# BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

# TRUCKEE MEADOWS FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

TUESDAY 11:00 A.M. JANUARY 5, 2020

PRESENT:

**Bob Lucey, Chair**

**Alexis Hill, Commissioner**

**Kitty Jung, Commissioner (via telephone)**

**Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner**

**Jeanne Herman, Commissioner**

**Janis Galassini, County Clerk**

**Charles Moore, Fire Chief**

**Mary Kandaras, Deputy District Attorney**

The Board convened at 11:22 a.m. in regular session 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:

21-003F AGENDA ITEM 3 Public Comment.

Mr. Kenneth Dalton spoke about Our Story, Inc., a non-profit 501c3 organization that sought to collect, preserve, and exhibit the contributions, heritage, and culture of the underrepresented people of northern Nevada. He discussed Black Springs, a historically significant site of the first African-American fire chief in the state. On behalf of Our Story, Inc., he requested the opportunity to convert the Black Springs Volunteer Fire Department into an African-American museum.

Mr. Thomas Daly commented on Agenda Item 8A4, the retirement of Battalion Chief Mike Heikka. On behalf of the Estates at Mount Rose Homeowners Association, he expressed gratitude for Chief Heikka’s service. He noted Chief Heikka always responded to fires in the community and had been instrumental in the planning and execution of seven fuel reduction projects during the past 11 years. He asserted Chief Heikka had been an extraordinary public servant. He thanked Chief Heikka for his service and wished him well in his retirement.

**21-004F AGENDA ITEM 4** Announcements/Reports.

Commissioner Hartung asked staff to work with Mr. Kenneth Dalton to obtain information about his request. He was not aware that the County still owned the Black Springs Volunteer Fire Department (BSVFD) building, but he was interested in the project, which he thought would be noble and honorable.

Commissioner Herman thanked Mr. Dalton for the update and request. She noted Our Story Inc. wanted to take possession of the BSVFD building and use it for a museum. She expressed support for the project if the District had the ability to grant the request.

Commissioner Hill expressed a desire to discuss the BSVFD project and hoped staff could work with Mr. Dalton. She said Our Story Inc. was an incredible organization and the project was a good idea.

Commissioner Jung echoed the sentiments of the other Commissioners regarding Black Springs. She said Black Springs had a deep history of African-American activism and was considered sacred to many leaders in the African-American community. She thought this type of project was more important now than ever to ensure all people were treated and honored equally.

Chair Lucey thanked Mr. Dalton for speaking to the Board. He noted he did not know much about the BSVFD, but he would educate himself quickly. He agreed with the other Commissioners’ statements about the project and would work with staff to have the issue agendized during a future meeting. He thought the project sounded like a wonderful addition to the community. He understood the importance of heritage in educating future generations.

Chair Lucey said he participated in a forum the prior night with District 2 Galena area residents where one topic of discussion was open burning. He asked for information about the process for open burn decisions and evaluations. He understood many factors were considered, such as weather and moisture, but he believed an update and explanation would be beneficial for the Board and the public. He requested an update about the consolidation of the Washoe Valley stations and the sale of the Hidden Valley station.

Chair Lucey mentioned an incident he had recently witnessed while driving on Highway 395 South. There had been a traffic accident and Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Chief Charles Moore, who had been driving home, was first on the scene. Chair Lucey observed Chief Moore pull over to help stabilize accident victims until emergency crews arrived. He asserted that having an active fire chief helped his piece of mind. He thanked Chief Moore for his efforts and for doing the right thing, even when nobody was watching.

Commissioner Herman thanked Mr. Dalton for his service as a firefighter.

CONSENT ITEMS – 5A through 5D

21-005F 5A Recommendation to approve the meeting minutes from the December 15, 2020 Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting.

21-006F 5B Recommendation to approve the addition of a Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) Alternative Deferred Compensation plan under the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Retirement Program arranged and serviced by Voya Institutional Plan Services, LLC. for part-time, seasonal and temporary employees. (All Commission Districts)

21-007F 5C Recommendation to approve revisions to the Mutual Aid Agreement between Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority to include new provisions for the exchange of services. (All Commission Districts)

21-008F 5D Recommendation to authorize the Fire Chief to enter into contracts with Nevada Division of Forestry for use of conservation camp crews as needed for fuels and conservation projects as needed in an amount not to exceed $30,000 per year. (All Commission Districts)

There was no public comment on the Consent Agenda Items listed above.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Herman, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, it was ordered that Consent Agenda Items 5A through 5D be approved. Any and all Interlocal Agreements pertinent to Consent Agenda Items 5A through 5D are attached hereto and made a part of the minutes thereof.

**21-009F AGENDA ITEM 6** Recommendation to accept and express heartfelt thanks for a personal donation of $500 from Commissioner Jeanne Herman in support of the District’s Ash Can Program. (All Commission Districts)

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) Chief Charles Moore thanked Commissioner Herman for her donation. He noted there had been a recent fireplace ash fire in her district. TMFPD was currently out of ash cans, so Commissioner Herman’s donation would be used to order more for distribution to residents in her district as well as throughout the County. He intended to provide an update to the Board about the ash can program. He stated the program reach was impressive as the cans had been distributed to residents of the County as well as those in the Cities of Reno and Sparks.

