

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA

MONDAY

10:00 A.M.

MAY 21, 2001

PRESENT:

Jim Shaw, Chairman
Pete Sferrazza, Vice Chairman
Jim Galloway, Commissioner
Ted Short, Commissioner

Nancy Parent, Chief Deputy County Clerk
Katy Singlaub, County Manager
Maureen Griswold, Legal Counsel

ABSENT:

Joanne Bond, Commissioner

The Board met in special session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 E. Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada and conducted the following business:

AGENDA

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Galloway, which motion duly carried, Chairman Shaw ordered that the agenda for the May 21, 2001 meeting be approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no response to the call for public comments.

COMMISSIONERS'/MANAGER'S COMMENTS

Commissioner Galloway requested an item be placed on the June 12, 2001 regular Board meeting agenda concerning a formal vote regarding the court offer to furnish a site for the City of Reno at One South Sierra, which offer was informally made at the last joint meeting.

Commissioner Sferrazza advised he requested an agenda item for a representative from the City of Reno to address the Board concerning Parks bond monies. Katy Singlaub, County Manager, said she requested that the City of Reno appear on June 12, 2001 concerning that issue.

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THE BOARD CONVENED AS THE SIERRA FOREST FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

01-498 BUDGET – SIERRA FOREST FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT - FISCAL YEAR 2001/2002

10:00 a.m. This was the time set in a Notice of Public Hearing published in the Reno Gazette-Journal on May 11, 2001 to provide for public comment in the consideration of the Sierra Forest Fire Protection District Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2001/2002, as well as possible adoption of the Final Budget. Proof was made that due and legal Notice had been given.

Chief Rich Harvey, Nevada Division of Forestry, Sierra Forest Fire Protection District, reviewed the 2001/2002 budget. He advised that written information was provided to the Board in response to questions raised at last week's caucus meeting concerning the Tentative Budget. The budget stays within the tax rate identified for the District. Chief Harvey then responded to questions of the Board concerning new positions, salary increases, and the tax rate. He advised that prior to the last fiscal year the tax rate was \$.38; last fiscal year, a \$.04 increase was requested to help fund the Advanced Life Support (ALS) Program at Galena and Washoe Valley; and the current tax rate is \$.42. Upon inquiry of Commissioner Galloway, Chief Harvey advised that, relative to the capital reserve for a new station at Verdi, a needs assessment has not been done, but the current station is very old and needs to be upgraded. There is an interest by the US Forest Service to co-locate at that station, and they see this as a benefit to the area. They would be agreeable to conducting a needs assessment, if the Board so desires. Commissioner Galloway suggested that, instead of calling the item a reserve for a new station, it could be called a "new construction reserve." A needs assessment could then be done to determine where to allocate the funds in order to give the District the most benefit for the money. Chief Harvey stated he could support that suggestion. He then responded to further questions of the Board concerning equipment, staffing issues, and facilities.

Commissioner Galloway stated that the \$.04 rate increase is fairly high. The rate has allowed the budget to start building reserve funds, which may at some point be built to a higher level than necessary. He questioned whether the \$.04 was an overshoot in the long-term and whether the rate could come down in the future. Chief Harvey advised that the reserve was not entirely funded by the \$.04 rate increase and he does not believe the District is overfunded because the money is being used to address needs in the area. Commissioner Galloway said a lot of increased assessed valuation is occurring in the area, and he would like to see a projection as to whether there could be a future reduction in the rate and still maintain services. Chief Harvey said that is looked at during each budget cycle, and their assessment indicates the facilities are going to need improvements. Commissioner Galloway said he had no problem with the reserve funds this year, but before they are projected too far in the future, he would request that a needs

assessment be taken to the community groups for their comments. Chief Harvey said they concur with that suggestion.

Commissioner Galloway then discussed issues concerning the proposed paramedic program. He said the cost is close to \$250,000 and adds a four-man crew, which he does not think is necessary. He requested a quote from REMSA who advised they could provide an ALS person 24 hours daily for a cost of \$160,000. This is almost \$100,000 a year less than what Sierra Forest Fire has proposed, and the REMSA program could be discontinued, if it did not prove to be satisfactory. He said, if the proposed paramedic program is started, it will be locked in forever. He advised he requested that a REMSA representative be present today to discuss their quote and answer questions.

Chief Harvey advised that the \$.04 tax rate increase was implemented, with the support of the Citizen Advisory Boards in Galena, Washoe Valley and Verdi, to provide ALS service in those areas. He noted that the four-man engine company is not the intent of this budget; and the four-person staffing actually results in a minimum of three firefighters on the engine. Three ALS personnel could be provided for a slight \$15,000 cost increase, which would give the public a bigger bang for the buck and is what the CABs have requested.

Jim Gubbels, Vice President, REMSA, stated they were not aware of Sierra Forest Fire's paramedic program proposal for Galena. He noted that the budget states that Washoe Valley, Galena, and Verdi are best effort response zones by REMSA contract, and this is a misstatement. There are 8, 15, and 20-minute response time requirements in the Galena area. He advised their \$160,000 quote would provide an ALS person 24-hours daily; they currently service the area and have not received complaints from the CABs or the NABs in their response times; a vehicle will be placed at their mobile post on Zolezzi and Virginia in about two months; and they also have a vehicle posted in the shopping center on Mt. Rose Highway. If St. Mary's puts in its Urgent Care Center in the area, a cooperative effort to share a nurse could be done to possibly bring down the price and increase the service level. He noted that the education of a nurse is greater than that of a paramedic. Mr. Gubbels said that REMSA firmly supported the Washoe Valley paramedic program, but did not support the expansion to Galena because they are not sure the area has a need for that program.

Upon inquiry of Chairman Shaw, Mr. Harvey advised that REMSA is a good partner and provides great service. Their request for an ALS person on the engine is not because they believe they can do a better job than REMSA, but is to enhance the service in the area, which can be done for a moderate cost. REMSA's support for transport, care flight, etc. would still be needed.

Commissioner Galloway stated that, historically, Sierra Forest Fire has been able to get three people on the engine by bringing someone in on overtime, if necessary. Mr. Harvey commented that they put four people at the Washoe Valley station last year and currently have four people at the Verdi station. This would bring all

of the Washoe County stations to the same base staffing levels, and the medical addition is justified in the Galena area.

Chairman Shaw opened the public hearing and called on those wishing to speak.

Ronnie Solaro, Joy Lake Road resident and Registered Nurse, spoke in support of paramedic service in the Galena area. She said the goal of emergency medical service is to provide first response as quickly as possible. The St. Mary's facility is not going to be open 24 hours every day, but the fire station is staffed 24 hours daily and is within an average six-minute response to an emergency call. She does not believe this request represents a duplication of service, but is an enhancement of an existing available resource. This is not the time to debate philosophical agendas between the fire district and the ambulance authority, and the \$.04 tax increase implemented in July, 2000 was for paramedic services in the area.

There being no one else wishing to speak, Chairman Shaw closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Galloway commented that, although there may be philosophical differences, the issue is whether the Board wants to spend more money to enhance medical services in the area, and what is the most cost effective way of providing those services. REMSA is able to provide ALS service to the area for less money than hiring ALS firefighters, and there is a good possibility that when St. Mary's opens, less money will be required to provide a better level of service. He noted that REMSA rotates their personnel and they have more practice in emergency medical service. Commissioner Galloway suggested the budget be approved, but the funding for the medical personnel and one-half of the holiday overtime be put in a reserve fund that could be used to hire ALS firefighters, contract with REMSA, or be used for some other option. Chairman Shaw said Commissioner Galloway's point is well taken, but the people in the area expressed a desire for the ALS firefighters. Commissioner Galloway stated that all of the options were not taken to the CABs and he believes this should be done.

Commissioner Galloway moved to approve the budget as presented, with the exception that the monies to fund the three paramedics and one-half of the holiday overtime go into a reserve fund to be used either for personnel, contracted medical services, or other options that may be determined to be more cost effective; and that these issues be taken to the CABs to obtain their input about where they believe they would get the most service for the money.

Commissioner Sferrazza commented that he thought the matter was already approved by the CABs. Chief Harvey advised that a memorandum contained in the agenda material dated April 12, 2001 from the Galena-Steamboat CAB states that "The super majority of the citizens in attendance (approximately 75) raised their hands in

support of the Paramedic and Advanced Life Support Program expansion to the Galena Fire Station." He said similar responses were received from Washoe Valley and Verdi.

Commissioner Galloway commented that the CABs did not have the REMSA quote and may not have known about the possible availability of a nurse versus a paramedic. REMSA was not aware of this proposal for the Galena area and he believes they should have had the opportunity to present a proposal to the CABs.

