

**WASHOE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AND
RENO CITY COUNCIL**

JOINT MEETING

MONDAY

11:00 A.M.

MAY 7, 2001

PRESENT:

Jim Shaw, Chairman
Pete Sferrazza, Vice Chairman
Joanne Bond, Commissioner
Jim Galloway, Commissioner
Ted Short, Commissioner

Jeff Griffin, Mayor
Dave Aiazzi, Councilmember
Sherrie Doyle, Councilmember
Toni Harsh, Councilmember
Pierre Hascheff, Councilmember
Dave Rigdon, Councilmember
Jessica Sferrazza-Hogan, Councilmember

Amy Harvey, County Clerk
Katy Singlaub, County Manager
Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel

Don Cook, City Clerk
Charles McNeely, City Manager
Michael Halley, Deputy City Attorney

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners and the Reno City Council met in special joint 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 Clerks called the roll for their respective Boards and the following business was conducted:

AGENDA

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Councilmember Doyle, seconded by Commissioner Bond, which motion duly carried, Chairman Shaw ordered that the agenda for the May 7, 2001, special joint meeting be approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sam Dehne, local resident, expressed his concerns about the Reno Gazette-Journal and the local television news media not reporting accurately.

**DISCUSSION – INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT – COUNTY OF
WASHOE & CITY OF RENO – LOCATION OF RENO
MUNICIPAL COURT**

Judge Paul Hickman, Reno Municipal Court, urged the Board of County Commissioners to allow the City of Reno to make the decision as to where the new Reno Municipal Court should be located, noting that Reno City Council has voted 4 to 2 to locate the court on the Pioneer Inn property, and that decision is supported by the judges. He stated their reasons are that siting Municipal Court at 195 South Sierra next to Justice Court would ensure that all of the courts will never be together at one location; and that they believe constructing the Municipal Court on the Pioneer Inn site would eventually lead to having all the courts together. Judge Hickman then responded to questions from Commissioner Galloway. Commissioner Galloway stated that locating the Municipal Court on the Pioneer Inn site will probably mean that even the Municipal and Justice Courts will never be located together. Judge Hickman disagreed and stated the County is proposing a band-aid solution.

Judge James VanWinkle, Reno Municipal Court, stated he has always thought of a court building as a public building in the center of town that everyone could be proud of, that stands for justice, and that citizens could identify with. Squeezing the Municipal Court behind the building at 195 South Sierra will not result in any of that; the site is too small; the City of Reno would have no presence; and the entrances would be very confusing. He further expanded on Judge Hickman's remarks stating Municipal Court could be like a magnet at the Pioneer site; and, in time, Municipal Court, Justice Court and District Court could all be located together.

Chairman Shaw expressed his appreciation to the Judges for their thoughts and comments. He stated the Justice Facilities Working Committee (JFWC) has recommended a site for the Municipal Court that is obviously not the site Reno wants and asked the Judges if they had an opportunity to attend any of the committee meetings. Judge VanWinkle stated they did attend some meetings and provided input, but their feeling was that the decision had already been made and they could not dissuade the committee.

Commissioner Sferrazza asked if a site plan or rendering of the building is available. Judge VanWinkle stated they do not have any drawings, but when they went through their planning process, their goal was to make sure the Municipal Court was built first because they are in a desperate situation with one of their courtrooms being operated in a trailer parked partially on the sidewalk. He added they looked at everything with the idea that all the courts would eventually be collocated.

Kevin Jeffers, HMC Architects/RP3, submitted written comments to the Board and Council, which were placed on file with the Clerk, expressing that he is seriously concerned with the idea of putting the Municipal Court next to the 1 South Sierra court facilities. He stated that doing so would be a grave planning error and would severely restrict future planning for the entire court system. Mr. Jeffers stated this is a short-sighted, ill-conceived, band-aid; a comprehensive master plan that includes future

needs of the County and the City should be conducted prior to any decisions; and any temporary savings promised will be negated by future complications that are not being planned for now. He urged the Commissioners to take the time to gather all the facts and warned that if the County and the City do not come together on this, they will lose the opportunity to realize collocation savings and to implement the recommendations of the Rose Commission.

