

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

TUESDAY

1:00 P.M.

JUNE 2, 2026

PRESENT:

Clara Andriola, Chair
Mariluz Garcia, Vice Chair
Michael Clark, Commissioner

Janis Galassini, County Clerk
Kate Thomas, County Manager
Michael Large, Chief Deputy District Attorney

ABSENT:

Alexis Hill, Commissioner
Jeanne Herman, Commissioner

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 1:00 p.m. in special session in the 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, Deputy County Clerk Evonne Strickland called roll and the Board conducted the following business:

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Chair Andriola said she was excited to have a workshop to discuss some great topics she felt would be very interesting.

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26-0370 **AGENDA ITEM 3** Public Comment.

Laura Wetherington thanked Commissioner Clark for all he had done for the library and encouraged the Commissioners to support literacy and self-education in the County. She stated that she was the mother of a child learning to read and navigate the library's online catalog. She added that her son recently checked out 23 joke books. She shared a joke she had learned. She explained that when she told her son she would be attending the Board of County Commissioners' (BCC) meeting to ask for support for the library, he had a message of his own. She said her son wanted the BCC to know he was seven years old and that he enjoyed using the library's computers. She explained that her son did not have access to a computer at home, so being able to use computers at the library was meaningful to him. She added that when her son logged into the library computers, it recognized her son was under 18 years old and automatically applied restrictions. She noted that her son had access to the computers in the children's section, where the tables and chairs were the right size for him. She said that she had questions regarding training for the

Library Board of Trustees (LBT) and about selecting future trustees. She stated that as a parent who valued reading, she was encouraged to hear that the Board was considering minimum standards for all County boards. She mentioned that over the past year, she had heard LBTs reference training and had applauded the Board and the LBTs for their work. She noted that when considering future training, she asked the BCC to consult with the new library director. She acknowledged that the LBT's constitution was somewhat unique within Washoe County, which she attributed to its dual role as both a volunteer organization and a governance board. She believed it was not unique Nationwide, as many library boards were organized similarly. She hoped that the BCC would include the new library director in discussions about the best training options and protocols for the LBT. She recognized that the County and school district were both facing budget shortfalls in the coming years, which was why she wanted to have individuals appointed to the LBT who had experience with the Friends of the Library organization. She indicated that the Friends of the Library was the main fundraising group for the library system, and that, outside of the tax structure and grant writing, their work would be indispensable in the coming years. She suggested that someone with connections to that fundraising group or an interest in that fundraising work would help strengthen the current LBT during a period of fiscal uncertainty for the County.

Deputy County Clerk Evonne Strickland advised the Board that she received emailed public comments, which were placed on file.

26-0371 **AGENDA ITEM 4** STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP AND UPDATES TO THE BOARD (Workshop Item) - The purpose of the Strategic Planning Workshop is to provide the Board with information and receive guidance for a unified vision of success and expected outcomes. Topics of discussion include: learnings and preparations related to emerging technology; County focus and priorities for digital information delivery; review efficiencies gained from targeted messaging and how services are delivered to residents of the County. (All Commission Districts.)

Chief Information Officer (CIO) Behzad Zamanian, Information Technology (IT) Manager James Wood, IT Manager Quinn Korbolic, and County Assessor Chris Sarman, conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Why...; Technology Landscape and Strategic Priorities; Technology Landscape & Priorities; Discussion Flow; Technology Strategic Planning Workshop; Technology powers every service in Washoe County; Cybersecurity Overview; Why Disaster Recovery is important to County's Operations; How does the Disaster Recovery Plan function?; Disaster Recover – What are we working on?; County Employees, TS & BT Employees vs Population (2008-2025); Technology Plan; Community Outcomes & Expectations; Untitled Slide (Page 16); Aligning Technology & County's Strategic Objective; FY 25-27 Information Technology Strategic Plan; Washoe County Technology Services Scorecard – FY26; Updated 2024-2027 Technology Plan; Data-First; Why is Data and Information Management Important for Washoe County?; Data Management Strategic Goals Overview; Manage Data as a Strategic Asset: Data Lifecycle Management; Data Management Project Actions, Status, & Next Steps; Artificial Intelligence (AI) @ Washoe

County; Assessor's Office Technology Initiative (3 slides); Artificial Intelligence – Next Steps; Thank you; Commissioner Input.

County Manager (CM) Kate Thomas indicated that the Board was in attendance for the third strategic planning workshop and the 2026 update. She said that Agenda Item 4 would provide the Board with topics, including learning and preparations related to emerging technology, County focus and priorities for digital information delivery, and reviewing efficiencies to achieve target messaging and how services were delivered to County residents.

Assistant County Manager (ACM) David Solaro referenced the slide titled *Why...* and noted that the County needed to discuss the evolving landscape of technology use and the community's overall expectations for County services. He relayed that with the increased use of AI, the citizens continued to expect more, faster. He believed that the need to provide services more quickly created a risk that required thoughtful negotiation to strike a balance between providing the service the community expected and providing the information necessary to fulfill requests. He mentioned that the County's information was a community asset, but was frequently mixed with product, which could create difficulties. He asserted that AI did not care about the information or its truthfulness and that it used information only to provide an answer. He reported that the Board would soon hear a presentation regarding data quality. He said that a diverse citizenry expected to find services, whether in person, by phone, online, via social media, or by email, along with all forms of communication regarding their needs, which he felt stretched the County's ability to provide that level of expected communication. He explained that, due to those challenges, staff had developed some solutions to better understand the direction the County could take. He invited Mr. Zamanian, Mr. Woods, Mr. Korbolic, and Mr. Sarman to begin their presentation. He noted that staff wanted the Board to provide input and recommendations after the presentation's conclusion.

Mr. Zamanian thanked the Board for the opportunity to discuss technology. He referenced the *Technology Strategic Planning Workshop* slide and believed that technology was a platform for discussing how to do more with less and invest in technology. He referenced the slide titled *Technology powers every service in Washoe County* and said it displayed the iceberg model, showing that services could not be provided without a massive foundation to support them. He explained that the community and staff utilized many services at the surface of the iceberg, such as email, websites, software, and police cars; however, there was extensive technology infrastructure supporting those services. He noted that existing and new systems needed support, and that a large amount of infrastructure was associated with each new technology approved. He pointed out examples on the slide related to technology foundations such as cybersecurity, data centers, geographical information systems (GIS), application support, and helpdesk and support staff. He said that the presentation would discuss topics such as cybersecurity, disaster recovery, and business continuity.

Mr. Wood read from the *Cybersecurity Overview* slide and asserted that cybersecurity was a business-resilient, risk-management function that protected County

operations, critical systems, and sensitive public data while also bolstering public trust. He listed some examples in which the County was responsible for sensitive data, including Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), personal identifiable information (PII), Payment Card Industry (PCI), and Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS). He reported that recent key investments included multi-factor authentication (MFA), endpoint protection, security monitoring, backup resilience, workforce awareness through phishing campaigns, and the implementation of over 100 firewall upgrades. He opined that workforce readiness mattered, which was why Technology Services (TS) implemented phishing campaigns, events, such as October Cybersecurity Awareness Month, informational campaigns, annual cybersecurity training, and departmental tabletop exercises to help employees prepare. He mentioned that areas of expansion included a *Zero Trust* approach, automation, resilience, AI-assisted detection, and compliance with the Center for Internet Security (CIS) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). He said that a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) position had been approved to assist with expansion.

Mr. Wood explained that cybersecurity reduced risk; however, no organization could eliminate risk completely. He read from the *Why Disaster Recovery is important to County's Operations* slide and said that ensuring County services could continue and recover in the event of a disruption was crucial. He noted that disaster recovery protected essential services and helped the County recover quickly and responsibly. He relayed that disruptions were inevitable, but it was TS's responsibility to be prepared. He said that TS's goal was to recover quickly, minimize impacts, and maintain public trust during disruptions. He speculated that strong recovery capabilities were the key to the organization's resilience and operational readiness. He raised the question of what recovery capabilities looked like in practice. He referred to the *How does the Disaster Recovery Plan function?* slide and asserted that the disaster recovery plan was designed to protect the most important services while communicating clearly and recovering safely. He said the plan established clear roles, responsibilities, and communication because recovery was focused on quickly and safely restoring services.

