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Minutes of the regular meeting of the West Truckee Meadows/Verdi Township

Citizen Advisory Board held on May 20, 2024, at 5:30 P.M.

Verdi Community Library & Nature Study, 270 Bridge St, Verdi, NV 89439

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

Present- Mac Rossi, Carly Brochard, Robert Laurie, Barbara Fenne

Absent- Denise Kolton

A quorum was established.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1. **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 CAB as a whole.

Emily Stapleton, from Washoe County's Sustainability team, shared information about the county's first-ever Community Climate Action Plan, aimed at achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. She emphasized the importance of community feedback in shaping the plan to reflect Washoe County's diversity. There are two main ways for the public to provide input: an online Clean Air Survey (open until July 3rd) and a series of listening sessions in June, including both in-person and virtual options. The sessions will cover topics such as low-emissions transportation, energy use, waste reduction, and water conservation. Emily encouraged community participation, particularly from vulnerable populations and rural areas, and provided details on how to access the survey and session information through the county’s website.

1. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES –** General community updates from public safety representatives; including but not limited to Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, and others as such [Non-Action Item]

\*Public safety updates were delivered after Item 6.

Washoe County Sheriff's Office

Lieutenant Armando Avina provided a public safety update highlighting key developments in the community. He noted a decrease in drug and narcotic violations, attributing it to increased enforcement along the freeway. The number of dispatch calls has remained steady, with an average of 48 calls per quarter. Avina praised deputies for their proactive efforts, such as conducting business checks and responding to potential thefts or suspicious activities. He also emphasized the importance of neighborhood watch programs and public vigilance in preventing crimes, including securing vehicles and using surveillance cameras. He highlighted challenges with GPS-guided traffic routes, particularly during the winter, and urged citizens to avoid risky routes like Dog Valley. Avina also mentioned an influx of people passing through the area due to events at Moon Rock, which can increase the risk of crimes like theft. He encouraged residents to continue their efforts in maintaining safety, particularly in preventing vehicle break-ins by securing valuables and using motion sensor lighting. Lastly, he provided updates on changes within the Washoe County Sheriff's Department, including staffing shifts, the retirement of Captain Brandon Zirkle, and the appointment of Captain Emilia Alicia to oversee both Incline Village and other areas.

Mac Rossi asked about the black stripe going through the Lieutenant’s badge. He informed the CAB that the stripe is to honor the fallen who have sacrificed their lifes.

A CAB member asked what triggers the Sheriff’s Office to stop a vehicle. Avina discusses how the department's interdiction team, which specializes in drug enforcement, conducts vehicle stops. The team uses specific training and techniques to identify suspicious behavior, such as pulling over vehicles with out-of-state plates, like from Nebraska, which might signal they are transporting illegal goods. The official notes that these officers look for specific triggers, such as violations or unusual travel patterns, especially with people coming from regions known for drug trafficking, like the Midwest or East Coast.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

Battalion Chief Derek Reid provided an update on recent fire and rescue activities. He reported that the department had responded to 31 emergency medical calls, including motor vehicle accidents, as well as 6 good intent calls. The Spring Green Waste and Curbside Burning programs have now been completed. Reid also highlighted the importance of river safety, particularly as the weather warms. He noted that the cold, fast-moving water poses significant risks, including hypothermia and loss of self-rescue ability within just 10 minutes. He emphasized that even if the water temperature rises to 90°F, it can still cause a shock response if someone submerges themselves, urging everyone on the river to wear personal flotation devices (PFDs). Regarding wildfire preparedness, Reid shared that the department recently took part in a multi-agency wildfire drill with the City of Reno and Sparks. This exercise involved simulating real-life fire scenarios, where firefighters were tasked with locating and containing fires, providing medical support, and assessing which homes could be defended. The drill focused on strategic home preparation and determining which properties were too overgrown to be defensible in the event of wildfire. Lastly, Reid mentioned that new firefighters will soon be joining the department, with additional hires expected in the future due to retirement and staffing needs.

