

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

MONDAY

9:00 A.M.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

PRESENT:

**Alexis Hill, Chair\***  
**Kathleen Taylor, Vice Chair\***  
**Miguel Martinez, Alternate Member**  
**Ed Lawson, Member**  
**Kristopher Dahir, Member**  
**Michael Clark, Member\***  
  
**Janis Galassini, County Clerk**  
**Beth Hickman, Deputy District Attorney**

ABSENT:

**Devon Reese, 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:

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Chair Hill asked for a moment of silence to remember the September 11, 2001, events.

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**23-012C AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.**

Mr. Ilya Arbatman expressed concern regarding the upcoming winter and asked the Board to establish a winter preparedness plan for the unhoused community. He claimed that the Cares Campus was regularly at capacity during winter months; therefore, the Board should open several warming centers. He suggested the County work with the City of Reno to reopen the Community Assistance Center (CAC) on Record Street for women and families since Our Place was at capacity. He believed community members were willing to help the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) conduct outreach to ensure people were aware of warming center locations and other winter resources. He reiterated his desire for a winter preparedness plan.

Ms. Rosie Zuckerman requested a winter plan that included warming stations throughout the County. She suggested the County open the CAC building as a warming shelter.

Ms. Meagan O'Farrell spoke about the need for a winter preparedness plan. She asserted there were not enough shelter beds to service the number of unhoused people in the community. She believed there should be warming shelters in all wards of the County and methods to transport people to them. She asked the Board to reopen the CAC, speculating it was a turn-key building that could be utilized for winter shelter. She suggested the Cities of Reno and Sparks deploy resources to support the County's homeless services. She encouraged the Board to respond to emails and meeting invitations from community advocates to establish tools and wraparound services for people experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Tara Tran supported 24-hour warming centers. She believed the system had failed many people. She asked the Board to ensure no one was left out in the cold during the upcoming winter.

Mr. Bill Sims remarked that while he never experienced homelessness, his father had. He recalled comments from people who suggested that advocates invite unhoused people to live with them, to which he would respond that advocates did what they could for the homeless community. He thought that suggestion was people's way of saying they did not want to try and solve the homelessness issue. He expressed support for the remarks made by previous commenters. He hoped the Board would work with the community to help unhoused residents through the winter. He believed there would not be one perfect answer, but trying to help was better than doing nothing.

Ms. Natalie Handler declared the Board needed to implement a winter preparedness plan with regional warming shelters. She reported that the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) considered warming stations exemplary if they were open 24 hours per day between October 1 and April 30 and any other day when the temperature reached below 40 degrees. She thought warming shelters should admit all unhoused people regardless of sobriety or past bans unless they acted in a violent or extremely disturbing manner. If the County intended to use libraries, senior centers, and recreational facilities as warming centers, she asked that their hours of operation be extended. She wanted the Board to work with faith communities, the Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority (RSCVA), and anyone else who could allow access to available or underutilized spaces. She stated the garage bays at the Cares Campus were insufficient for all demographics, and many people viewed the Cares Campus as unsafe or inaccessible. She reiterated the need for a winter preparedness plan and requested that one be implemented by October 1. She asked that the CAC be opened as an emergency shelter for women and families, which she speculated could grow into a space for a community-run garden, childcare services, and more.

Mr. James Harris shared he was a Cares Campus resident. He thought the CAC should be opened as a shelter for women. He spoke about issues at the Cares Campus and asked the Board to resolve some of the adversities people faced while housed there. Chair Hill asked a member of staff to speak with Mr. Harris.

Mr. Jake Maynard asserted people wanted a proactive winter plan that would save lives. He declared ample shelter space should be available to people experiencing homelessness throughout the winter. He opined the Board had failed over the past few years in terms of keeping unhoused residents alive through the winter, treating them with dignity, and providing them with necessary care. He thought the CHAB needed to put more work into the community.

Ms. Lilith Baran said she worked for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Nevada and was present to discuss a winter preparedness plan. She requested the opportunity to present empirical evidence and best practices to the CHAB regarding this matter. She declared she conducted research in national homeless law centers and with the Housing Not Handcuffs (HNH) justice network, a national group that worked to litigate on behalf of people experiencing homelessness. She speculated the County might be exposed to litigation in response to some of the issues in the unhoused community. She noted that advocates paid Jon DeCarmine upwards of \$1 million to present solutions to the Board, which she did not think were acted upon. She asserted that using science to solve public health issues was important. She suggested the City of Reno sell the CAC to the County to be used as a shelter for women, children, families, and wraparound services. She hoped the Board would contact her to enlist her help in solving homelessness issues with science.

