

**Draft MINUTES**  
**Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission**  
**January 22, 2025**

**The Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission met in a scheduled session on Wednesday, January 22, 2025, in the Washoe County Commission Chambers, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada.**

**The meeting was televised live and replayed on Washoe Channel at: <https://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/Communications/wctv-live.php> also on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WashoeCountyTV>**

**Vice Chair Dake called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.**

**1. Roll Call**

**Members Present:** Kevin Joell (Zoom), Sean Hill, Timothy Dake, Lisa Rode (Zoom), Mark Neumann, Neal Jones (Zoom), Nicholas-Martin Kearney, Mariluz Garcia

**Absent:** Miles Gurtler

**Staff Present:** Brandon Roman, Eric Crump, Stephanie D'Arcy, Aaron Smith, Jennifer Roebuck, Lindsay Liddell, Faye-Marie Pekar

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The pledge was recited by Commissioner Hill.

**3. Reading of Zoom Instructions**

Brandon Roman read the Zoom instructions.

**4. Election of the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Chair and Vice Chair for a term of January 22, 2025, through January 28, 2026.**

Commissioner Jones volunteered as Chair.

Commissioner Neumann requested to leave all positions as they are.

Commissioner Joell seconded the nomination for Commissioner Jones.  
No public comment.

Commissioner Joell thanked Commissioner Neumann for his recommendation to remain as chair but is happy to pass it on to another Commissioner.

Commissioner Jones was elected chair unanimously by a roll call vote.

Commissioner Neumann nominated Commissioner Dake as Vice Chair. Second by Commissioner Jones.

No public comment.

Commissioner Dake was elected Vice Chair unanimously by a roll call vote.

## **5. Public Comment**

No public comment.

## **6. Approval of the Draft Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of November 20, 2024.**

Motion by Commissioner Neumann to approve the Draft Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of November 20, 2024. Second by Commissioner Hill.

No public comment. Motion carried unanimously.

## **7. Resolution of Appreciation and Recognition of Service for Colleen Wallace Barnum for her 26 ½ years of outstanding service to Washoe County.**

Vice Chair Dake read the resolution for Colleen Wallace Barnum.

Colleen stated that she has had the of a lifetime and has been treated well and been given many opportunities to engage with citizens, serve park staff and take things to the next level. Challenges will come and go but Colleen's commitment to parks has stayed steady, and she will continue to stay engaged as a citizen and thanks the Commission for recognition.

No public comment.

Motion by Commissioner Neumann to approve the resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Jones. Motion carried unanimously.

**8. Resolution of Appreciation for Kristy Lide for her outstanding service and contributions to Washoe County.**

Vice Chair Dake read the resolution for Kristy Lide.

No public comment.

Eric Crump, Director of the Community Services Department, stated that Kristy is the epitome of the Museum and Great Basin Adventure and appreciates her, she has been a pleasure to work with for over 20 years and he wishes her the best in her retirement.

Kristy Lide stated she wouldn't have been with Washoe County for so long if it weren't for such a supportive Commission, it has been a joy working with Washoe County and working with Eric and Colleen.

Motion by Commissioner Neumann to approve the resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Jones. Motion carried unanimously.

**9. Presentation and discussion on community programs with Reno Food Systems by Lyndsey Langsdale, Executive Director and Farm Manager.**

Stephanie D'Arcy introduced herself as the new Park Operations Superintendent, and introduced Lyndsey Langsdale, Executive Director and Farm Manager of Reno Food Systems, who gave a presentation.

Lyndsey introduced the Regenerative Grazing Demonstration Project to Commissioners and shared how it aligns with the Washoe County Climate Action Plan. Lyndsey also shared letters of support from Washoe County Commissioner Alexis Hill, Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch, Kevin Piper, Executive Director of Nevada Associations of Conservation Districts, Jim Schaffer with Washoe Storey Conservation District, Chuck Shembre, Regenerative Ag Consultant and Soil Scientist with Understanding Ag, and Lisa Peterson Trujillo, neighbor whose property is near the pasture.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about funding and sustainability, Lyndsey stated she does have grants lined up to apply for through the Association of Conservation Districts and Truckee River Fund, however funding can't come through without approval of the use of the land.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question about possibly opening the property for a 4H program for additional funding, Lyndsey stated that it is something they would do. Being a nonprofit, she looks for things that can benefit the community.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question on the lease of the property, Lyndsey stated the lease on the 5 acres is 5 years and would be open to a similar lease or longer.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question to Deputy District Attorney, Lindsay Liddell, regarding the maximum lease, Lindsay stated she believes that in NRS chapter 244 which addresses county property, there may be some language regarding leasing to a nonprofit for up to 99 years.

