

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

WEDNESDAY

9:00 A.M.

JANUARY 13, 2021

PRESENT:

**Bob Lucey, Chair**  
**Vaughn Hartung, Vice Chair**  
**Alexis Hill, Commissioner**  
**Kitty Jung, Commissioner (via telephone)**  
**Jeanne Herman, Commissioner**

**Janis Galassini, County Clerk**  
**Eric Brown, County Manager**  
**David Watts-Vial, Assistant District Attorney (via Zoom)**

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 9:07 a.m. in regular session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

**21-0049** **AGENDA ITEM 3** Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

**21-0050** **AGENDA ITEM 4** Commissioners’/County Manager’s announcements, reports and updates to include boards and commissions updates, requests for information or topics for future agendas.

Chair Lucey explained the workshop would follow Open Meeting Law and be like a regular meeting of the Board of County Commissioners, but discussion would be more casual. He recognized the amount of effort put into planning the workshop, which had not been done for two years. The purpose of the meeting would be to figure out how things were going in Washoe County, gain feedback, and discuss specific agenda items with the assistance of County Manager Eric Brown. Assistant District Attorney David Watts-Vial would be available to provide legal feedback. Chair Lucey wanted a robust discussion while keeping things light and functional.

Erica Olsen, Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of OnStrategy, acting as facilitator for the workshop, said there had been a lot of background work done to plan and prepare for robust conversation regarding the five topics listed on the agenda. She indicated conversation would be more open and less formal, while topics would remain structured; she anticipated 20 to 30 minutes of discussion on each item. Staff would provide background or a quick general overview of each topic, and one presentation was planned

on the budget. The rest of the meeting would consist of broader conversation and questions. She reviewed the topics of discussion and indicated she would use many of the slides shown during the meeting to take notes and help facilitate conversation.

**AGENDA ITEM 5** Strategic Planning Discussion: The purpose of the Strategic Planning Workshop is to discuss and possibly give direction regarding strategic objectives for the current Fiscal Year 2021 and possible Fiscal Year 2022 objectives of the Washoe County Commission, which may include, but not be limited to review, discussion and possible direction to staff regarding:

**21-0051**      **5.A. Strategic Direction #1:** Homelessness and the County's role.

County Manager Eric Brown conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. The presentation included slides with the following titles: Board of County Commissioners 2021 Annual Workshop; Outcomes & Discussion Flow; Materials & Guidelines; Strategic Topic #1 Homelessness & the County's Role; Regional Homeless Services Summary (2 pages); Regional Emergency Shelter Operational Expenses; and Discussion.

Mr. Brown thanked Senior Management Analyst Dana Searcy and Assistant County Manager Kate Thomas for their work over the past year in chronicling services offered for homeless populations in Washoe County, and for interviewing providers to find out how the programs received funding and how they operated. Some programs were municipal, some were charitable, and others were State licensed. Staff had worked to identify elements governed or sponsored by the County, the Cities of Reno or Sparks, or other institutions.

Mr. Brown said the Board was familiar with the work being done at Our Place, as Washoe County had invested more than \$15 million in the project. The Community Assistance Center (CAC) was governed by the City of Reno through an interlocal agreement with the City of Sparks, Washoe County, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) acting as funding sources. Regarding specialty shelters, Mr. Brown said County staff had learned a lot of activity was not being coordinated with other municipalities, and this was an opportunity for improvement. Similarly, while some managed care plans covered housing for members of the homeless population, coordination with the government agencies working on housing was not always achieved.

Mr. Brown explained entities responsible for sheltering and rehabilitating the homeless populations in a region were part of the HUD Continuum of Care (CoC). These entities generally kept databases to track homeless population numbers, including the number of individuals who successfully found shelter and those who were chronically homeless. The HUD database and Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) software were utilized by HUD-funded recipients to track homeless populations, but only individuals who obtained services through government facilities were currently being

tracked by those systems. Other entities serving the homeless populations did not have access to HMIS, so their data were not being included in the region's totals. This challenge was a reason why many advocated for centralizing tracking efforts.

Mr. Brown noted the Cities of Reno and Sparks received significant Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) monies for many purposes, including homelessness services, but Washoe County did not currently have access to that funding. The housing authorities, HUD, and other local agencies were regionally focused on assisting the community with both affordable housing and homelessness; within the County, the Rural Housing Authority and the Reno-Sparks Indian Housing Authority were the primary recipients of government housing funds. Bridge and transitional housing programs such as Crossroads, the Village on Sage Street, and HopeSprings were run by nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, and Mr. Brown thought there were opportunities for better coordination as well as a greater involvement of health plans who understood how to manage Medicaid populations. There were also State-licensed facilities supporting populations with specific needs, such as substance addiction, mental health issues, or individuals in group homes; these facilities received funds from Washoe County, the Cities of Reno and Sparks, HUD, insurance and Medicaid reimbursements for services, and other private sources. He opined all aspects involved in the delivery of homelessness services across the region should be considered as a whole.

Mr. Brown discussed Washoe County's current role with community shelters and transitional housing. At the recent concurrent meeting, the municipalities had entered into an agreement to work on a men's shelter with the understanding that Our Place would continue to be governed by the County. He wondered whether there might be benefits in combining elements of bridge or transitional housing. The jurisdictions' managers had discussed the possibility of a new interlocal agreement to combine services currently offered through Our Place and other community programs. Mr. Brown thought doing so might help focus and standardize service delivery across the region, particularly counseling and case management. Built for Zero's studies also indicated shelters were only part of the bigger picture, and wraparound services were also needed.

Mr. Brown described his first visit to the CAC and his impression that the region was not paying enough attention to case management, adding individuals would not be able to get the help they needed if proper case management ratios were not funded. He acknowledged entities had been faced with increased funding needs over the past year, and that was at the top of the priority list.

Mr. Brown discussed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021 interlocal agreement. In a subsequent funding request through the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), Washoe County anticipated \$6.9 million in FY21 expenses as a result of the many expansions since the pandemic began. He suspected additional expenses would arise before the pandemic ended, but he also believed more efficiency could be achieved if the different entities worked to be less siloed as they managed operations.

Erica Olsen, Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of OnStrategy, acting as facilitator for the workshop, clarified staff's question for the Board was whether the County's role regarding homelessness services in the region should change and, if so, what those changes might look like.

Chair Lucey wanted to know whether the County could also apply for block grants for community development or homelessness. He said the issue with the County taking over the CoC was not real estate but staffing and funding. He was not sure Washoe County had the staff or capability to manage everything all together. He felt the current system was broken in that different entities handled triage and transitional housing and acknowledged the need to see it handled by one entity. He noted Clark County relied on insurance to help fund various projects including building housing and purchasing hotels. He wondered whether this could be a way to bolster Washoe County's funding and offset some expenses. He acknowledged the County had always been the largest provider of funding for homelessness services in interlocal agreements, but it had not taken on a full management role in the past. Managing these services could be a headache, but if the County had to spend the money, it should also manage those assets. With the most recent \$8.1 million expenditure for FY21, he said, the new Sage Street men's shelter was acquired, which would soon be known as the Nevada Cares campus. The Chair hoped expenses might be lower in the future but acknowledged they could remain a heavy burden. He mentioned a lack of a consistent, cohesive effort to unify and build homelessness programs in the region, and a lack of communication resulting from the municipalities' disagreements as to who would do what, rather than a focus on providing services.

Vice Chair Hartung noted the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) had also discussed coordination of services. He asked whether it would make sense to have one Board to oversee things, similar to the Truckee Meadows Water Authority, which might benefit from the economy of scale. He wondered how many total homeless individuals were in the region and what the total expenditure per person might be. If there was not a single agency handling sewer treatment, for example, services would be fractured and cost more. He wondered whether the University of Nevada, Reno might be able to assist with case management by creating an internship program or on-the-job training for degree-seeking students.

Vice Chair Hartung knew some individuals might not be willing to accept all the services offered, and those people might have to be separated from the population who would take advantage of those services. There was a huge number of individuals still struggling with housing concerns who were also elderly, disabled, or dealing with addiction, and these were the ones he hoped to concentrate on. He wondered how to reach others who needed but did not want to participate in all the programs available; he thought there might need to be some sort of consequences for non-participation. He clarified he was just putting these thoughts out for discussion.

Ms. Searcy remarked that, given the right situation and opportunities, most would be willing to accept help. She mentioned Grant Denton, who had recovered from homelessness and addiction to become a well-known advocate for these types of support

programs in the community. She admitted staff did not have a good answer as to the number of individuals currently experiencing homelessness, explaining the annual point-in-time count done by the CoC each January was not necessarily accurate; it was more of an indicator of general trends. Built for Zero hoped to help the region come up with a more accurate number by counting all individuals currently tracked in HMIS and the Good Grid system. If those two numbers were combined, she noted, there would be more than 1,400 people, but the number of individuals seeking services outside of those two systems would still be uncertain. She wondered how to bring together all the data, noting Mr. Denton and other outreach staff were currently working on that.