**23-013C**      **AGENDA ITEM 4** Election of Chair and Vice Chair for the Community Homelessness Advisory Board per Article IV of the Community Homelessness Advisory Board bylaws.

Vice Chair Lawson made a motion that Chair Hill remain the Chair of the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB), and Member Taylor be elected as Vice Chair.

On the call for public comment, Ms. Dani DeRosa opined that the CHAB's work was not good enough.

On motion by Vice Chair Lawson, seconded by Member Dahir, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Member Clark absent, it was ordered that Alexis Hill be elected as Chair, and Kathleen Taylor be elected as Vice Chair of the Community Homelessness Advisory Board.

**9:24 a.m.**      **Chair Hill and Vice Chair Taylor assumed their positions.**

**23-014C**      **AGENDA ITEM 5** Approval of minutes of the March 6, 2023, Community Homeless Advisory Board meeting.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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

**23-015C**      **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; Homeowner Rehabilitation Deferred Loan Program; Homeless Youth; Silver State Fair Housing Council; Private Activity Bond Cap; Home Means Nevada Initiative (HMNI); Emergency Rental Assistance; Questions.

Ms. Jones stated Sparks was an entitlement community that received an annual allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the United States (US) Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in amounts ranging between \$650,000 and \$700,000. Historically, those funds were used to administer deferred loan homeowner rehabilitation and emergency repair grant programs to Sparks residents who were low to moderate-income homeowners. For fiscal year (FY) 2022 to 2023, Sparks added new activities to its annual action plan to allocate funding to non-profits that provided shelter and services to youth experiencing homelessness and to support education and advocacy for fair housing rights and responsibilities.

Ms. Jones explained that emergency repair grants allowed residents to request up to \$10,000 for emergency health and safety repairs in their homes. Eligible applicants must reside within the City of Sparks and cannot have a household income exceeding 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). She outlined that repairs might include heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) replacement, water heaters, flooring, electrical, plumbing, and accessibility improvements. As this program provided grant funding, participants would not be required to repay any money they received.

Ms. Jones reviewed the homeowner rehabilitation deferred loan program, which allowed requests up to \$25,000 to address health and safety home repairs. Eligible applicants were Sparks residents with a household income that did not exceed 80 percent AMI. Repairs might include roof replacement, floor repairs, accessibility improvements, window replacement, sewer repairs, water damage, electrical work, siding replacement, and other things. The funds came from a 0 percent interest loan secured by a deed of trust, meaning the money would be repaid when the home sold or changed ownership.

Ms. Jones reported that Sparks partnered with the Eddy House to allocate CDBG funding to provide shelter and services to youth experiencing homelessness in Washoe County. She outlined services the Eddy House provided, including support groups, therapy, emergency beds, clothing, meals, showers, bus passes, life skills, and a community living program.

Ms. Jones remarked that the City of Sparks partnered with the City of Reno to allocate CDBG funds to the Silver State Fair Housing Council (SSFHC) to support fair housing advocacy training and education. She noted that the SSFHC provided yearly training for property owners and managers, maintenance staff, realtors, social service providers, homeowners, and community members. The SSFHC also helped people investigate housing discrimination claims, file HUD complaints, and create reasonable accommodation and modification requests.

Ms. Jones said Sparks received an annual allocation of private activity bond cap funds, noting that the 2023 award was over \$6 million. Sparks transferred 75 percent of those funds to the Nevada Housing Division (NHD) to support the development of affordable rental housing in Washoe County and 25 percent to the Nevada Rural Housing Authority (NRHA) for homeownership programs for eligible Sparks residents. She remarked the City of Sparks was awarded \$1 million in Home Means Nevada Initiative (HMNI) funding to purchase vacant parcels of land for future affordable housing projects, noting that Sparks was currently evaluating which properties to purchase. She added that Sparks received \$3 million in funding through Assembly Bill (AB) 396 to provide rental assistance for FY 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 and worked with the Reno Housing Authority (RHA) to establish two rental assistance programs, one was a short-term senior rental assistance program and the other for eviction prevention.

Member Dahir commended Ms. Jones for her presentation and expressed appreciation for the work of Sparks staff. He declared that while Sparks continued to aid unhoused residents, staff also worked hard to help people stay in their homes.

Vice Chair Taylor asked Ms. Jones to explain private activity bond cap funding. Ms. Jones stated those funds were not actual dollars; it was a bond cap that the NHD and NRHA would bring to their programs. For example, the NRHA had a mortgage credit certificate program and a down payment assistance program. They used those mortgage credit certificates to help homeowners when they obtained a loan for their home. They received a 20 percent refund on the interest they were paying, which lowered their monthly payment. It was a reduction in their monthly payment and it helped contribute to the amount for their qualification.

Chair Hill asked if Sparks had incentivized developers to build workforce and affordable housing. Ms. Jones responded that Sparks had yet to implement a program as far as she knew, but she believed there were discussions taking place. Member Lawson confirmed that Sparks had engaged some property owners regarding the process. Chair Hill reported the County had not implemented incentives for affordable housing but was trying to work with some developers in the area. Member Lawson hoped Sparks would have an

incentive program in place in the coming months. Chair Hill asked how many people had used the emergency loan or grant programs. Ms. Jones stated three approved households were working on projects, and five applications were being processed. She opined it was a great program that helped people stay in their homes. Chair Hill asked if the NHD programs were available outside Sparks. Ms. Jones responded that those programs were available to residents of Washoe County and people could contact the NHD for more information. She noted the NRH programs were only available to Sparks residents because they were designed for communities with a population of less than 150,000. Chair Hill mentioned many people in the region wanted to purchase homes and might meet the qualifications for those programs. Ms. Jones pointed out that the NRH and the HMNI had information regarding down payment assistance on their websites. Member Dahir clarified it was not Sparks' decision to only extend NRH to its residents; the program was based on population size. Chair Hill thanked Ms. Jones for her time.

**23-016C**      **AGENDA ITEM 7** City of Reno Housing Programs presentation Monica Cochran, City of Reno.

City of Reno Director of Housing and Neighborhood Development Monica Cochran conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Rental Assistance Achievements; Regional Breakdown; Data from Surveys – 80 responses (2 slides); Impact Statements (2 slides); Current Eligibility Requirements; HOME Program; Our Toolbox; Thank You.

Ms. Cochran provided an update on the City of Reno's accomplishments regarding rental assistance and affordable housing for the previous fiscal year (FY). While her presentation did not include other programs, she mentioned that Reno was responsible for building vibrant communities in areas where most residents made 80 percent or less than the area median income (AMI). Reno also partnered with ReBuilding Together Northern Nevada (RTNNV) on health and safety improvements and housing rehabilitation activities. She pointed out that Reno partnered with the City of Sparks and the Silver State Fair Housing Council (SSFHC) to address fair housing issues, and with Volunteers of America (VOA) to run the Reno Works program.

Ms. Cochran explained that Reno operated a rental and deposit assistance program, which grew immensely during COVID-19 (C19). Since the program's implementation, staff noticed consistency with the amount of assistance going to the community. She reported that in 2022, \$4.4 million in rental assistance was allocated to the community, which served 1,405 households, with the average amount of funding being \$3,000 over 2.25 months of assistance. Chair Hill asked if those were unique households, to which Ms. Cochran responded yes.

Ms. Cochran stated Reno provided regional rental assistance through various sources distributed to Reno and the Washoe County Home Consortium (WCHC). During C19, Reno received Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) funds to help people stay housed, which Reno continued to provide on a smaller scale as the need for the program decreased. Staff thought it was prudent to track the success of that program and developed

a survey to send to program participants at three months, six months, and one year following the assistance to find out if those people were still housed. She pointed out there were not a lot of responses yet because the program was new. She reported that 86 percent of the people surveyed were still housed, and staff often received emails and letters from people expressing thanks for the assistance program. She noted that 96 percent of participants ranked the service as satisfactory or better, which she thought was indicative of the hard work of Reno staff. She provided a few impact statements from program participants who were able to get back on their feet and move forward with Reno's help. She informed that staff held walk-in hours three days a week, or people could go online ([www.reno.gov/housing](http://www.reno.gov/housing)) to fill out rental assistance applications.

Ms. Cochran explained the City of Reno led the WCHC and administered the HOME funds that came into the region annually. She reported that in 2022, the WCHC received \$5.3 million in HOME funds that were distributed to six new affordable housing developments for 565 units available at 60 percent AMI. She reported that 2023 brought a special round of HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) funds, which allowed some units to be built at 50 percent AMI and one at 30 percent AMI. In addition to the HOME program, Reno offered other incentives for affordable housing projects, including a sewer and building permit waiver subsidy program. She remarked that in 2022, Reno reduced \$3.6 million in sewer connection fee waivers and \$500,000 in building permit fee waivers for developers building units at or below 60 percent AMI. Additionally, Reno offered parking spot reductions and density bonuses for affordable housing developers. She noted Reno also allocated a \$14.1 million bond cap to an affordable housing development.

Vice Chair Taylor expressed excitement and pride in Ms. Cochran and her team. She spoke about remarks from public commenters and opined that the community could do better, but progress was being made. She asked Ms. Cochran if the Community Assistance Center (CAC) could be turned into an immediate shelter. Ms. Cochran responded that the building was non-habitable due to a non-operational elevator and a leaking roof. She asserted getting the building up to code would take millions of dollars.