Mr. Wood read from the *Disaster Recovery – What are we working on?* slide and mentioned that the plan provided structure and coordination during disruptions and would only work if it was tested, updated, and understood, which was why TS worked on strengthening the plan through testing exercises, documentation, training, and partner coordination. He said that disaster recovery was not a one-time document and needed continuous improvement. He explained that TS was modernizing its technology to improve recovery speed and reliability by strengthening coordination with staff, vendors, and partners, and continuously learning from actual events. He indicated that the takeaway of the presentation was that cybersecurity and disaster recovery were part of the same resilience strategy to prevent what TS could respond effectively to when needed while continuing to improve the County's dependability.

Mr. Zamanian referred to the *County Employees, TS & BT Employees vs Population (2008-2025)* slide and reported that the community had grown by over 24 percent, and with that growth, there was increased demand for services, especially in

technology. He opined that it was notable how the County and staff took on additional responsibilities over the years through fiscally responsible decisions and policies to address the growing demand for technology without adding to employee headcount. He mentioned that the County's total employment figures were the same as those during the 2008 Great Recession. He relayed that TS, despite increased demand for technology and growth, attempted to maintain the same level of service without increasing employee headcount. He said that TS's employees had decreased by 13 percent since the 2008 Great Recession. He recalled that several questions from previous meetings were relevant, including how TS could leverage technology strategy to reduce reliance on increasing headcount. He referred to the *Technology Plan* slide and noted that it illustrated how technology demand rose over time, while current capabilities often remained the same or declined. He said that a technology gap emerged between increased demand and decreased capabilities, prompting TS to address it. He explained that the plan involved people, processes, and technologies that TS developed to create a Comprehensive Technology Plan. He felt that the plan answered the question of what TS could focus on and how to perform effectively.

Mr. Zamanian recalled that in 2022, TS began developing the Comprehensive Technology Plan to ensure the County had a framework to prevent the omission of critical data needed for planning. He referred to the *Community Outcomes & Expectations* slide and said that the diagram at the top considered community expectations and aligned with the County's strategic priorities, while the left side focused on external influences. He pointed out that the bottom of the diagram focused on the technology dimension, which included the type of technology used to improve efficiency and effectiveness, while the right side focused on project execution. He explained that the framework was built over 4 to 6 months with staff feedback and roughly 30 sessions with departments. He reiterated that various members of staff from different groups surveyed employees as part of the process, which had identified 15 priority initiatives and 55 major projects. He believed that a key factor in technology planning included ensuring that technology aligned with the Board's priorities, the Strategic Plan, and the Comprehensive Technology Plan.

Mr. Zamanian read from the slide titled *Aligning Technology & County's Strategic Objectives* and said that the four listed strategic objectives were taken from the Strategic Plan, which helped identify six areas of the technology plan business objective. He relayed that the six objectives included delivering an enhanced citizen experience, modernizing technology infrastructure, enhancing cybersecurity and business continuity, driving digital transformation and business process automation, being a strategic business partner, and enabling organizational excellence. He said that, based on the objectives, strategic actions were developed, including a list of projects aligned with the Board's priorities.

Mr. Zamanian referred to the *FY 25-27 Information Technology Strategic Plan* slide, which he pointed out was a screenshot of a technology projects database created through the technology planning process. He noted that the database was updated every three months and said that the left side of the slide listed the technology plan business objective under the County's strategic priorities, while the right side listed projects with

timelines. He referenced the *Washoe County Technology Services Scorecard – FY26* slide and recalled that three years prior, TS organized a data-driven scorecard by gathering stakeholder feedback to understand where TS ranked for each service. He noted that on the left side of the slide, service categories were listed, while the right side displayed the life cycle for each category. He reported that TS reached out to County staff and asked them questions related to the key service areas through an annual satisfaction survey, which then demonstrated the maturity level of the County's technology.

Mr. Zamanian said that County technology was updated every three years. He recalled that the previous year, TS had updated the technology plan for fiscal years (FYs) 2024 through 2027. He noted that two strategic actions were added during the last update: AI and a data management program. He said that TS had dabbled in AI and reported that one of the first things TS learned was how dependent AI was on data. He believed that many organizations quickly adopted AI applications but had also experienced risks and issues due to their impulsive approach. He said that the County learned to establish a comprehensive data management program, which was initiated a year and a half ago to align with strategic priorities. He mentioned that the data management program was a two- to three-year project due to the extensive data used at the County. He said that every department had data throughout the cloud or in data centers. He pointed out that the *Data-First* slide represented a sustainable AI approach and why it was important to have a strong data infrastructure.

Mr. Korbolic indicated that AI was a large catalyst for the data management program; however, even without AI, TS recognized that data was a foundational asset for much of the County's processes. He said that one of the best examples of why data information management was important to the County was the Community Services Infrastructure Scorecard. He explained that behind the scorecard was an asset management system and associated data regarding roads, facilities, sewer systems, and reclaimed water. He said that the data was an authoritative single source of truth, with a governance structure and process built around it to ensure it was accurate and always current. He noted that the Community Services Department (CSD) team used data to drive decisions regarding resource allocation and funding, and to communicate the health of the County's infrastructure. He said that TS's data information management program was designed to enable all departments to receive results while confidently making data-informed decisions regarding resources, policy, and operations through predictive or prescriptive use of data and analytics.

Mr. Korbolic referred to the *Data Management Strategic Goals Overview* slide and noted that TS worked with a consultant one year earlier, involving many stakeholders, to develop a three-year data management strategy. He indicated that the first goal was to build a strong, achievable data governance framework with accountability structures for data stewardship across every department, while managing data as a strategic asset. He said the second goal was to provide training programs and tools to enable the use of interpretation and analysis to build data literacy among staff. He reported that the third goal was to ensure high data quality and clear data governance, while empowering staff to use data to support evidence-based decision-making across the organization. He said that

the final goal was to increase transparency and community engagement by proactively sharing data when appropriate, both internally and to the public. He believed that TS could and should share a larger volume of data from a single location through the County's existing open data website.

Mr. Korbolic mentioned that the data had a lifecycle similar to that of any other asset. He referred to the *Manage Data as a Strategic Asset: Data Lifecycle Management* slide and explained that if TS implemented strong data governance, it would need to define accountability to ensure data was accurate and stored securely. He said that the County's governance structure would also ensure that TS archived or deleted data as appropriate to help manage costs and mitigate risks. He noted that when staff were well-trained and data-literate, they could ensure that data governance was followed, allowing TS to focus on data analysis, data-informed decisions, and communicating decisions internally and through public data visualization. He referenced the *Data Management Project Actions, Status, & Next Steps* slide and said that each TS goal was listed; however, it was not a comprehensive list. He reported that one of TS's next steps, over the summer and fall, was to finalize data and AI governance and develop a policy to be presented to the Board for consideration.

Mr. Korbolic referenced the *Artificial Intelligence (AI) @ Washoe County* slide and reported that, thus far, TS had explored many AI tools and use cases, some of which had been adopted, including Madison AI, which he believed the Board was familiar with. He said that as TS implemented Copilot Chat across all County staff, TS also developed Washoe County Chat, a public-facing chat assistant to be integrated into the County's website, expected to go live later in the summer. He noted that TS was transitioning to a strategic, responsible implementation of AI, which would be discussed later in the presentation. He said that part of the transition to responsible AI involved developing an AI policy. He speculated that TS wished to ensure that the County was not exposed to unnecessary cybersecurity or data-compliance risks, while avoiding tools that made autonomous decisions without human interaction. He highlighted that a key achievement TS accomplished was the completion of the Center of Excellence (CoE) for data and AI, which provided employees with training resources to understand best practices in data and AI. He said that TS could assist departments across the County to responsibly adopt AI tools to automate processes while developing solutions to data and AI problems. He relayed that the Assessor's Office (AO) had shown leadership in the data and AI space. He introduced Mr. Sarman to discuss how the AO had implemented changes.

