

**COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY BOARD  
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

MONDAY

9:00 A.M.

MARCH 16, 2016

PRESENT:

**Mike Clark, Chair**  
**Alexis Hill, Vice Chair**  
**Joe Rodriguez, Member**  
**Brandi Anderson, Member**

ABSENT:

**Ed Lawson, Member**  
**Kathleen Taylor, Member**

**Jennifer McCauley, Office Specialist**  
**Herb Kaplan, Deputy District Attorney**

The Community Homelessness Advisory Board convened at 9:00 a.m. in the Washoe County Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country, Office Specialist Jennifer McCauley called roll, and the Board conducted the following business:

**26-003C      AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.**

Ms. Kimberly Koschmann provided a document to the clerk, copies of which were distributed to the Board. She brought up a written statement she turned in at a previous Board of County Commissioners meeting regarding Grant Denton of the Karma Box Project, who signed off on the volunteer hours for someone convicted of domestic violence without them participating in the cleanup event. She wanted the Board to look into other domestic violence offenders whose community service hours were improperly approved. She spoke about crimes committed by Karma Box employees, adding that many victims do not report them out of fear of losing the resources on which they depend. She thought placing vulnerable populations under Mr. Denton's authority exposed countless people to harm. She wanted contracts with Karma Box to be suspended and an investigation into the agency conducted.

Ms. Emma Doty expressed concern at the lack of resources this Board makes available to her clients. She noted the Nevada Cares Campus is always full. She felt this Board should have binding authority, something she felt could be arranged. She urged each Board member to take their role seriously and volunteer their time to work one-on-one with the homeless population.

Mr. Paul White with Education Crusade stated he has worked with homeless populations since 1973, and he attributed the County's homeless problem to a lack of

humility to admit that the homeless program has been a failure. He thought the subcontractors who partnered with the County were unable to accomplish anything other than enriching themselves. He wanted all contracts for services at the Cares Campus to be terminated and his organization be allowed to make a presentation explaining how to run a successful homeless program in the community.

Ms. Pam Darr suggested that the money given to nonprofit organizations be more transparently accounted for, and the goals of the organizations should be to prevent growth in the homeless population. She requested an agenda item to discuss a plan to address homeless individuals who were coming from other counties, states, and countries without depleting the resources for homeless Washoe County residents. She did not want the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB) to disband, but she wanted more transparency and clearer goals about how to reduce homelessness.

Mr. Drew Ribar, a candidate for Nevada Assembly District 40, spoke about his youth on 4th Street. He felt that Mr. Denton and Karma Box were a symptom of a bigger problem of waste and abuse. He was unsure where the money allocated for the Cares Campus went. He expressed concern that the County's nonprofit partners are not accountable to the public, so they can get richer while the homeless population continues to suffer. He said funds have been diverted from infrastructure projects to pay nonprofit organizations. If elected, he indicated he would submit a bill draft request requiring that all government monies given to nonprofit organizations be subject to public records requests as a way of keeping those agencies accountable.

Ms. Melany Denny requested that the Board work with a broader group of constituents on a plan to address the root causes of housing affordability. The solution to homelessness is providing people with places to live, and local government would be critical to success. She remarked that robust reliance transportation infrastructure would ensure that people do not need cars to get to work, and universal healthcare would prevent people from becoming homeless due to illness or disability. She wanted the quality of life for people in each agency's jurisdiction to be improved. She listed different tools that could be used to help solve the problem, including the use of land banks, zoning changes, density incentives, impact fee reductions, and property tax waivers. A system was needed to support people and meet everyone's needs.

Ms. Virginia Wiggins stated she has proof of felonies committed against her by the Volunteers of America (VOA). She noted she gave up the housing she once had to take care of her father. She requested a full audit of the VOA and where they potentially breached their contract with the County. She said the Board needed to ensure the VOA is not engaging in unlawful behavior as a way of making more money. She spoke about her health issues, her plan to vote for people who will help the situation, complaints she has raised in the past about people with lice not being reported, and defamation and forgery committed by the VOA.

Pastor David Nyberg of St. Paul's United Methodist Church expressed appreciation that the three jurisdictions have taken the problem of homelessness seriously.

He told a story about an individual with serious health conditions who came to his church in February. Though his program received a grant in February, it does not have the money to help every individual who needs it. He mentioned that three other men over 70 have also come to his program, and he hoped there were people in chambers that could help them. He recognized that some concerns need to be addressed, but the issue of homelessness is not being ignored, and there has been improvement. Chair Clark directed staff to have someone reach out to Mr. Nyberg.

Ms. Trisha Creedon wondered whether the Board members watched *A City in Crisis*, a documentary she recommended, and whether they were aware of the way homeless citizens were treated. She requested that homeless sweeps stop. She expressed frustration about the condition at the Cares Campus and that homeless people were being cleared just to keep them out of view of tourists at the casinos. She did not believe anyone should be homeless when there were abandoned buildings downtown. She wanted the Board to remain intact and meet every month, and she felt members should be able to reply to public commenters directly.

Mr. Matthew Wilkie stated the homelessness crisis in the region is one of the worst of all time, and he described the difficulty he had in obtaining a copy of the CHAB meeting agenda. He thought the desire to disband the CHAB was tone-deaf, as the Board was one of the only regional bodies coordinating a response to homelessness. He said residents were paying attention to who was trying to solve the crisis and who wanted it to just disappear. He thought the Board should be expanded with a seat for someone who has lived homeless experience. He told a story of a person who was taken to the Cares Campus as an alternative to jail, which he felt was unacceptable. He thought more than six spots should be available for the Save Parking program. He opposed dissolving the Board.

Mr. Steven Markley spoke about the importance of the CHAB giving a voice to those living with homelessness during a time when funding for services was being slashed; it was critical to let those individuals know their voices matter. He said the Cares Campus was part of the solution, but more than one facility is needed, especially for women. He said women on the street face greater challenges than men, and some people do not want to take part in a system that would force them to live with someone with a history of sexual assault. He advocated for investing in community outreach programs full of people with lived experiences trying to help others.

Ms. Kelsey Owens stated Board members are supposed to lead the homelessness effort with their expertise and asked them whether they knew any of their unhoused neighbors. She said she had relatives who were homeless and did not feel represented by the CHAB members. While she felt the Board was ineffective, she thought it could look at community members already doing good work in the community without government funding. She indicated that the City's solution to the problem is always law enforcement. Children, veterans, working elders, and abuse victims were all becoming homeless, but the Board did not care. However, it was important to allow them to speak to the Board during meetings. She listed some of the agencies doing work for the homeless and requested that someone with lived experiences be appointed to the Board.

Mr. Brian Wadsworth, member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and candidate for the Board of County Commissioners, hoped the CHAB would not be dissolved, saying it should be expanded. He thought homelessness was an important topic in Washoe County, and everyone wanted solutions. He agreed that accountability and full transparency were essential for service agencies that receive public funding. He spoke about an opportunity he had to speak to Cares Campus participants and tour the CrossRoads facility. He thought humanity needed to be a focus when discussing homelessness, the immigrant population, and members of the LGBT community, all of whom deserve respect.

Mr. Christian Brown noted the two biggest proponents to disband the CHAB were not present. He listed things necessary to reducing homelessness, including better care facilities, more housing, good public transportation, and trained community workers. He wondered whether reallocating some of the police budget to improving community care would address the root causes of homelessness. He worried about the aging generation's ability to care for themselves. The CHAB should not be dissolved, he opined, and it should hold regular meetings at times more suitable for people to attend.

Chair Clark agreed with the suggestion to hold meetings at different times to allow more people to attend. Meetings should be held monthly for the first six months, he thought, then changed to semi-monthly. He emphasized the importance of hearing the perspectives of people with lived homeless experience. He discussed his goal to interview people on the street and share their experiences. He also suggested that staff add an agenda item earlier on CHAB agendas for Board member comments.

**26-004C**      **AGENDA ITEM 4** Approval of the minutes of the December 2, 2025, Community Homeless Advisory Board meeting.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Member Rodriguez, seconded by Member Anderson, which motion duly carried on a 4-0 vote with Members Lawson and Taylor absent, it was ordered that the minutes of the December 2, 2025, Community Homeless Advisory Board be approved as written.

**26-005C**      **AGENDA ITEM 5** Discussion and possible action to make a recommendation to each of the governing bodies, including the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners, the Reno City Council, and the Sparks City Council, to dissolve the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB).

Vice Chair Hill asked for clarification about the purview of the individual governing bodies with respect to the CHAB. Deputy District Attorney Herb Kaplan said the CHAB could be dissolved whether or not there was a recommendation from the Board itself. While the CHAB did not need to make a recommendation, all three governing agencies would need to vote if the Board recommended dissolution. Chair Clark noted that the two members who previously expressed interest in dissolution were not present.

Member Rodriguez indicated that he was an alternate to the CHAB, filling in for Member Dian VanderWell, and that Member Lawson was ill. He expressed support for the CHAB, which he described as important regionally. He said that the money invested by the City of Sparks into homelessness was important as well, and elected officials should work together on solutions. He wanted the CHAB to continue and hoped to take on a more important role with the Board. If the Board was inefficient, he felt, current sitting members should explore changing the CHAB's mission regarding housing support.

Member Anderson thought it was less important that the Board's actions be binding than that they identify opportunities to improve services and the way they care for the community. She felt the Board should continue as long as there are community members who need help. She pledged the City of Reno's participation and said they were open to potentially restructuring the Board to include members who are not elected officials. She thanked the members of the community who continue to speak during these meetings. She expressed frustration that the area's homeless program was considered a failure when many individuals were receiving valuable services.

Chair Clark expressed support for the CHAB, saying meetings were where elected officials could hear about the community's experiences directly from them.

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Member Rodriguez, seconded by Member Anderson, which motion duly carried on a 4-0 vote with Members Lawson and Taylor absent, it was ordered that the Community Homelessness Advisory Board not be dissolved.

**26-006C**     **AGENDA ITEM 6** Discussion and possible action to make a recommendation to each of the governing bodies, including the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners, the Reno City Council, and the Sparks City Council, to adopt new resolutions to modify respectively Resolution No. R18-017, Resolution No. 8499, and Resolution No. 3330, to: A. Provide for additional members of the Community Homeless Advisory Board (CHAB); and/or B. Rename the Community Homeless Advisory Board to the Community Unhoused Advisory Board.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

Chair Clark said one of the goals of this item was to discuss the possible addition of members to the CHAB, particularly those with lived homeless experiences. He was unsure how many would be added, but he wanted to know that the members were open to the idea of allowing private citizens on the Board.

Deputy District Attorney Herb Kaplan explained that each governing body would need to review its own resolution about the constitution of the CHAB. He advised the members that their potential motion should include specifically what the CHAB wants

the governing bodies to approve. Chair Clark reiterated his desire for the CHAB to recommend to the municipalities that private citizens be added to the CHAB as members.

Member Anderson thought the Reno City Council might be able to approve this idea more easily if the CHAB shared the goals it hoped to achieve by allowing citizens on the Board, or whether a subcommittee would be more effective. Chair Clark thought there would be value in having people with lived experience advise the other Board members about their lives, fears, and potential ways to improve their ways of life.

Member Rodriguez agreed both with the Chair's goal of giving the people a greater voice and with Member Anderson's suggestion that changes to the CHAB should be tied to specific goals. He spoke about some of the challenges faced by City of Sparks' boards and committees in having quorums during meetings where new volunteers were allowed on the boards. He expressed support for the concept but wanted it to be done in concert with goals and objectives so all new members knew what the Board wanted.

Vice Chair Hill asked about the Chair's vision. Chair Clark clarified that he wanted CHAB members to contemplate whether it wanted each jurisdiction to consider changes to their resolutions giving private citizens the ability to sit on the CHAB as non-voting members to share their experiences.

Member Anderson committed to sharing this discussion with the Reno City Manager to determine what sort of agenda item can be scheduled for Council discussion. It is possible, she continued, that the topic could be folded into discussions about potential legislative changes the City wants to support. Member Rodriguez committed to doing the same at the City of Sparks. Chair Clark indicated he would present the idea of having people with lived experiences on the CHAB to the Board of County Commissioners.

Mr. Kaplan noted that all three jurisdictions needed to work in concert about any changes to the CHAB. He observed that specifics, such as the number of private citizen Board members and whether they should be able to vote, still needed to be determined. It was decided to continue the agenda item.

**26-007C**      **AGENDA ITEM 7** Presentation and overview of the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality's (RISE) Outreach: Care, Cost, and Community Impact.

Benjamin Castro, Executive Director of the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality (RISE), conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed a slide entitled Who We Are. He noted that his organization's audited financial statements can be found on its website.

Mary Charles, CrossRoads Expansion Program Manager, continued the presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Who We Are; Why RISE's Model Works; What Was Invested; Scale of Engagement; Housing Outcomes; Stabilization Outcomes; and Family, Community, and Long-Term Stability.

Mr. Castro explained that RISE worked throughout all of Reno, except the Business Improvement District. He concluded the reservation by reviewing slides entitled Expenses; Cost Comparison: Outreach vs Crisis; and The Bottom Line.

Mr. Castro pointed out that camp relocations, or sweeps, were accounted for differently than outreach by law enforcement agencies. He said 90 percent of RISE's employees were people with lived experiences, and he has five certified peer recovery specialist supervisors to help them from potentially backsliding. In response to follow-up questions, he reiterated that the cost of law enforcement outreach was not included in his estimated cost for sweeps. He explained how the costs for each of RISE's outreach elements were calculated.

**26-008C**      **AGENDA ITEM 8** Presentation and of the City of Reno's Clean and Safe Team, including outreach, operations, and coordination.

Cynthia Esparza, Director of Community Engagement and Services with the City of Reno, conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Clean & Safe; Regional Roles; FY25 Homeless Fiscal Impacts; Clean and Safe Team; Clean and Safe Team Operations; Public Spaces; FY25 Outreach Outcomes; FY25 Maintenance Overview; Year-Over-Year Service Request Overview; City Walks Team; and FY25 City Walks Outcomes.

Ms. Esparza stated the Clean and Safe team (CAS) not only addressed homeless encampments in public spaces, but they also tried to connect people with housing options and services. She recognized that grant funding for homeless services will likely decrease moving forward, and all remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were exhausted in the fall. With respect to encampments, CAS tries to respond thoughtfully while supporting public spaces by addressing fire hazards, waste accumulation, environmental impacts, and safety risks. She said restoration of areas helps prevent long-term environmental damage and improves neighborhood conditions.

Ms. Esparza noted that CAS no longer has funding for their outreach contracts since ARPA funds were exhausted, though the City's outreach coordinator continues to work with community partners and nonprofit organizations. She said each dot on the City Walks Team map represents an outstanding service request. The City remains committed to maintaining safe public spaces while supporting efforts to connect individuals to services and housing opportunities.

Member Rodriguez inquired about minors. Ms. Esparza responded that the City works closely with Eddy House, who they contact whenever they come across minors during a cleanup event.

Member Anderson wondered what happened with the documentation collected during sweeps. Ms. Esparza replied that cleanups are noticed to all residents, and anyone looking to collect their property can contact Reno Direct who will put them in contact with CAS. Property is held for 90 days per the law.

**26-009C**      **AGENDA ITEM 9** Presentation and overview of street outreach efforts by the Washoe County Homeless Outreach Proactive Engagement (HOPE) Team, including its successes and challenges.

Sergeant Kellie Wright with the HOPE Team conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles or descriptions: Who We Are; photos; 2025 By the Numbers; Amazing Partnerships; 2026 Goals; and H.O.P.E. Clean Path Initiative. She said the HOPE Team focuses on proactive outreach, crisis intervention, mental health support, trauma-informed care, and encampment management.

Deputy Kourtney Lusby continued the presentation and reviewed the following slides: Why Clean Path; What Participants Receive; Participant Expectations; Accountability with Compassion; Rollout Plan; How the Public Can Report & Stay Informed; How YOU Can Help; and Contact Us. She indicated that the Clean Path Team plans to help 8 to 10 participants weekly, and they will provide quarterly metrics to their collaborative partners.

Responding to Board member questions, Sgt. Wright stated the HOPE program launched in 2021, but it has really taken off over the last two years with the involvement of the Human Services Agency (HSA). Now, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) is actively putting people into permanent housing. She spoke about attending two different Larson Institute meetings, and she expressed excitement about that program.

Sgt. Wright said the goal was for the jurisdiction-specific teams to get on the same page, and the WCSO is collaborating with the City of Sparks' HOPE Team to get funding for HSA workers to help them as well. The WCSO is also in discussions with the CAS team to figure out how best to work together.

Vice Chair Hill stated the biggest problem was a lack of housing. She expressed interest in joining the HOPE Team on a ride-along. She was glad that there was a focus on helping people on their housing journeys and not simply on enforcement. She inquired about the ordinance passed by the County regarding homelessness. Deputy Lusby said only one person has been cited under the no-camping ordinance, and that was done as a way of forcing resources on the individual. The only arrests that have taken place were on felony warrants. The gentleman who was cited currently lives on private property, and the HOPE Team is still trying to get him connected with services. She agreed that the ordinance was a tool for law enforcement to be able to cite people who are refusing resources while increasing cleanup costs. Should that man end up needing to go to jail, she continued, the detention services unit would still try to get him services.

Chair Clark pointed out that the arrests due to warrants would have happened in the normal course of business and did not occur because the individuals were homeless.

**26-010C**      **AGENDA ITEM 10** Board member announcements, reports, and updates to include requests for future board agenda items.

Vice Chair Hill thought the CHAB needed to formulate a plan to ask the State Legislature for resources as the supply of permanent supportive housing was insufficient; 1,200 more units were needed immediately. The 200 units available through the Nevada Cares Campus were insufficient, and they were expensive to build. She thought Cares would only be effective if there was enough supportive housing for everyone who needed it. Each of the three jurisdictions is running a budgetary deficit, she pointed out, and none have the ability to fund the type of housing that is needed, though they all have land available for development. She noted that 55 percent of the residents at the Cares Campus were seniors, and the jurisdictions need to ask the State for support.

Member Rodriguez agreed that help from the State is needed. Member Anderson requested a presentation from the Larson Institute related to the School of Public Health at the University of Nevada, Reno. She concurred with the Vice Chair's comments about needing legislative support and wanted to know how this Board could better support the HOPE Team so it could expand.

Vice Chair Hill remarked that Washoe County is supporting other counties that do not offer emergency shelters, and the State needed to address that inequality.

Chair Clark said all homeless individuals in Washoe County were residents of the County, and they needed to be taken care of. He agreed with the suggestion for a presentation by the Larson Institute. As an advisory board, the CHAB cannot direct the State to do anything, but it can advise the local jurisdictions to make those requests of the Legislature. He wanted the Board to explore cost-effective ways to produce affordable housing, unlike what was done at the Cares Campus.

**26-011C**      **AGENDA ITEM 11** Public Comment.

Ms. Trisha Creedon thought HOPE Team members should not be armed or wear bullet-proof vests. She spoke about the failure of two Board members to attend this meeting, the HOPE Team's ongoing harassment of an individual, and the 93 unhoused people who died last year even though services were available.

Ms. Pam Darr urged people to report issues that they see because one more day on the streets could be fatal for some people. Though she recognized that people could choose to live without a home, it was also people's right to feel safe in their communities. She thought homeless individuals could find purpose if they were given jobs. She expressed concern about drug use within the homeless community and about the amount of money spent on solutions that have not addressed the problem. She thought widows after marriages of five years or more should be able to keep their husbands' social security.

Ms. Trista Gomez stated the region has done a lot of work on homelessness, creating 630 beds at the Cares Campus and 38 spots at Our Place for families and women.

Homelessness is a national issue. She pointed out that the operational and employee costs at the Cares Campus were more than \$40 million annually, which is more than the County's current deficit. She thought consideration should be given to having homeless individuals paying 30 percent of their income on permanent supportive housing while other residents are paying between 57 and 60 percent of theirs. She praised Northern Nevada HOPES for their work, and while that program and the Cares Campus have been very successful, she wanted to make sure that residents were not sacrificing anything for these resources.

Ms. Danielle Osier-Tatar, a mental health provider in Northern Nevada, agreed with the suggestion of getting financial help from the State Legislature. She observed that one of the greater challenges faced by her clients is retaining housing, and she was unable to help one of her clients get rental assistance. She encouraged the CHAB to also ask the Legislature for funding to help sustain people's housing in emergency situations. She thought mental health should be represented on the CHAB as well.

Mr. Matthew Wilkie concurred about the need to seek legislative help, but boards and commissions are only allowed three bill draft requests (BDRs) per session. He pointed out to anyone running for any government, particularly those running for State Assembly, that, if elected, they will be able to submit their own BDRs. He thought it was important to know which candidates will make homelessness part of their base issues for their campaigns.

Ms. Kelsey Owens shared a story about a friend who was separated from her husband to sleep for safety reasons while strangers were able to accost her in her cot. Regarding the comment to call authorities if anyone sees something regarding the unhoused, she pointed out that an individual was killed recently after a call was placed to the police. She requested a moment of silence for Michael Johnson.

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**11:14 a.m.** There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

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**MICHAEL CLARK**, Chair  
Community Homelessness Advisory Board

ATTEST:

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**JANIS GALASSINI**, County Clerk

*Minutes Prepared by:  
Derek Sonderfan, Independent Contractor*