Member Martinez asked about the timeline of the survey results. Ms. Cochran responded that everyone who received assistance before the end of the FY received the first survey. In the future, staff would send surveys to people three months, six months, and one year after they received that assistance. Member Martinez looked forward to reviewing more updates on the rental assistance program. He asked Ms. Cochran to explain density bonuses for affordable housing developments. Ms. Cochran provided an example of a density bonus. If zoning only allowed 40 housing units on a parcel, an affordable housing project could increase the number of allowable units by 30 percent on that same parcel. There were also parking spot reductions to allow for the development of more units. Member Martinez asked Ms. Cochran to provide more information on warming centers offered in Reno. Ms. Cochran replied that information on warming centers would come from Washoe County staff.

Member Dahir thanked Ms. Cochran for her presentation. He thought it was important for people to know all the different things happening in the region. He asserted that every person was valued whether or not they had a place to live. He appreciated all the impact statements in Ms. Cochran's presentation and opined that the changes those programs made in people's lives were significant.

Chair Hill thanked Ms. Cochran for her work and looked forward to seeing how the Board could support her and her team.

**23-017C**     **AGENDA ITEM 8** Nevada Cares Campus Update presentation. Dana Searcy, Washoe County.

Washoe County Division Director of Housing and Homeless Services Dana Searcy conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Nevada Cares Campus Program Model & Operations; Cares Campus (2 slides); Cares Campus Priorities; Nevada Cares Campus Development – Progress; Nevada Cares Campus Newsletter; Nevada Cares Campus Construction; Nevada Cares Campus Development; Nevada Cares Campus Development – Capital Budget (2 slides); Nevada Cares Campus – Safe Camp (Temporary Location); Nevada Cares Campus – Safe Camp; Nevada Cares Campus; Nevada Cares Campus – Phase III; Cares Campus – Welcome Center/ Case Management & Therapy/ Staff Offices/ Dining Hall; Nevada Cares Campus (2 slides); Nevada Cares Campus – Phase III; Nevada Cares Campus – Resource Center (2 slides); Cares Campus – Phase IV; Cares Campus – Supportive Housing (2 slides); Nevada Cares Campus; Nevada Cares Campus – Construction Timeline; Nevada Cares Campus Outcomes; Nevada Cares Campus (2 slides); Nevada Cares Campus Outcomes – Reliance on Regional Emergency Services; Nevada Cares Campus Outcomes – Partnerships with Service Providers; National Trends; Nevada Cares Campus Outcomes – Point in Time Count; Nevada Cares Campus Outcomes – Permanent Housing Placements – Nevada Cares Campus Outcomes – Recidivism Rate; Cares Campus – Next Steps; Nevada Cares Campus.

Ms. Searcy stated the Cares Campus was a low-barrier shelter focused on housing solutions. She declared that staff was focused on increasing shelter capacity across the region, appropriate staffing ratios, and partnerships with regional service providers. She said all the projects in gold listed on the “Nevada Cares Campus Development – Progress” slide were either complete or in progress, noting that some of the projects would always be listed as in process because they were ongoing. She declared Phase II of the construction for the Cares Campus and construction for the Safe Camp were nearing completion, Phase III of the Cares Campus was underway, Phase IV for supportive housing was out to bid, and the Line Drive Housing Project had been added to the campus.

Ms. Searcy shared the *Nevada Cares Campus Newsletter*, which was designed for the people the Cares Campus served. The newsletter contained maps of the construction on site, where people could find services, a schedule for on-site partners, and highlights of new services and other current events on campus. She informed the newsletters were available online at [www.washoecounty.gov/homeless/cares-campus](http://www.washoecounty.gov/homeless/cares-campus).



Ms. Searcy explained that the “Nevada Cares Campus Development” slide provided the most current overview of the site. She declared there had not been any changes to the capital budget over the past year. She noted much of the Cares Campus funding was directed toward housing and services on campus rather than the shelter itself. She pointed out that funding for the Cares Campus came from Washoe County, the Cities of Reno and Sparks, State and federal funds, and the private sector.

Ms. Searcy announced that the construction of the Safe Camp would be completed in about two weeks. She recalled concerns from staff, when the Safe Camp consisted of tents, regarding how to keep people safe from winter exposure, which led to the purchase of ModPods. She opined the Safe Camp was beautiful, with open space, green grass, and trees. She highlighted updates to the Sprung, including bed labels, floor sealant, six new dorms, and the opening of independent cubbies. Ms. Searcy noted that Phase III of construction included a large welcome center that would house staff offices, services, and the dining room.

