DRAFT MINUTES
Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission
July 23, 2025

The Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission met in a scheduled session on Wednesday, July 23, 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

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. and introduced new Commissioner Chris Baker.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Kevin Joell, Timothy Dake, Neal Jones, Chris Baker, Tracy Kuczenski, Sean Hill

Members Absent: Miles Gurtler (excused), Lisa Rode (excused), Mariluz Garcia (excused)

Staff Present: Brandon Roman, Stehpanie D'Arcy, Aaron Smith, Cobi Burnett, Eric Crump

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited by Commissioner Baker.

3. Reading of Zoom Instructions

Recording Secretary Brandon Roman read the Zoom instructions.

4. Public Comment

There was no response to the call for public comment.

1:34 p.m. **The Commission recessed to address technical issues.**

1:37 p.m. **The Commission reconvened with Commissioners Gurtler, Rode, and Garcia absent.**

5. Approval of the Draft Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of May 28, 2025

Commissioner Dake stated the date in the introductory paragraph should be May 28, 2025, not March 26, 2025. Mr. Roman indicated that change was already identified and corrected online.

Motion by Commissioner Dake to approve the minutes as written. Seconded by Commissioner Joell.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Motion carried with a vote of five for, zero against, with Commissioner Baker abstaining and Commissioners Gurtler, Rode, and Garcia absent.

6. **Presentation and adoption of a proclamation recognizing July as Parks and Recreation Month, celebrating the vital role parks, trails, open spaces, and recreational programs play in enhancing the quality of life for our community.**

Chair Jones read the proclamation.

Motion by Commissioner Joell to adopt the proclamation as read. Seconded by Commissioner Baker.

Deputy District Attorney Cobi Burnett indicated that this was a discussion item and no action was needed. The proclamation will go into effect without a motion.

Commissioner Joell rescinded his motion.

7. **Presentation, discussion, and possible recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to approve an easement deed between Washoe County (grantor) and Sierra Pacific Power Company doing business as NV Energy (grantee), on a portion of Lockwood Open Space, Assessor Parcel Number 084-700-01, granting an easement totaling ±45,891 square feet [at the appraised value of $7,800.00]. If approved, this easement will support NV Energy's gas distribution utility services to serve the Lockwood area within Storey County. (Commission District 4.) (For Possible Action).**

Business Intelligence Program Manager Aaron Smith noted Washoe County has adopted an easement policy which allows for uses of scarce and valuable park land for economic benefit, such as for infrastructure and growth. The Lockwood Open Space area currently contains picnic areas, hiking trails, river access, and pit toilets. He conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Location; Location of Proposed Easement (2 slides); and Parkland Easement Application (2 slides).

Mr. Smith indicated the gas pipeline would serve parcels north of Interstate 80. The next best alternative for the easement, he continued, has conflicts with the railroad, bridges, and an existing Kinder Morgan pipeline. NV Energy's plan is to bore under I-80 because they do not desire above-ground gas lines. He said the Commission must evaluate the benefit of the project, which could potentially increase the property values of parcels to the north.

Commissioner Hill asked about the residents who would benefit from this project.

Mr. Smith said everything south of the river in that area is Storey County, and the open space north of the river belongs to Washoe County. The increase in property values to those residents in the north, he remarked, would increase tax revenue.

Commissioner Dake inquired whether the Master Plan contemplates any development ideas for this parcel of land.

Mr. Smith said this facility does not have its own master plan, and he did not believe that development of this specific area is contemplated in the County's Master Plan, which deals more generally with bringing park amenities to the community.

Chair Jones inquired about the timeline and impacts of the proposed tunneling.

Mr. Smith responded he would need to speak to NV Energy about a timeline, but any impacts to Lockwood Open Space would only be for six to eight weeks. Access to the access road would be limited during that time, but that would be the only impact to the Washoe County property.

Commissioner Joell asked about the trail loop in the area.

Mr. Smith replied that there are several loops in that area, most of which are closer to the river.

Mr. Crump added that all the nearby loops are south of the access road. He clarified the road that the proposed easement would go on is not the access road to the County's open space, but to two private parcels west of Lockwood. The subject easement goes over the County's entrance road, so there could be a period of controlled access when that area is constructed.

Commissioner Joell noted that, in addition to the cost of the land, there is an opportunity cost during construction in loss of access to the public. He wondered whether a separate fee could be charged for that akin to the fee charged by the County for a special event.

Mr. Smith said there is nothing requiring the County to only use the appraised value, and the community should be compensated fairly for any impacts.

Commissioner Baker received confirmation that no non-exclusive public utility easement (PUE) currently exists on the parcel. He thought a 10-foot PUE should have been included at the time of map recordation. He asked whether this easement could be used for future utilities.

