

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

FRIDAY

10:00 A.M.

FEBRUARY 16, 2024

PRESENT:

Alexis Hill, Chair
Michael Clark, Commissioner
Mariluz Garcia, Commissioner
Clara Andriola, Commissioner

Janis Galassini, County Clerk
Eric Brown, County Manager
Nathan Edwards, Assistant District Attorney
Michael Large, Deputy District Attorney*

ABSENT:

Jeanne Herman, Vice Chair

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 10:00 a.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, County Clerk Jan Galassini called roll and the Board conducted the following business:

24-0073 AGENDA ITEM 3 Announcements/Reports.

Chair Hill addressed rumors about the removal of public comment from the beginning of the meeting that day. She asserted that since 2020, and possibly even before, there had not been public comment before the Canvass of Vote. She affirmed it was a one-item meeting, and she looked forward to hearing public comment.

Commissioner Clark said he was unsure how prior Canvass of Vote meetings were conducted, but he thought community members were sensitive to the subject of public comment because that time was taken away from the start of regular meetings during much of 2023. He thought public comment should have been held at both the beginning and end of the meeting that day, regardless of the number of items on the agenda. He observed there had not been a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) for almost a month, and thought that day would have been a good opportunity to allow time for people to talk about whatever they wanted to talk about, especially due to the brevity of the agenda. He reported it was unusual not to have public comment at the beginning of a meeting and thought the BCC should offer that opportunity, regardless of possible precedent established at other Canvass of Vote meetings.

24-0074 AGENDA ITEM 4 Declaration of Canvass of Vote and Order for 2024 Presidential Primary Election, as required by NRS 293.387. "Canvass"

means a review of the election results by the Board of County Commissioners, by which any errors within the election results are officially noted and the official election results are declared. The canvass shall separately note any clerical errors discovered and take account of the changes resulting from the errors discovered, and the results declared must represent the true vote cast. As soon as the Board declares the results, the Registrar of Voters shall certify the abstract of the results, which must contain the number of votes cast for each candidate, and enter it in the record of the Board. The Board shall order the Registrar of Voters to transmit a copy of the certified abstract, as well as a mechanized report of the abstract in accordance with regulations adopted by the Secretary of State, to the Secretary of State within the time required by NRS 293.387. Voters. (All Commission Districts.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

Chair Hill invited interim Registrar of Voters (ROV) Cari-Ann Burgess to provide a staff review of the item.

Ms. Burgess thanked Manager Brown and the Commissioners for providing her the opportunity to run the election. She applauded the efforts of her staff. Chair Hill echoed Ms. Burgess's appreciation of the election workers. Ms. Burgess described a problem with the sample ballots which she took full responsibility for. She specified that she thought when a citizen opted out of receiving a mail ballot, they also opted out of receiving a sample ballot, which she later learned was incorrect. The file was sent to the print vendor under her incorrect understanding, which she said was no fault of her staff, and would not happen in any future election. She emphasized there was no malicious intent.

Ms. Burgess reported there were 16 early vote centers and 17 centers for voting on Election Day. She remarked none of that would have been possible without the election workers including observers, ballot runners, supply runners, and tech runners. She reviewed the processes in place for running smooth elections, which she noted were put in place by bipartisan community members. She advised there were a total of three members on the certification board. She divulged there were originally going to be five members, but two were unable to make the time commitments. She specified that when the election was complete, the certification board convened to conduct a voter verification paper audit trail. She noted the certification board also signed off on all rejected ballots. She reported there were 938 ballots rejected in the election due to them being returned after the deadline, and there were additional ballots that could not be accepted due to being in the wrong envelopes or being written on. She reasoned there were some processes that could be streamlined and improved in the future, which she reported she would be working on. She directed Commissioners to the election results in front of them. She informed there were a total of 48,438 votes cast in the election, including 3,193 votes cast on Election Day, 3,728 votes cast in early voting, which she noted was only one week in duration, and 41,517 votes cast by mail. She said out of all Republican and Democrat citizens registered at the time of this election, only 24 percent voted. She reported 85.7 percent of votes were submitted by mail and 14.3 percent of votes were cast in person.

Chair Hill asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Clark divulged his attendance at the Republican Caucus at Pleasant Valley Elementary School. He observed thousands of people there and was proud of the process in his district. He commented the caucus was run by volunteers and he did not see any security guards, nor any need for security guards. He stated it was peaceful and smooth, and everything got done. He remarked watching the process caused him to wonder why there seemed to be an increased perception of threats and danger. He wanted to know the cost of the Republican Caucus and the cost of the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP). He mentioned his attendance at a Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) meeting the prior night, during which Manager Brown talked about the state of the County. Commissioner Clark suggested sending representatives from the ROV to a caucus site to watch how the public ran a fair and honest election. He thought the caucus process of people showing identification, voting, and having ballots counted that night was superior to the PPP process.

