

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

TUESDAY

11:00 a.m.

AUGUST 9, 2011

PRESENT:

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

**Nancy Parent, Chief Deputy Clerk**  
**Katy Simon, County Manager**  
**Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel**  
**Tim O'Brien, Battalion Chief**

The Board convened at 11:09 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:

**11-68F      AGENDA ITEM 2**

**Agenda Subject:** “Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to two minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Commission agenda. The District will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to two minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the District as a whole.”

Jeff Church spoke about the dismantling of the Interlocal Agreement with the City of Reno. He urged the Board to consider allowing other agencies to contract with the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD). Mr. Church also urged the Board to consider an expansion of the Volunteer Fire Departments and suggested cross-training Washoe County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) deputies as firefighters.

Tom Dunn read from a prepared statement that was placed on file with the Clerk. He said he was an advocate for consolidation and regionalization, but was against the deconsolidation of the TMFPD and the Reno Fire Department (RFD).

Joe Dolan stated that he was hired by the TMFPD in 1984 and currently was employed with the RFD. He supported the regionalization of all fire departments in Washoe County, but could not support the Board of Fire Commissioner's decision to withdraw from the current contract with the City of Reno. Mr. Dolan indicated that consolidation had proven to save money and because of consolidation the TMFPD had saved over \$13 million, allowing the District to pay for capital improvements. He felt the

Board was willing to pay double for administration costs while reducing the number of firefighters on an engine company.

Garth Elliott spoke about consolidation and the Incline Village property tax refunds.

Gary Schmidt commented on other communities that had Public Safety Departments instead of separate police and fire departments.

**11-69F      AGENDA ITEM 3A**

**Agenda Subject: “Approval of BOFC meeting minutes from March 22, 2011, April 26, 2011, May 24, 2011, and June 28, 2011.”**

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Weber, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 3A be approved.

**11-70F      AGENDA ITEM 3B**

**Agenda Subject: “Approval of Volunteer Fire Department Report for months May and June 2011.”**

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Weber, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 3B be approved.

**11-71F      AGENDA ITEM 4**

**Agenda Subject: “Fire Chiefs Report – Report and discussion related to Fire District operations by Reno/Truckee Meadows Chief Michael Hernandez.”**

Reno/Truckee Meadows Chief Michael Hernandez reviewed the Incident Response and Fire Station brown out statistics as noted in the staff report. During the month of June the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) responded to 706 calls including: 427 medical calls; 54 fires; and, 110 other calls. He indicated that fire crews responded to four significant structure fires, 19 water rescue alarms that resulted in multiple rescues from the Truckee River and a request from the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD) for Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) assistance for a construction worker that had fallen into a manhole.

Chief Hernandez spoke about the recent rash of wildland fires that had occurred. He said the Sierra Front Interagency Dispatch Center reported approximately 22 fire starts in the region during a 24-hour period between July 29 and 30, 2011. He

thanked the volunteer agencies that assisted in the effort as well as the career firefighters and the numerous other agencies involved in mitigating the fires.

Commissioner Larkin inquired about “all other calls” that were noted in the Chief’s report. Chief Hernandez explained there were times when calls were received that did not fall into a specific classification. Commissioner Larkin remarked that those calls amounted to a significant number. He requested more information about those calls since they continue to be a significant portion of the responses.

There was no action taken or public comment on this item.

**11-72F      AGENDA ITEM 5**

**Agenda Subject: “Discussion and consideration of direction to staff to initiate implementation of the Strategic Transition Plan to return full authority for the administration and operations of the District to Board Control by July 1, 2012.”**

Kurt Latipow, Fire Services Coordinator, stated that during the June 28, 2011 Fire Commission meeting, he was directed to prepare a Notice of Termination for the Interlocal Agreement and transmit that notice to the City of Reno. He was also directed to return on August 9, 2011 with a strategic plan based on Alternative 3 in the cost benefit analysis.

Due to the amount of time needed to draft a Strategic Transition Plan, Mr. Latipow contracted with Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) to assist with the process of developing the plan. He noted that the primary focus was to effectively manage the transition without an interruption of service to the community. Mr. Latipow explained that the plan had been divided into the following nine functional areas as noted in the staff report:

1. Organization
2. Capital Assets and Equipment
3. Human Resources
4. Finance
5. Risk Management
6. Legal
7. Technology
8. External Relationships
9. Volunteer Fire Departments

Mr. Latipow indicated that interviews were held with numerous stakeholders to determine the many tasks required to complete the transition. The draft Transition Plan was a result of those interviews. Prior to contracting with the City of Reno, he said the County provided a fair amount of support to the District by way of a Cooperative Agreement. As part of the transition process, it was important to determine

the depth of services that remained and the impact on County departments in support of the new District.

During the June 28, 2011 Fire Commission meeting, Mr. Latipow indicated that the start-up costs for the new district were projected at \$700,000; however, based on the interviews and the draft Transition Plan, those costs were now estimated to be \$1 million. He emphasized that the Transition Plan must be properly funded in order to be successful and the authority must be given to implement the necessary steps while maintaining effective communications during the transition. Mr. Latipow felt it was necessary to have an open line of communication with the public, and provide routine updates and assurances that fire and emergency services would continue unimpaired throughout the transition period.

Chairman Breternitz said this was an important issue and requested a standing update item be on every TMFPD agenda.

In response to the call for public comment, Chris Graves stated his concern regarding the 30 percent increase for the start-up costs. In 1999, he said the District was identified as unsustainable and now, along with the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD), would again be unsustainable as a stand-alone department by 2015. He said the only options in keeping those departments sustainable were a reduction in staffing and a reduction in the potential deployment of resources. Mr. Graves reminded the Board that WC-2 was approved by the public and that regionalization of services was needed.

Tom Dunn continued reading from a prepared statement that had been placed on file with the Clerk during general public comment.

Robert Parker stated his concerns with the draft Transition Plan since provisions for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) were hardly mentioned. The TMFPD was modeled on the old City of Reno idea of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) on a fire engine and then Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority (REMSA) arriving as a paramedic, which was designed for a small area, but had been applied to the entire County. He explained there were many areas in the County where REMSA did not arrive for 20 minutes after the initial call. Mr. Parker urged the Board to amend the recommendation to include full-time paramedics at each TMFPD station.

Thomas Daly said the Transition Plan outlined some key components; however, many of the details were missing. He said concerned citizens had submitted a "Citizens Initiative" for reorganizing the District that also identified key issues, but had many details missing. On behalf of the citizens who drafted the Initiative, he asked the Board to flush out the details from both plans and then compare the two documents. The citizens believed once vetted, their plan would be less complex, more efficient and less costly, yet would have service enhancements including paramedics on all units. He felt that the process should be open and transparent, allow for public participation and involve the Citizen Advisory Boards (CAB'S).

Commissioner Humke said that the plan noted “review and evaluate available options for emergency dispatch” and asked if an outcome was anticipated as to who would provide the dispatch services. Mr. Latipow replied that he was not prepared to answer that question, and since he was participating in the subcommittee to review dispatch services, he felt it would be best to withhold comment until that project had concluded.

Commissioner Humke said the position of the TMFPD Chief would be established by October 2011 and asked if recruitment of firefighters would begin after that position was approved. Mr. Latipow replied that would be the recommendation since a leader was needed for the process. Commissioner Humke asked for an explanation of the staffing plan. Mr. Latipow explained that the overall staffing plan that drove the budget would be presented to the Board. He said there had been discussions about three-person staffing; however, every report that had been presented discussed “flexibility” for that three-person staffing. He said the staffing plan would be refined and then reviewed to see how much flexibility there was in preparing the budget. With regard to that staffing plan, Commissioner Humke inquired about the use of volunteers. Mr. Latipow replied there was no specific plan for volunteers, but the volunteer program set the stage for enhancements, stabilization and streamlining the utilization of volunteer forces within their limitations; nevertheless, those limitations depended upon availability. Commissioner Humke asked if the new fire chief would be tasked to solve that gap and create a plan to show how the volunteers could be incorporated into the staffing. Mr. Latipow stated that would be the expectation relayed to the Chief. He stated the vision for the new Chief would be carried into every operational and administrative program.

Commissioner Humke asked if any changes were envisioned with the Automatic Aid Agreements. Mr. Latipow replied that Automatic Aid and Mutual Aid were important foundations to maintain service to all citizens, regardless of the jurisdiction. He was aware that there was an opinion of a disproportionate use of Automatic Aid, but stated he was not necessarily in agreement with that opinion. He indicated that all of the agreements would need to be renegotiated because for the past 11 years the District had been joined with the City of Reno, and the requirements for the Interlocal Agreement stated that any agreement entered into was entered into as a partnership between the City and the District.

Commissioner Weber clarified that it was the decision of the Fire Commissioners and not Mr. Latipow to terminate the Interlocal Agreement. She thanked the citizens for their work on the Citizen Initiative, but waited to review that document until she heard Mr. Latipow’s comments and report on the Transition Plan. Commissioner Weber questioned if the Joint Fire Advisory Board (JFAB) could review the Citizen Initiative and then refer their comments to the Board before the Board individually reviewed the document. Mr. Latipow appreciated the work compiled by the citizens in the developing of their initiative. He said the direction was to bring the Transition Plan back to the Board on August 9th, and be mindful that the Transition Plan

should lay the foundation for the opportunity to move toward regionalization. He cautioned that there was less than 12 months to complete the transition.

Commissioner Larkin stated that the overtone had been to devise a super structure to accommodate the terms of regionalization. Mr. Latipow commented that staff had their eye on the future and, per Board direction, there was discussion not to lose sight of that target. Commissioner Larkin remarked that this was a commendable Transition Plan, but in going through the transition and forming a new agency, he was concerned if the region's economy would allow the Board to rely upon the traditional responses that a fire agency had taken on itself. He said some of the traditional services provided by fire services would not be attainable. Commissioner Larkin did not see any provisions in the Plan for the full integration of the EMS and noted that REMSA needed to increase their services for some of the medical delivery. Mr. Latipow stated that any fire service leader would prefer a four-man crew. However, throughout the nation a transition was occurring from the way service used to be delivered, to keeping it as safe as possible within the means. He added that he was a proponent for integration of public and private partnerships and utilizing the resources at hand, but in order to maintain that level of service, a two-tiered system needed to be exercised to the fullest extent and, in moving through the "New Now," there would be a shift back to self-responsibility. Commissioner Larkin said the fire services, as a primary responder to EMS, needed to be closely evaluated in terms of what types of responses would be allowed since it was not affordable to have two systems co-responding.

Commissioner Jung requested an update from Mr. Latipow's upcoming conference where the "New Now" would be discussed with other communities in similar economic situations. She inquired about the cross-training of deputies for fire protection and asked for information on that concept. Mr. Latipow stated that cross-training had been exercised in several jurisdictions throughout the nation. He explained that in some models not all the members would rotate and it became a challenge to stay current with all the new training requirements for both fire and police.

Commissioner Jung asked if other agencies had been approached to contract with the County. Mr. Latipow replied that he was not directed to seek that information, but in discussions with the Fire Chiefs from Storey County and the North Lyon Fire Protection District, there was an interest for collaboration in the East Truckee Canyon area. Commissioner Jung said there was a reference in the report to a survey where 71 percent of the survey participants said they would pay more for better service, and 76 percent said they would pay more for their fire protection. She asked if a plan or strategy had been considered. Mr. Latipow stated he was directed to "live within our means" and, without Board direction, staff would not present a plan for increased taxation. In the future, depending how the County moved forward with regionalization, that topic would need to be addressed.

Commissioner Jung was concerned about the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant and the prohibitions within that grant if the City needed to layoff firefighters because of the economic situation. She asked if the

County would develop a lateral entry process. Mr. Latipow said the first task was to develop a transition in partnership with the current partner. Based on the restart of the District, Commissioner Jung questioned if there would be an impact on homeowner's insurance. Mr. Latipow said the District's ISO rating drove some insurance company rates, which ranged from a four to a nine depending on the location of the home from the fire station. He indicated there would not be a reclassification or an analysis of the classification until there was an operating fire department.

Commissioner Jung wondered what the newly hired firefighters would do until July 1, 2012. Mr. Latipow said the number of hires was a moving target and that the financials were based on an assumption that all 43 members would return. He said until the ability was there to make an offer, it was not known how many would actually return to the District. The sole purpose of bringing the crews on before July 1, 2012 was not to run calls, but to go through the necessary policy and procedure training mandated by the County. Commissioner Jung asked if there was a "Plan B" in the event the new department was not ready by July 1, 2012. Mr. Latipow stated he was not directed to arrive at a Plan B. Commissioner Jung felt there needed to be some scenario planning in the event this did not occur on July 1, 2012.

Commissioner Humke asked for a description of the financial and management decisions made on June 28, 2011 by the Board of Fire Commissioners. Mary Walker, District Financial Consultant, said the information and the recommendation for terminating the agreement provided to the Board was mainly for the contract with the City of Reno. She explained that the TMFPD had seen a large decline in revenue that was apparent to continue. The property tax revenue, which used to be over 70 percent, now equated to 64 percent of the total revenues for the District. She said with the revenues declining, the needs of the District would not be met by entering into a multi-year contract that omitted control of the expenses since the primary expense, which was labor, was controlled by another entity negotiating the labor agreement.

Commissioner Humke asked what the duration would have been if the County renewed the contract. Ms. Walker explained that the contract submitted by the City first allowed for a two-year term, but the County could only get out of that two-year period if they consolidated with another entity or if there was a breach in contract. The County could not be released from the contract based on fiscal problems. She noted that the County would have been locked into the contract for the first two years, which then rolled into a four-year term allowing a year's notice to terminate, essentially locking the County into a seven year contract. She said the number one goal was to keep fire stations open and the only way that could be accomplished was with three-person staffing, which would save the County approximately \$1.2 million per year. She indicated that Article 2 in the Interlocal Agreement discussed the two parties working toward a regionalization scenario, but that never happened. At that time, the District's wages were only 3 percent different from the City's so merging would not have been a large additional cost; however, through the years the City's wages became higher than the regional average, plus they used four-man crews.