Carly Brochard asked Battalion Chief Derek Reid about mutual aid agreements between Washoe County and the City of Reno, particularly considering recent developments. She mentioned a new project in the Reno area, which had required a temporary fire station as a condition of approval but later requested to replace the station with a financial contribution for a fire truck instead. Carly wondered if Washoe County was involved in these decisions or had any input on the matter. Derek Reid responded by explaining that mutual aid agreements are typically renewed every few years and allow for the sharing of resources between jurisdictions like Washoe County and Reno. While Washoe County is not always informed about specific financial decisions, they are aware of plans when it comes to public safety. Reid acknowledged that while Reno's decisions are ultimately within their jurisdiction, Washoe County still works collaboratively with them, especially in emergency situations. He also highlighted that the fire department operates on a system of mutual aid, where both Reno and Washoe County share resources and respond to incidents based on proximity and need, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.

A Washoe County resident asked Battalion Chief Derek Reid about the duration and renewal process for mutual aid agreements, specifically regarding automatic aid between stations like Washoe County and Verdi. They were curious if these agreements are in place for a set period, such as one to five years, or if they are renegotiated frequently. Derek Reid explained that once mutual aid agreements are established, they typically remain in place without requiring frequent renegotiation. These agreements are reviewed annually but mostly continue unchanged, with updates mainly related to logistics or resource allocation (like time limits on how long resources can be shared). He clarified that these agreements are about maintaining life safety and ensuring resources are used effectively for the community, with a focus on mutual cooperation between departments.

Barbara Fenne raised several questions and concerns during her discussion with Derek Reid. First, she mentioned the city's sphere of influence and how properties sometimes switch between the city of Reno and Washoe County, causing confusion for residents. She suggested that if the public and local agencies approach the city on this issue from a health and safety standpoint, it might help address the confusion and improve coordination, especially for areas with mixed jurisdiction like those near Gold Ranch. She also inquired about the status of fire breaks being planned for areas like Somerset, Sierra Canyon, and Sunset Hills. She mentioned that her group had successfully secured a grant for these fire breaks and wanted to know if any progress had been made in terms of construction or location of the breaks. Reid acknowledged he wasn't directly involved with the grant but suggested reaching out to the project lead, who he identified as "Trade Home," to get more details. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining these breaks, especially in areas with significant grass fuels that could spread fire quickly. Barbara also stressed the need for fire breaks to double as escape routes in case of wildfires, as some areas have narrow access points that could bottleneck evacuation efforts.