Upon inquiry of Commissioner Short, Mr. Harvey stated that, if the Board does not want to put an ALS person on the engine, they still need three firefighter positions to cover the three shifts at the Galena Station, in order to guarantee a three person engine company. The paramedic is the most cost-effective way of doing that because the salary cost between the paramedic and the firefighter is only about \$5,000 a position for a total of \$15,000. If the money was given to REMSA to put a vehicle in the area, they would still be looking at trying to put the additional firefighters into Galena Station 8.

There being no second to Commissioner Galloway's motion, the motion died.

Commissioner Galloway stated he does not find it credible that, if the medical services are not enhanced, there would be a need for three more firefighters. The District has operated for years by bringing someone in on overtime when the need arises. Commissioner Sferrazza stated he might have supported Commissioner Galloway's motion except for the fact this issue has already been out to the CABs.

On motion by Commissioner Sferrazza, seconded by Commissioner Short, which motion duly carried, with Commissioner Galloway voting "no," Chairman Shaw ordered that the final budget of the Sierra Forest Fire Protection District for fiscal year 2001/2002 be adopted. It was further ordered that submission to the Department of Taxation be authorized following execution by all members of the Board.

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THE BOARD RECONVENED AS THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

01-499 BUDGET –WASHOE COUNTY - FISCAL YEAR 2001/2002

10:45 a.m. This was the time set in a Notice of Public Hearing published in the Reno Gazette-Journal on May 11, 2001 to provide for public comment in the consideration of the Washoe County Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2001/2002, as well as possible adoption of the Final Budget. Proof was made that due and legal Notice had been given.

Lisa Gianoli, Budget Manager, and Katy Singlaub, County Manager, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation of the 2001/2002 Washoe County Budget. Ms. Gianoli advised that the budget is balanced and meets the Board's budget guidelines set in

workshops earlier this year, while funding priorities established by the Board and the citizens. The property tax rate remains stable with the inclusion of the \$.21 voter override for the funding of the parks, trails and libraries bond.

County Manager Singlaub discussed budget strategies that include conservatism in revenue forecasting, continuous efficiency improvement, salary savings redirected to identified needs, cash flow management, pay as you go capital funding and low debt ratio, and a responsive budgeting system. She said the budget will be reevaluated in six months based on national and local economic performance, legislative decisions, energy costs, etc.

Ms. Gianoli then reviewed the full-time equivalent positions added in the budget and said they represent a .66% increase. She also reviewed operating expenses and special revenues, the General Fund, expenditures, cumulative growth rate, and funded above base priorities.

County Manager Singlaub discussed above base budget issues and responded to questions of the Board concerning the 35 new positions in the budget. She advised the start date of the new positions would be staggered throughout the year; and staff feels confident that budget revenues will be able to fund those positions permanently.

Commissioner Galloway discussed issues concerning franchise fee money. He said a couple of years ago, when the Board first started talking about franchise fees, he asked if a portion of those fees could be set aside for underground utilities in various districts of the County. He noted that California utility bills contain a 2% surcharge for underground utilities. If all the franchise fees continue to be put in the General Fund, he fears it will be too late to set aside some of those funds for underground utilities. He would hate to lose this opportunity to provide funds for that purpose. County Manager Singlaub said staff would bring that discussion to the Board with the implementation of the franchise fees. Chairman Shaw suggested that a workshop be scheduled on this issue. Ms. Singlaub advised that staff would propose to schedule that in June before the franchise fees are presented to the Board for implementation.

Ms. Gianoli thanked the Budget Division and Finance staff who worked hard to come forward with the budget. She expressed appreciation to all departments and elected officials for their cooperation throughout the budget process. County Manager Singlaub also thanked staff and the departments for their cooperation.

Richard Gammick, District Attorney, commended staff for doing a good job with the budget. He advised he requested two positions, and one was approved in this budget. He is not appealing the other position but will be requesting it again in the future because the need is there due to the continued growth and increase in caseloads in all areas of the District Attorney's office.

Chairman Shaw opened the public hearing and called on those wishing to speak. There being no response, the public hearing was closed.

Following further discussion, on motion by Commissioner Short, seconded by Commissioner Sferrazza, which motion duly carried, Chairman Shaw ordered that the final budget of Washoe County for fiscal year 2001/2002 be adopted. It was further ordered that submission to the Department of Taxation be authorized following execution by all members of the Board.

Chairman Shaw noted that Commissioner Bond was not present today as she is attending the National Association of Counties (NACO) conference.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

JAMES M. SHAW, Chairman
Washoe County Commission

ATTEST: AMY HARVEY, County Clerk

Minutes Prepared By:
Barbara Trow
Deputy County Clerk