BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA  

TUESDAY  9:00 A.M.  SEPTEMBER 10, 2013  

PRESENT:  

David Humke, Chairman  
Bonnie Weber, Vice Chairperson*  
Marsha Berkbigler, Commissioner  
Kitty Jung, Commissioner  
Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner  
Nancy Parent, County Clerk  
John Berkich, Interim County Manager  
Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel  

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 9:01 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:  

13-777  AGENDA ITEM 3 – PUBLIC COMMENT  

Agenda Subject: “Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to three minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Commission agenda. The Commission will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Commission as a whole.”  

There was no public comment. 

13-778  AGENDA ITEM 4 – ANNOUNCEMENTS  

Agenda Subject: “Commissioners’/Manager’s Announcements, Requests for Information, Topics for Future Agendas, Statements Relating to Items Not on the Agenda and any ideas and suggestions for greater efficiency, cost effectiveness and innovation in County government. (No discussion among Commissioners will take place on this item.)”  

Commissioner Hartung asked about the status of a report regarding combining Senior and Social Services. John Berkich, Interim County Manager, said it was anticipated there would be a status report presented to the Board on September 24, 2013 or, at the latest, at the first meeting in October.
Chairman Humke said the Request Tracker Summary provided by staff showed the total number of comments for the period of August 20th through September 10, 2013. He stated it indicated 73 people were against and 11 were in support of AB 46. A copy of the Summary was placed on file with the Clerk. He said in the Reno Gazette-Journal on September 4, 2013, there was an Education Forum article by Barbara Clark, Washoe County School District (WCSD) Board of Trustees (BOT) President, which got him to thinking there were two or three ways to achieve a positive outcome for the WCSD’s capital construction needs.

*9:07 a.m.* Commissioner Weber arrived.

Chairman Humke said the WCSD’s ballot question failed in 2008. He stated now the WCSD came back with AB 46, because they had said they did not want to see a vote of the people; and he felt there was something wrong with that statement. He personally felt there could never be anything wrong in consulting the people, and there was a history of 200 plus years of school districts across the nation going to the people to request money for capital construction.

Chairman Humke discussed the Regional Transportation Commission’s (RTC) Question 5 method, which was one direction the WCSD could go and was a successful example of an Advisory Ballot Question going to the Legislature. He said a Blue Ribbon Committee of approximately 30 people spent a year looking at the needs, the current revenues, and any possible revenues for the RTC. He stated a fuel indexing scheme was identified as the best way of generating revenue, and it was put on the ballot. He said the advisory ballot passed and was taken to the Legislature, who eventually approved the legislation that provided additional revenue for the roads.

Chairman Humke said another method would be to do a ballot question. He explained in the late 1990’s, the WCSD placed a question on the ballot, which failed. He stated the business community then respectfully asked the WCSD to step aside, and they created an analysis and found a revenue source. He said the WCSD, the business community, the parents, and the Board of Education joined together and got the question on the ballot. He stated they also went to the news media and talked about it everywhere in the community and, in the end, the ballot question was successful.

Chairman Humke said he challenged the WCSD to use one of those two methods, which would be a long-term solution to the problem evidenced in AB 46. He stated he did not know if AB 46 would be passed by this Commission, but a long-term solution was needed. He called upon the WCSD, the citizens, the business community, the news media, and other groups to enter into an effort to come up with a comprehensive revenue-generating stream to help with the WCSD’s capital construction and maintenance needs prior to the next Legislative Session.

Commissioner Weber said she had been discussing the County’s ordinance regarding congested and uncongested areas with the people in the Warm Springs area. She requested that ordinance be brought back sometime before the end of
the year to have conversations with the District Attorney’s Office and the Sheriff’s Office. She stated she had those conversations, but nothing seemed to be moving forward. She said the Warm Springs area had 40-acre parcels and was the only uncongested area in the County. She said she wanted to look at the ordinance to see if it was still appropriate.

Commissioner Weber said she received a detailed proposal from a local company, Intermountain Water Supply, LTD, to sell a large block of water rights to the County from nearby sources at what seemed to be a reasonable price and with good terms. She requested an action item regarding the proposal be put on the Board’s September 24, 2013 agenda, and that the District Attorney’s Office work with the seller to develop a contract acceptable to the seller and the County for the Board’s consideration. She advised there would be an evaluation of the proposal by an independent water-rights consultant for the Commissioner’s review prior to that meeting.

Commissioner Berkbigler said she received phone calls from several people who rebuilt their homes in the Caughlin Ranch area after they burned down during the Caughlin fire. She stated they were older homes that had reached full depreciation and, once their homes were rebuilt, their property taxes tripled. She said it was an act of nature that burned their homes down and not something they did. She requested staff look into whether there was something that could be taken into consideration for homes that were burned in wildland fires.

Commissioner Berkbigler said she received phone calls from several people who lived on a street just to the east of Gomm Elementary School, who were having a problem with people parking on the street when dropping off or picking up their children and during special events. She said the road was a single-lane road and the parking was creating a problem, particularly for the person on the corner, because the parents were parking in their driveway while walking their children to school. She stated she was not sure whether that was a County or a WCSD responsibility, but someone needed to look into it.

13-779 AGENDA ITEM 5 – PROCLAMATION

**Agenda Subject:** “Proclamation—September 15-21, 2013 as Healthy Living Week—Health District. (All Commission Districts)”

Commissioner Jung read the Proclamation. She said there was a complete needs analysis done two years ago, which showed the number one issue facing Washoe County was childhood obesity. She stated the school lunches were now much healthier and daycares were taught what the better eating choices for children should be. She said the other issue that was looked at was the community’s food deserts. She stated Commissioner Weber lived in Cold Springs, which was a food desert, because she was 10 to 20 miles away from a grocery store. She said the distance away from a grocery store contributed to high childhood obesity, because people did not have enough good food options available to them. She said even though the people who lived in the inner cities
had bus service, it was hard to carry bags full of groceries, and it was easier to go to a nearby fast-food restaurant. She advised one way that issue was addressed was changing the County’s ordinances to allow people to produce their own food and to allow indoor farming by means of hydroponic growing. She said the County had taken many steps, and she was proud of the work that had been done.

