

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

TUESDAY

10:00 a.m.

OCTOBER 26, 2010

PRESENT:

**David Humke, Chairman**  
**Bonnie Weber, Vice Chairperson**  
**Robert Larkin, Commissioner**  
**Kitty Jung, Commissioner**  
**John Breternitz, Commissioner**

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

The Board convened at 11:32 a.m. in regular session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada, and conducted the following business:

**10-85SF      AGENDA ITEM 2A**

**Agenda Subject:** “Approval of Agenda for October 26, 2010 Board of Commissioners Meeting.”

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 2A be approved.

**10-86SF      AGENDA ITEM 2B**

**Agenda Subject:** “Approval of Volunteer Reports.”

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 2B be approved.

**10-87SF      AGENDA ITEM 2C**

**Agenda Subject:** “Approval of minutes from May 17, 2010 special meeting and July 13, 2010 regular meeting.”

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 2C be approved.

**10-88SF      AGENDA ITEM 3**

**Agenda Subject: “Discussion and possible acceptance of Arrowcreek Station staffing option report and direction regarding the recommendations and academic review process.”**

Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD) Chief Michael Greene conducted a PowerPoint presentation, which was placed on file with the Clerk. The presentation highlighted the Arrowcreek Fire Station staffing, evaluation parameter for an eight minute response time, fiscal evaluation parameters, evaluation parameters for challenges, contracts, agreements and timing, approaches 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, community feedback, options and recommendations. He said the Board had directed an academic peer review process, but due to the lack of academic expertise with fire service issues that had been difficult to implement. Chief Greene remarked that the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) had not been formally directed to evaluate the issues and the options.

During the July 2010 meeting, staff had also been directed to seek community input on staffing options, but to exclude discussion of governance changes, which were being considered as part of the master planning process. Chief Greene indicated the following nine options were presented in the packet:

1. Relocation of the Bowers staff to Joy Lake, and Galena staff to Arrowcreek.
2. Division of Bowers staff to staff two-person rescue units at Bowers and Arrowcreek
3. Division of current staff from four firefighters at three stations to three firefighters at four stations.
4. Utilization of volunteers.
5. Exchange of territory between the TMFPD and SFPD through NRS 474.
6. Agreement to exchange service areas via contract for services.
7. Exchange of funding between the TMFPD and the SFPD via formulas based upon Ad Valorem revenue, interlocal contract for paramedic and first response services or modification of automatic aid agreements.
8. Revenue generation through modification of REMSA Franchise Agreement to enable SFPD paramedics to transport patients.
9. Revenue generation through creation of a GID, paramedic district, or tax adjustment.

Chairman Humke said focus had been placed on options 5, 6, and 7, but option 3, a reduction of the current staff; and, option 4, utilization of volunteers were also

considered. He said whenever possible the Board had always supported the use of volunteer fire personnel. He said during the community forums discussion ensued about utilization for a three-person manning and asked if Chief Greene was satisfied that the three-person choice was fully discussed. Chief Greene replied since that would be the most obvious solution he was satisfied. He explained a detailed analysis was conducted on the actual number of hours needed to provide staffing and, as labor negotiations were entered into and based on the need to address the current deficit prior to next year, he saw that there may be a reduction in the current staffing levels. Chief Greene said the cost of maintaining the current staffing at four people was \$482,311 a year in overtime. He said it would be unsustainable at the current rate to reduce the staffing levels at three stations. Chairman Humke felt the current staff could be spread further with additional capabilities and still provide safety. Chief Greene stated from an operational aspect; however, the operational aspect was not reviewed. He said as a method to address the budget deficit, the District would review three-person staffing for the existing engines.

Katy Simon, County Manager, noted that staff was unable to document the overtime cost indicated by Chief Greene. She stated in fiscal year 2009/10 the actual amount for overtime was \$869,654.

Chairman Humke said the staff report listed the recommendations and asked if that was the bottom line. Chief Greene confirmed that to be correct. Chairman Humke reviewed the recommendations and noted that district-to-district negotiations with the TMFPD were requested. Chief Greene concurred. Chairman Humke indicated if recommendation 2 was accepted, then recommendation 3 was to approve the use of a consultant to work out any additional information for the remaining recommendations. Chief Greene said the consultant could be used on a one-time basis to facilitate fire service personnel. Chairman Humke remarked an ideal outcome would be for this group, however defined, to arrive at an agreement and then this Board and the TMFPD Board would ratify that agreement. Chief Greene said separate from the governance function and from an operational aspect that was correct. Chairman Humke asked if the consultant would be restricted to the selected group of options 5, 6 and 7 or be able to review all nine recommendations. Chief Greene felt the consultant could review all the options, but based on the financial evaluation that moving personnel was the only feasible option, would review the SFPD only-option approach. He clarified that volunteer personnel had an essential role and were seen as a supplemental force and a force multiplier, but when putting the proposal together, staff was attempting to guarantee an eight-minute response time. Chairman Humke remarked if the consultant were placed with command staff it may be a short discussion for three-person manning and a short discussion for utilizing volunteers.

Commissioner Jung inquired about the contract expiration date with the collective bargaining unit. Chief Greene replied that date was July 2011. Prior to that, he stated the District had agreed with the bargaining unit to review on a program-by-program basis and, in doing so, the negotiation process should move more smoothly. Commissioner Jung asked if Chief Greene had any assistance through the County's Finance Department with the models and prioritizations. Chief Greene replied Mary

Walker from Walker and Associates was the District's financial analyst. Ms. Simon explained that the County had an arms length relationship with the District and confirmed that they used a contracted financial advisor, so the Finance Department was not directly involved. Commissioner Jung asked if Ms. Walker was in agreement with the provided data, numbers and modeling. Chief Greene explained there had been some contradictions in calculating, for example, overtime costs. He said his figures were based on the District being fully staffed and by calculating "X" amount of sick leave and "X" amount of vacation leave, to arrive at how many hours would be available and needed to be covered. He explained Ms. Walker used the higher overtime over the past few years and assuming the District would continue at that rate divided that by the number of employees, which was more than the amount budgeted and addressed in the current budget.

Commissioner Jung asked if it were possible for the County's Budget Manager to help with the modeling and the projections. Ms. Simon replied that would require loading all the costs and accounts of the District for the past 10 years, which would take a significant amount of time to build. However, since there were discrepancies, the financial projections could be reviewed. Commissioner Jung felt uncomfortable making a decision when there was not a consensus of the data. She asked how the proposed territory exchange through NRS 474 would cut costs since that would just transfer costs. Chief Greene indicated he had met with a nationally recognized fire services coordinator to confirm some of the assumptions. Commissioner Jung remarked she was inquiring about the financial data and felt that review should be from the County's Budget Division. Chief Greene explained the exchange of territory shifted the Verdi Station issue to the TMFPD, but in the current Interlocal Agreement there could be some savings applied to that Station. He agreed it did not cut costs, but staffed the three stations in the area and moved the issue of staffing another station to the Reno Fire/TMFPD. Commissioner Jung said she was concerned because of the tremendous loss of revenue that was never anticipated and needed more convincing as to how the exchange would make the SFPD more sustainable. She stated benchmarks and timelines were needed for the public to provide a map as to how this was moving forward.

In response to the call for public comment, the following individuals spoke: Richard Kenny said the 2,000 homes in the upper end of Arrowcreek Parkway received a lower quality of service than any other suburban Washoe County residence and, for that privilege, paid higher taxes. He stated the SFPD Board of Fire Commissioners needed to solve that problem. He felt the problem was created by a lengthy legacy of poor planning decisions that culminated in the existence of two fire districts with overlapping territories and no alignment between the source and the use of funds. He urged the Board to reach higher than the simple short-term expedient solutions. He felt the realignment of services could be achieved through interlocal agreements and the exchange of territory between the two Districts.

Kim Toulouse said he had been a supporter of the Fire Service Master Plan and the necessary changes to the SFPD and, if those changes were done properly, could benefit all Washoe County residents. He was concerned on the accuracy of the staff report and said there were contradictions and noted some of those differences. He was

also concerned about the loss of paramedics in Verdi and noted Verdi was in the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority's (REMSA) best effort response zone of 15 to 20 minutes. Mr. Toulouse explained the residents of Verdi fought to receive that service and had supported an increase in property taxes to help fund that service. Now an option was being proposed for the removal of that level of service which could place the Board in the unenviable position of pitting neighborhood against neighborhood. He felt any options needed to be presented through the Citizen Advisory Boards (CAB's) of the affected communities.

Bob Ackerman read from a prepared statement that was placed on file with the Clerk. He noted that he was in favor of option 5, the realignment of district boundaries per NRS 474. However, the short-term recommended the implementation of option 7, the exchange of funding between the TMFPD and the SFPD.

