



**Sun Valley Citizen Advisory Board Minutes of the regular meeting of the Sun Valley Citizen Advisory Board held on March 2, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. at Hobey's Casino, 5195 Sun Valley Boulevard, Sun Valley, NV 89433.**

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

Present – Michael Rider, Mary Espocito, Heidi Soper, Amy Owens, Veronica Cortes, Mark Neuman, Carmen Ortiz

Absent –

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The pledge of allegiance was recited

**3. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

Amy Owens highlighted the value of using 311 as an effective tool for addressing community issues, sharing that a reported pothole was fixed within three days when multiple residents submitted requests. She encouraged neighbors to work together, including coordinating through local social media, to help expedite responses. She also noted that March is Triple Negative Breast Cancer Awareness Month and, as a survivor, urged everyone to prioritize their health by getting regular mammograms, emphasizing that early detection saves lives and that breast cancer can affect both men and women.

Carol Burns highlighted the upcoming Sun Valley corridor improvement project, noting that what was once anticipated decades into the future now appears to be moving forward. She shared details about a public meeting scheduled for March 11 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Hug High School and expressed appreciation that long-awaited improvements to the final stretch of Sun Valley Boulevard are finally happening.

Brian Wadsworth introduced himself as a Democratic candidate for Washoe County Commissioner District 5, sharing his Northern Nevada roots, membership in the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, and background in public service, including work with his tribe, the state, and NDOT. He said his decision to run was driven by concerns over rural communities potentially losing access to emergency services, emphasizing that no community should feel overlooked or underrepresented. He expressed a commitment to ensuring all residents feel supported and safe.

**4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Michael Rider motioned to approve the minutes of the February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026, Sun Valley CAB meeting. The motion was seconded by another CAB member, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**5. PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES**

**Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District**

Sergeant Beier reported that many crime categories in Sun Valley, including burglaries, vehicle

thefts, and robberies, are trending downward. DUI arrests have increased, which he attributed to a dedicated enforcement unit actively identifying impaired drivers. He also noted an increase in shots fired incidents and shared that the Sheriff's Office is using a new drone program to help locate and respond to offenders more quickly. The drones, which can be deployed remotely, have already been used successfully, including during New Year's, and are expected to assist with issues like illegal fireworks, particularly during peak times such as weekends.

Heidi Soper asked about a serious accident recently reported on Sun Valley Boulevard involving a suspected drunk driver. Sergeant Beier said he was not familiar with the incident, noting it may have occurred while he was off duty. He explained that crashes on Sun Valley Boulevard are typically handled by Nevada Highway Patrol since it is a state route, and those incidents do not always get relayed through the Sheriff's Office.

Veronica Cortes shared appreciation for law enforcement's quick response after reporting an individual attempting to ride an illegal motorcycle, noting deputies arrived promptly even though the individual left. She emphasized the importance of that responsiveness in helping keep the community safe and expressed gratitude for the ongoing efforts to address issues and improve neighborhood conditions.

### **Washoe County Sheriff's Office**

Brett Taylor shared that Truckee Meadows Fire response statistics for Sun Valley are included in the meeting packets. He also noted that recent pile burning in the regional park has been completed, with additional burning possible in other areas as conditions allow. He encouraged residents to stay aware of smoke and report concerns so crews can verify or respond as needed.

Carol Burns asked whether any grant applications had been submitted, and Brett Taylor responded that three proposals have been put forward in different areas, focusing on new defensible space projects. He explained that identifying qualifying projects has been challenging, so they are testing innovative approaches that could benefit communities like Sun Valley. If successful, these efforts could be expanded locally, with funding decisions expected within the next month.

## **6. COUNTY MANAGER KATE THOMAS MEET & GREET**

County Manager Kate Thomas thanked attendees for their participation and emphasized the importance of community input through Citizen Advisory Boards. She shared her background in public service and explained her role as the county's chief executive, responsible for overseeing operations, supporting the Board of County Commissioners, and managing a workforce of more than 3,000 employees and a billion-dollar budget. Thomas said her current focus is on strengthening the county internally by ensuring fiscal sustainability, improving accountability, and attracting and retaining a strong workforce. She noted that while the county is not currently in financial distress, rising costs could lead to a structural deficit in the coming years if no changes are made, prompting a "hold the line" approach to spending and staffing. She also reassured the community that Citizen Advisory Boards remain a valued and essential part of county government and will continue to play a key role in shaping decisions, while affirming the county's commitment to supporting local communities like Sun Valley.

