**Gerlach/Empire Citizens Advisory Board**

**Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizens Advisory Board held on September 11, 2025, at 6:00 P.M.**

**at Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood, Gerlach, NV 89412**

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM –**Present – Russell Bierle, Kristy Evans, Schatzi Gambrell, Brandy Wilbur, Luis Garcia

Absent -

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**The pledge of allegiance was recited.
2. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT –**Taylor Hubler, Gerlach resident and school bus driver, thanked the Sheriff’s Office for their work but expressed concerns about road safety during this season. He noted unsafe driving behaviors such as dangerous passing, inexperienced drivers operating large vehicles, and poorly maintained or unsecured loads. He raised particular concern about transport of camps and art cars, citing untrained or underage drivers, oversized and unregistered vehicles on public roads, and missing safety equipment. He stated these issues were linked to a site near mile marker 16 on County Road 34 across from Fly Ranch, where he witnessed unsafe practices and was told of unpaid labor. Hubler reported two recent near collisions caused by distracted drivers and oversized art cars, both of which posed significant danger to his school bus route.

Greg Herrera, representing Burning Man’s government affairs team, stated that he and colleagues Katie Hoffman and Pete Dronkers were present to listen and gather feedback. He noted the event had just concluded and debriefs with partner agencies are being scheduled to review data and concerns. Herrera reported that Burning Man’s temporary closure order and NDOT permits remain in effect, with playa restoration and highway cleanup operations ongoing. Support operations such as NVO, DPW, administration, and shoreline teams are still active, while other event operations are winding down and equipment has been transported back to Black Rock Station.

Brian Beffort, Washoe County Sustainability Manager, provided an update on the fundraising campaign to support a microgrid for the Gerlach Community Center. He reported that the GoFundMe campaign has raised $2,300 to date, which is less than anticipated, but noted that several community members have been very generous. Beffort emphasized that with wider participation, such as small contributions from Burning Man attendees, the project could be fully funded. He explained that the campaign platform offers opportunities to share and expand fundraising through social and other media. While he currently manages the account, he expressed interest in transitioning responsibility to the CAB or GGID so the community can continue to build momentum. Beffort offered to support further efforts and remain available for collaboration.
3. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF** August 14, 2025

Schatzi Gambrell motioned to approve the minutes of the August 14 Gerlach/Empire CAB meeting. Luis Garcia seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
4. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES –**

**Washoe County Sheriff’s Office**
Deputy Jackson Crews, Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, welcomed input from the community on issues observed during the event and encouraged residents to share feedback for next year. He noted that statistical reports on calls and incidents will be available after partner debriefs. From his perspective, the main challenge was traffic backups in town, often caused by people camping along the roadway. Crews stated that deputies had to remind these individuals to move along to Burning Man. He concluded by offering to answer questions at any time.

A citizen raised concerns about traffic congestion during the event, stating that vehicles were parked on Highway 34 and 447 for extended periods, in some cases close to 24 hours. The commenter emphasized that the highways should remain open for traffic and that the situation was unsafe and unacceptable. Deputy Crews acknowledged the concern and confirmed that deputies responded to traffic backups as quickly as possible to maintain safety, though he agreed the situation was not ideal. He stated that discussions with other law enforcement agencies will take place to explore ways to better manage congestion in the future.

**Royal Ambulance**

JohnRey Hassan reported that Royal Ambulance is now fully staffed in Gerlach with three full-time EMTs and three full-time paramedics, maintaining 24/7 coverage. The team achieved 100% in-service time throughout August and continued the same through September. Since the last CAB meeting, crews responded to 20 incidents: 2 resulted in ground transport, 2 in air transport, with the remainder being treat-and-release, cancellations, or unable-to-locate calls. Hassan noted that crews transitioned from the red and white Gerlach Fire ambulance on August 13, with the Big Blue ambulance as backup. The EMS staff are working a 7-day on/14-day off rotation, embedding themselves in the community, and a “Get to Know the EMS Staff” sheet is being developed to introduce the six assigned providers. He added that Royal Ambulance is planning a community CPR and “Stop the Bleed” training, likely scheduled for late October or early November. Burning Man operations had no substantial impact on services beyond increased dust, and ambulances remained fully staffed and in service during the event.

