



**Gerlach/Empire Citizens Advisory Board
Minutes of the regular meeting of the Gerlach/Empire Citizens Advisory
Board held on March 12, 2026, at 6:00 P.M.
at Gerlach Community Center, 410 Cottonwood, Gerlach, NV 89412**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION OF QUORUM –

Present – Carl Copek, Brandy Wilbur, Schatzi Gambrell, Kristy Evans, Russell Bierle

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, reintroduced herself to the community and emphasized her focus on bringing actionable, policy-based solutions rather than just identifying issues. She highlighted priorities including mental health support for seniors, people with disabilities and caregivers through mobile response teams and housing partnerships; improving infrastructure and public safety funding in rural areas, including creating a rural infrastructure fund and requiring impact assessments for development; and strengthening the role of community advisory boards by incorporating their input more directly into project decisions. She encouraged residents to review her detailed proposals and stay engaged.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF February 12, 2026

Schatzi Gamrell motioned to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2026, Gerlach/Empire CAB meeting. Brandy Wilbur seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

5. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES –

Washoe County Sheriff's Office

Deputy Jackson Crews reported recent calls for service, including stranded motorists in the Sand Pass area and an unsuccessful attempt by campers to exit Massacre Rim via High Rock. He also noted that deputies are monitoring unregistered and uninsured vehicles and encouraged compliance with vehicle requirements.

Russell Bierle asked about a license plate reader that was mistakenly installed on Aspen Way and was supposed to be removed but remains in place, seeking clarification on its status.

Gerlach Volunteer Firefighters

Greg Nielsen of the Gerlach Volunteer Fire Department noted that wildfire season is approaching and training opportunities with Truckee Meadows Fire are becoming limited, urging interested volunteers to act quickly to complete registration. He also shared positive feedback from recent joint training, highlighting improved coordination and growing confidence between the agencies. Greg Nielsen

shared that the Truckee Meadows Fire chief visited early in the process, spent time meeting with the team, listened to their needs and helped initiate actions to support their efforts.

Schatzi Gambrell suggested reaching potential volunteers outside of Gerlach, including nearby areas like Duck Flat. In response, Greg Nielsen agreed and welcomed broader recruitment from surrounding communities and ranches, noting the added value of local knowledge and experience.

Carl Copek raised concerns that the community burn pile is nearing capacity, making it difficult to manage and leaving little room for additional debris. With the wet season ending, he emphasized the urgency of coordinating a controlled burn within the next 30 to 40 days to prevent accumulation of burnable materials in town. He noted that local coordinators have been in regular contact with Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, but scheduling has been challenging due to their existing workload and the burn pile not being on an annual schedule. Copek stressed the importance of handling the situation through proper channels and formally brought the issue to the county's attention to help move coordination forward.

Russell Bierle asked how recent changes to federal priorities—resulting in key FEMA ICS training (100, 200, 700, 800) no longer being available online—would impact the volunteer application process for Truckee Meadows. Greg Nielsen responded that while he had not yet confirmed specifics, it is likely the process can adapt by allowing substitute training, such as wildland coursework, to demonstrate progress. He explained the training requirements are meant to ensure commitment before advancing applicants, and other steps in the process could still serve that purpose. Bierle noted that, in the meantime, the absence of those trainings may temporarily lower barriers for applicants, since those requirements cannot currently be completed. Nielsen agreed that was a reasonable assumption and said he would follow up with the volunteer coordinator to provide a definitive answer.

Royal Ambulance

JohnRey Hassan reported that EMS crews have responded to 20 incidents so far this year, resulting in nine treatment releases, eight transports and three cancellations. Staffing remains stable with a full team of paramedics and EMTs, and no issues are anticipated. He shared that new uniforms are being rolled out and a new ambulance is expected to arrive soon, with plans to place it into service after inspection and registration. The ambulance will serve as the primary unit while longer-term decisions are made about county-owned equipment. Hassan also highlighted an upcoming March 25 training in Gerlach, bringing together EMS staff, local fire personnel and law enforcement for a full day of coordinated public safety training ahead of the busy season. Overall, he noted operations are running smoothly.

Kristi Evans asked for clarification on whether the March 25 training is open to the public. In response, JohnRey Hassan confirmed the session is intended for public safety personnel only, but community members are welcome to stop by informally to say hello.

Schatzi Gambrell shared strong appreciation for the EMS team, recalling a November ambulance transport and praising the crew for their professionalism, speed and quality of care from pickup

through follow-up. She emphasized that the team is doing a fabulous job and wanted that recognition noted on the record.

Greg Nielsen reinforced the praise for EMS crews, noting that Schatzi's positive experience could apply to any of them, as his experience has been consistently excellent with every crew, every time.

6. WASHOE ARTRAIL UPDATE – GERLACH TRAILHEAD – COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

Gabrielle Enfield requested that the board designate a representative to serve on a new community advisory group focused on the Washoe Art Trail trailhead and Gateway Park. She explained the goal is to bring together local stakeholders—including residents, a Gerlach GGID trustee, and representatives from Burning Man and Friends of Black Rock High Rock—to ensure the community is involved in decision-making. The committee will provide recommendations to Washoe County and the Gerlach GID on art selection, park maintenance and operations, and overall park management, including considerations like trash, peak-use impacts during events such as Burning Man, and any needed restrictions.