1. **REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION –**

Paul Nelson's presentation focused on the transportation initiatives and planning efforts in Washoe County, particularly led by the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). The RTC Board is made up of elected officials from Washoe County, the City of Reno, and Sparks, with additional staff leadership. RTC’s mission is to improve the community through quality transportation, focusing on planning, engineering, and public transportation. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan covers both short-term and long-term regional transportation planning, while RTC also handles the engineering and construction of major road projects. Though RTC builds the roads, it does not own them, as they are transferred to local jurisdictions for maintenance. Public transportation is another key area, with RTC Ride serving as the region’s fixed-route transit system. In the past year, RTC Ride recorded over 5.1 million trips, 60% of which were work-related, highlighting its significant role in the local economy. RTC is particularly proud of its Alternative Fuels Program, having transitioned its fleet to 100% alternative energy by 2022, ahead of its 2035 goal. This includes 23 electric buses, hybrid vehicles, and recently, hydrogen fuel cell buses, with a range of 300 miles per tank, offering more flexibility compared to electric buses, which typically need recharging after 90–100 miles. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) has been one of RTC's major successes, particularly the Virginia and Lincoln lines, which serve some of the busiest corridors in Reno and Sparks. These routes provide high-frequency service, with buses running every 10 minutes, and together they provide over 1.4 million rides annually. The Flex Ride program, which offers on-demand service, has also proven successful, particularly in areas with lower ridership. This program allows people to call for a ride within designated zones, with new zones recently added in areas like Somerset and Verdi. Flex Ride has helped the RTC offer a flexible and efficient service where fixed routes may not be viable. RTC also supports seniors and veterans through the Senior Ride Taxi Bucks Program, which gives eligible individuals $60 a month to use for taxi, Uber, or Lyft rides. This program helps those who may not have access to traditional transit. Additionally, RTC runs a Vanpool Program, with 340 vans in operation, making it the sixth-largest program in the nation. This initiative helps commuters share rides, reducing traffic congestion and pollution, saving 20 million miles of travel last year. Looking ahead, RTC is updating its long-term Regional Transportation Plan, which projects transportation needs and goals through 2050. The planning process includes gathering community input to identify the most pressing issues and the necessary projects to meet the region’s needs over the next 25 years. A recent multimodal study in the Verdi area identified key areas for improvement in pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, including new bridges and upgrades to existing ones. There’s also an emphasis on improving Interstate 80, with plans for wildlife fencing, bridge widening, and safety upgrades, in collaboration with the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT). Another significant initiative is the South Virginia Transit-Oriented Development Study, which focuses on developing vacant land between Meadowwood Mall and Summit Mall. The goal is to create walkable, bikeable neighborhoods that are well-served by transit, with potential for expanding bus rapid transit (BRT) to this area. The Active Transportation Plan is another ongoing project, which looks at enhancing bike and pedestrian facilities across the region, focusing on things like bike lanes, multi-use paths, and improving the overall pedestrian experience. This plan is part of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and is intended to create a more inclusive and accessible transportation network for all ages. Additionally, the Freight Plan is being developed to address the rising truck traffic due to the growth of warehousing and manufacturing in the region. The plan aims to ensure the safe and efficient movement of freight and to support Northern Nevada’s economy. Nelson also highlighted several road construction and maintenance projects for 2024, including the replacement of the Arlington Avenue Bridges, which are over 100 years old. These new bridges will feature community-inspired designs and improved safety features. Other significant bridge projects include the Sierra Street Bridge and Keystone Avenue Bridge, both of which are aging and need replacement. In terms of street improvements, several **pavement preservation** projects are planned, including resurfacing Somerset Parkway and sections of McCarran Boulevard. These projects are part of a larger strategy to maintain roads in good condition while being cost-effective. Safety improvements are also being made, such as changes to the intersection at McCarran Boulevard and Keystone, where a new traffic signal will be added to reduce dangerous left turns. Additionally, a project on West 4th Street will focus on reducing speed and improving pedestrian infrastructure, with the addition of two roundabouts and a multi-use path. Nelson also discussed upcoming projects aimed at improving biking infrastructure, including a downtown Reno bicycle improvement plan that will enhance safety for cyclists traveling between Midtown and the university area.

Robert Laurie asked Paul Nelson and Jeff Wilkin about how the funding for transportation projects is coordinated between the county and city budgets, particularly about new developments. Paul Nelson explained that the county's primary sources of funding for roadwork and transit are local fuel taxes, sales taxes (which fund transit), federal grants, and discretionary grants. He highlighted recent successful grant applications, including a $25 million grant for Lemon Drive and an $8.9 million grant for improving Sixth Street in downtown Reno. The county also secured federal funds for hydrogen fuel cell buses. Nelson then addressed Robert's question about funding from new development projects. He mentioned the RIF (Regional Impact Fees) program, which collects fees from developers to fund infrastructure improvements related to new development. Developers are required to pay $5,200 per housing unit, and this money is used to make improvements to roads, bike paths, and other infrastructure in the region. Wilkin clarified that these funds are allocated to regional improvements, not specific to individual developments, though they are used for capacity-expanding projects like adding lanes or installing traffic signals. The RIF program is part of a Capital Investment Plan (CIP), which aligns with the long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The fees collected are used to cover infrastructure improvements that go beyond what is considered standard for the development itself, ensuring that growth-related traffic needs are met. He also explained that RIF funding is typically used to cover the gap in funding that cannot be met by other sources, with the goal of ensuring that infrastructure keeps up with growth. However, projects that only serve a specific development—like a road leading directly to a new housing area—are typically the responsibility of the developer.