Commissioner Clark mentioned the potential closure of the United States Postal Service (USPS) mail center in Washoe County, which he objected to. He noted the change could take place just before the primary election, and he wondered about the chain of control for ballots and other mail related to voting.

Chair Hill interjected to ask Commissioner Clark to confine his remarks to the Canvass of Vote item under discussion and noted the USPS mail center item was planned for a future agenda. Commissioner Clark declared his comments were germane to the item, and vehemently objected to being interrupted. Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Nathan Edwards cautioned the remarks were allowed as long as they tied back to the item under discussion. Commissioner Clark said he was talking about future elections and the recent election, and how USPS changes could impact elections in Washoe County. He wanted to see a future Board of County Commissioners' (BCC) agenda item to prepare a request to the Postmaster General of the United States to not close the main Reno post office. He also wanted letters to go out to congressional representatives and senators to request their advocacy in keeping the mail center in Reno open.

On the call for public comment, Ms. Amy Powell spoke about her experience as a volunteer election observer. She reported she observed mail ballot processing for eight days during the PPP, and also observed during 2020 and 2022. She expressed the system in 2024 was better organized and more transparent. She described some procedures she observed that she thought were particularly key to the security of mail voting. She explained when a mailed ballot was returned to the ROV, the barcode on the envelope was scanned into the computer system. Once that happened, the system would prevent duplicate voting attempts from that individual. She said workers authenticated signatures on every ballot envelope and separated any that did not meet State standards. She remarked it was a painstaking process and was clearly visible from the public observation area. She spoke about the chain of custody and divulged that at each processing step, workers made a written account of ballots and logged any ballots that were removed.

She advised observers could easily see who was performing each task and that they were properly trained because each staff person wore a nametag that was color-coded to match the tray of ballots they were authorized to work on. Ms. Powell said Ms. Burgess managed the election excellently, and she remarked upon the atmosphere of pride and mutual respect among the staff that Ms. Burgess was able to foster. She observed the staff did a great job of carrying out a legal and secure election. She asked Commissioners to understand that a no vote on the canvass was an attempt to invalidate tens of thousands of ballots that were cast in good faith by voters who followed the rules. She concluded that would be a grave injustice. She said many people in attendance at the meeting that day were wearing blue to symbolize their confidence in the election as free and fair. She asked every Commissioner to uphold the will of the people and make a commitment to freedom by voting yes on the canvass of the PPP.

Ms. Gaia Brown introduced herself as a 23-year resident of Reno. She spoke about her personal voting history and ideological views over the years. She recalled the Pledge of Allegiance recited at the start of the meeting and urged people to stand by the commitment to being one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all, which she cautioned did not just mean people with the same opinions. She advised that was why the job of the ROV was so important. She summarized the ROV ensured a fair and accurate election with access for every registered voter, and avowed certitude of the results. She opined there were individuals who wanted to discourage certain classes of people from voting, subject elections to human error by hand counting, and make the job of the ROV so onerous that the person would quit, like the previous ROV. She thanked Ms. Burgess for taking on a task that had been performed well in the past and for her determination to do it even better. She asked Commissioners to honor the voters of Washoe County and uphold the democratic process by certifying the results of the 2024 PPP.

Ms. Stephanie Lerude requested certification of the PPP. She divulged she wore blue that day to signal her participation in what she called the silent majority of Washoe County citizens, who she believed supported the election officials and processes in place. She voiced her support for Ms. Burgess and the ROV staff and thanked them for undertaking work that was difficult at times. She thought considering other methods of voting at that time was egregious.

Ms. Julie M. was not present when called to speak.

Mr. Roger Scimé stated that in recent years, an alarming number of citizens had come to believe that elections were rigged, stolen, or sabotaged, which led to distrust and denial of the results. He said in the many elections during which he was a partisan poll watcher, he saw nothing deceptive or untoward, and he was prepared to swear to that under oath. He did note the objections, questions, and complaints from other observers, the overwhelming majority of which he believed were due to either outright misinformation or a misunderstanding of the processes and procedures. He did not understand the point of having elections if people refused to accept the results. He acknowledged there were some aspects of the election process that cried out for modification, clarification, or both. He reasoned voting to deny certification would accomplish nothing except to waste the time

of the BCC, the ROV, and voters. He thought that time was better spent making changes and ironing out any wrinkles in preparation for upcoming elections in June and November. He added refusing to certify would provide public relations and legislative fodder to those whose main purpose was to cast doubt on any elections their candidate failed to win. He implored Commissioners to certify the election. He questioned the validity of observations about a smooth caucus, given only one party held a caucus in Nevada that year, with effectively only one candidate.

