

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS, TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

TUESDAY 9:00 A.M. June 15, 1999

PRESENT:

Jim Galloway, Chairman
Ted Short, Vice Chairman
Joanne Bond, Commissioner
Pete Sferrazza, Commissioner
Jim Shaw, Commissioner
Roy Slate, Acting Fire Chief
Amy Harvey, County Clerk
Katy Simon, County Manager
Madelyn Shipman, Legal Counsel

The Board met in regular session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada, and conducted the following business:

AGENDA

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Commissioner Bond, seconded by Commissioner Shaw, which motion duly carried, Chairman Galloway ordered that the agenda for the June 15, 1999, meeting be approved.

MINUTES

On motion by Commissioner Bond, seconded by Commissioner Short, which motion duly carried, Chairman Galloway ordered that the minutes of the special meetings of April 13 and April 27, 1999, and the regular meeting of April 20, 1999, be approved.

99-30F PROGRESS REPORT

Following discussion and questions by the Board, on motion by Commissioner Bond, seconded by Commissioner Shaw, which motion duly carried, Chairman Galloway ordered that receipt of the Progress Report of Fire District Operations for the month of May, 1999, be acknowledged.

Acting Chief Slate commented on the significant incidents being the first sign of the fire season as contained in his report dated June 8, 1999.

99-31F FIRE SERVICE CONSOLIDATION

Assistant Manager Howard Reynolds gave a history of contract negotiations for fire service consolidation between Washoe County and the City of Reno which continue even though there have been several proposals presented for consideration.

Acting Fire Chief Roy Slate suggested that negotiations continue until the master contract is the outcome; and advised that the joint advisory board felt it would be better to schedule a regular meeting with the City Council in order to address their concerns with budgets and the tracking of over expenditures; that they also want a transition period to convert to a metro system; and that liable financing by the City of Reno is also a concern. In response to Chairman Galloway, he said that none of these have been considered as yet.

Mr. Reynolds explained some of the sections of the Agreement addressed in his memo to the Board of Fire Commissioners and the

report received from Chuc Lowden, Reno Fire Chief, for the benefit of those in the audience. He cited items of dispute, and the explanations given for his questioning of them.

Chuck Lowden, Reno Fire Chief, addressed the location issue, which would revolve around the master plan. He advised that the City has no problem in the jurisdiction as it remains with who owns the property; and that if real property gets annexed, the title would be in the fee simple owner. He said that the proposal is to look at budgeting as it concerns both entities and if new services indicate evaluation, then somehow it will be adjusted.

Commissioner Bond noted that keeping issues separate leaves doubt in her mind whether consolidation of services is taking place. Mr. Lowden responded that this is still the intent and will be addressed in the closing statements, and that they hope that the master plan will ultimately result in the merger of those two facilities. Commissioner Short said that he understands that the share of the costs must be provided for in the budget and he believes it would be appropriate to prepare a budget for a five-year period.

Chief Lowden stated that they eventually expect to do this.

Commissioner Sferrazza asked about first response areas, particularly the northwest stations, and Chief Lowden stated that this will be evaluated. Chairman Galloway remarked that this may become cumbersome in some areas as the fire stations change hands, and Chief Lowden stated that they could consider buying the two fire stations that the County has in the City of Reno, in order to make it as limited as possible.

Chairman Galloway said that if a station does become annexed, they want to assure that it at least addresses County needs. Commissioner Shaw stated that there is still a need for continued negotiations and he is starting to have doubts about whether consolidation will be money-saving to the County. In response to Commissioner Bond, Chief Lowden said the savings will come from the merger of stations and also overhead, i.e., one fire chief and one administration vs. two, and approximately one million dollars in combining two staffings into one company staffing.

As the discussion continued, it was noted that the Master Plan would have to be done by someone professional in doing that, otherwise staff would have a problem, which was analyzed to some length in a dialogue which took place between Chairman Galloway and Chief Lowden after which Commissioner Shaw stated his belief that a Master Plan is needed in advance of this contract. Commissioner Sferrazza remarked that in order to serve both entities, mutuality must be required as the goal to achieve. Chief Lowden stated that he cannot commit to that, because with the continued annexation occurring, Truckee Meadows would not experience a shortfall in providing services, and that would make it disproportionately done.

Commissioner Sferrazza talked about the mill rate advising that he wants the City of Reno to have an equivalent rate and cited figures he got from the State Fire District. The Budget Manager of the City of Reno stated that the City would consider a ratio on the base of services and were also looking at a significantly less mill rate. John Sherman, Director of Finance, Washoe County, indicated that in order for the Reno Fire to be converted into ad valorem rate, the portion in revenues being driven by their ad valorem tax rate must be considered. A discussion then ensued concerning effects which may occur in the case of annexation.

Chairman Galloway then asked for public comment and Marty Scheuerman, president of the Truckee Meadows Firefighters Local Union stated that he would support this as being very doable but that the point in annexation is being missed.

He then gave an analogy of Sparks or Reno annexing Sun Valley, questioning whether the level of service would be maintained. He addressed representation by the Union of the firefighters after consolidation.

Commissioner Short advised that his concern is in having a cost effective professional fire protection system, and even though the County may be the junior partner, saving taxpayer dollars must be achieved. Commissioner Sferrazza commented on the issues posed by Mr. Scheuerman stressing that it is critical that they be resolved.

