

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
SIERRA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

TUESDAY

4:00 P.M.

JULY 10, 2007

PRESENT:

Bob Larkin, Chairman
Bonnie Weber, Director
Jim Galloway, Director
Pete Sferrazza, Director
David Humke, Director*

Amy Harvey, County Clerk
Katy Singlaub, County Manager
Melanie Foster, Legal Counsel
Michael Greene, Fire Chief

The Board met in regular session in the Health Department Conference Rooms A and B, Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada and conducted the following business:

07-33SF AGENDA

There was no public comment on this item.

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Director Weber, seconded by Director Galloway, which motion duly carried with Director Humke temporarily absent, Chairman Larkin ordered that the agenda for the regular meeting of July 10, 2007 be approved.

**07-34SF RESOLUTION - RECOGNIZING DISTRICT CREW MEMBERS
FOR LIFE SAVING EFFORTS**

There was no public comment on this item.

Fire Chief Michael Greene introduced Captain Chuck White, operator/paramedic Alex Kukulus, firefighter/paramedic Dusty Mayfield, firefighter Casey Jagers, and Nicola Canazzaro who were the responsible parties that responded to Chief Pete Canazarro in his time of need. Chief Greene commended them and noted the events that unfolded were astounding and resulted in the saving the life of Chief Canazzaro.

Chief Canazzaro commented there were no words to truly express his gratitude and appreciation to the people who were involved in saving his life. On behalf of his family the Chief thanked everyone who was involved.

On motion by Director Galloway, seconded by Director Weber, which motion duly carried with Director Humke temporarily absent, it was ordered that the following resolution be adopted and the Chairman be authorized to execute the same:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Sierra Fire Protection District firefighters/paramedics saved a life on Saturday May 20, 2007; and

WHEREAS, What made this save different from the others was the person they saved was the Fire Chief of the Galena Volunteer Fire Department, Pete Canazzaro, who has been an active volunteer firefighter and Fire Chief for over twenty-eight years; and

WHEREAS, On May 20, 2007, Chief Canazzaro suffered a cardiac arrest and collapsed. His daughter-in-law, Nicola Canazzaro, immediately sprung into action and began CPR. Several minutes later the engine company from Sierra Fire Protection District arrived. Captain Chuck White, operator/paramedic Alex Kukulus, firefighter/paramedic Dusty Mayfield and firefighter Casey Jagers went right to work. Within seconds, they re-started Chief Canazzaro's heart and stabilized him for transport to the hospital. By the time Chief Canazzaro arrived at the hospital, he was out of danger. He walked out of the hospital a week later due to the life saving skills of the Sierra Fire Protection District. The people who responded to help Chief Canazzaro in his time of need are true heroes and lifesavers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Directors of the Sierra Fire Protection District recognize the successful and well-trained Sierra Fire Protection District firefighters/paramedics and join them in their quest to train and help people administer lifesaving procedures.

07-35SF **DISCUSSION/DIRECTION – PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND ORDINANCES TO ADDRESS FIRE HAZARD CONCERNS**

4:45 p.m. The Board, having already convened as the Board of Directors for the Sierra Fire Protection District, also convened as the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, and the Washoe County Board of Commissioners with Commissioner Humke temporarily absent.

Kurt Latipow, Fire Services Coordinator, referred to items A through F listed in the attachment to the staff report. He stated these items were based on research done between the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD), the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) and himself. The attachment was designed to provide the Board with a summary of the complex issues under consideration.

