

**COMMUNITY HOMELESSNESS ADVISORY BOARD
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA**

MONDAY

9:00 A.M.

JANUARY 6, 2020

PRESENT:

Bob Lucey, Chair
Marsha Berkbigler, Member
Oscar Delgado, Member
Kristopher Dahir, Member
Ed Lawson, Member

Nancy Parent, County Clerk
Paul Lipparelli, Assistant District Attorney

ABSENT:

Neoma Jardon, Vice Chair

The Community Homelessness Advisory Board convened at 9:01 a.m. in the Washoe County 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:

19-126C AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.

Mr. Michael Pitkin submitted a letter for the Board, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. He said the region's homeless were treated like second-class citizens. He indicated there was not enough transportation for those seeking employment and suggested more involvement from Nevada JobConnect; he believed the Day Labor Office of the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation was inadequate. He called for clarification from the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB), saying neither the Cities of Reno or Sparks contributed financially. He wanted to know what percentage of funding came from taxpayers in unincorporated Washoe County and he opined the County should lead the CHAB. He asked whether federal funds were available to help address homelessness in the region. He spoke about religion and unfair taxes, and discussed what he felt were dangerous housing and medical policies.

Mr. Jeff Church provided a handout for the Board, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. He mentioned he wanted to discuss three issues: camping, potential locations for camping areas, and possible solutions for mitigating the problem of homelessness. He recalled the recent death of a homeless woman who burned to death in a tent near the Truckee River. He noted his handout suggested a number of properties which he believed might be suitable locations for camping areas, and he thought more major players from local organizations and entities needed to be involved in the discussion, along with mediators who could help the community come up with appropriate solutions.

Ms. Valerie White thought only a legal sleeping location should be established, where all laws were enforced and all tents were removed during waking hours. She did not think a camping area should even be considered, saying it would be unsafe and would concentrate the same types of poor conditions already seen in other homeless encampments. She believed allowing camping would not reduce or address destructive conduct, addiction, or mental health issues, and would only subsidize bad behavior. She noted camping in any public location was illegal, regardless of whether an individual was housed or homeless, and laws should not be followed selectively. She suggested an overnight-only sleeping location, which would help address rampant illegal encampments by allowing law enforcement to remove them.

Mr. Jay Kolbet-Clausell, Master of Social Work Intern with the Reno Initiative for Shelter and Equality, stated referrals were going better with Washoe County, although outreach was still challenging. He requested homeless encampment sweeps not be conducted right before counts in the future, as this affected the accuracy of the totals.

19-127C **AGENDA ITEM 4** Approval of minutes of the December 2, 2019 meeting.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Member Dahir, seconded by Member Berkbigler, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Vice Chair Jardon absent, it was ordered that Agenda Item 4 be approved.

19-128C **AGENDA ITEM 5** Update, discussion, and possible direction regarding Nevada Fiduciary Solutions. Joe Arrascada.

Amanda Arrascada, Owner/Director of Nevada Fiduciary Solutions, LLC (NFS) conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. She reviewed slides with the following titles: What is a Representative Payee?; Social Security Administration; Other Types of Income; The NFS Referral Process; After a Referral is Made; NFS Payee Program Fees; How is NFS Different from Other Payee Agencies?; Debit Card Options for Personal Spending Allotments; Case Studies; and Contact Information and Office Hours.

Ms. Arrascada explained NFS could provide letters to potential landlords to help clients secure housing when they had a history of evictions or non-payment of rent. The assessment process was kept as simple as possible and could be done in-office or in the community. She noted NFS focused on assessing clients' overall well-being, including personal spending, access to health and personal care, access to treatment, grocery shopping, and other needs. She mentioned NFS was working to apply for grants to assist low-income individuals with payment of program fees, indicating even \$44 per month was a lot of money for many clients receiving Social Security. She explained the program was not intended to be a long-term option for many clients. With the exception of some elderly or disabled clients who required payee services indefinitely, the program was meant to be

a tool which could help people find housing, teach them how to budget and manage their own personal finances, become stable, and eventually take responsibility on their own.

Ms. Arrascada advised that clients' Social Security checks were deposited directly to NFS. She noted the Direct Express cards typically provided to Social Security recipients came with expensive ATM and transaction fees, and it was difficult to obtain replacement cards. Once NFS became a payee for a client, however, the client could receive a Life Freedom debit card. She said no ID was required to obtain these cards, and there were no overdraft fees like those associated with traditional bank accounts.

Member Dahir spoke about U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assistance for clients and wondered how many individuals in need of housing also had some form of income. Ms. Arrascada estimated between 70 and 80 percent of their clients received a monthly income of at least \$780. Member Dahir indicated payee services could help people with their finances in order to end the cycle of homelessness.

Member Dahir inquired whether NFS worked with Volunteers of America (VOA) at the shelter. Ms. Arrascada replied they did, adding it was challenging to get in touch and remain in contact with VOA case managers. She mentioned one of their clients had been at the shelter for six months and NFS had to reach out to the shelter's director after having significant difficulty getting in touch with the client's case manager. She also noted many homeless individuals were unaware they might be eligible for Social Security benefits. She said NFS often received referrals from Reno Municipal Court Judge Tammy Riggs for individuals with no income, and NFS could walk them through the process of determining benefit eligibility and helping them with housing difficulties.

Member Delgado wondered whether clients' participation in payee programs could impact community HUD funding. Ms. Arrascada said she did not know for certain, but she thought there might actually be more funding available if more individuals participated. She mentioned some shelters in other regions operated strictly on client fees, had no restrictions, and had recidivism rates under five percent. Member Delgado thought it might be difficult for some clients to give up freedom over their personal spending, but Ms. Arrascada noted at least half of NFS' clients joined the program voluntarily.

Member Berkgigler wanted staff to assist more individuals who were unaware of benefits they might be eligible for. Ms. Arrascada explained the shelter's intake packet was quite long at 27 pages, with the income portion being completely voluntary. If an individual chose not to answer income questions, staff could not adequately assess their needs and assist them with eligibility.

Chair Lucey asked what percentage of clients were receptive to financial education and how frequently they were seen. Ms. Arrascada said all clients who joined the program voluntarily were receptive to financial training, and they were seen on a

monthly basis. Chair Lucey thought this type of education was critical in helping individuals become stable and self-sufficient.

Member Dahir wanted to know whether there was any way to ensure clients received these types of services at shelters. Chair Lucey responded Agenda Item 7 would include discussion regarding the request for proposal for the Community Assistance Center and guidelines to ensure certain services were provided to clients. He further suggested Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks discuss integration of services with their respective management staff.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Member Delgado, seconded by Member Dahir, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Vice Chair Jardon absent, it was ordered that the presentation for Agenda Item 5 be accepted.

19-129C **AGENDA ITEM 6** Update, discussion, and possible direction regarding Washoe County as the lead agency for homelessness issues. Washoe County.

Chair Lucey spoke about the growing challenges and cost of funding homelessness services throughout the region and said a fiscally sustainable long-term solution needed to be identified. He recalled the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, and Washoe County were all asked to increase contributions to the Community Assistance Center (CAC) in 2017. He noted Washoe County had increased its contribution from \$1.2 million to \$2.7 million in addition to contributing \$400,000 per year to the Community Triage Center, but the Cities had not increased their contributions. He estimated the City of Reno had contributed approximately \$800,000 and the City of Sparks contributed between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Chair Lucey also discussed the unintended consequences of the Business Improvement District, where ambassadors helped the homeless in the downtown corridor but seemed to displace them to the river and other areas. He expressed concern regarding the potential cost for law enforcement to address the challenges from this displacement.

Chair Lucey stated Washoe County had spent more than \$15 million to relocate services for homeless women, children, and families to the former Northern Nevada Adult Mental Health Services (NNAMHS) campus, with another \$5 million in expenditures still anticipated. He noted all three municipalities previously funded the overflow tent together, but the City of Sparks withdrew funding in 2018 and the City of Reno advised they could no longer contribute in 2019; Washoe County then spent \$40,000 to fund the overflow tent in full. In total, Chair Lucey estimated Washoe County had spent more than \$20 million to address homelessness in the region. He asked Human Services Agency (HSA) Director Amber Howell to confirm these amounts, and Ms. Howell advised the figures the Chair cited were accurate.

Chair Lucey felt the County was continually being pushed by the Cities to take on more. He recalled the May 2019 emergency meeting between Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks to discuss unsafe conditions at the CAC, which prompted inspections and led to campus closure and the relocation of meal services. When the Volunteers of America (VOA) campus was reopened, he continued, the County was asked to provide more gloves, hats, socks, and coats. Ultimately, he wanted to know how the Cities of Reno and Sparks would contribute. If they could not, or did not feel their contributions were necessary, Chair Lucey said, Washoe County needed to know this. He opined the County should be given more leeway, especially if it was expected to become the lead agency on homelessness in the region.

