



# WASHOE COUNTY BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT Meeting Minutes

## Board of Adjustment Members

Peter Ghishan, Chair  
Rob Pierce, Vice Chair  
Kathie Julian  
Patrick Caldwell  
Leo A. Horishny

Thursday, October 2, 2025

1:30 p.m.

Washoe County Administrative Complex  
Commission Chambers  
1001 East Ninth Street  
Reno, NV

## Secretary

Trevor Lloyd

and available via  
Zoom Webinar

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### 1. Determination of Quorum

Chair Ghishan called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The following members and staff were present:

Members Present: Peter Ghishan, Chair  
Rob Pierce, Vice Chair  
Kathie Julian (via Zoom)  
Patrick Caldwell  
Leo A. Horishny

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Eric Young, Senior Planner, Planning and Building Division  
Elizabeth Hickman, Deputy District Attorney, District Attorney's Office  
Adriana Albarran, Recording Secretary, Planning and Building Division  
Brandon Roman, Recording Secretary, Planning and Building Division

### 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Ghishan led the pledge of allegiance.

### 3. Ethics Law Announcement and Instructions for Providing Public Comment via Zoom/Telephone

Deputy District Attorney Elizabeth Hickman recited the Ethics Law standards and the instructions for providing public comment via Zoom/Telephone.

### 4. Appeal Procedure

Secretary Trevor Lloyd recited the appeal procedure for items heard before the Board of Adjustment.

**5. Public Comment**

There was no response to the request for public comment.

**6. Approval of the October 2, 2025 Agenda**

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, Vice Chair Pierce moved that the agenda of the October 2, 2025, meeting be approved. Member Caldwell seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**7. Approval of the September 4, 2025, Draft Minutes**

Vice Chair Pierce moved that the minutes of September 4, 2025, meeting be approved as written. Member Horishny seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**8. Approval of the September 15, 2025, Draft Minutes**

Member Caldwell moved that the minutes of September 15, 2025, meeting be approved as written. Vice Chair Pierce seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**9. Public Hearing Items**

**A. Special Use Permit Case Number WSUP25-0013 (Sanctuary of God Church) [For Possible Action]** – For hearing, discussion, and possible action to approve a special use permit for a religious assembly use to allow the construction of a 15,000-square-foot single-story church which would include approximately 9,000 square feet of worship/assembly space (sanctuary, stage, and circulation) and 6,000 square feet of support areas, such as classrooms, offices, restrooms, and foyer. The project would also include a parking area for 154 parking spaces, utility infrastructure, and site grading in the amount of 18,000 cubic yards.

- Applicant: Sierra Builders of Nevada
- Property Owner: Abner and Manuel Lopez
- Location: 3485 Rolling Ridge Road
- APN: 085-512-32
- Parcel Size: 5.003 acres
- Master Plan: Suburban Residential
- Regulatory Zone: Low Density Suburban (LDS)
- Area Plan: North Valleys
- Development Code: Authorized in Article 810, Special Use Permits
- Commission District: 5 – Commissioner Herman
- Staff: Eric Young, Senior Planner  
Washoe County Community Services Department  
Planning and Building
- Phone: 775.328.3613
- E-mail: EYoung@washoecounty.gov

Senior Planner Eric Young conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: 3485 Rolling Ridge Road; Vicinity Map; The request is to...; Existing Site Condition; Proposed Site Condition (3 slides); Required Findings (3 slides); and Motion.

Mr. Young stated that no materials will be imported to or exported from the site. He explained the amount of proposed parking is consistent with County Code requirements, though some elements of the parking plan may need to be modified to meet landscaping standards. He noted the applicant will need to negotiate an agreement to cross City of Reno easements to connect to municipal water and sewer as well as to provide the required additional ingress and egress route.

Mr. Young anticipated that the development would impact the character of the surrounding area, though the trip generation report did not trigger enough additional trips to warrant a full traffic analysis. He said it is difficult to determine whether the impact will be positive, negative, or neutral. A property owner, for instance, could build a large house with significant accessory dwellings, horses, and cows on the same property with only building permits. Staff believes the recommended conditions of approval will reduce those impacts and make the use more compatible with a residential neighborhood.

