commissioner Berkbigler welcomed Mr. Brown and thanked him for his interest in Washoe County. She expressed concern about the fiscal future of the nation as well as the County. Noting his experience, she inquired which executive skills Mr. Brown had that specifically prepared him for managing the budget, and requested he share the approach he would use to help the County in the event of a fiscal downturn.

Mr. Brown explained he had managed fairly substantial budgets on both the revenue and expense side, and understood the art of forecasting based on historical trends, revenues, operating expenses, and capital expenses; he would also take into consideration the County's five-year strategic plan and growth projections. He stated he was well-equipped to take those factors into account along with the realities of today's economic trends. He believed realistic planning for future economic sustainability was part art and part science, and it included calling out issues before they became problems. He also brought to the table experience in both for-profit and non-profit organizations in implementing new technologies to help lower the cost of services provided. There was no one single solution, but he was very familiar with exploring cost-saving ideas.

As a follow-up, Commissioner Berkbigler inquired whether Mr. Brown had experience approving or denying the budget requests of multiple departments. Mr. Brown stated he did have experience in that realm and diplomacy was important as department heads would invariably want to know why they were denied. He advised he had been in both positions, having been a department head himself at various points as well as holding leadership roles which required managing through those issues. He felt it was important to maintain an open dialog and listen to each other. The County Manager served at the pleasure of the Board and the Commissioners set the priorities. He opined it was the Manager's job to make sure those priorities were reflected in the budget without strangling the ability of any one department.

Vice Chair Lucey thanked Mr. Brown and said he had enjoyed his introductory presentation and resume. He noted Washoe County was working to address various challenges. He felt the County was currently in a great position but said things did come up which required dynamic action. He asked what Mr. Brown felt his role would be to bring these issues the response they needed and help bring the Board to a consensus.

Mr. Brown said it was important to first make sure everyone was working from the same set of facts. When faced with challenging situations, people could sometimes have selective understanding, and a key element of the County Manager role would be to provide relevant information while determining what was shared in common so priorities could be set and decisions made. In his travels, he noted he had also observed other areas facing challenges with growth, homelessness, and substance abuse; his approach would be to educate himself on best practices used around the country to confront similar issues. He agreed that, while not everything he learned would be relevant or useful to this area, some lessons could be taken from other municipalities' experiences so Washoe County was not reinventing the wheel.

Commissioner Jung inquired which new programs or services Mr. Brown believed might be necessary for the BCC to reach their strategic goals and asked if he had identified any gaps the County needed to address.

Mr. Brown responded having goals and a plan was a great start, though it would be necessary to continually re-evaluate the plan document and goals based on new developments. He believed performance should be regularly evaluated against goals which had been set. He said Washoe County was in a great position from a growth perspective, but moving forward it would be important to make sure the forces helping the County grow were also sharing the responsibility of building infrastructure, resources, housing, and other things required to support that growth. When evaluating the County's goals and plans, he would focus attention on that area with creative thinking and researching best practices to help address growth needs.

Chair Hartung noted government was fraught with risk. He inquired how Mr. Brown would manage risk on a County-wide basis, and what he felt needed to be done for the County to have an effective enterprise risk management program.

Mr. Brown stated the most successful organizations he had been a part of featured individuals whose job was to focus on the issue of risk management. He noted sometimes this fell within the realm of the legal department and in other cases it was handled from a policy perspective, but it was important that risk management staff be independent and able to advise leadership when they felt the County was embarking on a path with an unacceptable level of risk. He had worked in organizations where it seemed every decision made was to avoid litigation, which was frustrating for the more progressive, innovative staff and made it difficult to move forward with anything on a timely basis. He concluded that risk was a continuum that needed to be managed on a daily basis by a dedicated resource or team.

Chair Hartung said the Board was not just responsible internally but also for multiple departments with elected heads. He asked how Mr. Brown would manage risk in the Sheriff's Office or other places.

The same resource or team could be used, Mr. Brown replied, to advise elected department heads when they were embarking on a path that could be problematic. Whether the affected area was a County agency, the BCC, or an elected office, the function of the risk management role would be very important.

Commissioner Herman wanted to know how Mr. Brown would deal with the opposing interests of policymakers and attempt to facilitate discussion while remaining apolitical.

Mr. Brown stated that, at different times over the course of his career, he had been hand-picked for positions because of his ability to manage difficult situations where strong, opposing interests had been problematic. When he first came to the California Telehealth Network in 2010, opposing views had prevented any real progress

since the program's inception in 2007. His first priority had been to meet with all 21 stakeholder organizations to gain an understanding of their perspectives and let them know they were all being heard. He and his team worked with everyone to find common ground, compromise, and make decisions so services could finally be brought to constituents. Within about four months, a path forward had been successfully negotiated, and the statewide telehealth network soon went on to become the largest in the nation.

Since Mr. Brown was used to difficult situations, Commissioner Herman noted, she wanted to know how he would help Washoe County find solutions for tough issues such as Swan Lake flooding in Lemmon Valley and other key issues that impacted County citizens.

Mr. Brown responded he had been watching the challenges in Lemmon Valley with great interest, and had even consulted his brother, a geotechnical engineer, to gain a better understanding of the causes and possible solutions. He spoke about the constituents affected by the flooding and expressed concern about the coming winter season. He stated he did not have an answer to the problem today and, even if there was a solution, he acknowledged coming up with funding would be another matter. He spoke about estimated costs and suggested relying heavily on the expertise of subject matter experts for ideas on mitigation and ways to prevent recurring flood problems. He said it was important to focus on lessons learned from the experience as well as retain that knowledge so the situation did not happen again in the future.

Commissioner Berkbigler asked Mr. Brown to walk the Board through what his approach to the annual budget process would be when dealing with appointed direct reports, elected officials, and their budgets. She also wanted to know the top two or three initiatives he would use to direct the budgets for key needs in the community today, such as addressing homelessness or issues in Lemmon Valley.

Mr. Brown explained his management style was to engage directly with the stakeholders with whom he worked. If he were fortunate enough to be selected as County Manager, one of his first tasks would be to spend time with each department head or elected official and their staff to gain an understanding of their key priorities and funding issues. He would also want to discuss the Commissioners' priorities and how they matched up with each department's priorities. After this, he said, work could begin on resolving areas of disagreement and identifying opportunities for operational improvements or other funding sources. He had experienced success during budget processes by maintaining open lines of communication and good working relationships so disagreements could be resolved, decisions made, and resources allocated.

Vice Chair Lucey said each Commissioner represented both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County and asked what differences Mr. Brown saw between county and city government, or county and state government. He noted Washoe County provided a number of different services that other local bodies did not, and also had to interact and work with those other bodies on a daily basis.

Mr. Brown said the various forms of local government were very different. Much of his work over the past ten years had focused on rural and unincorporated areas in California and had given him experience working with local officials. Washoe County was responsible for providing services to its constituents regardless of whether they resided in incorporated or unincorporated areas, and this required working together with different municipalities and as well as colleagues in state government. It was important to have a clear understanding of citizens' needs in both incorporated and unincorporated areas so no one was left out of the equation, and to establish and maintain good relationships with other entities whether local, state, or federal. He said it was amazing what could happen when the lines of communication were kept open and he often discovered resources which would not have been identified otherwise this way.

Commissioner Jung advised that, as an elected body, the BCC relied on complete and well-defined staff reports in order to be able to fully discuss all options and factors before making policy determinations or prescribing a course of action. She asked what could be expected under Mr. Brown's leadership.

Mr. Brown answered that his references would agree he and his staff had always been comprehensive in terms of the information they provided for decision making. The goal was to ensure the Board was properly informed on the issues most important to the constituents of the County, and it would be his role as County Manager to make sure they had the information needed to make decisions in a timely manner. He prided himself on this ability and said those who had served in a governance role within his organizations would attest to this.

Chair Hartung stated Washoe County was a large organization with about 2,700 employees. Employees wanted stability in organizational structure but he noted an organizational chart was also a living document. He asked what Mr. Brown would look at to manage the organization and help move things in the right direction in terms of Board's vision.

Mr. Brown responded he would want to make sure he had a clear understanding of the Board's vision, both in document form and through discussion. He would determine whether the County had the talent needed to execute that vision and make sure the most talented people were in the proper roles to make contributions to the organization. He would also look to identify areas of clear inadequacy, such as departments or programs not staffed or resourced properly. He wanted to be clear that his style was not to blow everything up and start over; he would spend the first six months to a year in the position learning everything he could about how the organization was working and where the areas of challenge were. He advised he was very much a 'management by walking around' kind of leader. During his tenure at Charter Communications, he explained, he spent time doing ride-alongs with technicians or shadowing representatives in call centers as they worked with customers. He did this to be sure employees had the resources they needed, the policies in place made sense, and areas of improvement were identified. He also noted he would look for metrics from other comparable organizations to see what took place in their in day-to-day operations.

Commissioner Herman inquired about Mr. Brown's experience dealing with citizens in rural areas. He responded he had managed some of the most rural parts of the company's territory at Charter Communications; one area in Eastern Washington, for example, had just 58 customers and was 3.5 hours from the nearest sizeable community. This experience taught him the challenges of providing and funding services in areas with little population density. In his current role with the California Telehealth Network, he had worked to connect over 300 clinics and hospitals, two-thirds of which were located in rural communities. He regularly visited and was known by name in rural Modoc, Plumas, and Lassen Counties, and he spent a lot of time advocating for rural services both in Sacramento and in Washington, D.C. He said he took the responsibility of public service very seriously and his natural inclination in any community was to help whenever he saw things not as they should be. Mr. Brown hoped to bring that talent and passion to the County Manager position.

Commissioner Berkbigler explained there had been some concern that Mr. Brown might try to California-ize Washoe County. She said the County's constituents were not interested in that and Californians were frequently asked to go home if they were unhappy. She inquired about his experiences in this state and whether he understood that Nevada was different than California.

Mr. Brown agreed Nevada was different, and shared that he had been coming to Washoe County for 15 years as a visitor, vacationer, and businessman. It was a beautiful place and, for the first five years of his tenure at the California Telehealth Network, he and his family came to Washoe County nearly every other weekend to participate in events. He explained he did not actually consider himself to be a Californian even though he had a California address for many years; he grew up in Virginia and his parents were North Carolinians. He respected the citizens of Nevada and Washoe County and felt he had a good understanding of the local values and standards of living. Mr. Brown also noted he had met many who had moved to Nevada because they wanted to get away from the way things were in California. His own personal interest in the area stemmed from the belief that Washoe County was in a unique position to attract the right types of investments and economic development to the area over the next five to ten years; he wanted to be a part of that.

Vice Chair Lucey said his focus was on experiences, relationships, and interactions in the community. He believed northern Nevada was unique in the way it had conducted itself in business, and he considered the residents here to be pioneers in many ways. He wanted to know how Mr. Brown saw himself working on a regional basis, what types of innovative approaches he felt might be appropriate, and what the Board could expect from him as a County Manager in this aspect.

Mr. Brown replied that, as County Manager, he would work on the Board's behalf to maintain positive relationships with other entities. This did not guarantee all parties would agree every time, but the relationships would focus on shared regional and statewide goals, and colleagues and stakeholders would be informed about Washoe County's priorities. Building relationships was something he spent a lot of time on and it

was critical to keep the lines of communication open when priorities or personalities clashed. At times, trade-offs would be required and there would also be times when parties would just disagree, but Mr. Brown believed much more could be accomplished if discussions began with a perspective of working together to serve the citizens. He said contention generally did not achieve great results and there was no time for such things with the amount of growth the County anticipated.

If he were to become County Manager, Mr. Brown continued, the Board would consistently hear positive feedback about his interactions with stakeholders, other municipalities and entities, and contacts at the State and federal level. He noted former colleagues, business connections, and even elected officials with whom he had worked while at Charter Communications still contacted him regularly, not because he still worked there, but because of the positive working relationship that had been established and maintained. These individuals respected his expertise and knew they would get the unvarnished truth from him. He felt his ability to establish relationships and maintain connections was a strong suit of his candidacy.

Commissioner Jung spoke about the overall aging of the County as an organization. She inquired what sort of legacy planning Mr. Brown had participated in during his previous employment with P&G as well as at Charter Communications, and asked what he would suggest to address the aging-out of baby boomers in County employment. She explained it had been a challenge to get executive-level staff and department heads to nurture and grow their replacements.

Mr. Brown said at least half of an employee's evaluation at P&G was based on their ability to develop people for promotion. Even if an employee was brilliant otherwise, there would be no advancement until they demonstrated an ability to groom the next generation of the company's leaders. This had become one of the core tenets of Mr. Brown's management style and he had invested a lot of time in the organizations he managed encouraging employees to build their careers there rather than just taking a paycheck until something better came along.