Ms. Barbara Twitchell remarked that every vote counted, though she acknowledged there were different ideas about the best way to ensure that. She said she had run caucuses in the past and had also been an observer of various components of previous elections. She reported she got an overview of all election processes, and thought caucuses were difficult and limiting. She reasoned the limitations were the worst part because Reno was a town that ran at all hours of the day, every day of the week, and not everybody could get to a caucus at a specific time and day to vote. She said Reno also happened to be a town with people who could not easily get to places due to disability or other difficulties. She said because the caucus required a person to be at a specific place at a specific time, it was too limiting for a county as large as Washoe County had grown to be. She summarized that the election processes she observed over the years were efficient and well done, and she never saw anything untoward. She thought the idea of voting by mail was convenient for many people who had children to watch, jobs to go to, or both, and could not easily get to a poll. Ms. Twitchell welcomed Ms. Burgess to her new job and thought she was brave for taking on that difficult role. Ms. Twitchell recalled being escorted when she was a volunteer observer in a prior election because she and her husband were subjected to threats. She thought good people had been lost because of that climate of hostility. She asked Commissioners to certify the election because it was well done.

Mr. Eric Lerude asked the Commissioners to certify the PPP results. He said there was no basis to not certify. He stated his support for interim ROV Ms. Burgess and her team. He asked the Commissioners to continue to support her and her staff and felt 2024 was a crucial year that needed steady leadership in the ROV office. He stated Ms. Burgess was the right person for the job and had the qualifications, training, and experience. He said it was not the time to be thinking about replacing her, nor the time to revise how elections were conducted. He understood the mail-in ballot process had worked well for many years, and thought it would continue to work. He asked that Commissioners not be swayed by the rhetoric and antics of the vocal minority asking for the election results not to be certified. He said they did not speak for the majority of the 500,000 Washoe County residents, and they did not want what was best for the community. He thought they wanted what was best for a narrow group, and wanted to be as disruptive and intimidating as possible to interrupt the BCC from completing its work. He thought that the minority wanted Commissioners to be so uncomfortable that they would quit their positions. He noted two ROVs had quit since 2022, and he advocated for order, not chaos. He thanked the Commissioners for their service to the County.

Mr. Derek Morse thanked the BCC, ROV office staff, and election volunteers for the hard work they did. He reasoned if there was credible evidence of

problems with the election, to the extent that the outcome as currently determined was not valid, it should not be certified. He cautioned that lacking such evidence, it was the duty of Commissioners to certify the results. He said not certifying would only encourage a narrative of elections being unsafe and not secure, which was not good for society, the County, or the entire country. He encouraged Commissioners to certify the vote.

Mr. Paul Lenart informed he had lived in Nevada since 1998 and found the integrity of the workers in elections to be superior to that of his former residence in Mississippi, which he described as a corrupt, southern autocracy. He said it was essential to protect every vestige of democracy won by generations past. He stated that he did not belong to either of the two major political parties, but an election was an election. He asked Commissioners to certify the results.

Ms. Nancy Podewils-Baba disclosed she had lived in Washoe County since 1986 and had observed the election process on many occasions. She said she was poll-watching and observing on Election Day at the Sparks library that year. She reported everything ran smoothly and everybody was welcomed and accommodated. She detailed two situations where citizens required additional help, and she felt the staff worked together well to assist everyone. She thought the process was great, and asked the BCC to certify the results of the election.

Ms. Penny Brock avowed that America depended on its election process. She objected to the PPP because of the tradition of Republicans and Democrats each holding a caucus in Nevada. She did not know why the ROV was put in a position of oversight of that part of the process, and she noted the associated costs. She knew the prices of some aspects from prior BCC meetings but wanted to know what the cost of the PPP was overall. She was concerned about the change and the lack of opportunity for the BCC to provide input.

Ms. Sandee Tibbett noted the inclusion of under God in the Pledge of Allegiance. She agreed with prior commenters about certifying the election, which she thought was probably the most fair election the County had ever run. She disclosed that she volunteered at the O'Brien Middle School caucus location and expressed her gratitude to the community, specifically to the volunteers and voters who helped the Washoe County Grand Old Party (GOP) Office conduct a record-breaking caucus, which she thought sent a strong message to elected officials in the State about the desires and capabilities of residents. She reasoned the caucus was a cost-effective, efficient, and transparent process. She felt the PPP was almost a waste of money, but concluded it ultimately motivated a large number of Republican voters to become more engaged and make their voices heard.

Ms. Janet Butcher read from a document that was distributed to the Board and placed on file with the Clerk along with additional documents she submitted.

Mr. Scott Finley read from a document that was distributed to the Board and placed on file with the Clerk.