Kristi Evans expressed support for community input on the proposed advisory group but asked whether the committee size would be limited, noting that different topics—such as art selection versus public safety or maintenance—might benefit from broader or varied representation. She suggested expanding participation, for example by including someone from the Gerlach Senior Center to better reflect the community. Gabrielle Enfield clarified that the committee's role is not to directly select art, but to recommend the process for art selection, along with guidance on park maintenance and management. She said the group would refine a proposed framework and provide recommendations to the county. Enfield was open to adding members, though she noted some hesitation about overrepresenting similar stakeholder groups, such as multiple wildland stewardship organizations.

Russell Bierle suggested that if only one stewardship organization is included on the committee, it should be the group with direct experience in local art projects, noting prior mural work in Gerlach. He also clarified there are two separate senior groups in the community and recommended including the independent Gerlach Senior Citizens nonprofit to better represent residents. Additionally, he proposed adding the Gerlach Volunteer Fire Department as a key local service organization. In response, Gabrielle Enfield explained her initial choice of representation was based on prior project involvement but agreed Bierle's points were valid. She expressed openness to adding community-based representatives, especially non-county groups like the senior nonprofit, and invited suggestions for contacts. However, she emphasized the need to keep the committee manageable in size and focused on its core purpose: providing recommendations on art selection processes, park maintenance and cleanup, and general park management, with final decisions ultimately resting with the property owner, the Gerlach GID.

Schatzi Gambrell motioned to nominate CAB member Russell Bierle to represent them for the Washoe ArtTrail Community Advisory Committee. Carl Copek seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING RECITATION OF THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Russell Bierle raised the question of whether to continue including the Pledge of Allegiance at GGID meetings, noting it is optional and that some attendees appear uncomfortable. Rather than making a

unilateral decision, he invited input from both the board and the community to gauge sentiment and determine collectively whether to keep or discontinue the practice.

Schatzi Gambrell expressed strong support for keeping the Pledge of Allegiance, noting her military background and personal connection. She described it as an honor and said removing it would be upsetting, emphasizing her desire for it to remain part of meetings.

Brandy Wilbur stated she agrees with the Pledge staying.

Carl Copek voiced strong support for keeping the Pledge of Allegiance, calling it an honor and a privilege. He emphasized that in Gerlach, local leadership and unity are reflected through respect for the flag, and that the community sets a positive example by focusing on local issues while upholding shared national values.

Schatzi Gambrell added that participation in the Pledge of Allegiance should remain voluntary, emphasizing that no one is required to stand or recite it if they are not comfortable doing so.

Greg Nielsen said he does not support changing policy based solely on unsubstantiated discomfort, emphasizing that concerns should be clearly expressed and justified. He noted that without hearing specific reasons, it's difficult to support removing the Pledge and encouraged those with concerns to speak up and explain them.

Carl Copek motioned to keep recitation of The Pledge of Allegiance agendaized at CAB meetings. Schatzi Gambrell seconded the motion. CAB Chair Bierle tabled the motion.

8. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUB& OTHER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Candee Ramos provided an overview of ways residents can get involved with Washoe County, highlighting tools like the Neighborhood Development Hub, community input portal, and email subscriptions for district updates. She explained how residents can participate in early-stage development discussions, submit ideas or concerns directly to the county, and stay informed about meetings and opportunities. Ramos emphasized that these tools help ensure community feedback is incorporated into projects and that residents receive follow-up on their input.

Russell Bierle asked about the application deadline for the next Washoe County Leadership Academy cohort. Candee Ramos responded that applications are not yet open and timelines may be updated as the program reviews feedback from past participants. She noted that applications typically open in the summer and encouraged participation, especially from rural communities like Gerlach.

Kristy Evans asked for clarification about the "Community Input Portal" and whether it serves as an alternative to calling 311 for submitting ideas like neighborhood improvements. Candee Ramos confirmed it is another option, explaining the portal is designed to provide multiple ways for residents to share feedback. She noted it can be used instead of phone calls or emails and allows users to submit ideas anonymously if they prefer.

9. REPORT ON REQUESTS FOR SERVICE FROM PREVIOUS CAB MEETINGS

There were no reports on requests for service.

10. COMMISSIONER AND BOARD MEMBER ITEMS

Schatzi Gambrell asked about the current status of at-large and alternate members for the board, specifically whether any alternates are officially in place. Candee Ramos explained that while there are five at-large seats and two alternate positions, there are currently no confirmed alternates. One individual had been invited but had not formally accepted or completed the process, leaving the position in limbo. As a result, there is at least one—and possibly two—open alternate spots available.

Carl Copek noted the passing of longtime community member Brooke Covey and expressed condolences to her partner, Brian, honoring her memory and wishing her peace.

11. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Katherine Yriarte, speaking in her role as a professional horse trainer and veterinary assistant, offered to provide hands-on training for local emergency responders on safely handling horses and other livestock during emergencies. She noted her experience with evacuations and working with untrained animals, emphasizing the risks of improper handling during crises. Yriarte said she and her husband would be willing to host a training session covering basic safety and first aid for animals to help improve emergency response in the community.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 pm.