Mr. Latipow stated discussion of a team approach to items A and B took place during a meeting between Fire District representatives and representatives from the

Board of REALTORS®, including those from North Lake Tahoe, specifically to involve the Board of REALTORS® in defensible space education and, to some degree, enforcement. He remarked that contact information for the Living With Fire Program and the Nevada Fire Safe Council had been added to the Environmental Contact List provided by REALTORS® to their clients during every real estate transaction. Mr. Latipow said staff had agreed to work with the Board of REALTORS®, the Living With Fire Program, and the Fire Safe Council to develop a 30-45 minute defensible space awareness/training program, which would be made available to all of the REALTORS® in the County. He thanked Chief Mike Brown of the North Tahoe Fire Protection District for offering to put the training program together. Mr. Latipow explained the Board of REALTORS® would partner with Washoe County to place *Living with Fire* brochures in every real estate office in the County. He added that the Governmental Affairs representative for the Board of REALTORS® would be working with the County to place a section regarding the creation and maintenance of defensible space, along with the appropriate reference links, in the *Residential Disclosure Guide* mandated and produced by the State. Mr. Latipow proposed the idea of working with the Living with Fire Program and the Building Department to create a self-assessment checklist that people would be required to work through and submit with their permit application packet before being allowed to do any tenant improvement work on residential structures. He emphasized the Board of REALTORS® was obviously committed to working with the County and the Fire Districts concerning defensible space issues.

With respect to item C of the staff report, Mr. Latipow suggested streamlining and enforcing the numerous laws and ordinances already on the books. He recommended adoption of the 2006 International Fire Code and the International Wildland Urban Interface Code by SFPD, TMFPD and Washoe County at the same time the City of Reno planned to adopt them. In researching codes, he noted that several references to the Wildland Code were found, particularly in the area of fuels reduction, although that Code had never actually been adopted by the County.

Mr. Latipow identified that items D and E were combined and seemed to work well together. He stated the County Manager had already put out a very aggressive program to be implemented by County employees and Mr. Latipow held multiple meetings with Finance and other departments to come up with Best Practices to implement those requirements. He said that Gary Neilson, TMFPD Division Chief, would provide training and Mr. Latipow compiled a list of topics based on the requirements set forth by the County Manager. Based on SFPD's status under NRS 473, Mr. Latipow pointed out they were able to adopt restrictions already put out by the State Fire Warden, which mirrored those in place for the Bureau of Land Management, the State Forest Service and the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District.

Mr. Latipow referenced item F, which discussed actions to recover firefighting costs from individuals responsible for causing a fire. He indicated the agencies had existing authority to do that, although it might be worthwhile to consider strengthening that authority.

Mr. Latipow discussed additional items for the Board's consideration, including retrofitting an existing helicopter from the Washoe County Sheriff's Regional Aviation Enforcement (RAVEN) Program with a "belly tank" at an estimated cost of \$250,000, which would permit its use during initial fire attacks. He noted there was already an item on the Board of County Commissioners' agenda for the purchase of a helicopter engine. If funds could be found for the fire equipment, it was possible to do the work at the same time the engine was installed and have the helicopter ready for firefighting sometime in late August or early September of 2007. Mr. Latipow talked about exploring a partnership with other fire agencies to partially fund one of the Nevada Division of Forestry's firefighting helicopters, although he did not yet have cost estimates available. He touched on other aircraft options for fighting fire.

Mr. Latipow observed there were numerous statutes, policies and lines of authority in place but inadequate staffing among the agencies to facilitate complaint follow up and mandate clearance of defensible space. He recommended a multi-agency, multi-department task force to look at all of the recommendations provided in the staff report, identify what was in the best interests of the citizens and the County, suggest ways of streamlining efforts, calculate the fiscal impact, and report back to the Board in more detail.

Chairman Larkin verified with Melanie Foster, Assistant District Attorney, that the Board could provide direction to pursue retrofitting of the RAVEN helicopter but any actual expenditure of funds would have to be placed on a future agenda for the Board's approval.

Commissioner Galloway asked Mr. Latipow to compare the cost effectiveness of retrofitting a RAVEN helicopter versus the use of other aircraft resources. He was concerned about losing the use of the RAVEN helicopter for law enforcement purposes while it was engaged in fighting fire. He requested a list of aircraft assets generally available in the area and their capacities, which would allow the Board to assess whether the impact of the RAVEN helicopter was significant enough to justify the cost.

Regarding item F of the staff report, Commissioner Galloway suggested the fire agencies automatically issue a claim letter when a responsible party could be identified and provide the Board with copies of the letter. The District Attorney's office could then evaluate the response to the letter and recommend a course of action to the Board on a case-by-case basis.

