

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

MONDAY

9:00 A.M.

SEPTEMBER 12, 2022

PRESENT:

Alexis Hill, Chair
Ed Lawson, Vice Chair
Bonnie Weber, Member
Devon Reese, Member
Kristopher Dahir, Member

Janis Galassini, County Clerk
Herbert Kaplan, Deputy 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:

22-0048C AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

PROCLAMATION

22-049C AGENDA ITEM 4 Proclamation to recognize the dedicated public service of Neoma Jardon in her role on the Community Homelessness Advisory Board, and with Washoe County's Vulnerable and Homeless population.

Chair Hill read the Proclamation and presented it to former Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) Member Neoma Jardon.

Ms. Jardon thanked the Board for the Proclamation and noted it was unexpected and appreciated. She stated it was the honor of her life to serve on the Reno City Council, saying the highlight was the work that was done by the CHAB. She said the goal had been to make things better than they were and for the community to work together to make positive changes for homelessness. She looked forward to the future work of the CHAB.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Chair Hill, seconded by Member Reese, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Member Lucey absent, it was ordered that Agenda Item 4 be adopted.

22-050C **AGENDA ITEM 5** Approval of minutes of the June 13, 2022, Community Homeless Advisory Board meeting.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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

22-051C **AGENDA ITEM 6** City of Sparks Housing Programs presentation. Amy Jones, City of Sparks.

City of Sparks Housing Specialist Amy Jones conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); Emergency Repair Grant (3 slides); Deferred Loan Homeowner Rehabilitation Program (3 slides); Homeless Youth; Silver State Fair Housing Council; Private Activity Bond Cap; State of Nevada American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) (2 slides); Questions.

Ms. Jones stated the annual award for the CDBG varied from \$650,000 to \$695,000, which was utilized for the Emergency Repair Grant and the Deferred Loan Homeowner Rehabilitation Programs. She noted the Deferred Loan Homeowner Rehabilitation Program was a loan for Sparks homeowners who needed large repairs such as garage door replacement or a new roof. The loan was secured by the deed of trust on the home and would be due at the time the home was sold or changed ownership. She spoke about the CDBG funds received by the Silver State Fair Housing Council that were used to educate the community about housing rights, help residents investigate discrimination claims, and file a claim with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) when necessary.

Member Weber thanked the City of Sparks for these wonderful programs.

Member Dahir thanked Ms. Jones for the presentation and asked her to explain who was being helped by the youth program. Ms. Jones said the City of Sparks would be advertising a request for proposals (RFP) and the providers within Washoe County would solicit. She noted funds could be awarded to more than one non-profit and the process would occur in the next month or two.

Chair Hill expressed excitement about the ARPA grant and asked whether the City of Sparks had heard from the State. Ms. Jones stated the initial application had been submitted and was just accepted for the second round to submit a detailed application. Chair Hill wondered whether the City of Sparks would work with the Reno Housing

Authority (RHA). Ms. Jones said the idea would be to do the RFP and hopefully work with non-profit developers that wanted to support low-income housing. Chair Hill believed it was not dense development and would have a neighborhood feel, which was what the CHAB had been pushing for. Ms. Jones stated it would depend on the parcel that was obtained. Chair Hill asked whether the City of Sparks had parcels it was interested in, and Ms. Jones responded yes.

Member Weber expressed excitement about residents' access to the Housing Stability Program. She asserted it was a great program and she had experienced the program's benefits with her mother in another area. She said it helped people with home repairs that they could not afford. Chair Hill noted the program ensured the homeowners could age in place so agencies would not have to provide them with homeless or transitional housing services.

22-052C AGENDA ITEM 7 City of Reno Housing Programs presentation. Monica Cochran, City of Reno.

City of Reno Housing Manager Monica Cochran conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: What is Affordable Housing; Our Mission; Strategic Goals & Outcomes; Goal 1 Increase Affordable Housing Stock (2 slides); Goal 2 Increase Residents' Access to Housing Stability (2 slides); Goal 3 Invest in Low-to Moderate-Income Neighborhoods (2 slides); Goal 4 Keep & Improve Affordable Housing Units (2 slides).