Dorothy Ramsdell spoke on the environmental impacts that could occur near the Bowers Fire Station. She urged the Board to make a decision that would preserve that environment.

Cliff Low said time was winding down to staff the new station. He said in July one Commissioner voted not to accept the grant for fear of being in a situation that could not be resolved. He said that may not have been a popular decision, but a decision he respected. Mr. Low said there was now a situation that focused on an interlocal agreement and how the City of Reno would work with the County to solve the problem. He asked the Board to tell the citizens where they stood on the issue.

Jane Countryman presented a document that represented the West Washoe Valley residents and was placed on file with the Clerk. She said the residents would like the issue to be resolved to benefit the entire County.

Robert Parker submitted a prepared statement that was placed on file with the Clerk. He said the work thus far showed a funding problem, but good solutions had also been brought forward. Dr. Parker felt everyone involved was concerned about protecting their turf rather than protecting the services. He quoted J. Pierpont Morgan who once told a consultant, "I didn't hire you to tell me I couldn't do it. I hired you to figure out how to do what I want."

Steven Perez felt that the Arrowcreek Station had always been an afterthought. He said at some point the stations needed to become a priority and how important they were to the community.

Alex Kukulus, Sierra Firefighters Association President, reported on an incident in the Arrowcreek area that took an Engine 14 minutes to respond and 36 minutes for REMSA to arrive on scene. He disagreed with the proposed options because they did not involve a change in governance. He urged the Board to examine everything and to get this done sooner rather than later.

Commissioner Larkin asked Kurt Latipow, Fire Services Coordinator, to comment on the Peer Review process. Mr. Latipow replied while querying individuals to conduct an academic peer review, he realized there were not many who had done these types of reviews. He said a scope of work had been completed; however, he had been unable to present that scope of work to the Forest Service. To date, he had been unable to find anyone at that academic level who was not working as a consultant, but did locate some individuals with strong academic credentials familiar with the fire service to understand the language and would ask those individuals to conduct a Peer Review. He indicated there was a draft scope of work in the Board's packet and, if so directed, he would continue to pursue someone at the Forest Service. Commissioner Larkin asked if the scope of work was contained on page 21 of the staff report. Mr. Latipow stated that was correct. Commissioner Larkin said relaxation of the academia standard was requested to include an academic who may be employed as a consultant. Mr. Latipow said that was his recommendation.

Commissioner Larkin commended Chief Greene for his due diligence in bringing forth options, but without the Peer Review felt the work was still incomplete. He said before the conversation could be advanced there were a few more components that needed to be in place. Commissioner Larkin said before any exchanges could be considered the Standard of Cover needed to be completed. He remarked that an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Review was in progress as was a review of dispatch and the Interlocal Agreement with the City of Reno. He said those reviews were scheduled to conclude by March 2011. He challenged staff to complete the Standard of Cover by that timeframe. Mr. Latipow explained he had committed a draft of the Regional Standard of Cover to the Joint Fire Advisory Board (JFAB) by the middle of March 2011 in order to receive input and then to be finalized. Commissioner Larkin asked if the Interlocal Agreement was on track to be completed by March as well. Mr. Latipow confirmed that to be on track.

Commissioner Larkin stated there were now milestones for the Standard of Cover, the Interlocal Agreement and the EMS review, but felt the Peer Review needed to be completed as well. He suggested Chief Greene work with Mr. Latipow to complete that review and bring it back to the Board. Commissioner Larkin clarified an option within the Standard of Cover was to analyze response times.

Commissioner Weber felt when stations were impacted, that needed to be presented to the affected communities and was surprised that had not occurred. Chief Greene clarified that information was brought forward during volunteer meetings and placed in a weekly e-mail with the attached options. He said he did not feel this was community against community, but rather a range of options to review for viability. Commissioner Weber was concerned that the community forums did not include everyone and stated this would take more time with all of the communities involved.

Commissioner Breternitz remarked in July he had voted against the Arrowcreek Station. He felt the solutions were more global than the Board had the capability of discussion at the moment. He said there were a number of elements

concluding in March 2011 and while those would give the base, they would not give the answer. He said he was committed to arriving at that answer, which involved a global review of the issues; however, he would not be rushed into making that decision. Commissioner Breternitz said he would support accepting the report and then allow the Board time to do their job.

