



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: September 16, 2025

DATE: August 28, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dave Solaro, Assistant County Manager

THROUGH: Jan Galassini, Washoe County Clerk on behalf of the Office of the County Manger.

SUBJECT: Approve a request to initiate proceedings to amend the Washoe County Code (Chapter 50 – Public Peace, Safety and Morals) to increase the buffer between housing and open space in the area south of Golden Eagle Regional Park due to housing development encroaching on open spaces; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance, pursuant to Washoe County Code Section 2.030 and 2.040. Manager. (All Commission Districts). FOR POSSIBLE ACTION

SUMMARY

Staff is requesting that the Board of County Commissioners consider the request to initiate proceedings to amend the Washoe County Code (Chapter 50 – Public Peace, Safety and Morals) to increase the buffer between housing and open space in the area south of Golden Eagle Regional Park due to housing development encroaching on open spaces; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance, pursuant to Washoe County Code Section 2.030 and 2.040.

This initiative aligns with the Washoe County Strategic Plan by supporting the County's commitment to balancing growth with the preservation of open space and ensuring the well-being of residents and visitors.

The action requested is the first step in a multi-stage process that will include ordinance drafting, public hearings, and final Board consideration, ensuring transparency and community engagement throughout.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Economic Impacts.

PREVIOUS ACTION

AGENDA ITEM # _____

On July 21, 2020, the Board approved a request to initiate proceedings to amend Washoe County Code Chapter 50, pursuant to a request by Commissioner Herman, to exempt APN 087-021-20 from the congested shooting boundary to allow legal target shooting. The ordinance did not receive a second reading and was not changed.

On July 10, 2018, the Board approved a request to initiate proceedings to amend Washoe County Code Chapter 50 to allow for limiting target shooting within Washoe County when conditions present a danger for wildland fire. This action was in response to concerns about public safety and fire risk in open space areas adjacent to residential development. The Board directed the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance, pursuant to Washoe County Code Sections 2.030 and 2.040. The ordinance did not receive a second reading and was not changed.

On July 28, 2015, the Board approved a request to initiate proceedings to amend Washoe County Code Chapter 50, pursuant to a request by Commissioner Berkgigler, to address public safety concerns related to the Firearm Congested Area Boundary, which had not been updated since 2002. The Board directed the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance, in accordance with Washoe County Code Sections 2.030 and 2.040.

BACKGROUND

The area south of Golden Eagle Regional Park has experienced significant residential growth in recent years, resulting in increased proximity between new housing developments and designated open space lands. This trend has raised concerns among local stakeholders regarding the preservation of open space, the management of land use conflicts, and the long-term sustainability of community character in the region. The encroachment of housing into open space areas has prompted calls for a reassessment of existing buffer requirements to better address the evolving needs of both residents and the environment.

Historically, Washoe County has managed the interface between residential development and open space through a combination of regulatory tools, including the establishment of minimum buffer zones, the dedication of common open space within subdivisions, and the implementation of open space management plans. These measures have been designed to protect natural resources, maintain recreational opportunities, and reduce risks associated with wildland-urban interface, such as wildfire hazards and habitat fragmentation. The County's approach has also included collaboration with regional partners, such as the City of Sparks, Tribal Communities, the US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, to ensure coordinated planning and stewardship of open space resources adjacent to urbanizing areas.

Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) provides the framework for addressing public safety and quality of life issues in areas where residential and open space uses intersect by defining the Congested Shooting area, where discharge of a firearm is prohibited.

Amendments to the County Code are governed by the procedures set forth in Washoe County Code Sections 2.030 and 2.040, which require that any proposed changes be initiated by a written request from an authorized official, placed on the Board of County Commissioners' agenda for consideration, and, if approved, submitted to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance. The Board's authority to amend the code is further supported by Nevada Revised Statutes, which delegate to counties the power to regulate land use and adopt measures necessary to protect public health, safety, and welfare.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of initiating County Code changes is limited to the standard administrative and legal review functions already budgeted within existing County operations. The preparation of proposed ordinances, including legal drafting and staff coordination, is a routine responsibility of the District Attorney's Office and the County Clerk, and does not require additional appropriations or create new ongoing costs for the County.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve a request to initiate proceedings to amend the Washoe County Code (Chapter 50 – Public Peace, Safety and Morals) to increase the buffer between housing and open space in the area south of Golden Eagle Regional Park due to housing development encroaching on open spaces; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance, pursuant to Washoe County Code Section 2.030 and 2.040.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with the staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: "Move to approve a request to initiate proceedings to amend the Washoe County Code (Chapter 50 – Public Peace, Safety and Morals) to increase the buffer between housing and open space in the area south of Golden Eagle Regional Park due to housing development encroaching on open spaces; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance, pursuant to Washoe County Code Section 2.030 and 2.040."