



Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board  
Minutes of the regular meeting of the Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board held on February 4, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Spanish Springs Library.

## **1. CALL TO ORDER/ DETERMINATION QUORUM**

Present – Bradley Young, Shannon Martell, Brandon Partain, Renate York,

Absent – Bonnie Billings, Jason Evans

## **2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

## **3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kim Gesynski spoke on behalf of the Wingfield Springs Preservation Group to oppose a proposal to build 764 homes on an existing golf course within the Wingfield Springs community. She argued the project is overdevelopment not responsible infill and would negatively impact traffic safety, water resources, infrastructure, wildlife, open space, and residents' quality of life. She emphasized the need for transparency and community input, and announced a public meeting on February 17, 2026, at Sky Ranch Middle School. The group is also collecting contact information from concerned residents to organize unified opposition to the proposal.

James "JJ" Phoenix addressed the Spanish Springs Citizen Advisory Board to speak about his role with the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) and his candidacy as the incumbent for Washoe County School District Trustee, District C. He shared his local roots and extensive public service background, including service in the U.S. Marine Corps, Reno Police Department, and Nevada Army National Guard. At NDVS, he explained that the agency supports veterans statewide through veteran service officers, two state veterans nursing homes, two state cemeteries, and outreach programs. Regarding his school board role, Phoenix highlighted his focus on strengthening special education services, increasing certified teachers and classroom aides, and supporting the district's strategic plan. Over the past year, he visited all 20 schools in District C twice to meet with principals and learn about their successes and challenges. Moving forward, he plans to increase community outreach, attend local events, and remain engaged with constituents while continuing to serve as trustee.

Bryan Byrne, a project manager with the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), provided an update on the Northeast Connector Feasibility Study. He announced that the public comment period has been extended from January 16 to early March. RTC is also planning to hold another public meeting in early March, with details on the venue and timing to be announced soon. Byrne shared that a flyer with a QR code linking to the project website and public comment form is available, and he offered to answer questions following the meeting.

Derek Reid with Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District announced that the district has begun producing monthly data sheets to share at CAB meetings. The January 2026 report shows 162 medical calls, 14 motor vehicle accidents, and an average of 11.3 calls per day. The reports will also include seasonal safety tips based on the types of incidents firefighters are responding to such as guidance on space heaters and carbon monoxide safety. He concluded by offering to answer any questions.

#### **4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF January 7, 2026**

Shannon Martell motioned to approve the January 7, 2026 Spanish Springs CAB minutes with an edit on item #4 to correct the name Brad Stanley to Bradley Young. Brandon Partain seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved with the recommended edits unanimously.

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

Brad Young relayed feedback from a resident suggesting that increased use of mass transit could help reduce traffic in Spanish Springs. The resident requested that the Spanish Springs CAB include information about rideshare options during the upcoming April RTC presentation. Commissioner Andriola confirmed that RTC will incorporate rideshare information into its April presentation to the CAB.

Brandon Partain shared that after last month's meeting, a resident asked him for more information about developers' "findings of fact," but he misplaced the person's email address. He has since provided the requested information to Ms. Bonnie and asked that it be forwarded if the individual reconnects. He emphasized the board's willingness to provide additional information and encouraged residents to approach members after meetings with any questions or requests.

#### **6. HOMELESSNESS & HOPE IN WASHOE COUNTY**

Sergeant Kelly Wright of the Washoe County Sheriff's Office introduced the HOPE (Homeless Outreach Proactive Engagement) Team, founded in 2021 as the only dedicated outreach unit serving unincorporated Washoe County, including Spanish Springs, Sun Valley, Cold Springs, Washoe Valley, Verdi, and rural areas. The team includes deputies and embedded case workers from the Washoe County Human Services Agency, focusing on building trust with unhoused individuals, connecting them to services, and transitioning them into stable housing through a compassionate, service-first approach. In 2025, the HOPE Team made 2,930 contacts (up 34%), achieved a 93% service acceptance rate, housed 194 individuals (up 35%), conducted 34 cleanups removing over 116 cubic yards of debris, and significantly reduced citations and arrests. They work closely with Sparks Police Department's HOPE Team and community partners to coordinate regional outreach. Looking ahead to 2026, goals include housing more than 220 individuals, expanding prevention and reentry referrals, strengthening transportation partnerships, and maintaining high housing retention rates. They are launching the Clean Path Initiative, a rural encampment program that provides food, water, trash services, and intensive case management in exchange for clean sites and active participation in pursuing permanent housing. The program emphasizes voluntary participation, accountability, and enforcement as a last resort. The team also announced a new public reporting tool on the Washoe County app to streamline reporting of encampments and related concerns. They encouraged community support through donations to local

nonprofit partners that help furnish homes for newly housed individuals.

A board member praised the Clean Path Initiative and asked how the HOPE Team identifies and contacts unhoused individuals whether they proactively drive around looking for people and approach them directly. The HOPE Team explained that most of their outreach begins with community-generated calls for service, submitted through WashoeSheriff.com, 311, and other reporting methods. They respond to those reports and make contact to offer assistance. In addition, they conduct proactive patrols, identify encampments, initiate contact, provide resources, and take enforcement action, if necessary, though their primary focus is outreach and support.

Helen Munson asked whether the HOPE Team, as law enforcement officers, has the authority to make arrests, especially for drug-related or more serious criminal activity, and what percentage of their work results in arrests. The HOPE Team explained that all members are fully sworn Category 1 officers and can make arrests when necessary, including for felony offenses or active warrants. However, enforcement is secondary to their primary mission of outreach and connecting individuals to services. They use discretion with low-level misdemeanors when appropriate and focus on helping people access resources. Arrests are very rare, only four in the past year, most of which were warrant-related. The goal of the team is assistance and housing support rather than incarceration.

Frank Winkler thanked the team for their work and asked about a common concern in the community whether some individuals experiencing homelessness are resistant to change and primarily seeking free housing or meals without wanting to improve their situation. The HOPE team acknowledged that while a small number of individuals may initially resist services, most can be engaged through consistent, relationship-based outreach. Team members emphasized their hands-on, compassionate approach, working to build trust and demonstrate they are there to help, not penalize. They focus first on housing stabilization, particularly for individuals struggling with substance use or mental health challenges, then connect them to treatment, sobriety resources, appointments and identification assistance. The team highlighted strong success stories, including individuals who have remained housed for several years. However, they noted a key challenge is sustained tenancy support beyond the initial housing period. Additional social worker capacity is needed to provide consistent follow-up during the critical first six months to improve long-term stability outcomes.

Joni Hammond asked whether increases in contacts (up 34%) and resources accepted (up 94%) reflect a growing homeless population or improved engagement outcomes. The HOPE team explained the growth is largely due to stronger relationship-building. Through repeated outreach, consistency and follow-through, team members build trust over time. As individuals come to know the team and see that promises are kept, they are more willing to accept services and word of that trust spreads within the community, leading some to proactively seek help. Joni also asked about funding sources and long-term housing expectations. The team shared that funding includes federal HUD support and other resources, and that the goal is long-term self-sufficiency. For example, one individual housed three years ago now pays his own rent using Social Security income in an affordable unit. Programs such as the Reno Housing Authority may assist with initial deposits or rent, but the focus is on stabilization, employment connections and income so individuals can sustain housing independently. The team emphasized a significant need for additional tenancy support. With limited caseworkers serving hundreds of clients, consistent follow-up ensuring rent is paid, utilities remain current and basic needs are met is challenging. Expanded support during the critical early months of

housing would significantly improve long-term stability outcomes.

Gary Murray asked how many individuals experiencing homelessness are currently in Washoe County. The HOPE team explained that while a recent Point-in-Time (PIT) count was conducted, final numbers are not yet available. They noted that the count is never 100% accurate, as some individuals decline to participate, but it provides the best available estimate and helps secure federal HUD funding based on demonstrated need. Staff shared that outreach teams covered several miles during the count to engage and gather information. While exact figures are pending, they confirmed the total is in the several hundred range.

Mike Pabuto thanked the team for their work and acknowledged staffing challenges. He asked how the HOPE team supports veterans experiencing homelessness. The team explained they coordinate closely with Veteran Services, including during the recent Point-in-Time count, when veteran representatives were available at 4 a.m. to respond immediately if a veteran was identified. When veterans are encountered, staff hotline Veteran Services for on-the-spot assistance, helping connect individuals to benefits, appeals related to discharge status (DD214), and other eligible services. They also highlighted a strong working relationship with the Nevada Department of Veterans Services' homeless outreach team, allowing for direct, real-time connections either by having representatives respond in person or speak directly with veterans by phone to arrange appointments and begin the benefits process.

A question was raised about whether Washoe County has partnered with national organizations and veteran-focused groups. Commissioner Clara Andriola shared that over the past year and a half she has worked closely with the Nevada Department of Veterans Services, including Colonel Devine, to bring Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) to Washoe County the first jurisdiction in the state to do so. Since launching Jan. 12, the two VSOs have already assisted approximately 75 individuals. The county supports the program by providing space and operational resources, with plans to coordinate services directly at the CARES Campus Resource Center to better reach vulnerable veterans. Commissioner Andriola also emphasized the broader impact of the HOPE model, noting it saves significant taxpayer dollars by diverting individuals from incarceration and connecting them to services earlier. She cited collaboration with regional partners, the courts and law enforcement, and highlighted the importance of prevention strategies such as the Sequential Intercept Model to reduce justice system involvement. While praising the HOPE team's success, she acknowledged ongoing policy discussions regarding individuals who repeatedly refuse services. She noted the need for regional coordination and legally sound policy tools to ensure individuals are offered resources while maintaining accountability. Finally, she underscored the importance of tenancy support, noting high success rates when sustained follow-up services are in place.

Eileen Adams asked whether churches or volunteer groups could assist with tenancy support and follow-up services for individuals who have been housed. The HOPE team responded enthusiastically, stating they welcome volunteer support and would gladly partner with churches or community organizations. They emphasized that additional help with follow-up check-ins and tenancy support would be invaluable, given limited staffing and the importance of consistent engagement to ensure long-term housing stability.

A community member shared an encounter with a recently widowed senior woman who had been evicted and is now living in her car after losing half of her household income when her husband passed away. The speaker noted that many individuals may be sleeping in vehicles,

making them harder to count, and expressed a desire to obtain information and resources to help the woman after feeling a personal connection to her situation.

Sparks Police Department outlined the evolution of its HOPE model, which began in 2016 with efforts to address encampments along the Truckee River and transitioned into a structured outreach program by 2020 with full-time officers dedicated to homeless engagement. The model, developed after reviewing best practices nationwide, is resource-first and enforcement-second, emphasizing relationship-building, trauma-informed care, motivational interviewing and harm reduction. Officers connect individuals to shelter, housing, mental health and substance use treatment, identification services, transportation, insurance enrollment and even bus tickets for reunification with family when appropriate. They work closely with regional partners including Our Place, St. Vincent's, Catholic Charities, the CARES Campus and Veterans Services. Since 2020, SPD has contacted nearly 7,600 individuals, representing about 2,300 unique people with repeated follow-ups to build trust. The average age of those contacted is 44, with the majority being white males. Data from the past year shows a significant reduction in the homeless population within Sparks, indicating progress. The department also balances outreach with enforcement tools, including trespass waivers for business owners, and encourages residents to report concerns through the City of Sparks "MySparks" app to ensure timely response and coordinated service delivery.

Shannon Martell asked whether outreach teams coordinate with Sierra Regional Center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), noting that it could provide an additional funding and support pathway. Sparks Police Department responded that they welcome new resource connections and are open to partnering with Sierra Regional Center to better assist eligible individuals. She also asked how the department supports unhoused American Indian and Native American individuals, specifically whether they are connected with their home tribes and tribal human services. Sparks PD explained that their approach is individualized and based on the person's willingness. If someone wants to reconnect with their tribe, family or another support system, officers will help facilitate that connection. If not, they work to connect them with other available local or national resources. The department emphasized that services are offered consistently across all races and genders, focusing on whatever support the individual is willing to accept.

Bruce Foster asked whether Reno Police Department is formally partnered with the Sparks and Washoe County HOPE teams. He was told that while Reno PD works closely with them, it does not yet operate under the same outreach-focused model, though efforts are underway to align approaches. He also encouraged continued coordination with the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and additional state resource partners. Drawing on his experience biking along the Truckee River corridor for decades, Foster commended Sparks' enforcement and cleanup efforts, noting visible improvements. However, he expressed concern that expanded services, including the CARES Campus, may have contributed to increased homelessness in the area, referencing the idea that "if they build it, they will come." He also questioned whether the proliferation of marijuana dispensaries could be contributing to behavioral health challenges and psychosis. In response, Sparks Police indicated that in their experience, harder drugs such as opioids are more commonly associated with the issues they encounter than marijuana.

