



STOREY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE

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Jay Carmona, Chair
Clay Mitchell, Vice-Chair
Lance Gilman, Commissioner

April 6, 2021

Honorable Governor Steve Sisolak
State Capitol Building
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Re: Storey County's Position on Innovation Zone bill draft as of 04/06/21

Governor Sisolak:

The Board of Storey County Commissioners on March 2 and 16, and April 6, 2021, directed county staff and lobbyists to take certain positions on BDR 1109-related draft legislation providing for the creation of Innovation Zones. Storey County opposes the Innovation Zone bill as presented thus far; however, the board finds merit in certain elements of the bill including expanding technology uses across the county and developing a mixed-use residential community at Painted Rock. The following summarize the board's directives and provides further explanation on the county's position on the matter.

1. ***Technology – Support and work with legislature and applicable elected officials to explore Blockchain, cryptocurrency, stable-coin, and other such technological advances and currency.***

Storey County is Nevada's forerunner in embracing and utilizing new technologies, and the board finds that new digital platforms such as stable-coin and Blockchain to be the potential digital capital of the future. We will seek guidance from the Nevada Department of Taxation; county recorders, clerks, and treasurers; and other such agencies and associations to evaluate the viability of these technologies and develop appropriate framework for their implementation.

2. ***Residential "Smart City" – Continue to support 2016 Storey County Master Plan as applicable to neo-traditional and new-urbanistic design as proposed by Blockchains' "Smart-City".***

The Storey County Master Plan supports large-scale residential development at Painted Rock. A mixed-use community integrating commercial, residential, and live-work use patterns is preferred over suburban sprawl. Graphic renditions by Blockchains, LLC and R&R Partners illustrating high-rise buildings clad in stainless-steel and glass, situated within clustered high-density nodes, and supported by multi-modal transit and "smart" infrastructure are aligned with the goals and objectives of the plan for this area.

Storey County to-date has received no development application from Blockchains or its affiliates for the Painted Rock area. We engaged with representatives of Blockchains about the draft bill and stated that an application for a mixed-use development may be submitted for consideration in accordance with Title 16 Subdivisions, Title 17 Zoning, the master plan, and other local and state statutes. The representatives were reminded that a master plan amendment is not required, and they were also reminded that a mixed-use residential development application by another developer at Painted Rock was approved by the board with action by the planning commission in 2006.

3. ***Separate Local Government – Oppose separatist governing control and carving up Storey County.***

Carving out a separate government within Storey County is not necessary for the advancement of technology, innovative industries, or residential "smart city" development. Storey County has for 20 years been Nevada's leader in attracting, permitting, and supporting technology, manufacturing, and energy sectors, and transforming northern Nevada from dependence on gaming to the diversified economic powerhouse it is today.

Tesla, Panasonic, Switch, Google, Fulcrum Bioenergy, and nearly 20 million square-feet of other companies made Storey County their home because of fast and simple permitting, easy access to

elected and appointed officials, and a dedicated team capable of finding innovative ways to overcome economic, social, environmental, and geographic obstacles. The proponents of the Innovation Zone envision a “sandbox” in which inventive minds are free to develop advanced technologies through expression and experimentation. We respond that this vision dovetails seamlessly into our current master plan, zoning allowances, development agreements, and proven business-friendly culture.

Storey County’s master plan, zoning designations, and ordinances facilitate a wide range of land uses. Diverse zoning encourages residential and community development, while also providing for revenue-generating commercial and industrial uses that offset costs of providing services to the county’s residents and businesses. The draft legislation stripping Storey County of roughly one-third of its land, much of which is commercial and industrial designated, will result in persistent fiscal instability potentially causing its inability to provide public safety protections, social services, and other core functions to current and future residents and businesses.

Storey County has been a proven leader in the state in economic development. Removing the county from the proven calculus it formulated may cause adverse economic, social, and environmental impacts to the county and region, and, moreover, may cause the same for the proposals identified in the draft bill. We will continue exploring ways in which objectives for residential and tech development in the draft legislation may be achieved within existing local and state regulatory framework.

4. ***Planning & Development – Reach out to Governor, Blockchains, and others for meaningful and authentic good-faith discussion to coordinate planning and oversight within existing governing framework.***


Conversations about the proposed legislation must consider state and local regulations, and binding agreements in-place in Storey County such as the Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center (TRI-Center) development agreement, TRI-Center infrastructure payback agreement, the TRI General Improvement District regulations and responsibilities, the inter-county effluent water line Tax Increment Area agreement, economic development and diversification districts for technology and manufacturing sector abatements, court degrees, utility and other easements and rights-of-ways, and government services agreements. These obstacles to Innovation Zone legislation have been shared with Blockchains representatives, and there remains unanswered questions as to how the proposed legislation will function properly within these frameworks.

5. ***Progress – Periodically update the Storey County Board of County Commissioners on the status of Innovative Zone BDR and bill, to and seek amended direction as conditions change and are known.***

We will periodically update the board on research findings into the Innovation Zone matters and seek direction as conditions change and more is known about the draft bill.

We respectfully request a meeting with you and your team to openly discuss the Innovation Zone bill. We look forward to being part of a conversation about the potential benefits in the draft bill, and ways to overcome challenging aspects of the proposed legislation within existing fiscal, economic, environmental, and land use regulatory structures.

Respectfully submitted,


Austin Osborne
Storey County Manager

Enc: Storey County Master Plan - <https://www.storeycounty.org/292/Master-Plan>

Cc.: Storey County Commissioners
Storey County District Attorney
Storey County Lobbyists
Governor’s Office of Economic Development (GOED)
Nevada Association of Counties (NACO)