Vice Chair Dake stated to turn it back to staff to discuss a potential lease on the land to bring back to the board. Stephanie D'Arcy stated she will look at all the opportunities available.

**10. Possible approval of the revised 2024 Rancho San Rafael Regional Park Master Plan. Revisions include an expansion of 400 non-paved parking stalls in the North Parking Zone and language stating when new trees are added to the pasture area or the disc golf course, that Great Reno Balloon Races should be consulted on tree location and/or species to ensure no impediment on their event.**

Faye-Marie Pekar, Park Planner gave a presentation on the revisions.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question about the indoor pickleball/tennis courts, Faye-Marie stated they were preserved, and the only changes were minor, as any major changes would have to have gone back out to public to be vetted.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's comments about the indoor pickleball courts, Faye-Marie stated the plans are conceptual and the specifics of the buildings would be in the next phase of implementation.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's questions about the number of parking spaces, Faye-Marie stated they would be adding 400 flex parking spaces to the northern parking zone as shown in the diagram, and the full build out of the master plan occurs it would be a net of 103 spaces total for the park. Within the adopted master plan there is expansion of parking at the Museum, next to the maintenance yard and additional parking in the Arboretum expansion.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question about the conflict with Great Reno Balloon Race (GRBR), Faye-Marie stated in terms of parking, this would be taking away spots from the November adoption plan by about 300 but there are still an additional 103 spots than what is there currently. Specific to tree count, nothing is currently proposed within the pasture area that would affect the event. The added language is that if trees are to be added in the pasture area or disc golf zone, Washoe County will consult with GRBR as to not affect the event.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question as to why this item is being brought back to the Commission, Eric Crump, Director of Community Services Department, stated that the changes from the November adoption are minor. Washoe County is working with GRBR to identify additional flex parking areas similar to how the parking is used now, but additional parking has always been part of the plan. The added language in the plan is to coordinate with GRBR when planting. Eric stated that GRBR does not have problems with the plan and representatives are available for questions as well.

In response to Commissioner Dake's question on the public comments that were made by GRBR after the November adoption, Nancy Gilbert, Board Member for GRBR, stated that they had voiced concerns on a number of issues, mainly marking, during meetings. Ms. Gilbert stated that their event is free and in order to keep the event free, they need to charge for parking. Ms. Gilbert stated they were told that they could keep the Northeast corner of McCarran and Sierra Street and then it was removed at another public meeting they attended. Ms. Gilbert stated they did not feel heard, so they went to the public and then had two very good meetings about the concerns and got back some parking on the North side.

Regarding the trees, Ms. Gilbert stated that on the plan there were added trees on the south side of the open area which created a danger issue for balloonists to get over to make their landings, which were accommodated in the compromise.

Commissioner Dake stated that he appreciated the explanation, and that the Balloon Race is a great Reno event, but that it was disheartening and concerning to see that the mark was missed as staff goes through a lot of effort getting public input and putting together the master plan. Ms. Gilbert stated that she appreciated them helping preserve the event, and the main concern was safety and getting people in and out of the park safely.

In response to Commissioner Neumann stating that there were no concerns raised in the November meeting when the Master Plan was approved, Pete Copeland, Executive Director of the Great Reno Balloon Race, stated that there was miscommunication between the two organizations and GRBR was under the impression the Master Plan would go to the Board of Directors in late January and believed they still had time to work through it. Mr. Copeland stated the compromise means a lot to their organization and means they can put the event on safely. It took a lot of work and hard feelings to get there, but it got done and can move forward with what is best for the community.

Commissioner Joell stated that he felt GRBR handled the situation unprofessionally. The final plan was put out to the public for final comments and the Commission did not get any comments. Park Commission meetings are public and advertised in advance with an agenda of what is being voted on. The public can provide an e-mail with concerns to be reviewed as Commission, the public can also attend in person or via Zoom and nothing was said.