Commissioner Hartung thanked Commissioner Herman for her donation and expressed pride for the ash can program. The number of houses saved by the program was unknown, but he was certain it worked.

Chair Lucey noted the County was unique because the TMFPD serviced urban and suburban areas as well as many rural parts of the County. Many homes in the District relied on fireplaces and wood-burning stoves, but ash from those fireplaces could become an issue if disposed improperly. He thanked Commissioner Herman for her continued support of the ash can program.

Commissioner Hartung noted he used his ash can for oily rags; it gave him peace of mind to have a safe place to dispose of them.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Hill, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, it was ordered that Agenda Item 6 be accepted.

21-010F AGENDA ITEM 7 International Association of Firefighters, Local 2487 Report.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Chief Charles Moore indicated Local 2487 representatives were not available to provide a report.

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

21-011F AGENDA ITEM 8 Fire Chief Report:

A. Informational briefing on operational matters and activities for the month of December 2020 and January 2021 to include the following items:

1. Bond Financing for the purchase of 3663 Barron Way

2. Galena Creek Trail Burn Plan

3. TMFR Report to the Community - 2021

4. Announcement of Retirement and Recognition of Service - Battalion Chief Mike Heikka

B. Commissioner DashBoard: Status update on ongoing Commissioner requests of the Fire Chief

C. Review of recent critical calls response statistics for November 2020 to include Mutual and Auto Aid for our regional partners.

Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) Chief Charles Moore mentioned bond financing for the purchase of 3663 Barron Way would require a 2/3 vote during the March meeting. The project was expected to be completed in June. The intent was to purchase the building that the TMFPD was currently leasing for administration, fleet maintenance, and logistics. The bond financing would raise slightly more funds than would be needed for the purchase, and the excess funds would likely be used for building improvements and training props. He noted the cost of the bond repayment would be roughly equal to the cost of leasing the building over the years because of the rate increases in the lease.

Chief Moore mentioned that the Nevada Division of Forestry (NDF) developed a plan to burn debris and logs along the Galena Creek Trail. Wildfire and Fuels Division Chief August Isernhagen conducted a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk. He reviewed slides with the following titles: Galena Burn Plan 2020; Galena Burn Description; Broadcast vs. Pile Burning (2 slides); Prescription Requirements; Galena Burn Plan Elements Cont’d (2 slides); and TMFR Recommendations.

Chief Isernhagen said the NDF requested the TMFPD’s support for their Galena Creek burn plan. The prescription requirements for the plan were modeled using the Behave fire modeling system.

Chair Lucey acknowledged the burn plan appeared robust but expressed concern about avoiding a situation similar to the Little Valley Fire. He noted there had been some severe wind events in that area during the past two months. He was apprehensive about ceding control to the NDF and the State. The number of homes in the vicinity that could be impacted would be 10 times greater than in the Little Valley Fire. He understood the need for fuels management through prescribed burns and he supported those efforts, but he had concerns. He asked that TMFPD staff be readily available to participate in the planned burn if it took place. Chief Isernhagen responded he was cognizant of the Little Valley Fire concern so his recommendation to approve the burn plan was not made lightly.

Chair Lucey reiterated severe wind events in that part of the County were a serious concern. Wind speeds between 60 and 70 miles per hour and severe gusts were common throughout those gullies.

Commissioner Hartung shared Chair Lucey’s trepidation because of the high winds in the area. The Little Valley Fire demonstrated how quickly fires could get out of hand. He asked whether all regional agencies were made aware of the prescribed burn and whether air resources would be available in case of an unexpected wind event. He stressed caution although he understood the need for fuels management burns. He wondered whether smaller burn piles or burning over longer periods of time might help to reduce risk.

Chief Isernhagen emphasized the burn plan was the NDF’s, not the TMFPD’s. He read and approved of the plan. The NDF had requested the TMFPD’s collaboration. All agencies, including local jurisdictions, were notified of the burn plan. He noted the Commissioners’ concerns and would relay them to the NDF.

Chief Moore mentioned the Little Valley Fire had been a broadcast burn, which burned quite a bit of acreage, as opposed to pile burns which were localized. The U.S. Forest Service had performed pile burns in the Little Valley area several years prior. Chief Moore noted he had insisted the TMFPD would have veto power over this burn project. He was comfortable the project could be managed safely because it would consist of pile burns; additionally, there was snow on the ground and the TMFPD had veto power.

Chair Lucey approved of the TMFPD having veto power. He sought confirmation that the proper staff would be on hand and precautions would be taken because the TMFPD would be responsible for the initial response if the fires got out of control.

Deputy Chief of Operations Alex Kukulus noted he had been the incident commander on the Little Valley Fire so he understood everyone’s reservations about this planned burn. He noted there were some significant differences between the prescribed burn that caused the Little Valley Fire, including the time of year and location. The Little Valley Fire took place in October and in a remote location. This project would not take place during fire season and it would be in a populated area easily reached by fire engines.

Chief Moore mentioned the Board received a draft of the 2021 TMFR Report to the Community. He noted the past year had included an extraordinary wildfire season as well as COVID-19, but the TMFPD still made significant service improvements. He asked the Board to review the report draft and provide their individual comments in the upcoming weeks. The final report could be presented to the Board during the February meeting if the Commissioners wished, or he could finalize the report after the suggested changes were incorporated.

Commissioner Hill suggested adding details about the TMFPD’s community outreach efforts, such as the ash can project. She thought outlining outreach efforts would help the community understand the importance of the TPFPD’s day-to-day work.

Deputy District Attorney Mary Kandaras suggested the Board avoid deliberating on a non-action item. She requested the Commissioners send their suggestions to Chief Moore directly and the final version of the report could then be presented to the Board at the following meeting. Chair Lucey thought Commissioner Hill’s suggestion had not constituted deliberation, but he appreciated the caution.

Chief Moore said announcing Battalion Chief Mike Heikka’s retirement was bittersweet. He noted Chief Heikka was a master at commanding wildfires, structure fires, and everything else that happened in the busy north battalion. The battalion chief always knew exactly what needed to be done and how to coordinate resources, and his 30 years of service had been exemplary. Chief Moore stated replacing Chief Heikka would be difficult, but he hoped to recruit him to teach classes because others had much to learn from him. Chief Moore presented Chief Heikka with a plaque and wished him the best in his retirement.

Chief Heikka thanked Chief Moore and the Commissioners. He said he had enjoyed every day of his 30 years of service; Chief Moore’s guidance had been outstanding, and the support of the Board made the TMFPD a great place to work.

Chair Lucey said Chief Heikka’s name had been synonymous with Truckee Meadows for as long as he had served as a Commissioner. He stated Battalion Chief Heikka had been a cornerstone for the TMFPD for many years, educating and protecting citizens, firefighters, and paramedics. He expressed gratitude for Chief Heikka’s service and wished him the best in his retirement.

Commissioner Hartung thanked Chief Heikka for his leadership and guidance. He spoke about the importance of incident command, noting Chief Heikka had been proactively involved in many areas of command within the TMFPD. He wished him the best in his retirement. Chief Heikka replied there were many good firefighters in the TMFPD who helped make a battalion chief’s job easier and more enjoyable.

Commissioner Herman thanked Chief Heikka for being an example for many years. She knew there were many firefighters in the organization who benefitted from his wisdom and experience. She wished him a happy retirement.

Commissioner Jung thanked Mrs. Heikka for the work she had done in the background to support Chief Heikka; she knew fire service involved the entire family. She thanked Chief Heikka for his unflinching service, especially during major emergencies. She agreed with Chief Moore’s comment about the difficulty of replacing his subject matter expertise. She urged him to enjoy his well-earned retirement.

Chief Moore mentioned an anecdote about the Rock Farm Fire where simply mentioning that Chief Heikka was in command allayed Chair Lucey’s concerns. Chair Lucey reiterated his gratitude for Chief Heikka’s service, noting he had protected many people and homes during his career.

Chair Lucey noted the Board had not discussed the bond financing, but he knew Chief Moore would bring the issue back after it went before the Debt Management Commission. He asked Chief Moore whether sections B and C of his report needed additional discussion. Chief Moore replied no.

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

21-012F AGENDA ITEM 9 Recommendation to approve the unfreezing of one (1) District Support Specialist position and one (1) Fire Captain position assigned to training and to approve a District Staffing Plan that includes 51 Firefighter Paramedic Positions including 3 grant funded positions and the creation of one additional Firefighter/Paramedic position, and if approved, authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the Board and to authorize the execution of a resolution augmenting the Truckee Meadows Fire General Fund Salaries and Employee Benefit Expense Accounts from the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District General Fund Contingency Account in the amount of $115,000. (All Commission Districts)

There was no response to the call for public comment.

On motion by Commissioner Hartung, seconded by Commissioner Hill, which motion duly carried on a 5-0 vote, it was ordered that Agenda Item 9 be approved and authorized. The Resolution for same is attached hereto and made a part of the minutes thereof.

**21-013F AGENDA ITEM 10** Announcements/Reports.

There were no Board member comments.

### 21-014F AGENDA ITEM 11 Public Comment.

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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**12:17 p.m.** There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned without objection.

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**BOB LUCEY**, Chair

Truckee Meadows Fire

Protection District

ATTEST:

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**JANIS GALASSINI**, Washoe County Clerk

and Ex-Officio Clerk, Truckee Meadows

Fire Protection District

*Minutes Prepared By:*

*Carolina Stickley, Deputy County Clerk*