WASHOE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Planning Commission Members
Jim Barnes
R. Michael Flick
Linda Kennedy
Daniel Lazzareschi – Chair
Kate S. Nelson
Amy Owens
Rob Pierce – Vice Chair
Secretary
Trevor Lloyd

Tuesday, November 20, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Washoe County Administrative Complex
Commission Chambers
1001 E 9th Street, Building A
Reno, Nevada 89512

and available via
Zoom Webinar

The Washoe County Planning Commission met in a special session on Thursday, November 20, 2025, in the Washoe County Commission Chambers, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada and via Zoom teleconference.

The meeting will be televised live and replayed on the Washoe Channel at: https://www.washoecounty.us/mgrsoff/Communications/wctv-live.php also on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/user/WashoeCountyTV

---

1. *Determination of Quorum

Chair Lazzareschi called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following Commissioners and staff were present:

Commissioners present:	Jim Barnes R. Michael Flick Linda Kennedy (via Zoom) Daniel Lazzareschi, Chair Kate Nelson Amy Owens Rob Pierce, Vice Chair (via Zoom)
Commissioners absent:	None
Staff present:	Trevor Lloyd, Secretary, Planning and Building Chris Broncyzk, Senior Planner, Planning and Building Julee Olander, Planner, Planning and Building Jennifer Gustafson and Beth Hickman, Deputy District Attorneys, District Attorney's Office Adriana Albarran, Office Support Specialist, Planning and Building Brandon Roman, Recording Secretary, Planning and Building

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Lazzareschi led the pledge to the flag.

3. Ethics Law Announcement

Deputy District Attorney Jennifer Gustafson provided the ethics procedure for disclosures.

4. Appeal Procedure

Secretary Trevor Lloyd recited the appeal procedure for items heard before the Planning Commission.

5. General Public Comment and Discussion Thereof

Chair Lazzareschi opened the Public Comment period.

Public Comment:

There was no response to the call for public comment.

6. Approval of November 20, 2025, Agenda

Chair Lazzareschi moved to approve the agenda for the November 20, 2025, meeting as written. Commissioner Nelson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with a vote of seven for, none against.

7. Approval of November 4, 2025, Draft Minutes

Commissioner Nelson moved to approve the minutes for the November 4, 2025, Planning Commission meeting as written. Commissioner Kennedy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with a vote of seven for, none against.

8. Public Hearings

A. Special Use Permit Case Number WSUP25-0018 (Iveson Ranch) [For possible action] – For hearing, discussion, and possible action to approve a special use permit for a high technology industrial use type for drone research and testing and for a private air strip use type; and to recommend approval to the board of county commissioners of a hazardous materials special use permit for a general industrial – heavy use type to include explosives testing and use and storage of certain hazardous materials in the High Desert planning area, as required by NRS 278.147 and Washoe County Code section 110.810.42. The project site is 320 acres and is surrounded by public land. The hazardous materials that are proposed to be on site have the following CAS numbers: 121-82-4 (RDX), 118-96-7 (TNT), 78-11-5 (PETN), 2691-41-0 (HMX), and 7790-98-9 (AP). The proposed special use permits include outdoor storage, and also include modifications to standards relating to landscaping, parking, noise, and paving.

- Applicant/Property Owner: BRDR Properties, LLC, c/o G. Barton Mowry
- Location: 2001 State Route 34, Gerlach, Nevada 89412
- APN: 066-030-05
- Parcel Size: 320 acres

- Master Plan: Rural
- Regulatory Zone: General Rural
- Planning Area: High Desert (HD)
- Development Code: Authorized in Article 810, Special Use Permits
- Commission District: 5 – Commissioner Herman
- Staff: Chris Bronczyk, Senior Planner; Jolene Bertetto, Planner
  Washoe County Community Services Department
  Planning and Building
- Phone: Chris: 775.328.3612; Jolene: 775.328.6106
- E-mail: CBronczyk@washoecounty.gov; JBertetto@washoecounty.gov

Planner Chris Bronczyk conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: High Desert Planning Area; Vicinity Map; Request; High Desert Modifiers; High Tech Industrial Use Type; Private Air Strip (2 slides); Outdoor Storage; Explosive Testing; Hazardous Materials; Modification of Standards; ATF Explosive Licensing; Safety Response on Site; Consultation; Notable Conditions of Approval (2 slides); Neighborhood Meeting; Public Notice; Findings; and Possible Motion.

Mr. Bronczyk noted the requested waiver would not give the applicant full freedom to ignore Washoe County's noise ordinance; it would pertain only to the airstrip. He stressed that no hazardous materials would be stored in the proposed outdoor storage areas. He mentioned that the applicants presented this item to the Gerlach/Empire Citizen Advisory Committee (CAB) earlier in the week.

Planning Manager Dave Snelgrove with Bowman Consulting Group discussed the numerous meetings and workshops held on this matter, including with the Burning Man organization. He conducted a slideshow presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Special Use Permit; Site Location; Existing Master Plan & Zoning; High Desert Area – GR Zoning Modifiers; and Outdoor Storage.

Michael Arth, general manager of Iveson Ranch, concluded the presentation by reviewing the following slides: Runway/Airstrip; Energetics – Overview; Location (2 slides); Materials; Frequency; Type Distribution; Detonators; Hobby Rocket Motor; 12 pound charge; Safety (3 slides); Noise; Noise Comparison; and Pollution (2 slides).

Mr. Arth provided his military background and described his interest in the drone industry. In addition to defense applications, his company also focuses on conservation, agriculture, and other uses. He said the State of Nevada allows and invites companies like his to conduct test operations in compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) guidance and state law. He anticipated that a land swap or license agreement with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would take place because part of the airstrip is on BLM land. The FAA requires aircraft to fly along with drones during certain flight profiles for safety purposes.

Mr. Arth discussed the safety magazines that would be used at the site, which he noted are certified by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). Daily

inspections of the facility will occur. He spoke about the importance of understanding how energetics systems behave and how they may interface with his system's components. This is not a manufacturing operation, and the rockets that will be used are not liquid-fueled rockets.

The energetics facility will be situated in the greatest depressed bowl on the property, Mr. Arth continued, helping contain noise. He compared the sound generated by the tests to a shotgun blast or a car backfiring and pointed out that the hobby rocket motors they plan to use are smaller than the rockets used by rocketeers in the area. He relayed his commitment to not testing charges above 10 pounds in size.

Mr. Bronczyk noted the following amendments to the conditions of approval proposed by staff: condition 2.d. will be moved to Planning's conditions, and condition 2.c. will be removed entirely.

In response to Commissioner Kennedy's questions, Mr. Bronczyk confirmed that the runway would be located north of where explosives would be used.

Regarding the safety of wildlife, Mr. Arth indicated there is barbed-wire fencing around the property meant to guard against cattle, and the applicant is open to providing additional fencing if necessary. Stackable concrete barriers and a dirt berm will also be placed around the pad when explosives testing is conducted.

Public Comment:

Mr. Evan McQuirk, president of the Board of Directors for Nevada Bighorns Unlimited (NBU), expressed concern about potential wildlife impacts, particularly from noise. He expected that drone flights would also directly impact wildlife. He believed these areas should be stress-free areas for animals. He raised additional concerns about potential expansion in the future and wondered how approval of this special use permit (SUP) would benefit Washoe County residents or wildlife. He opposed approval of the SUP on behalf of NBU.

Mr. Arlo Stockham, representing Bright Holland Corporation and other affiliated property owners, spoke about historical conservation efforts in the area and provided maps illustrating some of them. He stressed they did not want to interfere with economic development or this kind of research, but he felt a specific area should be designated for drone flights. He also advocated for noise monitoring to be included in the proposal, along with provisions for soil testing and on-site removal.

Mr. Michael Stewart expressed concern about potential impacts to neighboring properties. He spoke about his role in the reintroduction of bighorn sheep populations 20 years ago and said wildlife on both his property and BLM's property should not be impacted. He pointed out that the subject property is not surrounded entirely by BLM land because he and another property owner are directly adjacent to it. Nothing should be approved that will impact sage grouse, bighorn sheep, or deer.

Ms. Cheyenne Acevedo with the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) read a statement on behalf of the agency which addressed the following topics: the presence

of ecosystems in the area that support sensitive wildlife resources; the close proximity of known migration corridors; potential impacts due to noise, air traffic, and lighting, all of which can affect wildlife and displace animals; and the presence of sage grouse in the area. She said NDOW provided seasonal nighttime and crepuscular timing recommendations to the County to minimize impacts. She remarked that activities surrounding this project could increase wildfire risk, even with the safeguards proposed by the applicant, and she recommended hiring full-time fire staff to mitigate those concerns.

Mr. Steven Le Cam expressed concern about the toxic effects of the explosives, noise, and the impacts of this approval on wildlife. He feared that toxic elements would filter into the groundwater, into Fly Reservoir, and ultimately into the Lawson Farms area. He felt this was an incomplete submittal that did not adequately address the ability of munitions to resist excessive heat.

Mr. Robert Warner discussed the mission and responsibilities of Friends of Black Rock-High Rock, whose programs brought more than 500 people to the area. Among their concerns were the impacts to quiet solitude caused by drone rotors, the impacts of explosions on wildlife and migratory birds, wildfire risk, and the potential for future expansion. They recommended denial of the SUP, but should it be approved, they requested that conditions be added requiring independent sound monitoring, a public information and feedback channel, drone flight restrictions, and geofencing.

Mr. Ashton Caselli read a letter from the Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife (CNW) which discussed its mission and the areas of conservation that it represents. He spoke about the historical eradication of big wildlife in Nevada, noting that it was only through recent conservation efforts that large populations of bighorn sheep, mule deer, and sage grouse have increased. He brought up current initiatives undertaken by NDOW to encourage mule deer recovery. He said any increased stressors will decrease survival rates in harsh winters, and CNW opposed approval of the SUP.

Mr. Larry Johnson continued CNW's letter, which addressed the impacts of drone noise on wildlife and the inaccessibility of nearby areas to firefighting personnel. He echoed the call for denial of the SUP, but requested that, if approved, it should include conditions regarding restrictions on drone flights to the subject property itself and the inclusion of adequate assurance bonding for fire suppression and restoration.

Mr. Sev Carlson, an attorney representing Burning Man Project, indicated that 40 people attended the CAB meeting in person and 30 more online. Citing discussions the organization has had with the applicant, he asked that the following conditions of approval be added: a limit of energetics testing to 12 pounds of explosives per test; a limit of energetics test frequency; a prohibition of airplane and drone flights on Sundays with only five annual exceptions; and a prohibition on drone testing between sunset and sunrise with limited exceptions. He reviewed the components for an operations plan agreed to by the applicant, all of which, he believed, would mitigate the potential impacts of the proposed use.

Ms. Kristy Evans noted there already is a lot of unregulated firearms use, offroad vehicles, rocketeering, and mines in the area, as well as an abundance of flying and

road vehicles during Burning Man, and those activities are in line with the context of this proposal. She thought the applicant has addressed the concerns of the community, and the proposal will be regulated by many agencies. She said the Gerlach/Empire area has very few opportunities for economic development, and this would bring jobs and housing to the area. She expressed support for the project.

Mr. Mel Belding expressed agreement with many of the concerns already raised, though his major concern was fire danger. He spoke about a previous fire which destroyed an entire habitat. He felt additional information was needed about the storage and adequacy of the water meant for firefighting as well as about the storage of lithium batteries before this project can be approved.

Ms. Kristie Marchese opposed approval of the SUP, pointing out the applicant did not consult with the County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife. She thought barbed wire fencing would be an ineffective deterrent. The wellbeing of wildlife should take precedence over development which primarily benefits a foreign entity. Should the project proceed, she added, it should be required to take place entirely within the applicant's property, and it should not be approved without a thorough evaluation of wildlife impacts.

Ms. Linda Linton said she has not heard a benefit of this project to Washoe County or the State of Nevada. The property is in the middle of mule deer habitat, and she said fencing would not stop deer from entering. She felt the detriment of this project far outweighs the benefits, and she believed it would expand in the future. Expressing concern about enforcement in such a remote area, she opposed approval of an SUP for a military outpost.

The remaining speakers provided comment via Zoom. Mr. Kris Coston spoke on behalf of CNW and echoed its strong opposition to the zoning change, which he said would cause unforeseen disturbances to wildlife and increased wildlife danger. He thought the project would disproportionately burden local emergency response, and the only ones to benefit would be out-of-state companies.

Mr. Carlos Cardillo with the Nevada Center for Applied Research indicated that Nevada is one of only seven states designated by the FAA as an unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) test site. The FAA has already approved 9,000 square miles for drone operation at a different altitude. He spoke about the economic value brought about by drone development, testing, and manufacturing. Drones flying above a few hundred feet create very little noise, he continued, and Nevada should welcome startup UAS companies. He expressed support on behalf of his company for approval of the SUP.

Ms. Margie Reynolds expressed frustration at the small number of people who were notified of this project. She felt the revenue lost via hunting would be greater than that gained by Iverson Ranch employees. She said the example shown to residents of a similar situation in the Midwest was a poor comparison as sound travels much further in Hualapai Valley than in an urban area. She expressed concern about detonations taking place when tourists visit Fly Geyser. The project would not fit with the existing character of the area, and she wanted all stakeholders' opinions to be considered.

Mr. Bryce Pollack with CNW echoed the sentiments of other conservation groups, especially their concern about the lack of a flight plan as part of the SUP. He expressed concern about the noise from single-engine aircraft more than the noise from drones, adding that flights would take place daily. He thought a flight plan was necessary.

Mr. George Forbush with the Nevada Predatory Hunting Association expressed opposition to the proposal. Citing his experience as a bomb technician, he opined this would absolutely disperse wildlife. He spoke about the impacts of C-4 explosions on hearing and wondered why main charges would be used instead of just blasting caps. Fire protection will be difficult in the winter when the available water is frozen, and one fire would cause immense destruction. He echoed previous comments about the lost revenue from hunting and asked that the item be denied.

Mr. Russell Bierle listed many of the ways he is involved in the Gerlach/Empire community. He was unsure whether the figures pertaining to flights, explosions, and volume were projections or restrictions. He wanted a clear distinction between which figures are requirements and which are estimates.

Ms. Elisabeth Gambrell wondered why there was greater opposition to this proposal than when a geothermal plant requested running drills for two years. She noted the property owner has cleaned up hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of debris, and the applicant is willing to talk to residents. She said this would bring an economic opportunity to Gerlach and she welcomed this project. She believed Burning Man and local rocketeers produce more noise than the applicant would.

Discussion by Commission:

In response to Commissioner Owens' request, Mr. Bronczyk reiterated the nature of the two conditions that staff requested modifying.

Commissioner Kennedy pointed out that many additional conditions of approval were suggested during public comment, including some which were agreed to by the applicant. She felt staff needed to include some of them, specifically the ones to which the applicant agreed, in the proposal before the Commission approves it.

In response, Catherine Reichenberg with Gunderson Law Firm confirmed that the applicant is agreeable to some conditions which could be added to the SUP. Her law firm also had several discussions with NDOW regarding wildlife concerns. She offered to provide documentation of the points agreed to by both parties.

Chair Lazzareschi suggested that Ms. Reichenberg provide copies of those written agreement points to the Clerk for inclusion into the SUP.

Ms. Acevedo with NDOW confirmed the intent of the statement she provided earlier was to reiterate the potential impacts to wildlife due to this project. She noted the applicant agreed to the recommendations made by NDOW regarding seasonal timing restrictions, and those were included in the comment letter NDOW sent to the County.

Secretary Trevor Lloyd acknowledged the potential difficulty for staff to enforce some of the proposed conditions, and he suggested the applicant and Burning Man enter into an agreement. While some of the conditions could be enforced by County staff, he was concerned about grouping all conditions together without first reviewing them with legal staff.

7:43 p.m. **The Planning Commission recessed.**

7:53 p.m. **The Commission reconvened with all Commissioners present.**

Mr. Bronczyk conveyed that County staff confirmed its ability to enforce the following proposed conditions: a limit of energetic tests to five per day, a prohibition of airplane and drone flights on Sundays with five exceptions at the property owner's discretion, and a prohibition of drone flights or energetic testing between sunset and sunrise except for nighttime line-of-sight drone testing if approved by the FAA.

Commissioner Flick wanted an elaboration on the safety measures that would be taken for storage of the explosives.

Mr. Arth replied that their safety measures go above and beyond ATF's requirements. He said the magazine will be impenetrable, and a staff member will be present every day of the year. There will also be mitigating measures such as a camera system with alarms. The ranch lead who will be present every day is a retired police officer, and several staff members are former military members, all of which will act as a deterrent.

Commissioner Flick said he was unsure whether he would be able to make the finding about safety, but the measures Mr. Arth explained made him feel better. He felt more than one armed guard should be required.

Mr. Arth responded that the facility has 12 full-time staff members on site, many of whom have appropriate weapons training. He could commit to having two people present every day of the year if that was the PC's wish, something that Commissioner Flick indicated would make him feel better.

Vice Chair Pierce inquired about expected altitudes of the drones and tracer planes.

Mr. Arth replied that FAA Part 107 describes what is legal in the United States. He committed to not flying drones over private property, though he noted that major airlines and private drone companies have the legal right to do so at certain altitudes. The applicant is amenable to designating geofences around neighbors' properties, and they will not violate the law, which would jeopardize the licenses of their pilots. He added that they have been authorized by the FAA to do non-standard things under a certificate of authorization (COA) and discussed collaborating with the University of Nevada, Reno, to work under their COA as well.

The vast majority of activities the applicant plans on doing, Mr. Arth continued, will take place between 1,000 and 5,000 feet above ground level, which would be above the earshot of humans and most surface mammals. Aircraft would travel from ground

level up to that cruising altitude, and chase aircraft are usually separated from the drones by 500 to 1,000 feet. He remarked that the distance of these flight tests would depend on the flight profile and test objectives, though most would be between 5 and 25 miles. Though they are legally allowed to fly over areas protected by the Wilderness Act of 1964, he assured the Commission that they will not do so. The majority of the test profiles will take place over the playa, he noted.

Chair Lazzareschi opined that the existence of a Truckee Meadows Fire Protection-approved fire protection plan would provide a net benefit to fire safety. He indicated he would support this item.

MOTION: Chair Lazzareschi moved that Special Use Permit Case Number WSUP25-0018 as it relates to the requested special use permit for a high technology industrial use type for drone research and testing and for a private airstrip use type for BRDR Properties be approved with the amended conditions as described by staff and the conditions between the applicant and Burning Man read during the meeting which the County feels comfortable enforcing, as well as those conditions included as Exhibit A to this matter, having made all five findings in accordance with Washoe County Code Section 110.810.30.

He further moved that approval be recommended to the Board of County Commissioners of a hazardous materials special use permit for a general industrial – heavy use type to include explosives testing and use, and storage of certain hazardous materials in the High Desert planning area, as required by NRS 278.147 and Washoe County Code section 110.810.42 for BRDR Properties, with the conditions included as Exhibit A to this matter, having made all five findings in accordance with Washoe County Code Section 110.810.42(d).

He further moved that the development code standard in Table 110.410.10.4 be varied to remove the parking requirements for employees; to waive the requirements of WCC Section 110.410.25 (c-g), Design of Parking Areas; to waive WCC 110.306.50(a) which requires runways be located a minimum of 300 feet from any property line, and to maintain a noise standard of 65 decibels; to waive WCC 110.306.50(c) which requires parking per airplane parked; and to waive landscaping requirements found in WCC 110.412.45

Commissioner Owens seconded the motion.

Commissioner Flick reiterated his request for a condition requiring two licensed armed guards.

Chair Lazzareschi responded that the Washoe County Sheriff's Office, the agency who would be responsible for enforcing such a condition, did not provide any condition in relation to it. Discussion ensued regarding the process for licensing and training those types of armed guards.

The motion passed with a vote of five for, two against, with Commissioners Flick and Kennedy voting no.

Commissioner Flick explained that he voted against the proposal because there is no mechanism to ensure the protection of the public.

Secretary Trevor Lloyd recited the appeal procedure for items heard before the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Flick clarified that pursuant to WCC Section 110,810,30, Article 810, he could not make the Issuance Not Detrimental finding pertaining to the safety of the public.

9. Chair and Commission Items

A. Future agenda items

There were none.

B. Requests for information from staff

There were none.

10. Director's and Legal Counsel's Items

A. Report on previous Planning Commission items

There was nothing to report.

B. Legal information and updates

Deputy District Attorney Jennifer Gustafson announced this would be her last meeting with the Planning Commission, and she thanked the Commission and planning staff.

11. *General Public Comment and Discussion Thereof

Ms. Elisabeth Gambrell thanked everyone for their comments. She noted that Iveson Ranch was 127 miles from the paved road, and the building which will store explosives is equivalent to what was used by the military in foreign countries.

12. Adjournment

With no further business scheduled before the Planning Commission, the meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Derek Sonderfan, Independent Contractor.

Approved by Commission in session on December 2, 2025.

_____
Trevor Lloyd
Secretary to the Planning Commission