



Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board  
Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board held on April 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Gerlach Community Center.

## 1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION QUORUM

Present: Chair Russell Bierle, Vice Chair Kristin Evans, \*Schatzi Gambrell, and Carl Copek

Absent: Brandy Wilbur, Elizabeth Shoemaker

## 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## 3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Tammy Holt-Still indicated she was running for Washoe County Commissioner for District 5. She encouraged anyone with questions to contact her. She said she was a prior State employee and spoke about her time as an activist since the flooding in the North Valleys in 2017. She was running for the Commission seat because it was a necessary step to get things done.

**\*6:02 p.m. Member Gambrell arrived.**

Via Zoom, Mr. David Snelgrove, indicated that BRDR Properties planned to work on a special use permit associated with employee housing. He anticipated holding a neighborhood meeting on the matter in late May with the intention of submitting the request in June. Plans are still being finalized, and he anticipated attending the next Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board meeting once the application is submitted.

Mr. Rob Pierce announced via Zoom that he was also running for the District 5 seat on the County Commission. His priorities included smart, responsible growth, homelessness and housing accountability, public safety, mental health and human trafficking, fiscal responsibility, and lower taxes. He noted he sat on five different County boards and two for the airport. He urged residents to consider candidates' voting records and all aspects of them as candidates when making their vote.

## 4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF March 12, 2026

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Member Gambrell moved to approve the March 12, 2026, Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board minutes as written. Member Copek seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved on a 4-0 vote with Members Wilbur and Shoemaker absent.

## 5. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

### **Washoe County Sheriff's Office**

Deputy Jackson Cruz with the Washoe County Sheriff's Office (SO) indicated that he and Deputy Mike Stapledon participated in a medical training hosted by Royal Ambulance where they learned how to do a tracheostomy valve procedure. Regarding a question posed by Chair Bierle at the last Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board meeting, he stated the license plate reader on Aspen Street was never activated, and plans are in place to remove it. He noted that SO staff was still participating in vehicle recoveries and rescues, as well as aircraft assistance.

### **Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District**

Greg Nielsen with the Gerlach Volunteer Fire Department said the department also participated in the medical training. They will participate in additional training in May where they will receive their wildland firefighting certification.

Responding to Member Gambrell's question, Mr. Nielsen stated that no feedback was received yet on the dump, though they continue to follow up on the matter.

### **Royal Ambulance**

John Ray Hassan spoke via Zoom about the emergency medical services training day that took place jointly with Gerlach Fire and the SO. He appreciated that the agencies trained together because incidents in this area often required cooperation. He noted Royal Ambulance was now fully staffed, and they began using a new type 3 box ambulance on March 25 owned by Royal Ambulance, which was necessary given the significant mechanical issues the prior ambulance had and the age and space limitations of the backup ambulance. He indicated that the agency responded to 17 calls so far this year, made up of 12 ground transports and 5 treat-and-release incidents. Additionally, Gerlach staff now have full uniforms.

In response to Member Gambrell's question, Mr. Hassan said the self-lifting gurney resides in the back of the ambulance housed at the Washoe County yard. If the box is remounted on another chassis, the self-lifting gurney will go with it. The current ambulance has an auto-loading power lift which could not be moved without significant work. Noting that the gurney was purchased with funds raised locally, Member Gambrell thought it needed to remain here to be used by the people who paid for it. Mr. Hassan responded that he would provide Member Gambrell with contact information for the yard.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

## **6. ADOPTED AND PROPOSED COUNTY HOUSING INITIATIVES**

Planning Manager Kat Oakley conducted a PowerPoint presentation via Zoom and reviewed slides with the following titles: Background; Envision Washoe 2040; Overview of Changes; Accessory Dwelling Units; Multifamily Development; Missing-Middle Housing; Small Home and Lot Standards; Infill Development Standards; Mixed-Use (in progress); Housing Incentives; Applicability to High Desert Area; and Helpful Links.

Ms. Oakley stated that communities across Washoe County all expressed a need for more housing diversity and affordability, which the County has tried to address by removing barriers and providing incentives. She noted that the addition of guest quarters was most relevant to smaller, rural lots not on municipal sewer due to septic regulations. As such, kitchens are not

allowed in guest quarters.

Ms. Oakley noted that the goal of the changes made to turf and balcony requirements was to remove standards that resulted in costs without providing benefits. One requirement, as an example, resulted in large turf areas that became unusable. She said the goal of changes made to the open space standards was to ensure that space was usable. She emphasized that the addition of new housing types does not allow developers to increase existing densities; it only allows for different configurations of units.

Ms. Oakley pointed out that there has been a trend to build larger and larger houses, so the County strove to incentivize smaller lot development. All the initiatives she discussed to this point, including infill development, were already adopted by the County. Many of the areas targeted for infill development were developed prior to zoning regulations, though there were no areas in Empire that met the criteria for infill development.

Ms. Oakley indicated that the density incentive for senior housing was also adopted. The initiatives to provide incentives for small units and attainable housing were still in progress. She added that senior attainable housing was the only type for which incentives could be stacked. One last change was that public hearings would no longer be required for attainable housing projects since they would not need to go through special use or discretionary permit processes.