Cindy Martinez, a former Sparks Police officer and retired Gaming Control Board enforcement officer, shared her long-term perspective on regional growth and homelessness. She suggested that while the CARES Campus may have attracted individuals from outside the

area, redevelopment along Fourth Street particularly the demolition of older motels that housed working poor residents, seniors, veterans and individuals with mental illness also displaced vulnerable populations and contributed to homelessness. She described witnessing formerly housed individuals lose stability as affordable options disappeared and rents increased. Martinez expressed support for the HOPE model, noting that enforcement alone cannot solve homelessness and referencing her prior experience with repeat arrests that did not produce long-term change. She also asked how sex offenders experiencing homelessness are monitored. Sparks Police explained that when they encounter registered sex offenders, they document locations and notify the department's specialized sex offender unit, which is responsible for compliance tracking and follow-up. They indicated that these individuals are typically not found near schools.

A community member shared that they have heard criticism at public meetings suggesting the CARES Campus is costly and not producing results. In response, staff strongly disagreed, stating that the CARES Campus is achieving results and functioning effectively. They noted that its popularity and growing use reflect its success, with individuals hearing about available services and coming to access help. Staff emphasized that the campus continues to expand services and is doing meaningful work to support the community.

## **7. BOARD AND COMMISSION OPENINGS**

Brad Young announced an open position on the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Advisory Planning Commission representing Washoe County. The vacancy is for one lay member, with preference given to applicants who live within the Lake Tahoe Basin, though the Board of County Commissioners may waive that requirement. The application period is currently open and closes Feb. 9.

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

Brad Young provided several community updates, noting that the Wildfire Risk Reduction Program application deadline is March 1, 2026, with flyers and a QR code available for more information. He also announced a public meeting titled "Understanding Recent Changes to Homeowner's Insurance Laws in Nevada," scheduled for Feb. 24 at 5:30 p.m. in Building A, located in the Commission Chambers. In addition, he shared that he recently attended an evacuation planning session with Truckee Meadows Fire and Sparks Police focused on emergency evacuation procedures for Spanish Springs. He described the session as informative and emphasized that evacuation planning for the growing area will be a significant undertaking. An update on that effort is expected in approximately three months.

## **9. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

## **10. CAB MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS/REQUESTS**

There were no CAB member announcements/requests.

## **11. COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/ UPDATES**

Commissioner Clara Andriola highlighted several key points for the community. She noted that the upcoming homeowner's insurance meeting will also offer a virtual attendance option, with a Zoom link to be posted on the county website. She thanked attendees for participating in discussions, emphasizing the importance of addressing misconceptions, particularly around the CARES Campus. While acknowledging that the campus initially attracted individuals seeking services, she said that it is no longer the primary dynamic and stressed that improvements and regional collaboration efforts are ongoing. She underscored the need for stronger coordination among Washoe County, Sparks and Reno to improve efficiency, especially during tight budget cycles. Budget constraints, she said, can create opportunities for better regional alignment and innovation. She encouraged residents to review the county's recent budget workshop and said she has requested greater public engagement in setting funding priorities, along with clearer distinctions between mandated (compliance-based) spending and discretionary funding. Using road funding as an example, she explained that gas taxes currently fund road repairs, but electric vehicles do not contribute to that revenue stream. With road repair needs exceeding available funding, she suggested the need for policy discussions around equitable contributions, including potential EV fees. Commissioner Andriola concluded by reaffirming her commitment to transparency, data-driven decision-making and expanded public engagement to ensure residents understand the complexities of county budgeting and policy choices.

Bruce Foster raised concerns about traffic congestion, gridlock and infrastructure strain in Washoe County, questioning how the region reached its current challenges compared to fast-growing areas like St. George, Utah, and Boise. He suggested Washoe County appears to be playing catch-up amid rapid growth, increased development and rising frustration among drivers. Commissioner Clara Andriola responded that infrastructure and budget pressures are not unique to Washoe County but are occurring statewide. She suggested the issue may be systemic, particularly related to how funding models are structured, rather than solely local inefficiency. She emphasized that Washoe County has maintained a culture of fiscal responsibility and that, compared to other jurisdictions, its budget deficit ratio is relatively lower. She explained that projected population growth is an estimated 89,000 additional residents by 2044 which will require difficult funding and policy decisions. She reiterated that regional collaboration is improving and that the HOPE model, based on best practices such as the Sequential Intercept Model, has evolved significantly since its launch. While acknowledging early challenges, she stated that conditions have improved and that the influx of individuals traveling by bus for services is no longer occurring at prior levels. Commissioner Andriola emphasized transparency, public engagement and responsible budgeting, encouraged residents to report encampments through available portals, and highlighted the need to reserve jail space for its intended purpose while addressing the broader mental health crisis driving many community challenges. She also noted that emergency management officials will return to present evacuation planning results specific to Spanish Springs and Sparks.

## ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 pm.

DRAFT