Michael Rider asked whether the interlocal agreement for Sun Valley parks had been included in the county budget. County Manager Kate Thomas responded that the budget is still in its early development stages and, while discussions have occurred, it is too soon to determine whether the

agreement has been included.

Veronica Cortes asked whether business license fees contribute to the county budget and raised concerns about unlicensed vendors selling in the community. She suggested exploring options like short-term permits for temporary vendors to ensure fairness, support local businesses, and generate additional revenue, encouraging further discussion on the issue.

Mark Neumann raised concerns about the number of unlicensed food trucks operating in Sun Valley, noting the lack of fairness to businesses that properly obtain licenses and pay fees. He also questioned how Sun Valley residents contribute to parks funding through property taxes and referenced past funding changes that led to additional local fees. County Manager Kate Thomas acknowledged the need for equity in enforcement and noted that funding mechanisms like the GID have historically been used to help address gaps in services such as parks.

Carmen Ortiz asked whether developers could be required to present projects at Citizen Advisory Board meetings again, noting that CABs are now active and well attended. She expressed concern that relying on online notices limits access for seniors and others without internet. In response, staff explained that developers are already required to hold separate community meetings, but acknowledged the concern and agreed to explore ways to better share information through CABs or other accessible formats so more residents can stay informed.

Mark Neumann raised concerns about the limited public notification process for developments, noting that outreach is often restricted to properties within 600 feet, which can leave much of the community unaware of projects. He said this can result in minimal feedback being reported to decision-makers, even when broader community interest exists, and suggested the process should be improved to better inform residents.

## **7. FIRE ADAPTED NEVADA (FAN) AND THE COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN**

Kelli Nevills explained that Fire Adapted Nevada is a multi-agency partnership focused on wildfire preparedness, prevention and long-term resilience. She said the program works with federal, state and local partners, as well as communities, to help residents better understand wildfire risk and take practical steps to improve home survivability. She emphasized that embers, not just flames, are often the greatest threat to homes, making the area closest to a structure especially important for reducing ignition risk. Nevills also challenged common misconceptions about wildfire safety, noting that even homes with fire-resistant materials can still be vulnerable if surrounding conditions are not addressed. In addition to preparedness, she stressed the importance of planning for post-fire recovery, including infrastructure, water supply and rebuilding needs. She said Fire Adapted Nevada helps connect communities with the right agencies and resources before and after a fire so they can recover more effectively and build greater resilience over time.

Brett Taylor emphasized that wildfire mitigation must be a community-wide effort, noting that individual defensible space actions are not enough if neighboring properties remain vulnerable. He encouraged residents to work together, highlighting that even small efforts, like an hour of annual maintenance per household, can contribute to becoming a recognized Firewise community and help attract additional funding and resources.

He also shared that the county is updating its Community Wildfire Protection Plan using a new, continuously updated system that incorporates local data and community input. Taylor stressed the importance of public participation in shaping the plan, which will guide future mitigation efforts, funding opportunities and resource allocation to better protect communities like Sun Valley from wildfire risk.

Carol Burns asked whether a past program that helped residents clean up their properties for fire mitigation might return. Brett Taylor said those types of community cleanups are largely dependent on grant funding and can be difficult to sustain, but they aim to continue them when possible. He emphasized that success depends on community participation and buy-in, noting that coordinated, neighborhood-wide efforts are more effective than isolated property work.

Mike Refty shared that removing junipers near a home not only improves fire safety but also reduced his family member's insurance premium. Brett Taylor agreed, explaining that insurers are increasingly factoring wildfire risk into coverage decisions. He said proactive mitigation, such as clearing vegetation around homes, can help lower premiums and reduce the likelihood of losing coverage, as insurers are more likely to retain policies for properties where risk has been reduced. Kelli Nevills added that participation in Firewise USA can help homeowners reduce insurance costs, noting that some insurers, including USAA, recognize Firewise certification. She said residents can also request defensible space inspections, implement recommended improvements and provide documentation to their insurance providers to potentially lower premiums. Nevills noted that state-level efforts are underway to encourage more insurance companies to recognize these mitigation efforts.

A resident asked whether only eight homes are needed to form a Firewise community. Kelli and Brett confirmed that a small group of homes can initiate the designation, explaining that it is a voluntary, community-led effort intended to grow over time as neighbors see the benefits and join in.