Mr. Sarman referred to the first *Assessor's Office Technology Initiative* slide and indicated that the slide listed the AO's mission statement. He said that a few key words within the AO's mission statement included *efficiency, accuracy, and transparency*. He noted that the AO, like any other office, had lost some full-time employees (FTEs). He said that while the County's population had grown, the AO staff had not. He reiterated that the AO had a large staff but also experienced a heavy workload, which put them at capacity. He rhetorically asked how the AO would fulfill the office's goals and responsibilities at the County or State level. He relayed that the AO began researching, with various departments, how to become more efficient and do more with less.

Mr. Sarman read from the second *Assessor's Office Technology Initiative* slide and noted that AI enabled the AO to efficiently streamline its portion of the appraisal process by transforming and organizing data into actionable insights for appraisers, while summarizing and calculating complex information to produce reports. He reported that using the automated AI process saved the AO 20 percent of its staff's time. He said that AI automated the Python Optimized Excel Multiprocessor (POEM) and the Assessment of Personal Property: Review Assets with Integrated Search Engine (APP: RAISE) processes by calculating assets and assigning depreciation rates, eliminating the redundancy of manually written scripts. He said that the Python Email Automation and Response Logic (PEARL) was a large language access model that read through email to provide staff with context and a summary. He explained that PEARL could also potentially create automated responses.

Mr. Sarman referenced the third slide titled *Assessor's Office Technology Initiative* and explained that it still needed work due to increased workloads. He reported that, over the years, an equal and opposite inconvenience of technology emerged, as it addressed issues while also creating new concerns. He indicated that a challenge with technology was its expense and time-consuming nature, because by the time potential solutions were researched, developed, and deployed, new technology had emerged. He said that while the conundrum existed, the AO had the foresight to implement new models to address new decisions within the office. He asserted that every team could have efficiencies if it had the time to research them.

Mr. Korbolic reiterated that the AO was utilizing AI and tools to automate processes; however, not all departments needed AI. He said that the County could automate processes to become more efficient without incurring the costs or risks associated with AI. He referred to the *Artificial Intelligence – Next Steps* slide and indicated that TS was transitioning from AI explorers, or early adopters, to strategic implementation of AI tools. He explained that the point he was trying to make was that TS needed to adopt an AI strategy and take responsibility to ensure that the County chose the highest-impact projects while involving staff to solve real business problems. He said that TS hoped to focus on redefining and redesigning business processes through automation, with or without AI, as appropriate. He believed that TS was encouraging the adoption of AI by asking County staff to submit ideas on how AI or automation could be used in their departments or across the County. He said that, based on the staff's submissions, TS could focus resources on the highest-impact projects. He opined that, as TS staff, he ensured AI was adopted in a way that minimized risk while maximizing impact, and that guidelines and policies did not rely on AI-based autonomous decisions. He asserted that TS always wanted to ensure that an employee reviewed the AI-generated work before it was released.

Mr. Zamanian read from the *Technology powers every service in Washoe County* slide and asserted that the community and staff relied on TS every day, which he speculated was only possible through a technology foundation and foundational elements. He urged the Board to keep those services in mind when investing in technology. He said that the County wanted to invest in technology, but it was expensive and took a lot of work.

ACM Solaro speculated that the Board had heard much about new technology and TS's attempt to minimize risks. He recalled that in December, the Commissioners, elected officials, and department heads were interviewed to better understand strategies and concerns. He said there were tools that could automate the County, along with human oversight. He stated that the County sought the Board's view on how far they should advance with technology. He believed that, from the interviews, there was a fear that human review would be removed. He asked whether the Board had any concerns they wished to discuss, as the County planned to develop a strategy and plan. He said that employees were expensive but also necessary. He believed that the technology implemented thus far enabled staff to use better tools that assisted them in their work while remaining responsive to citizens. He indicated that TS was developing a website chatbot. He urged the Board to inform staff of any concerns related to the County's technology focus, infrastructure, or strategic direction.

Commissioner Clark asked Mr. Korbolic whether the Board could have simpler on-and-off switches for their microphones. He believed that most people who used the microphones rarely knew when they were activated. He felt that the Board was lucky to have Mr. Sarman present. He recalled that the AO lost 24 percent of FTEs during the 2008 Great Recession, and those positions were never replaced. Mr. Sarman confirmed that the AO lost 24 percent of its FTEs during the 2008 Great Recession. Commissioner Clark pointed out that the AO also saw a 25 percent increase in parcels throughout the County, creating a reappraisal workload that increased by 80 percent while the population grew by 28 percent. He acknowledged that efficiency could address increased workloads and wondered what the AO's limits were and the state of employee morale. He explained that much of the technology purchased came from the AO's special fund from the State. He speculated that much of the burden from increased productivity was borne by the Technology Fund.

Mr. Sarman opined that Commissioner Clark's statements were fair, but that, while the statistics were static, the AO was not a unique office in feeling increased pressure. He said that the reappraisal workload had increased by 80 percent, according to the slide, but the overall workload increased by 400 percent. He asserted that one of the AO's challenges was maintaining its vision and the ability to build models and programs while capacities were limited. He said that while the AO wanted efficiency, there was insufficient time to conduct research. He noted that some of the technology was built internally, while other technology was purchased with the Technology Fund. He said that technology seemed to increase in price annually.

Commissioner Clark recollected that many departments did not have access to a Technology Fund through their budgetary process. He noted that having access to a Technology Fund was beneficial for the AO, but emphasized that each office had its own limits. He reported that 50 percent or more of the County's income came from the AO through real property, personal property, appraisals, and assessments. He asked what the AO's limit was and what Mr. Sarman's predictions were for the AO.

Mr. Sarman indicated that the AO had reached a technological limit due to the 2008 Great Recession, loss of employees, and capacity. He recalled presenting to the Board previously to request new positions because the AO was approaching capacity. He speculated that AI had changed the landscape of workflows, but did not know whether he had a current answer for Commissioner Clark. He mentioned that he did see potential capacity gains; however, those would not come without cost, training, and a change in duties. He opined that every change brought disruption because a new set of challenges emerged when solutions were proposed. He reiterated that he did not have answers to Commissioner Clark's questions but said he took pride in the work his 63 employees had performed over the past 15 years. He noted that the County had grown, leaving the department's future uncertain. He explained that the AO was experimenting with new technology, but there would still be a point at which new staff might be needed.

Commissioner Clark asked if anyone was escaping taxation or if anyone was not having their property properly addressed. Mr. Sarman indicated that individuals were escaping taxes. He reported that the AO saved 20 percent in the reappraisal of the allocation neighborhoods process, but it was only a small component of what the AO did. He explained that by saving 20 percent, the AO could research equity and fairness across all parcels; however, the AO was still limited by error review, which resulted in new funding or quality class corrections. He believed that there were opportunities for the AO to focus and become more qualitative and quantitative. Commissioner Clark asked Mr. Sarman to prepare a future cost-benefit analysis of FTEs to ensure no property goes unnoticed and no individual escapes taxation.

Vice Chair Garcia thanked staff for the thorough presentation. She recalled that the first presentation TS gave her focused on the Comprehensive Technology Plan, which she believed had been discussed extensively. She understood that ACM Solaro wanted the Board to decide whether to focus on internal or external service delivery. She asked if the 15 high-priority and 55 major projects identified in the Comprehensive Technology Plan were inward-facing or external and how they were prioritized.

Mr. Zamanian recalled a slide in the presentation that related to the development of business objectives for technology focus areas. He said that part of the process included receiving information from various areas, including IT advisory firms, risk assessment sessions, and department discussions, which identified four focus areas to enhance citizens' experiences. He reiterated that enhancing the citizen experience, cybersecurity, business continuity, modernizing technology infrastructure, data transformation, and business process automation were priorities. He explained that TS was addressing both internal and external technology services in the Comprehensive Technology Plan and would consider all previously listed priorities, because he believed they were all important. He opined that another aspect of the technology planning process involved a strategic business partnership, which enabled the County to address technology needs and align with departments, thereby indirectly enhancing the citizen experience through service delivery. Commissioner Garcia indicated that TS gathered feedback from different departments and divisions while balancing internal and external priorities. Mr. Zamanian confirmed Vice Chair Garcia's assumption.