Russell Bierle asked whether there had been any developments regarding Royal Ambulance’s ability to continue service in Gerlach beyond December 1, given the current Washoe County budget.
JohnRey Hassan responded that he has been in communication with County Manager Soler and that they are working on a longer-term plan with the County. He noted the State has offered some flexibility for unplanned staffing incidents, allowing use of a Quick Response Vehicle (QRV) to maintain some level of service if sudden staffing shortages occur. However, he emphasized this is not a sustainable long-term solution and discussions with the County are ongoing.

Kristy Evans asked whether the school is still being used as the CareFlight landing zone and if there were any challenges responding to vehicle accidents during Burning Man, given the absence of a local fire department. JohnRey Hassan confirmed that the school remains an active landing zone and was used two or three times in August. He reported that while EMS crews responded to several vehicle accidents, none required extrication. One serious crash occurred on Highway 447 near mile marker 37 in Pyramid Lake’s response area, and both patients were transported by air. He noted they were fortunate there were no more complex incidents.

1. **COMMUNITY UPDATE ON FIRE SERVICE TO GERLACH/EMPIRE**Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro provided an update on efforts to restore local fire service capacity in Gerlach. He explained that Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) is Washoe County’s contracted fire provider, and work is underway to bring local volunteers into compliance with requirements such as physical, insurance, and training records. Two volunteers are close to completing the necessary steps to begin responding, and insurance coverage is already in place for vehicles and rostered volunteers. Solaro encouraged community members to volunteer either through the local nonprofit fire department or directly via the TMFPD website, which ensures access to proper training and certification. He noted the immediate goal is to have trained volunteers available with the necessary equipment for emergency response, such as vehicle extrication, rather than relying solely on Pyramid Lake or TMFPD, which may take up to two hours to arrive. Longer-term, volunteers have expressed interest in forming a standalone NRS 474 fire district, similar to TMFPD and Incline Fire, though Solaro acknowledged the limited funding and tax base in northern Washoe County would make this challenging. Solaro also reported early discussions with the new TMFPD Fire Chief about expanding service territory north of Township 22, potentially reaching the Oregon border, and stated a meeting with Chair Hill is scheduled to discuss payment in lieu of taxes as a possible funding mechanism.

Russell Bierle reported on progress toward re-establishing local fire response in coordination with Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD). He stated he is working to complete the required certifications, including a second physical since Pyramid Lake certifications are not accepted by TMFPD, and expects to be ready to respond within a few weeks. Another volunteer, Greg Nielsen, is also close to completing requirements after a short delay. Bierle noted that TMFPD is heavily engaged in wildland firefighting during this season, which has slowed progress. He emphasized that while the concept of forming a standalone NRS 474 fire district could provide a long-term solution, it is not an immediate fix. In the short term, efforts are focused on getting local volunteers fully certified and ready to respond alongside TMFPD.

Kristy Evans asked for clarification on Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District’s (TMFPD) role with the Gerlach volunteer fire department and how the relationship functions in practice. Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro explained that TMFPD is Washoe County’s contracted fire service provider and is assisting local volunteers much like they do in the Truckee Meadows area. While TMFPD primarily supports wildland and basic EMS volunteers in more populated regions, they have agreed to expand support in Gerlach to include training for structure fires. Solaro noted that TMFPD battalion chiefs have committed to providing training locally, and there may also be opportunities to train alongside volunteers from Warm Springs and other areas. He emphasized that TMFPD helps manage oversight, paperwork, and liability issues on behalf of the County. Evans also suggested creating a flyer to recruit more volunteers and make information easily available at places such as the post office. Both Russell Bierle and staff agreed to help develop and distribute such materials. Evans concluded by expressing appreciation for the clarification and for TMFPD’s support of the community.

Schatzi Gambrell asked whether Gerlach is included as a line item in the County’s budget to support both fire and ambulance services. Dave Solaro responded that Washoe County will begin its budget process in October and November, and he has already started discussions with the budget team regarding funding for Royal Ambulance as well as support for volunteer fire services. He noted ongoing efforts to seek donations from other volunteer fire organizations in Reno to help equip and support Gerlach volunteers once they are operational, emphasizing that funds would be directed toward practical needs such as equipment, outreach materials, and community engagement to encourage more people to volunteer.

Carl Copek thanked Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro for his efforts to address local fire service needs and emphasized the importance of wildfire prevention. He suggested greater focus on weed and deadwood mitigation as a proactive measure to reduce wildland fire risk. Copek expressed appreciation for recent County work clearing the firefighter’s house property, noting it as a positive example of prevention efforts that should be expanded.