Mr. Brown also said diversity was a key issue, noting he had been at the forefront of championing equal pay and promotional opportunities for women, and he was one of the first men in the cable industry to be acknowledged by Women in Cable Telecommunications as an advocate leader. He wanted to make sure these same values were instilled into the culture at Washoe County as an organization. Finally, he talked about working to address other employee issues and needs, including quality of life and affordable housing. After recruiting in a state like California over the past decade, where taxes were high and competition fierce, he learned there were many things that could be done to establish a positive relationship with employees and help them feel as though their organization took an interest in them and cared about their professional progress.

Chair Hartung provided some examples of the County's regional infrastructure, such as the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) and the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). He said what Washoe County did not have was a

regional stormwater or wastewater purveyor and the County still faced many issues in terms of infrastructure. He asked how Mr. Brown would solve some of those problems and bring everyone together collectively as a region to address aging infrastructure.

Mr. Brown noted he had faced similar challenges in bringing broadband to rural areas, where multiple communities had to come together in a united effort to pursue solutions because each was too small to succeed alone. To address aging infrastructure problems in Washoe County, he would first determine who the stakeholders were and whose assistance or cooperation was needed, and open discussions with them to help them understand the benefits of working together. He would then explore funding options which could be pursued jointly. Although it was not always easy, he was familiar with the exercise and comfortable with that type of role.

Commissioner Herman said the Board was very focused on maintaining the highest level of transparency and openness on behalf of the public. She wanted to know what could be expected under Mr. Brown's leadership in this respect.

Mr. Brown responded that the word transparency was frequently used by colleagues when describing him. He explained he saw a situation two years before where the future sustainability of the California Telehealth Network was at great risk. The network was growing at a rate that could not be sustained based on its fundraising status as a non-profit organization. He went to the board of directors with a financial forecast and had to suggest considering either transitioning to a similarly-missioned non-profit or closing the network down. It was not easy conversation to have, he noted, and it had put his own position at risk, but it was the right thing to do. As a result of that difficult discussion, the network eventually found a partner, Ochin, Inc., which acquired the organization. Since that time, operations were not only sustained but had actually grown. Mr. Brown said he had seen many situations during his career where people were dishonest and said that was not something in his DNA. He concluded anyone who had worked with him or for him would attest to this.

Chair Hartung advised Mr. Brown he had about two minutes remaining if he wished to make any closing remarks. Mr. Brown thanked the Board for the opportunity to interview. He knew he was not the conventional candidate in terms of years of service to a municipal organization, but suggested a new set of eyes and a fresh perspective from someone with relevant experience could benefit the County and its citizens. He said he had spent his entire career taking on leadership roles he had not been in before and had been very successful each time.

Mr. Brown admitted it was somewhat uncomfortable for him to stand before the Board and talk about all the great things he could do; those who knew him would agree it was not his usual style. He stated it was amazing what could be accomplished when people were not so focused on who would get credit. He identified as the type of manager who would work through the talent in the organization, bring out the best in them, praise them when they did well, and coach them privately when they did not. In public, he would

accept responsibility if things did not happen the way they were supposed to. Mr. Brown hoped the Board would give him serious consideration for the County Manager role.

**10:51 a.m.** The Board recessed.

**11:00 a.m.** The Board reconvened.

Candidate Kate Thomas took the podium and Chair Hartung reiterated the rules of the 45-minute interview process. Commissioner Berkbigler expressed concern about fiscal sustainability and asked how Ms. Thomas' executive skills would assist in preparing the County budget. Additionally, she wanted to know how Ms. Thomas would handle a nationwide fiscal downturn.

Ms. Thomas replied it was important to consider uncertainties, such as the closed basin situation and labor negotiations, when budgeting every year. She said it was important to keep a significant fund balance of between 10 and 17 percent in accordance with the County's policy to weather any fiscal downturns. She stressed the importance of communicating with department heads to determine which needs could be put on hold. She acknowledged cuts could be made to certain programs but, because 71 percent of the County's budget went toward employee salaries and benefits, there were not many frivolous programs which could be cut. She felt the region was set up to weather any situation but she admitted that could not be counted on. She reiterated the value of communicating with the budget team.

Vice Chair Lucey cited a few issues the County addressed, such as closed basins, economic development, infrastructure needs, and a constrained budget. He asked how Ms. Thomas would bring about consensus among the BCC to address those topics.

Ms. Thomas emphasized the importance of considering infrastructure capacities in planning for growth. She noted the northern Nevada area was making headway in areas like addressing wastewater, bridges, and dams. She thought the focus needed to remain specifically on stormwater and sewer capacity, adding that staff was considering ways to utilize those resources for future planning. She acknowledged there were many competing needs in the County, including economic development, County growth, and homelessness; advances needed to be made in the most important areas. She thought a balance between the limited revenue stream and infrastructure needs had to be found. As a team, these issues needed to be prioritized and she would work with aligning the BCC with those important issues so good policy decisions could be made.

Commissioner Jung asked Ms. Thomas which new programs or services would be necessary for the BCC to meet its strategic goals and fill in any gaps in service.

Ms. Thomas stated the values of integrity, quality public service, and effective communication guided everyone at the County. She pointed out a recent survey of County employees demonstrated that 76 percent of the staff were either highly or moderately engaged. She felt leadership could do a better job finding out from employees

which programs needed to come forward. She pointed out headway could be made with programs run by employees, such as the Outpatient Assisted Treatment program, which drove down costs around the jail population. She said employee wellness resulted in better work but the County could do more to show employees that the leadership was committed to their wellness.

Chair Hartung inquired how Ms. Thomas would manage risk on a County-wide basis and what would need to be done to have an effective enterprise risk management program or department.

Ms. Thomas pointed out the County had a talented risk manager who was tasked with multiple responsibilities. She said this could be an appropriate time to contract with someone outside the County to perform an analysis of the County's areas of significant risk, which would save money by avoiding unnecessary litigation and minimizing risk to employees and elected officials. She felt this would be a priority.

Commissioner Herman asked how Ms. Thomas handled the opposing interests of policy makers and how she facilitated discussion about issues, such as the flooding in Swan Lake, while remaining apolitical.