Commissioner Joell stated he would like to hear GRBR take some accountability for missing that it was approved and going to the public. Commissioner Joell realizes that the organization did not tell the public the event was going to be shut down, but stated the organization did not stop the media from interpreting it in that way. The event has an incredible amount of support from Washoe County, the park fees are waived, it is sponsored by Washoe County and believes as cash sponsorship is received by County Commission as well. Commissioner Joell stated that the 1990 and the 2002 Master Plans both included Arboretum expansion and most of the tree design is the same in the new plan and is not sure why it was never a problem in past years, and instead of voicing concerns to the staff, it was brought to the public. Commissioner Joell is confident that if the concerns were brought to the Commissioners or the staff, it would have been listened to as they are minor changes. Commissioner Joell stated it is very unfortunate that additional funds had to be spent with a design consultant after the fact and will ask for a reduction in sponsorship to make up for that. Commissioner Joell stated he has no issue with the minor adjustments but is disappointed how it ended up here.

Commissioner Jones stated that he agrees with the other Commissioner comments, as this is a very public process, Commissioner Jones is in support of the event but finds it unfortunate how it got to this point, however, hopes to move forward as partners. In response to Commissioner Jones's and Chair Dake's questions regarding the consultation and decision on future tree locations, Ms. Gilbert stated a lot of balloons rise from the field to participate in the race but stay close to the event so people can see them compete. GRBR would like to have input and keep trees low enough to not impact the balloons rising, or inflating.

Commissioner Dake stated the concern from the Commissioners was not so much about the small changes, but how they were brought about through the media and newspaper rather than through their regular channels as a Park Commissioner. Ms. Gilbert stated they did attend meetings and voiced their concerns but did not feel that they were being heard. Ms. Gilbert stated that the GRBR Board had no idea that the November Park Commission was going to be the final decision as that was not communicated to them, and they did not find out until it was already approved. Ms. Gilbert stated what was told to them in a private meeting was a different layout than what was shown to the public.

Pilar Aldecoaotalora, Secretary for GRBR agreed that the pictures shown in private meetings with Washoe County were different than what was presented to the public which was upsetting. Ms. Aldecoaotalora stated that they do not want to move backwards, and thanks the County and Commissioners for their support so far, but they did not feel, as a Board that they were getting good faith and that's the reason they decided to go public.

Commissioner Joell stated that there was nothing relayed about the discrepancies in the staff report and there were opportunities to relay in the November meeting and would like to see GRBR take accountability for the money and staff time spent on their mistake and move on.

Commissioner Neumann reiterated that all Park Commission, Commissioner Meetings, CAB Meetings are public and would love to work with GRBR but was frustrated it was brought to the public through media than to any meetings.

Commissioner Dake addressed the Commissioners and stated concerns and frustrations have been made clear.

Motion by Commissioner Neumann to adopt the revised 2024 Rancho San Rafael Regional Park Master Plan. Revisions include an expansion of 400 non-paved parking stalls in the North Parking Zone and language stating when new trees are added to the pasture area or the disc golf course, that Great Reno Balloon Races should be consulted on tree location and/or species to ensure no impediment on their event. Second by Commissioner Kearney.

Public comment by Rod Dimmitt with the May Arboretum Society, which is the nonprofit that supports the May Arboretum. Mr. Dimmitt stated that May Arboretum Society is also a stakeholder and was thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the process, and thanked Faye Marie and Dig Studio who did an outstanding job. The May Arboretum Society is excited for the new plan and the vision put forth, and for the first garden in 30 years. The plan was developed with community stakeholders and a 2.5-acre cactus and succulent garden. With a 7 inch per year average of rain in Washoe County, the new garden design will highlight low water use plants and how they can adapt to individual home gardens. Mr. Dimmitt, on behalf of the May Arboretum Society fully endorses the plan with the revisions put forth. Mr. Dimmitt also left business cards for the Commissioners and offered to do a presentation on what the new garden will entail and invited them out to Arboretum. Since 2017, the May Arboretum Society has donated around 1.5 million dollars to the Arboretum.

In response to Commissioner Joell's question on whether the Reno Disc Golf Association was consulted regarding the changes to the Master Plan, Eric Crump, Director of Community Services stated they were consulted and approved of the changes.

Motion carried unanimously.

**11. Presentation, discussion and possible approval of a request for sponsorship of the 2025 Artown Festival; waive park facility rental and use fees [\$87,400] in consideration of Washoe County being recognized as a Sponsor; and approve an agreement with Artown for the Artown Festival 2025 events to be held at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, July 1-31, 2025.**

Stephanie D'Arcy, Park Operations Superintendent, gave a background on the event and introduced Beth Macmillan, Executive Director of Artown, who gave a presentation.