Mr. Crump replied that this easement will be in the name of NV Energy, so it is not a public utility easement. Any other entity wishing to use it would have to go through the same process that is being considered here. He noted that action taken by this commission in these matters is separate from the Planning Commission and the Board of Adjustment.

In response to Commissioner Joell's follow-up queries, Mr. Crump explained this property was a mobile home park that flooded in 1997, at which time the County worked with the property owner to acquire it. It was then developed for access to the Truckee River. Had an easement been recorded at that time, he continued, this item would not be necessary.

Replying to Commissioner Hill's question about usage, Mr. Smith did not have specific attendance figures but said it is a popular park for river activities.

Commissioner Hill wanted the Commission to consider opportunity costs, true value, and ecosystem services in this discussion. He expressed caution about selling easements rights on park land.

Mr. Crump responded that this issue was why the County established its easement policy, which does not provide for private easements. The County must weigh the public benefit of easements for energy or water utilities. He brought up the negotiation process involved in obtaining the easement through Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park.

Mr. Smith indicated the County has discussed alternate routes for this project with NV Energy, who has not yet provided cost estimates for the next best alternate.

Regarding Commissioner Kuczenski's questions about NV Energy's mitigation and future involvement, Mr. Smith said NV Energy has committed to minimizing impacts to park users, noting that construction will take place on a section of the property not often used by park goers. NV Energy should only need to access the property for emergency repairs, and regular annual maintenance will not be needed.

Responding to additional questions, Clint Halverson with NV Energy did not anticipate impacts to access on the west side of Canyon Way. He discussed the composition of the pipe, which will not require regular maintenance, and the need to review test stations for operability only once every year or two. He confirmed the crossing of the river will be achieved with horizontal drilling, but open trenching will be used in a north-south direction along Lockwood Drive. Eight-inch polyethylene pipe will be used. He described the method that will be used to cross I-80, reiterating that no open space will be impacted. He reviewed the process they will implement to dig under the Truckee River in an effort to eliminate any river impacts.

With respect to alternative options, Mr. Halverson noted the Rainbow Bend community exists to the east of the Canyon Drive area, and there is not much room to cross the river there. He discussed the challenges with moving the cross site to the west, including building impacts and increased difficulty in crossing the river. Trenching across the river is not an option due to the significant amount of work, the associated permitting requirements, and risk to the ecosystem. He mentioned that the Nevada Department of Transportation would not let them cross I-80 via a bridge. He estimated that moving the pipeline west could increase project costs from $600,000 to $1.2 million, and there would be limitations to cross I-80 there.

Citing the County's difficulty in obtaining funding for maintenance projects, Commissioner Joell wondered whether a fishing station or other amenity could be included to justify the large savings that NV Energy would receive.

Mr. Halverson had no authority to comment on that because he is not part of the negotiations.

Mr. Smith will relay any recommendations made by this commission to the Board of County Commissioners.

Commissioner Joell had no issue with the safety of the pipeline, but in the spirit of public opposition to the project, he felt like it would be reasonable to ask for something that would benefit park users.

Commissioner Hill expressed concern about setting a precedent, and he thought the value of open space needs to be considered in the appraisal process. He thought it would be worthwhile to formalize that natural premium on open space for future contracts.

Commissioner Baker asked about the appraisal payment.

Mr. Crump said easement revenue typically goes to the park district where that park is located, or in this case the East Truckee Canyon area.

Commissioner Baker opined the proceeds should go toward improvements on the facility that generated the revenue.

Because there are not many amenities at that park, Mr. Smith stated, signage and graffiti removal are issues that need addressing at Lockwood.

Mr. Crump added that the park would also benefit from a cattle guard. Keeping the revenue at a park district level provides the County with some flexibility. He confirmed there is no source of potable water on the Washoe County property.

Discussion ensued about what elements could be contained in a potential motion, with Deputy District Attorney Cobi Burnett explaining the issue with including negotiation points in the motion.

Mr. Halverson believed that continuing this item until September to allow additional negotiations would not be problematic as they are still waiting for contracts to be signed by the customer.

Commissioner Hill recommended that staff consider a project that should occur at the site and include it in negotiations. He also suggested formalizing a standard, perhaps using negotiations at past parks, to guide the Commission in future considerations of similar projects.

Commissioner Joell moved to continue the item until September and direct staff to continue negotiating for park improvements, seconded by Commissioner Dake. Discussion ensued regarding the motion. Commissioner Joell amended his motion.

Motion by Commissioner Joell that this item be continued to the September meeting, and that staff be directed to continue negotiations with the applicant to provide for park improvements within the parks district that contains Lockwood Park. Seconded by Commissioner Hill.

On the call for public comment, Mr. Aquib Chowdhury stated he was an NV Energy employee and had no comment on the item.

Motion carried with a vote of six for, zero against, with Commissioners Gurtler, Rode, and Garcia absent.