Bob Cotter with Sierra Builders expressed appreciation for staff's recommendation to approve, adding that the appellant has no issues with any of the conditions. Jason Durr with KRI Architecture and Design remarked that the slides reviewed by staff were prepared before the neighborhood meeting, and some of the plans have been revised based on comments heard at that meeting. He conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles or descriptions: site plan; revised parking plan; Cross Section W-E; Cross Section N-S; Elevation Table; site plan with photos; floorplan; building materials (2 slides); and Executive Summary.

Mr. Durr pointed out the equestrian path not on the subject property and would not be impacted by the project at all. He expected that a low-voltage AT&T power line would need to be relocated underground, an endeavor the applicant would take on. Though the building will encompass 9,000 square feet, the square footage of the worship space would be capped at 6,498 square feet, the figure used as the basis for the traffic study.

Member Horishny inquired about the retention pond and potential impacts to adjacent residents. Mr. Cotter confirmed the size of the pond will be determined by a soils analysis. The grading will result in the property being lower than it is now. Mr. Durr pointed out that all grading permit applications are required to mitigate drainage so all water either stays on the property or goes to the street; it cannot impact neighboring properties.

In response to the Chair's queries about elevation, Mr. Durr recalled there was a 23.5-foot change in elevation between the lowest point of the parcel, the retention pond, and the highest point, the building. The parking lots will be stepped. He anticipated cutting down 15 feet from the highest point of the lot, and that material will be rebalanced to level out some of the property's steeper areas.

Chair Ghishan asked how the trip generation report was calculated. Mr. Cotter said the County basis its calculations off both the size of the sanctuary and the stage. He did not anticipate 154 cars in the parking lots during services, but that many spaces are required by code. Mr. Durr estimated the building would accommodate 300 seats, but the size of the worship space was the driving number used to calculate trips. The maximum occupancy, he clarified, is based on health and safety considerations. Member Caldwell pointed to the last page of the staff report which said the average number of attendees is anticipated to be 364.

Vice Chair Pierce expressed concern about a potential mass evacuation. Mr. Cotter said that was one reason for the secondary exit, which will be constructed at the same time as the connection to utilities is made. Mr. Young noted the trip generation for religious assemblies is unusual since most of the traffic occurs on one day. This was considered by staff in their analysis. Chair Ghishan commented that the traffic study estimates an average attendance of 85 to 90 at the church's current location, resulting in 67 peak trips, which is below the threshold requiring a traffic study.

In response to follow-up questions from the Members, Senior Licensed Engineer Janelle Thomas stated the trip generation study was performed in compliance with International Traffic Engineers' (ITE) Trip Generation Manual standards. She explained the factors that go into the calculation of the peak hour trip analysis. Vice Chair Pierce opined that any business which moves to a larger space is hoping for increased visitors. Ms. Thomas confirmed that the ITE manual contains specifics for the religious assembly use type.

Member Caldwell agreed that the larger parcel, the number of parking spaces, and the expected attendance all indicate significantly more traffic. He discussed a site visit he made where he witnessed considerable traffic, which he felt would increase substantially with this project. Ms. Thomas reiterated that staff utilizes the tools that are nationally recognized to calculate the trips that will be generated.

Member Julian asked about the maximum occupancy of the building. Secretary Trevor Lloyd replied that no one from the fire department was present to provide that answer. Member Julian thought any traffic analysis should factor in the total number of occupants allowed in a building. Ms. Thomas said trip generation analysis considers the average attendance, not maximum occupancy. Chair Ghishan clarified that the 364 attendee figure listed in the staff report is a national average upon which the ITE tables are based; the church is not anticipating 364 attendees. Ms. Thomas noted the calculations both for attendance and trip generation can be different, and they are based on national standards.

