WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: September 15, 2026

DATE: 08/24/2026

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager

THROUGH: Kate Thomas, County Manager

SUBJECT: Public Hearing: Second reading and possible adoption of an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) by removing provisions containing the metes and bounds descriptions for congested areas relating to the discharge of firearms; by revising provisions to require the congested area boundaries to be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners through resolution and depicted on congested area maps; and by revising provisions to require the congested area maps to be kept on file for public inspection at the Washoe County Clerk's Office and the Washoe County Office of the County Manager, and for digital versions to be made available through geographic information systems mapping; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto. (All Commission Districts) [For Possible Action]

SUMMARY

Staff is requesting that the Board of County Commissioners conduct a second reading and public hearing to adopt an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) by removing provisions containing the metes and bounds descriptions for congested areas relating to the discharge of firearms; by revising provisions to require the congested area boundaries to be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners through resolution and depicted on congested area maps; and by revising provisions to require the congested area maps to be kept on file for public inspection at the Washoe County Clerk’s Office and the Washoe County Office of the County Manager, with digital versions made available through geographic information systems mapping; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

The proposed ordinance is intended to modernize and clarify the process for establishing and communicating congested area boundaries, thereby improving public understanding and

enforcement of firearm discharge regulations in unincorporated Washoe County. The ordinance removes the legal descriptions of the congested area boundaries from the Washoe County Code (which requires 3 public meetings to amend); and instead, allows the Board to amend the boundaries via resolution by changing the congested area maps (which only requires one public meeting to amend). Thus, the ordinance will allow congested area boundaries to be amended in a more efficient manner, which is designed to address the challenges posed by population growth and changing land use patterns, ensuring that regulations remain effective and accessible to both the public and law enforcement. The requested action is consistent with the authority granted to the Board under Nevada Revised Statutes and reflects best practices for transparency and public accessibility.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On August 25, 2026, the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners introduced Bill Number 1959 and conducted the first reading of this ordinance, which amends Washoe County Code Chapter 50 by revising provisions related to the discharge of firearms.

On September 16, 2025, the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners approved a formal request from Assistant County Manager Dave Solaro to initiate amendments to Washoe County Code Chapter 50 regarding the delineation of congested areas for firearm discharge regulations. This request specifically sought Board direction to expand the congested shooting boundary south of Golden Eagle Regional Park.

BACKGROUND

The delineation of congested areas for the regulation of firearm discharge has historically relied on static legal descriptions, which, while precise at the time of adoption, have become increasingly misaligned with the realities of Washoe County's evolving land use and demographic patterns. The appropriateness of expanding or adjusting congested area boundaries is underscored by several interrelated factors. First, the county has experienced sustained population growth and urbanization, resulting in formerly rural or sparsely populated regions now containing significant residential development and increased public activity. This shift has heightened the potential for conflicts between lawful firearm use and public safety, particularly in areas where new subdivisions, schools, parks, and commercial centers have emerged adjacent to or within previously designated non-congested zones.

Additionally, advances in geographic information systems (GIS) technology now enable the County to more accurately and responsively reflect current land use conditions through map-based boundary delineation. This approach allows for timely updates in response to annexations, zoning changes, or the development of new community assets, ensuring that regulatory boundaries remain relevant and effective. The transition to a map-based system also facilitates greater public awareness and understanding of where firearm discharge restrictions apply, as residents and visitors can more easily access and interpret visual representations of congested areas compared to complex legal descriptions.

The expansion or adjustment of congested area boundaries is therefore justified not only by the need to address contemporary patterns of growth and land use, but also by the County's responsibility to proactively safeguard public safety in accordance with its statutory authority.

This approach supports the ongoing alignment of regulatory frameworks with the dynamic character of Washoe County's communities, while leveraging modern tools to enhance transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed ordinance is not anticipated to result in a material fiscal impact to Washoe County's General Fund. The transition from metes and bounds legal descriptions to map-based delineation of congested areas will primarily involve administrative updates to existing records and the maintenance of digital and physical maps, as required by the amended Washoe County Code Chapter 50. These activities are expected to be absorbed within the current operational budgets of the County Clerk's Office, the Office of the County Manager, and the Washoe Regional Mapping System, utilizing existing staff and resources.

No new appropriations or external funding sources are required for the implementation of the ordinance at this stage. Any incidental costs associated with the preparation, adoption, and public posting of updated congested area maps—including signage and digital mapping—are anticipated to be minimal and can be managed within existing departmental allocations. Should future amendments to congested area boundaries necessitate significant mapping or public notification efforts, such expenditures would be evaluated and addressed through the standard budgetary process.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Board conduct a second reading and hold a public hearing to adopt an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) by removing provisions containing the metes and bounds descriptions for congested areas relating to the discharge of firearms; by revising provisions to require the congested area boundaries to be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners through resolution and depicted on congested area maps; and by revising provisions to require the congested area maps to be kept on file for public inspection at the Washoe County Clerk's Office and the Washoe County Office of the County Manager, and for digital versions to be made available through geographic information systems mapping; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

POSSIBLE MOTION

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

"Move to adopt Ordinance Number [insert Ordinance Number assigned by the County Clerk], which is an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) by removing provisions containing the metes and bounds descriptions for congested areas relating to the discharge of firearms; by revising provisions to require the congested area boundaries to be adopted by the Board of County Commissioners through resolution and depicted on congested area maps; and by revising provisions to require the congested area maps to be kept on file for public inspection at the Washoe County Clerk's Office and the Washoe County Office of the County Manager, and for digital versions to be made available through geographic information systems mapping; and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto."