



Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board held on December 14, 2023 at 6:00 P.M. at Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood, Gerlach, NV 89412

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM** Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell, Russell Bierle, Brandy Wilbur, Kristy Evans, Tina Walters (Chair)

Quorum was established and meeting was called to order.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** – Comment heard under this item will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The Citizen Advisory Board will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Board as a whole. (non-action item)

During this time, the chair explained that general public comment was open for anyone to speak about any topic for three minutes. It was also mentioned that if someone had an agenda, they could speak at that time as well.

Gary Schmit - During this discussion, the speaker presented a document outlining a proposal for an industrial park and residential development on a 125-acre property. The speaker mentioned the potential zoning changes and the density of the development. They also discussed the employment opportunities it could provide.

Karen Balitzski – During this time, the speaker raised concerns about road maintenance on Rodeo Creek Road and the proposed erection of a communications tower near her house. She expressed her worries about the potential disruption and negative impact on her enjoyment of the area. The speaker expresses concerns about the tower being erected near their building and plans to oppose it. They also mention association documents that may prevent the tower from being built.

4. **REVIEW OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF AUGUST 10 and SEPTEMBER 14, 2023** (non-action item)

The participants decide to review the minutes of previous meetings and push them to the next meeting for approval.

Member Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell raises a concern about noise coming from a facility near the railroad tracks. They mention an agenda item from a previous meeting where it was discussed, and a repair team was supposed to be sent. The participant plans to bring up the issue again in the future.

5. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES** – A Washoe County Sheriff’s Deputy and/or members from the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department may be available to provide a general community update on public safety (non-action item)

Deputy Burns mentions ongoing issues in Fish Springs and advises the community to stock up on supplies for winter emergencies.

Captain Pritchard provides an update on the fire department's call volume and emphasizes the importance of clean chimneys and safe use of Christmas lights. He mentioned plans for a Full-on Fire Academy starting in mid-January and expected to complete in May. He also mentioned that about 10 perspective personnel will go through the program. He mentioned a conjoined program with Northlion, where four volunteers will join their academy. The training will include Firefighter 1, Hazmat Training, Basic wildland training, and Firefighter 2.

Member Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell raised a concern about people who have submitted applications for the Fire Academy but haven't heard anything. Captain Pritchard explained that due to recent changes in the HR department, applications may have been misplaced. He advised the participant to have the applicants reach out to them for assistance.

Member Kristy Evans asked about the role of volunteers in the Fire Academy. Captain Pritchard clarified that volunteers would have the same responsibilities as paid staff, including responding to calls and being equipped with pagers through their cell phones.

Member Kristy Evans mentioned Christmas lights and asked if leaving LEDs on all night would be acceptable. Captain Pritchard confirmed that LEDs should be okay and explained that they were mainly concerned about older bulbs that could get hot and potentially cause a fire.

6. **WASHOE COUNTY ROADS UPDATE** – Eric Crump, Division Director of Community Services Department, and/or Brett Simerly, Operations Superintendent of Roads, will be available to provide an update on Rodeo Creek Road, as well as a general update and Q&A on roads in the Gerlach and Empire area. (non-action item)

Member Tina Walters introduced Eric Crump and Brett Simerly from Washoe County's Community Services Department to provide an update on the ROADS program. Brett Simerly shared information about various roads in the area. He mentions the use of belly dumps, a grater, and a roller to construct the roads. An overview of the roads in the Gerlach area, including the regions they cover and the types of roads (gravel and pavement) was provided. The speaker discusses the different responsibilities for road maintenance in Gerlach, including the areas covered by Washoe County and VIA. The speaker talks about the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) for different roads, the traffic loads on the roads, and the resources available for road maintenance. The speaker mentions the length of culvert pipes and the miles of ditches and shoulders that need to be maintained for stormwater management. The speaker explained the two types of columns in the maintenance costs: Roads funds and slurry contract. Roads funds cover expenses for patching, maintaining, striping, signage, etc. The slurry contract is used throughout Washoe County and includes treatments such as overlays, cape seal, and

slurry seal. The speaker further explained the three types of treatments done in Gerlach: overlays, cape seal, and slurry seal. The speaker mentioned that the cost of full reconstruction for County Road 447 is between \$40 million and \$53 million, and for County Road 34 is between \$15 million and \$20 million. The speaker discussed the plan to continue spending roads and slurry contract funds, finding alternative funding sources, and applying for grant opportunities. The speaker confirmed that the town roads are listed on the slurry contract and mentioned the process of gathering information for the next slurry contract.

