



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: July 14, 2026

DATE: June 12, 2026

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Chad Giesinger, AICP, Planning Manager
(775) 328-3626, cgiesinger@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Kelly Mullin, AICP, Planning and Building Division Director,
Community Services Department

SUBJECT: Request by the Community Services Department Director, through the Washoe County Clerk, and pursuant to Washoe County Code (WCC) 2.030, to initiate amendments to WCC Chapter 50 (*Nuisance Code*) and WCC Chapter 125 (*Administrative Enforcement*) to enhance the enforcement capability of Washoe County enforcement officials by increasing enforcement fines to match the fine schedule used by the cities of Reno and Sparks, eliminating the 50% discount for payment of fines after the third penalty notice, exploring options to create an abatement fund to finance county initiated abatement of nuisance properties, authorizing automatic and continuing fines for failing to obey an Administrative Hearing Order after all required due process has been provided, clarifying collection procedures, allowing notice to be posted on a property in a conspicuous location in addition to the front door of a residence, clarifying that discretionary approvals may be withheld on properties with unresolved violations, deleting incorrect citations and language inconsistent with state law, deleting vague hearing decision language such as "any other action deemed appropriate", adding language to the definition of "obstruction" to include reference to public easements, declaring the storage of vehicles or materials as items that may not cause an obstruction, revising the definition of what is considered "screened" and declaring that residing in a recreational vehicle in an unauthorized manner is a public nuisance; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney's Office for preparation of a proposed ordinance in accordance with WCC 2.040.
(All Commission Districts.)

SUMMARY

Pursuant to WCC Section 2.030, the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners (Board) is asked to initiate amendments to WCC Chapters 50 (*Nuisance Code*) and Chapter 125 (*Administrative Enforcement*) to strengthen code enforcement remedies and

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potentially increase the rate of compliance. Staff is asking the Board to initiate these amendments in response to frustrations raised by the public and elected officials regarding the timeliness and effectiveness of resolving code violations. Additionally, the Administrative Enforcement Code (WCC Chapter 125.120 to 125.315) has not undergone a comprehensive update since its inception in 2013 (Ordinance 1518), to include fine amounts. Both the City of Sparks and the City of Reno levy higher fines for code violations.

Proposed amendments to WCC Chapter 125 are intended to strengthen existing code enforcement remedies, increase administrative fines to match those of Sparks and Reno, eliminate fine discounts when a violation remains unresolved, create potential funding mechanisms to finance county initiated abatement of nuisance properties, and revise administrative enforcement procedures (to include the administrative hearing process) to improve enforcement outcomes, reduce the length of time a violation remains unresolved, and eliminate inefficient processes.

Proposed amendments to WCC Chapter 50 would amend the definition of “public view” to include public access easements and publicly maintained trails, add language to the definition of “obstruction” to include reference to public easements, declare the storage of vehicles or materials as items that may not cause an obstruction, revise the definition of what is considered “screened” and declare that residing in a recreational vehicle in an unauthorized manner is a public nuisance.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Economic Impacts

PREVIOUS ACTION

January 12, 2010 – The Board adopted Ordinance No. 1419 which enacted the initial Administrative Enforcement Code (WCC 125.120–125.315); however, the code only addressed violations of construction codes and nuisances.

January 12, 2010 – The Board concurrently adopted the *Nuisance Code*, adding code language to WCC Chapter 50 (WCC 50.300).

September 24, 2013 – The Board adopted Ordinance 1518 which created the current version of the Administrative Enforcement Code. The ordinance broadened the code to address land use violations of WCC chapter 110 (*Development Code*).

March 23, 2021 – The Board adopted Ordinance 1667 which added provisions specific to Short Term Rental code enforcement violations. The ordinance also amended WCC Chapter 50 to address Short Term Rental nuisances.

September 13, 2022 – The Board adopted Ordinance 1692 amending WCC Chapter 55 (*Animals and Fowl*) to authorize animal control officers to utilize the Administrative Enforcement Code to address animal and fowl violations (in addition to criminal penalties).

BACKGROUND

The Administrative Enforcement Code (WCC Chapter 125.120 to 125.315) was adopted in 2013 to create an enforcement process authorizing the issuance of civil fines and other administrative remedies, an administrative hearing process (in lieu of court action), and

associated due process procedures. Prior to this, enforcement remedies only authorized the issuance of warnings followed by issuance of a misdemeanor criminal citation, thus straining limited District Court and District Attorney resources and criminalizing all land use infractions. The issuance of misdemeanor criminal citations involved lengthy court processes and often did not resolve the subject violations, leading to low compliance rates and inefficient use of staff resources.

While the Administrative Enforcement Code has significantly improved the flexibility and effectiveness of the enforcement process, the code has not undergone a comprehensive update since its inception. After administering the code for 13 years, staff have identified certain deficiencies in the code language, procedures, and enforcement remedies. Rectifying these deficiencies could improve enforcement procedures and outcomes.

In recent years, enforcement staff have consistently received complaints from the public, and elected/appointed officials, expressing frustration about unresolved or recurring code violations and the length of time it can take to achieve compliance. For example, it is not uncommon for a violation case to remain open for years without compliance, even after all available remedies have been pursued. In response, staff is proposing amendments to both the Administrative Code (WCC Chapter 125) and the Nuisance Code (WCC Chapter 50) that will enhance enforcement remedies and improve the efficiency of enforcement procedures.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact. The county may receive additional fine revenue if the proposed increases to enforcement fine amounts are approved.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Board initiate amendments to WCC Chapter 50 (*Nuisance Code*) and Chapter 125 (*Administrative Enforcement*) to strengthen code enforcement remedies and procedures as identified in the subject description; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney's Office for preparation of a proposed ordinance in accordance with WCC 2.040.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be:

"Request by the Community Services Department Director, through the Washoe County Clerk, and pursuant to Washoe County Code (WCC) 2.030, to initiate amendments to WCC Chapter 50 (*Nuisance Code*) and WCC Chapter 125 (*Administrative Enforcement*) to enhance the enforcement capability of Washoe County enforcement officials by increasing enforcement fines to match the fine schedule used by the cities of Reno and Sparks, eliminating the 50% discount for payment of fines after the third penalty notice, exploring options to create an abatement fund to finance county initiated abatement of nuisance properties, authorizing automatic and continuing fines for failing to obey an Administrative Hearing Order after all required due process has been provided, clarifying collection procedures, allowing notice to be posted on a property in a conspicuous location in addition to the front door of a residence, clarifying that discretionary

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