Vice Chair Garcia indicated that she had not known that an infrastructure scorecard existed for TS, and expressed her appreciation for it. She asked whether there was more emphasis on prioritizing aspects that were scoring poorly. Mr. Zamanian indicated that the scorecard was intended to be a high-level priority to help TS identify which aspects were scoring lower than others and realign the focus. He believed that the scorecard provided a big-picture view of what TS should prioritize to enable data-driven decision-making. He said that each aspect had criteria and life-cycle planning, with different indicators that helped better understand the information being populated. He recalled that a few years ago, TS transitioned from an in-house telephone system to a cloud-based system called Vonage. He said there had been challenges since transitioning to Vonage, and TS was trying to better understand whether it would be considered again in the next budgeting process. He reiterated that the scorecard helped TS make better decisions and focus on areas of need.

Vice Chair Garcia asserted that whether the category was internal or external, raising the grade on lower-rated categories was important. She recommended finding a balance between internal and external technologies. She expressed that she was an adoptive parent and that encountering an automated response when seeking assistance for her child through adoptive services would not be acceptable to her or most others in a crisis. She believed that being met with human interaction during times of stress or angst was better than being met by a robot. She opined that much had changed since the creation of the Comprehensive Technology Plan and since TS interviewed the Commissioners only six months previously. She felt that the environment would change drastically with automation and new technologies, and that the County needed to be very flexible.

Vice Chair Garcia said cybersecurity was very concerning and that it was a system not considered until things went wrong. She mentioned that large agencies like the County were constantly under attack and individuals were looking for new ways to infiltrate the County's technology systems. She expressed relief when she witnessed that the County's cybersecurity was ranked well. She said there was a National and international race for intelligence, and that AI was beyond what humans could understand. She recommended continuing cybersecurity monitoring because it would continue to evolve. She urged the Board to meet every six months because technology changes rapidly. She appreciated the staff's time, the presentation, and the opportunity to provide input regarding constituent needs and requests.

Chair Andriola asserted that there was a correlation between internal and external technologies. She believed there was a balance in using external technologies to provide citizens with more flexibility and access, enabling employees to answer questions promptly while freeing up their time; however, staff had to learn the additional tools. She thanked CM Thomas for including a CISO in the budget, as she thought it underscored the importance of cybersecurity. She speculated that it was not a matter of whether a cyberattack would happen, but when. She believed that by being proactive, the County was prioritizing cybersecurity. She opined that as skill sets improved, internal training and feedback were important to ensure the County did not revert to old processes. She recalled that the *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that International Business Machines (IBM)

and Red Hat had committed \$5 billion to launch a new open-source software project called Project Lightwell. She pointed out that the technology was expensive. She said that Project Lightwell would deploy 20,000 engineers to work on open-source AI. She felt that there would be an inflection point in changing the dynamic regarding how software and licensing were researched. She asked if TS was aware of the project.

Mr. Zamanian said that TS was researching whether the County wanted to develop custom software or use open source software. He believed that there was a risk associated with every decision, including purchasing, because it could create budget challenges. He noted that open source might create cybersecurity risks. He said that the County needed to follow certain rules as they related to Department of Justice (DOJ) requirements, PCI, and HIPAA. He explained that TS decided to use off-the-shelf products as much as possible, even though they were expensive, leaving TS at the vendor's mercy but allowing the model to constantly receive updates. He said that when there was a cybersecurity threat, vendors had to update their software and provide it to the County, whereas if the County adopted an open-source model, it would be at the mercy of County staff and other risks. He recalled that, when researching open-source risk, TS had considered developing an in-house strategy rather than using off-the-shelf products.

Chair Andriola indicated that the County was in the customer service business. She believed that there was always a balance and that the County did not have to be the first mover. She said that first movers were usually not government agencies. She used the example of a printer, noting that the printer itself was not expensive, but the ink, software applications, purchasing, and security updates contributed to the overall cost. She said there was a data-driven way to balance and opined that many areas could be automated through the Electronic Discovery Reference Model (EDRM) because the information was data-heavy. She gave the example of minutes. She recalled a time when everyone was afraid there would be no human workers. She felt there would be a time when that could happen, but did not believe it would occur in her lifetime. She asserted that human involvement was needed. She said there was a famous gentleman in the 1950s who predicted AI and hated the term because it was called *intelligence*, which implied the system had a conscience. She thanked TS for their hard work and for adopting the CIS, which was a statutory requirement in Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 603A. She reiterated that humans were needed and that *data governance* would be a term the Board would use and discuss regularly. She looked forward to the new CISO and further updates. She requested that technology or software costs be added to the next presentation.

Chair Andriola relayed that it might seem like she was pushing open source and clarified she was, noting that even Microsoft and other major companies used it. She said there was a balance between technology and cost. She mentioned that the County had a responsibility to the public to be transparent and it could not assume individuals understood the automation process without it being intuitive. She thought it was important to examine all processes, such as public records requests (PRRs) and permitting, that could be automated to streamline costs and reduce processing times. She indicated that it would be interesting to receive another update that considered budget constraints and future improvements. She reiterated her thanks to the staff for their hard work. She opined that

Intellectual Property (IP) should be researched with potential licensing at the State level. Mr. Sarman agreed with Chair Andriola and believed that there was value in IP. She commended the creation of Madison AI, the online strategy, and ACM Solaro for his ideas. She encouraged the County to investigate IP opportunities.

2:05 p.m. **The Board recessed.**

2:10 p.m. **The Board reconvened with Commissioners Hill and Herman absent.**

Digital Communications and Accessibility Manager Tami Cummings, County Assessor Chris Sarman, and IT Manager Kobe Harkins conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Digital Information Delivery; Discussion Flow; Washoe County's Most Visited Front Door; WC Chose to Lead; From Digital Brochure to Services Platform; Assessor's Office Website Initiative (3 slides); Interactions with Our Citizens; Current Issue with Decentralized Web Management; Improving the Citizen Experience; Real-World Security Incidents; Improving Website Security; Future Trends in Government Digital Services; Commissioner Input.

ACM Solaro introduced Ms. Cummings, Mr. Sarman, and Mr. Harkins and mentioned that they would be presenting information on digital information delivery. He emphasized the importance of understanding the work that had gone into digital accessibility and the future model for the County's website. He joked that, eventually, AI might be able to mine data on its own. He shared that when a question was posed to Google, it could provide a synopsis without needing to access an entire website. He noted that there would be a discussion regarding departmental website utilization and the advantages and challenges of centralized versus non-centralized web governance.

Ms. Cummings explained that, for decades, the primary points of access to Washoe County government had been its buildings, service counters, and telephone systems. She noted that there had been a change and that, for most residents, the Washoe County website now served as the County's primary access point. She reviewed the slide titled *Washoe County's Most Visited Front Door* and said that in 2025, Washoe County's website received approximately 4.7 million unique visits, and noted there were roughly 13,000 resident interactions per day. She shared some reasons the public might access the Washoe County website, such as finding information on voting, finding a lost pet, participating in public meetings, reserving parks, getting married, applying for business licenses, or getting a birth certificate. She indicated that the County's website was no longer merely a communications tool and had become one of the primary means through which public services were delivered to constituents. She explained that if the County's website was one of the main ways residents accessed County government, then digital access really was not simply about technology or information sharing, but about service delivery. She noted that digital accessibility meant ensuring every resident had equal access to information, programs, and services. She mentioned that if a senior resident with declining vision needed voting information or accessible voting support, they could face challenges if the County's website was not designed appropriately. She explained that improperly labeled forms, buttons that could not be read by assistive technology, or inaccessible

information could prevent residents from obtaining critical election information. She explained that residents increasingly interacted with County government through digital platforms, whether paying taxes, applying for permits, locating senior services or food assistance, or receiving emergency alerts on their computers, tablets, or phones. She indicated that digital access was no longer just a convenience but the primary way many residents experienced government services and navigated important life events. She noted that the DOJ recognized the shift when it issued new digital accessibility requirements in 2024 under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). She added that the DOJ required compliance with over 50 detailed success criteria by April 2026.

