WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT
BOARD MEETING DATE: *January 17, 2023*

DATE: Wednesday, January 11, 2023

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Cadence Matijevich, Government Affairs Liaison, Office of the County Manager
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THROUGH: Eric P. Brown, County Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion and approval of the 2023 Washoe County State Legislative Principles, including an update and direction to staff regarding the 82nd Session of the Nevada Legislature. The principles are meant to serve as a framework of guidance to staff, lobbyists and elected officials in representing the County before the Nevada Legislature and provide a means to advance and protect the County's interests on issues at the state level. Among other things, they address legislative, regulatory, administrative and fiscal impact issues that may arise during the legislative session. Approval of principles may include but is not necessarily limited to the following overarching categories: respect for governmental roles in delivering quality public service, economic strength and diversity, and effective communication. Manager's Office. (All Commission Districts) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to review and provide direction to staff regarding the 2023 Washoe County State Legislative Principles. These legislative principles are to be used by staff, lobbyists and elected officials in guiding their activities and actions while representing Washoe County before the Nevada Legislature.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Fiscal Sustainability, Economic Impacts, Vulnerable Populations, and Innovative Services

PREVIOUS ACTION

On August 16, 2022, the Board provided direction to staff regarding Washoe County's official Bill Draft Requests, including direction to submit Bill Draft Requests to the Legislative Counsel Bureau on the following topics:

- Authority for county recorders to take action to proactively remove discriminatory covenants from recorded documents within their counties.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

- To amend chapter 484D of Nevada Revised Statutes to expressly add certain county vehicles to the list of emergency and service vehicles allowed to display blue lights while operating.

BACKGROUND

The 82nd Session of the Nevada Legislature is scheduled to begin on Monday, February 6, 2023 and will last for 120 days. Historically, the Board of County Commissioners has approved legislative principles prior to the start of each regular session of the Nevada Legislature.

The 2023 Washoe County State Legislative Principles provide guidance to staff, lobbyists and elected officials in representing the County before the Nevada Legislature and provides a means to advance and protect the County's interests on issues at the state level. These guiding principles define boundaries of the program to address legislative, regulatory, administrative and fiscal impact issues that may arise during the legislative session while also providing flexibility so that the Office of the County Manager, elected officials and contracted legislative representatives may be proactive and respond quickly within the dynamic environment of Nevada's biennial legislative process. These principles are intended to support Washoe County's vision of being the social, economic and policy leadership force in Nevada and the western United States.

Washoe County's legislative interests include, but are not limited to the following:

- Taxation, land assessment, franchise fees, budget and other County revenue source issues;
- Public employment issues related to employee health care, worker's compensation, public employee retirement;
- Land use issues, regional planning issues, and issues related to annexation, public utilities, capital projects, transportation, natural resources, etc.;
- Various water issues including, regional water and flood control issues, water rights, water utility rates, consolidation of water services, etc.;
- Homeland security and emergency preparedness issues;
- Administration of elections ; and
- Social service issues, including child welfare, indigent health care, homeless services and programs, and public assistance programs.

Washoe County's 2023 State Legislative Principles are defined as:

Respect for Governmental Roles in Delivering Quality Public Service

- **Partners Providing Service to Our Shared Constituents**
  All governments in Nevada (State, County, Cities, School Districts, and Special Districts) are partners in providing consistent and reliable services to our shared constituents, and therefore all levels of government must be viable in order for our citizens to enjoy an outstanding quality of life. A great State requires strong, effective, mutually respectful government at all levels. Washoe County supports

collaborative efforts of service providers within the region and the state to provide the best service possible at the lowest possible cost to the constituents of Washoe County.

- **Focus on Outcomes**
  Services to citizens should be provided efficiently, should be effective, and must demonstrate measurable results. All governments should be held accountable for measurable outcomes and cost-effective performance, while at the same time be given flexibility to allow their elected leaders to decide how best to achieve those outcomes.

- **Local Determination**
  Statewide policy decisions should be made by State leaders; local policy decisions should be made by local leaders. Local governments must have the right to control their resources, and voters should have the right to decide whether those resources are sufficient or not. Local governments should have discretion on delivering State programs and services when funding is reduced or diverted by the State.

- **Local Decision-Making and Flexibility**
  Washoe County urges the preservation of local prerogatives over matters traditionally and best governed at the local level. State legislative policy should encourage local officials and citizens to solve local problems. Legislation should foster local flexibility and assist local government leaders and the citizens they represent in addressing problems in ways that best serve their community.

Economic Strength and Diversity

- **Support Economic Recovery and Development**
  Promote regional collaboration on economic development and support a coordinated regional response to the economic challenges and opportunities facing Northern Nevada.

- **Long Term, Sustainable Solutions**
  The economy and tax revenue base on which all governments in Nevada rely continues to undergo fundamental changes, particularly given commercial marketplace shifts and changes in consumer behaviors following the COVID-19 pandemic. Transferring service responsibilities or revenues from one government service provider to another will not responsibly and sustainable meet the needs of the citizens of Nevada and Washoe County. All governments need to be working together toward long-term solutions for service provision and equitable, stable funding for those services that does not come at the expense of another. Washoe County supports the concept of creating new revenue sources, but also strongly believes that evaluation of constraints on existing revenue sources is warranted.