Kelli Seals, Health Educator, thanked the Board for the Proclamation. She said the fifth annual obesity forum would be held this year, which was expanded to include a “Healthy Living Week.” She stated she was happy about the changes that were taking place in the community. She said the epidemic of obesity and chronic diseases was like turning a huge ship, because it took a lot of work to get it to turn around. She stated the work being done at the local level, as well as at the other levels of government, would start to bring about more of that change.

Ms. Seals said as part of “Healthy Living Week,” there would be a screening and a “Weight of the Nation” event held at the University of Nevada, Reno. She stated an educational event for parents would also be held in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club. She said the events hopefully would help increase the community’s participation and knowledge, so the changes could continue.

Commissioner Weber said there had been a lot of discussions about community gardens, but she noted the regional parks were not being used for them. She felt that was an initiative that should be worked on so the people not able to have their own gardens would have a place to go. She hoped Commissioner Jung could see what could be done with that, since she was the Board’s liaison to the District Board of Health. Commissioner Jung replied that was an excellent idea, and she would ask that item be put on the District Board of Health’s agenda so they could work in conjunction with the Regional Parks and Open Spaces Department. She said she was aware there had been issues with staff and water, but maybe something could be worked out if the volunteers became involved.

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Jung, seconded by Commissioner Hartung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 5 be adopted.

CONSENT AGENDA – AGENDA ITEMS 6A THROUGH 6C

13-780 AGENDA ITEM 6A – ASSESSOR

Agenda Subject: “Approve roll change requests for errors discovered for the 2013/14, 2012/13, 2011/12, 2010/11, and 2009/10 unsecured tax rolls and authorize Chairman to execute the Order and further direct the Washoe County Treasurer to correct the error(s) and notify the taxpayer if an adjustment to the tax bill is necessary [cumulative amount of reduction $6,921.56]—Assessor. (All Commission Districts.)”
There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 6A be approved, authorized, executed, and directed.

13-781 AGENDA ITEM 6B – MANAGER

Agenda Subject: “Approve 2013 State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant [$5,850, no match required] from Nevada SERC. Grant term: August 06, 2013 through October 31, 2013; and if accepted, direct Finance to make the necessary budget adjustments--Manager. (All Commission Districts.)”

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 6B be approved, accepted, and directed.

13-782 AGENDA ITEM 6C – SENIOR SERVICES

Agenda Subject: “Accept grant supplemental award from the Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division for the following Older Americans Act Title III Programs: Nutrition Services Incentive Program [$68,268, no match required] retroactive from October 1, 2012 through December 31, 2013; and the Aging and Disability Resource Center Money Follows the Person [$16,000, no match required] retroactive from August 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014; and direct Finance to make the appropriate budget adjustments--Senior Services. (All Commission Districts.)”

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 6C be accepted and directed.

13-783 AGENDA ITEM 7 – COMMUNITY SERVICES

Agenda Subject: “Introduction and first reading of an Ordinance amending the Washoe County Code at Chapter 125 (Enforcement; Remedies; Penalties) by clarifying civil code enforcement and by modifying the current regulations for the administrative enforcement of codes including removing provisions and procedures for correction notices, notices of violation and recording such notices, and withholding permit and license approval; adding provisions and procedures for stop activity orders and remediation orders, warnings, and administrative penalty
notices; modifying provisions and procedures for judicial abatement, non-judicial abatement, summary abatement, and chronic nuisance abatement; modifying the administrative hearing procedures; adding civil action procedures; adding and clarifying certain definitions; modifying administrative enforcement penalties and fees; establishing an administrative hearing office; and, modifying the administrative hearing officer procedures. Recommendations include other matters properly relating thereto; and, if approved, set the public hearing and second reading of the Ordinance for September 24, 2013 at 6:00 p.m.--Community Services. (All Commission Districts.)”

Bob Webb, Planning Manager, said the County’s Fundamental Review project identified the County’s Administrative Enforcement process should be looked at to verify the process was viable, and to ensure minor Code violations did not end up in criminal court. He stated that meant a citizen could potentially have a criminal court conviction for a relatively minor Code violation, such as having a junk vehicle in their front yard.

Mr. Webb said there were three phases to the project. He stated the first phase was to look at the existing Administrative Enforcement Code adopted in 2009. He stated the second phase was to investigate ways to find another home for the Administrative Hearing Office, which currently functioned under Animal Services. He said the third phase was to make sure the existing County Code had the ability to use the Administrative Enforcement, Civil, and Criminal Codes as necessary to enforce the entire spectrum of Code complaints and violations; even though the focus would be on Administrative Enforcement being the first and foremost venue for minor Code violations.

Mr. Webb said for the first phase, staff met with the District Attorney’s Office and County management, where it was determined staff could proceed with looking at the current Administrative Enforcement Code to determine what was working and what was not. He said the proposed changes being looked at today included removing any provisions that were not working, which included recording a notice against a property. He stated if someone chose not to comply, for example removing a junk vehicle from their property, a notice against the property was recorded. He said when that property owner wanted to take out a loan or refinance their property, in theory, they would have to clear that recorded notice before they could proceed. He said the concern in the neighborhood was the junk vehicles remained even though the notice was filed. He advised another provision that was not working well was mediation, which was an idea put forward by the citizen’s working group in 2008/09. He said the intent of mediation was to have people work together to find a resolution regarding minor Code violations. He stated the problem was most of the time it was a County agency approaching a property owner about having a junk vehicle in their front yard.