A resident noted that materials like wooden or certain composite decks can increase fire risk and affect insurance costs. Brett Taylor responded that building materials and home design play a significant role in wildfire vulnerability, highlighting newer Wildland Urban Interface building codes that improve fire resistance in newer homes. He explained that older homes may lack these protections and encouraged homeowners to assess and upgrade features like decks, siding and vents when possible. He added that the county is exploring funding opportunities to help support these types of home hardening improvements.

Sean McGrath asked whether a map showing individual Firewise-participating properties is available online. Brett Taylor clarified that maps show recognized Firewise communities, not individual homes. He explained that participation is organized at the neighborhood level, where a community lead works with residents to complete assessments, track mitigation efforts and achieve Firewise recognition, which can then be publicly identified as a Firewise community.

Veronica Cortes shared concerns about changes in insurance coverage, noting that insurers may begin separating wildfire coverage into standalone policies, potentially lowering premiums but reducing overall protection. She urged residents to review their policies carefully and said that if they receive a non-renewal notice, they should contact the Division of Insurance for assistance, emphasizing the importance of staying informed and advocating for fair coverage.

Jesus Lopez shared an opportunity for Sun Valley residents through the Washoe County Leadership Academy, offering a chance to sign up for potential home hardening assistance. He said selected participants may receive help with improvements such as vents, skirting or vegetation cleanup, though participation is not guaranteed.

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

Alex Wilson explained how the Neighborhood Development Hub works and how residents can use it to stay informed about development projects in unincorporated Washoe County. She noted the hub provides details on upcoming meetings, project descriptions, locations, developers and opportunities to submit feedback, either in person or online at any time. She emphasized that CAB meetings are one way to share this information for residents who may not have internet access, while the online portal expands access beyond the state-required 750-foot notification radius. Wilson added that residents can sign up for alerts, view meeting recordings and track project outcomes, and encouraged anyone needing help to contact staff or 311 for assistance.

Michael Rider encouraged residents to sign up for development alerts, noting they are the best way to stay informed about projects across the region. He said alerts allow residents to track and comment on developments beyond the limited notification area, helping them stay engaged and provide input on issues that may impact the broader community.

Veronica Cortes announced an upcoming meeting at 6 p.m. the next day regarding a proposal to establish density bonuses for attainable senior housing. She expressed concern about incentives for developers and encouraged attention to the discussion, emphasizing the importance of supporting seniors.

Alexandra Wilson clarified details for upcoming meetings on the Small Unit Density Incentive project, noting a virtual meeting scheduled for March 4 from 5 to 6 p.m., followed by an in-person meeting on March 5 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Washoe County Complex. She encouraged anyone interested to attend either session.

Mark Neumann raised a concern that residents living within 750 feet of a project may not receive notice if the development is in a neighboring jurisdiction, such as Sparks, even if they live in unincorporated Washoe County.

Frank Bedetto shared that shortly after moving to the area, he learned of a proposed 250-unit development nearby and was concerned about potential impacts, including road paving. In response, staff explained that information about the Chocolate Drive project is available through the county's application portal and can be accessed by searching for the project online within the appropriate district listings.

## **9. BOARD MEMBER/COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCEMENTS/ REQUESTS/ DISCUSSION AND REPORTS BACK ON ANSWERED REQUESTS -**

Commissioner Mariluz Garcia provided updates on quality of life, infrastructure and economic development efforts in Sun Valley, thanking County Manager Kate Thomas for her support and highlighting funding for a full economic development study. She shared that significant infrastructure investments are underway, including the Sun Valley Boulevard Improvement Project, pedestrian and biking improvements and park access projects, with opportunities for community input through upcoming meetings and a project website. Garcia also highlighted community-focused initiatives, including a new summer food truck series to boost local engagement and economic activity, and an upcoming community cleanup event focused on reducing fire risk and collecting items like tires and e-waste. She encouraged residents to stay informed, participate in events and take advantage of available resources.

Sean McGrath asked whether food trucks participating in local events would be properly licensed and permitted. Commissioner Mariluz Garcia confirmed that the partner organization overseeing the

events requires strict compliance, including business licenses, state requirements, tax registration and fire safety certifications for all participating vendors.

Michael

Rider

## 10. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

### ADJOURNMENT –

The meeting was adjourned at    pm.

DRAFT