8. Presentation, update and discussion on the off-leash dog, pilot program.

Park Ranger Celia Walker conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Washoe County Parks Off-Leash Program Overview; Off-Leash Program Park Review – North Valleys (2 slides); Review of Off-Leash Program – Lazy 5 (2 slides); Review of Off-Leash Program – South Valleys (2 slides); Review of Off-Leash Program; and Program Summary.

Ranger Walker explained that people preferred to use the grass field at North Valleys Regional Park than a nearby enclosed dog park maintained by a homeowners association. She noted Hammer's Healthy Hounds provides waste bags at Lazy 5 Regional Park in addition to being a sponsor of the Lazy 5 Music Series as well.

Chair Jones inquired about the prevalence of fighting at the parks.

Ranger Walker replied there were no reports at North Valleys or Lazy 5, though there were a few reports of dog owners at South Valleys Regional Park with more aggressive dogs. Regarding the Chair's query about mixing large and small dogs, she pointed out that the County makes it known that use of the parks is at dog owners' risk, and there have been requests for a park which caters to small dogs. She said these pilot-program parks are shared-use parks and not dog parks.

Commissioner Baker expressed support for the program. He inquired about partnerships at the North and South Valleys parks and how the program was advertised.

Ranger Walker said there is a partnership with Natural Paws at South Valleys to provide waste bags, and they do so at Galena Creek Regional Park as well. She remarked that signage was and is used at the parks laying out the rules and hours for the off-leash program. Promotion was also done through social media, the department's website, and flyers. Word of mouth has helped the program grow. She noted the closest dog park to Lazy 5 is the Sparks Marina, which is not close.

Commissioner Kuczenski wondered about the difference between the off-leash program and a typical dog park, and she asked about the number of dog parks owned by Washoe County.

Ranger Walker explained that dog parks must follow certain regulations, including fencing and dual-gate entrance. Water, trash, and waste bags must also be provided. The off-leash program allows owners to have their dogs off leash without breaking rules, but guidelines must be followed. Hidden Valley Regional Park is the County's only dog park, she pointed out, and it contains separate areas for large and small dogs. She added that Rancho San Rafael contains 25 acres of multi-use pastureland, and the County has an agreement for off-leash dog use there.

2:46 p.m. **The Commission recessed.**

2:54 p.m. **The Commission reconvened with Commissioners Gurtler, Rode, and Garcia absent.**

9. Update on PROS Consulting's work to develop a Service Plan for the possible creation of a Park District.

Community Services Director Eric Crump indicated this will be a standing item on each agenda to allow the Commissioners the opportunity to have discussions about PROS Consulting's plan. He stated the County has will soon finalize an interlocal agreement with the City of Reno to initiate the proceedings for a park district. He noted the County, along with the Cities of Reno and Sparks, met with PROS, and the staffs of all three jurisdictions are compiling information requested by the consultant. Weekly meetings are held every Monday morning, he remarked, with the consultant expected to meet with stakeholders in person next week.

10. Parks Reports

Parks Operations Superintendent Stephanie D'Arcy highlighted portions of the report included in the staff report, including the entry regarding the Galena Campfire Program, which will feature an upcoming event with live animals and a performance by Sagebrush Rebels Trio. She promoted a Truckee River Cleanup event on September 13. She spoke about a fundraiser which raised $6,000 for restoration efforts at Davis Creek Regional Park, a collaboration with Peavine Elementary School students, and the 20th Anniversary of the Lazy 5 Summer Music Series.

Ms. D'Arcy explained that the Rancho San Rafael playground project is delayed due to permitting issues, and she anticipated an August opening. The bike project at Sun Valley Regional Park is nearly complete. She noted that Melio Gaspari Splash Park has been closed this summer due to delays on fixing issues that were identified during installation of a new pump room. She hoped that facility would be opened within a week after a health inspection.

Chair Jones asked about the number of donators at the Davis Creek fundraiser.

Ms. D'Arcy said she will obtain that information and return with an answer.

11. Director's Report

In addition to adopting a resolution at its June 10 meeting to initiate the proceedings for a park district and approving an interlocal agreement with the City of Reno, Community Services Director Eric Crump noted, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) also appointed Commissioner Baker to this commission and approved an easement deed for Sierra Sage Golf Course. At its July 8 meeting, the BCC accepted a $275,000 grant from the Division of State Parks' Recreational Trails Program to connect the Michael D. Thompson Trailhead to Hunter Lake Road.

12. Commissioner Request for future agenda items.

There were no requests.

13. Public Comment

Though no members of the public responded to the call for public comment, Deputy District Attorney Cobi Burnett advised the Commission that there is no legal prohibition against a Commissioner approving meeting minutes for a meeting at which they were not present.

Commissioner Hill stated there are many wonderful Artown events happening in County parks in the coming days.

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14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Derek Sonderfan, Independent Contractor

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Chair Neal Jones

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