Responding to additional queries, Ms. Thomas confirmed that a secondary access is required per a condition of approval, but such an access would not be required if a single-family home were proposed for this site. The secondary access will only be used in emergencies and not as an additional ingress/egress route. Member Horishny felt that should have been made visually clearer in the plans.

Member Julian pointed out that the staff report references 400 attendees. Mr. Lloyd explained that one parking spot is required for every three seats within the worship area, plus one space for every 300 square feet of additional public space. Member Caldwell was unsure why there was an assumption that fewer than 400 attendees should be expected.

With respect to secondary access, Mr. Cotter said that that has not been requested yet; it is normally done during the process requesting easement access for utilities. Secondary access is a condition of approval, and the project will not be able to be built without it.

Member Caldwell inquired about the finding related to consistency. Mr. Young responded that nothing about this project can be found to be impacted by a policy in the North Valleys Area Plan or the Master Plan. He confirmed the parcel is zoned low-density suburban (LDS). A warehouse would not be permitted in LDS zoning, though a few certain types of businesses would be allowed with special use permits (SUPs).

Regarding drainage, Mr. Young stated that staff is required to consider runoff. Engineering staff is well aware of the water table in this area, and a soils analysis will have a very large impact on the design of the drainage pond. The intent of the review, he continued, is to ensure runoff does not impact neighboring properties. Mr. Lloyd reminded the Board they are reviewing a conceptual plan. If approved, the applicants will need to produce a full set of building plans as well as a detailed hydrology report that details stormwater collection requirements which be reviewed by the County. Mr. Young stated this item provides the public with its opportunity to engage in the process, but residents are always able to lodge complaints if they witness code violations. He explained that improvements to Rolling Ridge Road would be part of the building permit requirements for this project, and they would be funded by the developer.

On the call for public comment, the following individuals expressed opposition to the project: Mr. David Purdue; Mr. Michael Marquiz; Ms. Elaine Hanford; Mr. Chuck Allen; Mr. Michael Rodriguez; Ms. Lorrie Aguilar; Mr. Clyde Cordova; Mr. Tom Hardin; Ms. Emily Hagler; Ms. Judy MacKay; Mr. Craig Goodfellow; Ms. Corrinne Carmignani; and Mr. Paul Hinen.

Reasons for their opposition included: disruption caused by the church; the addition of 300 to 400 vehicle trips over the course multiple services; the ugliness of the building; the likely deterioration of the plastic fence; the loss of views of Peavine; the failure of the project to meet Washoe County Development Code requirements; inconsistency with adjacent rural neighborhoods; inadequate roadway improvements and drainage solutions; the potential infiltration of the water table of downstream neighborhoods; the inadequacy of nearby streets to handle additional traffic; the use of local streets by construction traffic; the likelihood of overflow parking on neighborhood streets; an increase in crime, noise, and light pollution; a negative impact on property values; the presence of rhyolitic tuff on the site, which is highly expansive and difficult to build on, causing structural integrity concerns; the difficulty for water to penetrate the clay; the insufficiency of the proposed retention pond; the large amount of impervious surfaces in the plans; potential contaminantion of the water table; the allowance of a commercial building in a residential neighborhood; an increased risk of traffic accidents; the lack of snow plowing on Rolling Ridge Road; the possibility of the church holding large events during the week; the fact that the traffic study was provided by the applicant; decreased access by emergency vehicles; the presence of many retired individuals on Rolling Ridge Road and the poor condition of the road; the lack of community sewer, water, and fire hydrants in the area; the absence of a fire protection plan until the time of construction; impacts to residents' quality of life; impacts to animals; increased litter; incompatibility with the neighborhood's character; the lack of public transportation options to the site; the presence of North Valleys High School students; the lack of property tax revenue generation; public safety concerns; the current significant traffic on Golden Valley Road; the potential damage to property due to runoff; the destruction of a sidewalk to accommodate the project; the lack of nearby homeowner approval; and the possibility of vehicles parking on private property on Opal Station Road.

Mr. Marquiz displayed photographs and provided materials to the Board. In response to Member Caldwell's question, he said he did not believe the applicant addressed his concerns, and no subsequent documentation was posted to the site. Ms. Hanford and Mr. Cordova also submitted materials to the Board.