Ms. Cummings reviewed the slide titled *WC Chose to Lead* and said that in 2023, Washoe County began developing a long-term digital accessibility program based on the principle that every resident should have equal access to County services and information. She noted that the goal was not just about compliance, but about public access for all residents, ensuring they got what they needed when they needed it. She shared that Washoe County had met the original DOJ compliance deadline, which was later extended to April 2027. She explained that the goal was achieved through extraordinary work across the organization, by not just one team, but hundreds of employees. She acknowledged IT Manager Beth Todd and her team, who were instrumental in those efforts. She mentioned that the digital accessibility team conducted an independent accessibility audit, completed advanced web accessibility administration training, and logged hundreds of hours over several weeks to learn what it was like to have a website that was digitally accessible. She said that a County-wide digital accessibility plan was developed, and that dozens of tools and training opportunities were provided to help remediate tens of thousands of complex accessibility issues across websites and applications. She noted that the County's staff was its greatest asset. She added that employees across departments carefully reviewed and improved their web pages to ensure the information was accessible to residents. She mentioned that, as a result, Washoe County was now recognized as a national leader in digital accessibility. She shared that Washoe County had been invited to present its best practices to governments across the Country, and most recently, the National Association of Counties (NACo) had recognized Washoe County as one of three counties that they recommended following for digital accessibility practices. She cautioned that the work would be ongoing, as an accessible website would need to be consistently maintained. She indicated that the success had highlighted a significant structural challenge.

Ms. Cummings reviewed the slide titled *From Digital Brochure to Services Platform* and said that Washoe County operated under a highly decentralized web model, with over 150 content editors across departments who added content to the County's website daily. She explained that the model worked well when the website functioned more like a digital brochure. She said it was now the primary service-delivery platform. She felt that when something had become that important, governance mattered. She shared that one of the biggest challenges moving forward would be content management. She noted that Washoe County maintained more than 6,000 web pages and that a substantial volume of information was provided to the public daily. She said that over time, due to employee turnover, varying levels of web expertise among the content editors, and continual content accumulation, the County's website had experienced challenges with outdated or

duplicative information. She noted that some information existed in unpublished areas, which staff understandably assumed residents could not access. She noted that, unfortunately, scanners and search tools often could access that information. She mentioned that the national best practice increasingly pointed to a centralized web administration model. She explained that departments would still have complete control over their content, but the way that information was managed would change. She believed that a centralized approach would provide stronger oversight, quality assurance, more direct accessibility support, and content governance to help the County ensure that information was accurate, current, accessible, and easy for residents to find. She mentioned that, realistically, a mature, centralized model required dedicated staffing, which took both time and considerable resources to develop.

Ms. Cummings noted that Washoe County had launched Web Administration Lite, indicating that it was building guardrails with its current resources. She stated that the Communications team and TS were partnering to ensure the digital experience was more user-friendly. She explained that in partnership with the TS team, specifically Beth Todd's team, several initiatives were underway, including exploring an AI-powered website search. She shared that residents' expectations were changing quickly, and people were no longer browsing websites the way they once did. She indicated that the public was asking questions and expecting immediate answers from AI solutions, and that almost half of the residents preferred AI-powered overviews to reviewing or searching a website. She felt that meant that the information had to be accurate, structured, and trustworthy, because unfortunately, AI was only as good as the information provided to it. She emphasized the importance of data hygiene and said the County wanted residents to get the right answers the first time, resulting in a consistent County experience. She mentioned that staff were asking departments to conduct deep content reviews, eliminate outdated pages, reduce duplication, and make content clearer and easier to understand, without confusing or complicated jargon, which was one of the 50 success criteria that the DOJ requested. She noted that it was not simply about websites but about resident access, public trust, and how to monitor, modernize, and deliver service responsibly. She believed the encouraging part was that meaningful progress had been made. She indicated that the AO was a model because they had thoughtfully reviewed their materials, reduced unnecessary content, and created a much cleaner resident experience.

Mr. Sarman thanked Ms. Cummings for the recognition and shared that his staff had worked hard. He mentioned that the success was due to the collaborative framework and vision that was developed, as well as their shared understanding of what digital accessibility should look like.

Mr. Sarman reviewed the slide titled *Our Priority & Goal* and said the priority and rationale were to meet goals, expectations, requirements, and to provide excellent public service. He mentioned that, when combined with considerations of staff and user efficiency, the priorities aligned. He stated that the data from the AO was valuable, particularly given the high volume of visitors to their website. He noted that the goal was efficiency through simplicity. He emphasized the importance of optimizing the user

experience, ensuring that information was easy to find and understand, and as accurate and accessible as possible.

Mr. Sarman reviewed the slide titled *Define Demand & Shape Change* and said that his office evaluated demand for its website. He shared that many people from the County, State, and other countries used the Assessor's website to obtain data. He noted that after evaluating the standards, various changes were made, including improvements to labels, changes to heading colors, updates to online forms, correction of broken links, and refinements to content to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements.

Mr. Sarman reviewed the slide titled *Results and Closing Message* and said the result was that the public loved the updated website. He shared that community members frequently told him they enjoyed using the website and hoped it would remain unchanged. He explained that moving forward, there would need to be a balance between transparency and accessibility while keeping it simple, improving efficiency, and collaborating with County staff. He noted that change was inevitable and that staff needed to be adaptable. He mentioned that technology continued to advance rapidly and emphasized the importance of ensuring that the data was high-quality, clean, accessible, and accurate.

Mr. Harkins reviewed the slide titled *Interactions with Our Citizens* and said he used AI to search Washoe County's 6,000 web pages to identify the unique services that were available to citizens. He pointed out that, given the number of user accounts, 12 pages required Washoe County citizens to log in with their account credentials to access content. He shared that the County's websites were complex and offered services such as interactive mapping, online payments, public meeting registration, and translation services.

Mr. Harkins reviewed the slide titled *Current Issues with Decentralized Web Management* and said there were currently 152 content editors, some of whom also held other jobs. He shared that, with 24 departments, managing multiple individual websites was difficult and could affect citizens' experiences. He stated that the websites' complexity posed security risks due to the various opportunities for interaction. He acknowledged that scaling websites and keeping up with technological changes could be difficult under the current model. He added that maintaining consistency across websites was an ongoing challenge.

Mr. Harkins reviewed the slide titled *Improving the Citizen Experience* and said there would be many benefits if the model were changed to a centralized team and model. He stated that the goal was to keep the County updated, but shared that if there was disorganization, important information could lag. He mentioned the importance of avoiding data duplication, such as duplicating navigation tools across websites, which could confuse users. He expressed his appreciation for the data accessibility component that was under development, which he felt was the first sign of an organized, centralized model. He noted that he did not want to limit creativity in web design, but said it was important to determine what County residents needed to actively and successfully review data. He explained that information on websites could become outdated or need to be

removed and emphasized the importance of managing those components more efficiently. He stated that more applications were becoming mobile, and he believed the trend would continue to grow. He shared the importance of being thoughtful when handling new technology.

Mr. Harkins reviewed the slide titled *Real-World Security Incidents* and said that all the examples presented involved AI and how it could be used against organizations. He stated that the County's cybersecurity team worked hard to protect against situations in which the County's technology could be exploited. He shared an example of Samsung employees loading sensitive information into a chatbot without thinking, resulting in the data being exposed to the world. He explained that County employees were continually trained to ensure the safety of the County's confidential data. He mentioned a recent example in which the County's cybersecurity team worked with the Washoe County Recorder's Office (WCRO) after the WCRO detected that records were being scraped from its website. He stated that the cybersecurity team identified the technology and found a way to prevent it from happening in the future. He noted that while AI tools could be useful, there were many risks associated that people needed to be aware of.

Mr. Harkins reviewed the slide titled *Improving Website Security* and said the initiative would involve Ms. Cummings's team working in coordination with cybersecurity and all departments, ensuring consistency and security while continuing to deliver value to County citizens. He believed that the process would make significant improvements to policies governing website standards, reducing access to ensure tight security and reduce attack surfaces. He explained that with websites, there were always third-party components. He emphasized the importance of keeping websites up to date, which was an ongoing task. He felt there were many benefits to a centralized website model.

Mr. Harkins reviewed the slide titled *Future Trends in Government Digital Services* and said that Washoe County was already offering many of the services listed. He noted that Washoe County had long provided interactive mapping capabilities and maintained a platform to alert the community about events. He noted that other government agencies were reviewing the services listed on the slide and added that Washoe County was already using many of them. He informed the Board that future considerations could include unified citizen portals, citizen participation platforms, and the potential for each County resident to have a unique identification (ID) to access their information. He explained that there were smaller countries whose entire populations were organized similarly.

Mr. Harkins provided a live demonstration by speaking into his phone and asking how to license a dog in Washoe County. His phone responded that licensing a dog required a rabies vaccination certificate and confirmation that the dog was spayed or neutered, noting that might affect the fee. His phone stated that dogs four months of age or older must be licensed and that licenses could be obtained online through DocuPet, in person at the Washoe County Regional Animal Services (WCRAS), or by mail. His phone

noted that licensing fees ranged from \$8 to \$30 per year, depending on spay or neuter status and license duration, and that unlicensed dogs might be subject to fines. His phone included contact information for additional pet licensing assistance, as well as links to relevant resources and the online application. He explained that individuals were increasingly determined to use AI tools to their advantage and access websites in various ways. He reiterated broader questions raised throughout the workshop, emphasizing the need to assess whether Washoe County's technology foundation was sufficient, whether data was well governed and managed, and whether systems were secure. He stated that the factors influenced how residents interacted with County services.

ACM Solaro said he wanted to discuss a few related items with the Board. He mentioned that the staff was seeking to understand the Board's perspective on several issues. He asked the Board to consider the experience they wanted residents to have when accessing County information online and to identify future technologies Board members were hearing about from constituents that staff should be aware of when delivering services.

Vice Chair Garcia wondered whether the approval of Assembly Bill (AB) 266, which began several years ago, was an unfunded mandate for the Board regarding language access, and whether Ms. Cummings' team was involved in addressing those requirements. Ms. Cummings replied that her team worked collaboratively with Management Services Officer Elizabeth Jourdin and her group. Vice Chair Garcia questioned whether the DOJ mandate was also unfunded. Ms. Cummings confirmed that it was.

Vice Chair Garcia wondered whether the centralized model and team would be existing positions or if additional positions were needed. Ms. Cummings replied that there were many options to consider. She explained that web administration could be managed by current staffing, but certain models could include a web administration manager or a web governance process. She mentioned that the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) had a team of 8 or 9 staff members through whom all information was funneled. She indicated that those staff members reviewed accessibility standards and materials and that messages were shared as a single voice and vetted by each department. She noted that there were many options available in the centralized model. She emphasized that the information would be vetted very carefully to meet specific policy standards.

Vice Chair Garcia congratulated Ms. Cummings on receiving the national recognition. She said that she had received positive feedback about the City of Sparks' and the Washoe County Sheriff's Office's (WCSO) applications. She explained that most people were likely unaware of those applications. She shared that someone could point to an illegal dump site using their phone, and the Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates would be listed, then sent directly to the work crew coordinator. She stated that there were many available options and believed the information needed to be shared with the community. She mentioned that she would research other jurisdictions and counties, as well as their websites. She noted that Mr. Sarman had been at the forefront of many innovative practices, which she felt demonstrated true leadership and a willingness to take

on creative ventures. Mr. Sarman replied that he had an excellent team that helped implement those practices. He expressed his appreciation to his staff.

Chair Andriola said that there were 3,069 counties in the United States of America (USA). She stated that receiving one of the most prestigious awards at the NACo conference was an honor and expressed appreciation to everyone involved. She acknowledged Mr. Sarman's contribution and said he deserved recognition for the award. She explained that the City of Sparks had an impressive application. She noted that other jurisdictions had embraced technology, which she felt was a proactive way of addressing safety issues. She mentioned that some departments might not be aware of their needs due to a lack of familiarity with available possibilities. She suggested sharing information across departments or other jurisdictions that might already have similar information that could be helpful. She said those entities could also collaborate with NACo and its technology team to determine whether any work was already underway that Washoe County had not considered.

Chair Andriola stated that a substantial amount of data was being extrapolated and that knowing how to use it could be complicated. She believed that training in data analysis to enable informed leadership decisions was important and could be a worthwhile investment. She noted that everyone had a different skill set and brought different talent and experience. She reiterated the importance of data governance and analysis, highlighting best practices and training to support data-driven decision-making. She mentioned that she participated in cybersecurity training and that bots could impersonate County employee email addresses. She felt it was important for individuals to exercise caution when communicating via email. She added that if an email or link seemed odd, it was likely a scam. She said the TS staff were extremely busy dealing with cybersecurity issues. She acknowledged the great work on accessibility being done by staff who were proactive rather than waiting for the DOJ, even though an extension had been granted to 2027. She noted that managing 24 departments, with more than 3,000 employees and a wide range of functions, could be overwhelming. She acknowledged that there were many County websites and navigating them could be challenging, noting that some users might be resistant to changes.

Chair Andriola questioned whether there was a way to identify where barriers occurred. She noted that the public could become frustrated when they were unable to quickly locate County departmental information and had to navigate through multiple areas of the website. She suggested thinking innovatively and collecting data to identify more efficient ways to improve accessibility. She said that community feedback and understanding community needs were essential. She thought that the public might not always know exactly what they were looking for and could spend significant time searching through websites. She emphasized the importance of proactively identifying opportunities for automation and development. She shared that she frequently used various Washoe County websites and thanked staff for maintaining them. She highlighted the importance of cross-departmental collaboration and transparency in sharing information. She provided an example of using the Assessor's website to locate information about a specific parcel, while being able to access additional tools such as mapping and GIS resources. She

mentioned that AI could suggest related information and links in a single, common area and hoped that after receiving community feedback, there would be many opportunities to explore. She thanked the staff and congratulated those involved who received the award at NACo. She recognized that Mr. Sarman and the AO contributed to those efforts.

2:47 p.m. **The Board recessed.**

2:48 p.m. **The Board reconvened with Commissioners Hill and Herman absent.**

Communications Director Nancy Leuenhagen, Media & Communications Manager Bethany Drysdale, and ACM Solaro conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Targeted Priority Messaging & Service Delivery; Discussion Flow; Service is the throughline; Targeted and proactive messaging; Targeted Messaging in Action: Public Guardian; Emergency Communications: Regional Collaboration; Regional Coordination & Readiness; Customer Service: Washoe311; Building a Culture of Customer Service; Customer Service: Single Point of Entry (2 slides); Commissioner Input.

ACM Solaro shared the slide titled *Targeted Priority Messaging & Service Delivery* and stated that the last portion would discuss targeted priority messaging and service delivery.

Ms. Leuenhagen shared the slide titled *Discussion Flow* and explained that the three areas they would be covering were targeted and proactive messaging, regional coordination and readiness during crises, and building a culture of customer service.

Ms. Drysdale stated that by the end, she wanted everyone to understand communication strategies that would align with residents' expectations. She noted that resident expectations had been changing, and that Washoe County had been changing with them, but felt they had not explained to the Board exactly how their communication strategies had been evolving. She said that Washoe County was at an inflection point with its residents, who were expecting delivery in a different way. She added that they would also explore centralizing information both digitally and physically.

Ms. Leuenhagen shared the slide titled *Service is the throughline* and declared that the throughline was service and using a diverse set of tools to reach residents. She described clear communication as a service. She said that resident expectations required them to use more channels than traditional media, social posts, and press releases. She shared the examples of podcasting, broader social networks, articles opposite the editorial page (op-ed), Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and stronger, enhanced website information.

Ms. Drysdale stated that Tami Cummings mentioned that the website was the front door to information, but that there were also a number of windows. She explained that for a long time, they had been able to issue press releases that the media would pick up and run as a story; that story would run a couple of times, and that was how people

received their media. She declared that was no longer how things worked. She added that it was not simply a social post, either, but that there were many different ways to receive information. She shared that she commuted 40 minutes every morning and afternoon, listening to podcasts, and that was how she received her information. She clarified that, together, those things were how they would reach more people, by having more touchpoints. She gave the example of someone seeing a press release, or seeing that story at home on the news, or, if they did not watch the news, seeing recaps later on their TikTok feed. She acknowledged she was stating things the Board was already familiar with, as the County was already engaging in these new methods, but wanted to explain why they might notice her team doing things a little differently.

