



DRAFT MINUTES

Special Concurrent Hybrid Meeting City of Reno Parks and Recreation Advisory Board City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission

Thursday, April 30, 2026 • 6:00 PM

**Washoe County Chambers
1001 East Ninth Street, Building A
Reno, NV 89512**

Public Meeting Notice – Meetings are open to the public and notice is given in accordance with NRS 241.020.

1. Call To Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Chair Neal Jones.

City of Sparks Parks and Recreation Commission (Sparks PRC):

Present in person: Sheena Harvey, Terry Frugoli, Councilmember Donald Abbott

Via Zoom: Melanie "Jill" Short, Matthew Robinson

Absent: Vice Chair Megan Mentzer, Tracy Gale, Mobby Michael

City of Reno Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (Reno PRAB):

Present in person: Chair Ian Anderson, Vice Chair Marie Krueger, Karla Werninghaus, Tara Webster, Councilmember Miguel Martinez

Via Zoom: Jerry Wager, Elise Domingsil, Cheryl Guinan

Absent: Lucas Ingvaldstad, Kathleen Schneider

Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission (Washoe County OSRPC):

Present in person: Chair Neal Jones, Vice Chair Sean Hill, Tracy Kuczenski, Timothy Dake, Nicole Flangas, Commissioner Mariluz Garcia, Chaz Lehman, DDA

Via Zoom: Miles Kinsler, Kevin Joell

Absent: Chris Baker, Jennifer Uvira

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

Ms. Julie Conway spoke about her history in Washoe County and expressed support for Agenda Item 6. She thanked the members of the three boards for their work. She looked forward to hearing the presentation, saying she supported developing a service plan and identifying funding sources. She suggested that funding be sustainable over time; that it be sufficient for new facilities, maintenance of existing facilities, and the continuation of recreation services; and that it be fair for all parties. She noted the City of Reno invested in the system 100 years ago with the development of parks like Stewart Park.

6:10 p.m. Sparks City Councilmember Donald Abbott arrived in person.

Via Zoom, Ms. Iris Jehle-Peppard, Executive Director of One Truckee River, indicated that her organization recognized the need for sustainable and sufficient funding for capital improvements and ongoing maintenance for open space regionally. She expressed excitement for the prospect that will be explored in Agenda Item 6.

4. Approval of the Agenda for the April 30, 2026, Joint Parks Commission Meeting

There was no response to the call for public comment.

For the Washoe County OSRPC, Vice Chair Hill moved to approve the agenda for the April 30 Joint Parks Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Dake. The motion passed with a vote of seven for, zero against, with Commissioners Baker and Uvira absent.

For the Reno PRAB, Vice Chair Kreuger moved to approve the agenda for the April 30 Joint Parks Commission meeting, seconded by Board Member Guinan. The motion passed with a vote of seven for, zero against, with Members Ingvaldstad and Schneider absent.

For the Sparks PRC, Commissioner Harvey moved to approve the agenda for the April 30 Joint Parks Commission meeting, seconded by Commissioner Frugoli. The motion passed with a vote of four for, zero against, with Vice Chair Mentzer and Commissioners Gale and Michael absent.

5. Approval of the City of Sparks Draft Minutes for the Joint Parks Commission Meeting of June 26, 2025

There was no response to the call for public comment.

For the Sparks PRC, Commissioner Frugoli moved to approve the June 26, 2025, Joint Parks Commission minutes, seconded by Commissioner Short. The motion passed with a vote of four for, zero against, with Vice Chair Mentzer and Commissioners Gale and Michael absent.

6. Presentation and Discussion on Park District Service Plan with PROS Consulting

Nathan Ulliot, City of Reno Parks and Recreation Director, cautioned against visualizing what could be, saying this item would focus on what has already been done, including updates about public and stakeholder feedback, as well as some of the things allowed under the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS). He believed that a framework would be ready to be presented in a few months.

Leon Younger, President of PROS Consulting, Inc., reminded the attendees that PROS was responsible for preparing a study evaluating the feasibility of a service district. He conducted a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed slides with the following titles: Agenda; Progress Update – Where are we today?; Meeting Objectives & Groundrules; The Case for a Special Service District (2

slides); Stakeholder Interviews; Shareholder Feedback – Key Themes; Survey Results; Q3; Q7; Q8; Q10; Q11; Q12; Q12a; Q13; Q13a; Q13b; Online Survey; Level of Service; Operational & Capital Costs; Staffing; Maintained Acreage; Nevada Parks, and Trails and Open Space Districts.