Vice Chair Hartung asked whether the Board would consider approaching the Cities of Reno and Sparks regarding possible changes to the CHAB to give it more authority, both in terms of budget and its ability to provide regional oversight. He understood the municipalities did not wish to give up control, but he felt conversations were currently siloed without all partners at the table. He hoped to have future discussions in a more regional capacity.

Commissioner Herman agreed but wanted the Board to remember that, while homelessness was taking up an increasing amount of the County's funding and time, there were taxpayers who needed help as well. She hoped all of them could be served but acknowledged doing so would require a lot of money and change. Chair Lucey remarked the County was spending a lot but not getting full dollar value out of that money. Commissioner Herman wondered how many homeless individuals were being served versus the rest of the population.

Commissioner Hill stated she was still learning the aspects of budgeting. She wanted to know whether the County's expenditures included funding from federal grants. Ms. Searcy responded there was not a complete figure reflecting how much the County had spent on homelessness services, but interlocal agreements showed operational and ongoing costs. She hoped the numbers would go down in the future. She thought the Cities of Reno and Sparks utilized almost 100 percent of their funding from HUD block grants, and she reiterated the County did not currently receive those types of funds.

Commissioner Hill indicated the County only received federal funding to provide services for women and children. Ms. Searcy responded she was not sure about that, but the Human Services Agency (HSA) accepted many grants. Commissioner Hill said the monies did not all come from general funds; staff members sought grants for many services. She agreed the CAC presented an opportunity for the region to come together, share funding, and possibly create a state mandate regarding how much each entity was required to contribute.

Commissioner Hill asked whether the Cities of Reno and Sparks could potentially receive less funding if the County began receiving HUD funding. Mr. Brown said grants accepted on behalf of the COC would be passed through to whichever entity assumed control of it. Commissioner Hill mentioned the Cities used some of that grant

funding for sidewalk repair, but Mr. Brown specified it only pertained to the portion of those grants devoted to homelessness.

Chair Lucey noted emergency solutions grants, home grants, and urban development action (UDA) grants could all be used to provide services including public facilities, small business services, and social services. He felt grant application writing was important, but it was difficult for the County to apply for block grant funds without a specific use planned. Similarly, if Washoe County took over the CoC, funding would be available for that purpose, but it might be better to keep things as they were if managing overall homelessness in the region was too big a task. He wanted the Board to have staff investigate the possibility of taking over the CoC; if this happened, he said, the other regional municipalities should contribute financially. Alternatively, things could remain as they currently were, he said, and other avenues could be explored to support the community's efforts. Emergency shelters, Our Place, and transitional programs, along with entry-level housing programs such as those offered by the Reno Housing Authority (RHA), all provided services for the region, but managing all these together would be a massive undertaking.

Chair Lucey continued that the HSA, currently devoted to managing senior and human services, already occupied five floors; if the County were to take ownership of even more programs, it could require expansion of the agency. He noted Volunteers of America (VOA) and the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality (RISE) also ran two facilities. He repeated funding and management would be concerns if the County were to take over. Businesses in the downtown area were suffering due to widespread homeless encampments, as were the Truckee River and the Cities of Reno and Sparks. Camps were spreading across Bureau of Land Management properties as well as throughout Sun Valley, the South Meadows, Silver Springs, and other parts of the County. As real estate costs continued to increase, he stated, more residents found themselves unable to afford housing. Additionally, the COVID-19 (C19) pandemic had contributed to job losses throughout the region, and the Chair indicated these problems were amplified by the lack of a unified, solid program. He wanted the Board to consider whether Washoe County should step into the role of creating a unified program, or if it might be better to keep things the way they were.

Vice Chair Hartung suggested there was a need to categorize the individuals suffering from varying levels of poverty or housing instability in different groups. He thought some populations might be easier to assist than others. For example, services for seniors might begin with those who were able to live independently, and then move to others who needed more services, such as those in assisted living, skilled nursing, or end-of-life care. He believed there were already good models, such as Step 2, from which the region could take cues. He suggested learning from how those types of agencies managed their operations and budgets. He also wanted to dispel the myth that grant funding was different from taxpayer dollars; it was all public money and would need to be used wisely. He felt forming a single oversight agency would be the best way to address the region's needs, and all entities would need to commit to doing their share. Help would be needed from the Cities of Reno and Sparks as well as the federal government.

Commissioner Hill, citing Built for Zero's model of oversight by one agency to reduce entities working individually, wondered whether counties or other jurisdictions typically took over. While she was a proponent of choosing one governing agency via inter-jurisdictional agreement, she admitted the individuals served could still end up without housing. She expressed concern about a lack of cohesive services if the County let go of its control.

Ms. Searcy responded other communities were overseen by one central CoC without breaking down services by counties or cities; some of these were run by counties and others by cities. What was unusual in Washoe County was that the County had taken the lead but the City of Reno still ran the CoC, whereas usually one entity managed both. The point of the CoC was not to have a lot of staff; the City of Reno had one Management Analyst and a few support staff, but only one position was devoted full time to the CoC. The CoC was made up of regional programs that came together to improve the way the systems functioned and develop policies and procedures. She indicated Built for Zero emphasized that if a region did not have a complete and accurate view encompassing all available programs and services, there would be no clear view of how all systems were functioning together. She agreed a conversation was needed regarding whether it might make more sense for all these things to happen under one entity. Commissioner Hill felt buy-in from local jurisdictions had increased since the CHAB had taken a leadership role, but there would need to be plans for transitioning from the Cities of Reno and Sparks.

Commissioner Hill asked whether legislative approval would be required to implement these changes. Chair Lucey believed the County could take over the CoC by adjusting the interlocal agreement, but Commissioner Hill clarified she thought legislative approval would be needed to provide the CHAB with money and decision-making power. Chair Lucey noted the CHAB had not been not formed by the Legislature and could be given more authority through an interlocal agreement, similar to the health district; a region was not mandated in the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) to have a board such as the CHAB. He pointed out that many other counties could not afford this type of oversight.

Commissioner Jung believed cooperation from the other municipalities was important, and she believed management of the CoC was dictated by the NRS. She discussed the Cities' use of general funds versus pass-through funds, and she expressed support for Vice Chair Hartung's suggestion to identify smaller populations the County could most effectively help. She thought this might allow the County to test the waters before taking on more responsibility. She cautioned that Commissioners should expect thousands of phone calls during the next election season if Washoe County considered formally taking over all homelessness services, as the area's housing crisis was constituents' number one concern. She agreed the County should take on that responsibility by listening to staff's direction on where to spend money and which programs to take over, followed by helping a sub-population they knew they could help. She feared not having a single source of input and follow-up would preclude any entity from demonstrating their ability to assist.

Vice Chair Hartung spoke about the senior living model and suggested beginning with individuals requiring skilled nursing services to find ways to help them become more independent. He thought some would require less assistance than others, and most wanted to be productive members of the community. He reiterated prioritizing different populations would give staff a better idea of what would be needed. He acknowledged there would also be groups the County might not be able to do a lot for, depending on the severity of their needs and circumstances.

Assistant County Manager Christine Vuletich emphasized the importance of the grant funding received by the Cities. If Washoe County were to take on more responsibility, it would need to be able to access that same funding. She noted the amounts shown during the presentation were a breakdown of what was in the interlocal agreement but not representative of the full cost; the actual cost was closer to \$7 million. The information did not include capital investments made over the past few years, such as the \$15 million spent on Our Place and the more than \$3 million spent for the Nevada Cares campus. She explained most costs flowed through the indigent fund but were currently coming out of the general fund; the transfer from the general to the indigent fund was close to \$20 million annually. While the County received some grant money, it would need to work to obtain additional funding, and could be more successful if block grant funds were obtained.

Chair Lucey asked whether Ms. Vuletich was familiar with UDA grants and inquired about Washoe County's ability to access those types of funds. Ms. Vuletich was not certain of the details or specific purpose of UDA grants but suggested exploring them further. If the County were to take on additional responsibility, she noted, it would be prudent to get access to additional grants so costs would not have to come out of the general fund.

Chair Lucey expressed concern that entities were competing for the same grant funding. Ms. Vuletich thought there were different types of block grant funds, some of which were only for homelessness services and could not be transferred. She believed most funding was tied to specific purposes. Mr. Brown added that grants were allocated using a formula. While duplicate recipients could not receive the same grant funding, an interlocal agreement could be drafted assigning one entity the authority to receive the funds.

Commissioner Herman commented grants were not guaranteed funding and involved some risk.

HSA Director Amber Howell clarified the amount spent on Our Place was higher than shown in the presentation because, in addition to the RISE contract, HSA staff expenses needed to be included. Regarding grants, she said most came through HUD and they required a low barrier model; this was different than the one used at Our Place. She cautioned that low-barrier models had not been shown to be successful, and the eligibility criteria for some grants might be changed so the County would not have to provide services under an ineffective model. She pointed out the CoC was part of the HUD application each

year, which required declaration of a lead agency. When the County applied for funding in September, the lead agency could be changed, but it could not be changed in the middle of a term.

Ms. Olsen summarized there did not seem to be a general consensus about the CoC but there was some movement towards one entity taking over and demonstrating impact with one sub-population. Additionally, there appeared to be interest in finding out whether the CHAB could be given more authority.

Chair Lucey recalled money had been spent on the OrgCode study when the CHAB was formed but expressed concern that not much had come of that investment. He wanted to know whether Built for Zero would return with more information or recommendations, and he mentioned there had been discussion at CHAB meetings regarding the need for Medicare billing to help cover the costs of services provided at the VOA shelter. He understood shelter staff were primarily concerned with getting bodies out of the cold and providing meals and shelter, but there were not many vendors who could provide the services VOA and RISE did. He indicated the community was lucky to have them and it was not as simple as just doing a better job interviewing clients. He expressed concern that populations might be coming from California due to lower-barrier shelter models in the region. These individuals were staying longer than expected, going back to encampments after 30 to 90 days, and then returning to the shelters. He recalled the case of Million-Dollar Murray, fearing revolving-door populations were costing taxpayers a significant amount of money.

Chair Lucey expressed frustration about the resistance faced during efforts to consolidate homelessness services for the region. He indicated everyone seemed to agree there were problems, but no one wanted the responsibility or cost burden to fix things. To do so would require planning an approach, searching for federal funding, and appointing more staff. He thought it ridiculous that there was only one full-time staff member to manage the region's CoC, given the increasing impact of homelessness in the region. He mentioned how services in Austin, Texas included immediate shelter and transitional housing, as well as financial classes, food support, and other benefits and incentives which helped clients the entire way through their journey to self-sufficiency. He noted Austin had a large budget to accomplish these goals, and he understood money was a key piece of the puzzle.

Ms. Olsen asked whether the Board would like to give direction or provide more specifics. Commissioner Herman believed the involvement of decision makers from the Cities of Reno and Sparks was needed. Chair Lucey reiterated the CHAB's functional power, responsibility, and funding could be improved if it was given more authority, and he indicated this would allow better representation from each of the municipalities.

Manager Brown mentioned a concurrent meeting to discuss the Health District was planned for the following week, but he thought there would also be discussion regarding homelessness. He felt there would be an opportunity to ensure a collaborative effort to reach a solution. He opined staff had enough information to move forward.

Vice Chair Hartung spoke about trying to make things work within the region's budget and emphasized the need to supplement funding by billing Medicaid, Medicare, or insurance for any clients with coverage. He discussed utilizing medical billing models and codes for any services provided.

Commissioner Jung thought case management was also an important component, along with the ability to scale down operations. She spoke about getting important data and following up with experts. She expressed optimism regarding the creativity and potential of the current models being discussed. Chair Lucey agreed scalability was critical and reiterated identifying populations who might be most easily helped could be an effective first step.

Commissioner Hill added that housing was an important component which still had not been figured out. She spoke about the RHA and federal housing programs, leveraging the CHAB or other similar organizations to help with the CoC, and bringing different organizations together to work as a cohesive group to tackle goals suggested by Built for Zero. She noted the lack of affordable housing in the region would continue to be problematic when clients in transitional housing became ready for more permanent housing.

Chair Lucey repeated his frustration at the lack of concerted efforts to address the region's overall problems. Vice Chair Hartung agreed assistance from community partners was needed for the housing component. He spoke about utilizing help from local businesses in need of a workforce pool or retraining unemployed individuals. He thought larger companies could help with this, though the C19 pandemic might have reduced their workforce need somewhat.

Chair Lucey discussed programming in New York that helped repeat court offenders receive placement through human services agencies. He discussed Reno's Downtown Business Improvement District, which helped employ and train formerly homeless individuals; the County currently employed former clients of the Crossroads program. He ensured staff had enough direction as a starting point, recapping that the County wanted to assert itself more into the discussion of homelessness. He said everything needed to be constructed around data.

Vice Chair Hartung said specific ideas should be discussed during a concurrent meeting so as to prevent the discussion from being too broad; otherwise people could become exhausted.

On the call for public comment, County Clerk Jan Galassini stated she had received two emails from Ms. Maeve Ambrose and Ms. Pam Roberts, which would be placed on the record.

As read by Ms. Galassini, Ms. Ambrose thanked the Board for its unanimous support of purchasing the Governor's Bowl and Wells Fargo properties. She felt the C19 pandemic imposed an overwhelming burden on people running existing

shelters, and this would likely continue to impact homeless individuals. She expressed concern about the source of funding for the new shelter, especially given that the County would be responsible for 69 percent of those costs. She opined a tax increase should not be considered, but rather money should be taken from other services for maintenance costs. She thought an automobile tax would impose a hardship on people who needed their vehicles for transportation.

Ms. Roberts' email indicated she encouraged the County to partner with the Cities of Reno and Sparks to address homelessness. She felt the CHAB should create a task force of representatives from each jurisdiction to research successful approaches and hold public workshops to solicit input from impacted stakeholders. She urged the County to work with relevant departments within the University of Nevada, Reno. She spoke about her time in the Nevada Attorney General's Office, the steps they took to protect the elderly, and the results of implementing their action plan. She thought technology and the Board's commitment could help improve the quality of life for all residents.

Mr. Hugh Ezzell congratulated Chair Lucey and Vice Chair Hartung on their roles. He felt discussion regarding fiscal issues had been somewhat lost in the conversation about data. He thought important community partners and residents were not involved enough in the discussions. He felt all Commissioners needed to attend meetings in person. He believed there was not enough data available, and staff needed to work on the problems of homelessness, including figuring out the causes of the problems. Some individuals had lost housing due to losing their jobs; others were chronically homeless and did not want help. He did not think the problem of homelessness could be solved with the wave of a wand, and he hoped the Board would prioritize the issues.

Chair Lucey said there had been robust discussion regarding how to move forward. He spoke about finding funding for solutions, the involvement of the public, and the careful use of tax dollars. Ms. Olsen suggested the Board recess briefly as the discussion had taken longer than anticipated. Vice Chair Hartung first wanted to know whether there were any expectations or requests for staff.

Chair Lucey indicated the workshop had been intended for dialog so staff could gain an understanding of the Board's overall goals; more specific conversation could be planned for future agendas. He reminded everyone to keep in mind what had been discussed during the strategic planning session as the year progressed so staff would be able to prioritize and focus on the Board's overall goals. Vice Chair Hartung agreed prioritization was key.

**10:38 a.m.**    **The Board recessed.**

**10:42 a.m.**    **The Board reconvened with all Commissioners present.**

**21-0052**      **5.B. Strategic Direction #2:** Appointed Boards and Commissions.

Ms. Olsen asked whether there were specific boards or commissions the BCC would like to see addressed or what the areas of concern might be. Assistant District Attorney David Watts-Vial conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. He reviewed slides with the following titles: BCC Appoints Members; BCC may be member or liaison; and Discussion.

Mr. Watts-Vial explained the County Commissioners each sat on various Boards as well as approved the appointment of members to public boards and committees. Commissioners received staff reports regarding the history and purpose of each board when appointments were needed, and at times, there had been questions regarding each board's operations, limits, or authority; these questions sometimes went beyond the scope of what was listed on the agenda or required further research. Mr. Watts-Vial noted he wanted to give Commissioners the ability to look at the different boards and identify which ones they needed more information on or had questions about. He noted that, at the bottom of the list on Slide 10, the Nevada Local Justice Reinvestment Coordinating Council would be formed in the summer after the Board made two appointments. They would provide input on criminal justice issues important to the County and provide them to the Nevada Sentencing Commission.

Vice Chair Hartung thought it would be helpful to have a brief description of what each board did. He thought the Board of Adjustment (BOA) and the Board of Equalization (BOE), for example, had names which might not convey their purposes effectively.

Commissioner Herman felt the public needed to be more involved in local government, and each board needed to have a clear and specific purpose. She enjoyed hearing ideas from community members and having them share their thoughts. She believed the selection process for board members needed to be more serious. Rather than just having candidate names appear on an agenda for the BCC to select and appoint, she wanted more notice and the ability to interview candidates if Commissioners so desired.

Commissioner Jung agreed that, when non-elected individuals were considered for board appointments, it was important that the Board have more information regarding their background, and the Commissioners should consider whether those positions should be elected or part of a citizen advisory board (CAB). She noted CABs were very different from planning commissions. In her experience, citizen boards were sometimes not properly equipped or empowered, and members did not always feel they could speak up. She spoke about issues that could be appealed and the composition of the Board of Health. She thought additional public education regarding the different boards might be needed. If there were no complaints, she said, the BCC might think a board was doing well, but that was not always the case. Regarding the names and purposes of each board, she wondered whether marketing could be done or names could be changed. She indicated some citizens just beginning to learn about local government might not realize what the BOE did simply from its title. She suspected there might be more applicants if the

region's boards had more self-explanatory titles, and she agreed the BCC could do a better job of screening applicants.

Commissioner Jung stated the involvement of other municipalities was sometimes necessary with certain boards, but she wondered how this should work for the boards which were funded exclusively by the County. She remarked she had not often seen staff using the boards she served on for advisory purposes; often, board members had nothing to say other than "okay" before moving to the next subject. She thought boards should be figuring out difficult issues at a grassroots level, as the board members worked for the citizens to make decisions and inform other citizens. She did not have a solution but wanted to share her concerns. She admitted she was uncertain as to the direction that should be taken.

Commissioner Hill thought staff should investigate times when few people applied for appointed board positions. She felt there had to be a way to get people excited about being part of the County. She suggested further outreach or providing clearer descriptions of the board's purposes and the length of the appointments. She noted the City of Reno provided an educational class to teach interested citizens about city offices and functions, wondering whether Washoe County could do something similar.

Chair Lucey said the other Commissioners made good points. He agreed it was not ideal to receive packets only a few days prior to a meeting, or to evaluate candidates they might not have met in person based on short biographies and applications rather than full resumes. He expressed concern regarding the magnitude of some of the decisions these appointed representatives were responsible for, and the potential cost implications to taxpayers. He noted some boards had appeal processes which could become expensive, while other boards did not even have appeal processes available. He agreed more citizen involvement was needed. He added the Community Services Department had done a great job getting information out to the community in recent years, but outreach was still not as extensive as it could be.

Commissioner Jung thought the contact information provided by public commenters when they signed in to speak at meetings might be useful for outreach purposes. She suggested staff ask those who attended meetings to share their thoughts and include information regarding various boards and openings in those communications. She thought good opportunities for outreach were being missed.

Commissioner Herman reiterated the importance of training for citizens interested in serving on CABs or Neighborhood Advisory Boards. Chair Lucey agreed training was important, and he thought most community members might not know exactly what went into being a County Commissioner or the processes of a board meeting. He appreciated Commissioner Jung's suggestion regarding the utilization of contact information provided by public commenters for outreach. He discussed accountability and oversight, wondering whether some decisions should be made directly by the BCC or whether appeal processes were needed in certain situations.

Ms. Olsen summarized the points Commissioners and staff had brought up, including the selection of board appointees, the makeup of citizen boards, increasing public engagement, and utilizing the input of board members for advisory purposes. Chair Lucey recalled some of these points had been brought up during previous strategic planning sessions, but nothing seemed to have changed dramatically. He hoped this might change in the future.

Mr. Brown explained it might take some time to provide descriptions of every board on the list. He asked whether there were any which might be a higher priority than others. Vice Chair Hartung reiterated many citizens probably could not ascertain what the BOE or BOA did by those boards' titles alone. Commissioner Herman expressed concern regarding the amount of work it would take for staff to provide all requested descriptions, suggesting this could be provided each time a board needed a new appointee rather than all at once.

Chair Lucey thought it was possible to obtain a quick synopsis of each board's function and purpose, but a deeper dive would likely be needed prior to each new appointment. To Mr. Brown, he replied the Planning Commission, the BOA, and the Board of Health had been specifically mentioned, and he felt information on the open space and parks or animal advisory boards would also be useful. He asked whether there were other boards Commissioners wanted to prioritize.

Commissioner Herman thought there might be some information already available on the County's website. Vice Chair Hartung suggested some boards, such as the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency or the Regional Transportation Commission, could provide their own descriptions.

Manager Brown clarified he needed to know which boards staff should address first. He noted each board's description would also need to be double-checked to make sure it was current and correct.

Chair Lucey wanted to know whether some boards could be consolidated. He spoke about how active each board was, noting that members of boards which met once per quarter to discuss just a few items were less likely to be actively involved. He insisted citizen participants would want to know their roles so their time was being spent appropriately.

Commissioner Hill discussed active recruitment and other outreach methods, such as social media, to get the community interested. She thought staff members could be more actively involved in the outreach process as well.

Vice Chair Hartung recalled the PC had taken over some roles in 2008 that had formerly belonged to the BOA. He mentioned it would not be good to consolidate boards which already had long meetings as members might become overwhelmed. He also thought it would be useful to have information regarding which board functions were defined by Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS).

Chair Lucey discussed terms and the active involvement of community members who served on the boards and made decisions. Commissioner Jung asked whether an agenda item was needed to discuss reimagining the Washoe Leadership Academy, which had been disbanded during a previous economic downturn. She thought citizens were eager to be involved and connected, and she imagined the old academy model could be updated to engage the community. She suggested this discussion be placed on a future agenda.

Ms. Olsen summarized the action items, including providing board descriptions and whether each board was mentioned in the NRS. Staff would also work to provide more detailed information on the various boards each time a new appointment came up, as well as considering whether certain boards could be combined to improve efficiency. She also noted Commissioner Jung's request to consider reactivating the Washoe Leadership Academy.

On the call for public comment, Ms. Galassini read a portion of an email submitted by Ms. Pam Roberts, in which Ms. Roberts expressed concern about the procedure for appointing members to boards. She noted the BCC delegated the responsibility of appointing CAB members to the specific Commissioner who served in that CAB's district. She remarked she had applied for a position on the Warm Springs Rural CAB the last two years and provided examples of why she felt the appointment of that CAB's members should not be made solely by Commissioner Herman. She cited several sections of the NRS to back up her points. She expressed frustration about the Commissioner's alleged involvement with the development of an unincorporated town in the Warm Springs area. When the three-minute public comment time limit expired, Ms. Galassini noted the remainder of the message would be placed on file.

**21-0053**      **5.C. Strategic Direction #3:** Health District Board Structure.

Ms. Olsen introduced the next topic, which was a discussion regarding the District Board of Health (DBH) structure.

Mr. Brown conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. He reviewed the slides titled Health Boards Comparison and Discussion. He noted the agenda for the concurrent meeting scheduled for January 20 included a discussion about a possible restructuring of the DBH. He mentioned the structures of the boards for both the Washoe County and Clark County Health Districts were established in the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS). Discussion at meetings between jurisdictions thus far had considered whether an effort should be made to increase elected official representation on the Washoe County DBH. The interlocal agreement was currently being revised so both appointed representatives could be elected officials if the jurisdictions chose. Legal analysis of the statutes governing the setup of the DBH had determined the number of board members could not be changed; however, changes could be made to the way representation was laid out.

Mr. Brown mentioned any proposed changes or amendments to the current interlocal agreement would need to be announced by October 7, 2021 in order to give sufficient time for implementation by January 1 the following year. There had also been discussion regarding rebranding the Washoe County Health District. For example, the Southern Nevada Health District had a broader reach than just the boundaries of Clark County. There had been much energy behind the possibility of considering a similar approach with the Washoe County Health District.

Chair Lucey thought Mr. Brown had done a great job covering the issues in a careful yet effective way, while conveying the BCC's concerns with the current construct. The Chair requested further discussion prior to the upcoming concurrent meeting, noting some changes could be made immediately while others would need to wait until December due to the way the agreement had been drafted.

Vice Chair Hartung said issues regarding board membership could be worked through with regional partners. He noted membership issues had caused some angst, and he thought the Health District needed to be rebranded regionally, suggesting a name such as the Northern Nevada Health District or Western Nevada Health District. He noted the BCC did not have authority over the DBH itself.

Commissioner Jung was not certain the suggested changes were something everyone wanted. She said the County funded the DBH in its entirety, and she had worked for many years to lower the general fund transfer. She spoke regarding the possibility of making the DBH regional and whether the County wanted full responsibility for it. If so, discussions regarding the budget, including possible franchise fees and the pros and cons, would be needed.

Chair Lucey concurred. He discussed accountability and the construct of the DBH membership. He expressed frustration that the members made important decisions which impacted the entire community, but local officials received emails and phone calls when citizens were unhappy with the DBH's choices. He wanted to know where his representation was. He was concerned that representatives of all three municipalities, when voting a certain way, could be outvoted by the citizen members of the board representing only themselves rather than a district or ward.

Vice Chair Hartung wondered whether the DBH's leadership hierarchy was defined by NRS or if there was a way to ensure the board's Chairperson was an elected official. Commissioner Jung expressed support for that idea.

Mr. Brown recalled the subject might have been discussed previously with Mr. Watts-Vial, who said staff could investigate the possibility. Vice Chair Hartung felt this would be a good step to begin moving forward.

Chair Lucey restated the importance of accountability. He recalled when the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors' Authority implemented a new tax and changed their board structure to ensure the Chairperson was always an elected official. The DBH Chair

would run meetings, set agendas, and work with staff. Currently, he said, both the DBH Chair and Vice Chair were not elected officials. He expressed concern regarding a possible lack of accountability and the fact that they could not be voted out of their positions. To add to Vice Chair Hartung's point, he agreed there were certain steps which could be taken immediately to improve the situation, and larger changes, such as structuring the entire board to be more like Clark County's, could be worked on over time.

Chair Lucey believed all three municipalities agreed representation should be changed to include at least two members from each municipality, or, as was currently the case in Clark County, to a 9-member board which included two representatives from each municipality, plus a physician and someone representing local industry such as restaurants, gaming, and small businesses. He thought this would allow a public presence with industry-specific knowledge to remain a part of the DBH, while ensuring that the majority of individuals on the board were elected officials. He wanted to look into this possibility and considered recommending it at the BCC's next meeting. Vice Chair Hartung expressed agreement.

Commissioner Jung recognized the importance of considering who should have authority over a board as dictated by who funded that board, while at the same time acknowledging the social and emotional impact of having leaders from other jurisdictions taking part in and explaining the joint decisions. She felt the other jurisdictions would argue the County should take over, which she agreed with as long as the County also maintain power and all jurisdictions were working in the same direction.

Chair Lucey spoke about fostering a sense of involvement in the community and whether the County should continue to fund the largest portion of certain programs without also having the largest share of decision-making ability. He reiterated staff should move forward with ensuring most representatives on the DBH were elected officials. Other issues could be worked on as the year progressed, with changes to be effective January 1.

Ms. Olsen summarized the ideas discussed: rebranding the Washoe County Health District, working to ensure the Chair and Vice Chair of the DBH were elected officials, and exploring the possibility of expanding the number of board members.

Vice Chair Hartung thought it would be good for the public to know about the appeal processes available. Chair Lucey suggested considering whether the appeal process should be changed or updated. Mr. Brown noted this would be included in the staff report for the upcoming concurrent meeting.

Chair Lucey noted the time and suggested the Board recess at noon for lunch. Ms. Olsen recommended moving to the financial outlook portion of the agenda.

There was no public comment on this agenda item.

**21-0054**      **AGENDA ITEM 6** Financial Outlook.

Via Zoom, Assistant County Manager Christine Vuletich shared a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. She reviewed slides with the following titles: Maintaining Stability in a Time of Uncertainty; FY 2020 Year-end Results; How Much Fund Balance is Needed?; and Components of Fund Balance. She described how the County's budget had been positively impacted by the federal stimulus and pent-up economic demand after the spring shutdowns. Staff had taken measures to prepare for possible economic fallout as a result of the COVID-19 (C19) pandemic, including reducing transfer-outs and deferring projects which had not yet begun, but pent-up demand after shutdowns, combined with the stimulus, had actually resulted in a large fund balance.

Ms. Vuletich explained that property taxes, the County's largest revenue source, did not always come in equal increments over the year; the period from March to August 2020 had been somewhat dry. Nonetheless, the County's bond ratings had recently been upgraded, which she thought was a great outcome considering the pandemic. However, she cautioned that continued consecutive reductions and volatility or extreme deviations from the planned budget could result in the County being put on a fiscal watch or even a financial takeover by the State of Nevada, as had happened in White Pine County.

Ms. Vuletich spoke about the County's fund balance. \$23.8 million of that balance was currently restricted for a property tax refund settlement, which was the Treasurer's estimate of the County's share of the \$56 million total settlement that would need to be paid. Also committed were funds for administrative programs and assigned purchase orders not yet completed. Approximately 15 percent of the budget was currently unassigned.

Budget Manager Lori Cooke reviewed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Mid-Year Review slide. She discussed how the County would finish up the year. She noted that, because the budget had been formulated and adopted during the height of the spring shutdowns and unemployment, revenue expectations had been adjusted to account for the uncertainty of the impact. Washoe County was currently in a good position, which Ms. Cooke noted was due in part to significant reductions and cost-saving measures taken in the beginning of the C19 pandemic. The consolidated tax (C-tax), which was Washoe County's second-largest revenue source, had come in higher than anticipated. She noted fiscal shifts after the 2020 presidential election were still possible because of changes to the administration, and it was not yet known whether there might be an additional stimulus package. She explained there were currently no direct funding allocations planned for local governments in the latest proposed bill. Due to emergency response expenses and other costs, as well as the continued economic uncertainty, staff continued to monitor developments.

Ms. Vuletich continued the PowerPoint presentation by reviewing the following slides: Outlook: Uncertainty & Maintain Stability and Economic Outlook (3 slides). She mentioned concerns regarding unfunded mandates, saying she heard the

previous day that the State of Nevada was in dire straits with funding, asking departments to cut 12 percent from their budgets going into FY22. She admitted there were several unknowns and the future economic outlook was still murky. Though the economy had rebounded in the latter part of 2020 with eight months of job growth, that was reversed in December 2020 with a net loss of 140,000 non-farm jobs. Much of this had been driven by the C19 pandemic via business restrictions, stay-at-home orders, and impacts to the leisure and hospitality industries, all of which caused a loss of 500,000 jobs. There were still 3.9 million fewer jobs than there had been prior to C19. The government, education, and healthcare sectors had also lost 5,000 jobs, and nearly all labor markets were showing signs of weakness.

Ms. Vuletich said Washoe County had been very fortunate. December's numbers for Nevada would be available the following week, but while Clark County recently hit a 11.5 percent unemployment rate, Washoe County was holding at 5.4 percent. She believed Washoe County performed better than some areas due to its diverse economy. She said the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding had not been announced when staff put together the FY21 budget in early 2020, and there had been much uncertainty as to when businesses would be allowed to reopen. The economy began improving in May; hopes were high that these trends would continue, but there was no guarantee that would be the case.

Ms. Vuletich mentioned online sales had increased dramatically during the pandemic. Governments had been concerned about online sales for years as they had not been able to charge tax if a seller did not have a physical business presence in their state. A court ruling in 2018 changed this. In 2020, online sales had increased 84.3 percent over the same period the previous year. However, with C19 still looming, there had also been a decline of one-half percent in economic indicators, due to reduced gaming activity.

Ms. Cooke concluded the presentation by reviewing slides with the following titles: FY 2022 Budget Outlook (3 slides); Next Steps; and Questions. She explained the FY22 budget outlook, stating allocations made the previous year would carry forward with no changes. The Public Employees' Retirement System had increased its split with employees, and half of this was under employers' purview. An interlocal agreement was being worked on and staff was waiting on more updates from County departments. The BCC had approved projects, and funds had been utilized from the CIP balance; the stabilization reserve would become part of the restricted balance as it was not available for operations. Staff would not know exactly what to anticipate for June C-tax until August but would keep an eye on it. There were still many unknowns which could impact taxable sales and, though there were one-time resources that could be utilized if needed, this would not necessarily cover everything. Budget meetings would be held before the end of March, when more details would be available. Keeping everyone updated on the County's fiscal situation was paramount. She said staff could provide updates more often if needed, but they would not have property tax estimates or a pro forma from the State until between mid-February and late March.

Chair Lucey thanked Ms. Cooke and Ms. Vuletich for the information and said the Board could request more time with staff if any questions arose.

There was no public comment on this agenda item.

**12:14 p.m.**    **The Board recessed.**

**12:49 p.m.**    **The Board reconvened with all Commissioners present.**

Chair Lucey noted there had been no public commenters signed in to speak on Agenda Item 6 prior to the Board's recess.

**21-0055**        **5.D. Strategic Direction #4:** Supplemental Government Services Tax.

Erica Olsen, Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of OnStrategy and facilitator for the workshop, advised there were two discussion topics remaining.

Assistant County Manager Christine Vuletich conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. She reviewed slides with the following titles: Background; Allowable Uses; SB11; and Discussion. She explained taxable vehicle sales were one of the largest sources of revenue for the County each year. She said these taxes did not hold through every year and did not have to go on a ballot to be approved; they could be implemented by regular ordinance, which would require first and second readings. She commented other agencies were also looking for revenue. Currently, only the County could impose these taxes, but the potential approval of a new bill in Legislature could allow the Cities of Reno and Sparks to also do so. She was not certain where the bill would go or what the allowable uses for those taxes would be.

Government Affairs Liaison Jamie Rodriguez provided a quick overview of Senate Bill (SB) 11. She commented there had been a bill draft request (BDR) discussion at the Reno City Council's August 26, 2020 meeting, where they expressed interest in implementing a supplemental government services tax (SGST) to help with the cost of providing human services and addressing homelessness. The topic had been postponed until after the recent concurrent meeting about the Nevada Cares facility. If the City of Reno implemented a SGST, she noted, Washoe County could also implement one, but only in the unincorporated areas of the County. It was unclear whether the tax could also be implemented for Sparks residents. She felt it was a matter of which entity decided to implement it first; if the County did so, the City of Reno could not, and vice versa. If the City of Reno proceeded with the SGST, however, she cautioned they could act on it quickly.

Chair Lucey asked whether the City of Reno currently received any portion of the government services tax (GST). He thought Washoe County utilized it to pay for the Regional Emergency Operations Center and other needs. Budget Manager Lori Cooke responded the current basic GST rolled through C-tax distribution through the State of Nevada and was distributed per a formula, with the Cities each receiving a portion. She

mentioned the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) held back a 6 percent administrative fee for collecting and submitting to the Department of Taxation.

Chair Lucey said the bill would go through the Government Affairs Committee. Commissioner Jung requested information regarding what administrative fees the County charged other jurisdictions, if any. She indicated the State of Nevada, with a 12 percent budget gap, would soon pass some of its budgetary burden onto local governments, and the County would need to do whatever it could to collect revenues.

On the call for public comment, Mr. Hugh Ezzell spoke about the subjects discussed during the strategic planning workshop. He said the fight over money with other jurisdictions was nothing new, and he suggested the County tighten its belt further, reminding the Board that constituents, too, were struggling financially. He opined residents were not being considered, noting the worsening unemployment rate and housing crisis.

Mr. Kenji Otto spoke about being retired and on a set income, and how added taxes would impact his household. He considered selling their home and moving to a different county, though he said his wife would prefer not to do that. He stated he would not buy another car in Washoe County if new taxes were implemented. He knew many citizens in similar financial situations would also be hurt, and he said the County and its Commissioners would lose both residents and votes by imposing additional taxes.

Ms. Galassini read an emailed comment submitted by Ms. Teresa Scalise, in which Ms. Scalise stated the tax was a bad idea, especially for struggling households and those on a fixed income. She said vehicle registrations were already taxed, and this new tax could force people to sell their vehicles. She asked the Board to vote no.

Via the Zoom app, Ms. Gina St. Dores commented she had been a resident since 1992. She spoke about the region's growing housing issues and job loss, opining that lockdowns were stifling economic recovery. She believed the economy needed to be carefully reopened. She suggested hiring temporary workers to do C19 cleaning and distribution of personal protective equipment, which she felt would help improve the economy while addressing the health crisis. She opined adding a SGST was inconsiderate of constituents who did not know where their next income would come from; it would also be an added burden to those seeking employment or struggling with housing costs. She hoped the Board would consider more productive solutions rather than implementing additional taxes.

Vice Chair Hartung recalled owning a business during the great recession, the huge job losses that had occurred during that time, and how unemployment statistics had not accounted for all the business owners who were struggling or had lost work. Although the SGST would be based on vehicle manufacturers' recommended sales prices, he said, there was no real connection between vehicle drivers and the region's homelessness issues; he preferred taxes be applied to and used to pay for similar things. For example, he would likely be supportive of a tax enacted on vehicles in order to pay for the region's road systems. He suggested asking voters what they wanted. He recognized

the City of Reno was also trying to enact the taxes, but he was not in favor of the County doing so just to get it done before the City could. He felt implementing a SGST during a time of economic difficulty would be unwise.

Commissioner Jung expressed doubt that the average resident in her district spent \$30,000 or \$40,000 on their vehicles. Chair Lucey indicated he did not want the County to take a position on the SGST currently. The subject had been brought forward for discussion because it had come up so many times as a possible answer for funding, and discussion was needed regarding the reasons the Commissioners supported or did not support the tax. He felt it was important to consider potential benefits and drawbacks.

Ms. Olsen asked whether there was a possible scenario where such a tax made sense. Chair Lucey said that would be a broad discussion.

Commissioner Herman indicated she had received many phone calls from citizens hearing about a potential new tax. She said she did not want to create more homelessness, worrying that a new vehicle tax might be the difference between keeping some people on or off the roads and therefore employed. She indicated she would not vote for something that would put more people in a situation the region was working so hard to cure, and she opined the money had to be found some other way.

Chair Lucey said it would be great to have money laying around to fund all sorts of things, but a tax was a tax. The SGST would have to be paid not only when residents purchased vehicles, but also every year as they registered. 24 departments, from Public Safety to the Human Services Agency to the courts, were against implementation of the SGST. He did not think it was a great idea but reiterated the discussion was necessary.

Commissioner Hill noted Vice Chair Hartung had brought up two points. If the tax were to be used for road construction because it generated actual revenue on the County's roads, it might make sense because jobs would be created by those projects. She noted jobs were created by supporting the region's homelessness services as well. She thought the County might be okay with the revenues it currently had, and she expressed hesitance to support a SGST unless there was both a clear budget deficit and a direct correlation between the new tax and the services it would fund for the community.

Chair Lucey expressed concern that, if passed, SB11 would become a State law, and not only the City of Reno but any incorporated Nevada cities could implement the tax. He thought the bill had the potential to be devastating and it could set a bad precedent as drafted. As a Commissioner, he could not tell the State how to manage its affairs, just as the Commissioners would never allow the City to tell them how to run the County. He reiterated discomfort with the bill, saying it needed more work regardless of whether the Board supported moving forward with a SGST.

Commissioner Jung indicated that any city imposing such a tax would be asked to contribute more for the region's homelessness services, the Board of Health, and forensic services, for example. She noted they had other outstanding bills not yet paid.

Chair Lucey spoke about renovating rules and regulations that had been drafted more than 40 years ago. He realized Washoe County was growing, and along with that growth came larger regional needs; he stated the County needed to operate as such. The Chair wanted things run like a business, without handshake deals. He believed there was already little trust in government and it would only be further undermined if the County were to enact a tax residents could not even see. He asked whether the City's budget was truly efficient, saying they should earn back the trust of the community and work to safely reopen businesses before trying to enact new taxes.

Commissioner Hill indicated the SGST was a regressive tax which was likely to unfairly impact the more vulnerable members of the community. She stated she was a proponent of taxes, felt that local governments needed more revenue, and understood that the City of Reno was struggling with its budget. However, she thought something more along the lines of a property tax would be more appropriate and would have less of an impact on those residents who were already struggling to survive.

Vice Chair Hartung added enabling an SGST would cost a lot for businesses in the region with vehicle fleets. Those costs would then be passed on to customers, which would affect the local economy. He recalled the advisory question had failed by 59 percent. He said he was taking his position because it had to do with fiscal responsibility.

Commissioner Herman stated she did not want it on her conscience if constituents were driven to homelessness as a result of such a tax. She knew many residents' vehicles were barely holding together as it was, and an added tax burden every year would be one more thing residents struggled to afford.

Chair Lucey said it was never fun to tell departments they had to make cuts, but it had to be done at times. Without additional taxes imposed, revenues would decrease and the County would not be able to provide as many services and citizens could suffer. During the recession, he recalled, many cuts had been made and impacts from those cuts had been felt for years. 51 percent of the County's budget came from property taxes; as capital markets rebounded, growth of between 6 and 7 percent could happen, but the County could not increase taxes that quickly. The Board had frequently discussed secondary revenue sources, including gas or vehicle taxes. Staff could work to become more efficient, but efficiency could only go so far. He knew the conversation was tough to have, but he believed it was prudent to discuss such concerns.

The Chair reminded everyone that flooding issues persisted in the North Valleys, and even the rainy-day fund was insufficient to cover the remaining costs. He noted there were still individuals in those parts of the County who felt they had not received the response they needed. These types of problems would persist. The budget would always be constrained, and he said it would be up to the discretion of the voters to make tough decisions.

Vice Chair Hartung believed businesses needed to be in control of their costs. If a business owner provided a quote a customer did not like, that customer had the

option to shop around. In government, however, this was not always possible. He advocated caution and expressed appreciation for the discussion regarding a difficult subject. He noted that, even after putting 145,000 miles on his car, it was still expensive to register each year, but he budgeted each year for that expense. He also agreed the SGST would disproportionately affect those in the County at the lower end of the income spectrum. He knew there were senior citizens who sometimes had to go without certain things so they could afford other expenses, and this was the nature of a fixed-income lifestyle, as Social Security was not increasing commensurate with inflation.

Chair Lucey thought Commissioner Jung had brought up a good point, and he wondered why the DMV received a 6 percent fee just for collecting taxes. If the County also had to do administrative work to deploy taxes for the Cities of Reno or Sparks, he wondered, could it also charge a fee like the DMV? He said the County paid more than any other entity, yet the other municipalities never seemed satisfied with their revenues and were always seeking more. He knew their structures were different and they relied more on C-tax than property taxes, but he felt it was important to stay within a budget.

Commissioner Hill indicated the City of Reno potentially enacting the SGST to put more funding towards homelessness services might help. Commissioner Jung indicated she might support this. Commissioner Hill continued that money put towards the region's Continuum of Care (CoC) could help the bigger picture overall. However, she said, the County was not prepared to enact additional taxes on every citizen. She hoped staff would approach the Legislature to advocate for non-regressive taxes that could help with the long-term picture overall.

Chair Lucey indicated discussions regarding taxes were always difficult and he could not think of a specific scenario where a SGST made sense to him. He noted there was a gas tax for road improvements and government needs, and he reiterated he simply could not support the SGST with the current C19 pandemic, which had resulted in increasing unemployment, homelessness, and struggling businesses.

Mr. Brown mentioned he heard people pose the question of why an entity would impose a SGST if the \$13 million it would generate would be used to defray the \$8 million in homelessness expenses; this was not his recommendation. Vice Chair Hartung responded by inquiring about the benefit to drivers. Mr. Brown admitted they would not receive a benefit; he was merely explaining this was something Statute allowed the County to do. Vice Chair Hartung said taxing one group to pay for another did not make sense to him. He acknowledged the region's vehicle tax structures would need to be changed at some point. As combustion vehicles decreased in popularity and people spent less on gas, there would need to be other ways for the County to receive taxes that covered the cost of road construction and maintenance. However, currently, he did not think an added tax was the solution.

If the County moved forward with the CoC, Commissioner Hill remarked, consolidation of services might be possible, which could lead to longer-term savings. She looked forward to the auditing committee reviewing how homeless services were being

provided so staff could show how the funding went directly to helping people who were homeless or struggling with housing needs. She indicated citizens could be shown these were direct expenses which benefitted the community.

There was no action taken on this agenda item.

**21-0056**      **AGENDA ITEM 7** Board of County Commissioners Rules and Procedures.

Chair Lucey stated the census had recently been completed and he hoped to receive information soon as to how the County was growing. He opined Washoe County would need to begin acting like the sizeable county it was becoming, including the operations of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). He explained each Commissioner operated differently, and he believed changing the Chair and Vice Chair each year put staff at a disadvantage, causing them to have to readjust frequently. He suggested the terms of these positions be changed from one to two years. He opined the Chair should be a Commissioner who could control the business of the BCC. He said every Commissioner's vote should have equal value, and any Commissioner could request to have an item added to an agenda. He recommended each Chair serve for a period of 24 months, beginning in even years, leading through election cycles and Legislative sessions before retiring the position. He felt this would improve consistency with staff by developing an understanding of each Chair's style and manner of operation. With the County's issues becoming larger, he opined, regular changes to the structure of the BCC could be problematic.

Chair Lucey brought up communication and how the Commissioners preferred to work with staff. He said it was the Commissioners' job to act as an intermediary for the public in each of their districts, and to relay the challenges and frustrations of their constituents to staff so the County could be functionally effective. This went back to trust in government and the need to be effective tools for the constituents they served. Each individual Commissioner's communication preferences should be considered, and he recalled Commissioner Herman's desire to receive agenda packets earlier to give her more time to digest it. He wanted more than just a weekend to review and read through information, do background research, and reach out to citizens who might be impacted. He added that the rules of the Clark County Board of Commissioners specified the Chair would elect members of each board they represented.

While the BCC could not elect chairs or vice chairs for all boards, Chair Lucey continued, he felt they should be allowed to select the leaders of any boards that Washoe County funded the majority of or assumed control of, such as the District Board of Health or the Community Homelessness Advisory Board. He said the BCC knew which of its members were most experienced in certain subjects, like Vice Chair Hartung with water resources. Since they knew the strengths among them, Chair Lucey opined the BCC members should also be able to discuss the best ways to place Commissioners as members of boards throughout the community. He felt the structure had not been available for the Board to do this in the past. He continued Commissioner Herman was excellent in working

with the County's rural residents and advocating for individuals. He thought a broader discussion regarding structure would give staff a better springboard. He noted each Commissioner had a busy schedule and there was nothing part-time about the job, though they still managed to fit it into their lives. He thought it would help the Board's structure to consider retaining each Chair and Vice Chair for a 24-month term, beginning in January on even years. This would allow the Commission to really work towards solving issues and working with staff and management effectively.

Commissioner Jung felt things were being done more strategically and effectively than in the past, and the best person for each role should be deployed. She had no problem supporting a two-year term for the Chair and Vice Chair, as it would help them build stronger relationships with peers and staff. She indicated she wanted to make sure staff understood a Mayor was a different role than a Chair, and she had no problem with longevity as long as staff did not treat her differently.

Chair Lucey hoped every staff member always treated the Commissioners equally, as each one of them served at the benefit of the public and their concerns should be equally valued. Vice Chair Hartung concurred, adding the Board should elect the Chair they felt was best for the job, and the Vice Chair should not just directly ascend but be voted into the role. He served as the Chair on a number of boards, including TMWA, the Flood Management Committee, and the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency, as well as the Vice Chair on other boards. He said the job of the Chair was to be the presiding officer facilitating decisions by the board. He clarified a Chair was not the same as a Mayor since they were still a Commissioner, not ranking any higher than any other member of the Board.

Chair Lucey agreed the roles of Chair and Vice Chair were more responsibilities than titles. He said rules could be suspended and any Commissioner could request an agenda item to do a revote of any Board officers they felt were being ineffective. The role of Chair was to act as an intermediary between the BCC and the public, and make sure staff was working to support the Board's discussions. He took the role seriously, he said, and wanted to put in the extra time and effort so the Board could be effectively structured. During elections and Legislative sessions, the role was even more important, and he recalled working on BDRs just before the Board switched Chairs; while one Chair started part of the process, another had to finish it.

Vice Chair Hartung agreed the suggested changes would be best for continuity. Chair Lucey noted citizens often seemed to have no idea who was running the Board as it changed so frequently. Commissioner Jung added that changing the Chair and Vice Chair so often increased the cost of doing business.

Vice Chair Hartung asked whether the Board, after listening to public comment, would vote on each of the five bullet points summarized by Ms. Olsen in the presentation. Chair Lucey responded they were stylized to take action broadly on the Commission rules and procedures.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Vice Chair Hartung reiterated his support for the changes to the terms of the Chair and Vice Chair roles as well as Commissioners receiving packets earlier so they could review candidate information more thoroughly in preparation for appointing individuals to different boards. Chair Lucey asked whether Assistant District Attorney David Watts-Vial had suggestions on when or where to implement the suggested changes.

Mr. Watts-Vial opined the discussions had been broad and, because the agenda item had been noticed as being for possible action, he suggested staff prepare changes which the Board could vote on as soon as the next meeting, so comment could be allowed on the recommendations. He added that, since the Board was discussing beginning the Chair's 24-month term in even years, he felt odd years might be better since elections were done in even years. In the event the Chair up for election ended up being voted out, another vote would need to be done. He thought staff and the Board should consider the potential ramifications in such circumstances and perhaps discuss further.

Chair Lucey expressed appreciation for Mr. Watts-Vial's feedback, but felt it was important that the Chair remain consistent when working on BDRs all the way through the Legislative session. He acknowledged a Chair could lose his or her seat, but he believed the Commissioners could communicate with one another regarding effectiveness. He did not recall the Board ever electing a Chair who was coming up for election; they elected Chairs who could fulfill the remainder of their term. Each of the Commissioners were on different cycles, and he thought there were ways to address any concerns that came up. He stated he was okay foregoing a motion that day, to be brought back at the next business meeting to allow citizens time to participate and improve trust in government.

Vice Chair Hartung said he was ready to take action on the policies that pertained to the BCC and its structure. He saw no need to delay it or give staff more to do.

Chair Lucey proposed a motion to amend the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners Rules and Procedures to reflect that the term of the Chair should be for two years, to be elected on an even year. Further, the Vice Chair should also be voted on and not automatically ascend to the Chair position. He stated appointments to boards and commissions should be made at the recommendation of the Chair in an effort to deploy Commissioners in the most effective manner throughout the community, if approved by the Commissioners during a vote.

Vice Chair Hartung seconded the motion but additionally felt the Board should be able to overrule the Chair's recommended appointment to a community board or commission if the Commissioners did not see eye-to-eye with the Chair. Chair Lucey agreed. Commissioner Hill added that individual Commissioners could take a vote on one appointment as opposed to being forced to vote on all appointments.

Chair Lucey amended his motion to reflect Vice Chair Hartung's comments. Vice Chair Hartung seconded the motion.

On motion by Chair Lucey, seconded by Vice Chair Hartung, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, it was ordered that the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners Rules and Procedures be amended to reflect that the term of the Chair should be for two years, or 24 months, to be elected on an even year. It was further ordered that the Vice Chair position should be voted on and the Vice Chair should not automatically ascend to be the Chair. Appointments to boards and commissions were ordered to be made at the recommendation of the Chair for a Commission vote to best deploy Commissioners in the most effective manner throughout the community. Lastly, it was ordered that the Board be allowed to overrule the Chair's recommendation for board and commission appointments.

Commissioner Hill asked whether the BCC had done the commission evaluation in the past as mentioned in Agenda Item 7.4. She felt it seemed strange and possibly unnecessary to do a self-evaluation. Chair Lucey remarked he had never done this.

Commissioner Jung explained the history of the self-evaluation, saying it was a way for Commissioners to point out when they were uncertain whether an individual or individuals in boards or commission positions were doing a good job and should continue in their role.

Vice Chair Hartung suggested a yearly evaluation reviewing whether various goals and objectives had been met should be done by the Board as a whole. Chair Lucey thought this could be done under the Announcements and Reports section of each agenda, where the Board could discuss what was upcoming or what had gone on in various community meetings. He thought the requirement for self-evaluation should be removed.

Vice Chair Hartung spoke about doing a sort of report card for the BCC. For example, money had been spent to upgrade the sewer plant, and one of his goals was to have the County be a leader in the subjects where he was knowledgeable. He thought it would be helpful to take a high-level look at the BCC's goals and objectives, as well as those of the Commissioners themselves, to evaluate what they had been able to achieve each year.

Chair Lucey said strategic planning meetings were a great opportunity to do that, or something like a State of the County update. He thought this report could come from the County Manager, noting Mr. Brown had provided a similar report during his evaluation the previous year. He thought an annual State of the County report from the Manager based on the BCC's goals from the previous year would be a good element to add to strategic planning workshops.

Commissioner Jung added that a better job could be done of explaining to taxpayers how their dollars were used for various improvements. She felt this would help to improve public trust in local government.

Ms. Olsen asked whether the Board wanted to address the subject of the meeting packets. Vice Chair Hartung expressed frustration about not always being aware

of everything going on with certain projects. He noted he would not want information regarding every permit, such as a resident requesting a permit to build a garage. Though he followed the Citizen Advisory Boards (CABs), sometimes certain things did not appear on CABs' agendas. He spoke about resurrecting dashboard reports and provided an example of a charter school in his district which had not been required to go through any boards or public approval processes because its type of use was allowed on the property in question. When signs were put up, constituents began contacting him with questions, but he did not have much information to provide them. He thought more communication on such issues would be beneficial. Though he knew staff was overwhelmed, it was very difficult to digest a full meeting packet when Commissioners received it the Friday before a scheduled meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. Brown asked what a more acceptable time frame for packets would be, adding that moving the date back would also likely impact the cutoff date for items to be added to each agenda. He thought the Commissioners' concerns were fair and it was always a balancing act. Since he had been with Washoe County, he had pushed for more flexibility, and if the BCC no longer wanted last-minute additions to the agenda, adjustments could be made at the staff level.

Vice Chair Hartung clarified he was not in favor of delaying processes as there was already a public perception that government moved at glacial speeds, but he was open to suggestions to remedy the problem.

Commissioner Hill stated the schedule for development items was usually known, and Commissioners and staff knew when bigger items were upcoming, but she understood it was also difficult to get the packets any earlier with the Board's schedule.

Chair Lucey suggested utilizing the Granicus system to allow Commissioners the ability to view upcoming agenda items, even if only in a draft or read-only status. He thought this would allow Commissioners to be versed in upcoming subjects in case constituents were to call about them. He agreed it was difficult to receive calls from the public regarding upcoming projects if Commissioners did not have much information themselves, noting misinformation often spread when that information was not yet available.

Vice Chair Hartung noted this would only pertain to upcoming agenda items. Chair Lucey said staff could fill Commissioners in on other issues such as those going to the Planning Commission or Board of Adjustment, which would not be on the BCC's agendas.

Vice Chair Hartung replied only appeals would be seen by members of the BCC, and Chair Lucey indicated it might be better for the Commissioners not to see every issue because some things went to other boards in order to maintain neutrality. If an issue progressed beyond a specific board and came to the BCC, however, Commissioners would then receive information on it.

Vice Chair Hartung remarked all the information was public information. He clarified he was not suggesting the Commissioners make decisions ahead of time, but rather they be able to understand which issues were in process in the community. He noted numerous subdivisions had been approved in Spanish Springs in the past, and he had known about them. Chair Lucey responded any knowledge staff had of things happening with the Cities of Reno or Sparks before the BCC did could impact their Districts.

Mr. Brown stated he was under the impression there could be legal exposure issues. Assistant District Attorney David Watts-Vial commented that Open Meeting Law (OML) dictated when Commissioners could view things; they were supposed to see information at the same time as the public. He indicated research would need to be done to find out whether the BCC could see information in advance without violating OML.

Regarding upcoming planning issues, Mr. Brown suggested holding monthly review meetings with relevant groups. Vice Chair Hartung remarked Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro used to do that prior to the pandemic. The Vice Chair thought the dashboard had been convenient and helped him to get a feel for various projects and issues in the community.

Chair Lucey believed each Commissioner probably had a different communication style; if Vice Chair Hartung needed a dashboard report, it would be important to provide that to him. The Chair requested constructive dialog regarding the most effective methods and types of communication for each Commissioner and the Board as a whole.

Vice Chair Hartung agreed, noting more new development was currently being planned or occurring in Districts 2, 4, and 5 than in Districts 1 and 3 due to the availability of land. He felt it was reasonable to determine what Commissioners needed in order to be informed and the best way to provide that information to them.

Chair Lucey said it would be beneficial to know about issues with any sort of fiscal impact, given the uncertainty with the County's financial outlook and future revenues, and the fact that every bill introduced at the Legislature came with a fiscal note. He indicated it was useful to see lists of grants and other incoming monies, how that money would be or was being spent, and whether there was funding available for other needs. Information regarding capital improvement projects was important to include. Commissioners needed to be able to evaluate large potential expenditures, such as a new courthouse, for example, while providing clear directives and feedback, and being mindful of both staff and community members' time. Vice Chair Hartung expressed agreement.

Ms. Olsen summarized the discussion for this item. Mr. Brown mentioned they were precluded from expanding the elected official presence on the District Board of Health. Chair Lucey said membership was currently based on the interlocal agreement, but expansion would be something that could be discussed in December if the Board chose to modify the agreement.

Vice Chair Hartung clarified discussion would be needed by October in order to make amendments by the deadline. Chair Lucey agreed and said he felt functionally better regarding the potential upcoming changes.

**21-0057**      **AGENDA ITEM 8** Public Comment.

Mr. Hugh Ezzell said he had heard good things from several Commissioners regarding the supplemental government services tax (SGST), and he felt the Chair was working hard to keep the County moving forward. He believed the number of citizens struggling financially outnumbered those who were not, and he hoped the Board would keep this in mind when considering the SGST. Regarding voting for expansion of boards, he did not think the best-qualified individual always got voted in. The position Dr. Anthony Fauci held was important, but Mr. Ezzell opined he was not the most qualified individual for the job. He urged the Board to find money elsewhere and only pay for the basic services County residents needed. He suggested reducing employee compensation to further cut costs rather than implementing an added tax. He compared government spending to the use of a credit card, and the County should not buy something it could not outright afford.

Mr. Kenji Otto said there was a time in his life when he was homeless. Most homeless individuals, he said, did not want to get off the streets quickly, and some even wanted to be there. He noted he had taken in a homeless veteran shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic began who stayed until Thanksgiving. He thought California was transporting homeless correctional residents to Reno, which he felt needed to be researched. He told a story about his time in government where he purchased 25 computers for \$25,000 when he had been tasked with buying five for the same price. He suggested governments of any size could cut back on waste, citing examples where he thought Washoe County was being wasteful. He spoke about water being stolen for a month in Cold Springs by homeless individuals and he wanted this fixed.

**21-0058**      **AGENDA ITEM 9** Announcements/Reports.

County Manager Eric Brown said valuable input had been received and staff would begin working on things. Chair Lucey thanked Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro, Mr. Brown, and Erica Olsen, Chief Operating Officer and Co-Founder of OnStrategy and facilitator for the workshop, for putting the strategic planning session together. He said the discussion had been productive and good conversations were had regarding difficult topics. Commissioners Jung and Herman and Vice Chair Hartung agreed and expressed gratitude to staff. Chair Lucey thanked everyone for their service and hard work.

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**2:44 p.m.** There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

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**BOB LUCEY**, Chair  
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST:

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**JANIS GALASSINI**, County Clerk and  
Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners

*Minutes Prepared by:  
LJ Burton and Derek Sonderfan, Deputy County Clerks*