Ms. Leuenhagen shared the slide titled *Targeted and proactive messaging* and stated that, as they continued to discuss those topics and, in light of the Raftelis Report, including the realignment of Board meetings and workshops, they had a clearer idea of the Board's priorities. She stated that this allowed them to be more proactive in messaging those priorities for the Board. She detailed some of the priorities as senior services, attainable housing, eviction mitigation, behavioral health, community involvement, and quality of life. She noted they had recently voted to add equine businesses, agrotourism, heat mitigation, dark skies, and public noticing. She explained that all of those built a roadmap for her and her team to follow in order to enhance that messaging.

Ms. Drysdale cautioned that while it might sound archaic, she loved the idea of the old-fashioned press kit. She stated that they wanted to provide something like that to the Board. She described that a kit might include a press release and talking points for each topic important to the Board. She added that they could develop social media posts for the Commissioners to share. She stated they could include them in a Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) agenda. She clarified that, for each touchpoint the Commissioners had with the public, her team could help them prepare with information. She hoped that the Commissioners would enjoy that delivery of information. She asked what topics were important to them and suggested providing information on those topics. She expressed that, for example, if a Commissioner was somewhere in the County where a citizen might ask about a recent Board vote, her team wanted to make sure the Commissioner was prepped with all the key information.

Ms. Leuenhagen recalled that they had recently hired someone to handle social media and noted that, regarding videos and shareable content, while her team had produced a lot of content, they had not always asked the Commissioners to share it or shown them where it was. On the topic of building toolkits, she stated that was exactly what her team was there to do.

Ms. Leuenhagen shared the slide titled *Targeted Messaging in Action* and noted they were also using a similar approach to enhance messaging for their own departments, including digitally and across all available channels. She shared that they had recently met with the Public Guardian to work on a campaign that would be coming out in the fall. She explained that residents had to use the Washoe County website, which was outdated and contained incorrect forms. She added that when they met with the Public

Guardian for the project, they assigned tasks and said they found some things each team could do, such as Web Administration Lite. She noted that many of the smaller departments lacked support to accomplish some tasks, which was what her office was there for, and she would work with them that summer. She reiterated that they could do press releases, media stories, social reels, and even a podcast for the Public Guardian, building up to a particular campaign in the fall. She felt this was a target that the office needed. She stated it was a great example of how they were going to work and package their information, and make things more accessible, thanks to their diverse set of messaging tools. She noted that much of it would include senior services or senior citizens.

Ms. Drysdale shared the *Emergency Communications: Regional Collaboration* slide and stated that they would be switching topics, but that it would still be in the theme of customer service. She felt that communications was customer service, and that communicating with residents was not simply customer service, but rather their duty. She noted that it was probably most obvious in an emergency. She stated they had heard from residents and from the Board that they needed better information during an emergency. She added that, behind the scenes, there were jurisdictions, and that they would not be speaking for the city, and the city would not be speaking for them. She noted they would also not speak for Truckee Meadows Fire & Rescue (TMFR), as TMFR handled its own communication. But, she explained, this meant there was no single source of vetted information. She declared that she would explain how that came to be during COVID-19 (C19). She noted that during that time, many people were trying to share information about C19, but nobody had any solid information, such as what one should do, how long one needed to stay home, whether six feet of separation was really necessary, and so on. So, she stated, they created a website that served as a single source of information for the entire region. She noted that they had built significant equity in that site and that it also attracted substantial traffic. She added that they had an accompanying Twitter account. Then, she explained, everyone became accustomed to C19, so they no longer really needed all that information on the website. She noted that they did not want to lose the site, so they changed the Universal Resource Locator (URL). She said that they had used that for a short time, but once again, every jurisdiction was taking individual actions in an emergency. She stated that, as a region, they attended a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training session in Emmitsburg. She noted there were approximately 30 people from around the region training together, and the question came up again, regarding what they were going to do in a massive emergency where the cities were putting their own FAQs on their own websites, while Washoe County was also putting information on its own website. She felt this was too much for residents to keep track of. She stated they returned from that training and continued developing the regional website idea. She explained that they had done that and had been meeting not just with their counterparts in the Cities of Reno and Sparks, but also with partners around the region. She said that the point was that they had one highly vetted source of information that the whole region could use. She stated that she would walk the Board through the website as a kind of live demonstration, then they would discuss the topics further.

Ms. Leuenhagen pointed out that Ms. Drysdale had worked hard with local groups, Public Information Officer (PIO) groups, and the Washoe County Technology

Services Department to refresh the website, along with Business Technologist II Joshua Andreasen. She stated that it took months to update, and a willingness from the teams involved.

Ms. Drysdale shared the home page of the website and said it was not a Washoe County Emergency Management (WCEM) site but a regional site, which required significant meetings and buy-in. She complimented Developer Analyst II Kyson Coombs with the Technology Services Regional Services division, along with Mr. Andreasen. She thanked them for helping ensure the site was regional and met the needs of their partners.

Ms. Drysdale scrolled up the homepage and stated that the information they wanted people to know was already available elsewhere, such as on the site PerimeterMap.com. She noted that in an emergency, they had been directing citizens to PerimeterMap.com, where they could see road closures and evacuation zones. But, she mentioned, people also wanted to see webcams, such as the fire webcams, and that the County was not going to then direct them to the fire webcam site. She felt that would defeat the purpose. She explained that, instead, they were able to pull information from different platforms and portals on different websites, such as power outages pulled directly from the NV Energy website. She clarified that those were not recreated or filtered through the County, but were pulled directly from the NV Energy site. She pointed out weather maps, air quality, and traffic maps. She knew people wanted to know whether there was an evacuation, how many people were involved, how many were being evacuated, and where the shelters were. She stated they had that information on the website, along with written updates and press releases vetted either by the incident commander or the Joint Information Center (JIC). She explained that the last major region-wide event was earthquakes in April, and before that, the Davis Fire. She felt they were fortunate not to have to update the website very often, but noted they did want people to become familiar with it. She noted that the Cities of Reno and Sparks, the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority Health (REMSA Health), the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), and the hospitals had all been working together.

Ms. Drysdale felt their work had been very exciting, but clarified that they were sending all their residents to the centralized website, regardless of jurisdiction or city limits. She stated they wanted to provide the Commissioners with social posts they could put on their own social feeds in the event of an emergency to direct residents to the centralized website. She noted that on the website, they could change the header to deliver information in the event of an emergency. She noted that their team developed the site on WordPress to remain secure while also being less centralized, thereby making it accessible to any employees with the correct credentials in the event of an emergency. She explained that the site had been years in the making, not because they had been moving slowly, but because they wanted to do it right. She reiterated that the County was at a tipping point regarding residents' expectations, namely that all jurisdictions should work together, which is what they had been trying to do.

Ms. Drysdale shared the slide titled *Regional Coordination & Readiness* and said that the team had been meeting with regional PIOs and now had a robust group.

She clarified that PIOs were the individuals within organizations who typically distributed vetted information in an emergency. She specified they were not simply meeting with the PIOs of the Cities of Reno and Sparks, Washoe County, and TMFR, but also with additional organizations such as REMSA Health, Renown Health, NV Energy, the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, and the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA). She also noted that local school districts needed to communicate with parents and students in the event of an emergency. She added that one reason they had been meeting was to identify points of contact so that, in an emergency, they would know whom to contact. She stated that having those personal relationships made communicating in an emergency much easier and more seamless, and was what residents expected of them. She said residents did not want a group of strangers assembling to learn how to contact each other, but wanted that only in an emergency. She noted they met quarterly and that in each meeting they worked on exercises and walked through Web Emergency Operations Center (WebEOC) content. She clarified that the group wanted to be fully deployable in an emergency and that a robust team would help cover vacations or emergencies involving only certain agencies. She felt the final and most important thing was unified messaging in an emergency.