Ms. Thomas asserted the County Manager needed to remain apolitical. She acknowledged the political interests of the Board might not always align but solutions should not be politically-driven. She thought the Manager's job would be to help policy makers understand all sides of an issue to determine the best technical solution, all while keeping the public informed. She stated the County was responsible for doing what was best for the population and not just considering the best political move. She had faith the County was trustworthy to deliver a good product, even if it meant learning from its own errors.

Commissioner Berkbigler queried Ms. Thomas about her communication style and asked how she would keep the BCC and the public informed of key issues impacting the County.

Ms. Thomas stated she over-communicated and insisted that her team understand the issues so they could be communicated quickly to the BCC. She anticipated having access to each Commissioner to make them aware of all potential issues, so they could communicate issues and solutions to their constituents. She stressed open communication was her style and praised strides made by the Communications Department in providing information to citizens. She pointed out an effort was underway to get newsletters out to the Districts, recognizing each experienced different issues. Working together with the BCC, she said, would result in consistent messaging to the community.

Vice Chair Lucey noted Washoe County was a regional service provider and there were many challenges in providing a functional government to its citizens. He asked Ms. Thomas about the differences she observed in county, city, and state governments, given that the residents for many of these were the same.

Ms. Thomas replied she worked for all three types of those organizations and had a good understanding of the differences between each of them. She commented the County was responsible for State-mandated issues such as servicing the indigent population, providing regional forensic services, and running the library. She felt there was a misperception that the County was simply another city, and a misunderstanding about the breadth of services the County provided. She stated the County was required to take care of homelessness and she expressed pride in the progress made with the Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services campus. She pointed out the Public Guardian's Office addressed situations where a citizen might not have anyone set up with medical guardianship. Ms. Thomas indicated it gave her great comfort that the County provided these services.

Ms. Thomas said a level of fiscal and human accountability needed to be maintained along with leadership in providing those services. She thought the County could do a better job in explaining its role with those services. The County worked with a \$700 million budget and was comprised of 26 department heads; as the fourth-largest employer in the region, it was significantly larger than the cities. She remarked the State was responsible for statewide operations but it did not touch the community as closely as the County. She concluded the County continued to work with transparency and integrity.

Vice Chair Lucey asked a follow-up question about how Ms. Thomas would change the general public's perspective. Ms. Thomas responded an understanding between the County and the Cities regarding their responsibilities would allow the community to be served better. This would allow for clearer explanation of what the services were and who provided them. She mentioned Washoe 311 often received calls about issues which should have been directed to other agencies; these were opportunities to better explain who did what. She posited 311 data could be used to better direct people to the right agency.

Commissioner Jung stated the BCC typically wanted a full discussion on all options and factors before determining policy changes. She wondered what they could expect under Ms. Thomas' leadership regarding well-defined staff reports and testimony.

Ms. Thomas imagined herself in the role of a Commissioner, saying she would want to know all areas of concern as well as areas that would provide opportunities for success. She stressed decision-making needed to be driven by data and communication needed to be open. Providing the right information to the Board was necessary so they could make the best decisions for the community. She underscored the importance of having concise and transparent agendas since they were the most public-facing documents.

Chair Hartung recognized the County had around 2,700 employees but the organizational chart was a living document. He inquired about the organizational changes Ms. Thomas would make to support the Board's policy direction and strategic goals.

Ms. Thomas said responsibilities were currently shared among three ACMs, each of whom could step in if the Manager was unable to fulfill his or her duties. She expressed appreciation that she worked with talented ACMs and department heads. She

indicated she would meet with those ACMs and department heads to determine whether any changes needed to be made. She stated the BCC's policy goals should be the driving factor in how the organization was run, and the organizational chart needed to align with that understanding. She felt the current arrangement worked well but she had not yet spoken with department heads to see if they were receiving what they needed. She was not committed to using the existing structure but she cautioned against changing things that were not broken.

Chair Hartung asked whether she would hire another ACM if she were appointed as the County Manager. Ms. Thomas attributed many of the County's recent successes to the involvement of the ACMs at the department head level; department heads could come to them to learn about budget updates and potential issues. She did not know whether it would be effective for the County Manager to take on some ACM responsibilities and she anticipated keeping three ACMs. This would maintain a layer of accountability and keep channels of communication open for department heads to get information.

Commissioner Herman pointed out District 5 made up 89 percent of Washoe County and it was historically very rural. She queried Ms. Thomas about her experience in dealing with citizens in rural areas.

In her time with the State, Ms. Thomas responded, she was responsible for talking to jurisdictions throughout the state, some of which were very rural. She communicated with Clerks from those areas to ensure voting integrity. She admitted many of her current tasks were not involved directly with the rural community but one of her goals was to get more involved. She noted she worked with the Gerlach Volunteer Fire Department and understood their needs were quite different than those in downtown Reno. She felt paying more attention to constituents in rural communities would help them be more successful.

Commissioner Berkbigler asked which indicators Ms. Thomas used to measure the cost effectiveness, efficiency, and desired outcomes of certain programs. Ms. Thomas cited the County's current attempts to gather information on the impact of the NNAMHS program, acknowledging it could be difficult to measure success rates because the program spanned multiple departments. Rather than asking how many meetings were held every month, she was trying to determine how many citizens were being aided by the program. One way the County measured success was by the use of outside consultants who performed cost analyses on the County's programs. She stated it was important to determine the intended goals of any program when it was rolled out, listing some of the goals of the NNAMHS campus. She said impacts on the jails, the criminal justice system, and the Sheriff's Office needed to be considered in assessing the overall success of the program. After these cost analyses, decisions could be made about tweaking a program or discontinuing it and providing a different service. She said the staff at department head meetings reviewed performance indicators as a team to see whether the right questions were being asked and whether they yielded the right results.

Vice Chair Lucey opined the Commissioners sometimes felt that not enough innovative approaches were being suggested and many of the initiatives introduced by the BCC were ignored by staff. He inquired about how Ms. Thomas would use her relationships in the community to create a better structure at BCC meetings, which would bring forward innovative approaches to address challenges.

Ms. Thomas answered that Commissioners often brought forward innovative ideas which originated in meetings with constituents, other elected officials, and other jurisdictions. One of the greatest challenges was to balance these against the strategic plan. She felt there were ways to adhere to the strategic plan while putting forth some of the Board's innovative ideas. By communicating properly with the BCC, she felt programs that were currently underway could be better prioritized with the new, innovative programs introduced by the Board. She stressed that the Manager needed to ensure the Board felt heard. She highlighted the Washoe County Impact Awards as a way of illustrating to the community the balance between long-term projects and innovative ideas.

