



Warm Springs/Rural Minutes of the regular meeting of the Warm Springs/Rural Citizen Advisory Board held on March 11, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. via ZOOM

1. CALL TO ORDER/DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Present – Kevin Cook, Larry Chesney, Jan Mortensen, Carolyn White, Nicole Black
Absent –

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Katherine Yriarte, a candidate for Washoe County Commission District 5, emphasized the size and diversity of the district and her commitment to representing all communities equally. She highlighted key priorities including support for seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers—proposing solutions like mobile mental health teams, caregiver networks, and prevention-focused policies. She also focused on protecting rural and agricultural communities by addressing overregulation and growth outpacing infrastructure, suggesting a rural infrastructure fund, improved emergency response, and stronger roles for community advisory boards in development decisions. Yriarte pointed to her small business background as motivation for reforming outdated regulations, advocating for streamlined home-based business policies and business-informed regulatory reviews. She additionally stressed the importance of honoring tribal sovereignty through early and respectful government-to-government engagement. Overall, she framed her campaign around offering specific, actionable solutions—many requiring policy changes rather than new funding—and a commitment to listening to and serving all communities in the district.

Larry Chesney shared that once the candidate filing period closes on the 13th, the Palomino Valley community plans to host a separate community meeting, not subject to Open Meeting Law requirements. He noted the intent is to invite candidates to participate, providing additional time and flexibility for more in-depth discussion with residents.

Brian Wadsworth, a candidate for Washoe County Commissioner District 5, introduced himself as a Northern Nevada native, member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, and participant in the Washoe County Leadership Academy. He emphasized his local roots, education in business and accounting, and experience as a former tribal leader. He expressed concern about rapid county growth, particularly the strain on resources such as land and water along the Truckee River, and the need to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with development. Wadsworth said his decision to run was driven by gaps in emergency services in rural areas, citing a community left without ambulance or fire protection as unacceptable. He stressed that no community in Washoe County should feel forgotten and committed to learning more about and addressing issues facing rural residents.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Kevin Cook motioned to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2026, Warm Springs Rural CAB. The motion was seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously. Larry Chensney abstained.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

Derek Reid did not provide any updates.

A resident asked about the status of county-owned land on Del Campo and whether there had been any progress or plans for its use, potentially for a future fire station. Derek Reid responded that while the land was acquired with a possible future station in mind, there are currently no active plans or discussions underway. He noted that any development would depend on factors like growth and budget constraints, highlighting the significant cost which is estimated to be around \$18 million for a new fire station.

Kevin Cook asked about the end date for the controlled burning season.

In response, TMFPD shared that the season is expected to end around the end of April but emphasized that burn days are determined daily based on conditions like wind. Residents are encouraged to check the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District website for real-time updates on whether burning is permitted and for any changes to the schedule.

6. FIRE ADAPTED NEVADA (FAN)

Brett Taylor's presentation focused on the concept of living with fire and the importance of building fire-adapted communities through shared responsibility between agencies and residents. He explained that Fire Adapted Nevada is a collaborative effort among federal, state, and local partners to support communities in preparing for wildfire, with the goal of improving fire response, creating resilient landscapes, and helping communities adapt to the reality that fire will always be part of the environment. He emphasized that wildfire risk is increasing due to factors like climate patterns, fuel buildup, and expanding development into wildland areas. In Nevada, cycles of wet winters followed by drought contribute to heavy vegetation growth that later becomes fuel, while wind patterns and low humidity intensify fire behavior. Taylor highlighted that modern fires often spread rapidly through embers, meaning homes are frequently ignited from small vulnerabilities near the structure rather than large flames. A key takeaway was the importance of preparation at the individual property level, especially within the first five feet around a home. Landscaping choices, building materials, and maintenance can significantly reduce the likelihood of ignition. He noted that even well-built homes can be lost if nearby vegetation or materials allow embers to enter structures, underscoring that mitigation must be intentional and ongoing. Taylor also stressed the importance of early evacuation, explaining that fast-moving, wind-driven fires cannot be safely fought once they intensify. Residents should plan ahead and leave early rather than wait until conditions become dangerous. He encouraged community involvement in broader planning efforts, including the update to the Washoe County Wildfire Protection Plan, noting that public input is critical to ensuring the plan remains useful and actionable over time. He also highlighted the Firewise program as a practical way for neighborhoods to organize, reduce risk, and potentially benefit from improved insurance outcomes by demonstrating proactive wildfire mitigation. Overall, the

presentation reinforced that wildfire preparedness is a year-round responsibility that depends on both individual action and community-wide coordination to reduce risk and protect lives and property.