Mr. Younger mentioned that if a special service district were created, part of PROS' work would be to determine the life cycle of all participating agencies' assets. Knowing that would help set a baseline for creating priorities. He noted that younger residents were moving into the area, and they expected parks services to be available to them.

Andy Belknap with Baker Tilly continued the presentation by reviewing the following slides: Nevada Parks, Trails and Open Space Districts; Service Plan – NRS 318A.090; Public Hearing – NRS 318A.120; Formation – NRS 318A.170; and Powers – NRS 318A.300. He stressed that there were not huge economies of scale when operating regional parks districts because most of the work was done at the ground level. Areas where economies of scale could be achieved included management, tech support, and human resources (HR). Most money is not spent in those areas, though. He said Nevada has no existing parks district, so there was no model to follow. Because Washoe County has its own planning commission, he remarked, it would make the final decision about establishing a special service district based on the actions of the other local governments.

Mike Shellito with PROS summarized that a special service district was feasible, though it would be up to the jurisdictions to decide whether they should do it. He reviewed slides entitled Summary of Key Findings and Guiding Principles & Goals. He noted that certain funding elements would be determined in the Service Plan, and he expected PROS to propose several options to fund it, among them forming Joint Powers Authority. Mr. Younger concluded the presentation by reviewing the What's Next slide.

OSRPC Chair Jones stated that 75 percent of most organizations' budgets go towards personnel costs, and he wondered how to balance that without losing any employees. Mr. Younger replied that part of PROS' work will be to evaluate the cost per experience and cost per acre to determine the effectiveness of the agencies. Partnerships also contribute greatly to making parks districts work, he stated, and there are great organizations in the area.

OSRPC Commissioner Flangas asked about the options provided to survey respondents pertaining to possible additional charges. Mr. Younger felt that the survey results showed people were willing to pay more money into the system, even without knowing what it would be spent on. Regarding the relationship between the potential Board of Trustees and the jurisdictions' existing planning commissions, Mr. Belknap responded that that is currently unknown since there are no other parks districts in the state, but ultimately there would be independently elected trustees on the Board. He anticipated that local planning commissions would review the projects proposed by the parks district, and details about that could be included in the agreement between the three governmental agencies.

Washoe County Commissioner Garcia believed the significant number of respondents to the two surveys provided a good litmus test for the proposal. She wondered when consideration would be given to the various labor unions involved with all the combined employees. Mr. Belknap emphasized the importance of involving employees early in the process. While one goal was to ensure that no employees would be worse off, he recognized that it would be challenging since each jurisdiction uses different collective bargaining agreements, so a working group of HR executives and collective bargaining group representatives would be important. Attorneys would also need to be involved as the process of consolidation was very challenging.

In response to OSRPC Vice Chair Hill's question about the makeup of the parks district staff, Mr. Belknap said the idea was that all employees would transition to be employed by the new district under terms that were no worse than their current terms. Pursuant to NRS, cities and counties can

dedicate resources, land, and facilities to a new district, though that was also challenging because some land holdings were originally dedicated to the agencies with certain requirements. He added that land could be transferred by fee titles, leases, or through some type of agreement that is faithful to how the lands were originally conveyed to the public. This would be complicated, as would respecting the existing contracts between each jurisdiction and various vendors.

Replying to additional board member questions, Mr. Younger said inequity can only be overcome by identifying areas where it exists and overcoming it, possibly through a master plan. PROS tries to build any adopted plans into the service district. He was heartened to see the willingness of users of all three park systems as well as the leadership of each agency to share.

Reno PRAB Member Webster asked how the creation of a parks district would affect implementation of the heat mitigation plan pursuant Assembly Bill 96. Mr. Belknap said he expected parks to play a large role in any heat mitigation plan by being included in regional planning; he thought that could be included in the foundational agreement for the district.

Commissioner Flangas thought it would not be wise to set a ceiling for funding by tying contributions to an arbitrary rate. Mr. Belknap agreed and felt it would be prudent to work with the State to loosen restrictions on what local governments can do. The State created this statute with the specific hope that a special district might be created. He acknowledged that revenue options were very limited, particularly with property taxes being at the cap.