Commissioner Jung noted all levels of government were experiencing issues with the baby boomer generation aging out of work. She asked about Ms. Thomas' plan for legacy planning and how important it was given the rapidly-changing employment pool.

Ms. Thomas emphasized the importance of understanding the changes in the active workforce. She called the County a victim of its own success as it had become a place where many new employees wanted to work. She cautioned against having either a workforce that was largely new or largely aging; one approach the County took was overlapping new employees with old ones. She said there were benefits to having the fresh vision of new employees but it was difficult to lose older employees' institutional knowledge. She thought the department heads were keeping an eye on this issue so they did not have to play catch up when knowledge was lost to retirement.

Chair Hartung referenced the regionalization of certain infrastructure with the TMWA and the RTC, and queried Ms. Thomas about how she would involve stakeholders in the areas of wastewater and stormwater.

Ms. Thomas mentioned the County considered methods for stormwater management in this region but how the County delivered wastewater services could require a different approach, perhaps modeled after TMWA. She noted the County was working with the City of Reno and other agencies on permitting its facilities in the northern part of the region. She thought issues such as increasing the amount of discharged effluent could benefit from a review of how it worked in other jurisdictions. She said the Nevada Infrastructure Report Card provided information from engineers about how to develop infrastructure that would last for generations without creating sprawl. She admitted the County could use all its resources for infrastructure and still not satisfy the need; partnerships would be necessary to deliver those services. She praised the RTC for its work on road infrastructure but felt the County needed to work with the State and the private sector on stormwater and wastewater issues.

Chair Hartung indicated he wished to see wastewater treated to an extremely high standard and agreed with One Water Nevada's vision that all water issues could be addressed in one group. He asked how that could be accomplished collaboratively with the two municipalities who utilized different processes.

Ms. Thomas thought that was doable because there was a profound understanding in the region about what needed to happen with those resources. She felt each jurisdiction had a desire to move in that direction and the Water Innovation Campus provided an opportunity around which the entities could coalesce. She thought certain things made more fiscal sense to accomplish together and this would be one of those opportunities.

Commissioner Herman wondered what the Board could expect under Ms. Thomas' leadership with regard to maintaining transparency. Ms. Thomas replied the County was better at showing how they were performing because it had a responsibility to the public. She felt like the County no longer hid areas of failure, especially since those failures could result in receiving additional resources in that area. She expressed a desire to work with the Communications Department to point out areas of concern which the County was addressing. She provided an example of the Community Homelessness Advisory Board, which was made up of elected officials and allowed everybody to participate in the discussion. This created a level of trust in the community because they were part of the process. She added that did not mean all issues should be resolved in a public setting. While the County was moving in the right direction regarding transparency, it would benefit the BCC and staff to do more, specifically before they were forced to by the Legislature.

Chair Hartung invited Ms. Thomas to provide a closing statement with her remaining time. Ms. Thomas stated the County's mission was to work together regionally to provide a safe, secure, and healthy community. Having a clear understanding of that mission was why she wanted to lead the organization. She thought knowing where the Board stood on issues was important as it provided a Manager the opportunity to work towards advancing its priorities. She thanked the Board for its time and consideration, and said she was proud to be a part of the County in any capacity.

**11:49 a.m.** The Board recessed.

**12:00 p.m.** The Board reconvened.

Candidate Jon Hager took the podium and Chair Hartung reiterated the rules for the 45-minute interview process. Commissioner Berkbigler said fiscal sustainability was very important to the County and the Board as a whole, and inquired as to how Mr. Hager's executive skills prepared him for dealing with the financial and budgetary issues that Washoe County would face in the coming years.

Mr. Hager said that, as the former Chief Financial Officer for the Nevada Public Employees' Benefits Program, he understood fiscal sustainability was of dire

importance in serving the citizens of Washoe County. In his research, he noticed the County's expenses seemed to be increasing at a faster pace than revenues, reserves had drawn down over the past few years, and the number of days of cash on hand had dropped to about 75, which he felt was somewhat concerning. The County still had an AA bond rating, which was promising, and other communities had very little cash on hand. In that regard, Washoe County was in a good place but could not continue indefinitely down the same path. He spoke about ways to reduce expenses and increase revenues, but noted increasing taxes could negatively impact citizens and businesses. These were policy decisions the Board would ultimately need to make with the information provided to them by County fiscal staff.

Mr. Hager explained other options could also be considered, noting an article he had read which said many municipalities did not consider the proper commercial value of their assets. Logan International Airport in Boston, for example, had been situated on waterfront property whose commercial value to the city ended up being much higher than the cost of relocating the airport. He was not suggesting Reno relocate its airport, but there might be assets within the County which were not properly valued or meeting their full commercial revenue potential. He spoke about deciding between doing things that would raise revenues or reducing taxes and taking over services that businesses should be providing. He felt an important part of the County Manager's job was working with stakeholders to make sure every department understood their role, what services they should provide, and which services to cut if it came to that point. He noted cuts should not necessarily be made across the board, referencing his time at the State of Nevada when he had been asked to cut the budget by 50 percent. Cutting a car in half, he opined, would result in a pile of junk. Similarly, the County Manager would need to be methodical about giving the BCC proper priorities, making sure they understood the pros and cons of each option, and ensuring the budget could be properly balanced.

Vice Chair Lucey said the Board had been dealing with a number of sizeable initiatives and leadership from the County Manager was needed to facilitate solutions. He provided examples such as closed-basin stormwater, economic development, and infrastructure needs. He wanted to know how Mr. Hager would create consensus and address those concerns.

Mr. Hager responded it was important to maintain open communication as plans that were not communicated might as well not even exist. He spoke about maintaining relationships with the Cities of Reno and Sparks, outlying areas such as Wadsworth, and the State. It was the job of the County Manager to work with each Commissioner, both in public and behind closed doors, to make sure they understood what was going on so that nothing the BCC received in a public setting would ever surprise them. Regular communication before meetings and throughout each week would be essential. He continued by saying partnerships should also be formed with local businesses, non-profit organizations, CEOs, elected officials, the Cities, and even the State to best serve the citizens' needs and get people involved. He offered the relocation of many services to the NNAMHS campus as an example of a partnership that benefited the community as a whole.

