

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS, TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

TUESDAY

1:30 P.M.

MAY 9, 2000

PRESENT:

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

Marty Scheuerman, Acting Fire Chief
Betty Jo Vonderheide, Chief Deputy County Clerk
Katy Singlaub, County Manager
Madelyn Shipman, Legal Counsel

The Board met in special 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 Galloway, which motion duly carried, Chairman Short ordered that the agenda for the May 9, 2000, special meeting be approved.

00-22F DISCUSSION/UPDATE ON CONSOLIDATION WITH CITY OF RENO

Mary Walker, Walker and Associates, financial consultant to the District, submitted a detailed financial analysis dated May 4, 2000, which was discussed in detail and placed on file with the Clerk. Included in this report were 9 items pertaining to station staffing, distribution of costs and savings, etc., that the negotiating teams have agreed upon; and Ms. Walker stated that these should be included in the final agreement. She further explained that the costs for the 15 firefighters for the second engine company at Station 11 were not included in the consolidation costs and Reno has agreed to hold the District harmless for those costs because, whether consolidation occurs or not, the City of Reno is going to have to put that second engine company in place in accordance with the tax increase Reno got from the voters to do so. Other station staffing was discussed and Ms. Walker explained that the original contract back in January just eliminated the deficit, but the contract as currently proposed will provide that each entity will actually receive the equivalent of one free staffing of one station. She further stated that the projected total savings over a 3-year period is over \$5-million.

Commissioner Sferrazza reaffirmed that if consolidation is accomplished, the tax rate for the TMFPD will not need to be increased. Ms. Walker stated that that was correct; but pointed out that the dispatch contract still needs to be renegotiated, which the City of Reno has committed to try to do before July 1st; and that direction to staff concerning that would be appropriate. Commissioner Shaw asked if not having to increase taxes would last for the duration of the 5-year plan. Ms. Walker stated that it is her belief that this would alleviate the deficit for the 5-year period, barring any other declines in assessed value; and that additional provisions for lost revenue due to annexations are included in the interlocal agreement.

Commissioner Bond asked Ms. Walker if she is very comfortable with the analysis, the figures and the bottom line. Ms. Walker stated that she is and that she and District staff have worked very diligently with the City of Reno to make sure they are also very comfortable.

Howard Reynolds, Assistant County Manager, and Steve Watson, Washoe County Labor Relations Manager, responded to questions from Commissioner Galloway regarding consolidation of labor agreements between Locals 731 and 2487.

A discussion then ensued concerning continued use of the volunteer fire fighters. Mr. Reynolds explained that Local 731 has agreed to maintain the "status quo" of the volunteers and that the cleanest way to ensure that would be to have a letter from 731 acknowledging the definition of "status quo." Chief Scheuerman had prepared a definition, dated April 18, 2000, of the fill-in and recall practices used by the District to cover vacant stations. In response to Commissioner Galloway, Mr. Reynolds advised that the authority for future renewals of the volunteer contracts, their budgets, their equipment, etc., remains with the District. Madelyn Shipman, Assistant District Attorney, stated that she believes that that intent was there, but specific wording still needs to be included in the interlocal agreement; and she read the amended language that has been proposed and agreed to by both parties.

Commissioner Galloway summarized that the items that still need to be included in the interlocal agreement are the 9 items from Ms. Walker's memorandum, that volunteer agreements will be renewed by the District, and that the "status quo" definition needs to be clarified and acknowledged. Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Shipman added the hold harmless agreement concerning the water tenders, the dispatch contract, and the successorship language proposed by Mr. Reynolds that would allow future consolidation with other entities to further regionalization.

Commissioner Bond asked City of Reno staff if there has been anything mentioned so far that they did not have knowledge of or that would jeopardize this consolidation. Ralph Jaeck, Assistant City Manager, stated that he has not been surprised by anything this morning; that he agrees that the role of the volunteers is very important; that staff still needs to work on some of the items in Mr. Reynolds' letter; that, as far as the dispatch contract, he feels the future costs can be resolved; and that the items in Ms. Walker's memo look all right to him.

Noting that several individuals have requested to speak, Chairman Short called for public comment concerning consolidation of the TMFPD and the City of Reno fire protection services.