Member Dahir noted many of the decisions regarding homelessness in the region were made before the current incumbents were in office, and he suggested it might be helpful to consider more than just two years of history. He said the County would not have to fund everything even if it became the lead agency. He thought a review of each entity's spending could be beneficial and he acknowledged the spending might be unequal, but he also believed this was the first time the subject had been discussed since he had taken office. He admitted funding was limited and might be running out, but the City of Sparks would help if it could obtain more grant funding. Member Dahir opined it was not always about money; what was most important was making decisions. He said there was no question the County had stepped up, and the City of Sparks appreciated this and wanted to show their support.

Member Delgado said he was caught off guard by Chair Lucey's statements regarding funding, noting the City of Reno did not have financial staff present and was not prepared to discuss the City's expenditures. He acknowledged Washoe County had taken on a financial burden and admitted the Cities and the County had not seen eye-to-eye the past several years. He expressed gratitude for Washoe County's efforts, but thought efficiencies needed to be improved, opining there was not enough funding to support the region's population growth. He indicated the County had the authority to levy taxes to alleviate its financial burden and provide aid to the community. Member Delgado stated he would be happy to support this should the County decide to move forward.

Chair Lucey suggested starting with a clean slate if Washoe County became the lead agency for the Community Homelessness Advisory Board (CHAB). He indicated his desire to identify roles, discuss contributions and auditing, and implement a system of checks and balances, accountability, and transparency. He spoke about the dispersion of homeless individuals throughout the community and expressed concern about building camps without an understanding of who would manage them. He acknowledged a frustrating lack of clearly-defined processes and wanted Members, staff, and management to come together to build a more cohesive understanding. He challenged the Board to rebuild from the ground up, and to include representatives from other entities such as public safety and housing in future discussions.

Member Lawson felt some residents of the Cities of Reno and Sparks were double-taxed as they paid taxes to their cities in addition to the County. He pointed out the

Cities' taxes were for police, fire, parks, and roads, but not for homeless and social services. He opined requiring Sparks residents to pay the same as Reno residents would be unfair. He acknowledged Chair Lucey's frustrations, but observed there were many community representatives in the Chambers who had never attended a meeting, and he felt the Board was making progress. Member Lawson said the need to help vulnerable populations in the region was clear, but he suggested discussing in private the finer details about how things could be done, not due to an inability to get along, but because each Member was passionate about the subject. He concluded with a statement of appreciation for Washoe County's efforts thus far, saying he believed things were moving in the right direction.

Member Berkbigler noted the region encompassed three different political entities and she believed responsibility for addressing homelessness issues belonged to all three. She indicated the County was responsible for many departments and services benefiting the greater region, including law enforcement, voter registration, recordkeeping, and social services, but statutory requirements did not specifically mention homelessness. She said the Board of County Commissioners would be unlikely to support a tax increase to provide additional services which had not even been defined. She thought it was inaccurate to say residents within the footprints of the Cities were being double-taxed. Having grown up in Sparks, she pointed out there had always been an argument of the Cities versus the County, or someone claiming one municipality was not paying its fair share. She reasoned the homeless would always be a presence in the region, and the purpose of the CHAB was to help resolve the social problems created by homelessness, which the Members could do by directing their respective Boards. She echoed Chair Lucey's statements that the HSA was overworked and overwhelmed, and she agreed CHAB Members should work together to move forward rather than worrying about what had been done by predecessors. She said something needed to be done regarding the lack of housing in the region. She thanked the Members for their comments and believed they all shared the same desire to help the homeless.

Chair Lucey acknowledged Washoe County and the Cities were working together and making strides, but he reiterated the municipalities' contributions should be fair and equitable. He asked the CHAB representatives to carry a message back to their Councils and Boards that the region needed to come together and stop arguing about history. Chair Lucey described growth, economic change, and a level of vitality in the County which had not been seen in 20 years; along with that progress came challenges which had to be addressed, such as rent increases and a lack of housing. He wanted County Manager Eric Brown, Reno City Manager Sabra Newby, and Sparks City Manager Neil Krutz to meet to discuss ways to address these issues as a community. Chair Lucey indicated it was important for the municipalities to determine the best use of resources so individuals who were without homes, food, and transportation would have the tools they needed to grow and become self-sufficient. He clarified he did not mean Washoe County would never accept the responsibility as lead agency for the CHAB, but the thought further discussion was needed before this could happen.

Member Delgado understood Member Berkbigler's comments regarding a lack of support for tax increases and agreed more assessment was needed. He said the City

of Reno could be counted on to support Washoe County to the best of their ability. He spoke about reassessing the goals of the CHAB and suggested taking another look at the contract for the CAC to see where efficiencies could be improved.

Member Dahir agreed the County had taken large steps to address homelessness in the region and was working very hard. He offered the City of Sparks' support, saying Sparks might not have as much funding, but had businesses, the community, churches, volunteers, and relationships which could provide benefits. He acknowledged the three municipalities shared a collective responsibility to work together to address the problem of homelessness.

Ms. Howell reminded Members of the anticipated opening date of May 15, 2020 for Our Place, formerly known as the NNAMHS campus. She hoped moving women, children, and families to the new site would free up space at the downtown shelter and overflow shelter. She thanked Members for their discussion and suggested solving problems in the region was more important than which municipality should take the lead. Ms. Howell noted many individuals were struggling and the problem was larger and more expensive than it was 10 years ago.

Chair Lucey proposed a motion and direction to staff that all three Managers quickly convene a meeting with Ms. Howell to identify the next steps to truly reorganize and re-identify, and at the same time address concerns about where the wheel was broken and how to fix it. Following his motion, he stressed the need for foundational plans that could be brought back to the Commission and the Councils; specifically, he wanted discussion concerning the request for proposal (RFP), what would be done, and how money would be spent.

Member Berkbigler seconded Chair Lucey's motion and added that, based on Member Delgado's concerns, any future discussions should involve City and County finance staff who could answer questions and help identify funding sources and needs. She felt everybody agreed the CHAB needed to enact homelessness policies specifically for the homeless and not necessarily for others in the community. Chair Lucey agreed with Member Berkbigler's statement.

Member Lawson indicated he and Member Dahir could not procedurally direct the Sparks City Council to act based on a CHAB motion. He clarified each local jurisdiction would need to discuss the CHAB's recommendation and take a vote before any action could be taken. Chair Lucey acknowledged this but stressed his desire for the conversation to begin today and that the other Board members hear his direction.

On the call for public comment, Mr. Jeff Church asked why major players in the community were not more involved in CHAB discussions, and he suggested bringing in representatives from local hospitals, courts, the Veteran's Administration, the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority, the Sheriff's Office, and other municipalities and entities. He recalled the case of Million-Dollar Murray, a chronically homeless individual who was able to maintain housing, employment, and sobriety when participating in

community programs, but who also quickly relapsed into alcoholism, poor health, incarceration, and homelessness whenever the programs ended. In total, this individual's medical bills and other expenses cost the community more than a million dollars over a 10-year period. Mr. Church insisted increasing taxes in Washoe County was not an option and he urged staff to find other ways to fund the needed services and programs. He supported the possibility of further discussion between the municipalities' management and finance staff. Ultimately, he felt the CHAB discussion had been beneficial and hoped it would lead to real action.

On motion by Chair Lucey, seconded by Member Berkbigler, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Vice Chair Jardon absent, it was directed that all three Managers quickly convene a meeting with Director Howell to identify the next steps to truly reorganize and re-identify, and at the same time address concerns about where the wheel was broken and how to fix it. Following his motion, he stressed the need for foundational plans that could be brought back to the Commission and the Councils; specifically, he wanted discussion concerning the RFP, what would be done, and how money would be spent.

19-130C **AGENDA ITEM 7** Update, discussion, and possible direction regarding the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Community Assistance Center operator. City of Reno.

City of Reno Acting Housing Neighborhood Development Manager Monica Cochran conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. She reviewed slides with the following titles: RFP for Men's Shelter Operations; Current Shelter Capacity; Proposed Shelter Capacity; Change to Available Beds; Significant Events; RFP Standards of Quality; CAC RFP Operational Components; Questions (2 slides); and Projected RFP Timeline.

Member Berkbigler requested more information regarding the Low Barrier and Housing First models, as well as how security would be enforced in a Low Barrier model. City of Reno Community Development Management Analyst Hettie Read said the goal was to decrease the number of people sleeping on street, and increasing barriers would result in higher numbers of individuals who did not access shelters. She advised the Housing First model was a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development best practice, where discussion and planning for housing an individual began the moment the individual entered the shelter. She said local shelters had safety rules in place which did not allow aggressive behavior or weapons. Member Berkbigler asked whether shelters were currently alcohol and drug-free. Ms. Cochran advised that shelter clients were not allowed to bring substances onto the site, and Ms. Read added substances were confiscated and clients were asked to leave the shelter if caught with them.