Commissioner Jung asked Mr. Hager what new programs or services he believed were necessary to reach the County's strategic goals and what gaps he had identified that needed to be addressed.

Mr. Hager answered that he lived here and had seen the news reports about limited housing, problems in Lemmon Valley, the need for new roads, new schools, water improvements, and the continued growth of the City of Fernley. Without sitting down with staff, he felt it would be difficult for him to identify a specific gap or need. He noted former County Manager John Slaughter had mentioned he was still learning about all the different programs even after five years in the position. Mr. Hager opined the County needed to examine potential partnerships for additional housing, with the Cities or private industry, or consider developing into some of the unincorporated County areas. He acknowledged the latter step would also lead to a need for further infrastructure improvements. He said it was all part of the long-term planning process.

Chair Hartung said the County had about 2,700 employees and stability was extremely important in the organization, but the Board also understood that an organizational chart was a living document. He inquired what changes Mr. Hager would make to support policy direction and strategic goals if appointed County Manager. He wanted to know how Mr. Hager would take succession planning into account, given that the County was a very dynamic organization with people always retiring.

Stability started at the top, Mr. Hager opined, beginning with leadership and clear, consistent communication, both internal and external. He spoke of transparency, saying there was nothing worse than being an employee with no idea what was going on. He mentioned different ways to share information with employees, including all-staff announcements and regularly-scheduled meetings at the department level, which had been implemented in his current organization. He also said it was important to ensure services were being provided to the community and measured to ensure goals were being met and staff was being held accountable. Regarding retirement and turnover, he felt hiring the right people into the right positions was essential. For example, a creative individual might not be the best fit for a data entry position, and a data entry person might not be ideal in a project management position. He concluded it was important to communicate with employees and be clear in that communication, as well as hiring the right people for the right jobs at the right times in order to maintain long-term employees.

Commissioner Herman noticed Mr. Hager had not been afraid to talk about Swan Lake earlier and said she liked what he had said about infrastructure and the need to plan for it. She asked what experience he had in dealing with citizens in rural areas.

Mr. Hager answered he and his Silver State Health Insurance Exchange team had traveled throughout Nevada in both urban and rural areas to get input on the program. He said it had been an interesting time, with some individuals and communities supporting the initiative and others opposing it. He described some areas where the opposition was clear; many doctors, he noted, did not like the Affordable Care Act, and other individuals simply did not want changes made to their health insurance. The

opposition would come into the discussion with arms crossed. Mr. Hager approached them by explaining he was simply a government bureaucrat tasked with implementing a federal law over which he had no authority. He then appealed to their desire for a common solution, saying the only real way to make sure the program would be able to provide the necessary services was to share those needs with him. It was all a matter of organizing events both large and small, and even knocking on doors.

Commissioner Berkbigler requested Mr. Hager walk through his approach to the annual budget process, noting the County budgeted on a fiscal year basis with both elected and non-elected department heads. She inquired how he would build consensus so the budget could be met without a deficit and department heads could still get some of the things they really needed, such as the Sheriff's need for more deputies.

Mr. Hager responded the process should begin with a strategic plan which listed priorities and expenses, and then a determination could be made about areas where cuts could be made. He would want to learn each Commissioner's individual priorities as well as those they shared as a group, and there would be many discussions in public and private to keep the Board informed throughout the budget process. Discussions with elected and non-elected officials would be held to determine each department's priorities and which things they could not live without. He noted the prioritization process should be fully transparent, as there was nothing worse than having a program cut without an understanding as to why. The alternative to budget cutbacks was digging into the County's reserves, which had been done before, but which could be problematic. Finally, raising revenue was also an option, but doing so could impact businesses. Mr. Hager said it would be up to the BCC to ultimately decide.

Vice Chair Lucey said the County was the regional service provider for a number of agencies and he asked Mr. Hager how county government was different from city government and state government. He noted the districts were comprised of both unincorporated and city residents.

Mr. Hager replied Washoe County was the 36<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation, with huge swaths of barren land. In the unincorporated areas, he said, the County was often the prime provider of services. There were overlaps at the City level, such as for homeless services, healthcare, and child protective services, and the State also had some degree of responsibility for services such as mental health and public safety.

Mr. Hager expressed concern he might not have answered the question appropriately. Vice Chair Lucey clarified he sought to understand how Mr. Hager saw County government interacting with the State, being that the initiatives of the State were very different from those of the County. He also asked how the relationship between the County and the State or even between the County and the Cities could be more fruitful, based on interactions initiated by the County Manager's office.

Mr. Hager thanked Vice Chair Lucey for the clarification. He said it was important to cultivate good relationships with other governments, whether the Cities, the

State, or even surrounding counties, because many of the problems faced were regional or even statewide. He felt it would be helpful to forge alliances and agree on direction. The County would need to effectively communicate if it needed help from the State; for example, emergencies needed to be communicated at both the State and federal levels and expenses had to be properly documented for reimbursement. It would be the County Manager's job to break down barriers and help staff with effective one-on-one communication. He also said there should never be a situation where anyone on the County staff was mistrusted by either the Board or the public. He reiterated the importance of clear communication.

Commissioner Jung said the Board wanted a full discussion on all options and factors before determining policy changes or courses of action, including complete and well-defined staff reports. She asked what could be expected under Mr. Hager's leadership in this regard.

Mr. Hager responded the Board could expect clearly-defined reports and discussions at the podium. He noted there appeared to be very thorough reports available on the County's website but it was important that each report have a clear executive summary and information could be easily referenced within the staff report. He said part of the County Manager's job would be to make sure communications were consistent across departments, did not duplicate efforts, were layered, and started with a simple overview but then went deeper. Staff should also be available and ready to answer further questions if needed.

Chair Hartung said the County managed a lot of risk and dealt with many departments with elected heads. He queried Mr. Hager as to how he would go about managing risk on a County-wide basis and what he felt needed to be done to have an effective risk management program in place. He mentioned the Sheriff's Office as an example of risk the County had to manage.

Mr. Hager was not certain of the structure of the Risk Management office but assumed staff would work with various departments to determine the amount of risk in each. It would be important to know how many deputies the Sheriff's Office needed and whether data was available to support that need. He said it would also be important to know the consequences of not receiving those deputies. The financial risk would then need to be estimated and other pros and cons determined. All of this information would be provided to the BCC either in the form of a comprehensive, County-wide risk management report or through individual department reports. Either way, he felt it would be imperative for the Board to have that information so they could make the proper decisions.