Mr. Webb advised the tool that worked well for Animal Services was their Notice of Civil Penalty. He stated for a warning to keep a barking dog quiet would be given and, if another complaint was received, the Notice of Civil Penalty would issued,
which was a $100 administrative ticket. He said staff would like to include that type of notice into the new Administrative Enforcement process, which would be called an *Administrative Penalty Notice*. He stated an individual would be given a warning about what was wrong with their property and that they would have to correct the problem within 30 days. He said they were also informed if it was not corrected within that timeframe, the Enforcement Officer would be back to issue a $100 penalty. He stated the penalty would escalate if the violation was not corrected within the set timeframes. He said it was hoped, based on Animal Services’ *Notice of Civil Penalty*, people would comply so they could avoid paying the penalty. Mr. Webb said those were the major changes that would affect Washoe County’s citizens.

Mr. Webb said when a citizen received an *Administrative Penalty Notice*, they had the right to appeal it to an Administrative Hearing Officer (AHO). He stated the AHO would hear the case and decide if a violation existed, which was a critical component of the process. He said if there was an appeal of the AHO’s decision, the appeal would go to District Court. He stated many of the other Code changes dealt with how an appeal was handled.

Commissioner Weber said she was excited about this ordinance, because many people indicated once a complaint was made it took forever to get through the process. Mr. Webb said the hope was the changes would speed up the process. He explained the current Code mandated that the initial warning, a *Correction Notice*, be given, which provided no less than 30 days for the corrective action to take place. He discussed the next steps before the violation would be recorded, and noted that could extend the notice timeframe up to 45, 60, or 90 days. He stated the proposed Code provided for a warning of no more than 30 days. However, based on the Enforcement Officials discretion, if a case was serious and warranted less time, the notice could provide less time to make the correction. He said there was also a provision to extend the timeframe if the violator was working on the correction, but needed more time. He stated that was critical because the goal was to obtain voluntary compliance in correcting the Code violations.

Commissioner Weber asked what the timeframe was for the first, second, and third notices. Mr. Webb replied that would depend on the case, but in theory the first warning was 30 days. He said the Code indicated if a violation reoccurred within two years, they would not receive a warning. So a second notice could be issued the day after if it was not corrected and a third notice the day after that. He stated he had been talking with the Code Compliance staff, which felt giving another warning between the first and second notice with a shortened timeframe would be fairer to the citizens. Commissioner Weber said it appeared to be discretionary on the part of the Administrator on how long the time period would be. Mr. Webb said the discretionary thresholds were defined within the Code. He stated the first threshold considered if the person was actually taking action to correct the violation and would not be able to get the correction done on time for whatever reason. He said the second considered any circumstances, such as a major operation, which would prevent complying within the specified timeframe. He stated the
third was if the person came up with a plan of action that would correct the violations within a specific timeframe.

Commissioner Hartung asked who the AHO’s were. Mr. Webb replied the AHO’s were contracted employees of the County. He stated the pro-tem judge list was used to solicit people interested in being AHO’s. He said they submitted their qualifications to the Administrative Hearing Office, and the qualified people on that list were offered a contract. He stated there were seven or eight individuals who had been AHO’s since 2009. Commissioner Hartung stated it was a quasi-judicial function. Mr. Webb said the qualifications were spelled out in the Code and required either administrative hearing experience or a background in the judicial process.

Chairman Humke said the Administrative Hearing Office was located at Animal Services, and he asked if the citizens were complaining that was a loss of neutrality. Mr. Webb stated it was not necessarily due to citizen complaints, but a feeling by Animal Services and the Sheriff’s Office that the perception could be out in the community. He said if an individual wanted to appeal a ticket issued by an Animal Control Officer, the individual had to go to the Animal Services Office to request a hearing, which was held at the Animal Services Office. He said one of the proposed Code changes would be to establish the Administrative Hearing Office as a separate office.

Chairman Humke believed the Sheriff’s Office requested that they no longer manage Animal Services and that the Administrative Hearing Office function be moved. Mr. Webb said he felt they were two different issues. He said the discussion about the Administrative Hearing Office came up a couple of years ago during the Fundamental Review project. Chairman Humke stated he did not agree with the analysis that indicated the Administrative Hearing Office should be moved. He said the Family Court had an advocate’s office, which was managed by a contractor, on the same floor of the courthouse. John Berkich, Interim County Manager, said there had been discussions with the Sheriff concerning his interest in setting the Administrative Hearing Office apart from Animal Services, and perhaps developing it as a separate department. He stated an agreement was reached with the Sheriff that an item would be brought to the Board, which would seek direction to look at the alternatives regarding Animal Services’ position within the County. He agreed with Mr. Webb that was separate from this particular issue. He said there had been discussions with Mr. Webb about putting the Administrative Hearing Office under the County Manager’s Office. He stated staff could look at where the appropriate home would be for the Administrative Hearing process, while looking at the Animal Services issue if that was what the Board directed.

Chairman Humke noted it was pointed out mediation was successful in the criminal arena, and there was evidence that it served as a healing function for both victims and perpetrators. He felt in this area, which was complaint driven, the complainants had a certain anonymity. Mr. Webb said that was correct. Chairman Humke said during mediation when there was a junk car, the property owner was the offender and the Code Enforcement Officer was standing in the shoes of the complainant, which was the mediation; and he asked if that was the flaw. Mr. Webb said it was, because what
would the mediator mediate. Chairman Humke asked if it was time for the County to deviate from the complaint-driven system, and have the Code Enforcement Officers patrol in black and white vehicles. Mr. Webb said he would leave that as a policy discussion for the Commission, because it involved more than just land use, zoning, and business licenses. He stated it was about how the County looked at all of the Code violations that were dealt with in all of the Code chapters. He said the current policy of a complaint-driven process was affirmed in 2009 when the Administrative Enforcement Ordinance was first adopted. Chairman Humke said he had no plans to change that, but this was the first opportunity for the newer Commissioners to have this discussion. He advised that was why he wanted to touch on some of those past policies that still existed.

Commissioner Hartung cited an example involving storage containers, which confirmed why he felt the complaint-driven system was working well. He stated he did not see a need to change to a policing style of enforcement but, at some point, another Compliance Officer might be needed. Mr. Webb said for land use, zoning, and licensing there were two Compliance Officers, but he did not know how many there were for animal issues.

Commissioner Weber asked if the ordinance regulating storage containers had been changed and were they part of the Administrative Code. Mr. Webb said the storage containers were not, but were in Chapter 100 of the Development Code. He explained the Administrative Code allowed for the enforcement of those regulations administratively, so a storage-container violation would not have to be handled criminally and the Administrative Enforcement process could be used to gain compliance.

Nancy Parent, County Clerk, read the title for Bill No. 1699.

In response to the call for public comment, Katherine Snedigar said the Code Enforcement Officers’ actions were often extreme when it came to any violation on a property. She said some people were building a house on Pyramid Highway and the Code Enforcement Officer shut them down because the neighbor next door kept complaining. She did not believe the Code could be enforced until the house was completed, because the storage container was there to hold construction supplies, but Code Enforcement came along and said they had to get rid of it. She asked why, because no one was being harmed but the person building the house.

Commissioner Weber asked if there was an issue with Code Enforcement or Building and Safety. Mr. Webb said he would have to get the address, because it could be either. He stated he would look into it and would report back to the Commission. He said the new Code provisions allowed an individual to have a storage container to store the building materials in conjunction with an active building permit. He explained 30 days after a Certificate of Occupancy was issued, the storage container must be removed or located permanently according to the applicable sections of the Code. Commissioner Weber asked in cases where people continually called in complaints, did the County always react to those complaints. Mr. Webb said a complaint received for land use, zoning, and licensing was investigated. He stated if the complaint was warranted, the
Compliance Officer would contact the tenant or the property owner to resolve the Code violation. He said if the complaint was determined to be unfounded, there would be no contact with the property owner or the tenant and the complainant would be contacted and informed the complaint was not valid. He noted Building and Safety had its own inspectors who acted as Compliance Officers, but the same process would be followed when investigating complaints.

Bill No. 1699, entitled, "AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE WASHOE COUNTY CODE AT CHAPTER 125 (ENFORCEMENT; REMEDIES; PENALTIES) BY CLARIFYING CIVIL CODE ENFORCEMENT AND BY MODIFYING THE CURRENT REGULATIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE ENFORCEMENT OF CODES INCLUDING REMOVING PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR CORRECTION NOTICES, NOTICES OF VIOLATION AND RECORDING SUCH NOTICES, AND WITHHOLDING PERMIT AND LICENSE APPROVAL; ADDING PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR STOP ACTIVITY ORDERS AND REMEDIATION ORDERS; WARNINGS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY NOTICES; MODIFYING PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR JUDICIAL ABATEMENT, NON-JUDICIAL ABATEMENT, SUMMARY ABATEMENT, AND CHRONIC NUISANCE ABATEMENT; MODIFYING THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING PROCEDURES; ADDING CIVIL ACTION PROCEDURES; ADDING AND CLARIFYING CERTAIN DEFINITIONS; MODIFYING ADMINISTRATIVE ENFORCEMENT PENALTIES AND FEES; ESTABLISHING AN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING OFFICE; AND, MODIFYING THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING OFFICER PROCEDURES. RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE OTHER MATTERS PROPERLY RELATING THERETO," was introduced by Commissioner Hartung, and legal notice for final action of adoption was directed.

13-784 AGENDA ITEM 8 – APPEARANCE

Agenda Subject: “Appearance: Heather Renschler, Ralph Andersen & Associates. Status and update on Washoe County Manager Recruitment.”

Heather Renschler, Ralph Andersen & Associates President and Chief Executive Officer, said September 6, 2013 was the suggested closing date for accepting applications, 40 resumes had been received and she had started the screening process. She said applications would still be taken because some important conferences were coming up. She said she had appointments with several candidates at the Nevada Association of Counties (NACO) conference and at the International City County Management Association conference in Boston, MA. She stated at the beginning of October, she would be back to discuss the candidates with the Board to determine who they wanted to bring back for the panel interviews. She said while she was here today, she would be working with Human Resources to further refine the panel interviews, which would be held on October 17th and 18th. She noted she was not yet prepared to release any names or provide any details that would expose anyone’s confidentiality.
Chairman Humke asked if 40 candidates was a normal number for a county like Washoe County. Ms. Renschler said it was at the lower end of what was normal, partly because the interviews would be conducted in a public session. She stated some candidates did not want to expose themselves to the public interview process unless they were under key consideration. Chairman Humke asked how many people expressed interest and then did not apply. Ms. Renschler said some of those numbers would not get to her, because they never submitted an application. She stated at least five to six candidates declined to submit as they became more aware their name would come out due to the public interviews. Commissioner Weber said the interviews had to be conducted in public by law. John Berkich, Interim County Manager, said Legal Counsel worked with Ms. Renschler to ensure the process met the letter of law, and to protect people as much as possible up until the time the names had to be released. Ms. Renschler advised candidates signed a release form, so they were fully aware their material would be posted as part of the agenda packet.

Commissioner Hartung asked how many candidates were local. Ms. Renschler replied 14 lived within the State, but not all of them held a position with a governmental entity. She said she was looking for a combination of oversight, size and scope, management and leadership philosophy, and past career history; and how that blended with the brochure that indicated what the Board’s desired characteristics were. She stated she was in the process of doing personal, Skype, or telephone interviews to collect more information, which would allow those assessments to be made. Commissioner Hartung asked how many of the 14 candidates were from Northern Nevada and would be familiar with the region’s dynamics. Ms. Renschler replied six to eight. She noted a couple of other candidates had prior experience in Nevada, but now resided in another state.

Chairman Humke asked if there was anything the Commissioners needed to do. Ms. Renschler said they should let her know of any potential candidates they became aware of.

There was no public comment or action taken on this item.

13-785  **AGENDA ITEM 9 – COMMUNITY SERVICES**

*Agenda Subject:* “Discussion and direction to staff regarding Washoe County’s participation in a process to develop pending federal legislation designed to prevent the endangered species listing of Sage Grouse, and to identify public lands that may have a future public or private use and to assure such efforts also serve to satisfy the requirements under AB 227 and the Nevada Land Transfer Task Force formed to address the transfer of public lands from the federal government to the State of Nevada—Community Services. (All Commission Districts.) Requested by Commissioner Hartung.”
Bill Whitney, Planning and Development Division Director, said there were two different efforts that had some overlap. He stated the first was the statewide effort to deal with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services court ordered 2015 date on rendering a decision on the Sage Grouse as an endangered species. He said the second effort was the Nevada Land Transfer Task Force study on transferring public lands from the federal government to the State of Nevada. He advised it was important for the County to engage in both efforts and their overlap provided the Board the opportunity to develop a list of federal lands that would make sense to transfer out of federal ownership for local government use and for potential economic development.

Mr. Whitney said Nevada’s congressional delegation was looking to take proactive steps to address the situation regarding the federal Sage Grouse legislation. He said Senators Reid and Heller were jointly considering federal legislation to look at the concept of selecting public lands that already had a special designation. He said those lands could be compared to the critical Sage Grouse habitats to see where overlaps occurred. He stated those lands could then be put under an appropriate federal designation to protect the critical habitat of the Sage Grouse and to potentially reduce the total amount of federal acreage that would be restricted from future development. He stated protecting the critical Sage Grouse habitat was the environmental side of the federal legislation.

Mr. Whitney said the other side of the proposed federal legislation was the opportunity to support economic development efforts through the release of selected federal lands, which would typically be lands close to existing community services and infrastructure and did not encompass development restraints.

Mr. Whitney said another item was the Nevada Land Transfer Task Force, which Commissioner Hartung was the County’s representative to. He stated some county representatives were already stating the general positions of their respective commissions. He advised Commissioner Hartung felt it was important this Commission start that dialog. He said Washoe County’s position could be to present a list of public lands it would like to see released from federal ownership for economic development purposes. It could also include any policy statements relating to the potential physical impacts to the State and to the County, based on the idea of taking over the management of public lands from the federal government. He said the bulleted items on Page 3 of the staff report dated August 30, 2013 addressed Commissioner Hartung’s initial concerns.

Mr. Whitney said staff’s recommendation was to hold a workshop to gather public input. He stated staff would return to the Board with that information, so a subsequent meeting or workshop in October or November could be scheduled to discuss the information gathered before submitting it to the State’s congressional delegation.

Mr. Whitney said he was aware Commissioner Hartung wanted to get the Board’s input regarding the Nevada Land Transfer Task Force, and he included a preliminary list of federal lands for the Board’s review.
Commissioner Hartung said he recognized the Nevada Land Transfer Task Force legislation did not provide for an alternate, but wisdom dictated the Board should appoint Commissioner Weber as the alternate to attend and at least be a part of the conversations. Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel, said the appointment of alternates was not appropriate unless the ordinance or statute creating the public body expressly provided for them. He recollected the Nevada Land Transfer Task Force law made no such provision. He had been informed some agencies appointed alternates, but he was not aware of any means by which they could do so.

Commissioner Hartung said during the last meeting of the Task Force, the group was urged to come up with lands they wanted moved under their control. He stated the County had more land than it would know what to do with. He suggested drawing a circle with a 20 or 30 mile radius out from the center of the two local municipalities to see what lands in that area the County might want to have control over. He said in addition to the concerns he already raised, if the Sage Grouse were listed as an endangered species, would their management remain under the control of the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) or would they fall under the County’s control. He stated if they fell under the County’s control, would the County have to pay for that management. He noted during the last meeting, Lincoln County suggested they wanted all of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in their county under their control. He said doing that in Washoe County was not something the County could afford.

Commissioner Hartung asked if a parcel right off Pyramid Highway was added to the list, because the City of Sparks wanted a cemetery within the City’s boundaries and they felt that would be a good place for it. Mr. Whitney said it was a section of land between Pyramid Highway and Sun Valley in Township 20, Range 20, and Section 29. He said the list he provided had not been fully vetted by all of the County’s departments or any of the federal agencies.

Commissioner Weber said the Sage Grouse issue had been going on a long time and was being dealt with by the Nevada Association of Counties (NACO), the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the Western Interstate Region (WIR). She stated the list of concerns needed to include whether the County wanted to see the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) revenues go away. She said there would be a conversation about Senator Reid’s and Senator Heller’s proposal at Lake Tahoe on Thursday. She noted she was concerned if Washoe County did not take action to at least designate what lands the County wanted, the federal government would come in and tell the County what it would be receiving.

Commissioner Hartung said the Sage Grouse issue involved national legislation and, if the Sage Grouse were put on the national Endangered Species List, all the rules would change, and those lands would have to be set aside regardless of what the Board’s intent was.

10:38 a.m. Chairman Humke left the meeting and Vice Chairperson Weber assumed the gavel.
Mr. Whitney confirmed the listing of the Sage Grouse would happen at the national level, but the State of Nevada and the local governments had been involved in this issue for a long time in an attempt to preserve critical Sage Grouse habitat statewide so they would not be listed as an endangered species.

Commissioner Berkbigler said during discussions on the Interstate Highway 11 project, the location of the proposed wilderness area was at the top of Washoe County where it abutted Oregon. She asked if Sage Grouse were found all over the Great Basin, why was there a concern about protecting them. Mr. Whitney said that was an age-old question but, when a species’ habitat was being reduced by whatever means, and the species’ numbers were dropping perceptibly, then the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services got involved.

Vice Chairperson Weber asked if the Sage Grouse helped reduce the fuels that contributed to wildland fires. Mr. Whitney said the Sage Grouse were a Sagebrush obligate species, which meant that was where they lived and reproduced. He stated what he heard over the years was the grazing of livestock on public lands helped keep the Sagebrush habitat healthy, which some people agreed with and some did not. Commissioner Berkbigler said the same argument was made regarding the Mule Deer habitat. She stated she believed it was any excuse that could be found to stop growth and development in the State. Vice Chairperson Weber said Marcus Faust suggested remembering what happened in Clark County when the Desert Tortoise were put on the Endangered Species List. She stated if the Sage Grouse were put on the Endangered Species List, there should be some consideration on what that would do to Washoe County’s economy and to the County itself.

Commissioner Hartung said the County had no control over the animals that were added to the Endangered Species List. He stated it could be demonstrated the Sage Grouse’s numbers were strong in Nevada, but he did not believe that would exempt Nevada from the Sage Grouse being on the Endangered Species List.

Commissioner Hartung asked if the proposed workshop would exclude the Board. Mr. Whitney said he was open to direction regarding whether or not the workshop would be held before the Board. Commissioner Hartung stated he had no preference, but he would like to know what ideas the people presented. He felt a lot of people would be present, because they would not want to be stopped from riding their motorcycles on the public lands and that sort of thing. Mr. Whitney said the workshop should focus on the economic development aspects of the federal legislation. He stated as Commissioner Hartung pointed out, the County had no influence on the environmental side of the legislation. He said he did not want to mislead the citizens into thinking they could influence the federal Sage Grouse legislation. He felt the workshop should be focused on what input the County could put into the federal legislation regarding the public lands the County wanted. Commissioner Hartung said the public should be provided the contact information for the Senators working on the Endangered Species Act. Vice Chairperson Weber agreed the public should be made aware of what the Commission could and could...
not do. She suggested inviting the Washoe County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife members to the workshop.

In response to the call for public comment, Katherine Snedigar said only 8 percent of Nevada’s land was owned by the public, while the rest was owned by the federal government. She asked the Board to reconsider not taking on lands just because they were not suitable for a shopping mall or a subdivision, because they could still be used by Washoe County’s people. She said a fee could be charged for people to ride their off-road vehicles on the public lands, and she was sick of the federal government trying to take over everything.

Jeanne Herman discussed the Nevada Plan, which was a plan to get the lands under federal control under Nevada’s control. She said it was a great Plan and the County should consider it. She stated the State was losing a lot of tax monies and fees, which might alleviate some of the shortages being experienced right now.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Berkbigler, which motion duly carried with Chairman Humke absent, it was ordered that staff’s report be accepted and that staff be directed to initiate the workshop outside of the Board at the earliest date possible.

Mr. Whitney said staff would bring the information collected during the workshop back to the Board for discussion.

13-786 AGENDA ITEM 11 – COMMUNITY SERVICES

Agenda Subject: “Authorize the Chairman to recommend approval of Water Rights Application 82959 to the Nevada State Engineer, proposing to change the point of diversion, place and manner of use of 1.0 acre-feet of Lake Tahoe water rights (via Glenbrook Creek and tributaries) from Douglas County to Washoe County—Community Services. (Commission District 1.)”

11:00 a.m. Commissioner Hartung left the meeting.

Vahid Behmaram, Water Rights Manager, said this was a routine matter required by Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) to move water from Douglas County to Washoe County.

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Jung, seconded by Commissioner Berkbigler, which motion duly carried with Commissioner Hartung and Chairman Humke absent, it was ordered that Agenda Item 11 be authorized.
AGENDA ITEM 10 – DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Agenda Subject: “Discussion and possible action to direct the filing of a petition in state district court under Ch. 43 of the Nevada Revised Statutes for a judicial determination of the constitutional validity of the County’s possible imposition of a one-quarter of one percent on gross revenue from retail sales (sales tax) and an ad valorem tax of 5 cents on each $100 of assessed valuation of taxable property (property tax) as authorized by AB 46 of the 2013 Nevada Legislature--District Attorney. (All Commission Districts.)”

Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel, said one way to get to the bottom of some of the questions asked about the constitutionality of AB 46, would be to ask District Court to confirm the County’s authority to impose the taxes in AB 46. Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 43 was the Judicial Confirmation Chapter, which was designed to allow the local governing bodies to obtain answers to important questions about the extent of their powers prior to their exercising those powers. He stated questions came up a lot during bond issuances and when a local government was about to do something that would have broad and significant impacts and desired to know up front whether the legal authority to do so existed.

11:05 a.m. Commissioner Hartung returned.

Mr. Lipparelli stated it was possible this process might ferret out the legal issues raised about the constitutionality of AB 46, and provide an answer to the County regarding its validity prior to the time the County had to act on the taxes, which was by January 2014. He said the process involved filing the petition, holding a hearing with the opportunity for interested persons to participate, and then a process to review the judgment by the Supreme Court, which must take place 30 days from the time District Court made a decision. He said if the Board was interested in pursuing this approach, the Board could make a motion to direct the petition be filed, and the District Attorney’s office would undertake that as quickly as possible so it could get in front of the judge at the earliest opportunity. Commissioner Berkbigler asked if there was time to get an opinion by the October sales tax deadline. Mr. Lipparelli believed there would be time, but it would be close. He said filing the petition started the process, but it had to be published once a week for five consecutive weeks and posted 30 days prior to the hearing. He stated the noticing periods would consume most of September and October, and could push the Board being able to take action right to the limit for the enactment of the ordinances.

Commissioner Hartung stated there was not just the question of the two-thirds majority vote, but that AB 46 circumvented the voters in Nevada. He stated he was not sure that was a constitutional issue or not. He asked how broad the question could be. Mr. Lipparelli replied it could be as broad as the Board wanted it to be. He understood the main issue about the constitutionality involved whether the Legislature had the authority to authorize subordinate units of government to impose taxes when, if when it acted by itself, it would have to do it with a two-thirds vote. He said AB 46 required this
Board to approve the taxes with a two-thirds vote. He stated the question was did the initial enactment of AB 46 by the Legislature require a two-thirds vote based on Article 4, Section 18 of the State Constitution. He said if the Board was aware of other legal questions raised about AB 46, now was the time to get them answered.

