

DRAFT MINUTES
Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission
May 27, 2026

The Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission met in a scheduled session on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, in the Washoe County Commission Chambers, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. The meeting was televised live and replayed on Washoe Channel at: <https://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/Communications/wctv-live.php>; also on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/WashoeCountyTV>.

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Chair Neal Jones, Vice Chair Sean Hill, Kevin Joell (Zoom), Chris Baker, Tim Dake, Tracy Kuczenski (Zoom), Jennifer Uvira (Zoom), Nicole Flangas, Miles Kinsler (Zoom)

Members Absent: None; Board of County Commissioners Liaison Mariluz Garcia not present.

Staff Present: Aaron Smith, Chaz Lehman, Stephanie D'Arcy, Davina Breese, Iryna Wilcox, Brandon Roman

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The pledge was recited by Commissioner Dake.

3. Public Comment

There was no response to the call for public comment.

4. Approval of the Draft Minutes for the Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Meeting of March 25, 2026, meeting.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Motion by Commissioner Baker to approve the March 25, 2026, Open Space and Regional Parks Commission minutes as written, seconded by Commissioner Flangas.

The motion passed with a vote of nine for, zero against.

5. Acknowledgement and recognition of Park Operations staff, Christopher Smyczek for his outstanding service and contributions to Washoe County.

District Park Manager Brian Harrower lauded Mr. Smyczek for his responsiveness, willingness to help coworkers, the educational opportunities he presented to the community, and his commitment. He presented Mr. Smyczek with a certificate.

6. Presentation by Nolan Yount on his Eagle Scout project at Davis Creek Regional Park.

Park Ranger Nick Steuer introduced Eagle Scout Nolan Yount, who conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Overview; Work Day 1; Demolition Day; Painting; Installation; Finished Product; and Why Davis.

Mr. Yount explained that the existing fire rings were very shallow and did a poor job of containing fires. The new rings were donated by a welding class at Truckee Meadows Community College, though work needed to be done on them before installation. He noted that the old rings were extracted on the first day of the project. Adults helped with the grinder to clean the metal before the rings were painted. He said he was proud to do the project at Davis Creek Regional Park, which was the site of his first Scout camp-out.

Chair Jones, Vice Chair Hill, and Commissioners Dake, Baker, and Flangas thanked Mr. Yount for his work given the importance of fire safety, stressing the value placed by the community on Davis Creek Park.

7. Presentation by Nevada Firearms Academy on the updates and operation of the Washoe County Regional Shooting Facility.

Parks Operations Superintendent Stephanie D'Arcy reminded the Commission that Washoe County entered into an agreement with Nevada Firearms Academy (NFA) in 2024 to operate and manage the facility. This partnership allows the County to offer additional services beyond what they are able to do alone. He conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles or descriptions: We are Nevada Firearms Academy; Since we took over operations; We are NFA; Hours of Operation; RSF Improvements; Community Involvement; photos; Goals; and What the community is saying now.

Scott Catron with NFA mentioned he was an Eagle Scout who cut the ribbon at the shooting range with his father in the 1980s. He noted that many firearms groups supported NFA's endeavor to operate the facility, and many of the concerns about this partnership did not come to fruition. The Single Action Shooters and Reno Rod and Gun Club are among the groups who regularly use the range, and events at the range were either held or will be sponsored by SHOOT Sig, Glock, Bergara, Barrett, Tactical Games, and Sheep Show.

Mr. Catron indicated that the range initially offered 15 steel targets, and now there are 47 steels to help people train. Anyone who finds and hits a specific target gets entered into a raffle to win a rifle or free range time. He noted that a community member donated the equipment to throw clays for a five-stand shotgun service, and Sheep Show has also offered to donate one stand. He said the cost to use the range increased for adults but went down for children. Educating children was one of NFA's areas of focus, as they have five different programs geared towards kids from ages 3 to 18. Many free classes are also offered to the community, and information about them is available on the group's website. He hoped to offer the opportunity for scouts to earn 14 or 15 merit badges at the property, helping kids who cannot afford to go to camps that are far away. He described the working relationships the NFA has with various local companies and organizations and some of the benefits that people can receive for patronizing those businesses.

Mr. Catron spoke about the plan to build berms that would protect shooters at bays 4 through 12 from shooters on the thousand-yard gallery. NFA is working with members of the community to transport dirt to the area to allow for more opportunities for training and development. He shared his goal to make more regular presentations to the Commission and thanked everyone for their support.