In response to Commissioner Dake's question regarding the decibel levels and complaints from neighbors from previous events at Rancho San Rafael, Ms. Macmillan stated that they are absolutely concerned that the event is embraced by not only Washoe County and the community but by the neighbors as well and will adhere to the decibel level that is mandated by Washoe County as they do at all other event locations.

In response to Commissioner Kearney's question about a contingency plan, Ms. Macmillan stated they would look for another location and make a plan to make sure Artown always happens for the Community.

In response to Commissioner Kearney's question regarding bringing Artown back to UNR, Ms. Macmillan stated it was looked at during Covid, but they could not make it happen, but they do have Artown on the Quad every Tuesday night which UNR supports.

In response to Commissioner Kearney's concerns about the Washoe County logo already being on the Artown website before approval of this item, Ms. Macmillan stated that Washoe County has been a huge supporter and sponsor of Artown for many years and this piece is in addition to what Washoe County already supports.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question regarding the number of events happening, Ms. Macmillan stated they have worked with Washoe County to release the dates not being used so other events can be reserved to gain revenue. Artown will be using 11 days at Rancho San Rafael.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question regarding growth during a non-Covid year, Ms. Macmillan stated Movies in the park used to take place at Wingfield Park, during Covid years was at the drive-in movie theater. There were no Artown events at Rancho last year and this event is new for Artown at Rancho in this location in a more intimate and suitable area, which is also the proposed amphitheater area.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question regarding the event being open and free to the public, Ms. Macmillan stated the event is open and free to the public. Artown will be working with Washoe County to make sure to not overfill capacity. They will have a set number of wristbands, the number decided by the County and once they have all been issued, no further attendees will be permitted. The only vendors will be food and beverage. The gates will open at 5pm, the show will be from 7:30pm to 9:30pm and people will exit. Artown will bring in portable

restrooms, provide security, light trees for parking lots and ensure a safe environment.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question regarding the days Artown will be releasing back to Washoe County for reservations, Stephanie D'Arcy, Park Operations Superintendent stated Parks has received the schedule of events and the released dates are incredibly valuable as July is a busy time. The dates will be utilized for weddings and other events popular during the season.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question regarding the other areas of the park remaining open to the public, Stephanie stated that the other areas of the park not used by Artown would remain open to the public during normal Park hours.

Motion by Commissioner Hill to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve a request for sponsorship of the 2025 Artown Festival; waive park facility rental and use fees [\$87,400] in consideration of Washoe County being recognized as a Sponsor; and approve an agreement with Artown for the Artown Festival 2025 events to be held at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, July 1-31, 2025. Second by Commissioner Neumann.

No public comment.

Motion carried unanimously.

## **12. Presentation, discussion and possible approval of a Special Event Agreement with Luis Palau Association for the Great Reno Tahoe CityFest to be held at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, August 23 & 24, 2025.**

The representatives of Reno Tahoe CityFest introduced Randy Burtis, Festival Director, who gave background information on the event and a presentation.

In response to Commissioner Hill's question to staff regarding why this event is brought to Park Commission, Eric Crump, Director of the Community Services Department, stated that there are three different types of events. There are standard reservations which are made through a permitting process at staff level, special activities which are clearly defined in the policies, and special event agreements which are larger events that require a formal agreement with different terms and conditions, insurance, and are triggered based on size, duration and often both size and duration. This event falls under the special event agreement of the policy, which will be given to the Commissioners.

In response to Commissioner Dake's question regarding the risk involving motorsports and insurance requirements, Eric Crump stated that all agreements are run through the Risk Management Division within Washoe County and the Deputy District Attorney, and District Attorney's office. The event is explained, and they will decide the insurance requirements specific to the event.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question on the number of churches, Carey Hart stated they are currently at 85 churches and by the time of the event will hope to be at over 100 churches participating as they are adding them weekly.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question regarding the speaker location, Ms. Hart stated the speakers will be facing Coleman and with the distance of the stage to Coleman Avenue the sound will decrease, and the speakers can be directed towards the slope rather than into the homes and decibel levels will be monitored.

In response to Commission Dake's question on fees, Ms. Hart stated the event is free. Ms. Hart stated they will make the neighborhood aware of the event and invite them.