Member Tina Walters raised a concern about getting the roads fixed in town. Brett Simerly explained roads are listed in the slurry contract and currently staff is in process of obtaining the roads to be included in the next contract while working with Engineering whom oversees the slurry contract. Member Tina Walters thanked the speaker for the information.

Member Kristy Evans raised a concern about the higher cost of County Road 34 on the cost sheet. Brett Simerly explained that County Road 34 experiences heavy use due to hay truck traffic and the influx of people during Burning Man. He also mentioned the difference in structural design compared to County Road 447 and the presence of springs and moisture. The speaker referred to the wet winter and the rain during Burning Man as factors affecting the road condition. The speaker explained how moisture coming up through the pavement and traffic can deteriorate the road quickly. The speaker mentioned the rough condition of the road shortly out of Gerlach and the impact of moisture and traffic on its deterioration. Discussion about road reconstruction goal if potential funding is obtained from Burning Man. The responsibility of maintaining certain sections of the road is discussed, with Pershing County being responsible for a part of it. Brett Simerly mentions overlaying the worst areas and prioritizing the worst sections for maintenance.

Member Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell suggests reaching out to Ormat and the BLM for potential funding and the road maintenance done by Ormat is discussed. The possibility of including the Rodeo Creek section in a FLAP grant application is mentioned. Concerns are raised about the condition of the unpaved section of Rodeo Creek road and its impact on residents' vehicles. Brett Simerly expresses concern about partnering with Burning Man instead of partnering with Ormat. Explanation of the difference between the responsibility of Washoe County for the gravel section of road and the responsibility for road 34. Member Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell raises concern about the condition of manhole covers and suggests addressing the issue before adding another layer to the road.

Member Kristy Evans discusses the accumulation of personal items along the county's fence line and suggests county employees should not store vehicles and lumber there.

Karen Balitzski – During this discussion the speaker expresses disappointment about the exclusion of Empire Farms in the presentation and the perceived unequal treatment. She raises concerns about the ongoing construction and the lack of assurances for road maintenance related to the new plants in the area. Participants express frustration with the poor road maintenance, broken windshields, and flat tires. She disputes Washoe County's denial of responsibility for the road, providing evidence of road signs and mile markers. Brett Simerly suggests contacting the Bureau of Land Management for assistance with road maintenance as it falls under their ownership.

Gary Schmit – During this discussion the speaker disputes Washoe County's denial of responsibility for the road, providing evidence of road signs and mile markers. He addresses concerns about the lack of hard copies of the PowerPoint presentation and other materials, citing the Open Meeting Law requirements. He verbally requests a public records request for a copy of the power point presentation and all materials referred to in written form associated with this item. He suggests that at least one copy of the presentations and supporting materials be available at future meetings. He expects to have an electronic copy emailed to him and provide his email address for fulfillment within a day. Candee Ramos notes that an electronic copy of the materials is available online and offers to email it to the concerned participant.

(Dontel Chief) provides update regarding roads and has been in discussion with NDOT Fernly office contact, Chris, as Fire will be conducting controlled burning in Nixion area the following Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Additionally working up towards Gerlach between mile marker 60 and 68 for right-of-way controlled burning to address the tumbleweeds in the ditches. A press release will also be sent out.

7. NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING HUB STANDING AGENDA ITEM – Candee Ramos, Washoe County Community Outreach Coordinator, to share the latest community information on the Neighborhood Meeting HUB featuring development community meetings. (non-action item)

Candee Ramos addresses the previous concern about the neighborhood hub system and the lack of information available for a specific project. shares information about an upcoming neighborhood meeting regarding a proposed 100-foot monopole with attached telecommunication equipment in District 5. The meeting is scheduled for December 21, 2023.

Mr. Britcher - During this discussion the speaker would like to know which carriers will access that telecommunications tower. He inquired if it would include First Net, AT&T for first responders network connection. Candee Ramos will inquire about this information and once obtained will be provided to the CAB members for further distribution.

Mr. Byers - During this discussion the speaker expresses concern about the missing sign-in sheet and recording from the meeting on July 31st. Candee Ramos decides to follow up on the Ormat meeting that was posted and then taken down. Member Kristy Evans expresses curiosity about whether the project is coming forward again and if there will be a meeting in the near future. Candee Ramos decides to provide the sign-in sheet and recording to CAB members once they are publicly available.

Member Tina Walters expresses curiosity about a meeting that was posted and then taken down on November 27th.

Member Russel Bierle expresses concern about not receiving any email notifications for meetings despite signing up for them. Candee Ramos decides to troubleshoot the email notification issue after the meeting and find out which meetings he did not receive notifications for.

Gary Schmit - During this discussion the speaker raises concerns about the availability and accessibility of supporting materials during the meeting. He expresses concern about the

availability of CAB documents only on the Washoe County page and insists on receiving direct email notices. He 10 insists on the public body making supporting materials available to anyone present at the meeting and requests a recess if necessary.

8. **COMMISSIONER AND BOARD MEMBER ITEMS** — This item is limited to announcements and/or requests for future agenda items by CAB members and potential general announcements from the county commissioner and county manager. (non-action item)

Commissioner Herman expressed appreciation for the meeting management and proudness expressed for the community and wishes for Merry Christmas

Member Kristy Evans provided information about the upcoming Planning Commission meeting for Burning Man 360 specific scheduled to go before Planning Commission on January 2nd, 2024, date to be confirmed. The Board of County Commissioners Meeting on December 19th includes GGID master plan amendment for subdivision is agenda item 17 scheduled to be heard not before 1pm. Discussion about the need for a feedback information gathering session and providing feedback to the county regarding the Burning Man Permitting Process. The speaker discussed identifying the person in the county to provide feedback to. The speaker discussed Vacant Properties in the Community and mentions the desire to have someone from the community involved in the October feedback meeting. They also express concern about permits and reporting to the police. The speaker concern about vacant properties in the community and seeking expert advice on how to handle them.

Elisabeth (Schatzi) Gambrell offers a thank you to Candee and her office staff for their support over the past year.

9. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** – Comment heard under this item will be limited to three (3) minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the agenda. The public is encouraged to submit a “Request to Speak” form to the Board chairman. Comments are to be addressed to the Board as a whole. (non-action item)

Candee Ramos provided an update regarding DTS Broadband and Television. She read verbatim the response to ensure no interpretation and misinterpretation. “We are still working with the County to finalize the agreement. Once we have that finalized, we can definitely get some flyers and a timeline created for the Gerlach and Empire residents as that will dictate the timeline. As far as tv goes, we have a partnership with direct tv where we help facilitate the sign-up process. The residents will be paying Direct tv directly for the tv services and the rates will be at the then posted price for the selected package where the resident signs up for those services.” The basic package is \$84.99 and once the contract is finalized then more information will be provided.

Gary Schmit - During this discussion the speaker raises concerns about housing and commercial properties in Gerlach. They mention the school district's ownership of vacant lots and the lack of market for commercial activities.

Carl Kopek – During this discussion the speaker expresses their support for using tax dollars for road improvement. The speaker mentions the need for road improvement and the possibility of Burning Man providing expertise and lobbying for funding. The speaker expresses their dissatisfaction with the tone, tenor, and disrespect shown by a certain party in previous meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned.