

**COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY BOARD
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

MONDAY

9:00 A.M.

DECEMBER 6, 2021

PRESENT:

Alexis Hill, Chair (via telephone)

Ed Lawson, Vice Chair

Neoma Jardon, Member

Bonnie Weber, Alternate for Member Devon Reese

Kristopher Dahir, Member

Janis Galassini, County Clerk

Nathan Edwards, Assistant District Attorney

ABSENT:

Bob Lucey, Member

The Community Homelessness Advisory Board convened at 9:00 a.m. in the Washoe County 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, County Clerk Jan Galassini called roll and the Board conducted the following business:

21-093C AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.

Ms. Meagan O'Farrell urged the Board to work with the City of Reno to open the Record Street facility as an emergency overflow shelter. She noted the weather forecast showed the temperatures later in the week would drop to the teens with highs in the 30's during the day. She knew the City of Reno would be discussing the potential sale of the Record Street building. She thought the use of that facility would be the fastest and easiest way to save people from the dangerous temperatures. She said the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality was ready to open and run the Record Street shelter. She mentioned the shelter portal was not updated during the weekends and urged staff to make those updates a priority because poverty did not take weekends off.

Mr. Darsh Patel provided a handout which was distributed to the Board and placed on the record. He thanked the committee for undertaking tasks to help individuals experiencing homelessness. He was aware of the incidences of frostbite often resulting in amputation amongst the homeless population who did not have proper shelter, clothing, food, and footwear. He was spearheading a project to raise awareness and to purchase winter boots for the homeless. He suggested the community equip law enforcement, emergency rooms, or skilled nursing facilities with a budget to purchase winter boots for the homeless.

Ms. Heather Carpenter indicated her agreement of Ms. O'Farrell's comments. She said some commenters present in Chambers regularly engaged with the homeless population and had first-hand experience with poverty; she believed none of the Board members could say the same. She asked the Boardmembers to be mindful of the audience's experiences.

Ms. Jessica Castro agreed with Ms. Carpenter's statements and observed she did not see Boardmembers out on the streets. She mentioned the inaccuracy of available bed counts, noting she still saw sweeps taking place. She said she often called to confirm whether the beds reported as available were still open, but often the beds were not available. She expressed disappointment that socks were listed as possible Christmas gifts for residents of the Cares Campus. She invited Members Lawson and Jardon to do some outreach with her, stating she would be working on hygiene bags for the homeless. She asked Member Jardon to support the reopening of the Record Street shelter.

Ms. Meghan Archembault was called but was not present to speak.

Mr. Bill Sims commended Mr. Patel for his efforts to help the homeless population. He spoke about homeless individuals sleeping on the streets due to the lack of shelter space and about safety concerns for people in the shelters. He disagreed with staff's assertions about the availability of beds and wait times for obtaining a bed. He asserted the Board needed to reopen the Record Street shelter. He expressed concerns about safety at the Cares Campus.

Mr. Jake Maynard requested the emergency reopening of the Record Street shelter. He said Boardmembers acknowledged the Cares Campus was not adequately providing services and safety to everyone who sought emergency shelter. He noted the main arguments against opening the Record Street shelter was the goal of centralized homeless services and to discourage the movement of homeless individuals towards downtown. He believed that limiting the movement of any community member was concerning. He inquired about the status of the ModPods for the Safe Camp. He asserted the sweeps needed to stop because they put people in danger, encouraged police brutality, made it difficult to access services, and wasted money.

Ms. Meghan Archembault, founder of Reno/Sparks Mutual Aid, said her organization should not exist because the citizenry should be cared for by their government. She asked where homeless individuals went when they were removed from the Cares Campus or Our Place, when beds were not available, and when the shelters were not admitting women. She observed many women were afraid to go to the Cares Campus because of the reported sexual assaults. She expressed concern about the individuals who would sleep outdoors during winter storms, the vacant Record Street shelter, and shelter resistant individuals. She noted cold weather contributed to opioid intoxication and could raise the risk of overdose.

Ms. Ilya Arbatman asserted many of the suggestions from public commenters were not unreasonable. She noted the Record Street shelter was ready to open

and an operator was available, so it could provide shelter for approximately 50 women and couples as well as private rooms for families. She stated there was a lack of shelter options for single women, noting many women paired up with someone solely for safety. She suggested there was a need for a lived experience advisory board to help everyone better understand the needs of the homeless community. She expressed disapproval of the homeless sweeps.

Ms. Elise Campbell, a social work student at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), expressed concern about the housing crisis in the County and her ability to serve the homeless population with the available resources. She lacked confidence in the County's ability to utilize funding correctly and equitably. She stated the lack of affordable housing prevented progress for people who were ready to graduate from shelters and transitional housing programs. She asserted the safety issues for women at the Cares Campus needed to be addressed. She urged the County to open emergency shelters for unhoused women and couples in preparation for the upcoming winter weather. She asked the Board to influence the standards that provided protection and assistance to low-income renters.

Ms. Sequila Angkratok, a Master's level social work student at UNR and a Navy veteran, said many veterans suffered from homelessness. She expressed concern about the safety of women at the Cares Campus, troubled that many women were not receiving the dignity they deserved as members of the community. She thought the voices of those women were not being heard, validated, and acted on. She asked the Board to place the safety of the houseless community, especially women, at the forefront of the decisions they made. She urged the Board to open housing immediately, secure safe housing for women, and create more gender protected spaces.

21-094C **AGENDA ITEM 4** Approval of minutes of the August 2, 2021 and the November 1, 2021 meeting.

There were no public comments on this item.

On motion by Member Dahir, seconded by Member Jardon, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Member Lucey absent, it was ordered that Agenda Item 4 be approved.

20-095C **AGENDA ITEM 5** Board update and discussion on the Nevada Cares Campus homeless service campus capital project. Dana Searcy, Washoe County.

Washoe County Special Projects Manager Dana Searcy conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. She reviewed slides with the following titles: Homeless Services Update; Cares Campus – Safe Camp; Safe Camp Summary; Participant Advisory Committee Feedback; Safe Camp Winter Plans; Safe Camp Construction; Cares Campus – Emergency Shelter (6 slides); Cares Campus – Construction Update (4 slides); and Homeless Services Update.

Ms. Searcy reviewed Safe Camp (SC) statistics, noting the biggest challenge was housing. Many individuals who were ready to move out of SC had no place to go because housing options were very limited. She indicated Karma Box would retain the operating authority at SC. She reported the ModPods had not arrived as anticipated due to trucking shortages. She mentioned the Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) at SC was a board completely composed of participants; staff was invited to participate and listen but did not guide discussions. She said she would ensure members of the PAC would be present to speak at the next Community Homelessness Advisory Board meeting. She reviewed some of the suggestions made by the PAC.

Ms. Searcy said 45 spots would be dedicated for warming at the Cares Campus (CC) and staff was working on the plan to lease the garage building on the Reno Housing Authority (RHA) parcel. Staff proposed moving all of the tents into the garage bays for protection from the snow while they wait for the ModPods. She noted the garage was close to the camp and moving the tents would clear the space for the ModPod installation. She displayed an image of the SC construction design, noting one acre on the west side of the parcel would be left unused for a future project.

Ms. Searcy mentioned approximately 30 to 40 people used the warming center during the day. She said the RHA parking garage would accommodate 14 people per bay, it had 26 bays, so it had capacity for over 300 people. She spoke about the PAC established for the CC, noting the first meeting was the prior week. She said a memorandum of understanding (MOU) process had been developed to establish volunteers for the campus partnership development program. Staff was working with approximately 12 different agreements with MOUs. She said Karma Box was contracted to do some outreach and cleanup with the businesses along 4th Street and the work had begun. She explained staff decided on providing care packages with socks, a hat, and gloves as holiday gifts. The goal was to have 850 care packages to ensure there were enough for everyone. She commended staff members who worked on the care packages, noting several organizations were contributing to the project.

Ms. Searcy explained the bed count process for the CC, noting there were an average of 15 beds available daily in November. There were no days without an available bed. She said people looking for a bed could wait at the warming center, and none waited more than a couple of hours for a bed. She said the CC was accepting women as long as Our Place was full, or the individual was unable to stay at Our Place.