Ms. Leuenhagen pointed out that WCEM Administrator Kelly Echeverria and her team were embedded in the process and attended the PIO meetings, which illustrated that everyone was working together. She added that everyone understood the list of contacts changed with each type of emergency, which they learned from C19, but that they were now equipped for that. She shared the slide titled *Customer Service: Washoe311* and stated that the final topic they wanted to highlight was building a culture of customer service. She explained that they launched Washoe 311 in 2017 in the Office of the County Manager (OCM), and they quickly realized it was a communications function because they were interacting with constituents who had been calling with questions. She noted Washoe 311 was a messaging mechanism that had since evolved into a customer service center because residents didn't know which jurisdictions or departments to contact and instead wanted a single place to go for information. She added that Washoe 311 mattered because it centralized access and simplified many of the hurdles they had discussed. She stated that residents did not have to call and could instead send an email or a PRR, which she felt was a significant part of what Washoe 311 did. She felt it had become a robust hub for information and citizens' questions. She compared the Washoe 311 staff to kindergarten teachers, in that they knew everything because of the breadth of questions they received.

Ms. Drysdale shared the slide titled *Building a Culture of Customer Service* and added that they had been working with Washoe 311 to figure out how they could be an even better source of customer service, and found that government call center customer service did not really have a specific training path. She noted general call center training existed, but that Washoe 311 was not a call center like a retail company might have, so that style of training did not fit. She detailed that they reached out to Truckee Meadows Community College's (TMCC) Educational Programs Inspiring the Community (EPIC) program, which was helping them develop a training program for government customer service call centers. She stated they had learned that there was a certification called the Direct Contact Service Professional Certification, administered by a national organization, and that it would be designed for local governments. She noted that this aligned with CM

Thomas's goal of building a culture of customer service. She explained that they expected their staff to be the very best, and that residents who called for help would receive the help they needed without multiple transfers or being placed on an extended hold. She announced that they were very excited about the next step in Washoe 311's customer service. She added that, regarding an app, they currently had a demo from the service request platform company that they used.

Ms. Drysdale detailed that the costs with that specific company had been static, so they had used it for a long time. She mentioned that when the County added NextRequest 1 to 2 years ago, it was because their current public records platform had stopped working the way they needed it to. She said they would love it if one could take a picture and send it in, and then the platform would automatically create a service request and a work order under the same number.

Ms. Leuenhagen shared the slide titled *Customer Service: Single Point of Entry (1/2)* and said that one of CM Thomas's seven goals was to enhance customer service for all County staff who interacted with citizens. She related the story of a man trying to find his way around the Washoe County Administrative Complex after receiving unclear directions. She explained that it was a daily interaction for most people, so they would have the Washoe 311 team lead the single point of entry initiative in Building A of the complex. She noted it would take place after the Registrar of Voters (ROV) Office completed its move after 2026. She clarified that their new initiative would not happen in the immediate future, but they still needed to plan for it. She added that they needed to complete the customer service training, reach out to other departments, and enhance customer service, as people often visited in person. She noted that the wayfinding in the complex was confusing and unsafe. She felt that having so many points of entry needed updating. She explained that they would combine all those tasks into a one-Washoe mindset.

ACM Solaro shared the slide titled *Customer Service: Single Point of Entry (2/2)* and stated that he had worked for the County for a long time, but that one of his roles was as an architect overseeing the Master Plan for the administrative complex. He disclosed that the document contained a discussion of how to bring various community services together in one convenient location for citizens. He noted they used to be three distinct departments, which was very confusing for citizens. He explained that currently, they were still discussing a single point of entry for the complex, specifically for Building A. He mentioned that Building D, which contained the Treasurer's Office and the AO, essentially had a single point of entry. He noted that Building B housed Northern Nevada Public Health (NNPH) and that he wanted a single location for citizens to go, but the County was not there yet. Returning to the discussion on Building A, he explained that having multiple departments with individual front counters throughout the complex created issues. He felt that most citizens did not know where they were going or what they were doing, which meant all front counters became information portals for anyone looking for another department. He explained that the latest iteration of the facility Master Plan featured the concept of a single point of entry. He noted that, with the ROV and its associated intense public interaction moving to a different location, it would allow them to adopt a different mindset regarding how Washoe County served its customers.

ACM Solaro suggested removing confusion for the citizens and having Washoe 311 representatives present to answer questions. He felt nobody would read the signage and would instead prefer to ask a person a question. He stated that despite efforts to provide information on the County websites, people still wanted to come in person. He suggested a complex with a series of counters, with Washoe County employees going to the customer rather than requiring the customer to come to them. He felt more could be done to improve things for everyone. He declared that new space was expensive to build and that the County should use its space differently so that, even if someone ended up in Building D, technology solutions could allow them to complete their transaction for Building A. He shared that the County had learned a lot over the last six years, which had informed their plan to design the one-stop shop, or at least reduce the number of entrances to approximately three. He thought they had been successful with that in other County buildings, directing customers to where the employees needed them to be. He explained that his slide showed a preliminary drawing of an area where a customer could enter, complete a transaction at a window, or, if a meeting was needed, County staff could go to a series of meeting rooms.

ACM Solaro shared the slide titled *Commissioner Input* and announced that he wanted to understand what was important to the Commissioners regarding targeted messaging to the public, as well as what they were hearing from their constituents that they felt the County should focus on for messaging and customer service.

Vice Chair Garcia asked ACM Solaro to explain the preliminary drawing he was displaying, specifically where the WCRO was. ACM Solaro explained that the WCRO would move across the hall to what would soon be the former ROV space, with their current space turning into conference rooms. He reiterated that the plan would almost certainly change over time.

Chair Andriola thanked ACM Solaro and the team, and said that it was no surprise the County wanted to create a culture of customer service. She reiterated that Washoe County was in the customer service business and delivered essential services, using taxpayer dollars effectively, with measurable positive outcomes. She thanked the team for treating communication as a resource to get ahead of misinformation. She felt that, through the tools and resources the team had presented, the County could see and discuss the facts. She recalled she often had to help people who were lost at the complex and thought a single point of entry was a good idea. She thanked staff for reviewing Washoe 311, considering how to improve service levels, and providing the Board with quality information. Her final thanks was for including the CAB information, which she thought was another useful resource. She agreed that Washoe County needed a unified message, and that thought many people might not understand the Incident Command System (ICS) or the FEMA training the team attended. She stated she had been to the same training location and felt it reinforced the one county, one message mindset.

Vice Chair Garcia stated that the website needed to be sent to elected officials, as they sometimes messaged incorrectly and sent citizens to the wrong locations. She shared that she was initially confused about why Perimeter Map was on the homepage,

but after looking at the site further, she felt it delivered comprehensive information and that the way it was structured made sense. She congratulated the team on their hard work. She encouraged them to provide information for the Commissioners to share and disseminate with their constituents. She hoped other jurisdictions would be receptive to the ideas, too.

Chair Andriola stated that they were all looking forward to the toolkit because, as Commissioners, they were responsible for talking about facts.

CM Thomas noted that the Board had received a lot of information across the three strategic planning meetings and thanked them for listening. She stated that they appreciated the Board's input and the opportunity to brief the Board and the other departments. She felt the theme across all three meetings had been leadership. She noted the County was a regional leader with exceptional staff that often brought ideas and concepts forward to help the County develop and grow. She added that they were proud of the staff and the leadership the organization had been putting forward in the region.

ACM Solaro stated that they would continue to use the information gathered over the three sessions and would reconnect with the strategic planning committee. He noted they would also speak with elected officials and department heads to vet some of the work from that committee and incorporate the Board's information to create the Strategic Plan for the upcoming FY 2027 through FY 2029. He hoped they would be back before the Board in August for adoption of the plan. He felt there was a lot of work to do to set up the initiatives and for department heads to fit changes into their current work plans, but he thought that by the next budget season, they would have a document that everyone could reference. He stated he would see the Board again in late August. He appreciated input from all the departments, along with the external members and regional partners who presented. He felt putting an outside perspective on their work was important.

26-0372 AGENDA ITEM 5 Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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3:28 p.m. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

CLARA ANDRIOLA, Chair
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST:

JANIS GALASSINI, County Clerk and
Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners

Minutes Prepared by:
Jessica Melka, Deputy County Clerk
Lizzie Tietjen, Deputy County Clerk
Andrew Garnand, Deputy County Clerk

Pending Board Approval