Carly Brochard asked Jeff Wilkin about the possibility of improving South Verdi Road with guardrails and widening it, especially due to safety concerns during icy weather and community support for such improvements. She inquired whether Regional Impact Fee (RIF) funds could be used for this project.

Jeff Wilkin explained that RIF funds are typically reserved for capacity-increasing projects, like adding lanes or intersections, not safety measures like guardrails. He noted that decisions about such projects are driven by the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and funding priorities. He also mentioned the success of the FlexRIDE program, which has seen growth in ridership, and expressed hope for its continued expansion.

Mac Rossi asked Paul Nelson about the potential for a new tax or fee to help fund road maintenance, specifically referencing the gas tax and whether any legislative initiatives have been considered to capture more funds for road upkeep. Paul explained that there had been discussions and a study in 2019 about implementing such measures, but nothing had materialized. He noted that they are monitoring what other states are doing to address this issue and that future legislative sessions may explore solutions, including the possibility of new fees.

Mark Lyons asked two questions to Jeff Wilkin. First, he inquired about the involvement of Washoe County and the City of Reno's emergency management services in the planning and studies related to wildfire evacuation. Specifically, he wanted to know if these agencies were engaged in the process of developing evacuation plans and how their input was integrated. Second, Lyons asked for clarification on the sequence of bridge replacements for the I80 Bridge replacement project. He wanted to know which bridges would be worked on first and the general timeline for these projects.

Addie asked about the Verdi study about the Gold Ranch overpass to be realigned with Trelease ln and was redirected to ask Meg Raginis for information.

Dee Ann Radcliffe asked about the exclusion of her area, Verdi, from the RTC Flex Ride service area. She inquired about who to contact at RTC to discuss the possibility of adding her area to the service. The response suggested reaching out to Jim Key, the director of public transportation at RTC, providing his email address ([jgee@rtcwashoe.com](mailto:jgee@rtcwashoe.com)) for contact.

1. **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB –**

Alexandra Wilson shared an update on Washoe County's development projects, noting that the most recent meeting was in April, discussing master plan and zoning changes in District 1. Meeting summaries and recordings are available, along with project details on the Washoe County applications page. Wilson highlighted that while notifications are required within 750 feet of a project, her team sends updates to the entire district. She also mentioned ongoing projects like Summit Church’s expansion and a private school in Incline Village. Residents can sign up for updates or get assistance navigating project information.

1. **BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS/DISCUSSION** — This item is limited to announcements, requests for future agenda items, or discussion by CAB members and/or Commissioners. [Non-Action Item]

Mac Rossi shared his positive experience with Washoe County's Leadership Academy, a 10-month program that provides in-depth insights into county operations. He praised the program, noting it’s a valuable way to learn about county services and gain hands-on experience. Applications for the program are now being accepted online. Rossi also mentioned a memorable experience from the program where he shadowed dispatch during a shift, finding it fascinating and gaining a deep appreciation for the dedication of dispatchers.

1. **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 chair. Comments are to be addressed to the Board as a whole.

Alexandra Wilson provided an update about the Washoe County Leadership Academy, which is now accepting applications. The program, which opens Wednesday and closes in mid-June, received 276 applications for 35 spots last year. The academy offers a behind-the-scenes look at county operations, including tours of the jail, dispatch, animal services, and the Medical Examiner's office. This year's program will also include visits to various county landmarks like the UC Data Science Center and a trip to Gerlach. The program provides leadership training and covers a wide range of county services, from birth certificates to the Public Administrator's office. It’s a valuable opportunity to learn about Washoe County's diverse functions.

1. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m.