In response to Commissioner Joell's question regarding a maximum number of event dates for Rancho San Rafael, Stephanie D'Arcy stated there is a limit of 2 events per year at this level, the Great Reno Balloon Race is one, this festival would be the second for 2025 in this space.

In response to Commissioner's Joell's question regarding how it is decided who fills the special event spots, Eric Crump stated that there are a variety of factors that go into permitting special event agreements, and right now it is the first request in but will work with groups based on the guidance set in the policy. Mr. Crump stated that in his experience it has worked itself out as there are other parks and opportunities to bring to event promoters.

Motion by Commissioner Dake to approve a Special Event Agreement with Luis Palau Association for the Great Reno Tahoe CityFest to be held at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, August 23 & 24, 2025. Second by Commissioner Neumann.

No public comment.

Motion carried unanimously.

### **13. Parks Reports**

Stephanie D'Arcy, Park Operations Superintendent, gave the report.

Nevada State Parks has tentatively awarded a recreational trails program grant for Sierra Front Trail Construction Project Phase One in the amount of \$275,048 with a match of \$68,762 for a total project cost of \$343,810. Phase One will include 7.7 miles of multi-use single track trail connecting from Michael D Thompson Trailhead to Hunter Lake Road, expected to be awarded in April or May. Stephanie stated she is incredibly impressed with the planning team and the large number of projects, grants, and proposals they are always working on, and is excited to announce Bobby Fowler was hired as the new Natural Resource Field Technician to support trails and integrated vegetation management program.

Dragon Lights Reno did have a 15-20,000 person decline in attendance this year since moving from summer to fall. The event was extended for a few weeks, but the attendance drop was attributed to colder weather. The fall season is a better time of year for Parks as it keeps the summer season open for reservations and other public use. Dragon Lights was still a very successful event.

May Museum has loaded the 2025 traveling exhibition in for 2025, The Lost World of Dragons will run through April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Wes Jahn has accepted the offer as the new curator for the May Museum.

There were 9,788 volunteer hours for 2024, which is equivalent to \$327,000 and almost 5 additional full-time staff and has increased over 1400 hours over the previous year.

In response to Commissioner Kearney's question regarding the nature loop trail, Stephanie stated that it would not affect Artown or the Luis Palau festival.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question regarding the start date of the Sun Valleys BMX track start date, Stephanie stated she was in a meeting last week on the final design items and the project is set to start any day, but she will get the information on the exact start date to Commissioners as soon as possible.

## **14. Director's Report**

Eric Crump, Director of Community Services Department, gave the report.

The Board of County Commissioners approved \$2.5 million for the next phase of South Valleys Regional Park, which is primarily grading, infrastructure, and parking.

\$512,000 was awarded for drainage improvements to the Lemmon Valley Park Ball Fields.

\$546,000 was awarded to the Melio Gaspari Water Play Park at Lazy 5 Regional Park for improvements.

\$459,000 was awarded for the construction of the Riverbend Trailhead, which is a new facility located in Verdi along the Truckee River. This has been many years in the making with an adjacent property owner and will be constructing river access, a short trail system and a trailhead.

In response to Commissioner Dake's question regarding a direct connection, Mr. Crump stated it will have no direct connection and will be just Truckee River access.

In response to Commissioner Dake's question regarding the time frame for construction, Mr. Crump stated that they are still having those conversations but believes it should be in the summer.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question on the location of the trailhead, Mr. Crump stated it is in what would be east Verdi near Somerset. This is separate from the Pyramid Tahoe Trail.

The Board of County Commissioners approved a land lease and amendment to a development agreement with First Tee Northern Nevada.

In response to Commissioner Neumann's question regarding the 18-hole golf course, Mr. Crump stated they broke ground 2 weeks ago.

In response to Commissioner Dake's question regarding the events at Rancho San Rafael and fee waivers, Mr. Crump stated fee waivers have been done historically but are at the Park Commission's discretion, formerly were at the Board of County Commissioner's discretion for Park events. The Luis Palau Festival is paying fees. The Great Reno Balloon Race and Artown are 2 events that historically receive fee waivers as they have been sponsored by the county and are great events for the community, but ultimately fee waivers for events at the Park Commission's discretion.

#### **15. Commissioner Request for Future Agenda Items**

No requests.

#### **16. Public Comments**

No public comment.

#### **17. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:31pm.

**Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Roebuck, Office Specialist**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair Neal Jones