Chair Bierle inquired about the process that projects would need to follow to establish that they were developed under different setback standards. Ms. Oakley said the two considerations were location and lot size, and that process would apply to the Gerlach properties identified in the presentation. However, any request for a reduced setback would also need to demonstrate conformity with the general character of the area through whatever permitting process was required for the request. All the eligible lots are currently located along Gerlach's special modifier zone.

Member Copek believed these initiatives would help Gerlach address its housing problem. He wondered whether there were additional considerations because most of Gerlach was made up of manufactured housing. Ms. Oakley pointed out that the minimum square footage for manufactured housing was reduced at a state level from 1,200 square feet to 400 square feet, prompting the County to make a similar change. These initiatives would result in no other changes as long as there were not multiple manufactured homes on a single parcel, which would be considered a manufactured home park. Two manufactured homes on one parcel would be considered by the County to be two homes, while the Gerlach General Improvement District would consider them to be a duplex.

Noting that it could take three to five years to get anything built in this area, Member Gambrell wondered whether the County was considering ways to streamline the process. She brought up a situation where the Planning Commission (PC) picked three types of prefabricated homes that, if selected, resulted in approvals being fast-tracked. Ms. Oakley responded that changes made to accessory dwelling units (ADUs) would eliminate the need for a specific permitting process. She added that the building permit process can be completed entirely online. She said that the topic of inspections was not contemplated with these amendments, but there could be opportunities to revisit process elements in the future. The process of identifying pre-approved models to fast-track approval of building plans is still in progress, and she encouraged people to refer interested architects and designers to the County. That will all

exist within the ADU hub online.

Vice Chair Evans emphasized the importance of presentations like this at Gerlach CAB meetings. Noting that missing-middle housing projects would not have much application in Gerlach, she wondered which initiatives would provide the most benefit to the area. Ms. Oakley agreed with her that changes to ADUs could have a significant impact on Gerlach. She felt the cottage court concept could have a wider impact as well given its smaller cost. She also saw a potential opportunity in the downtown corridor with the addition of allowances from the High Desert modifiers. She confirmed that building permits would still be required for ADUs. Vice Chair Evans discussed the challenges associated with having inspections completed in Gerlach given its remote location.

Responding to queries from members of the public, Ms. Oakley stated that projects for income-restricted housing do not require public hearings pursuant to a State mandate. The County still requires an administrative review process, which not only includes public notice of all properties within 500 feet, but other agencies are given a chance to review and add conditions of approval. Ms. Tammy Holt-Still wanted an assurance that Gerlach would not experience the types of development-related issues that the North Valleys did unless that was what it wanted. Ms. Oakley stressed that state statute does not allow zoning regulations to be bypassed just so the public hearing process could also be bypassed.

In response to additional questions from the public, Ms. Oakley recognized the limitations of what could be done through modifying zoning regulations. She was unsure whether the County could help with asbestos removal, but other incentives and support exist that could help. She clarified that the five initiatives which have been adopted are available on the website, and the last four will be added once adopted. Those four have already been heard by the PC, and she anticipated decisions by the Board of County Commissioners by the end of June. She was unsure whether website platforms which host the County Code would be updated when the County updates its website.

Member Copek inquired about a condemnation process for derelict structures. Ms. Oakley offered to investigate that matter. Member Copek thought those properties constituted liabilities to the town. Chair Bierle said those derelict structures, if torn down and rebuilt, would no longer be able to use the older setback requirements, at least until these new code changes. Ms. Oakley replied that it would be likely that the derelict commercial buildings on the main street could still be eligible for reduced setbacks, and buildings of similar sizes could be constructed.

Additional questions were asked by members of the public. Ms. Oakley responded that an effort to coordinate County trips to Gerlach was not in the scope of these amendments, but the County has hired a new building official, so it might be worth restarting discussions on the matter. Her presentation, including helpful links, is available on the Gerlach GID's website.

## **7. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB & OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Candee Ramos, Media and Communications Program Manager, displayed the County's website and demonstrated how interested parties could locate their County Commissioner, make invocation and proclamation requests, and request that a Commissioner attend an event. She reviewed how residents can utilize the Community Input Portal, find upcoming Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) dates, and provide resident input. She hoped people would use the portal to get involved. She showed how people could locate both archived and upcoming

agendas.

Ms. Ramos indicated there were openings on the Washoe County Board of Equalization and the Library Board of Trustees, and anyone interested in those seats could apply online. She reviewed the Neighborhood Development Hub, which displays all upcoming neighborhood meetings for proposed development. She expected that a presentation would be given at the Gerlach/Empire CAB's May meeting about the Iveson Ranch RV park.

#### **8. REPORT ON REQUESTS FOR SERVICE FROM PREVIOUS CAB MEETINGS**

There were no reports.

#### **9. CAB MEMBER/COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS**

Member Gambrell requested that a Planning employee join the next Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Board meeting via Zoom. She echoed a suggestion made earlier in the meeting that County staff organize rural service days to coordinate all relevant appointments in the area. She expressed concern about a burn pile and asked that a Truckee Meadows Fire Protection Department representative attend the next meeting as well.

#### **10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no response to the call for public comment.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Member Copek moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Gambrell seconded the motion, which carried on a 4-0 vote with Members Wilbur and Shoemaker absent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.