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

Citizen Advisory Board held on July 21, 2025, 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, Bob Laurie, Barbara Fenne, Carly Borchard (online)

Absent- Cameron Kramlich

A quorum was established.

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT** –   
     
   There was no public comment
2. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETINGS OF** May 19, 2025   
     
   This item was skipped.
3. **ELECTION OF CAB OFFICERS**

Bob Laurie nominated Carly Borchard to be Chair and Mac Rossi to be Vice Chair of the West Truckee Meadows Verdi Township CAB. Barbara Fenne seconded the motion. All CAB members were in favor and Carly Borchard was voted as Chair and Mac Rossi was voted as Vice Chair of the CAB.

1. **PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES –**

**Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District**Fire Chief Richard Edwards introduced himself as the new Fire Chief of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection Council. He comes from Stockton, California, where he served as fire chief for the past five and a half years. With nearly 30 years in the fire service, he has extensive experience in operations, dispatch, and communications. Edwards said he is eager to apply his skills to local challenges and looks forward to working with the community.   
  
Derek Reid provided a safety update, noting that the region is currently at a high to extreme risk for wildland fires. He reminded residents that everyday activities like barbecuing, towing with dragging chains, cutting metal, or using torches and grinders can easily spark fires, especially during the heat of the day and in windy conditions. He encouraged residents to keep yards clear for fuel reduction and be mindful of timing when working outdoors. Reid also emphasized personal safety in hot weather, stressing the importance of hydration. Since people wake up already dehydrated, he recommended drinking fluids early in the day, avoiding sugary drinks, and choosing beverages with electrolytes like sodium and magnesium. He added a reminder about lightning safety: if you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck and should seek shelter. For June, he reported 33 total calls for service: 15 EMS calls, one motor vehicle accident, one fire, 15 good intent calls, and one false alarm.

Mac Rossi asked whether there have been any fires caused by people sleeping on or near the railroad tracks, referencing a past presentation on the issue. The response noted that it is difficult to determine specific causes in such cases. While some fires have been classified as “undetermined” due to lack of evidence, simply having someone nearby does not prove they started it. No specific statistics were available, but it was emphasized that more than 80 percent of fires are human caused.   
  
Bob Laurie asked whether local governments act criminally or civilly to recover costs from human-caused fires, and how often that occurs. The response explained that enforcement typically depends on the severity of the fire. When major incidents occur that destroy homes, property, or cause loss of life, agencies will investigate and seek accountability. In smaller cases, such as an escaped campfire that burns a limited area, there is usually little follow-up or effort to identify the responsible party. It was noted that determining cause varies sometimes homeowners admit mistakes, such as fueling a generator that led to a house fire, which makes investigations straightforward. In wildland fires, officials rely more on tools like lightning trackers to rule out natural causes and confirm whether the fire was human caused.   
  
Mac Rossi asked whether fires are often caused by sparks from construction or renovation work, such as when building houses. The response indicated that while it’s possible such incidents have occurred, no specific cases came to mind at that moment.

**Washoe County Sheriff’s Department**Lieutenant Nick Tone provided updates from the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, focusing on recent activity in the West Truckee Meadows area. He reported that the three-year average for calls for service in this area is about 660, most of which are either dispatched or self-initiated. However, self-initiated activity has decreased significantly, largely due to staffing shortages following COVID. He noted that overall calls for service have risen from an average of about 668 to 1,004 in the Verdi/West Truckee Meadows area. On July 4, dispatch received around 2,000 emergency calls, compared to the typical 1,400–1,500, making it an unusually busy day. While the increase was not a large percentage, it reflected higher demand on resources. Tone also reported improvements in property crime trends, particularly auto burglaries at trailheads. Thanks to proactive patrols and public reminders to secure belongings, those numbers have dropped to nearly zero.   
  
Barbara Fenne asked if the Sheriff’s Office was instrumental in catching the suspects stealing mail in parts of Somerset. Lieutenant Nick Tone explained that such cases are usually handled by the detective division, and jurisdiction can depend on which part of Somerset is involved. He confirmed that several suspects had been caught, though it was unclear if all were apprehended. Tone described how thieves often obtain mailbox keys, target cluster boxes, and rotate through different subdivisions, sometimes pausing before striking again. Fenne and Tone both emphasized the importance of residents reporting suspicious activities such as people loitering near mailboxes with large bags since many mail theft arrests happen through proactive traffic stops or observant deputies. Tone also noted that mail theft is a federal crime with serious penalties and encouraged residents to call the non-emergency line if they see anything suspicious. Finally, he added that mailbox locks are being changed to improve security.

Mac Rossi shared his experience participating in a program that allows community members to sit with 911 dispatchers for a few hours to better understand their work. He described the experience as eye-opening and entertaining, noting the intense demands dispatchers face. Rossi observed that most dispatchers were women and said staff expressed interest in recruiting more men who can multitask effectively. He praised the program as informative and worthwhile, adding that every new deputy is also required to participate in a dispatcher sit-along, recognizing dispatchers as “rock stars” for the critical work they perform.   
  
The CAB members and the audience went off topic on the agendized topic of public safety and discussed HOA’s and how to increase CAB attendance offering varying opinions on what may help increase CAB attendance.

1. **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATES ON ALERT SYSTEMS -**

Jessica Adams-Lopes from Washoe County Emergency Management gave an overview of the county’s emergency alerts and warning systems. She explained that alerts are sent through as many channels as possible using the federal Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), which includes the Emergency Alert System (EAS) for TV/radio and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) for cell phones. Additional notifications go out via text, voice, mobile apps, and Washoe County’s social media platforms. In September 2024, the county transitioned from “Code Red” to the Rave Alert/Smart911 system for improved functionality. She strongly encouraged residents to sign up for Smart911 at ReadyWashoe.com, noting that profiles allow people to share details such as medical needs, pets, or mobility issues, information that can be critical during evacuations. Previous subscriber data was not transferred over, so residents must re-register. The county hopes to double or triple the 100,000 current users. Adams-Lopes also highlighted Perimeter, a real-time situational awareness tool used by first responders and the public. Through Perimeter (accessible at PerimeterMap.com), users can instantly view live updates about evacuation zones, warnings, road closures, and shelter locations, with color-coded maps and detailed descriptions. She encouraged everyone to use these platforms to stay informed and prepared during emergencies.

Barbara Fenne asked whether the Perimeter map is accurate and up to date, and whether it reflects new housing developments or storage facilities. The response confirmed that the map is updated in real time as soon as information comes from law enforcement or fire agencies, making it far more effective than past text-only alerts. Instead of relying on confusing street descriptions, the public can now visually see their location in relation to an evacuation or hazard. It was also explained that Perimeter integrates with Google Maps and Google Earth, allowing both street view and satellite imagery. This level of detail lets users zoom in to see individual houses and newly built developments, ensuring the map is both current and precise.

Bob Laurie, serving on his HOA board, raised concerns about communication challenges in senior communities. He noted that residents often don’t use offices or digital tools, making it hard to reach everyone. His HOA has discussed ideas like block captains or door-to-door outreach and asked whether the county or state provides templates or protocols that HOAs could use to establish local communication networks during emergencies. Jessica’s response indicated that no such template currently exists, though staff could help develop one for his neighborhood. Other HOAs typically use their own established systems. As an example, it was noted that the LDS Church has a strong culture of mutual check-ins, which makes communication easier. The suggestion was made that lessons from such systems might be adapted for use in HOAs facing similar challenges.

Kelly Echeverria explained that the county’s switch to a new alerting system was driven by the need to better serve people with access and functional needs. The system now allows **two-way communication**, so individuals outside an evacuation area can be advised to leave early if they need extra time, and those inside can signal if they need help evacuating. When someone does, emergency management relays their location to the Sheriff’s Office or Incident Command. She noted that uptake of **Smart911** is still low, so only a few individuals have been reached directly during recent fires, but the system has already proven valuable. It also provides internal data showing day vs. night population counts in evacuation zones, which helps agencies like the Red Cross determine if shelters are needed.

Echeverria added that the county has shifted toward using **libraries as temporary evacuation points**. Libraries are trusted community spaces, easy to open quickly, and often all that is needed since most fires are resolved rapidly by local fire crews and the community is highly self-reliant. Shelters are rarely required, but the library system provides a practical, immediate option.

Mac Rossi praised the quality of the staff presentations and suggested a practical way to boost community awareness. He said his HOA has a newsletter coming out and offered to include extra copies of the emergency information so residents would see it. He noted that many people don’t read newsletters thoroughly, but if the flyer falls out, they are more likely to notice it. He encouraged considering similar outreach through HOAs as a way to spread important information.

Bob Laurie asked about FEMA’s requirement for local hazard mitigation plans, noting that they are difficult, time-consuming, and often questioned whether they are worth the investment compared to other priorities like training. He also raised concerns about whether local resources are better spent on preparedness and response, since agencies are ultimately judged by how they handle major emergencies. The response confirmed that Washoe County’s Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan is up to date and currently in the adoption phase. Staff acknowledged the process is arduous but explained that changes have been made to make the plan more useful. The county hired a mitigation coordinator, mapped hazards, assigned jurisdictional responsibilities, and matched each action item with known funding sources so grant applications can be more targeted and successful. This ensures projects move forward rather than sitting idle until the next five-year update. As an example, the first completed mitigation project was avalanche safety signage in Tahoe—small but important for public safety and infrastructure. It was emphasized that while the plans are federally required for reimbursement, they also save money long-term: studies show every $1 spent on mitigation saves $6–$11 in response and recovery. In addressing Laurie’s concern, staff clarified that training and mitigation use separate funding streams, so investments in mitigation don’t reduce training budgets. Both efforts complement each other: mitigation reduces risks in advance, while training ensures readiness to respond effectively when emergencies do occur.

1. **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITES –**

\*\*This item came after item 9.   
Casey McDonald gave an update on upcoming community engagement events. He noted that while there is no new activity in the Neighborhood Development Hub for District 1 except in Incline, there is a Budget 101 workshop scheduled for tomorrow night at the Washoe County Commission Chambers. The workshop, called the “Washoe Checkbook” session, is designed to increase transparency about how the county spends money. Attendees will be able to review budget information, take a short survey, and submit questions in advance so the finance team can prepare responses. Commissioner Andriola and the County CFO will be present. McDonald added that the session will run from 5:30–7:00 p.m. on July 22 and will also be available via Zoom for those who cannot attend in person.

1. **CAB MEMBER/COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS –**

Bob Laurie said board members are required to complete online trainings on harassment and bias. He took both courses, but a technical issue prevented the system from recording his completion, so he kept receiving reminder notices. He stated on the record that he completed them. Casey McDonald responded that Alex Wilson has already confirmed Laurie’s completion and has reached out to acknowledge it. Barbara Fenne responded Barbara Fenne shared that she had a similar experience as Bob Laurie, completing the mandatory trainings multiple times without the system properly recording them. She found the situation frustrating and somewhat excessive. Bob Laurie responded by noting that workplace rules evolve over time and that while he doesn’t object to the training themselves, it seems more like an internal compliance matter. Still, he agreed it’s valuable for the public to know that board members are being educated on these important issues.

Mac Rossi spoke about his experience in the **Leadership Academy**, which he attended as part of the second cohort. He praised the program as extremely well done and informative, noting that the third group recently finished and recruitment is underway for the fourth, starting in September. Participants commit to one day a month for about nine or ten months. He shared highlights, including site visits across the county—from Gerlach to various facilities—that gave participants a deeper understanding of county operations. One of the most memorable tours for him was the sewer department, where he learned about millions of dollars in infrastructure updates. He was especially struck by the sight of machines compressing non-flushable wipes into daily truckloads of bricks, a vivid example of the challenges faced in managing wastewater. Rossi described the program as eye-opening and highly worthwhile.

Mac Rossi praised recent public facility improvements, noting that the county invested significant funds into upgrading the senior area and did a tremendous job. He encouraged others to take a tour to see the results. He also highlighted the new swimming pool at Moana, a city project costing around $52–53 million and said staff there will give tours of the entire facility. Rossi described both projects as impressive and worthwhile to visit.

1. **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT -**

There was no public comment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:29 p.m.