Ms. Renee Rezendes informed that she participated in the caucus, and felt it was historic to see all the people who participated. She thought the election should be certified because nothing of significance would come out of it and no Republican delegates would be awarded. She compared the cost of the PPP to the cost of the caucus and advised a return to voting by caucus. She said she was part of the entire process and stayed to help count and tally ballots. She emphasized the transparency of the process, and appreciated that people were able to stay for everything, including the counting of ballots and the announcement of who won. She was excited about getting the tallies at the end of the process. She remarked two and a half hours was not long enough for the caucus. She acknowledged the caucus disenfranchised some people, and she advised she got permission to take ballots to some citizens who qualified for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations. She recalled seeing many issues when she observed the last election and was glad observers were able to see signatures during the recent PPP. She appreciated that the election monitors had adequate space to see in the recent election, unlike her prior experience.

Mr. Buddy Miller said he was an observer of the polls and ballot counting since 2004. He thanked the BCC for allowing him to speak and asked the Board to approve the proposed Declaration of Canvass and certify the vote. He said it was evident that polling and tabulation of votes was done correctly and independently and there was no reason to suspect any problem. He congratulated the poll workers and ballot counters, both temporary and regular staff. He divulged he observed polling on Election Day at the Washoe County Administrative Complex, the Spanish Springs Library, and the North Valleys Library. He reported he found incredibly competent teams and said that without question, each member of the polling teams knew exactly what they were doing and were very helpful to voters. He expressed his support for Ms. Burgess as interim ROV. He thought despite being new to her position, she led her team to run a very smooth voting process. He hoped the Board would certify the election.

Mr. George Lee spoke about the role of states in running elections as established by the National Voter Rights Act. He emphasized any irregularities that were not resolved before the BCC signed off on the election put individual Commissioners in peril of being sued federally. He noted the absence of some names from the rolls used at the recent Republican Caucus, which he reported he personally witnessed.

Ms. Chris Garvey divulged the primary reason she attended the meeting that day was to hear the conversation. She was disappointed that subsequent to Ms. Burgess's acknowledgment of issues with ballots, no questions followed about what steps had been taken to ensure those things did not happen again. She claimed that was the second time there was a problem with sample ballots, and spoke about her personal experience with not receiving a sample ballot that year. Ms. Garvey expressed concern about potential changes to mail processing and thought having mail sent to Sacramento to be processed would impact not only Reno but would also delay mail for rural areas currently serviced by the mail center on Vassar Street. She recalled Ms. Burgess's concern about the chain of custody for ballots if those changes were to take place and wished the Commissioners had asked questions about those issues so the public would know the Commissioners were

committed. She urged the BCC to start asking hard questions and find out what the ROV was doing to ensure the vote of the public was secure.

Ms. Joni Hammond said she worked all eight days of the PPP and the caucus. She reported that she did not see or hear of any threats at either venue. She said if there were real threats, they needed to be documented and investigated by law enforcement. Otherwise, people needed to stop making claims. She compared the high cost and time commitment of the PPP to the low cost and duration of the caucus. She claimed there was universal distrust of mail-in ballots, Dominion voting machines, and Washoe County elections. She suggested there was confusion about the caucus, but no distrust. She informed that at the PPP, she observed multiple people who brought in two ballots bearing their names. She added multiple people brought in ballots addressed to people who were deceased or no longer at an address, and she wondered why the ballot rolls were not being cleaned. She expressed that even if money was the only consideration, she remained confused as to why millions of dollars would be spent on an elongated process versus spending less money on a one-day election. She reported Florida did a one-day election, as did France, and she believed Washoe County also needed to conduct elections in one day.

Ms. Pam Roberts disclosed her participation in poll observation in the recent election and over the past few years. She experienced poll workers to be well-trained and helpful. She provided an example from early voting at the Washoe County Administrative Complex, which she thought illustrated how well the system worked. She recalled an elderly gentleman who arrived to vote but, in fact, had already voted and forgot. She applauded the efforts of the voting staff, who assisted him in understanding his mistake. She was proud of the effectiveness of the ROV staff.

Mr. Bruce Schmidt thanked the Commissioners and did not blame them for the creation of the PPP or the potential move of the post office. He thought those issues needed to be talked about, but in a different venue. He recalled news about voting and voter fraud over the past several years which prompted him to observe elections. He said he observed approximately six polling locations and was universally impressed with the competence, training, and helpfulness of the workers. He noted he did not see any voters who left unhappy, regardless of what problems arose. He learned it was also possible to observe ballot counting from mail-in ballots which he did one morning and was impressed by. He thought Commissioners should be proud of what was done by election workers, and looked forward to the next election. He believed the results should be certified.