In response to additional Board Member questions, Mr. Young said the acoustics of the area were not considered, though typical County noise standards would apply to this project. He opined the varied attendance figures recited today are a result of the metrics used by staff, which are based on square footage. It does not account for the different ways religious assembly facilities can operate. He admitted the numbers based on square footage do not easily reconcile with some of the projected attendance figures, but that same methodology is followed for every project which comes before the Board. Discussion ensued about potentially including a condition requiring an additional traffic study.

Ms. Thomas confirmed that the condition of approval related to roadway improvements pertains only to the project's driveway. Contemplation of offsite improvements would be triggered if a full traffic impact analysis were required for the development. Member Caldwell did not see anything in this project that would necessitate a new traffic study. Ms. Thomas reiterated her explanation of how the ITE manual calculates trip generation based on the square footage and use of a building. Experience has shown that a full traffic impact analysis is not warranted if the 80-trip threshold is not met. Things like evacuations are not considered, she went on, although a secondary emergency access route is being required. Member Caldwell stated he understood the way trips were calculated, but he did not agree that it produced a reasonable number.

Member Julian thought the neighborhood meeting was insufficiently summarized in the staff report as it did not convey that the appellants did not respond to most of the attendees' concerns; they only addressed the building façade and the retention pond. She requested that future summaries of neighborhood meetings include more detail about what happened, as well as attendance figures and the number of people who supported or opposed a measure. She stated she cannot support approval of this SUP.

Member Caldwell concurred that issues such as traffic, scenic vistas, drainage, and changes to the character of the surrounding area were not addressed at the neighborhood meeting. He felt it would not make sense to build a church with 154 parking spaces in this location.

Chair Ghishan spoke about a church in his neighborhood, saying it generates negligible traffic on Sunday mornings. He reviewed each of the necessary findings, and based on his experiences in his neighborhood, he will support staff's recommendation for approval.

Member Horishny acknowledged staff's perspective that this proposal fits in the Master Plan and is legally permissible, but he believed it is the Board's job to consider the personal aspects of a proposal. This building would be three times the size of a home and large garage. He spoke about regularly witnessing water running through a property below the subject property, and he suspected the retention pond would not help that situation. The parking lots would significantly impact the views of neighbors, and he expressed concern that there would be negative impacts whether the church fails or succeeds. He could not support the project, despite it being legal.

Vice Chair Pierce noted all findings need to be found to the satisfaction of the Board. He reviewed each of them, saying he was concerned about drainage. Ultimately, he thought this project would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area, and elements of safety also need to be addressed more fully. Because he could not make that final finding, he could not support the project.

Member Horishny moved that Special Use Permit Case Number WSUP25-0013, Sanctuary of God, be denied, not having made all five findings in accordance with Washoe County Code Section 110.810.30. Vice Chair Pierce seconded the motion, which carried on a 4-1 vote with Chair Ghishan voting nay.

Secretary Trevor Lloyd recited the appeal procedure for items heard before the Board of Adjustment.

## **10. Chair and Board Items**

### **A. Future Agenda Items**

There were none.

### **B. Requests for Information from Staff**

There were none.

## **11. Director's and Legal Counsel's Items**

### **A. Report on Previous Board of Adjustment Items**

There were none.

### **B. Legal Information and Updates**

There were none.

## **12. Public Comment**

Mr. Michael Marquiz thanked the Board for its denial of the application for a special use permit. He noted many of the figures in the proposal have changed over time, and the trip generation was made without considering the building's maximum capacity, which was one of several things he felt staff did not adequately address. He wondered whether the public will be allowed to participate in the appeal process. Secretary Trevor Lloyd said all appeals heard by the Board of County Commissioners are noticed the same way as this application was, and members of the public will be able to make public comment at that meeting.

## **13. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Derek Sonderfan, Independent Contractor

Approved by Board in Session on November 6, 2025



Trevor Lloyd  
Secretary of the Board of Adjustment