Ms. Cochran stated this plan was presented to the Reno City Council earlier in the year. She said a recent report showed there were approximately 10,000 affordable housing units in the region and 70 percent of them were in the City of Reno. The City of Reno allocated \$13 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds towards several affordable housing projects. She commented that since the Deposit and Rental Assistance Program started in June 2020, it had provided \$1.2 million from sources outside of pandemic funding and \$4.2 million in Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds, which helped 1,600 households. She spoke about neighborhood improvements at the Evelyn Mount Community Center, Trainer Pool, Yori Park, Mayors Park, and Paradise Park that benefitted residents. She indicated the City of Reno was preliminarily exploring workforce housing. She said the plan was for housing for individuals above 60 percent of the area median income (AMI) and would not be the same units that individuals below 60 percent of AMI would be able to utilize. She spoke about a program through Rebuilding Together Northern Nevada that helped homeowners make safety improvements to their homes that they could not otherwise afford.

Member Dahir stated when the CHAB began, the goal was to assist people who needed housing. Then an additional goal was added to help them retain their housing without providing constant assistance. He thought every piece of assistance that was provided to the community was beneficial.

22-053C **AGENDA ITEM 8** Reno Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Housing Outlook presentation. Brian Bonnenfant, University of Nevada Reno.

University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) Project Manager for the Center for Regional Studies Brian Bonnenfant conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Employment Gain/Loss by Industry – Reno MSA; Unemployment Rates; 2019 Net Migration – Washoe County; Mobility Trends by Age Range; 2019 In-Migration to Washoe County; Population Trends; New Home Sales Activity; New Residential Supply; Apartment Vacancy & Rent Trends; New Residential Developments; Existing Home Sales Inventory; Existing Home Sales Activity; Single-Family Homes with Non-Primary Residence Tax Rates; Income Trends; Annual Employment & Wage Trends; Home Price Affordability; Rent Price Affordability; Quarterly Existing Home Sales Price Trends; Future Appreciation of Existing Home Values; Regional Economic Linkages; EV Car Sales Trend; Building Resilient Supply Chains; Geothermal Power Plants and Hot Springs; Reno MSA Housing Outlook; Questions.

Chair Hill thanked Mr. Bonnenfant for the presentation and stressed the importance of getting service workers housed as they were the most vulnerable population based on income.

Member Dahir thought the Home Price Affordability slide needed to be shared with everyone and thought it showed the poor job being done about affordable housing. He mentioned there would be no way for kids to be able to stay in the area unless solutions for affordable housing were created. He expressed concern about seniors who were locked into their housing and could have to move if their situation changed. Mr. Bonnenfant stated the columns on that slide showed a 5.5 percent mortgage rate and said the rate had gone up to 5.9 percent in the past few days. He noted the next day the Consumer Price Index (CPI) numbers would come out which would indicate whether another rise would occur. He opined the rate would likely be higher than 6 percent in 2023, noting if that happened no one would be able to afford to purchase a house.

Member Dahir believed adding more homes would not change anything; it would just mean there were more homes people could not afford. Mr. Bonnenfant agreed and thought some creative thinking needed to be done moving forward. He said many organizations were looking into modular building, rezoning, and more incentives. He noted UNR had been working with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) on land incentives to reduce pricing to entice developers to build homes below the market rate. He opined many programs were coming that could help people with affordable housing. Safety nets needed to be in place for individuals facing unemployment and he stated that 2023 could bring pain and job loss.

Member Reese referred to the New Residential Developments slide, regarding the number of approved and the number of unapproved/pending units, and said as policymakers they tried to take the numbers provided and apply them to something practical for the community. He mentioned the government had struggled with

development issues for years. He spoke about the focus of the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) and noted homelessness was related to housing affordability. He believed the goal was to use this data to avoid upcoming pain in the community. He asked about the data from the slide and how it was used to measure goals. Mr. Bonnenfant stated the program was started in the 1990s and there was outreach done to determine what the community needs were. He said the information was compiled because a title company wanted a seamless, non-jurisdictional look at the growth in the Truckee Meadows. Once the information was put out, Sierra Pacific wanted to use the data for utilities and the Washoe County School District had been using it for more than a decade for planning schools and infrastructure. He indicated the data would be used as a metric to plan roads, utilities, schools, and other future projects. He stated there would be growth in the south part of town but after ten years there would be growth in the north and Spanish Springs areas. He said transportation needs in the North Valleys would be significant. He believed there were more lanes on Moana Lane than on Highway 395 coming from the North Valleys, which he thought was alarming. He expressed the importance of the lands bill and acquiring land from the federal government. Spanish Springs was encompassed in one area, but the North Valleys was spread out to the California border. He emphasized the need for land and infrastructure that would be required in that area over the next 20 years.