Ms. Searcy displayed an updated construction diagram. She mentioned staff learned more about the sprung building such as the fact that the slab could not be cut to install a kitchen. She outlined the location of the kitchen, case management, bridge housing, resource center, and overflow space that could be used for overflow winter space as needed. She said the amount originally budgeted for construction inside the building was \$8 million but the updated budgeted amount was \$11 million. Staff was working to reduce that amount by making material substitutions. She mentioned the need to ensure compromises made to save money in the short-term would not create maintenance or safety

concerns in future. She displayed an image of what the cubicles would look like when installed.

Member Jardon mentioned the agenda item regarding the sale of the Record Street building would be pulled from the City of Reno's meeting agenda for the following Wednesday. She said Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve was concerned about making sure both short-term and long-term plans were discussed. She noted the City of Reno meeting agenda included an item for the potential purchase of 96 bridge housing units, similar to the Sage Street modular units. She asked whether the garage building cold-weather shelter would be open in time for the colder weather later in the week. Ms. Searcy replied the plan had been to present the emergency option plan to both Boards on December 14, but in light of the colder weather staff would be working to get the garage open. She said staff was working with Karma Box to ensure the SC was prepared. Member Jardon inquired whether an emergency shelter option was available, indicating the City of Reno would be happy to help with any of those efforts.

Member Jardon asked about the safety issues for the CC particularly for women and how they were being addressed. Ms. Searcy said staff was keeping a close eye on the issue. She stated the one report received by staff had been investigated fully by the Sheriff's Office (SO) but was not substantiated. She indicated staff worked with anyone who wanted to report an incident and anything that needed a police report was escalated. She asserted staff paid close attention to issues in the community and asked anyone with specific examples to contact staff. County Security Administrator Ben West said County staff held frequent meetings with both Allied Universal Security (AUS) and the Volunteers of America (VOA) to discuss security issues. He stated he had weekly calls with the SO communications team as well as their executive staff about responses to the CC; they matched up calls to the SO with existing incident reports to make sure nothing was missed. Additionally County staff had orders and procedures for both AUS and VOA staff to encourage and facilitate reports to law enforcement. He said security staff had the ability to take people to a private location to make those reports to law enforcement. He indicated staff was working to address the concerns of both getting things reported as well as understanding the issues surrounding the reporting of certain kinds of crimes. He stated security staff had no specific reports of women or other groups being targeted. He was aware some people were victims of things that were not necessarily reported to staff.

Member Dahir asked whether there was enough staff at the CC to monitor safety issues or whether staff waited for incidents to be reported. He observed that homeless individuals would not often report on each other. He wanted staff to consider that aspect of this population because he believed having an open comment section would not address all safety concerns. He noted the shelter currently housed 589 individuals but the capacity after the ModPods were installed would be 523. Ms. Searcy said completion of that installation would take approximately a year and a half. The goal was to reduce the number of people in the sprung building by placing them into housing. She asserted nobody would be removed from the shelter. She said capacity would increase with the addition of bridge housing, but people would be spread out more. Member Dahir observed that putting plans

into motion took time and the wait could be frustrating. He stated the Board took note of everyone's frustrations and concerns. He believed the plans were progressing well.

Member Dahir asked about the number of people who would be impacted by the winter weather. Ms. Searcy replied the most recent count of unsheltered individuals was approximately 700 although the number of people who went into the shelter was unclear. She believed a significant number of individuals would be impacted by the winter weather, that was the reason staff needed to ensure there was enough capacity for anyone who sought shelter from the elements. Member Dahir expressed concern about ensuring no one was left out in the cold. Ms. Searcy said the heated garage facility would hold up to 300 people. The RHA agreed to lease the garage to the County and staff was working on the details. She hoped to have that agreement approved on December 14. She agreed to email an update to Boardmembers and to post updates about the building and the ModPods on the housing website.

Member Weber asked about the process of reporting issues for both individuals at the CC and for advocates. Ms. Searcy said the Board met to hear some of those concerns and staff was available to take calls and meet with advocates to address them. She understood the importance of keeping the CC safe so she made herself available. Member Weber observed that Ms. Searcy and her staff were very busy and believed there should be an ongoing opportunity to meet with individuals so they could share their concerns. She suggested a weekly meeting where staff could sit with advocates to receive reports.

Chair Hill thanked staff for providing the staffing plan. She expressed eagerness for the Board of County Commissioners' (BCC) approval of the plan. She thought it showed commitment to ensuring the emergency shelter remained safe and successful, and that it followed the Our Place model. She reminded the public the warming center was open for anyone who wanted to get out of the cold weather without staying in the shelter.

Member Jardon requested to hear from VOA staff because they worked directly with shelter participants. She asked about the County's position on an emergency shelter for women, and whether they would be supportive of the City of Reno opening Record Street. County Manager Eric Brown said he only recently learned about the City of Reno's plan the prior week, so he would need to consult with the BCC.

Member Jardon asked about the expectations for the next 48 hours; she wanted clarification about the 5,000 square foot garage building that could hold over 300 people. She asked whether the space could be arranged in a manner that would provide more secure opportunities for women. She asserted the perception of unsafe conditions was equally detrimental as the reality of unsafe conditions and the issue needed to be addressed if people were to be attracted to the CC. Ms. Searcy replied she expected an answer of whether the County would have access to the building within 24 hours. She said the garage would provide the opportunity to put women in a separate area while allowing them to access the CC facilities. The garage would also allow the tents to be moved off the site

where the ModPods needed to be constructed. She indicated she would provide an update to the board within the next day or two.

VOA Regional Director Pat Cashell felt staff from the VOA, the County, the City of Reno, and AUS were working well together to make the CC a place of change. He believed the CC would become a place the community would be proud of. He acknowledged safety was a concern, noting that staffing was the biggest issue, and would continue to be a concern until they were fully staffed. He indicated there was a process for individuals to report when they felt threatened or attacked, noting staff took those reports seriously. He said the SO supported CC staff when warranted. Director of Operations and Compliance Julianna Glock said individuals could report incidents directly to their case manager who would assist them in filing a police report if it was a crime. She reiterated there were cameras throughout the campus, and they were reviewed regularly by both law enforcement and County staff. She said she spoke with County staff and reviewed security cameras whenever someone filed a grievance, noting a grievance could be filed at the CC or at Record Street. She mentioned the VOA was considering installing boxes where anyone could turn grievances in confidentially. She explained there was an appeals process whenever someone was asked to leave the campus for any amount of time with the exception of an overnight. She said an incident had to be very serious, such as violence or the sale of drugs, for anyone to be banned for six-months.

Member Dahir asked that staff be careful to stay on course with the existing plan because making decisions based on an emergency could create situations which would take resources away. He noted having the right staff in place was necessary and more open campuses would require more staff.

20-096C **AGENDA ITEM 6** Update, discussion, and possible direction regarding the Community Homeless Advisory Board (CHAB) goals and objectives to include but not be limited to:

- a. Permanent housing for the Nevada Cares Campus residents and region
- b. Regional shared data
- c. Engagement of community donations and volunteers
- d. Safety of shelter clients, employees, and visitors
- e. Community communication

Assistant County Manager Kate Thomas commented Agenda Item 6 was a continuation of an item discussed on the November 1 agenda.

Member Dahir noted the Board had moved forward on the goals listed in the agenda; however, he thought focus had been lost on making the meetings a safe place for community partners to collaborate and create a unified approach. Based on the information the Board received, Member Jardon felt the campus was evolving and coming together in terms of costs, fundraising, and staffing. She opined the priority for the Board was to discuss creative transitional housing.

Chair Hill agreed with Member Dahir and thought it was important the community felt they could be a part of the meetings; she envisioned the regional shared data accomplishing that. She wanted to explore collaboration with the non-profit operators to share data and ensure people were getting into housing. She recommended adding permanent and transitional housing to the list on Agenda Item 6A. Once emergency staffing issues were resolved, she thought it would be beneficial to bring in speakers to review the next steps for housing. She mentioned she would work with Vice Chair Lawson and staff to get the topic of housing added to future agendas.

Vice Chair Lawson thought housing needed to be the Board's priority for the future as he thought the program would not work unless people were able to get into permanent housing. The regional shared data, he opined, was important because it sped processes up by eliminating the need for an interview every time. He appreciated the County's volunteer coordinator position at the campus, and he thought it was helpful to have someone who could coordinate the large number of volunteers. The jurisdictions did not have a large budget, but he noted safety was a priority. He said the Board needed to figure out the housing issue, because the problem would not be solved if the unhoused got back on track but did not have a place to live.

Member Jardon wondered about the possibility of an ombudsman position; this person would go to different jurisdictions and obtain information from homeless individuals that did not feel comfortable talking directly to an official. She thought the information could be gathered from the ombudsman and shared with the Board to mitigate safety issues. Agreeing with other members on the importance of housing, she said the jurisdictions were making housing a priority. The value of the campus, she opined, could not be understated and the community's involvement was needed.

Member Dahir expressed his concerns that data was collected and shared with the Board without them ever meeting the people experiencing homelessness. He thought updates needed to be made so people affected by the decisions of the Board were part of what was being done. He believed government was unable to solve all issues surrounding homeless individuals, and said the community needed to be involved in a unified process. Chair Hill agreed with Member Dahir and asked that the built for zero model be followed with shared regional data. She said she would work with Chair Lawson to ensure the advocates felt heard by the Board.

Member Jardon referred to a public comment asking whether the data dashboard was updated on the weekends. Staff confirmed the data dashboard was not updated on the weekends.

20-097C **AGENDA ITEM 7** Board members announcements, reports, and updates to include requests for future board agenda items.

Member Jardon mentioned Northern Nevada HOPES had their first program graduates. She noted the Board had advocated for the creative program and

facility. She commended Northern Nevada HOPES' Chief Executive Officer Sharon Chamberlain and her staff for their efforts.

20-098C **AGENDA ITEM 8** Public Comment.

Ms. Megan Archambault disapproved of the emphasis placed on reporting crimes to law enforcement, as she felt law enforcement perpetuated further trauma. She thought comprehensive data was needed on the number of people kicked out of the Cares Campus, and she opined the appeals process was ineffective because of the inability to notify someone once a decision was made. The recent sweeps, she said, caused mistrust and fear for unhoused individuals. She asserted people were told there were no beds available at the Cares Campus. She explained members of her group donated trash bags and tents to those living outside, but those items were destroyed by the Reno Police Department. She described witnessing Karma Box staff berating people, and she thought unsheltered individuals deserved better treatment.

Ms. Jessica Castro noted the room was full of advocates who stated there was harm being caused to the homeless. She said she was told to worry about her own advocacy when she relayed her concerns about Karma Box. Sexually assaulted women came to her for help, but she had nowhere to go with the information because she did not trust the people in charge. She said she was denied when she asked to view cameras for these incidents. She commented the first time she tried to reach out to the Board for help, the Board lied to her and said the person she advocated for refused help. She felt when she went on campus as an advocate she was treated as a nuisance and disregarded.

Ms. Heather Carpenter stated her support for agenda item 6A and commented money and effort should go into getting people into private rooms rather than for added security on the campus. She mentioned it was difficult to meet with a case manager and some individuals could be at the campus for months and never meet with one. She questioned the accessibility of the grievance process due to the large number of people in the homeless community who struggled with written communication. Expressing her satisfaction with the postponement of the Record Street sale, she hoped the idea would be abandoned entirely.

Ms. Meagan O'Farrell appreciated that the concerns constituents and advocates brought to the County were being heard, but she thought it was unfortunate the conversation went through a consultant. She indicated the position the County was in was not new, and many people had been advocating for a winter preparedness plan since last winter. She asked the County to work with the City of Reno to open the Record Street Shelter as an emergency overflow space, and she stressed the urgency for it to happen soon due to the upcoming storm. She opined putting aside egos and focusing on saving and supporting human life was important.

Mr. Bill Sims felt the Board was not doing anything to help the homeless community and expressed frustration because only positive matters were discussed during the meetings. He asked why a woman he met was evicted from Safe Camp for being an

insurance liability when Safe Camp was supposed to welcome everybody, even those with health issues. He opined people should be worth more than money, and said the Board was there to serve the people.

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10:53 a.m. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

BOB LUCEY, Chair
Community Homelessness Advisory Board

ATTEST:

JANIS GALASSINI, County Clerk

*Minutes Prepared by:
Carolina Stickley and Evonne Strickland, Deputy County Clerks*