Member Dahir spoke in support of helping clients eventually transition out of shelters, and Ms. Cochran noted there was a contract with the Veteran's Administration which helped some veteran clients transition. Member Dahir discussed a need for reporting and he thought Built for Zero did a good job. He felt receiving updated metrics each month should be a top priority for the Board for decision-making purposes.

Members Lawson and Delgado wanted to know the proposed length of the contract, and Member Lawson also asked what constituted a qualified bidder. He agreed with Member Dahir's comments regarding the need for data, saying the more information the Board had to make decisions with, the better. Ms. Cochran explained there had been some discussion regarding the length of the contract and she thought it might be set at three years, but the length was not yet finalized. She noted staff had reviewed prior requests for proposal (RFPs) and looked at examples from Las Vegas. She said City and County staff had met to discuss processes and planned to assemble a committee soon. Member Delgado hoped there would be sufficient competitive bidders.

Reno Assistant City Manager Bill Thomas said the RFP would go out in February and he requested direction from the Board about whether to include the winter tent and security services. Mr. Thomas indicated no formal decision had been made to keep security at the site on a long-term basis. Chair Lucey thought the intent of closing the campus and moving the tent had been to increase security, and Mr. Thomas said this was correct. Mr. Thomas suggested outreach-only services could be provided by the vendor, but he suspected prospective vendors would agree having more security at the site was best.

Chair Lucey believed law enforcement was still responding to many calls at the campus, and issues at the shelter had not decreased. However, he thought the opening of the Our Place campus could lead to a dynamic shift at the Community Assistance Center (CAC) once women, children, and families were relocated. Chair Lucey suggested management staff reconvene after the opening of Our Place to determine if there was still a need for the winter tent or security at the CAC. Mr. Thomas indicated this might not be possible due to the impending February deadline. Member Lawson then proposed including the winter tent and security services as separate line items in the RFP, so one or both could later be removed if needed, and each item could be given an exact cost from prospective vendors.

Member Dahir expressed concern regarding the possible length of the contract and wondered if it could be reduced. He also said he had heard there were fewer law enforcement calls to the CAC since meal services were relocated; he asked whether someone from the Reno Police Department (RPD) was present and could speak to this. RPD Lieutenant Joe Robinson answered that, unfortunately, there had been no sign of calls to the CAC slowing down. Members Delgado and Berkbigler echoed earlier statements that the perception of security at the CAC could shift once women and children were relocated to the Our Place campus.

Chair Lucey indicated the goal was to provide an atmosphere of security for every individual was the goal, and he felt the concept of security included adequate shelter, food, and personal safety. He requested further definition of the term security, including what exactly would be expected of the provider, how security would be utilized or implemented, and whether it would be provided under a separate contract. Member Berkbigler asked when the current security contract would expire, and Ms. Cochran advised it was set to expire on June 30.

Chair Lucey asked Assistant District Attorney Paul Lipparelli whether a motion was needed. Mr. Lipparelli indicated a motion was necessary if the Board wished to request specific items in the RFP. Member Dahir proposed a motion to move forward, requesting the winter tent and security services be included in the RFP as separate line items. Chair Lucey seconded the motion. Member Lawson reminded the Board to include direction regarding the length of the contract.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Member Dahir, seconded by Chair Lucey, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote with Vice Chair Jardon absent, it was ordered that the RFP for the CAC operator include security services and the winter tent as separate line items, with an option to review the contract after one year.

19-131C **AGENDA ITEM 8** Update, discussion, and possible direction regarding the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Our Place operator. Washoe County.

There was no one present to make this presentation, so Chair Lucey pulled the item and indicated it would be heard at the next meeting.

19-132C **AGENDA ITEM 9** Board members’ announcements, reports, and updates to include requests for future board agenda items.

There were no Member comments.

19-133C **AGENDA ITEM 10** Items for possible consideration on the February 3, 2020 agenda: Safe Place/camping location discussion.

Member Dahir suggested considering overnight-only camping. He opined the goal should be for people to get help and move on rather than stay in the camp long-term and remain homeless. He requested a future presentation and report from Built for Zero with updated data.

Member Berkbigler requested a staff report on potential camp locations, along with information on ways similar communities addressed liability related to such camps. She provided the example that, if a location under the Wells Avenue overpass was chosen, the City of Reno could be held liable for problems at that site.

19-134C **AGENDA ITEM 11** Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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10:54 a.m. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

BOB LUCEY, Chair
Community Homelessness Advisory Board

ATTEST:

NANCY PARENT, County Clerk

*Minutes Prepared by:
LJ Burton, Deputy County Clerk*