Commissioner Berkbigler asked about one elected board raising taxes for another elected board over which they had no oversight, and was that essentially the same question. Mr. Lipparelli said that was a new question in terms of the constitutional inquiries. He stated as a matter of public policy, there were questions about the wisdom of one board raising taxes and giving the money to another body to spend. He believed there were analogous situations in State law where the Board of County Commissioners enacted the tax, which was then spent by another body. He said the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) came to mind as an example of that. He stated that question could be added, but the more complicated the process, the less likely there would be an answer within the timeframe available. Commissioner Berkbigler felt that was legal under the two-thirds scenario or under a vote of the people. She said after thinking about it, both the gas tax and the railroad trench were monies raised by the County, but the monies went under the direction of another entity.

Commissioner Berkbigler asked how this impacted the Dillon’s Rule issue in Nevada, and was that something the courts would address. Mr. Lipparelli advised he did not see a Dillon’s Rule issue, because Dillon’s Rule operated when the County was trying to do something that it did not have the express authority to do. He said if the County came up with the idea for raising taxes for the Washoe County School District’s (WCSD’s) capital projects, Dillon’s Rule would apply because the County did not have the authority to do tax increases without the express authority of the Legislature. He stated AB 46 was an express authorization by the Legislature for the County to raise the taxes.

Commissioner Hartung asked about exceeding the statutory tax cap, and should that also be a question for judicial review. Mr. Lipparelli said the $3.64 cap was a statutory cap, which the Legislature expressly authorized Washoe County to exceed. He stated he did not see that as a problem because the constitutional cap was $5 per $100, which this was well within, and he did not see that was a question the courts needed to address.

John Slaughter, Acting Assistant County Manager, advised AB 46 passed both houses by a two-thirds vote.

Vice Chairperson Weber asked Mr. Lipparelli to go over the timeframe again, especially if there was an appeal. Mr. Lipparelli said the petition would be filed and then notice would be given by placing the notice in a newspaper, which would encompass four weeks and one day if it was worked out correctly. He said the biggest problem would be getting a hearing on the Court’s calendar within the available timeframe. He stated the Court could be asked to treat the petition as a special matter and to schedule the hearing as quickly as possible, but there was no guarantee they would.
said the 30-day review period occurred after the Court ruled on the case, but any appeal would almost certainly push this out beyond the available timeframe. He stated if there was an appeal, it would be the end of the game.

Commissioner Jung said the County did not need to have the Court’s decision by October 22nd, as long as it was received by December 10th or later if the Board held a special meeting. She stated the Board could always move forward with the ordinances and could ultimately vote no in December at the second reading if the Commissioners were not satisfied or the judge said no. She said at least all of the options would be on the table and the Board would not be putting itself in a box. Mr. Lipparelli said it would take some thought to determine when the meetings could be held within the required timeframes. He stated it took two readings to adopt an ordinance and the sales tax had to be authorized by ordinance. He said regarding the property tax, a levy needed to be done in one meeting instead of two. He stated the County was mandated to arrange for the sale tax to be collected by the State and there was a timeframe for putting an agreement with the State in place. He said there was also the ultimate January 2014 deadline. He said it would be tight.

Vice Chairperson Weber said one of her concerns was how much of the County’s staff time was being used to get information on an issue the County did not ask for. She stated her second concern was whatever decision came down to the Board, ethically she did not feel she had the right to vote on this issue. She said because of that she did not know if she could support a vote on this today.

Commissioner Berkbigler said she understood Vice Chairperson Weber’s concerns but, as she understood Dillon’s Rule, the Commission was an extension of the Legislature and they could direct the Commission to do whatever they wanted unless it was written in the constitution that they could not. She believed that was the real underlying legal question.

Commissioner Hartung agreed he would like to have the judicial review done, but he also agreed with the ethical issue of circumventing the voters. He said he was very uncomfortable the voters in Washoe County were being circumvented, especially when the bond issue in 2008 failed to pass by nearly 55 percent. He felt it was incumbent on the Board to seek a judicial review, because the answer might be this was constitutionally out of bounds. Commissioner Jung agreed with doing the judicial review, but the ordinances should not be held up while it was being done. She said if the Legislature could not make the decision and the Commissioners said they could not make one either that meant the Commission was no better than the Legislature. She stated within the McCarran ring where the oldest schools were located, the 2008 bond issue overwhelmingly passed. She said the unincorporated areas brought down the vote.

Commissioner Jung said this Commission had gone against the will of the people when they were asked if there should be more or less regionalization and the vote was overwhelmingly for regionalization, but still the fire departments were deconsolidated. She said there had been many advisory votes where the Legislature did
not act on them. She stated she did not believe if the Board went to the people to see if they would advise the Legislature to take this on, it would make much of a difference. She said the Board was elected to do a job based on the information available, and she agreed about petitioning District Court; but staff should also work on a plan to move forward, so this did not get held up, which she felt would be disrespectful to the taxpayers. She said the number one economic indicator based on research done by the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) indicated excellent companies could not be recruited to come to the region because there were not enough talented individuals here to do the jobs, and the talented people they wanted to bring to the area refused to come due to the area’s K-12 performance. She stated this was the beginning of turning things around whether or not everyone agreed with it. She asked staff be directed to put everything together, because she felt it was incumbent for staff to leave the Commissioners with options.

Commissioner Jung said she was not sure she was for this either. She asked if the Commissioners should stay away from telling anyone how they would vote until there was a full public hearing. Mr. Lipparelli stated due process required that a person with something at stake have the chance to present their case to the board that would make the decision. He said board members were often advised by their legal counsel not to make up their minds before the hearing took place, so they had the benefit of all testimony and evidence prior to making a decision. He said the passing of an ordinance was a legislative act and as such, there was not one single evidentiary hearing that was the critical time for the presentation of evidence. He stated that meant a county commissioner or a state legislator could state their position upfront before any hearings were held without violating any legal mandate. He said some people might say it was not wise politically to announce a position before all the evidence was in, but legally this was not like deciding a Special Use Permit appeal or some other item where the Board was sitting as a quasi-judicial body.

