

JOINT MEETING
BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS, TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
AND
RENO CITY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 2:00 P.M. NOVEMBER 23, 1999

PRESENT:

TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT	CITY OF RENO
Jim Galloway, Chairman	Jeff Griffin, Mayor
Ted Short, Vice Chairman	Dave Aizzai, Councilmember
Joanne Bond, Commissioner	Sherrie Doyle, Councilmember
Pete Sferrazza, Commissioner	Pierre Hascheff, Councilmember
Betty Jo Vonderheide, Deputy County Clerk	Tom Herndon, Councilmember
Katy Singlaub, County Manager	Dave Rigdon, Councilmember
Marty Scheuerman, Acting Fire Chief	Charles McNeely, City Manager
Madelyn Shipman, Legal Counsel	Patricia Lynch, Legal Counsel

ABSENT:

Jim Shaw, Commissioner	Donald Cook, City Clerk
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The Washoe County Board of Fire Commissioners of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the Reno City Council convened in a special joint meeting in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 E. Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada with Chairman Galloway presiding. The Washoe County Clerk called the roll and the following business was conducted:

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sam Dehne, Reno citizen, stated that he is in favor of consolidation providing there are no lay-offs and no reduction in pay, but strenuously objects to the City of Reno staff and the City Council controlling the operation; that he objects to government that operates in secret, which issue the Reno Gazette-Journal recently exposed has been going on at City Hall, and puts a citizen in jail for speaking during public comment which occurred at today's Reno City Council meeting.

Cathy Brandhorst, area citizen, stated that she agreed with the comments made by Mr. Dehne; and that she would like to be safe and have immediate response time. She then advised that she was also arrested at City Hall for public comment.

99-53 FIRE SERVICE CONSOLIDATION

Marty Scheuerman, Acting Fire Chief, commented that a staff report was provided to the Fire Commissioners and the Council members. He reviewed the status of fire service consolidation, advising that the Abby Group was hired to prepare the fire station location master plan, but due to some technical glitches, the proposed final product is not expected for a couple of weeks.

Commissioner Bond stated that she is somewhat frustrated with the continued delays in developing a plan and requested that whatever work product is available be presented for review by December 15th. Sherrie Doyle, Councilmember, agreed and stated that she would like to have a draft plan and draft contract presented by December 15th, with everything to be finalized no later than the end of January, 2000.

Chief Scheuerman advised that once the product is presented, staff would need time to interpret the documents and present them to the labor unions and other concerned parties for review; and that he believes the December 15th date is realistic for staff to receive a plan from the consultant. Chief Scheuerman and Mary Walker, Walker and Associates, Financial Consultant for the Fire District, responded to several questions of the Commissioners and Council members concerning various issues including the cost sharing formula alternatives being considered; consolidation of stations in overlapping areas; fiscal equity issues; impacts of annexation; cost savings of consolidation; union issues; etc. Chief Scheuerman advised that the Fire District and City of Reno staffs are looking at many alternatives in order to accomplish the desired goals of maintaining levels of service, no lay-offs, and no tax increase; and that a governing board will be established to oversee operations of the consolidated department. Ms. Walker stated that the fairest picture in terms of cost sharing and ease of administration is being looked at; that whatever cost sharing formula is developed needs to assure that there is accountability to the taxpayers and protection for the Fire District and the City of Reno; that she feels negotiations are proceeding very well and agreement on the various issues will soon be reached; and that she believes consolidation is the best avenue to pursue and will afford sufficient savings to provide Fire protection to citizens without increasing taxes or decreasing levels of service.

Dave Aizzai, Councilmember, commented that he thought an informal agreement had already been reached concerning formula percentages of approximately 60/30 and questioned why other options are being looked at. Chairman Galloway stated that during early discussions he suggested a couple of possibilities as a basis for starting to look at a formula, one being to use assessed valuations which someone determined would be about a 1/3-2/3 division; that all suggestions and other formula options being considered have been in the hands of the negotiators; and that staff encountered difficulties with the original concept because it was determined that it would result in some unincorporated areas being big losers, so it was necessary to look at other options that would provide more equality to everyone. Commissioner Bond stated that in her mind there was no predetermination of a formula because that would have to be developed as the process moved forward.

Councilmember Aizzai asked what current formula is being considered and Ms. Walker responded that what she developed as a draft to the City was to use the methodology of charging actual direct expenses and then allocating out Station 2 and Station 11 based on area of service and a proportionate share of assessed valuation, which would result in approximate savings of 50/50, noting that this is only one of the alternatives being negotiated.