Chair Jones wondered whether local vendors took issue with NFA offering free classes. Mr. Catron replied that these classes were not offered elsewhere, and they were recommended by the U.S. Concealed Carry Association to be offered for free. Responding to the Chair's follow-up query, he provided a description of five-stand shooting.

Citing his desire to increase use of the facility, Commissioner Baker asked about NFA's outreach efforts. Mr. Catron stated there were issues with the facility before NFA took it over, and they are trying to overcome some reputational concerns. They offer free classes at the range, along with voter registration. Many of the events they hold and giveaways like free range time are intended to get people to come to the facility, though he was open to other ideas. He noted they have a strong social media presence, and most of their classes are taken by at least one individual court-ordered to do so because they were caught shooting in illegal areas.

Commissioner Flangas offered to connect Mr. Catron with the organizers of an upcoming archery event in Tahoe. Mr. Catron spoke about an employee who used to be the archery instructor at the University of Nevada, Reno, but he recognized the challenges of shooting arrows in the wind. He hoped to expand the facility's archery offerings once they can build more berms.

8. Presentation, discussion, and recommendation to approve the revised Parkland Easement Policy, to be effective immediately.

Park Planner Faye-Marie Pekar conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Overview; Background & Policy History; Goals of Revised Policy; Parkland Easement Policy Update; Application and Review Improvements; Annual Rent & Long-Term Stewardship; Application and Review Improvements; Benefits of Revised Policy; and Parkland Easement Policy Update.

Ms. Pekar highlighted that much of the property received by Washoe County in the past was Land-Water Conservation Fund constricted, and some Bureau of Land Management areas had patents that would limit what could happen on those properties to outdoor use only. Additional review processes outside of County jurisdiction may need to occur. She noted the old fixed application fee was \$100, but they would be moving to an adopted fee schedule. Having a flat rate associated with annual rents, she continued, would eliminate the need for case-by-case negotiations. With respect to the suggested motion, she said the 2012 Parkland Easement Policy contained language about compensation and mitigation which she wanted to carry over to the new policy.

Chair Jones expressed support for the County's initiative to keep its rules and regulations up to speed. He remarked that most lawsuits are filed over easements, not boundaries.

Responding to Vice Chair Hill's questions about easements, Ms. Pekar indicated that most easement requests received by the County were for utilities, primarily underground. Access easements were also occasionally sought, though they were rarely approved because they needed to provide public benefit. She explained that leases were fixed contracts that could be renegotiated, while easements are meant to be in effect in perpetuity. She said the proposed annual rent fee was comparable to the ones implemented by adjacent land managers; rent would be either 3 percent of the appraised value or a minimum of \$200. Staff gets an appraisal on most easement requests, and that value is included in staff reports. She provided the example of a gas main through Sierra Sage Golf Course as one which received an appraised value of \$12,000, and if that were done today, rent would cost 3 percent of that. Applicants are allowed to select the appraiser from a list of approved appraisers provided by the County; if one is not selected, appraisers are chosen in list order.

Commissioner Flangas inquired about the cost for appraisals. Ms. Pekar replied that the preliminary title report happens when the applicant is not in escrow, and it is intended to give the value of the land. That cost ranges from \$1,500 and \$2,000 and, per the compensation and mitigation language mentioned earlier, it is to be borne by the applicant. The five-year changes in value are based off the U.S. Housing Index, and if that is not a usable figure, staff uses another cost index within the policy. She reiterated that the minimum rent is \$200 or 3 percent of the appraised value, and that language should be included in the policy.

Commissioner Baker wondered what happened to the revenue generated from rent. Ms. Pekar said the revenue did not go into the General Fund; it went into a general obligation fund with the Parks Department. The revenues stay with whatever park the fee is generated through, and if there were no need in that park, they would stay within that park district. Staff could also request that the fees be used elsewhere.

Commissioner Dake thought the new policy would provide the Commission with guidance for future decisions.

Chair Jones pointed out that non-use does not equal abandonment, and he asked whether abandonments needed to be in writing. Ms. Pekar responded that abandonments are determined at the Board of County Commissioner (BCC) level, and the result is a recorded document showing that the easement has been relinquished. This is specific to parkland easements, not necessarily utility easements. Operations Division Director Aaron Smith added that any agreement the County enters into must be approved by the BCC, and parkland easement agreements would contain language explaining how they would need to be abandoned, which could be done without BCC approval.

