\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* DRAFT \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* DRAFT \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Whereas, the experience of standing under a natural starry night sky inspires feelings of wonder and awe, encouraging a growing interest in science and nature, particularly among young people and visitors to our state, and

Whereas, the proliferation of excessive artificial light has disrupted naturally dark skies to the extent that the vast majority of Americans, including residents of urban Washoe County, live under a light dome and cannot experience the visual wonder of a natural night sky; and

Whereas, excessive artificial light negatively impacts human health, nocturnal wildlife activity and the ecological balance in our natural environment, and wastes roughly $3 billion per year of energy and natural resources in the United States, contributing unnecessarily to toxic pollution and diminished energy security; and

Whereas, Nevada, particularly sparsely-populated far northern Washoe County, is home to some of the darkest, starriest skies in the country, including the Massacre Rim International Dark Sky Sanctuary certified in 2019; and

Whereas, a Dark Sky Sanctuary is public or private land that has an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment; and

Whereas, the town of Gerlach, the recipient of a Travel Nevada grant to promote tourism, and the gateway to some of the darkest skies in the country including the Black Rock Desert - High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area, will seek Nevada state certification as a Nevada Dark Sky Community; and

Whereas, astro-tourism is a growing segment of the economy as travelers learn there are still a few truly dark places left where they can experience an amazing star-studded sky they can’t experience at home; and

Whereas, Dark Sky International, the globally recognized authority on light pollution and protection of dark skies recognizes International Dark Sky Week to raise awareness of the effects of light pollution and encourage the protection of dark skies with responsible outdoor lighting,

Now, Therefore, we, the Citizens Advisory Board of Gerlach, Friends of Black Rock-High Rock and Friends of Nevada Wilderness ask the Board of County Commissioners to declare April 21-28 as International Dark Sky Week in Washoe County and invite all residents to join us in raising awareness and support for protecting our precious dark skies as a shared resource we all wish to preserve.