1. **BURNING MAN COMMUNITY REFLECTION AND INPUT TO WASHOE COUNTY ON EVENT PERMITTING**
Kristy Evans explained that she requested this agenda item to ensure the CAB provides constructive input to Washoe County on community needs during Burning Man and similar events. She emphasized the CAB’s role as a function of Washoe County and stressed her intent to identify problems and propose solutions rather than simply lodge complaints. Evans noted that while Burning Man occurs on federal land in Pershing County, the surrounding communities in Washoe County are directly impacted and require coordinated support. She described several challenges experienced during the August rain and playa closures, including traffic gridlock that left residents unable to reach work or access emergency routes, vehicles parked on public and private property, insufficient sanitation facilities, and a lack of visible leadership or coordinated response on the ground. While she acknowledged the efforts of local deputies and some Burning Man staff and Rangers, she said overall response felt uncoordinated and inconsistent, with residents often left to answer visitors’ questions themselves. Evans expressed frustration that the problems seemed predictable and preventable, given that similar issues had occurred in past years. She then presented a written proposal for the CAB to request that Washoe County work with relevant entities to create a formal plan for playa closures or major incidents. Her proposal included the need for additional sanitation facilities in Gerlach and Empire, such as extra porta-potties or dedicated servicing of those already in place. It also called for a traffic mitigation plan with a designated staging area and clear management authority. She emphasized the importance of having a Washoe County point of contact physically present in Gerlach during such incidents to address immediate safety issues. Evans further stated that Burning Man should be required to have a team with decision-making authority stationed in Gerlach during closures to address matters of sanitation, traffic, and trash. Finally, she stressed that any plan developed must be clearly communicated to local agencies and the community so that everyone knows who is in charge and how issues will be handled. Evans concluded by reiterating that the goal is to develop practical, solution-oriented measures to reduce community impacts during future Burning Man closures.

Russell Bierle stated his support for the recommendations presented by Kristy Evans, describing them as solid and a strong starting point for public input. He agreed with Evans’ observation that the situation was predictable and preventable, noting that the disruption was caused by a relatively small amount of rain rather than an extraordinary event. Bierle said the response was inadequate, especially considering there had been a similar incident two years ago that should have served as a rehearsal. He added that the community should also have access to a written evacuation plan, explaining that during the previous event people were confused about where to go, who to talk to, and what to expect, leaving residents fielding repeated questions without clear answers.

Schatzi Gambrell said that Kristy Evans’ proposal reflected the same concerns raised repeatedly in the past 14 years of post-Burning Man debriefs, and she appreciated seeing them consolidated into one solution-focused document. She expressed frustration that despite these ongoing discussions, the problems persist. Gambrell criticized the lack of adequate sanitation and cleanup during the recent closures, pointing out that while a 70,000-person event raised only $2,300 for local infrastructure, residents were left dealing with garbage on roads, at businesses, and even in parking lots without sufficient porta-potties to meet demand. She emphasized that climate change makes rain and related disruptions more predictable, yet no clear plans are in place for common emergencies such as weather closures, traffic accidents, or vehicle breakdowns. She urged agencies and event organizers to listen to the community and develop real solutions rather than leaving Gerlach to manage the consequences.

Brandy Wilbur said she agreed with the points raised by Kristy Evans and added perspective from Empire, which faces similar but distinct challenges since it is not an incorporated town. She explained that while residents there do not deal with vehicles parking in their driveways, she personally worked the gas line 12 to 18 hours a day during the event and was inundated with questions from travelers, especially about where to go when the playa was closed. She noted there is no nearby location, like a large parking lot, to direct vehicles, leaving few options. Wilbur stated that the Empire store’s parking lot was used to stage vehicles, holding up to 100 cars, and its porta-potties became overflow facilities. However, she emphasized that these are funded entirely by the store, not Burning Man, at a cost of around $10,000, and that she cannot afford to double that expense when closures cause greater demand. She said while Empire’s situation differs from Gerlach, the community still faces similar impacts, particularly related to sanitation and traffic management.

Luis Garcia said he agreed with Kristy Evans’ comments and shared perspective from his experience working at the Gerlach office during the last two rain-related closures. He noted that while many debriefs have been held, communication has often been lacking, and he urged agencies to be more proactive and creative. Garcia suggested using closure orders to prevent traffic from backing up into Gerlach at all and proposed utilizing properties such as the 360 site or the Showers property for emergency staging, possibly with special use permits throughout the County. He emphasized the need for clear, advanced communication so that residents and visitors know what to do when closures occur, rather than being left without direction. Garcia expressed concern that despite repeated meetings and debriefs, lessons learned are too often filed away and forgotten until the next emergency, and he urged agencies to act on solutions rather than letting them sit unused.