Commissioner Jung asked for clarification on the Joy Lake Station. Chief Greene replied that Station was used as the sleeping quarters for Battalion Chiefs and where the seasonal crew was based. Commissioner Jung asked about a recent acquisition of an ambulance. Chief Greene said the District received a donation of an ambulance from another department with the intent being that vehicle would be used as a rescue unit and a rehabilitation unit. He said if that vehicle were licensed and used for transport the District would be in violation of the Franchise Agreement.

Commissioner Jung requested that be returned as an agenda item with the staff report including the status, update and the usability of the vehicle. She addressed the long-term viability of the SFPD and, on its own, the TMFPD. She felt a regional approach needed to be taken in solving the problem and noted the Standard of Cover could point in the right direction. She commended Chief Greene on the progress made so far and said it was a good matrix. However, believed the major piece was the regional study and the Peer Review to point in the direction as to allocate resources, which had to be done with the City of Reno, the TMFPD and the SFPD all at the table. She affirmed that she had never changed her position on regionalization of fire services, the coverage of fire services or the moral responsibility concerning the safety of the citizens.

In response to a concern from Commissioner Weber, Chief Greene replied volunteer fire personnel as consistent first responders were a difficult task. He said the volunteer role as a supplement or a force multiplier would establish a sleeper program in regularly staffing an Engine. He noted that placing volunteers in a station as a mechanism to provide staffing to meet the response holes was the direction he was moving. Commissioner Weber said that was perfect. She asked that the motion include a review of a working group to discuss how the volunteers could be used.

Mr. Latipow clarified that the consultant would be relative to the Peer Review process. Commissioner Larkin stated that was correct.

Commissioner Weber thanked Chief Greene for holding the community forums, but believed those should continue with different communities. Ms. Simon indicated those forums were posted on the County website and a wide array of notices were sent concerning the dates and times for those forums. Commissioner Weber stated it may have been noticed but not brought to the attention as being applicable to certain communities.

Chairman Humke thanked Chief Greene for forging a discussion on regional fire.

On motion by Commissioner Larkin, seconded by Commissioner Breternitz, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that:

- The staff report be accepted as written and transmitted to the TMFPD staff, specifically Mr. Latipow;
- Mr. Latipow be authorized to engage a consultant for the Peer Review, as specified on page 21 of the staff report;
- Mr. Latipow be authorized to continue the dialogue with Chief Greene, specifically for Mr. Latipow to prepare a staff report for the TMFPD specifying the options that had been delineated;
- A timeline for completion of all the reviews be completed and brought back to the TMFPD's meeting in November;
- Chief Greene be commended for diligently completing the task; and,
- The remaining two workshops be reserved to be completed sometime at or near the completion of all the processes and Chief Greene be released from the remaining two workshops.

**10-89SF      AGENDA ITEM 4**

**Agenda Subject: “Commissioner’s/Managers Announcements, Requests for Information, Topics for Future Agendas and Statements Relating to Items Not on the Agenda. (No discussion among Commissioners will take place on this item.)”**

Commissioner Jung restated her request for an agenda item concerning the donated ambulance and the plan for utilization of that vehicle within the auspicious of not violating the Franchise Agreement.

Commissioner Weber asked if the intent of the motion in Agenda Item 3 was to exclude Chief Greene from moving forward and placing the direction with Kurt Latipow, Fire Services Coordinator. Chairman Humke confirmed that an element of the motion was directing Chief Greene and Mr. Latipow to continue to consult on all the relevant items.

**10-90SF      AGENDA ITEM 5**

**Agenda Subject: “Public Comment.”**

Gary Schmidt spoke on an issue that arose earlier in the meeting when the Board was in recess.

Cliff Low stated it was never his intention to rush Board members into making a final decision. However, he sought a clear statement of direction from the Board and reiterated his previous comments.



Bob Ackerman said he was unclear if the direction in the motion of Agenda Item 3 included the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the Reno Fire Department all sitting at the table.

Per Legal Counsel's advice, Chairman Humke advised Mr. Ackerman to speak to Chief Greene or Mr. Latipow for clarification.

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**1:26 p.m.** There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion by Commissioner Larkin, seconded by Commissioner Weber, which motion duly carried, the meeting was adjourned.

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**DAVID E. HUMKE**, Chairman  
Sierra Fire Protection District

**ATTEST:**

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

*Minutes Prepared by:  
Stacy Gonzales, Deputy County Clerk*