Ms. Walker said some of the savings would be achieved through the size of the crews, workers' compensation costs, cost allocation for the City's administration services, lower salaries and employee costs, but the County would lose the annexation credit. According to the last offer, the City would have phased out the annexation credits. Ms. Walker said if service wanted to be retained in all the stations, three-person staffing would have to be accomplished. She agreed there had been a good relationship for the last 10 years and money had been saved, but it was now a new world where organizations had to provide the highest level of service at the lowest cost.

Chairman Breternitz confirmed that he reviewed the Citizen Initiative and noted some interesting ideas. He said the purpose of his request for this item to be placed on every TMFPD agenda was due to the large amount of information. He supported the Transition Plan, but added fine-tuning would be needed.

Commissioner Weber agreed with arriving at a Plan B, but did not think today was the day to decide on that plan. She asked Mr. Latipow to restate the management part of changing from a four-man to a three-man crew. Mr. Latipow replied the numbers were based on the flexibility or management rights to staff to a minimum of three as necessary in order to manage the budget and the workflow.

Reno/Truckee Meadows Fire Chief Michael Hernandez commented that he intended to assist in the transition process and work toward success. He said the ultimate goal was continuity of service delivery to the community. He was concerned for the employees and felt management owed them and could not just change the rules.

On motion by Commissioner Larkin, seconded by Commissioner Humke, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that staff be directed to initiate implementation of the Transition Plan to return full authority of the administration and operations of the TMFPD to Board control by July 12, 2012.

**11-73F      AGENDA ITEM 6**

**Agenda Subject: "Discussion and possible direction to the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District members of the Joint Fire Advisory Board as to the role of the JFAB during the transition of fire service provided by Interlocal Agreement to fire service provided directly by the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and possible direction to staff."**

Commissioner Larkin said there was some dispute regarding the role of the Joint Fire Advisory Board (JFAB). He noted there were no contractual issues for the JFAB to continue discussions, but there may be transitional issues. He asked if the Board still wanted representatives on the JFAB to receive direction from the Board of Fire Commissioners.

Blaine Cartlidge, Deputy District Attorney, indicated that the JFAB's role was defined in Article 2 of the current consolidated Interlocal Agreement, which offered



an advisory role to the two governing bodies. Other than meeting quarterly, he said the role was not mandatory in terms of meeting or giving input. Mr. Carlidge said there were a set of goals that were amended that set the purpose and policies the JFAB could address. He said the role of the JFAB was framed by the Interlocal Agreement for the purpose of the operation of the consolidated fire department and advising on those matters. The direction given by the two governing bodies to their representatives on the JFAB helped set the agenda and the purpose for each JFAB meeting.

Chairman Breternitz felt that the elements of termination related to operations and specific issues from the agreement could potentially be areas of discussion for the JFAB. Mr. Carlidge agreed. He said under the contract there was a year wind down and that contract included: the definition and role of the JFAB; and, operations governed by the Interlocal Agreement through July 1, 2012.

Chairman Breternitz said the JFAB should be ready and willing to help on the appropriate matters during the transition period. Commissioner Larkin commented that the JFAB had their role expanded to include discussion related to regionalization and asked if the Board still wished for the JFAB to engage in those types of discussions. Commissioner Weber said this was an opportunity to grow relationships and have conversations with other entities. Chairman Breternitz believed that this Board would support the on-going effort as it related to regionalization.

Mr. Latipow indicated that the JFAB and the transition process were managed by the same staff. He supported regionalization, but emphasized that staff could only do so much. He said in moving forward to those JFAB meetings where regionalization would be discussed, a clear vision would be important. Chairman Breternitz said the schedule of meetings would be determined by the JFAB. According to the Interlocal Agreement, Commissioner Jung explained that a JFAB meeting could be called by any JFAB member.

In response to the call for public comment, Chris Graves said that the members of the JFAB had a duty under WC-2 and, as part of regionalization of fire services, continue to direct the meetings through this process and communicate what was occurring to the community and the other stakeholders.

There was no action taken on this item.

**11-74F      AGENDA ITEM 7**

**Agenda Subject: “Commissioners’/Manager’s Announcements, requests for information and identification of topics for future agendas. (No discussion among Commissioners or action will take place on this item.)”**

There were no Board member comments.

**11-75F      AGENDA ITEM 8**

**Agenda Subject: “Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to two minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Commission agenda. The District will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to two minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the District as a whole.”**

There was no response to the call for public comment.

\* \* \* \* \*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**12:52 p.m.** There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion by Commissioner Humke, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, the meeting was adjourned.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**JOHN BRETERNITZ**, Chairman  
Truckee Meadows Fire  
Protection District

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**AMY HARVEY**, Washoe County Clerk  
and Ex-Officio Clerk, Truckee Meadows  
Fire Protection District

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