Member Reese thought there would be land and infrastructure needs in the future, but said there were also current needs for them. He believed there was constant pressure about the lack of available housing but said many single-family and multi-family developments were unbuilt. Local agencies had approved development projects but that did not mean they would come to fruition quickly. He indicated housing issues impacted people at every level and noted his focus was on vulnerable populations. He believed the data presented for future developments would not help the vulnerable populations much and thought the CHAB needed to think more critically about getting metrics to accommodate the people who needed housing the most.

Chair Hill agreed the information was helpful for the Board and kept it focused on the need to house people in the leisure and hospitality industry. She asserted the effects of increasing interest rates would deter people from traveling which would hurt that industry. She wanted safety nets in place to ensure those people remained in their homes.

22-054C **AGENDA ITEM 9** Board update and discussion on the Nevada Cares Campus. Dana Searcy, Washoe County.

Division Director of Housing and Homeless Services Dana Searcy conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Cares Campus Priorities; Cares Campus Updates; Cares Campus Updates – Security; Cares Campus Updates – Medical Services; Cares Campus Partnerships; Cares Campus – Construction (2 slides); Cares Campus – Staffing; Cares Campus – Jon DeCarminé Recommendations; Cares Campus – Emergency Shelter (4 slides).

Ms. Searcy noted the website dashboard showed that the number of available beds at the Cares Campus had increased significantly. She indicated the increase was not due to fewer people staying on the campus, but because the methodology had changed. Volunteers of America (VOA) staff was checking beds every two hours to verify whether beds were available. She stated an individual needed to be at their bed once in 24 hours to keep that bed, but the process to determine available beds changed when staff discovered people were storing their belongings at their bed but not sleeping there. She spoke about the importance of an accurate available bed count during winter as the campus would need as many beds as possible.

Member Weber expressed gratitude for the great work at the Cares Campus. She asked about black mold in some of the facilities and wondered whether they were still being used. Ms. Searcy stated the first shower room had mold growing on the ceiling and it caved in before work to patch it was able to be done. She indicated the shower room had been closed for six months. Staff had evaluated the cost to fix the building or purchase a new building and it was determined to be more cost effective to purchase a new building. She said men would be moved into the women's shower building since there were more men than women showering regularly. She stated it would be at least a year before the new buildings were ready. She mentioned there was mold growing in the second building as well, but it was not as severe as in the first building. She said some work had been done to treat the mold before men moved in there. The building was closed during the night to air out the showers to reduce the growth of mold although it still came back and was treated as soon as it was discovered. She stated individuals who wanted to shower could schedule an appointment and noted that removed the need for additional work in the building. Recently, drainage had become an issue in the second shower facility with the floor starting to seep inside the doorway, so a large plate was placed on the floor to keep it stable until more work could be done. She said staff was waiting for the bid but had been told it was going to be just under \$100,000 in repairs. She asserted the situation was not being taken lightly and noted there needed to be a safe place for people to shower until March when the new buildings would be ready.

Member Dahir asked for an update about the Safe Camp. Ms. Searcy indicated the Safe Camp was under construction and should be complete in December. She said Ames Construction would be vacating the area near the Spaghetti Bowl and the Safe Camp would take over that space. She stated the building with women's showers and laundry would open in March and the entrance of the Cares Campus would be moved to the north next to the Safe Camp entrance. At that time construction would shift to the south of the campus.

Member Dahir asked if staff was ready for the cold weather. Ms. Searcy asserted they were prepared and were set to shift quickly to accommodate needs. She stated the campus was not reducing capacity and noted the food service and the warming area could have greater capacity if needed. She indicated campus staff was prepared to open the overflow shelter as they had the previous year and would double the capacity for the upcoming winter.

Member Reese thanked Ms. Searcy for the updates and expressed appreciation for her hard work. He asked about the volunteer program identified in her presentation related to serving meals. Ms. Searcy stated the Reno-Sparks Gospel Mission served breakfast in the mornings and Catholic Charities served lunch and dinner for both the Safe Camp and the Cares Campus. She indicated staff was currently not allowing outside food to be brought in except for the food from those partners. She noted the front gate had too much activity for partners to serve food, so they moved the food site to the inside volunteer area where volunteers could help hand out meals. She commented that in the future a location would be provided for other partners to bring in food to serve for dinners and Catholic Charities would only serve lunch.

Member Reese understood all meals were currently provided by the Reno-Sparks Gospel Mission and Catholic Charities but wondered whether community groups such as the Burrito Project and Food Not Bombs would be able to operate on the Campus at a future time. Ms. Searcy stated they would be able to.

Member Reese said an abundance of smoke was in the area recently and he believed that would increase usage of the shelter. He mentioned changes to the methodology four counting beds had been made which appeared to have freed up some beds. He spoke about garage bays being used the previous year for overflow capacity and wanted assurance that people would not be outside during the coldest months. Ms. Searcy said within the past year the campus had established multiple ways for individuals to be sheltered from the elements that included assigned beds, a warming room to eat and warm up in, and a waiting list to be assigned a bed. She stated the overflow shelter inside the heated garage bays would open at 9:00 p.m. and would close for the day around 6:00 a.m. The individuals staying in the overflow shelter could move to the warming room in the morning for breakfast and to keep warm. She indicated the current capacity of the facility was 604 beds, with 112 spaces in the warming room, and the capacity of the overflow shelter was doubled to 96. She believed the beds at the overflow shelter were only full one time in the previous year and she did not anticipate a huge increase. The campus would stay prepared and adjust as the needs of the community adjusted. She stated the Safe Camp would increase the number of pods from 44 to 50 when the camp opened in December.

Member Reese spoke about the number of individuals using the shelter and was encouraged by the amount of staffing. He wondered what was being done to help the VOA get to a fully staffed level. Ms. Searcy said prior to the opening of the Cares Campus the rate of pay was \$13.75 per hour. The pay was increased to \$15.00 per hour when the Cares Campus opened, and since a new contract was in place for the winter the pay was increased to \$17.00 per hour and \$19.00 per hour for overnight shifts. The County had brought the Karma Box, the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality (RISE), and VOA employees up to the same level of pay and she noted it helped to stabilize turnover with the positions. She asserted training was a huge issue. At first, there was not enough staff, and COVID-19 (C19) levels were high. She mentioned it took some time to get people trained and for staff to be assured that employees had the knowledge, support, and tools they needed to do their jobs. She stated there would be continued support onsite at the Cares Campus from the partner organizations and County staff. This consisted of 24 case

managers, 6 onsite counselors, and the MedTrust contracted employees. She noted since the onsite staff had increased, a reduction in chaos had occurred at the campus and staff was more prepared to handle situations that arose. Prior to additional staffing, the VOA was dealing with mental health and medical situations alone. She noted construction inside the dorm was starting soon and it would be reduced from one very large area to six 100-person dorms where staff and case managers would be assigned to individuals staying there. She believed relationships would be formed there between individuals and case workers, which would allow staff to be less overwhelmed and they could provide more support.

Chair Hill expressed excitement about the updates and said Ms. Searcy was making positive changes. She acknowledged the hard work and applauded Ms. Searcy and her team. She appreciated the trust from the Cities of Reno and Sparks partners, noting in the beginning when the contract for the Continuum of Care was signed, there was some distrust. She thanked the VOA staff in the room.

22-055C AGENDA ITEM 10 Board update and discussion on Nevada Cares Campus Service Plan Recommendations. Jon DeCarmine, JD Consultancy, LLC.