Commissioner Jung asked if going to District Court would only apply to this case or would it be precedent setting and would have major implications across the State. Mr. Lipparelli said the District Court bound by its decision those people who were a party to the case. He stated when a case was appealed to the Nevada Supreme Court, the appeal resulted in a published decision. He said that decision then became part of the body of case law for the entire State and could potentially be precedential if the same set of facts and the same legal issues arose. He stated that case could be looked at as binding precedent on that particular issue.

Vice Chairperson Weber commented she was only stating her opinion on this discussion regarding filing the petition. She reiterated her concerns regarding this issue.

Commissioner Berkbigler made a motion to have the Washoe County Board of Commissioners direct a petition be filed in State District Court under Chapter 43 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) for a judicial determination of the constitutional validity of the County’s possible imposition of one-quarter of one percent
on gross revenue from retail sales (sales tax) and an ad valorem tax of $.05 on each $100 of assessed valuation of taxable property (property tax) as authorized by AB 46 of the 2013 Nevada Legislature. Commissioner Hartung seconded the motion, but asked if it was wise to put dollar figures in. He said he believed AB 46 allowed the Commission to manipulate those numbers, and should only the constitutional validity of the imposition of a sales and/or property tax be looked at. Commissioner Berkbigler agreed it would be a good idea to leave numbers out of the motion. Commissioner Hartung seconded the change. He asked if that change would have any effect on the outcome. Mr. Lipparelli said the question could be asked without the actual dollars and cents but, instead could ask if any sales tax or property tax, as authorized by AB 46, was constitutional.

In response to the call for public comment, Katherine Snedigar said there was no constitutional amendment or statute that gave the Legislature the authority to give the Commission the authority to impose a tax on the taxpayers. She stated she did not waive her right to vote on this, and she never would. She discussed NRS 244 and Article 4 of the Constitution. She requested a forensic audit be done on the WCSD to see where the money went and how much they actually had.

Commissioner Weber said she had some information provided by Ms. Snedigar, which she never shared with the other Commissioners. She stated she would forward it to the Manager to forward to the Commissioners. She said she had a concern about people having the opportunity to vote on this, and she would not be supporting the motion because of the reasons she stated earlier.

On the call for the question, the vote was 3-1 with Commissioner Weber opposed and Chairman Humke absent.

13-788 AGENDA ITEM 12 – MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Agenda Subject: “Discussion and possible direction to staff on AB 46 of the 2013 Nevada Legislative Session, including but not limited to direction to staff to develop the appropriate ordinance(s) and Board of County Commission resolutions to implement the provisions of AB 46 of the 2013 Nevada Legislative Session--Management Services. (All Commission Districts.)”

Commissioner Berkbigler felt it was important the Commissioners did not take a position on AB 46 and continued to do their due diligence. She also felt it was important the Board make it clear to the public that the Board was doing what was best for Washoe County’s citizens by fully vetting this and publically getting as much information out about this process as possible.

John Berkich, Interim County Manager, noted the possible options sheet had been updated since the last meeting. He said the questions listed would be addressed by the Washoe County School District (WCSD) during the September 17, 2013 workshop. He stated there was another list containing the questions from the Board members. He said those questions were being accumulated and the answers would be
provided for the Board. He stated all of the information was being put on the County’s and the WCSD’s web sites.

In response to the call for public comment, Katherine Sneidgar said AB 46 was targeted directly at Washoe County, which meant the County’s citizens lost their right to equal protection under the constitution. She stated the Board, the Assembly, and the Governor did not get to waive her rights. She explained why this could be considered fraud or possibly racketeering. She said if the Commissioners wanted to risk incurring a personal liability for stepping outside their authority, she stated that would be a matter for the federal courts to decide; because that would be where she would go with this.

Jeanne Herman said she was sorry the Board was put in the position of having to deal with AB 46. She stated taxes were a big issue for seniors, especially if someone else could take the money and blow it. She said the WCSD was not judged for the way they spent their money or audited in any critical way.

There was no action taken on this item.
attending the Whittemore Peterson Institute’s fundraising dinner and TMWA’s annual picnic.

Commissioner Jung said she went up in the balloon Washoe County sponsored, and it was definitely a bucket-list experience.

Commissioner Berkbigler said she would not be present for the September 24, 2013 meeting and would not be in a position to call in.

Commissioner Weber said it was a joy to go to the Great Reno Balloon Race. She thanked Commissioner Jung for bringing that sponsorship opportunity to the Board and was glad the County was able to be a sponsor. She said Burning Man and the Reno Air Races had a great economic impact on Washoe County.

Commissioner Hartung noted the County’s sponsorship of the Great Reno Balloon Race was the use of Rancho San Rafael Regional Park. He suggested the County participate in other future events in that manner. He said the event had been compared on numerous occasions to the balloon festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

13-790 AGENDA ITEM 14 – CLOSED SESSION

Agenda Subject: “Possible Closed Session for the purpose of discussing labor negotiations with Washoe County, Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and/or Sierra Fire Protection District per NRS 288.220.”

There was no closed session required.

13-791 AGENDA ITEM 16 – PUBLIC COMMENT

Agenda Subject: “Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to three minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Commission agenda. The Commission will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Commission as a whole.”

There was no response to the call for public comment.
12:07 p.m. There being no further business to discuss, on motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Berkbigler, which motion duly carried, the meeting was adjourned.

DAVID HUMKE, Chairman
Washoe County Commission

NANCY PARENT, County Clerk and
Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners

Minutes Prepared by:
Jan Frazzetta, Deputy County Clerk