**\*10:00 a.m. Member Clark arrived at the meeting.**

Ms. Searcy acknowledged the region struggled to implement a winter plan each year. She asserted that a staff goal was to ensure the Cares Campus could ebb and flow with the community's needs. She pointed out the resource center was designed for day services but would include 84 beds for winter overflow and could stay open for 24 hours per day if needed. She recalled that in 2022, staff filled the garage bays with 56 cots, and there was room for 112 people in the warming center, which stayed open 24 hours per day and did not reach capacity the previous winter.

Ms. Searcy displayed renderings of the supportive housing facilities and noted the Cares Campus board recently accepted a \$22 million grant from Home Means Nevada for the project. She reviewed the Cares Campus construction timeline and highlighted different facets of the project nearing completion.

Ms. Searcy reported that over 2,700 unique clients were served at the Cares Campus in one year, noting that 43 percent were aged 55 and over, 43 percent had a cognitive or physical disability, and 29 percent were uninsured. She remarked there was a decrease in the number of law enforcement and emergency medical responses on campus, which she accredited to the 30 on-site service partners now available. Staff also saw a decrease in the number of unsheltered people and had managed to triple the number of housing placements. She spoke about recidivism, noting staff would pull statistics every six months. She stated that from January 2022 through June 2022, there was a 37 percent recidivism rate. She informed that staff would measure recidivism rates six months and one year after housing placement to determine the percentage of people returning to homelessness.

Ms. Searcy reviewed the next steps regarding the Cares Campus. She declared that employee readiness and training programs, haircut services, and therapy groups were being developed. She thought staffing levels looked good and no longer

required close monitoring. She reported staff had implemented recommendations from an evaluation of the Cares Campus by Jon DeCarmine. She listed upcoming project completions, including Restroom Building B and Sprung improvements in November and the opening of the resource center and winter overflow in December.

Member Lawson was impressed with the progress made at the Cares Campus in the two and a half years it had been open. He declared that 636 people placed in permanent housing was a big deal and thought the program was working well. He believed the plans to implement wraparound services for mental health and other needs would help people get out of homelessness. He reported that Northern Nevada HOPES was scheduled to open next door to the Cares Campus and would provide essential services such as mental health care.

Vice Chair Taylor echoed Member Lawson's sentiments. She asked Ms. Searcy if her claims that warming and cooling shelters did not reach capacity were accurate. Ms. Searcy responded that the public utilized the shelters, but they did not reach capacity. Vice Chair Taylor clarified that there was availability for people who needed to take advantage of those services, to which Ms. Searcy replied yes. Ms. Searcy noted a tight capacity for women but thought those needs would be met as the winter overflow beds opened. Vice Chair Taylor asked when warming centers were scheduled to open. Ms. Searcy said they would open on November 1 and be available 24 hours per day. She added that if temperatures reached below 40 degrees at any time before November 1, the shelters would open early. Vice Chair Taylor asked for confirmation that if temperatures dropped between October 1 and November 1, the shelters would open early, which Ms. Searcy confirmed. Vice Chair Taylor thought the staff did an excellent job relaying information through the Cares Campus newsletters and other resources. She thanked Chair Hill for her leadership on the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) and opined the Cares Campus was a beacon of hope for people in the community.

Member Martinez applauded the County staff's dedication to providing vital community services. He appreciated Ms. Searcy's information regarding the decrease in emergency medical and law enforcement responses to the Cares Campus. He asked Ms. Searcy to address some concerns expressed during public comment regarding staff training and security. Ms. Searcy declared that many safety improvements had been made. When the Cares Campus initially opened, staff implemented bag checks and a gate. The County was later able to implement metal detectors and bag scanners. She reported fewer sit-outs and incident reports over the past six months.

Member Dahir acknowledged that fixing community issues took time. He thanked the County for taking the lead on the Cares Campus and thought it allowed the Cities to focus on keeping people in their homes. He pointed out there were people who could potentially never go out and get a job and wondered what the solution was for those people. Ms. Searcy asserted the County was working to get appropriate case management in place, noting the Cares Campus and Our Place had a 1 to 30 ratio of case managers, which did not include counselors and on-site staff. Member Dahir recalled a public comment claiming that Our Place and the Cares Campus were at capacity and asked Ms.

Searcy if that was true. Ms. Searcy responded she was not prepared to speak about Our Place being full or not; she knew the online dashboard reported it was at capacity. She said Cares Campus and Our Place staff worked hard to admit people. She reported there had not been a situation where a woman had to wait more than 12 hours before getting a bed, but families were different, as there was a waiting list of about 30 families in need of housing support. Member Dahir applauded Ms. Searcy for her work. He declared the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) existed to bring community collaboration between the Cities and the County. He stated he would continue to support anything that could be done to help the community.

Member Clark wondered who would be supplying the haircut program at the Cares Campus as he had a friend who owned a local barber college. Ms. Searcy responded that Super Cuts had agreed to provide the service. Member Clark asserted he was focused on seniors, noting that 43 percent of those who lived at the Cares Campus were senior citizens, and asked what was being done to help them. He reported that patrons of the Washoe County Senior Center had expressed frustration about shopping carts left in the parking lot. He suggested implementing programs and activities for unhoused seniors at the Cares Campus so they would not need to travel to local senior centers. He asked Ms. Searcy if a shuttle service brought people from the Cares Campus to the Senior Center. Ms. Searcy replied she was unaware of such a service but would look into it.

Member Clark stated he frequented the Senior Center and confirmed there were shopping carts full of people's belongings in the parking lot and around the building. He expressed concern regarding some incidents between unhoused seniors and other patrons of the Senior Center. He spoke about an individual he photographed lying on the corner of Ninth and Sutro Street whom he later learned had passed away. He remarked *Our Town Reno* published an article about that person claiming he had been sleeping in the bushes near the Senior Center because he felt unsafe at the Cares Campus. Member Clark asserted the County paid a lot of money for the Cares Campus; therefore, people should not be afraid to seek shelter there. Ms. Searcy declared she was unaware of an individual passing away and would research the incident. She noted many people were not comfortable in a congregate shelter because there were a lot of people and activities going on. The Cares Campus worked to ease that discomfort through improvements to implement individual dorms in the Sprung so people could have their own space. She reported a separate area had been set up for women, and there was talk about creating a separate space for seniors and people with disabilities who may be more vulnerable. She spoke about the resource center, noting it would have a different entrance from the main campus to allow people who did not want to go into the shelter access to other services provided by the Cares Campus.

Chair Hill asked Ms. Searcy if the 115 people 65 and older at the Cares Campus were searching for permanent housing. Ms. Searcy thought most patrons of the Cares Campus over the age of 65 were looking for housing with supportive services and stated there was a lot of effort towards helping people stay in their homes as they aged. She asserted the Senior Center was available to all senior citizens regardless of income level, and people were welcome even if they were unhoused.

Member Dahir thought it should be noted if someone felt unsafe at the Cares Campus. He expressed condolences for the person who passed away but did not think it could be explicitly tied to something that happened at the Cares Campus. He did not believe unhoused people should be less welcome than others in public places. He suggested there could be boundaries, such as not allowing shopping carts throughout a parking lot, but all people should be welcomed into taxpayer-funded spaces such as the Senior Center. He appreciated the County's effort to help people get into permanent housing.

Member Clark apologized for not stopping to help the individual he photographed. He remarked that some patrons had expressed discomfort with the conduct of unhoused residents at the Senior Center. He reported he took a tour of the senior center in Carson City, which did not allow shopping carts in the parking lot, and directed unhoused people to other locations with resources for homelessness. He thought all seniors should feel welcome at senior centers without certain groups present to make them feel uncomfortable. He scheduled a tour of the Douglas County Senior Center, which operated similarly to Carson City's. He suggested Washoe County follow their lead so patrons could feel comfortable at the Washoe County Senior Center. He did not think the Senior Center should be a low-barrier facility.

Chair Hill announced that the Housing and Homeless Services department was now in charge of the Our Place campus, and she looked forward to seeing statistics and learning how the community could help women and families in need of shelter. She thought the number of people placed in permanent housing was incredible and attributed it to the caseworkers on campus. She asked Ms. Searcy to highlight the staff's work to help people obtain insurance. Ms. Searcy responded that assisting people to become insured was one of the first things caseworkers did when they connected with patrons of the Cares Campus. She noted the County recently received acceptance from the State to be a Medicare provider so it would receive reimbursements for certain services provided at the Cares Campus. Chair Hill shared she regularly stopped for people she saw on the side of the road to give them a snack and a bus pass and talk to them about the Cares Campus. She asserted the Cares Campus was different from how it was in the beginning; it was now a safe space where people were placed in permanent housing.

Member Clark asked if there were plans to have senior wings at the Cares Campus and Our Place. Chair Hill responded it was her understanding that Our Place already had a senior area, which Ms. Searcy confirmed. Ms. Searcy stated that staff at the Cares Campus were working to move more vulnerable individuals into a separate space, but she would not consider all senior citizens on the campus vulnerable. Member Clark thought the low-barrier standard for the Cares Campus should not apply to all Washoe County programs. He opined certain standards should be upheld for other County facilities. Ms. Searcy declared there were many different providers in the region with programs that were not low-barrier, and if someone on campus qualified for one, caseworkers worked hard to get them moved. Chair Hill asserted it was essential to spread the word that if people went to the Cares Campus for help, staff would connect them with the most appropriate resources for their situation. She commended County staff for receiving a Built for Zero grant and a MacArthur Genius grant for implementing best practices for homeless services.