Richard Boykin, President of the Washoe County Volunteer Firemen's Association, stated that they have not been kept apprised of the negotiations so they do not know whether their concerns have been addressed. He stated that he believes there is a misconception concerning what the volunteers do; that they are not primarily a fill-in group; that they are first responders to calls in their geographic areas; that they are concerned that they may be relegated to a fill-in or second response level; and that their neighbors really depend on them to make quick

responses. He emphasized that all the 350 volunteers want is to continue to be able to work for and serve their neighbors and the County. Commissioner Galloway asked Chief Boykin if the definition of "status quo" should include the volunteers' role as first responders in their geographic areas. The Chief stated that it definitely should and, when a call goes out, the volunteers should be called at the same time the career personnel are called. Language was proposed and discussed to add to the contract to address those concerns. Chief Scheuerman advised that the agreements between the District and the volunteers, which Reno will be assuming, have always provided that the volunteers provide initial response fire protection services, emergency medical services, rescue services and hazardous materials response within their geographic area; and that is why he did not include that in the April 18, 2000 description. Commissioner Sferrazza suggested that the contract with Reno include the language that the volunteers will continue to be first responders in the geographic areas they serve.

Commissioner Bond asked that the volunteers be kept apprised of the status of these negotiations. Chairman Short stated that the County certainly appreciates the volunteers.

Alfred Vandenburg, Washoe County resident, expressed his opposition to Reno's attempt to annex his neighborhood.

Sam Dehne, a Reno citizen, stated that he agrees with the consolidation concept, but that the City of Reno should not be in charge. He also stated that as a citizen he really appreciates the volunteers.

Paul duPue, speaking on behalf of the firefighters represented by Local 2487, commended the Board and the City of Reno for taking on a very difficult task.

Charles Perkins, resident of South Hills, stated that he is against the City of Reno getting any closer than they are and that if the County had to increase his taxes for fire protection, he would not object.

Gary Ferro, North Valleys resident, stated that their concern is that they have not had an opportunity to look at the final document and suggested that it be posted on a website so that people can comment on the agreement and can decide whether this is the best deal for the citizens. He also expressed the importance of maintaining the volunteers as first responders.

Ike Eichbaum, South Hills resident, stated that he came from a long line of volunteer firemen and that he is also very grateful for all of the firemen. He further stated that the City of Reno is "gobbling up" the fire district and expressed his hope that this is not just another step toward "gobbling" them up also.

Frank Partlow, Reno resident, pointed out that the County has expended a lot of effort, time and money putting together focus groups and surveying residents, and that, from those efforts, the County learned that 61 percent of the people believe the County does not do everything it can before going to the voters for more money and that the voters would be more likely to vote for a bond issue that included consolidated services.

Chairman Short read a letter into the record from the Pleasant Valley Volunteer Fire Chief, Ken Carpenter. Chief Scheuerman recapped some of the history of the District and stated that the volunteers have contributed largely to the safety and welfare of the citizens of Washoe County since time began and that they will continue to do so. He stressed that there is no intention to use the volunteers in any lesser capacity or

function and emphasized that the District does use and respect the volunteers and will continue to support the volunteers.

Commissioner Sferrazza stated that two District employees, who are part of Local 3, have expressed concern about losing some of their benefits when they transfer to Reno and asked that their concerns be addressed as much as possible by the City of Reno. Rick Gonzales, City of Reno Labor Relations Manager, agreed to sit down and talk with the individuals and report back to the Board in writing.

A discussion ensued concerning consolidation options with other entities.

Commissioner Sferrazza moved that:

1. Staff be directed to continue negotiations to finalize the interlocal agreement with the City of Reno concerning consolidation of the Reno and County fire services, specifically including the following:
 - a. The recommendations made by Mr. Reynolds in his May 3, 2000, letter, giving the County the right to terminate the contract on an annual basis if the County negotiates a better deal regarding consolidation with another entity and Reno refuses to include them in the contract;
 - b. The nine recommendations contained in Mary Walker's letter of May 4, 2000;
 - c. A condition that the dispatch agreement be finalized to the extent possible; and
 - d. The hold harmless agreement with respect to the 15 additional fire fighters.
2. That the provisions concerning the volunteer firefighters include that:
 - a. The definition of "status quo" for the volunteer firefighters is that the volunteers are first responders in their geographic areas for fire protection services, emergency medical services, rescue services and hazardous materials responses, and they provide the fill-in and recall practices outlined in Chief Scheuerman's description dated April 18, 2000;
 - b. This definition of "status quo" be attached to the interlocal agreement and acknowledged by the City of Reno and Local 731 as the "status quo" that would be maintained and adhered to concerning the volunteer firefighters;
 - c. Any renewal, modification, etc., of the contracts with the volunteer organizations will be under the control of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District.
3. Mr. Gonzales be requested to meet with Shawna Howard and Kenny DeBerg and respond in writing to the Board concerning his attempts to address the concerns of Local 3 and explain the benefits these employees will be receiving.
4. The final interlocal agreement is subject to Local 2487 agreeing to the collective bargaining agreement with Local 731.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bond.

Commissioners Sferrazza and Shaw spoke in support of the motion stating their belief that this will be good for the citizens of Reno and Washoe County; that it will provide better fire protection services at less cost with substantial savings to both entities; and that if this consolidation of services is as successful as they feel it will be, other entities might join in. Commissioner Sferrazza also stated that he thinks this will also provide some protection against annexation as the fiscal incentive for Reno to annex will be somewhat diminished.

Commissioner Galloway stated that, while he is for consolidation, he believes there are too many problems with this arrangement and he cannot endorse it. He cited the problems as being taxation without representation for the Washoe County residents, the bad experience that occurred with the dispatch contract, an attitude of negativity towards the volunteer firefighters, lack of recourse for non-performance, the inability of the City to dedicate funds specifically for fire protection as is done in the District, Local 731 could veto any future consolidation that includes Reno, there has already been a non-disclosure issue, and that he does not believe the management competency at the City of Reno is adequate. He also stated that if it is approved, however, he will do everything he can to make it work.

Commissioner Bond stated that she is going to support the motion; that the distrust between entities has to be resolved; and that for the benefit of everyone in Washoe County, the entities have to come together and prove that they can accomplish this.

Chairman Short stated that he cannot support the motion because from the beginning he wanted a joint powers governance so the people in the unincorporated area would have a vote; that without that, this Board is advisory only with no real control; and that if the motion passes, he will also do his best to make it a success. He further stated that his goal was to someday have a truly regional fire protection district, which he does not see now if Local 731 has veto power; that in this valley, there are 5 different fire chiefs, which is a real disservice to the taxpayers; that what he wanted was for everyone to sit down with a map of the entire Truckee Meadows, get the politicians out of it, get the fire professionals in there without their badges, and set up a district that would save the taxpayers a lot of money.

The Chairman then called for the vote on the motion. Commissioners Bond, Sferrazza and Shaw voted "yes" and Commissioners Galloway and Short voted "no." The motion passed by a 3 to 2 vote and it was so ordered.

Following further discussion, on motion by Commissioner Sferrazza, seconded by Commissioner Shaw, which motion duly carried with Commissioner Galloway abstaining, it was further ordered that the length of the interlocal agreement be 3 years with an option to renew for 2 years.

00-23F DISCUSSION AND UPDATE OF FY 2000/2001 DISTRICT BUDGET

Acting Chief Marty Scheuerman stated that in light of the vote to approve the consolidation agreement, the District is prepared to operate off of its ending fund balance at this point in time.

Commissioner Galloway stated that the City of Reno might reject the consolidation agreement because of some of the conditions the Board put on it. He asked what would happen if that occurred and the District remained as it is and did not put a tax increase in their budget.

Commissioner Sferrazza stated that there was a budget presented that maintained the service level without a tax increase by using some of the ending fund balance. Chief Scheuerman stated that by using up the ending fund balance, the District could manage for one year. He also stated

that he would present both budget scenarios at the next meeting.

BOARD COMMENTS

Chairman Short requested that Mary Walker and staff put together the numbers on other consolidation options for presentation to the Board at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Guy Felton, a Washoe citizen, spoke in opposition to Sheriff Kirkland resigning in a manner that prevents the citizens from voting for his successor for the remainder of his term and stated that the Board of County Commissioners should have challenged the Sheriff's power play.

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

TED F. SHORT, Chairman
Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District

ATTEST: AMY HARVEY, County Clerk