Commissioner Herman explained the BCC was very focused on maintaining transparency on behalf of the public and asked what could be expected under Mr. Hager's leadership.

Mr. Hager said he had directed staff at the Silver State Health Insurance Exchange to make everything available publicly through the website, ensure all

information went to the Board, and document all policy decisions. He mentioned one problem with such levels of transparency was information became more difficult to find, so it was important to structure everything with ease of access in mind. His philosophy was that citizens had a right to know what was going on in their government.

Commissioner Berkbigler asked Mr. Hager to provide the Board with an understanding of how he interacted with direct reports and other employees on different levels to establish good working relationships, trust, and respect. She also wanted to know if he thought any changes needed to be made to the County's current staffing or management structures.

Mr. Hager opined an organization could not be run without good staff. He said one of the first things he did with his staff was give them a mission and then allow them to do what they needed to do. He would provide answers to their questions if he knew them or help them find answers if he did not. If a barrier needed to be broken down, he was happy to help with that. Typically, however, he did not give a ton of direction after providing a mission. With other staff, he tended to get to know people and talk about their families and children, which he felt helped keep employees engaged and working hard. To Commissioner Berkbigler's question about changes that needed to be made in the County, Mr. Hager thought it would be premature for him to decide on changes or improvements without talking to staff first. He said it did appear there were a lot of direct reports for each Assistant County Manager, but without knowing the workload for each of those departments and actually speaking to employees, he would be hesitant to make any specific recommendations.

Vice Chair Lucey noted the County Manager was technically the only employee of the Board, and the BCC often implemented initiatives and addressed certain issues within the County through the County Manager. He asked how Mr. Hager would use his abilities as Manager to advance the Board's innovative approaches and implement them on a regional basis, as well as maintain future participation in programs the BCC was interested in.

Mr. Hager answered that his job as the Board's appointed representative would be to translate their policies and visions into strategic initiatives, and create actionable work for County staff from those goals. He believed he would initially need a lot of help from current staff, especially the ACMs, who were familiar with the issues, and he would also seek direction from each of the Commissioners. He said the importance of relationships and communication could not be understated; it was essential to communicate clearly with the County's counterparts, the Cities and the State, and each of the Commissioners. Actively listening, asking clarifying questions, having discussion in both public forums and behind the scenes, and working with engineers and different subject matter experts were all important for thorough communication.

Commissioner Jung said the County, the State, and the nation were experiencing the graying of the largest population, the baby boomers. She asked what Mr. Hager's experience was with legacy planning and how important he believed it to be. By

legacy planning, she meant that all supervisors, managers, department heads and other knowledgeable staff were planning for their replacements on the job.

Mr. Hager said succession planning was vital for any organization, and it was important that long-term, knowledgeable employees identified potential successors and allowed subordinates to do parts of the position to prepare them if the job became vacant. He had been surprised there was not already a planned replacement for the County Manager at the time Mr. Slaughter announced his retirement, but he understood the Board's desire to do a national search. If selected as County Manager, he said, he would bring the ACMs along for important tasks. He said it was vital to allow subordinate staff a chance to do the job, at least in part, and to make sure they were given the opportunity to succeed in the role they should be training to be in.

Chair Hartung said some of the County's infrastructure was run by Joint Powers of Authority agreements, such as TMWA and the RTC. Given that infrastructure was aging, the Chair asked how Mr. Hager would engage and involve various stakeholders to achieve regional collaboration with those services, and wondered if he saw a benefit to combining things such as all water management into one regional service.

Mr. Hager felt it would depend on the situation; the Swan Lake area, with both unincorporated and incorporated parts of Reno, might be ripe for a water district. He said that did not necessarily mean just one water district should handle all of Washoe County's needs, though perhaps it could. He suggested looking at all options, not rejecting any out of hand, and bringing in all stakeholders to have them better understand what was going on. If one water district managed the Swan Lake area, he said, it might be more efficient than the County and the Cities doing so, but the revenue to operate the water district would then have to be paid by that area's residents. On the other hand, residents in other areas of Washoe County would not be paying millions to fix the problems in the Swan Lake area. There was no right or wrong answer, he opined. Regardless, water still needed to come from somewhere and be discharged to somewhere. Discharging into the Truckee River required extensive reclamation processes, though pumping out to other areas would also require consideration of water purity and economic issues. For each scenario, stakeholders and affected residents needed to be part of the dialog, and appropriate leadership should be present to help guide discussion.

Commissioner Herman wanted to know how Mr. Hager dealt with opposing interests of policymakers and how he would attempt to facilitate discussion while remaining apolitical.

Opposing interests could be a challenge, he agreed. He recalled a heated situation where two State administrators who disagreed on funding issues began screaming at one another, requiring Mr. Hager to step between them. He understood it was difficult to get things done with two completely opposing viewpoints. The current national political climate was very contentious, he noted, with both sides having seemingly nothing in common; Washoe County appeared to be relatively amicable by comparison. However, he noted those on opposing sides were all still Americans, and they each wanted to do the

right thing. This was common ground that could bring them together. He opined that people needed to speak to one another as people, rather than as ultra-liberals or ultra-conservatives. The bottom line for the County Manager position was to implement the Board's policies and decisions regardless of their political implications. He said he would provide options, pros and cons, and information to facilitate the BCC's decision-making processes, and he would provide information to the public through appropriate planning and communication.

Chair Hartung pointed out Mr. Hager still had time remaining and invited him to provide closing remarks if desired. Mr. Hager said the County Manager position was an exciting opportunity, noting he had served all his life, within the military, at the State, and by serving patients at Hometown Health. He was excited to get back into government since he felt he could make a great difference by facilitating conversations and helping the BCC serve the citizens of Washoe County. He voiced appreciation for the opportunity to interview and thanked the Board.

On the call for public comment, Mr. Jeff Donahue said he was a retired executive who had moved from southern California six years before. He spoke about meeting the former Sheriff during a leadership training 17 years ago and said he was good, but our current Sheriff would take things from good to great. Similarly, he felt all three candidates were good, but only one would be great. He spoke about the difficulty of leadership positions and the importance of the relationship between the County Manager and the ACMS. He concluded Mr. Brown, whom he had known for six years, would not let the Board down.

Mr. Greg Hudson was called but was not present to speak.