Susie Jackson raised three concerns. First, she criticized the lack of trash collection requirements for Burning Man participants, stating that while the event promotes “pack it in, pack it out,” trash is consistently discarded along the streets of Gerlach and on nearby highways. She suggested that the organizers should be required to provide dumpsters, including some located in town near their office. Second, she described unsafe traffic control during the event, noting that flaggers were inattentive, with one incident where she had to honk her horn to alert a flagger who was not paying attention, creating safety risks on Highway 447. Third, she pointed to abandoned vehicles and trailers left along local streets for years, some of which she said belong to Burning Man or its participants. She urged that these be removed and added that Burning Man employees should be required to register their vehicles in Nevada, or at least ensure they are properly registered and insured, as many currently operate unregistered cars in the area.

Taylor Hubler thanked Kristy Evans for developing a plan that captured many of the concerns he intended to raise and said he wanted to add a few examples for the record in support of the proposal. He described incidents at the school, including someone defecating on the sidewalk and past problems with people attempting to camp on the property or even board his school bus to party. He suggested that signage should be posted throughout town to make clear where public access is prohibited and to discourage trespassing and illegal parking. Hubler also expressed frustration that visitors often claimed they had nowhere to go while large properties such as 360 and Showers sat empty, which he believed would be ideal emergency parking areas. He added that Diablo Street became nearly impassable when vehicles parked on both sides during fair weather, and recommended designating Showers as a parking location for visitors passing through town. He noted that neighbors reported being blocked in by parked cars, generators, and loud music, and he emphasized that the community would strongly support the proposed plan. He concluded by affirming his willingness, along with other residents, to help move the effort forward and hold parties accountable.

Carl Copek said he has attended Burning Man for 30 years and noted that rain has always been a recurring issue at the event, making it entirely predictable. He emphasized the principle that failure to plan is planning to fail, and expressed frustration that the event continues to operate without a clear contingency plan for weather or traffic management. He described the ongoing strain on the Gerlach community as unsustainable, saying residents are left emotionally exhausted by the lack of leadership and coordination. Copek stated that this year felt like a step backward after some progress had been made in past years, and he called on Burning Man, BLM, the State of Nevada, and Washoe County to take responsibility for developing lasting solutions. He specifically proposed investing in large-scale parking lots along Highway 447, funded in part by the per-person state tax paid by Burning Man participants, to provide safe staging areas during closures or weather events.

Bill Gooch, a Gerlach resident living on Main Street, described the repeated negative impacts of Burning Man on his property. He said his fence has been struck five times in the past six years, including three times this year, and although a Burning Man board member once promised repairs, nothing was ever done. Gooch also criticized the unsafe driving in town, particularly by participants operating large, rented vehicles such as U-Hauls without adequate skill or awareness. He said many perform U-turns in front of his home and the local pizza place, creating hazards that deputies are often left to manage. He recounted a serious incident in which a truck driver, believed to have suffered a seizure, jackknifed in front of his house, nearly hitting his property, his father’s home, and patrons at a nearby restaurant. Gooch also noted another truck passed through town on fire, underscoring his concern that the situation could have been far worse. He urged stronger oversight of commercial driver licenses (CDLs) and better regulation of vehicles used by event attendees. Finally, he suggested using local gravel pits or other designated areas as parking locations to relieve the burden on Gerlach’s streets and improve safety.

Katie Hoffman, Agency Relations Manager for the Burning Man Project, thanked the community for the opportunity to participate and acknowledged that the earlier-than-usual meeting limited the organization’s ability to present data and solutions. She emphasized that the team is taking careful notes and provided context on several key issues. Hoffman said Burning Man does place sanitation resources in Gerlach for participants traveling to the event, and during the multi-day storms this year, they increased those resources when problems were raised. On traffic, she noted that Burning Man coordinates with NDOT, Nevada State Police, and the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, while also funding additional traffic control through Silver State Sign and Barricade. Their contracted crews were extended multiple times this year, including in Empire, where additional flaggers and a crosswalk were provided in response to storms and overflow parking. She acknowledged that commercial vehicle traffic remains a significant concern but said Nevada State Police expanded their enforcement during the event. Regarding trash, Hoffman reported that highway cleanup operations began the week prior and will continue through the end of September. Crews are covering highways 447, 446, and 34, from Cedarville to Wadsworth, to remove debris left by participants. She closed by reiterating the organization’s commitment to working with partners and indicated that colleague Greg Herrera could provide further details on traffic coordination with law enforcement.

Kristy Evans reiterated that while Burning Man and the BLM are central to event operations, the Gerlach and Empire communities ultimately fall under Washoe County. She stressed that residents need the County to be a stronger advocate and partner, ensuring the community’s concerns are represented at the table when permits are issued. Evans said the most serious problems arise during playa closures or other incidents when visitors flood into town without adequate sanitation, traffic management, or direction, leaving residents to shoulder the burden. She emphasized that she is not opposed to Burning Man itself but believes the lack of coordinated planning is unsustainable. Evans requested that Washoe County work directly with the BLM and Burning Man to ensure a written contingency plan is tied to the event permit. She concluded by proposing that the CAB vote to send a formal written request to Washoe County, so the community’s priorities and expectations are clearer moving forward.

Schatzi Gambrell noted that while she appreciated the recommendations drafted, additional suggestions had been raised that should be considered before moving forward. She asked whether a revised format could be prepared so she would have a clear motion to present, but when pressed on specifics, she could not recall exactly what addition was requested.

Luis Garcia emphasized the need for creativity in addressing playa closures and traffic backups, suggesting that Burning Man explore options such as using their own land or seeking special use permits for emergency parking areas. He stressed the importance of developing and sharing plans, so residents are not left without answers during disruptions. Garcia warned against letting feedback from community debriefs end up ignored in filing cabinets, urging agencies to act on solutions before the next emergency rather than waiting until problems resurface.

Schatzi Gambrell moved that the Citizens Advisory Board adopt the letter proposed and read by Kristy Evans, with the added request that Burning Man properties be considered for use as emergency parking. She proposed that the finalized letter be forwarded to the Bureau of Land Management, Washoe County, and the Burning Man administration.

Kristy Evans stated that Washoe County serves as the community’s representative agency, and therefore the letter should be directed first to the county. She explained that it would then be the county’s role to carry the concerns forward to whichever agencies they believe appropriate. Schatzi Gambrell said that she amended her motion. Kristy Evans and Schatzi agreed to postpone the motion to hear a response from Dave Solaro.

Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro said the letter would be a strong first step in formally communicating Gerlach residents’ concerns to Washoe County regarding the Burning Man event. He noted that while much of the discussion centered on parking and related impacts, the board may also want to provide feedback on other recurring issues that arise outside of Burning Man. Solaro added that he is considering potential new approaches and “homegrown solutions” within the community, though he wants to refine these ideas further before presenting them. He affirmed that Washoe County is the proper entity to receive the letter and represent the community’s concerns.

Russell Bierle clarified that the motion should emphasize the request is directed to Washoe County, asking the county to require Burning Man to meet these obligations as a condition for continuing to hold the event in the future.

Kristy Evans said the board’s goal is to identify challenges and then leave it to the appropriate agencies to determine what solutions are feasible within jurisdictional and legal limits. She acknowledged she has ideas but recognized that not all may be permissible. Evans emphasized the importance of documenting community concerns to ensure they are visible and considered, even while exploring creative solutions.

Schatzi Gambrell moved that the board submit Kristy Evans’ proposal, with additions such as exploring the use of Burning Man-owned land for emergency parking, to Washoe County as the community’s representative agency. She stated the county could then advance the proposal and develop further solutions. Gambrell also suggested the board revisit the issue on a bi-monthly basis to track progress. Brandy Wilbur seconded the motion. The proposal is attached at the end of the minutes.

Greg Herrera explained that Burning Man did have a plan in place during the rain events and that it was enacted through constant coordination with the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, Nevada State Police, and NDOT to close Highway 447 and prevent traffic buildup. However, he acknowledged that despite those efforts, congestion still developed in Gerlach, showing that the plan fell short in protecting local communities. Herrera said there is room for improvement, particularly in communication and in adding measures that account for population impacts in Gerlach.

A resident noted that many people are unaware of the 20 feet between private property and the highway belonging to Washoe County. They raised concern about a property near Orisa Fee’s residence, where metal sculptures and debris are placed dangerously close to the roadway, creating what they described as a “junkyard.” The resident stressed that this poses a safety hazard and urged Washoe County to act since it is county-owned land.

The CAB voted unanimously in favor of the motion made by Schatzi Gambrell.

1. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Candee Ramos provided a walkthrough on how residents can learn about upcoming development projects in the Gerlach–Empire area. She demonstrated the process on WashoeCounty.gov, showing that by searching “Neighborhood Developer Meetings,” residents can access the Community Services Development page. There, they can view a schedule of upcoming and past meetings either by map or project list. She noted that the only recent project in the area was the Iveson Ranch event held on August 6. At present, no new developments are scheduled in Gerlach. Ramos encouraged residents to sign up on the county website for email updates, either by district (Gerlach falls in District 5) or specifically for neighborhood developer meetings. She emphasized that these meetings take place early in the planning process, giving the public a chance to provide input before projects move forward. Candee Ramos encouraged community involvement in Washoe County’s Boards and Commissions, noting that while there are no current openings, residents can check for opportunities on WashoeCounty.gov by searching “board openings.” She explained that volunteer roles are always available in programs such as the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). Ramos added that she would speak with Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro about potentially including the Gerlach Volunteer Fire Department on the county’s volunteer listings. She thanked the group for the opportunity to share this information.
2. REPORT ON REQUESTS FOR SERVICE FROM PREVIOUS CAB MEETINGS

There was no report on requests made at the previous CAB meeting.
3. COMMISSIONER AND BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

There were no commissioner or board member announcements.
4. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro shared positive news that Washoe County has finally secured a $29 million Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) grant to improve State Route 34 after a decade of trying. The project will begin with the design within six months, with the federal government leading the work and the County covering its portion of the match. The upgrades will include drainage improvements, resurfacing, and a dedicated turn-off lane at the 8-mile playa entrance. Solaro emphasized that these improvements will enhance safety and reduce the heavy burden on Washoe County Road crews, who currently spend significant time keeping the roadway functional during both daily use and high-traffic events like Burning Man.

Taylor Hubler expressed strong appreciation for the news about the FLAP grant, noting that as a school bus driver who travels State Route 34 daily, the road is the most dangerous part of their route, and the upgrades will make a huge difference. Hubler then raised a serious safety concern about a storage site at the 16-mile marker across from Fly Geyser that is being used for camps and art cars. He reported unsafe and likely illegal practices, including unlicensed drivers, oversized vehicle transport violations, and even a 14-year-old that was operating a vehicle that was towing trailers. Hubler urged authorities to investigate the site and called on Burning Man organizers to take responsibility, stressing the danger to the community. He warned that unless addressed, it could lead to a tragic accident involving local schoolchildren and Burning Man-affiliated vehicles.

Carl Copek thanked everyone who traveled long distances to attend the meeting and expressed appreciation for Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro’s support and updates. Speaking as both a community member and a Burning Man participant, he offered an apology on behalf of Burning Man for the disruptions and misbehavior caused by event attendees, acknowledging that the impacts were unacceptable and pledging to push for improvements. Copek also suggested that the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe be included in future contingency planning, noting that their large parking facilities, such as those used for powwows, could provide safe staging areas for thousands of vehicles during closures rather than leaving cars backed up on the roadside.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 pm.

PROPOSAL APPROVED BY GERLACH/EMPIRE CAB - 9-11-2025

BURNING MAN COMMUNITY REFLECTION AND INPUT TO WASHOE COUNTY ON EVENT PERMITTING

The Gerlach-Empire Citizens Advisory Board requests Washoe County to work with the appropriate entities to formulate a written plan for playa closures or other incidents causing significant traffic backup during the Burning Man event to mitigate the following issues impacting the communities of Gerlach-Empire:

1. An adequate plan for sanitation facilities in Gerlach/Empire. This could include the staging of a pumper truck to continually service porta potties in town, or the placement of additional portos.
2. A traffic mitigation plan, including a location for vehicles to stage so they do not overrun Gerlach. Specifically identify who will be managing and implementing a traffic plan in town in these contingency situations. Explore the possibility of a special use permit or other mechanism to utilize local Burning Man properties or BLM land for emergency staging of vehicles.
3. A Point of Contact from Washoe County who can be present in or available to the residents of Gerlach/Empire, and who can address immediate safety issues. Gerlach/Empire residents need to know who to contact when these significant issues arise.
4. A requirement that Burning Man has a team of people in Gerlach in advance of playa closures, including someone who has the authority to address issues relating to sanitation, traffic, and trash.
5. Dissemination of this plan to the relevant agencies working in Gerlach/Empire and the community so we are all aware of what should happen, who is in charge, and who we can go to if issues arise.