She remarked there was a public comment claiming that the County was not following best practices, but the County would not have received those grants if that was true.

**10:45 a.m.**     **Member Clark left the meeting.**

**23-018C**     **AGENDA ITEM 9**     Discussion and possible action to amend the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) Bylaws, Article V, Section 2 to provide only that the CHAB will ensure meetings comply with the Open Meeting Law and that meeting locations will provide reasonable access and accommodations for the public. Article V, Section 3 of the bylaws may be amended to provide that regular meetings of the CHAB will be held at the discretion of any member of the board, through the Chair, and will be noticed with at least thirteen (13) days written notice to each member of the CHAB.

Washoe County Division Director of Housing and Homeless Services Dana Searcy displayed a document that was distributed to the Board and placed on file with the Clerk. Ms. Searcy stated this item was agendized at the request of the Board to amend its bylaws.

Member Dahir reminded the Board members that the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) was created as a tool for Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks to work together to help solve homelessness issues in the region. He thought it was important for the Board to continue hearing from the community and non-profit organizations. He supported this item but hoped the Board would continue to meet even if there were no updates from the Cares Campus. Chair Hill appreciated Member Dahir's remarks. She felt caught up on the Cares Campus and Our Place progress because she was regularly in contact with County staff as a County Commissioner, but there were Board and community members who did not have that same access. Member Dahir believed Board meetings were helpful so the CHAB could keep up with current events and community partnerships.

Member Lawson remarked he attended the Nevada League of Cities Conference in Las Vegas and gave a speech about Washoe County's work on homelessness. He claimed Las Vegas had a population of 3 million people and did not have many beds available for the unhoused population. While Washoe County was not perfect, he believed it was further along than other communities. He was proud of what had been accomplished in a short amount of time. He thought the Board should meet as often as it liked to continue to do good work and maintain community partnerships.

On motion by Member Dahir, seconded by Member Lawson, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Member Clark absent, it was ordered that Agenda Item 9 be approved.

**10:54 a.m.**     **Member Clark returned to the meeting.**

**23-019C**      **AGENDA ITEM 10** Board members announcements, reports and updates to include requests for future board agenda items.

Chair Hill expressed excitement for the Board to review statistics from Our Place at the next Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) meeting.

**23-020C**      **AGENDA ITEM 11** Public Comment.

Mr. Jack Haddock asserted he always wanted to participate in projects to better the community. He recently worked with Project 150 to aid high school students experiencing homelessness, noting the organization put on a coat drive and prepared 250 backpacks for unhoused students. He introduced his friend, Mr. David Desmond, who lived at the Cares Campus. Through conversations with Mr. Desmond, he realized some of the needs of Cares Campus residents and was able to provide small gifts such as Sudoku, coloring books, notepads, pens, skin cream, and chapstick. He remarked he had been searching for a County staff member he could speak with regarding additional needs of Cares Campus residents and would contact Washoe County Division Director of Housing and Homeless Services Dana Searcy. He wanted to provide support wherever possible. Chair Hill asked Ms. Searcy to speak with Mr. Haddock.

Mr. David Desmond stated he had been friends with Mr. Haddock for over 45 years. He was a resident of the Cares Campus and alleged that all the comments made at the meeting, both good and bad, were accurate. He mentioned the project he and Mr. Haddock started to bring gifts to the women at the Cares Campus. He asserted anyone who wanted to donate could contact Mr. Haddock. Chair Hill thanked Mr. Desmond for his effort to support women at the Cares Campus.

Ms. Kristen Gordon was not present when called to speak.

Ms. Trisha Olsen declared she had been a resident of the Cares Campus for two months. She thought Ms. Searcy made conditions at the campus sound better than they were. She opined the staff should be more educated, compassionate, and accommodating. She challenged Board members to spend a week undercover at the campus to learn what it was like. She suggested the County hire staff members who could help people with rehabilitation and job skills.

Ms. Christine Acuña suggested opening a campground outside the city for people experiencing homelessness who did not want to go to the shelter. She expressed frustration with people who camped in public areas throughout the community.

Mr. Steve Burdick was not present when called to speak.

Ms. Randy Peyser spoke about homeless camps near her home and the Mariposa Charter School. She stated she was a former liaison for the frail elderly at the City of Pacifica's senior center. She noted that the individuals she worked with were usually kept separate from other facility patrons. She claimed people who were relatively

well did not want to be around unhoused individuals at the senior center. She remarked she used to make food for people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco and realized that when she had something to give, she felt no fear, but she did not have anything to give now and felt afraid. Chair Hill directed staff to speak with Ms. Peyser.

