

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

TUESDAY

10:00 A.M.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

PRESENT:

Bob Lucey, Chair

Marsha Berkbigler, Vice Chair

Kitty Jung, Commissioner (via telephone)

Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner

Jeanne Herman, Commissioner

Nancy Parent, County Clerk

Eric Brown, County Manager

David Watts-Vial, Assistant District Attorney (via Zoom)

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 10:00 a.m. in regular session in the 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, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

**20-0650      AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.**

Mr. Hugh Ezzell said he arrived at the Washoe County Administrative Complex early that morning and observed many County offices were open, as were restaurants and stores throughout the State. He wondered why the County's Building and Community Services Departments were not open to the public. He observed both departments were important to the community. He acknowledged both departments conducted business by phone and email, but the offices were closed to the public. He opined those departments needed to reopen.

A voicemail from Ms. Annemarie Grant was played in Chambers. She shared the Commissioners' salaries. She played part of the audio recording of her brother's arrest. She noted a County jail inmate had tested positive for COVID-19, so she asked about the safety precautions taken to ensure inmates were safe from illness and infection.

Ms. Parent read an email by Ms. Elise Weatherly. In it, Ms. Weatherly spoke about God, Grace Community Church, and Pastor John F. MacArthur.

As read by Ms. Parent, Mr. Daniel Purdy alleged his brother Thomas Purdy was murdered in the County jail. He thought the Commissioners needed to think about community members instead of focusing on their next election. He urged the Board to protect community members from police brutality by ensuring policies were followed at the jail.

Adjustment. Chair Lucey disagreed with Commissioner Herman's assertion that Mr. Chesney was the only option because there were other qualified applicants from which to choose. He wanted to make his concerns known, noting he would do the same on issues regarding his district. He clarified he did not question Mr. Chesney's qualifications or his past performance on the Planning Commission. His concern was wanting a fair process. He opined a level of separation was needed for a fair process and equal representation across both boards.

On the call for public comment, voicemail messages were played in Chambers and the following individuals spoke in opposition to appointing Mr. Kenji Otto to the Washoe County Board of Adjustment position: Mr. Vince Marko; Ms. Michelle Butler; Ms. Rebecca Marko; and Ms. Kristen Wright. These individuals expressed concerns including: Mr. Otto not being a good fit for the position; his tendency to engage in disputes with neighbors; his history of making inappropriate and racial comments online; his values not aligning with those of the community; his propensity towards intimidation tactics when dealing with disagreements; and the availability of other qualified candidates.

Ms. Parent read emails from individuals who wrote in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Kenji Otto to the Washoe County Board of Adjustment: Ms. Irene Crouse; Ms. Sarah VanEmmerick; Ms. Bonnie Valker; Michael and Tanya Taylor; Mr. Jeff Dison; and Ms. Tracy Vasina. These individuals expressed concerns including: Mr. Otto's inappropriate treatment of women in the community; his aggressive behavior towards residents; the community's need for a representative who loved the North Valleys community; his history of verbal abuse and physical threats towards members of the community; the existence of a petition signed by several hundred community members who objected to Mr. Otto holding a community position; his history of racist comments; his harassment of community members; his attempts to make Cold Springs an unincorporated town; and his behavior being contrary to what the community considered appropriate.

Commissioner Herman moved to accept Agenda Item 10 and appoint Larry Chesney to the Washoe County Board of Adjustment. Vice Chair Berkgigler seconded the motion. The motion failed on a 2-3 vote, with Chair Lucey and Commissioners Hartung and Jung voting "no".

Chair Lucey stated he understood the complexity of the issue and had no intent to subvert Commissioner Herman, but he felt Mr. Chesney should not serve on two boards.

Chair Lucey moved to appoint Vernon S. Waligora to the Washoe County Board of Adjustment. Commissioner Jung seconded the motion. Before a vote was taken, Chair Lucey suggested Agenda Item 10 be reagendaized for a future meeting, during which Commissioner Herman could recommend a different candidate. Commissioner Herman agreed with Chair Lucey's suggestion. Chair Lucey withdrew the motion and the seconder agreed.