Mr. George Jostlin explained he had known Mr. Brown almost 30 years, watched him succeed at various levels throughout his career, and had seen him be a great leader at each level. He had worked in organizations where Mr. Brown was a leader and remarked none of his replacements had been nearly as great. Mr. Jostlin could not think of a better person to lead Washoe County and said the Commissioners would agree if they spent time with him individually. He assured the BCC that Mr. Brown was the most qualified individual they would have the opportunity to work with and said he had not found a single reason not to take unpaid time off from work to speak on Mr. Brown's behalf.

Ms. Lori Beach agreed Mr. Brown was a fresh voice and said she would love to see him as part of the team, but she felt his expertise was not at the level the County currently needed for a Manager. She said Kate Thomas' answer to Vice Chair Lucey's question was very telling and revealed the County would not be moving in a new direction under her leadership; her answers made it sound as though the BCC worked for the staff rather than the other way around. She wondered why Ms. Thomas had not taken great ideas to the innovation program she spoke of. In contrast, she felt Mr. Hager answered questions with specific examples. Ms. Beach spoke about risk assessment processes in the military and she was certain Mr. Hager possessed great risk management experience. She noted he had answered many questions from a team perspective and she liked how he had spoken

of working closely with the ACMs. She hoped the Board had listened to all three candidates and that the interviews were not just a foregone conclusion.

Mr. James Johnson complimented the slate of candidates and said all of them had done an excellent job responding to the questions. He spoke in support of Mr. Brown, whom he had known and worked with for eight years. As a result of his work in organizational development, he felt he had a unique opportunity to witness Mr. Brown's leadership abilities. He believed Mr. Brown was an accomplished leader, experienced in the complex issues of a public-serving organization, and excelled at distilling and implementing the vision of a board. He also fostered a constructive, collaborative workplace culture and was an excellent role model. He said Mr. Brown's work had brought him to Washoe County many times and so he would combine a fresh perspective with an understanding of the challenges faced in the Truckee Meadows. As a longtime resident, Mr. Johnson supported Mr. Brown's candidacy and said he would be pleased if the BCC selected him as County Manager.

Ms. Denise Ross said the Board had posed some difficult questions but Mr. Hager frequently responded with the terms transparency and communication; she felt this indicated a lot about his honor and what was important to him. Ms. Ross said she had met and spoken with each Board member over the past three years. She admitted some of them did not like her or the subjects they spoke about but they had always maintained a certain level of respect and dignity with her. She said Ms. Thomas had not said one word to her in those three years nor had she spoken with the other people of Lemmon Valley. She opined an ACM should have a more far-reaching personality, including speaking with constituents; this would illustrate a certain level of work etiquette that Ms. Ross felt was essential. There could not be transparency without communication, nor could there be communication without transparency. She said Mr. Hager insisted on both and she requested the Board consider him for County Manager.

Chair Hartung requested Ms. Galassini distribute paper ballots to the Board. He said each Commissioner would vote for a candidate and ballots would then be collected, read aloud, and tallied by the Clerk.

Deputy District Attorney Paul Lipparelli noted the staff report provided to the Board used the term nomination. He explained the next step would be a nomination process, done by each Commissioner individually, with the Clerk then publishing the results. Ultimately, upon completion of the nomination process, the Board would vote, but he clarified the Board was currently trying to determine if there was consensus around one candidate. He noted the entire process would be transparent. He explained each ballot had an area for the selection of a candidate as well as a place for each Commissioner to sign his or her name so their choices would be clear to the Clerk and could be made a part of the public record.

Ms. Galassini collected the ballots and announced the results: Commissioner Berkgigler nominated Eric Brown; Vice Chair Lucey nominated Kate Thomas; Commissioner Jung nominated Eric Brown; Chair Hartung nominated Kate

Thomas; Commissioner Herman nominated Jon Hager. Chair Hartung advised Mr. Brown and Ms. Thomas had received two votes each and requested the Clerk distribute a second set of ballots. The Board proceeded with the next round of nominations.

Ms. Galassini collected the ballots and read them aloud: Commissioner Berkgigler nominated Eric Brown; Vice Chair Lucey nominated Kate Thomas; Commissioner Jung nominated Eric Brown; Chair Hartung nominated Kate Thomas; Commissioner Herman nominated Jon Hager.

Chair Hartung clarified the pool of candidates had been narrowed to just Eric Brown and Kate Thomas, who each received two nominations during the first round. Commissioner Herman revised her ballot and provided it to the Clerk. Ms. Galassini read the final ballot: Commissioner Herman nominated Eric Brown.

Chair Hartung congratulated Mr. Brown and invited him to the podium to speak. Mr. Brown thanked the Board, expressing surprise and gratitude for the nominations. He thanked the other candidates and said he looked forward to serving the Board and the citizens of Washoe County.

On motion by Commissioner Jung, seconded by Commissioner Berkgigler, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, it was ordered that Eric Brown be appointed County Manager for Washoe County.

**1:08 p.m. Commissioner Berkgigler left the meeting.**

Chair Hartung said it was wonderful that Mr. Brown would be the first African American to serve Washoe County as County Manager. Mr. Lipparelli advised Agenda Item 5 also permitted direction to staff on preparation of an employment contract if the Board desired, or this could be left up to staff to prepare. Either way, Mr. Lipparelli noted, the contract would ultimately require final review and approval by the BCC.

Commissioner Jung wanted the contract to require a minimum 90 days' notice should the County Manager decide to leave employment, including monetary clawback penalties to be assessed if less notice was given. This was not a reflection on Mr. Brown or his integrity, she said, but anything less than 90 days' notice could put the BCC in a very difficult position.

Chair Hartung asked Mr. Lipparelli whether this direction needed to be in the form of a motion. Mr. Lipparelli indicated a motion was not required as staff had noted Commissioner Jung's comments and would begin preparing a draft employment contract with the aforementioned modifications.

**19-0762 AGENDA ITEM 6 Public Comment.**

On the call for public comment, Ms. Lori Beach and Ms. Denise Ross were called but declined to speak.

**19-0763**      **AGENDA ITEM 7** Commissioners’/County Manager’s announcements, reports and updates to include boards and commissions updates, requests for information or topics for future agendas.

There were no announcements.

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**1:10 p.m.**      There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

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**VAUGHN HARTUNG**, Chair  
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST:

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**NANCY PARENT**, County Clerk and  
Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners

*Minutes Prepared by:  
Derek Sonderfan, Deputy County Clerk*