Ms. Terri Kenney informed there was a shuttle from the Cares Campus to the Washoe County Senior Center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, at 10:30 a.m. She stated she had been a resident of the Cares Campus for four months, had accomplished a lot with her social worker, and was waiting for a housing placement. She spoke about a dispute between Cares Campus patrons and a member of staff, which she was accused of starting. She mentioned the food provided to residents of the Cares Campus came from Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada (CCNN). She declared there was a lot of dust and dirt in the air ducts and wondered if it was the responsibility of the County to have those cleaned. She suggested Cares Campus employees be randomly drug-tested and spoke about a patron who overdosed in the restroom. She claimed staff threatened to remove women from the Cares Campus because it was intended to be a shelter for men, and women were housed there as a courtesy. Chair Hill asked a member of staff to speak with Ms. Kenney.

Ms. Teresa Bacon suggested the Cares Campus host Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA), and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings for its patrons. She spoke about an incident when other Cares Campus residents attacked her on her way to work. She asserted the Board did not know what went on at the Cares Campus and thought Board members should go undercover into the campus. She declared she had a Bachelor's degree in social work (BSW) and that people with physical and mental disabilities should not be housed with the general population at the Cares Campus. She spoke about an incident when a resident passed away and asserted the staff needed better training to help people.

Ms. Penny Brock displayed a document that was distributed to the Board and placed on file with the Clerk. She read a quote from the Cares Campus website, which indicated there were a total of 3,284 beds available at the Cares Campus. She spoke about the County's budget and increases in property taxes. She alleged there were homeless seniors because they could not afford to pay their property taxes. She recalled an elderly couple attended a Board of County Commissioners' (BCC) meeting where they spoke about needing assistance with paying their property taxes. She wondered if the BCC extended any help to them. She mentioned other tax increases in the County and opined the County's budget was too large.

Mr. Donald Young III stated he was a journalist who had interviewed people experiencing homelessness in San Diego and Reno. He reported that many of the people he interviewed came from ordinary places, and changes in circumstances brought them to where they were. He thought most people had difficulty getting through life and some needed more help than others. He spoke about his work with the commander of a naval cyber warfare unit and suggested the Board utilize some of the commander's methods when combating homelessness.

Mr. Jake Maynard declared the purpose of this Board was to advocate for unhoused people. He thought concerns regarding shopping carts in parking lots came from a place of bias. He asserted people used shopping carts to transport their belongings because they had no other options. He wondered why people living at the Cares Campus did not know about Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) meetings and why there were no free public transportation opportunities to bring unhoused people to the meetings to provide first-hand accounts of the conditions at the Cares Campus.

Mr. Bill Sims thought the County should work with the City of Reno to fix the non-functioning elevator and leaking roof at the Community Assistance Center (CAC) to provide access to families who needed shelter. He pointed out that just because a person was homeless did not mean they were no longer a member of the community who could be barred from public spaces. He declared that no matter someone's life circumstances, it was not their job to make others feel comfortable about their situation. He did not think people should be moved out of the community because they were experiencing homelessness. He hoped the Board would develop a detailed plan to ensure people were cared for as winter approached.

Ms. Lily Baran reiterated her desire to present homelessness solutions to the Board. She listed available shelters in Las Vegas and asserted Member Lawson's claim regarding the amount of shelter space there was inaccurate. She suggested the Washoe County Housing and Homeless Services department be located at the Cares Campus so staff could know what was happening there. She thanked the individuals who lived at the Cares Campus who voiced their concerns during the meeting. She thought there was supposed to be a member of the CHAB who had lived experience and suggested there was a commenter with a BSW who would be a great candidate for that position. She believed the only data point the Board should care about was that the number of outside deaths had doubled between 2021 and 2022. She declared the Board needed to do something to address the issues.

Ms. Natalie Handler opined the CAC was a solution for the families on the waitlist for Our Place. She thought the Board should be provided with an assessment of the CAC from the building department with an estimate of what the necessary repairs would cost. She stated that the fact that warming shelters never reached capacity the previous winter did not mean there was no need for more warming centers throughout the region. She declared some people could not make it to the Cares Campus because of transportation issues or not being permitted on the property. She spoke about a social media post she had seen that claimed the Special Weapons and Tactical (SWAT) team was using Reno Housing Authority (RHA) homes to conduct training exercises. At the same time, unhoused people were on wait lists for those homes. She asked if those exercises could be done elsewhere or not at all. She hoped the Board would develop a winter preparedness plan.

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**11:33 a.m.** There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

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**ALEXIS HILL**, Chair  
Community Homelessness Advisory Board

ATTEST:

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**JANIS GALASSINI**, County Clerk

*Minutes Prepared by:*  
*Taylor Chambers, Deputy County Clerk*