Commissioner Galloway thought it best to see how things worked out with the voluntary cooperation of the Board of REALTORS® before enacting mandatory requirements for those programs.

Commissioner Galloway requested that Mr. Latipow put together a matrix of existing ordinances in order to identify gaps and report back to the Board.

In response to Chairman Larkin's requests, Mr. Latipow agreed to report back on the RAVEN helicopter and other aircraft assets at the regular Commission meeting of July 24, 2007. He also agreed to provide specific recommendations to the Board for addressing properties with overgrown flammable materials and insufficient defensible space in approximately 30 days.

In response to the call for public comment, Dennis Wilson, President of the Reno-Sparks Association of REALTORS®, reiterated his organization's commitment to working with the County agencies and disseminating information. He placed a copy of the Association's updated Environmental Contact List on file with the Clerk and explained that this disclosure form had already been implemented. Mr. Wilson added that the disclosure form would also be provided to the Sierra Nevada Association of REALTORS®, which serviced Carson City, Douglas County, Fallon, Lyon County, Lake Tahoe and Elko County. He commented that Mike Young, President of the Incline Village Association of REALTORS®, also participated in the meeting with Mr. Latipow and concurred with the disclosures.

Bob Parker indicated he bought property in Galena Forest two years ago and spent over \$10,000 removing dead trees, undergrowth and debris. He placed a photograph of his property on file with the Clerk and stated that most of his neighbors took care to clear defensible space around their properties. Mr. Parker suggested that the County give a six-week notice to noncompliant property owners and then bill each owner for the cost of having a contractor clear defensible space if the owner had not done so.

Gary Schmidt urged the Board to protect property owners' rights during a fire in accordance with Article 1 of the State Constitution. He pointed out that, during the 2004 Andrew Lane fire, power had been shut off to protect power poles in the area, resulting in the loss of approximately 200,000 gallons of water to protect residences because their wells could not operate without electricity. Mr. Schmidt pointed out that Public Utility Commission regulations required power poles to be cleared within a distance of ten feet around them.

Commissioner Galloway asked if all of the Fire Districts represented had the power to order property owners to abate excess fuels. Mr. Latipow indicated that they did. Commissioner Galloway wondered if it was necessary to pass ordinances on a District-by-District basis and/or if an abatement program should be complaint driven or automatic. Mr. Latipow did not believe additional regulations were necessary but stated that additional staff was needed to carry out the existing regulations. He expressed a preference for an automatic proactive abatement program but cautioned it would take about two years to ramp up such a program. Mr. Latipow deferred to the recommendations of the two Fire District Chiefs on this issue.

***5:21 p.m.** Commissioner Humke returned to the meeting.

Marty Scheuerman, Division Chief for TMFPD and the City of Reno, reported that his agency acted on all complaints, inspected the site, and issued a notice of

violation when appropriate. He stated the City of Reno could compel property owners to clean things up or bill them to have the property cleaned up. Chief Scheuerman indicated there were sometimes problems with absentee owners or large parcels of land adjacent to urbanized areas that were federally owned. He noted that local governments could not compel the federal government to clean up their properties. Commissioner Galloway requested verification that there was an ordinance in place for TMFPD as well as for the City of Reno. Ms. Foster pointed out that the same codes had been adopted for TMFPD as those in existence for the City of Reno, with a few changes designed to address wildland concerns.

Commissioner Galloway commented there was a difference between an order to create defensible space and an order to remove dead brush and low limbs. Mr. Latipow suggested that was an area for a task force to bring forth a recommendation for a wildland fire safety program and ordinance, which the County did not currently have. Commissioner Galloway suggested some mechanism needed to be in place, at least on a complaint basis and particularly in urban-wildland interface areas, and the issue should be fast tracked. Mr. Latipow acknowledged there was a need to update the Community Wildfire Prevention Plan, which already identified low, medium and high hazard areas. Commissioner Galloway indicated he would like to see recommendations for an ordinance that could be applied based on those hazard areas.