Mr. Alan Munson expressed his appreciation for the service of the Commissioners. He informed he participated in the caucus, and favored that process. He thought there were many issues with mail-in ballots, including the cost. He also preferred the brevity of the caucus to the extended time allowed for the PPP. He acknowledged the difficulty of conducting the caucus in such a short period of time with so many people but noticed people seemed to be enjoying talking to friends while they waited. He reasoned having more people checking voters in would help speed up the process. He encouraged Commissioners to consider retaining the caucus.

Mr. Xo McBeth commented on the persistence of election fraud claims, which he voiced had been under discussion since 2020. He thought that pattern showed people did not care about evaluating evidence, but were instead motivated by arriving at conclusions. He did not think the BCC should take those claims seriously. He asserted all elected officials should be held accountable for their actions, regardless of party affiliation. Mr. McBeth disavowed the complicity of multiple presidents in the occupation of Palestine over many decades.

Chair Hill asked Mr. McBeth to return his remarks to the topic under discussion, to which he replied he had nothing further to share.

Ms. Darla Lee challenged the notion of a vociferous minority which was mentioned by prior commenters. She was offended by that. She alluded to polls which showed an obvious majority of people who wanted voter identification requirements. She echoed the comments of several people about how well the caucus went. She found it a very encouraging affair with appreciative, engaged citizens. She shared concerns and rumors that were brought to her attention regarding efforts to move away from voting machines and towards all-mail voting. She opposed that and thought it would be prone to fraud. She was concerned that signatures for future elections might not be captured on paper, but could instead be captured on a new intake tablet. She wondered if the tablet would also validate the signature. She understood any time electric equipment was changed, programmed, or upgraded, it took six months to work out the kinks. If digital signatures were a possibility for elections in the future, she theorized it would be better to not undertake the change in the middle of that year because of the potential for error and manipulation.

Ms. Yolanda Knaak opined PPP complaints should have been investigated. She believed there was a lot of confusion over the PPP. She observed that PPP mailers said there was no other voting, which was incorrect because of the possibility for Republican voters to participate in the caucus. She clarified that people with disabilities were able to participate in the caucus by contacting their party. Ms. Knaak stated the caucus did not have any costs. She said there was no universal ballot mailing or ballot harvesting for the caucus, and voter identification was required. Due to those safeguards, she felt confident in asserting it was an honest and fair election, unlike the PPP, which contained a number of factors that she deemed were open doors for fraud. She remarked on the high cost of the PPP, and noted it did not provide Republican delegates. She recalled the caucus process was used by Republicans and Democrats in the past, which she surmised would cost the State less. She advocated for a return to full and exclusive use of the caucus. She had not heard confirmation regarding any investigation of election complaints and stated that needed to be done.

Commissioner Clark expressed his agreement with almost everything said that day. He agreed that Ms. Burgess was an honest, competent person doing a good job. He agreed with the poll watchers and ballot counters and affirmed he was not an election denier by any stretch of the imagination. He firmly believed the voter rolls needed to be cleaned up. He recounted a recent meeting he had with the ROV in Carson City. He

informed that although Carson City was much smaller than Washoe County, the ROV in Carson City reported he took between 8,000-9,000 names off the voter rolls. Commissioner Clark drew an analogy between voter rolls and a car, which he said could not run well if bad fuel was put in it. He provided a document to the Clerk which was placed on file. The document provided was a ballot he received at his home, which was addressed to a friend of his who moved eight years ago, but continued to receive mail at the home of Commissioner Clark. He said he had provided similar documentation in the past, and he had no faith in the election rolls. He thought everyone had a right to vote, but if the rolls were not accurate, the outcome of the election could not be accurate. He believed the County had the ability to clean up about 90 percent of the voter rolls by using information from the Recorder's Office, Treasurer's Office, County Clerk, and Assessor's Office.

Commissioner Andriola agreed with Commissioner Clark that accurate voter rolls needed to be a priority. Her understanding, in speaking with the Secretary of State and many other jurisdictions, was that the Voter Registration and Election Management Solution (VREMS) was going to make a major difference in the upcoming election. She asked if VREMS was used in the PPP, and Manager Brown responded it was not. Commissioner Andriola asked if VREMS would be implemented for the upcoming election. Manager Brown replied it was scheduled to be available for the primary in June, which would be the first time the system would be in effect. He added that Commissioner Andriola was correct in stating that the primary focus of the VREMS project was to clean up the voter rolls.

Commissioner Andriola asked ADA Edwards for clarification regarding compliance with the action that was in front of the BCC. She specifically wanted to know what the scope of the vote should be and what was appropriate to consider from information shared by the interim ROV about the process thus far. ADA Edwards summarized the Commissioners were voting on whether or not the results presented by the PPP were accurate and official, as reported by the ROV. He said if Commissioners wished to follow up on any details, including potential errors, that was a question for the interim ROV. Commissioner Andriola asked Ms. Burgess if there were any irregularities that would be important to consider alongside the election results provided. Ms. Burgess said there were not and affirmed that she worked with her staff very closely, and they had reviewed the results to ensure they were correct.

