



## Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board held on February 8, 2024, 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)

A quorum was established and the meeting was called to order at 6:13 p.m. due to difficulty with Zoom link.

- 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)

Community member Karen Valitzski commented that the proposed communications tower that will be near her home and that she is against it.

Community member Eric Wanberg lives near the proposed communications tower outlined the industrial aspect of the proposed location and that it would not be an ideal location when there are other options. Expressed concern that the HUB did not adequately identify what the proposal was for the neighborhood meeting.

- 4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF [JANUARY 12, 2024](#)** (for possible action)

CAB member Elisabeth “Schatzi” Gambrell moved to approve the minutes. CAB Vice Chair Kristy Evans seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

- 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)

### Washoe County Sheriff’s Office

Captain Brandon Zirkle apologized for not being there in person and shared that he wanted to ease the anxiety around the transition of new Washoe County Sheriff’s Deputies being assigned to Gerlach. Deputies Stapleton and Cruz will be those who are assigned to the Gerlach area. Sunday through Wednesday will be covered by Deputy Stapleton who has significant patrol experience and in rural areas and will begin his duties on April 1. Deputy Cruz will take the other side of the week and is excited to work the rural area near Gerlach, but he will not begin until January 2025. In the interim, Deputy Bill Harvey will

serve the area out of Reno until Deputy Cruz begins. Captain Zirkle outlined the backgrounds of each of these Deputies who will be assigned to the area.

CAB member Schatzi Gambrell said that she had concerns because rural area of Washoe County has a lot of roads, activities and special permits, and was concerned about losing two experienced Deputies in lieu of two new Deputies to the area who did not know the circumstances of Gerlach. Captain Zirkle said that they can work through any issues and the Deputies who have been assigned have a lot of experience including some in Gerlach, and is confident they will be a good fit.

CAB Vice Chair Kristy Evans thanked Captain Zirkle and appreciates law enforcement and specifically Deputy Burns and Fox. Requested that during Burning Man event that these previously-assigned Deputies help during this time period. Captain Zirkle said that he would look into this idea to ensure a smooth transition.

CAB member Russell Bierle said that Gerlach has a hard time dealing with change. Suggested a meet and greet opportunity to meet them ahead of the transition. Captain Zirkle said that Deputy Stapleton will be doing ride-along sessions and meeting community members leading up to the transition.

Community member Carl Kopek praised Deputies Fox and Burns and expressed concerns that there may not be full staffing over the summer and holiday weekends. Captain Zirkle assured the community that Gerlach would have full service from the Washoe County Sheriff's Office.

#### Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Fire Department

Captain Johnathen Prichard provided information about service calls which included medical and false alarms. He went over a grant that their organization is submitting an application for to replace and upgrade existing equipment and to get AEDs to create a heart-safe community and that the Gerlach school had received an AED that was donated by Ormat. Completed phone upgrade at the station, however after 5 p.m. they will receive an automated system.

CAB member Russell Bierle asked if the Community Center could be on the list for future AED machines, and Captain Prichard said that the center was on the list of locations within the grant application.

**6. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE** – Sarah Tone, Washoe County Business Facilitator, will provide information about business development, with a Q&A. (non-action item)

Sarah Tone provided information about the updated Community Services Department (CSD) webpage that will make navigating starting a business easier. She pointed out the FAQ page, neighborhood development meeting HUB, expert support program, quick maps, and estimating project costs, among other opportunities. Ms. Tone will oversee complex applications such as for projects like Burning Man, which includes a number of agencies, jurisdictions, and unique geography. She then shared the Business Licensing toolkit including the checklist on what is needed to go through licensing.

CAB member Russell Bierle said that he was on the Washoe County webpage to verify if a business had a license and was unable to find this information online, but that Washoe 311 had been helpful in providing this information to him. Asked if there was a way to search a list of business licenses in the area. Ms. Tone

answered that there are ways to search businesses in many other ways, but not currently by if they are licensed. She promised to add this feature to the search tool.

CAB Vice Chair Kristy Evans asked Ms. Tone her role in the Burning Man projects. Ms. Tone explained that she communicates with all of the regional partners working together to assist with the Burning Man project so that the running of the event is more efficient. Ms. Evans followed up expressing appreciation to Ms. Tone, and shared that Gerlach residents do not have a representative so that the community's opinions are being taken into account when County permits are being considered. Ms. Tone said that she would be the point of contact and may be reached at Stone@washoecounty.gov. Every five years the Burning Man event must update their permit, and Washoe County, the GGID and Washoe County Sheriff's Office, and Air Quality, among others all have an opportunity to provide feedback during the permit process. Ms. Evans asked to have a standing item in the October CAB meeting to discuss Burning Man concerns, what went well, etc. Ms. Tone said that she could also be a part of this meeting.

Ms. Evans also asked about the Special Use Permits in the area and confirmed with Ms. Tone if she is the point person for those. Ms. Tone confirmed that she could be a point of contact for these also. Reminded that annual permitting feedback for Burning Man occurs in January and February.

Community member Carl Kopek asked about changing from a mobile home to stick-built house but having permits reviewed is difficult due to the distance from Reno. Ms. Tone answered that the County does permit stick-built homes in Gerlach and can work with Mr. Kopek to assist with his specific situation. Mr. Kopek also stated that the CEO of Burning Man is willing to communicate directly to the people of Gerlach and that there is no need to communicate with agencies outside of Burning Man itself to provide feedback.

Mr. Bierle asked about Gerlach General Improvement District (GGID) being identified by Ms. Tone as a stakeholder and coming together with other stakeholders. Mr. Bierle, as an employee of the GGID, was unaware of these meetings and asked Ms. Tone if he could work with her on being a part of future gatherings. Ms. Tone said that she had been working with Northern Nevada Public Health (NNPH) on GGID concerns, but would like to work with the GGID directly. Mr. Bierle expressed concern about structure capacity, and Ms. Tone said she would like to discuss this with him further.

- 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)

Chair Walters had to leave the meeting and the management of the meeting was taken over by Vice Chair Kristy Evans.

Ms. Ramos shared her screen to show the Neighborhood Meeting HUB. Outlined upcoming event that is not near Gerlach. Demonstrated how to use the map and the list of upcoming events in alphabetical order. The Diablo Drive amendments is still on the map, however there are no meetings in the near future.

Ms. Evans asked about what happens next after the Geothermal tower and if the item would go to the Board of Adjustment or to the Planning Commission next. Ms. Ramos indicated belief it would be the Planning Commission but would ensure that was accurate.

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)

CAB Vice Chair member Kristy Evans inquired about the status of a community meeting that had been previously scheduled and had been cancelled, which would include Commissioner Jeanne Herman, County Manager Brown and Dave Solaro. Ms. Ramos indicated that the meeting is still in the process of being scheduled, and Ms. Evans expressed satisfaction with this as many people within the community are looking forward to attending.

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)

Carl Kopek said that he has been watching the County Commissioners meetings and would like to speak at these, but the distance is prohibitive.

CAB member Russell Bierle explained that there is a format in place where Gerlach citizens are currently able to make public comment from Gerlach in general public comment at the beginning of Board of County Commissioners meetings, and again on specific items that pertain to Gerlach as identified on the agenda. February 27 at 10 a.m. citizens are invited to the Gerlach Community Center to provide comment, for the next Board meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned.