

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS  
TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT (TMFPD)**

TUESDAY

9:00 a.m.

FEBRUARY 27, 2018

PRESENT:

**Marsha Berkbigler, Chair**  
**Kitty Jung, Vice Chair**  
**Bob Lucey, Commissioner**  
**Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner**  
**Jeanne Herman, Commissioner**

**Nancy Parent, County Clerk**  
**Charles Moore, Fire Chief**  
**David Watts-Vial, Deputy District Attorney**

The Board convened at 9:00 a.m. in concurrent session with the Washoe County Board of Commissioners and the Washoe County Library Board of Trustees in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerk called the roll and the Board conducted the following business:

**18-035F      AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.**

Mr. Ron Hess spoke about the Washoe Public Lands Management Act. He said he believed the Fox Range and Pole Creek areas should be removed from consideration as wilderness areas; he wanted them returned to multiple land use management status. He stated the United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had determined the Fox Range and Pole Creek areas should not be classified as wilderness through an environmental impact statement process. He referenced several documents from sources such as the *Nevada Wilderness Study Area Notebook*, *BLM Winnemucca Field Office, April, 2001*, and the *Potential Resources Associated with Proposed Roadless Areas in Nevada (second edition)*, which were placed on file with the Clerk. He stated the Fox Range and Pole Creek areas had future potential for large scale wind energy production as well as other potential land uses, which would only be possible if the areas were managed as multiple land use resources.

Ms. Elise Weatherly spoke regarding renewing her Library card, not being heard, 401k savings, polling juveniles, Tesla, solar panels, Governor Brian Sandoval opposing Tesla, Oprah, and capital punishment.

Mr. Bob Thomasson submitted his statement, which was placed on file with the Clerk. He spoke in opposition to the Washoe County Lands Bill citing issues such as the need for costly infrastructure improvements to accommodate increased traffic and for increased fire protection. He suggested expanding the Reno Sparks Metropolitan

Area through the Interstate 80 corridor to the east. He did not think the requirement for 500,000 acres of new Washoe County wilderness was warranted.

**The Following Agenda Item No. 4 was heard by the Washoe County Board of Commissioners and the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District.**

**18-036F**      **AGENDA ITEM 4** Presentation, discussion and possible direction to staff regarding regional dispatch using Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and fire service delivery considerations. (All Commission Districts)

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) Chief Charles Moore announced enhanced automatic aid with the City of Sparks had just launched the previous day. He explained the automatic aid agreement came about as the result of a car accident during which no one immediately responded due to communication problems between the two entities. He said he and the Sparks Fire Chief agreed the issue need to be addressed which led to the logical arrangement of sending the closest unit to a vehicle accident or any other call regardless of jurisdiction. He noted it took a long time to finalize the agreement since the City of Sparks had to upgrade their Tiburon system, which took many months to complete. He explained the process of upgrading the Tiburon system inadvertently corrupted the ability for one dispatch agency to clone a call to the other agency, which resulted in further delays. This was why it had taken two years for the implementation to happen, but automatic aid with the City of Sparks was now live.

Chief Moore knew there had been plenty of opportunities for the closest fire engine to respond during his six years with the TMFPD, but resources were only sent based on jurisdiction unless there was a specific call for mutual aid. He explained automatic aid applied to structure and brush fires but not to any other types of calls such as priority one emergency medical service (EMS) calls. He had seen situations where there was a priority one emergency which was eminently life threatening and although the closest unit was only a few hundred feet away, it was not dispatched. He noted he would be meeting with the Fire Chief of the City of Reno, the Fire Chief of the City of Sparks, and Dean Dow of the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority (REMSA) to discuss what steps they could take to move forward. He mentioned he had previously visited the city of Las Vegas to gather information about how they managed their responses and he was impressed with their simple but effective operation. He remarked there had been discussions about the expected growth of the community and how the additional calls would be handled. He felt consolidated dispatch was going to be the key.

Chief Moore provided a handout detailing all of the reported TMFPD EMS calls during calendar year 2017 by priority and station, which was placed on file with the Clerk. He explained Priority 1 (P1) calls were life threatening, Priority 2 (P2) calls were eminently life threatening, and Priority 3 (P3) calls were not life threatening. He said there was one other category called the Omega determination which was a call with zero acuity. He believed the public had been well educated about calling 911 when

they had a medical emergency. He said it could be argued that it was not necessary to send a fire truck and an ambulance to P3 calls, but nevertheless in the last year a fire truck, lights and sirens had been sent to calls that did not really need that sort of response 1,370 times. He thought the solution was a consolidated dispatch with an emergency medical dispatch (EMD) process to determine whether a call was life threatening or not.

Chief Moore explained the current process involved a medical emergency call being received by a 911 call taker at the Parr Boulevard facility where the dispatchers obtained very limited information as to what the nature of the medical emergencies were. Once the calls were transferred, the callers were interrogated a bit more where the priority categories were finally determined. He said it was important to respond immediately to P1 calls and he thought the current dispatch process wasted time. He believed the executives of all the applicable organizations recognized this was not a good way of doing business because it slowed the process down and the closest units were not being sent.

Chief Moore said the next steps would involve meeting and strategizing about how to fix the problem. The County had conducted a dispatch study that was presented to the Board on March 7, 2017 which concluded the need for a consolidated dispatch. He said a 2012 Tri-Data study indicated most of the problems within the EMS system were dispatch related; everything pointed to the issue of dispatch being an impediment to getting the appropriate level of services out the door quickly without over-responding. He noted most of the technology needed to accomplish this already existed and asserted the need to consolidate the four dispatch centers in the region into one dispatch center. He said by the next TMFPD Board meeting he would be able to update the Board on the results of the meeting he would be attending later in the afternoon with his colleagues. He said he understood there might be discussion about regional fire services, but he thought there were a number of ways that could be tackled. The TMFPD and the City of Sparks were effectively already acting regionally in that regard by sending the closest unit to the scene of an emergency. He thought there were different ways regional fire services could work, but the current relationship with the City of Sparks was the model that many jurisdictions used. He said the use of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) to dispatch the closest unit was the best practice throughout the United States and in his opinion this was the direction they needed to go with respect to local regional fire services. He thought regional services would not necessarily require a political consolidation with one budget and a new Board with all of the complicated terms regarding how it would be financed and governed. He said when he was in Colorado he had merged eight separate fire districts in three municipalities into one district, but it was enormously complicated and took 15 years to accomplish. He believed creating a local regional fire department would be a heavy lift; there was a lot that could be done to improve services through simple actions like consolidating dispatch and having agreements to send the closest unit. He believed that was the logical place to start and asked the Board to provide direction. He noted the Board had not indicated its opposition to the concept of a regional fire department, but he knew there were some very big impediments in the way.

Commissioner Jung asked about potential liability issues in situations when the closest unit did not respond during a life threatening emergency. Deputy District Attorney David Watts-Vial replied the broad rule was that the provision of fire services was a public duty that was owed to the public in general, not to any individual homeowner. Commissioner Jung wondered if that meant everyone would be liable and Mr. Watts-Vial responded under the public duty doctrine, a home owner did not generally have a right to proceed against a fire agency unless there was some level of negligence. Commissioner Jung thought it might be negligent if an agency right across the street did not respond because a negligent dispatcher did not alert them to the life threatening emergency nearby. Mr. Watts-Vial said under the circumstances described by Commissioner Jung, there was nothing to indicate that the closest entity that was not notified should have done anything; it could not respond if it was not given notice.

Commissioner Jung clarified she wanted to determine who would be liable if a response was not sent in an emergency situation and someone sued. She asserted if the County was sued due to a dispatch error, the blame would be shared by the Cities and the County. She wanted all the agencies to discuss this scenario with their legal counsels to determine if there would be a diffusion of responsibility or if one agency could be solely liable in this type of situation. She thought the liability issue would get the agencies to come together to deliver basic services the government agencies were sworn to provide. She referenced a presentation the Board received regarding a fire services and consolidation study near the beginning of her first term as Commissioner. The study recommended regional dispatch and sending the closest unit regardless of jurisdiction as it was considered the best practice. However, the Board had not been able to gain any traction toward this end since the deconsolidation. She was not in favor of consolidation at this time, although she knew it was the best practice. *She said she agreed* with regionalization, but thought the County and the Cities needed to create a dedicated fund for fire services that could not be affected by an economic recession or boom. She reiterated she was in favor of regionalization, but wanted discussions to happen regarding liability and the creation of a dedicated fire fund. If those issues were not addressed she would rather the agencies had automatic aid agreements. If automatic aid agreements could not be agreed to, then she thought the County could address the issue at the State Legislature.

Commissioner Hartung said he somewhat disagreed with Commissioner Jung. He believed a regional system was crucial because it would enable them to see where every unit was and what they were doing. He reminded the Board they did not have a true consolidation in the past; rather they had a contract that was not renewed. He asked Chief Moore if the agreement to send the closest unit included sending multiple units to a catastrophic event that required more resources, or if a battalion chief on scene would make that determination.

Chief Moore replied the agencies would decide depending upon the nature of the emergencies. If there was a series of incidents with multiple priority categories (P1, P2 and P3) they would need to determine what sort of response and equipment was required. For instance an agency might have determined that for a structure fire the

response should include three engines and a ladder truck, so some of those decisions were made ahead of time. With the advantage of AVL, the closest units would be dispatched regardless of their jurisdictions; however, the agencies had to agree that they would all send resources according to the new protocol.

Commissioner Hartung said he was concerned too many resources might be sent to a scene. He described a “fender bender” accident that he witnessed where this was the case and he wondered how the need for resources was determined. Chief Moore responded it started with the interrogation of the 911 caller. Commissioner Hartung asked if a police officer on a scene would request additional services through the same dispatch system. Chief Moore said yes, the officer would call the dispatcher and that would trigger the response.

Commissioner Hartung professed his support. He said jurisdictional boundaries did not matter when people needed help.

County Manager John Slaughter stated he wanted to provide a brief update on the status of the dispatch studies that had been requested. Before discussing the update, he clarified there was no intent to point fingers at individual dispatch staff members or supervising staff. He said the Washoe County dispatch staff was the most robust in the region. He said the dispatch consolidation study that was conducted jointly by the City of Reno and the County a year ago provided three options for consolidation which would save as much as \$990,000. Since the County had not been able to gain any traction towards consolidation, the Board requested information about how much it would cost for the County to have its own separate dispatch system. Work was being done with a consultant to determine the answer, but there was some modeling that had to be done which was not anticipated. He expected the study would come back to the Board soon. He thought he and Chief Moore had discussions that were a little bit “out of the box” regarding regional dispatch and he thought there were some other northern Nevada agencies that might be interested in joining the talks.

Chair Berkgigler stated the greater region was going to continue to grow and she thought bringing in Storey County, Carson City or even parts of Lyon County and the Fernley Fire Department might save everyone money. She thought this could be a way to reduce the cost to taxpayers and provide better service.

Commissioner Lucey noted there were a number of challenges in District 2 because some areas in the South Valleys were geographically constrained. There were some challenges with a lake in the middle of the southern part of Washoe Valley and Carson City often assisted with EMS calls. However, he noted in talks with the Cities of Reno and Sparks, the boundaries are not simple and fluctuated due to annexations. He spoke about an incident on Mount Rose Highway when the closest unit at Station 12 was not able to respond because the incident happened outside its jurisdiction; instead a Reno fire station responded all the way from Moana Lane. He thought AVL was a technological advancement that would be an important part of the future and through

AVL the dispatchers would be given the best possible chance of getting a response out quickly.

Commissioner Hartung commented dispatch staff was made up of the most compassionate people and he was amazed at how they stayed so calm during calls. He wondered how Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service calls were currently dispatched and how they would be dispatched in the future with the new technology.

Chief Moore responded BLM and Forest Service calls could either be dispatched through the local office or through the Sierra Front Interagency Dispatch Center (SFIDC) in Minden. He said most of the areas of concern were those that were along the borders. He added dispatchers did a phenomenal job and were fantastic people; the issues were more about how the calls were sent in and out.

Commissioner Hartung commented cab companies had been using the vehicle locator technology for years and even a smart phone could locate a person. He thought the need for AVL for fire services was long overdue.

Chief Moore stated there was one other component that needed to be fixed. Car crashes were typically reported to 911 which were subsequently routed to the Nevada Highway Patrol (NHP) while it was still unknown if there were any injuries. Fire trucks were not usually dispatched to these types of incidents. However, when the NHP arrived on the scene of a recent car crash they reported there were injuries to REMSA and then REMSA had to call for a response from the TMFPD. He thought it was crazy for the response to the injuries to go through so many steps.

Chair Berkbigler agreed this was something that needed to be fixed.

Commissioner Herman thanked Chief Moore and noted a lot of progress had been made. She thought he was on the right track and she approved of what he had been doing.

Chief Moore thanked Commissioner Herman and said he was not aware of any opposition to discussing the issues; he thought all the agencies agreed there was a need to do something different.

Regarding AVL, Commissioner Jung said one could watch the progress of a car on Uber's phone application and everyone had GPS so she did not think the technology was expensive. She wondered if there was a requirement to purchase the system from a National Firefighters Association sponsored vendor or if there were some other reason besides expense that was delaying the implementation of the technology.

Chief Moore responded the AVL technology existed, but the problem was that Reno, Sparks and the TMFPD were not able to push information back and forth to each other. There was something called "cloning a call" which took a lot of steps. Mutual

aid requests were manual and they took a long time. He said what he learned from his trip to Las Vegas was that all the agencies could pay into a system to fund the dispatchers, and then those dispatchers could dispatch to all of the agencies. He thought this was the solution.

Commissioner Jung agreed that was the solution and asserted it would also be a personnel solution because currently there were people in the dispatch center who were doing the same job but were being paid differently because of the different agencies they represented. She thought it was important to create a regional dispatch center to create equity within that very stressful environment. She said it would help with the number of sick days, health issues and with basic personnel management. She asked the Chief make to that argument a part of his discussions with the other chiefs because it was not fair to the dispatchers.

Chair Berkbigler remarked she did not think there was any question that there was a dispatch problem and that AVL was the answer to the problem. She asked the Chief what was considered regional services and if he considered Clark County a regional service. Chief Moore replied yes, he did consider that a regional service because of the way each jurisdiction cooperated with each other.

**10:31 a.m. Commissioner Jung left the meeting.**

Commissioner Berkbigler recalled when the automatic aid legislation was being discussed in 2015, some testimony had been provided from some of the firefighters in Clark County. They said it was not uncommon for them to be in another agency's jurisdiction, it was something they did daily, and it was beneficial. She said the regional fire agreement with Sparks was really important and they needed to find a way to resolve the problems with the City of Reno. She said she was gravely concerned about the situation in Verdi. She worried if Reno annexed everything within its sphere of influence (SOI) in Verdi that there were some patches of land they could not annex because they belonged to the County. She hoped the discussions about regional fire services would not get caught up on the idea that they had to be one entity. She said she would not agree to consolidation because it would cost the unincorporated tax payers a great deal of money. It was her intention to find ways to lower the overhead to the constituents and to provide a better service.

Commissioner Hartung asked the Fire Chief if dispatch staff would be able to see where all the vehicles were located and which unit was closest. Chief Moore said he currently had the technology in his vehicle and he could see the position of every single fire truck in the region.

Commissioner Hartung asked if the Chief would be able to see where law enforcement vehicles were. Chief Moore thought the answer would be no. Although it might be possible, he believed there was a separation between law enforcement and fire services. Commissioner Hartung thought it might be wise to share that information due to

recent events with active shooters. He wondered if dispatch staff could see all the vehicles and Chief Moore replied he thought they could.

Finally, Chief Moore described the arrangement with Sparks saying when the TMFPD responded to a call in Sparks, Sparks would not send another fire truck out when it was a low acuity call. Sparks could likewise respond for the TMFPD and the TMFPD might not even know it since Sparks would handle the reporting. If another agency thought they still needed to respond in their jurisdiction even though the closest unit was sent with a truck that had at least one paramedic, it would not be harmful to the public. He saw no point in prohibiting a paramedic fire engine from responding to a critical medical call when they were just a few hundred feet away simply because they were not in the right jurisdiction.

Chair Berkbigler thanked Chief Moore and said he made a great point.

On the call for public comment, Ms. Norma Havens from USA Fleet Solutions discussed the locally operated AVL, GPS and Telematics company. She claimed the company could offer the latest technology which included second-by-second tracking. The company could also read diagnostic codes on engines and had executive dashboards so one could see everything that was going on. She said their mobile application was robust and easy to work with. Current customers included Washoe County, the City of Sparks, the City of Reno, the State of Nevada, Carson City and Douglas County. She believed the company could possibly be a partner to any departments that were considering AVL.

Ms. Elise Weatherly thanked Chief Moore. She stated she called the police a few times and she thought the questions they asked of her were a waste of time. She spoke about certain people being a good fit for the job of dispatcher, the need to reward good employees and the need to fire bad ones.

For the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the Board of County Commissioners, on motion by Commissioner Lucey, seconded by Commissioner Hartung, which motion duly carried with Commissioner Jung absent, it was ordered to move forward with AVL and direct staff to implement AVL in dispatching.

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Manager Slaughter mentioned Agenda Item 5 on the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District agenda for the Chief's Announcements was removed.

Deputy District Attorney David Watts-Vial said Agenda Item 6 on the TMFPD Agenda was for public comment and Agenda Item 7 on the BCC agenda listed public comment for the Washoe County Library Board and the TMFPD. Since the Library Board already took public comment and adjourned, it would be appropriate for the TMFPD Board and the BCC to open public comment at this time.



**18-037F**      **AGENDA ITEM 5** Commissioners’/Fire Chief’s announcements, requests for information, topics for future agendas, and statements relating to items not on the Agenda.

This item was removed from the agenda.

**18-038F**      **AGENDA ITEM 6** Public Comment.

Ms. Elise Weatherly said she had wondered about the validity of public libraries since young people were getting so much education from their devices, but after the library presentation she understood that libraries were preparing kids for the future. She was glad they were putting their efforts into providing science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) education and that they were helping kids to be at the appropriate reading level. She said she objected to the No Child Left Behind system. She commented on the state of the Reno Downtown Library and said everyone should pay to utilize the meeting rooms at the libraries, even non-profit organizations.

Ms. Tammy Holt-Still displayed some information on the overhead projector about prevention, detection, and correction of corruption in local government, which was also placed on file with the Clerk. She claimed propaganda about the amount of money being spent in Lemmon Valley had been shared on the Face the State television program. She said \$4,000 had been spent on a sewer plant that was in violation of the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) and she had asked Senator Heidi Gansert to look into the situation. She said the sewer plant was dilapidated and would soon be overwhelmed with new development that was going into the 100-year flood plain. She asserted the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) had pumped over 108 million gallons of water into an aquifer to stop water from being absorbed into the ground. She said Washoe County needed to deal with issues publicly, transparently and morally.

Ms. Zanny Marsh, Executive Director of the American Red Cross of Northern Nevada (Red Cross), said the Red Cross was concerned about the safety of residents and pets who were at risk of displacement, injury or loss of life due to home fires. Consequently, Red Cross volunteers were raising awareness and installing free smoke alarms in the homes of the most fire affected communities. There would be a concentrated push to install up to 600 smoke alarms on the dates of April 28, May 1 and May 5. She encouraged anyone who was interested in receiving a free smoke alarm to call (775) 954-1185. Data suggested up to one half of individuals who experienced a home fire were saved as the result of having a functional smoke alarm in their homes. Residents were encouraged to take advantage of the program.

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**10:46 a.m.** There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

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**MARSHA BERKBIGLER**, Chair  
Truckee Meadows Fire  
Protection District

ATTEST:

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**NANCY PARENT**, Washoe County Clerk  
and Ex-Officio Clerk, Truckee Meadows  
Fire Protection District

*Minutes Prepared By:  
Catherine Smith, Deputy County Clerk*