Mr. Jon DeCarmine of JD Consultancy, LLC joined the meeting via Zoom. He stated he had been working with the Cares Campus for the past two years. He indicated his experience included 25 years working in homeless services as a consultant and as an Executive Director for a large shelter called Grace in Gainesville, Florida. He said Alachua County, where he was located, had been able to reduce homelessness by 47 percent over the past eight years along with a 70 percent decrease in unsheltered homeless. He acknowledged the hard work of Ms. Searcy and her team and noted they had made significant improvements at the Cares Campus. He mentioned there was a sharp decrease in medical calls since he started working with the County. He said the County had been incredibly responsive to the needs of staff and leadership including pay, training, streamlining contracts, and performance measurements. He asserted all Phase 1 elements had shown substantial improvements, which included creating a safe environment, providing basic needs, crisis services, conflict de-escalation, trauma-informed care, and diversion services. He stated the most exciting improvement was the increase in housing placements and he hoped he could continue working with County staff to see that improve further.

Mr. DeCarmine indicated he would be at the next CHAB meeting in December and would be doing additional training to flesh out the diversion program, as he thought all the right pieces were in place. He stated the diversion program could be a critical element to the effectiveness of the shelter. He said the shelter should only be serving people who had no other place to be and noted the diversion program would help screen out individuals whose homelessness issues could be solved with fewer resources provided. He stated the training would focus on boundaries for staff and promoting safety on campus while still providing a welcoming environment. He commented he would be working with staff on the implementation of the length-of-stay policy. He said the bed count Ms. Searcy

shared showed more beds were being used consistently, which was a good indicator that people were comfortable staying at the campus. He mentioned there had been a slight decline in the number of unique individuals being served monthly, noting as of the end of July it was about 900 people. The campus was trying to ensure the beds were being turned over and clients were placed in permanent housing. He stated the shelter was seen as part of the process of solving the housing problem and not as a destination. He stressed that the level of improvement was outstanding for a new project. He indicated the housing market was not currently getting better and noted people in the shelter who received social security could not afford fair market rents. He believed market rents were twice as much as the paycheck of an individual on a fixed income and until that changed homelessness would continue. He said there were things to be done as a community that the CHAB had control over. These included: the creation of permanent supportive housing units, ensuring all Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding was being used appropriately and effectively, providing access to drug and alcohol treatment services and mental health services, and access to healthcare. He asserted the project had taken on the monumental task of filling in where so many other systems had failed. He noted it was common for the homeless service system to be expected to solve all the issues related to homelessness. He opined the services provided at the shelter were nothing less than successful.

Chair Hill expressed excitement about the shelter being on the right track.

Member Reese thanked Mr. DeCarmine for his comments and said he was looking forward to meeting him. He stated over the past year and a half since the County stepped in to fulfill the lead role in homelessness, several people in the advocacy community looked to Mr. DeCarmine for his advice. Member Reese acknowledged criticism that occurred during the planning stages and believed the shortcomings early on painted a picture that was not accurate. He appreciated Mr. DeCarmine's comments of encouragement and said the frontline workers needed the most support. The project was a work in progress, and he hoped Mr. DeCarmine would continue to help refine the work of the community to be dynamic and engaged. He wondered whether Mr. DeCarmine could provide some examples of ways to continue the refinement process.

10:40 a.m. **Member Dahir left the meeting.**

Mr. DeCarmine said that was the question about homeless services in every community. He stated he had experienced homelessness himself. He had protested outside city hall in the late 1990s as he was convinced the local government was not doing enough to meet human needs. He thought the community had done an excellent job providing lifesaving support to many people very quickly. He believed there was always room for improvement, noting that local, financial, and political support could help in any homeless shelter. He acknowledged the increase in housing placements over the past year and said it was a shining example of the project having the right momentum to accomplish more due to growth.

Chair Hill thanked Mr. DeCarmine for the update and said staff looked forward to working with him and continuing to make the program even better.

22-056C **AGENDA ITEM 11** Board members announcements, reports, and updates to include requests for future board agenda items.

Vice Chair Lawson said three years ago this initiative was put together and he was proud of how far it had come since then. The County had done a great job with its leadership in making these services work. He acknowledged there were some growing pains and issues initially but that was to be expected. He saw this as a world-class example for other communities. He asserted that U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto said she had never seen anything like this particular project. He congratulated the County for the good work.

22-057C **AGENDA ITEM 12** Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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10:45 a.m. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

ALEXIS HILL, Chair
Community Homelessness Advisory Board

ATTEST:

JANIS GALASSINI, County Clerk

*Minutes Prepared by:
Doni Blackburn, Deputy County Clerk*