Commissioner Short stated that he believes the approach Ms. Walker and the District and City of Reno fire professionals are using is appropriate; that he does not think there is a magic number to the formula and there cannot be any losers in the consolidation effort; and that shared savings should be allocated in a fair manner to protect the District and the City. Commissioner Sferrazza discussed issues concerning Station 2 and Station 11 and stated that he supports the proposed formula that provides 50/50 savings for both entities. Tom Herndon, Councilmember, stated that he does not think anyone from the City of Reno has argued with the fact that there should be a sharing of the benefit and the exact formula is not the real issue; that he believes the purpose of this meeting is to hammer out how taxpayer dollars can be saved, and there is no doubt that that can be accomplished with consolidation; that the Fire Commissioners and the City Council need to direct staff to move forward and work out the necessary details; and that if something does not work quite right, it can be straightened out at a later time.

Chairman Galloway stated that he believes the idea of an assessed valuation formula is the best way to go; that adjustments may need to be made at first to assure there are no big losers; but that once that is done and a rate is set, he believes assessed valuation is a good method to follow because it automatically compensates for annexations, etc.

Chuck Lowden, City of Reno Fire Chief, and Stuart Schillinger, City of Reno Budget Manager, were present to provide additional information.

Councilmember Doyle commented that she believes a fiscal equity study that includes fire consolidation is forthcoming and will

hopefully answer many of the questions being raised today. She requested that a financial report be presented by the District and the City of Reno about the impacts of annexation at the joint meeting to be held after the draft plan and agreement are presented and reviewed.

Chief Lowden advised that if staff receives the draft plan and agreement by December 15th, it would be possible to have a joint meeting in January. Charles McNeely, City Manager, stated that he sees no problem in receiving the requested documentation by December 15th; and that January 18, 2000 could be set as a tentative time frame to bring recommendations and the draft contract to the joint bodies.

Jeff Griffin, Mayor, City of Reno, commented that this effort is still in the preliminary stages and everything he is hearing today is encouraging with regard to moving forward with consolidation and to let staff negotiate and figure out the elements that are very close to agreement.

Commissioner Bond stated that the purpose of consolidation is to remove the lines between the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County; and that the effort to put this together should move forward.

Councilmember Aizzai commented that this issue has been dealt with for over a year and is not any closer in his opinion; that the issues being discussed concerning the distribution of cost and savings are totally new but he hopes the process is closer and everyone can agree to move forward; and that he would like to sign an agreement today containing a 60/30 percentage and move on.

Commissioner Sferrazza stated that he totally supports consolidation and the efforts made by staff; and that he believes consolidation is much closer to being accomplished.

Chief Scheuerman clarified that staff is looking at actual costs for all other stations and not applying a specific formula; that the only area a formula is being applied is to Station 2 and Station 11, since that is the only combination; and that from that point on any new stations would trigger a look at the same type of assessed valuation formula after determining how well it worked the first time.

Commissioner Short commented that he thinks staff needs to work out the formula and the details; that he believes the staff from both entities are on the right track and is hopeful that something will be developed that is workable and fair; and that paying for actual cost of service is very fair in his opinion.

Chairman Galloway asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Commissioners and Councilmembers on this item and there were no response.

Councilmember Doyle complimented the Reno and District Fire Chiefs for their efforts in working with staff and government officials on this issue. She stated that at the January meeting she hopes the fire master plan can be discussed; that at the last City Council meeting a request was made for a joint meeting with the Commissioners to talk about another issue, which hopefully can be discussed at the January meeting, noting that it is important for the County and the City to talk to each other because sometimes information gets lost between staff, newspapers, citizens, etc.; and that a lot of things are happening regionally and individually that need to be discussed by the governmental entities.

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Councilmember Doyle left the meeting.

Councilman Herndon commented that although different routes are being taken, everyone is going to the same destination; and that the details should be worked out sooner than later to accomplish consolidation.

Mayor Griffin stated that many of the issues brought forth were about minute details and reflect a greater understanding of the elements; that fire service consolidation involved a complex and difficult process that brought the parties to the point where

they are talking about what he thinks are small detail points; that he is very encouraged and feels that consolidation is within grasp; that there is great staff at the District and the Reno Fire Department; and that it is a joy to be involved in government when these types of opportunities are seized and accomplished.

Chairman Galloway complimented everyone on a very good meeting.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

JIM GALLOWAY, Chairman
Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

ATTEST: AMY HARVEY, County Clerk

JEFF GRIFFIN, Mayor, City of Reno

ATTEST: DON COOK, Reno City Clerk

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