Commissioner Galloway and Mr. Jeffers debated the pros and cons of locating the Municipal Court as the committee recommended.

Commissioner Bond noted that the Board of County Commissioners is discussing where to put the Reno Municipal Court when the City of Reno has already chosen their preferred site, and asked what the alternatives would be if the County and the City can not come to agreement. She pointed out that one of the main reasons the County bought the Pioneer Inn was because it was needed for future court consolidation/expansion, and emphasized that if the City puts their Municipal Court anywhere else downtown, the chance for consolidation of all the courts will be lost.

Mike Robinson, JFWC, reaffirmed the committee's recommendations and position and discussed the problems with trying to plan too far out into the future.

Sam Dehne, area resident, stated that courthouses should not be items of idolatry; that the County should not have purchased the Pioneer Inn; that the voters turned down the concept of expanding the courthouse; and that government should listen to the citizens.

Gary Schmidt, area resident, stated the voters and the committee have spoken. He stated the average citizen's visit to government services provided downtown is probably less than 30 minutes; the average visit to a court is probably less than an hour; and what downtown Reno really does not need is more traffic trying to find a place to park.

William Brainard, area resident, submitted written comments on the request to speak card, which Chairman Shaw read.

Tom Gallagher, Summit Engineering, pointed out that he submitted a memo in response to Commissioner Galloway's memo and stated he does not believe the voters turned down the concept of new, consolidated justice facilities, but rather they turned down an \$86-million tax increase. He said he believes it is a totally fallacy to say the voters turned down the new courthouse. Concerning the projected savings, Mr. Gallagher asked if there had been any new calculations because there appeared to be disparity concerning the numbers after the last joint meeting. He expressed his belief that the County and the City have the opportunity to do this right.

Commissioner Galloway emphasized that the citizen task force has identified that substantial savings can be achieved by locating the Municipal Court next to the

Justice Court and expressed his belief that making the wrong decision at this point in time will mean the County will be subsidizing that bad decision in the amount of \$2.9 million.

Councilmember Doyle stated the Pioneer Inn site is a part of the downtown office core and expressed the urgency of getting the new Municipal Court built and doing something with the “darkened” Pioneer Inn.

Commissioner Sferrazza explained that he supports the site recommended by the committee because he believes the public did reject exactly what is currently being proposed on the Pioneer Inn site and the waste of the 1 South Sierra site. He further stated if the Board votes for the committee’s recommended site and the City still wants the Pioneer site, he would be willing to sell the whole site to Reno for \$14 million and let them do what they want with it.

Commissioner Bond stated the committee did as requested in identifying savings by consolidating court functions, but their recommendations preclude any future potential for consolidating all of the courts, not just Municipal and Justice. She stated it is difficult for her to give up on the long-range “dream” of a truly regional justice facility for an immediate solution that will bring some savings, but no where near the savings that could be realized in the future for the community. Commissioner Bond moved that the City of Reno be allowed to locate the Reno Municipal Court on the Pioneer Inn site. The motion was seconded by Chairman Shaw who expressed his agreement with Commissioner Bond’s comments. Chairman Shaw further stated he supported purchase of the Pioneer Inn property because of the ability to consolidate and collocate all of the courts at one site, which he still believes would be the right thing to do for the taxpayers.

Commissioner Short noted that the County did commit to the City of Reno that they would buy the Pioneer Inn, regardless of the outcome of the bond issue, and that they would keep the court facilities in downtown Reno. He also discussed the growth in criminal statistics and jail population. Commissioner Short further stated he believes the Pioneer Inn is a great site for future expansion; however, the voters overwhelming turned down the bond issue. He explained that the Commissioners then convened the Justice Facilities Working Committee, noting that they were a very diverse group of citizens who have worked very hard; and that the committee recommendations can not be ignored. He then discussed the advantages and potential savings that could be achieved by locating the Municipal Court next to the Justice Court at 1 South Sierra and urged the Reno City Council to reconsider their decision and take another look at the alternative.