Larry Chesney asked about how to participate in the Firewise program, including what steps are required and what benefits it provides. In response, staff explained that interested participants would work through a local coordinator, receive a property risk assessment, and be given mitigation recommendations. Participation involves completing those improvements, verifying them, and maintaining annual reporting to remain recognized as a Firewise community. Additional questions focused on insurance benefits and costs. Staff noted that while premium reductions are modest, the greater value is demonstrating risk reduction, which may help homeowners maintain coverage in a tightening insurance market. They also explained that insurance rates are influenced by factors such as fire protection capacity and ISO ratings, which can be lower in rural or volunteer-served areas, contributing to higher premiums. The discussion also touched on the importance of infrastructure and partnerships, particularly with NV Energy, emphasizing that proactive mitigation and system hardening can reduce wildfire risk and prevent larger impacts like power loss or infrastructure damage during fire events.

A resident asked why large-scale mitigation efforts like pile burning and firebreak construction, commonly seen in forested areas like Tahoe, are not being done more proactively in local BLM-managed lands. In response, staff explained that while some mitigation work does occur, the Bureau of Land Management oversees vast areas of land and must prioritize locations with the highest risk of loss. They noted that large projects like firebreaks are limited by funding, scale, environmental regulations, and permitting requirements, and may not always be effective depending on where fires start or how vegetation regrows. The response emphasized that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that the most reliable protection comes from defensible space and property-level mitigation. Residents were encouraged to focus on reducing fuels immediately around their homes, as these actions are proven to be the most effective in preventing structure loss.

7. SWIFT EXIT: EVACUATION STUDY PLAN

Kelly Echeverria provided an update on ongoing efforts to improve evacuation planning, noting that earlier community feedback directly led to the creation of a widely recognized, multilingual evacuation video. She emphasized that the current effort is focused on being methodical and data-driven in updating evacuation plans, with strong reliance on public input through an interactive website where residents can identify concerns and trouble areas. She explained that the county has brought on multiple vendors and tools to support the effort, including fire and traffic modeling systems that simulate worst-case scenarios using real-world variables like weather, fuel conditions, and road networks. These tools will help officials better understand how fires may spread and how evacuations should be structured. Echeverria highlighted the development of detailed evacuation zones, built with input from community advisory boards, that align with property lines and natural or manmade boundaries to reduce confusion during emergencies. These zones are designed for internal use by emergency responders to improve decision-making and coordination during incidents. She also noted that the study incorporates additional factors such as large community events and population surges, ensuring evacuation plans reflect real-world conditions. Once modeling and analysis are complete, the findings will be used to update evacuation plans, procedures, and resource deployment strategies to improve safety and response effectiveness.

Jan Mortensen asked how to access Perimeter and Smart911. In response, staff explained that Perimeter is a public-facing website used to share real-time emergency information, while Smart911 is the county's alert system that residents can sign up for through ReadyWashoe. They noted that Smart911 allows residents to provide important details about household members, including medical or mobility needs, which helps emergency responders tailor alerts and assistance during evacuations. This system enables more targeted communication, especially for those who may need extra time or support to safely evacuate.

Katherine Yriarte raised concerns about challenges during recent fires, particularly the Davis Fire, where road closures prevented veterinary staff from reaching animals and delayed or blocked livestock evacuations. She noted that this led to dangerous situations, including people being forced to consider releasing horses, and asked whether there are plans or training to better coordinate livestock evacuations and avoid similar issues in the future. In response, staff acknowledged the issue and said it is being actively explored, including discussions with the state about adopting tools like a Colorado-based app that connects local residents with trailers and resources to assist with evacuations. They explained that current limitations stem from coordination and authorization requirements, where only certain trained entities are allowed to assist, which can slow response times. Staff expressed interest in improving coordination, incorporating stakeholder input, and potentially including these concerns in the broader evacuation study to develop better solutions moving forward.

Kevin Cook asked whether the evacuation modeling and simulation videos would be accessible to the public online. In response, staff said the models are not currently planned to be posted online due to the large number of scenarios being run, but they intend to compile and present selected examples to the community in meetings. They acknowledged the value of broader access and said they would consider making them available more widely if possible.

8. NV ENERGY GROUND FUELS

NV Energy representatives explained their Ground Fuels Program, which focuses on reducing wildfire risk around power infrastructure through vegetation management and fuel reduction. The program, established in 2019 following state legislation, works to clear vegetation along power line corridors and around poles to create fuel breaks and improve safety. They noted that their work is complex and varies depending on land ownership, including federal, state, and private lands, each with different regulations and permitting requirements. While NV Energy holds easements for power lines, they still must coordinate with landowners and comply with environmental and safety regulations, which can limit the scope of work. The program follows general wildfire safety guidelines, such as clearing vegetation around poles, but lacks strict state-mandated standards, relying instead on national best practices. Herbicide use is limited and cannot be applied broadly, which can allow vegetation like cheatgrass to return, requiring ongoing maintenance cycles every few years. Representatives emphasized that their work is ongoing and depends on community cooperation, encouraging residents to authorize access so crews can perform fuel reduction. They also highlighted that what residents are seeing locally is part of a maintenance phase, with crews revisiting previously treated areas to sustain wildfire mitigation efforts.