- **Fiscal Responsibility**
  Washoe County supports local government fiscal responsibility and long-term financial planning, including retaining and expanding tools at the local level to

better manage budget, cash flow and allow for responsibly structured local revenue sources.

- **Unfunded Mandates**
  Washoe County believes the Nevada Legislature should not impose mandated functions, activities, or regulations on local governments without providing financial resources or means to meet the cost of carrying out these mandates.

Effective Communication

- **Representation**
  Washoe County is committed to working with the 2023 Legislature, community stakeholders and business partners to provide effective representation of Washoe County's legislative objectives. The Washoe County Legislative Team is readily available to assist legislative committees, individual legislators and legislative staff to provide timely and accurate responses to requests for information that will assist in the formation and deliberation of proposed legislation.

- **Cooperative Legislative Relations**
  Washoe County recognizes that local governments in the region have numerous areas of mutual interest, and that a cooperative and integrated approach to legislative relations best serves the interest of the residents of Washoe County. We will act with integrity when engaging with other governmental entities on legislative matters.

- **Legislative Updates**
  When the Nevada Legislature is convened, the Washoe County Legislative Team (including, as appropriate, the County's contract lobbyists) shall communicate at each regular Commission meeting, pursuant to a standing item, to provide information and, when necessary, obtain direction on various legislative issues. It is understood that the Washoe County Legislative Team will communicate the majority position and/or direction of the Commission when speaking with legislators, legislative staff and when making presentations at the Legislature.

- **Board Direction**
  Direction will be sought from the Commission regarding the objectives and intent of proposed legislation, as opposed to direction on specific bill language. This is necessary because of the fluidity of the legislative process. It also allows meaningful input by County lobbyists in drafting proposed bill language, including amendments to proposed legislation.

- **Adopting Board Legislative Position**
  When a legislative issue comes before the Commission for direction or action, the majority vote will be the official position of Washoe County. The Commissioners and staff agree not to communicate minority opinions to legislators or the Legislature. The Washoe County Legislative Team (including the County's contract lobbyists) may indicate, when asked, the identity of Commission dissenter(s). When communicating personal opinions on proposed legislation

Commissioners will be clear that they are communicating in a personal capacity and not on behalf of Washoe County. Lobbying staff (including the County's contract lobbyists) shall not present any opinion or position of a single Commissioner on any issue if there is any question as to whether the Commission as a whole shares the opinion or position.

- **Commission Legislative Liaison(s)**
  At their discretion, the Commission may name up to two Commissioners to serve as liaisons to the Washoe County Legislative Team to assist the team in the considering proposed legislation and the development of County positions on proposed legislation. At the direction of the Commission, the Washoe County Legislative Team will meet with the Commission Legislative Liaison(s) on a routine basis for the purpose of providing updates on proposed legislation and emerging legislative issues.

- **Special Meetings**
  When the Nevada Legislature is in session, the Commission may hold special meetings to allow for legislative updates and to provide direction to staff. Meetings between the Commission Legislative Liaison(s) and County lobbying staff shall not be considered Special Meetings.

- **Lobbyist Authority**
  The Washoe County Legislative Team (including the County's contract lobbyist) shall have authority to make decisions on matters known to be in the best interest of the policy making/management position of the County. Lobbying staff shall look to the Washoe County Strategic Plan for guidance on policy positions. Direction on issues shall be sought from and/or approved by the County Manager, or in his discretion, an Assistant County Manager, or department head or division manager. If there is a question regarding the impact of an issue, the County Manager shall, if there is time to do so, direct that the issue be brought to the next Commission meeting for discussion and possible direction from the Commission. However, when it is not possible to follow the above stated procedure due to the need for immediate decision-making, it is understood that the Washoe County Legislative Team (including the County's contract lobbyists) shall confer and collectively decide the appropriate position on behalf of the County. In certain circumstances it may be determined that it is in the best interest of the County to abstain from taking a position on proposed legislation.

- **Commission Participation at the Legislature**
  Commissioners may be called upon to appear before Legislative committees and/or meet with individual legislators, as necessary, when major issues are developing. Commissioners are requested to notify the County Manager (or Designated Acting Manager in his absence) of all contacts with legislators on behalf of County issues, in order to provide a cohesive and well-organized lobbying effort. To preserve the impact of their presence to issues of major importance, it is recommended that Commissioners not be seen on a regular basis at the legislature. More frequent involvement may dilute the impact or perceived importance of the Commissioner's presence at the legislature.

- **Appointed Boards: Authorization to Represent Washoe County**
  Members of a board, commission or task force appointed by the Commission or by the County Manager may appear before the Nevada Legislature, Committees of the Legislature (including subcommittees thereof), and/or meet with individual legislators, as representing the interests of Washoe County only if specifically authorized to do so by the Commission or the Washoe County Manager.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact as a result of this action

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners approve the 2023 Washoe County State Legislative Principles and provide direction to staff to operate in accordance therewith.

POSSIBLE MOTION

I move to approve the 2023 Washoe County State Legislative Principles and to direct staff to operate in accordance therewith.