Councilmember Aiazzi stated he has been asking for the documentation that shows there will be a quarter of a million dollars saved in prisoner transports by this proposal and has never received it. He stated he does not believe it is true that prisoner transports to Reno Municipal Court cost the Sheriff’s Office \$250,000 per year. Councilmember Aiazzi also disputed the projected security savings stating that having more people going through the doors will require more security. He further stated the Chairman of the committee was opposed to the bond issue and many of the committee members had preconceived notions or were politically motivated. He also discussed the con-

flicting information concerning the facility at 1 South Sierra and asked the County if they are now keeping the files there and saving the \$114,000 a year it was costing to move the files back and forth.

The motion to enter into an interlocal agreement with the City of Reno to allow Reno to locate the Reno Municipal Court on the Pioneer Inn site was restated and Chairman Shaw called for a vote. The motion failed on a 2 to 3 vote with Commissioners Galloway, Sferrazza, and Short voting “no.”

Councilmember Aiazzi moved to adjourn the Reno City Council. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Doyle. Following discussion, the motion to adjourn was withdrawn.

Commissioner Sferrazza moved that the County offer the site next to 1 South Sierra to the City of Reno at no cost in exchange for the County being provided free parking at the Parking Gallery and being allowed temporary use of any unused space Reno constructs at the site.

Chairman Shaw asked Legal Counsel if it was appropriate for the Board to make this offer to the City of Reno at this particular time. Paul Lipparelli, Deputy District Attorney, stated staff could amend the interlocal agreement according to the Board’s direction and it could be approved at this time, if that is the Board’s desire.

Councilmember Sferrazza-Hogan asked if the Commissioners would give the land to the City without a reduction on the parking, noting that the \$62,000 per year the County pays goes to the Redevelopment Fund, and the County would save money if Municipal Court is located adjacent to Justice Court. She stated the land should be given with no strings attached.

Councilmember Doyle stated she is not prepared to enter into an interlocal agreement for a site other than the City’s chosen site at this time without discussing and considering alternatives.

Mayor Griffin explained the County can direct their staff to amend the interlocal agreement, and the City could consider the amended agreement at a future meeting. He stated this is negotiating at the table and he would like to have something on the table, so he would like to hear what the County is offering.

Following further discussion, Commissioner Sferrazza repeated the motion. Commissioner Galloway seconded the motion and stated he would be open to a counter offer from Reno.

Katy Singlaub, County Manager, clarified that the agreement would still include the \$2.9 million worth of property at the Pioneer Inn site for 58 parking spaces for the City of Reno in perpetuity. She also pointed out that the County will have to pro-

vide other parking if the 60+ parking spaces at the 1 South Sierra site are removed to build the Municipal Court.

Legal Counsel Lipparelli asked if the motion is to direct staff to develop a new agreement containing these provisions or is the intent to actually approve an agreement at this time. Commissioner Sferrazza stated there is no agreement, so his motion is to direct staff to put his suggestions into an offer form or into an interlocal agreement to be considered by both entities in the future.

Chairman Shaw called for the vote. The motion carried unanimously and it was ordered that staff be directed to draft an interlocal agreement between Washoe County and the City of Reno, which includes that the County will provide the land free of charge to locate the Reno Municipal Court next to the Reno Justice Court; that the City will provide the County free parking at the Parking Gallery for the spaces it currently rents at \$62,000 per year; that the City will allow the County use of any excess space they construct until such time as the City needs it; and that the County will still provide the 58 parking spaces at the Pioneer Inn for the City of Reno.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

JAMES M. SHAW, Chairman
Washoe County Commission

JEFF GRIFFIN, Mayor
City of Reno

ATTEST: AMY HARVEY,
County Clerk

ATTEST: DON COOK,
City Clerk

*Minutes Prepared by
Sharon Gotchy
Deputy County Clerk*