Commissioner Galloway asked whether Reverse 911 was used to distribute information regarding the restrictions put into place by SFPD. Mr. Latipow stated that was not an approved use for the Reverse 911 program but extensive public outreach was done through all local media avenues. He remarked that the news stations had interviewed him personally on two or three occasions. Commissioner Galloway wondered if it was appropriate to explore expanded use of Reverse 911. Mr. Latipow expressed his belief that Reverse 911 should be reserved for immediate notification in case of the need to shelter in place, which is what it was designed for. He agreed to discuss it further with Aaron Kenneston, Emergency Management Administrator.

On motion by Director Galloway, seconded by Chairman Larkin, which motion duly carried, staff was directed to:

1. Proceed to work with the Board of REALTORS® and report back to the Board at regular intervals on the progress and success of those programs.
2. Carry out staff recommendations on item C, to include the creation of a matrix identifying existing ordinances and authorities to look for gaps that might need to be filled.
3. Report back to the Board on item F, indicating whether the District Chiefs agreed on a protocol for making a record and attempting to collect compensation in all cases where a party responsible for causing a fire was identified. If necessary, place recommended policies on future agendas for Board approval.

4. Related to items D and E, pursue initiation of ordinances and amendments, and/or declaration of emergency as necessary, placing the need to address defensible space issues in special hazard areas at the forefront.
5. Report to the Board at its regular meeting on July 24, 2007 regarding available aircraft resources and options, including an assessment of retrofitting the RAVEN helicopter.

07-36SF **CHIEF'S PROGRESS REPORT**

There was no public comment on this item.

Fire Chief Michael Greene referred to a list of projects and important issues submitted in the staff report.

Director Galloway asked about long-term relocation of the Sierra Fire Protection District's headquarters. Chief Greene indicated there had been discussion about the Arrowcreek and Mount Rose stations. He stated there was a volunteer assisting with the project and they planned to work on detailed numbers the following week. Director Galloway requested an update at the next regular Board meeting.

No action was taken on this item.

07-37SF **RENEW PROPERTY AND LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY**

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Director Weber, seconded by Director Galloway, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the Washoe County Risk Manager be authorized to renew the property and liability insurance policy for the Sierra Fire Protection District with the Nevada Public Agency Insurance Pool, effective July 1, 2007, for an annual premium of \$70,720.59.

07-38SF **DISCUSSION/DIRECTION – STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS**

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Director Weber, seconded by Director Humke, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that staff recommendations regarding strategic planning goals were to be reviewed at the County Commission retreat meeting planned for July 23, 2007.

07-39SF DISCUSSION/DIRECTION – INTERNAL PLANNING PROCESS

Fire Chief Michael Greene explained there was now an Internal Planning Committed established for the District and he wanted to make sure their goals met with Board direction as identified in the staff report.

There was no public comment on this item.

Upon recommendation of Fire Chief Michael Greene, on motion by Director Galloway, seconded by Director Weber, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the goals for the planning process be approved as follows and as outlined in the staff report: to assure long-term fire and emergency medical service delivery to the citizens of the Sierra Fire Protection District by identifying challenges and threats, exploring opportunities and options, and recommending solutions to the Board of Directors.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gary Schmidt pointed out that Public Utility Commission regulations required power poles to have all brush cleared for ten feet around them. He did not believe the power poles in the County met that standard and asked the Board to address the problem. Mr. Schmidt was glad to see the County now required hydrants at every new water tank and suggested the County subsidize hydrants at private water tanks to be used by firefighters. He recalled the firefighters had run out of water during the 2004 Andrew Lane fire and turned back private water trucks because they were not on the County contractor's list.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

ROBERT M. LARKIN, Chairman
Sierra Fire Protection District

ATTEST:

AMY HARVEY, Washoe County Clerk
and Ex-Officio Clerk, Sierra
Fire Protection District

*Minutes Prepared By
Stacy Gonzales and Lisa McNeill
Deputy County Clerks*