Commissioner Garcia thanked Ms. Burgess and her team and stated she was ready to make a motion.

Commissioner Clark restated his agreement with most things said in the meeting that day, but also outlined two points of departure. He contended Interstate 80 was a mountainous road with hundreds of accidents annually, and took exception to anyone who thought it was not a dangerous road. He believed the ability to get ballots back and forth could be impeded by reliance on that road. He said he noticed the problem with voter rolls years ago and thought the County had the capacity to fix it using revenue generated from tax rolls and other resources. He emphasized accuracy of voter rolls was crucial for election integrity.

On motion by Commissioner Garcia, seconded by Chair Hill, which motion duly carried on a 3-1 vote with Vice Chair Herman absent and Commissioner Clark voting no, it was ordered that the Declaration of the Canvass of the Vote for the 2024 Presidential Preference Primary be approved, and the Registrar of Voters be directed to certify the abstract of the results and transmit the abstract to the Secretary of State.

24-0075 **AGENDA ITEM 5** Public Comment.

On the call for public comment, Mr. Barry Levinson was not present when called to speak.

Ms. Valerie Fiannaca displayed a document, copies of which were distributed to the Board and placed on file with the Clerk. She thanked the Commissioners for certifying the election. She pronounced the caucus as an overwhelming success. She described her caucus involvement at a small school in Sun Valley. She said people were excited to be there and to participate, despite the cold. She reported their team of 15 volunteers was able to process approximately 700 voters in three hours, including counting time, which many people stayed to witness. She was struck by the hunger for connection within the community, which she observed was absent during COVID-19 (C19). She said she realized at the end of the night that her own children had never voted in person, which saddened her. She enjoyed the evening of the caucus and felt a return to that basic, inexpensive, and patriotic method of voting was needed because it involved the community at a visceral level. She noted the envelopes wrapping the ballots were pink and blue with a circular hole in the outside, which negated the secrecy of the ballots. She described materials she presented that day and an email she sent to the Commissioners. She talked about her research on the 90 people who applied for the open position on the Library Board of Trustees (LBT) and saw one applicant who stood out. She asked the Commissioners to look at that material and suggested a more thorough vetting process be developed for candidates.

Mr. Jeff Church displayed a document, copies of which were distributed to the Board. He read text copied from the Washoe County Library System website, which stated on November 5, 2024, Washoe County voters would decide whether to extend a 30-year tax override. He described the site warned that if the tax was not extended, librarians would be laid off and the book budget would be eliminated, which Mr. Church said was not true. He said, to the best of his knowledge, there was no such ballot measure, and nobody had filed a petition on it. He was concerned that false information was being distributed to the community. He reported Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 281A.400 indicated public officials in the County could not advocate for or against a ballot measure. He urged the Commissioners to remove that text from the library website. He asserted that, depending on the circumstances, he was not opposed to new taxes, but he felt this tax violated some golden rules of taxation. He objected to the use of the term renewal, which he did not think applied in this case. He thought it was more accurate to simply acknowledge the tax had expired.

Ms. Kimberly Carden expressed her support for the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) and for mail-in ballots. She said she was a 26-year active-duty Army retiree, and during her entire service, she voted by mail. She reported that she was stationed in 14 different locations and four different countries, and always had full confidence that her vote was going to count. She expressed her sincere appreciation for the interim Registrar of Voters (ROV), her entire office staff, and all the election volunteers. She divulged prior work in a caucus and as an election observer. She said she much preferred the PPP and mail-in ballots.

Mr. Edward Goodrich commended the Commissioners and the ROV staff for their diligent work on the PPP. He opined one of the two major, officially recognized political parties in Nevada chose to dilute the value of the PPP by holding a competing presidential caucus with rules preventing candidate participation in both the caucus and the PPP. He theorized that caused confusion for election officials and, more importantly, massive confusion for voters. He noted the cost to the State and County to hold what was, in reality, a devalued election. He asked Commissioners to submit, either on their own behalf or through an elected legislator, a bill draft request (BDR) for the next legislative session. He suggested if a major political party chose to hold an exclusive presidential caucus instead of participating in Nevada's PPP, that political party should be held responsible for its portions of the election's costs incurred for that PPP. He judged that would return the legally required monies expended by the County and State back to the people of Nevada, who were, in fact, financing the elections.