Commissioner Flangas asked whether the provision about a \$200 minimum would need to be included in any motion to approve the policy. Deputy District Attorney Chaz Lehman said that could be included in the motion.

Commissioner Kinsler wondered what would happen to the equipment in or above the ground should the easement be abandoned. Mr. Smith replied that those would be abandoned in place, though there have not been too many of those requests. It is highly cost prohibitive to dig the

equipment out, though staff was open to recommendations from the Commission. Ms. Pekar added that reclamation plans are required as part of the application process. Commissioner Baker thought that underground equipment would likely not be a problem, but things like overhead power lines could be unsightly and present negative impacts and safety concerns to the community.

Responding to a follow-up question about the failure to follow a reclamation plan after abandonment, Ms. Pekar explained that typically bond and reclamation plans are included with permits, but abandonments are not common with parkland easements, which are intended to live in perpetuity. Mr. Smith mentioned that there are construction agreements wherein the developer agrees to do the reclamation and restore the property.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Motion by Commissioner Flangas to approve the revised Parkland Easement Policy, including the Compensation and Mitigation section of the 2012 Easement Policy, and to allow staff to make an amendment under the Annual Rent section to include a \$200 minimum, seconded by Vice Chair Hill.

The motion passed with a vote of nine for, zero against.

9. Update on PROS Consulting's work to develop a Service Plan for the possible creation of a Park District.

Operations Division Director Aaron Smith provided a brief historical summary of the item, noting that while population growth was at 14 percent per year, park attendance increased by 66 percent. Each citizen contributes \$21.28 per year to park lands in Washoe County. A recent study showed that each dollar invested in parks and recreation yields \$3 in local economic benefit. As such, consideration is being given into how services are being delivered regionally.

Mr. Smith said results of the parks level service analysis can be found online, and there were opportunities to expand the parkland services desired by the community. The study also showed strong public support for more consistent services, as well as equitable access to parks. He reviewed statistics about respondents' thoughts on the importance of parks to quality of life, the consistency of park services between jurisdictions, and their supportiveness of a consolidated parks district.

Mr. Smith indicated that developing a service plan, including governance and funding models, would be one of the next steps, along with analyzing district boundaries, planning for staffing and asset transition, and preparing for statutory service plan requirements. He expected that the service plan would be delivered in November at the latest.

Chair Jones opined that deed restrictions on some of the parks might slow down the process, and leases might be more advantageous than fee transfers. Vice Chair Hill wanted requested copies of the survey results for when he speaks to members of the community. Mr. Smith responded that people can go to ourparksnv.org, the landing page for potential consolidation. He committed to providing links to the population figures he shared.

10. Parks Reports

Parks Operations Superintendent Stephanie D'Arcy noted that all three of the County's aquatics facilities were opened by Memorial Day for the first time in years, and she praised those who were instrumental in getting them open. She reviewed the materials included in the agenda packet for this item, highlighting the Lazy 5 Regional Park Master Plan update and the 21st Lazy 5 Summer Music Series. She announced that all five of Davis Creek Regional Park's existing electrical feeders were tested on March 16, and a report was provided to the insurance company for review. It was agreed that three of the five feeders needed to be replaced, those that serve the amphitheater, the wellhead pump, and the residential area. Power to the water system will be regained once these are replaced, which would need to happen before the campground could reopen. She did not have a date for when that would occur, but she would update the Commission.

Ms. D'Arcy remarked that a presentation on the fuel mitigation process and its effects on migratory birds will be added to July's Open Space and Regional Parks Commission meeting agenda, as will a budget presentation.

11. Director's Report to include updates on Board of County Commissioners actions, future meeting locations/Commissioner field trips, community sponsorship requests, department updates, and community partnerships.

Operations Division Director Aaron Smith indicated that Washoe County received an \$18,500 donation for Rancho San Rafael Regional Park from the Paul and Gwen Leonard Charitable Foundation. The Board of County Commissions will consider a purchase and sale agreement next month for a piece of land to serve as a trailhead for the Swan Lake Nature Study Area.

12. Commissioner Request for future agenda items

There were none.

13. Public Comment

There was no response to the call for public comment.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Derek Sonderfan, Independent Contractor

Chair Neal Jones