Kevin Cook raised concerns about herbicide use near wells and asked whether residents are informed about the types being applied. In response, staff explained that the program is developed in coordination with the Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF), where trained foresters

and herbicide specialists determine appropriate products and application methods for each project to ensure safety and compliance.

Larry Chesney emphasized that herbicide use around utility poles follows strict federal guidelines and is handled by highly trained, certified applicators, noting the expertise of state specialists in determining appropriate treatments. He clarified that participation is entirely voluntary—property owners can opt out or discuss alternatives and that contractors will explain exactly what is being applied. In response, NV Energy reinforced that the program is designed to be transparent and cooperative, working with property owners to address concerns, providing details on herbicide use, and ensure comfort with the process before any application occurs.

Chris Jones introduced himself as NV Energy's Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, highlighting his 30+ years in fire service and his role as one of a few decision-makers statewide on fire-related power operations. He explained that NV Energy follows established protocols when fires occur near electrical infrastructure, working closely with fire agencies to assess whether a fire is predictable and controllable. If needed, he has the authority to initiate emergency power shutoffs (de-energizations) to protect infrastructure and public safety. Jones noted that power can be shut off remotely and quickly restored in safe areas, and that these shutoffs are expected to increase due to evolving regulations and wildfire risks. He also emphasized coordination at incident command, support for vulnerable "Green Cross" customers who rely on electricity for medical needs, and NV Energy's ability to provide generators or relocation assistance. Additionally, he oversees vegetation management inspections to ensure compliance with safety standards.

George Boyce questioned the effectiveness of recent vegetation work, noting that while brush appeared to be masticated (ground up), the debris was left in place under power lines, potentially creating additional fire risk rather than reducing it. In response, staff acknowledged that proper treatment should include reducing and managing biomass to minimize fuel load, ideally leaving only low stubble. They encouraged residents to report concerns, explaining that quality control is part of the program and that crews will revisit and evaluate sites if standards are not met to ensure the work delivers the intended wildfire mitigation benefits. NV Energy clarified that mastication (grinding vegetation) is not intended to increase fire risk but to reduce it by breaking material down into smaller pieces. The goal is to keep debris under about four inches, so it stays in contact with the ground, decomposes more quickly, and helps slow fire spread rather than fuel it. Brett Taylor added that, in practice, crews typically remove only larger debris, while smaller, masticated material is left in place. This approach helps flatten fuel loads and reduce fire intensity, preventing rapid fire movement through larger, unprocessed vegetation.

Carolyn White asked about different types of power shutoffs, noting both intentional de-energizations during fires and outages caused by what she understood to be more sensitive system settings, such as "fast trip fire mode." In response, Chris Jones explained that these are separate safety measures. While planned de-energizations are used when fires threaten infrastructure, "fast trip fire mode" is triggered during elevated fire danger conditions based on weather, fuel moisture, and risk modeling. In this mode, any disturbance such as wind or a fault—causes the system to automatically shut off power to prevent potential ignition, and service is only restored after crews inspect the line. He added that some of these protocols are required by the Public Utilities Commission and are becoming more common as wildfire risk increases.

Kevin Cook asked about the typical line voltage for the local distribution system and whether transmission lines are present in the area. In response, staff explained that the local distribution

lines operate at roughly 34 kilovolts, which is relatively moderate, and confirmed that transmission lines are not located in that valley but are situated in a different nearby area.

9. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Casey McDonald provided a brief update noting there are currently no new development projects, but residents can view past and future proposals through the county's Neighborhood Development Hub. He shared that board and commission openings are expected soon, with applications opening in April, and encouraged interest in two available CAB alternate positions. He also addressed infrastructure issues, including internet service at the site, which is expected to improve with increased speeds, though options are limited by county security policies. Regarding road conditions at the regional shooting facility, McDonald relayed that the road is in poor shape and would require full reconstruction at a significant cost. Due to limited funding and competing priorities across the park system, only short-term measures—such as warning signage and evaluating interim fixes—are planned for now, though the project remains on the county's capital improvement list.

Larry Chesney expressed frustration over the long-term neglect of the road, noting it has not been maintained in over two decades despite being part of a public facility used by the community and regional agencies. He urged the county to take at least basic action, such as patching potholes, and indicated he plans to escalate the issue to county leadership. He also emphasized the importance of the regional shooting facility, which serves law enforcement across a wide area, arguing it should warrant better infrastructure investment.

10. CAB MEMBER/COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS

Jan Mortensen asked where to obtain additional wildfire evacuation checklists and whether they could be shared more broadly, such as through posting by staff. In response, Brett Taylor noted the checklists are available on the Living With Fire website and offered to provide more copies or print additional materials for distribution.

Carolyn White noted that the 2019 removal of the financial component from the area plan was intended as phase one of a two-phase process, but the anticipated full update has not occurred. She requested that planner Eric Young attend a future meeting to provide a status update, and staff agreed to follow up.

11. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT –

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT - The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.