Mr. Goodrich spoke about his attendance at a recent meeting where potential changes to a local post office were discussed. He encouraged the Commissioners to go as quickly as possible to their federally elected officials and formally voice their opposition. He thought the change would be a bad thing. He criticized conduct from earlier in that day's meeting which he felt debased the BCC. He encouraged the Commissioners to maintain proper order, germane discourse, and comity in meetings.

Mr. William Steward echoed Commissioner Clark's observations about the importance of maintaining accurate voter rolls. He agreed wholeheartedly with Commissioner Clark that public comment should be heard at both the beginning and end of all meetings. He said though Commissioners were elected to their positions, many public commenters could not sit for three hours. He spoke about his experience as a precinct captain for the caucus at Sepulveda Elementary School and thanked everyone who voted. He said there was a need for more election volunteers. He believed it was necessary and appropriate to hold precinct-based elections in a single day with voter identification requirements and paper ballots. Mr. Steward emphasized the importance of people being able to work together to accomplish the many items that came before the BCC. He applauded recent improvements to fiscal transparency at the State level and encouraged the County to do the same. He read a quote from Mr. Billy Graham about politics and religious beliefs in America.

Mr. Scott Finley read from a letter that was provided to the Board and placed on file with the Clerk.

Ms. Renee Rezendes stated there was no need for caucus voters to reimburse anyone. She recalled the recent initiation of the PPP and observed that Washoe County residents had to pay for the PPP regardless of whether they chose to participate in it. She suggested complaints about Vice Chair Herman's absence at some gatherings were unfounded because she was not required to be there. Ms. Rezendes understood Vice Chair Herman had to be invited to those gatherings by the Chair in order to participate, and wanted to know if her understanding of that was correct. She felt Vice Chair Herman had been treated unfairly and that people should be aware of procedures and requirements regarding those meetings in the future. She stated her desire to learn more from Chair Hill regarding meetings of that kind.

Ms. Penny Brock asked for paper ballots and hand counting to be on the agenda. She said Commissioner Clark supported her request when she made it the prior month, and she added that Chair Hill had assured him any item a Commissioner requested would be put on an agenda. She said that item continued to not be put on the agenda, despite repeated requests. She recalled County Manager Eric Brown informed that he sent the agenda item request to the Secretary of State (SOS). She reasoned that was a problem because the District Attorney's (DA) office approved its inclusion on the agenda. She reported that she called the SOS, and was told they had no record of receiving that request from Manager Brown. She wanted to know what the written record and truth was. If Manager Brown did send the request, Ms. Brock wanted to know if he received a response.

Ms. Brock advised there were over 200 counties putting paper ballots and hand counting on the agenda, including Nye County. She informed Nye County also had Dominion machines count ballots and hand counting was found to be more accurate. She disclosed her attendance at a recent meeting regarding a post office in Reno and was concerned about changes for many reasons, especially election integrity. She emphasized the importance of ballots being secure and accounted for. She stated if mail-in ballots went to Sacramento, they would be handled by many people. She noted comments about post office changes needed to be made by February 28, 2024, which meant the BCC did not have much time to provide comments. Ms. Brock reported that she inquired about whether Ms. Amber McReynolds still had a contract with the County, and had not gotten an answer. Ms. Brock recalled a comment interim ROV Cari-Ann Burgess provided at the post office meeting in which she divulged she had a contact in Washington, D.C. that she would communicate with the next day. Ms. Brock theorized that the contact was Ms. McReynolds and wondered what response Ms. Burgess received.

Ms. Janet Butcher expressed disappointment that some attendees had already left and could not hear her remarks. She appreciated the praise for election workers and stated she was signed up to be an election worker again in the future. She noted she did not sign up for the PPP because she thought the caucus was the more important event of the two. She said Nevada was a caucus state for many years, and claimed she knew why the PPP was initiated. She said universal mail-in ballots were uncontrollable, and listed numerous concerns she had with election security and registration procedures.

Mr. Buddy Miller stated his preference to vote by PPP rather than caucus for numerous reasons. He applauded Ms. Burgess's work.

Mr. Roger Scimé reminded everyone that the decision to conduct a PPP rather than a caucus was made at the State level in Carson City, not in Washoe County. He reasoned arguing about it at a BCC meeting was meaningless. He agreed with Commissioner Clark regarding concerns about Interstate 80 and potential problems with the rerouting of mail, particularly during adverse weather conditions. He thought the BCC should put together a resolution to state, as unequivocally as possible, that mail processing should remain in Reno rather than be moved to Sacramento. He suggested the establishment of something akin to a Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) comprised of people like himself and others who spoke that day. He hoped it could be a venue for discussion of items of concern like voter rolls and holes in ballot envelopes, and thought that the working group would be able to provide suggestions to the BCC on an advisory basis.

24-0076 AGENDA ITEM 6 Announcements/Reports.