Responding to Commissioner Garcia's query about whether the district would need to be put before voters, Mr. Belknap said the jurisdictions had the authority to create one, but voters would likely need to approve measures to increase the revenue necessary to support it.

Sparks City Councilmember Abbott wondered whether the general improvement districts (GIDs) were contacted. Mr. Belknap responded that they reached out to the Sun Valley GID, who had previously implemented an assessment to support parks, and they planned to contact the Incline Village GID. There were not many other options under NRS. He confirmed that the additional \$25 charge referenced in the presentation was only one option, and the consultants planned to explore at least four different options for funding. Under a consolidated parks district, all ratepayers would eventually pay roughly the same amount, though that would not occur immediately.

Reno City Councilmember Martinez inquired about the level of trustee involvement in the land use process. Mr. Belknap noted they would not have land use authority, but they could work closely with the entities' planning departments. PROS will review all existing parks' master plans and use them as a starting point for the new district, though he imagined the new district would eventually create a regional parks master plan. They could then share that with the planning commissions to inform them of their vision. He stressed the importance of intergovernmental coordination. Mr. Younger spoke about his experience as a special service district director in Ohio and how that district worked with planning commissions.

Councilmember Martinez inquired about the makeup of the trustee board. Mr. Belknap explained that the NRS spells out how the initial appointments are made by the local governments, noting that it would eventually transition to an independent district where trustees are elected every two years. Some trustees would start with two-years terms and others four-year terms. The legislation was very general and did not specifically consider three agencies forming one district.

Vice Chair Hill asked about staffing. Mr. Belknap said the district could contract with Washoe County for HR and payroll services, but they should have freedom to determine the best way to deliver support services. It would make sense to contract with one or two agencies, though they could opt to provide those services internally. There will be many ad hoc committees to determine those details.

OSRPC Commissioner Kuczenski wondered whether the staff members who were interviewed were interested in a consolidated district. Mr. Belknap thought they would have a lot of questions, but he reiterated the pledge to ensure that nobody would be worse off afterwards. In fact, some could end up better off under one district.

Councilmember Abbott asked about a potential exit plan. Mr. Belknap stated any created district could be dissolved, and he believed the local governments would want to know what would happen if it did not work as intended. Because the governing bodies would appoint the first five trustees, there would be a close link between the district and the agencies at the beginning. He thought that was intentional. Amendments addressing dissolution could be included in the district's founding documents. He pointed out that other districts had dissolved, usually due to insolvency or looming insolvency.

Chair Jones recognized that handling things like land acquisition and cooperative agreements between the governmental agencies would be complex, but the public seemed to enthusiastically support the idea. All three bodies need to seriously consider this, he felt.

7. Public Comment

Ms. Julie Conway thanked the members for their thoughtful questions. She knew when this was passed in 2017 that it would not be easy. She commended the consultants for their work, adding that she was encouraged by the results. She spoke about collaboration between the three governments in addressing the unhoused crisis and transportation issues. She expressed gratitude to the elected officials for their support, opining that not doing anything was not an option. She said it took Bozeman, Montana, five years to create their district and thanked everyone for their time on this important issue.

Mr. Mac Rossi felt that charging renters, many of whom used regional parks, a fee could be an additional source of revenue.

Ms. Tina Nappe recalled that Rancho San Rafael Park required a vote of the people. She expressed excitement for the process, which she thought was worthwhile because the parks were desperate for attention. She was unsure whether all parks would ever be fully maintained, and there was already a lack of amenities like soccer fields, pickleball courts, and spaces for events. She expressed concern that the directive to focus on maintenance over expansion would result in no new park acquisitions.

Ms. Karen Mullen expressed appreciation for PROS Consulting's recognition of the strained budgets and their assurance that staff would be protected. She encouraged the Board to proceed and hear all options for funding, adding that people in the community had a desire for new parks, more open space, and better facility maintenance. She felt that a parks district would be beneficial for young people and future generations, and it would help address environmental concerns.

Ms. Iris Jehle-Peppard stressed the importance of this issue on the Truckee River, which is critical to the region as it comprises 80 percent of the area's drinking water. There are currently very few resources available for the river, she noted, and though the issue is complicated, the region and the community deserve for the process to be pursued.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m. by Washoe County Open Space and Regional Parks Commission Chair Neal Jones.