Mr. Scheuerman stated that he shares the vision of a regional fire service noting that the entire process has to be continued

toward that goal.

Frank Partlow expressed his belief that a proper agreement needs to be developed and it is nonsense that consolidation cannot save dollars and provide the same level of service.

Mr. DeLorey, speaking on behalf of Citizens for Responsive Government, addressed the focus in the deliberations today and in the future to be a Regional Fire District with regional representatives as a whole. He advised that the appearance is that the focus is a little soft toward regionalization.

Mike Gardner, Chief of the Volunteer Fire Department, expressed concerns about the proposed new fire station in Lemmon Valley and his department's vision a new fire station to honor current and past members of his department. He questioned where the accountability is with this process down the road. He stressed that Commissioner Bond has tried to resolve this, and Commissioner Bond agreed and stressed that the station issue must be settled.

Following more discussion concerning the volunteers, Commissioner Shaw expressed appreciation for their services and noted that hopefully Chief Gardner will continue to help. Chief Gardner stated that he does not know how to implement the fire station into the contract. Chairman Galloway explained the budget process indicating that there is no way to get the \$200,000 to build the Lemmon Valley fire station; and that until this agreement is resolved, this is on hold.

Laura Carmen, Hidden Valley Homeowners Association, emphasized that they are very much in favor of a regional fire district. and a metropolitan board.

Sam Dehne, a Reno citizen, stated that he respects both Reno and Truckee Meadows personnel and is very much for consolidation; but that the blunder is allowing Reno to head this as he believes the City of Reno Council is bad news.

Commissioner Sferrazza said he is prepared to make a motion to direct staff to continue negotiations and to stand fast on the mutuality requirement, fire station location, and staffing, and include a formula based on mill rate pro rata funding in the City of Reno and the District; and that he would extend the deadline to October 31, 1999, to enable the City of Reno the exclusive right-to-serve language for unincorporated areas.

He continued that the formula for subsequent fire stations be reviewed and developed by staff using a ratio to service to be applied to new stations and annexed stations in order to recoup the amount the County would be losing in terms of assessed valuation that there be language provided for volunteer budgets to be maintained within the discretion of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District.

Commissioner Bond said she would like to add direction that the master plan be accelerated so the level of service can be addressed; and that the issues of operations and the debt have to be analyzed to get a firmer idea of the outcome in terms of how each entity will be affected.

Commissioner Shaw indicated he would like to see something concrete in reference to cost savings in what the City is presenting to the County today and also would like to have Mr. Reynolds make some comments on what has been brought up.

Chairman Galloway stated that he still thinks this contract approach is backwards and he would rather go for a joint powers agreement simply because the County, as the regional provider should not have Reno run things; that, as such, the County could consolidate the debt without all these separate formulas. He delineated expenses and costs involved, and expressed his concern regarding the loss in revenue through annexation into the city and the possibility of a tax rate increase.

Commissioner Short explained that some figures need to be presented as the district will still have some expenses including volunteer expenses and major maintenance on the fire stations. Commissioner Bond noted that if a joint powers agreement was in process, this detail would still be needed, and that although she believes this process will be successful, if it turns out otherwise, there are always alternatives.

Commissioner Shaw, with all due respect, pointed out that it appears that Board discussion on this issue has been geared toward the same direction in past meeting and is repetitive, that as Mr. Partlow indicated, a trust level between the two entities has to be established in order to reach conclusion on this. He restated the importance of hearing from Assistant County Manager Howard Reynolds as the County's chief negotiator. Chairman Galloway stated that because his constituents have urged him to not support anything but a joint powers agreement, he believes that he cannot support consolidation in any other way.

Commissioner Bond stated that she would second the motion made by Commissioner Sferrazza if he would restate his motion to include some of the items in the discussion. Commissioner Sferrazza noted that in his observation, there is no disagreement on the fundamentals of consolidation but only on how to reach that goal.

Assistant County Manager Howard Reynolds commented that he believes that what has been discussed today is appropriate and workable.

Following discussion, on motion by Commissioner Sferrazza, seconded by Commissioner Bond, which motion duly carried with Chairman Galloway voting "no," it was ordered that in regard to fire station location (Section No. 3.2 in the proposed agreement) that this also include staffing; that the master plan be agreed upon and the process be accelerated so that it is ready before October 31, 1999, and would provide for mutuality in closing stations; that the current mill rate be built into that master plan by both the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the City of Reno with the sales tax that goes to the District to be calculated in the same manner; that in regard to Budget and Funding (Section 11.1), that the formula for cost savings be as stated, however, for new stations, that a new formula be developed by staff as a method of protection from annexation and at the same time enable both the Fire Protection District and the City of Reno to share in the costs of new or annexed stations; that specifically the McQueen Fire Station be exclude from that as it is covered by the first formula; that any savings from that consolidation be split in the relative budgets; and that insofar as volunteers are concerned, the District have some control over that in terms of the budget, and staff would negotiate that in the agreement so there would be no reduction in funding for the volunteers effort.

Chief Slate asked for clarification on hiring a consultant to assist with the master plan over the next three months. Commissioners Sferrazza and Bond agreed that this was intended in the motion and all agreed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mike Gardner stated that AB409 has loosened up the regulations on defibrillators which affects the insurance coverage.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned.

JIM GALLOWAY, Chairman
Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

ATTEST: AMY HARVEY, County Clerk