County Manager Eric Brown acknowledged, in regard to the United States Postal Service (USPS) issue, that interim Registrar of Voters (ROV) Cari-Ann Burgess attended a recent meeting and subsequently notified the Secretary of State's (SOS) office of her concerns regarding possible changes to mail processing. He said the meeting initially was communicated to the County and the SOS as a community input meeting, which he believed was not a clear representation of the intention. He disclosed a conversation he had with SOS Deputy for Elections Mark Wlaschin the prior day. Mr. Wlaschin assured him the SOS was aware of the issue and was in contact with the Nevada Congressional Delegation and others in Washington, D.C. to work on identifying a solution and ensuring those proposed changes did not happen. Manager Brown said if there was an update, he would share it with the Board of County Commissioners (BCC). He thought an update with the next steps would likely be given prior to the BCC meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 20, 2024. He reported asking Mr. Wlaschin if he advised a letter or proclamation be sent from the BCC. Mr. Wlaschin responded that he did not advise a formal letter or proclamation yet, because strategies were still being worked out. Mr. Wlaschin said he would follow up. Manager Brown contended the USPS issue impacted Northern Nevada on a much larger basis than just mail-in ballots.

Manager Brown congratulated Ms. Burgess and her team for performing marvelously. He commented he visited vote center locations over the past four years, both for primaries and general elections. He advised he had never seen everything so well prepared, and had never seen the degree of high morale that he observed in both early voting and on Election Day in 2024. He pointed out that was the warm-up, and ballots in the primary would be more complicated. He thanked the County's department heads who allocated their employees' time to assist the ROV with elections. He said people would need to step up again in an even bigger way, and based on what he saw in the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP), he was confident about upcoming elections being run well.

Commissioner Clark addressed an earlier comment regarding decorum. He said he would extend the courtesy of not interrupting Chair Hill, and expected that courtesy to be reciprocated. He noted all the Commissioners were elected by approximately the same number of constituents and, as such, he thought he had the right to finish his thoughts without interruption. He said whether the SOS thought the BCC should write a letter or not, he thought they should. He agreed with Manager Brown that changes would affect more than election mail, and cited the importance of many jobs connected to the postal center. He theorized the impact on the community and on mail delivery would be significant and negative. He wanted to see an agenda item on the next BCC meeting, possibly to include a resolution, but to at least include a vote about a letter to support retaining the postal center in Reno.

Commissioner Clark submitted a letter to be placed on file with the Clerk regarding the denial of a resolution proposed by Vice Chair Herman. He initially understood there would be a vote on the item, but supposed some people did not want to go on the record about their position regarding the resolution.

12:08 pm **Nathan Edwards left.**

12:08 pm **Deputy District Attorney (DDA) Michael Large arrived.**

Commissioner Garcia echoed Manager Brown's sentiments regarding the election. She was impressed by the Technology Services' (TS) support for the live feed in the election room. She asked when the live feed would end and was informed it would end after the meeting that day. She thanked the ROV staff for their diligence.

Commissioner Andriola thanked everyone and shared her experience of participating in the caucus. She enjoyed the connections and conversations that took place that evening. She thanked Ms. Burgess and her staff for fulfilling the legal requirements established for the PPP. She shared there were comments that day that reminded her of her years at the Legislature, and the need for changes in some areas. She specifically recalled advocating for voter identification requirements, but acknowledged that even if everyone wanted something, there were compliance requirements that had to be addressed. She reminded everyone the BCC was created by the Legislature and there were limitations to what the Commission could do. She thought it was important to look at what could change, and where those changes needed to occur. She felt everyone who contributed to the success of the elections should be recognized, regardless of where they worked.

Regarding potential changes with the local USPS processing center, Commissioner Andriola asked Manager Brown if he was aware of a timeframe for the final decision. He responded that he did not know. He thought that was likely part of what the SOS was following up on. Commissioner Andriola felt, both personally and professionally, that it was the responsibility of everyone to voice their concerns. She thought it was evident that the possible changes were of concern beyond the election. She did not understand what provoked the proposed changes and said she would seek further information. She advised

she would be making phone calls that day to learn more and voice her concerns. She asked Manager Brown if he knew the reason for the changes, and he responded he did not.

Commissioner Clark theorized the reasons for the proposed USPS changes were motivated by cost savings. He heard of a deadline of February 28, 2024, to contribute comments about closing the post office. He thanked security staff, Sheriff's Office (SO) deputies, and Deputy District Attorney (DDA) Michael Large for their attendance at the meeting that day. He asked for a tour of the ROV office, which he had not previously had.

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12:16 p.m. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

ALEXIS HILL, Chair
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST:

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

*Minutes Prepared by:
Heather Gage, Deputy County Clerk*