

**WASHOE COUNTY COMMISSION  
RENO CITY COUNCIL  
SPARKS CITY COUNCIL**

TUESDAY

9:00 A.M.

OCTOBER 16, 2001

JOINT MEETING

**Present:**

**Jim Shaw, Washoe County Commission, Chairman**  
**Pete Sferrazza, Washoe County Commission, Vice Chairman**  
**Joanne Bond, Washoe County Commission**  
**Jim Galloway, Washoe County Commission**  
**Ted Short, Washoe County Commission**

**Jeff Griffin, City of Reno, Mayor**  
**Sherrie Doyle, Reno City Councilmember**  
**Toni Harsh, Reno City Councilmember**  
**Pierre Hascheff, Reno City Councilmember**  
**Dave Rigdon, Reno City Councilmember**  
**Jessica Sferrazza-Hogan, Reno City Councilmember**

**Tony Armstrong, City of Sparks, Mayor**  
**John Mayer, Sparks City Councilmember**

**Absent:**

**Dave Aiazzi, Reno City Councilmember**  
**Mike Carrigan, Sparks City Councilmember**  
**Geno Martini, Sparks City Councilmember**  
**Phillip Salerno, Sparks City Councilmember**  
**Ron Schmitt, Sparks City Councilmember**

The Board and Councils met in joint session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada. Also present were Washoe County Manager Katy Singlaub, Deputy District Attorney Paul Lipparelli, County Clerk Amy Harvey, Reno City Manager Charles McNeely, Reno City Attorney Patricia Lynch, Reno City Clerk Don Cook, Sparks City Manager Shaun Carey, and Sparks Deputy City Clerk Lenda Azcarate. Following the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our Country, the Clerks called the rolls for their respective entities, and the Board and Councils conducted the following business:

**AGENDA**

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Commissioner Bond, seconded by Mayor Armstrong, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the agenda for the October 16, 2001, joint meeting be approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Shirley Allen, area resident, said she does not agree with the Nevada Supreme Court ruling against the County Clerk, that allows the District Court Judges to retain authority over filing office staff.

Richard Schoot, area resident, stated that he is a Panther Valley resident and serves on the Stead Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB). He said at their last meeting they discussed contingency plans in the event of an emergency. They decided they would like to have a safe house that they could go to in times of an emergency. Mr. Schoot said the emergency plan is still in the planning process and they would welcome any suggestions.

Chairman Shaw said Washoe County, Sparks and Reno are planning a joint meeting to discuss emergency issues that relate to the community.

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**Commissioner Sferrazza arrived at 9:10 a.m.**

Ed Graham, area resident, advised he is a property owner within the proposed Verdi annexation area. He said the regional plan should incorporate desired uses, service providers, etc., within Truckee Meadows. This plan was initiated by the legislature in the 1980's and was updated for the first time in 1996, and since its inception the major fights have been territorial, over lines that are at best, imaginary, and have absolutely nothing to do with planning. Mr. Graham said some members of the Regional Governing Board do not even follow their own plan; that local leaders continue to fight over issues that have nothing to do with the regional plan; and that the real losers are the community and taxpayers who own property in the area. He requested the entities stop fighting and start improving the community instead of dividing it.

Sam Dehne, area resident, suggested that maybe the National Guard should be guarding vital resources, such as water and power supplies, instead of being at the airport. He expressed concern about security at the airport, and how nobody seems to care. Mr. Dehne requested that these joint meetings not be held at the same time the Sparks City Council is meeting.

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**The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened as the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the Sierra Forest Fire Protection District.**

**01-1081 DISCUSSION – REGIONAL FIRE AGENCY**

Howard Reynolds, Assistant County Manager, reviewed his memo dated October 15, 2001, and advised that Reno does not want to conduct parallel studies. He said Reno would like to conduct the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Interlocal Agreement for Fire Service and Consolidation between the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the City of Reno first, and following the completion of that study, begin gathering information concerning the formation of a regional fire agency. Mr. Reynolds said the language in the interlocal agreement specifically included the word “while” so that these studies could be conducted parallel to each other. The studies are not dependent on each other, and he expressed concern that if they wait until the effectiveness evaluation is complete, there may not be sufficient time to introduce any potential legislation that would be required for the creation of a fire protection district. Mr. Reynolds noted that a fire protection district is just one of several models that should be evaluated.

Chairman Shaw asked if the concern is the timeline. Mr. Reynolds responded if they do not start the study concerning a regional fire agency now, they will not be able to consider a separate fire district at the 2003 legislature. He clarified that he is not saying that is the model they should end up with, but they do need to move forward in order to have legislation in place for consideration.

Commissioner Galloway stated that he attended two Fire Advisory Board (FAB) meetings on behalf of Commissioner Bond. He advised that the Board was deadlocked, because Reno representatives were insisting that, although they had originally outlined plans to consider how they would move toward a regional fire district, they decided not to discuss that issue. The position taken was the FAB was not the proper venue for that discussion, and to him that meant the joint meeting is the proper forum.

Councilmember Doyle asked whether any studies had been conducted regarding the cost effectiveness of the interlocal agreement. Mr. Reynolds said no, although there is no question that money has been saved, which was the whole purpose of entering into the agreement.

Councilmember Doyle asked whether any cost formulation had been conducted on forming a separate fire district. Mr. Reynolds said no, which is why he recommended an analysis be started now to determine that precise information. This issue has been studied numerous times and the expertise of evaluating that information lies within this region, and could probably be done by someone within one of the various local agencies.

In response to Councilmember Doyle's inquiry concerning notice of the regional fire agency formation meetings, Katy Singlaub, County Manager, said letters were sent to the City of Reno in July and August. She said the first meeting was held in September with several representatives from the City of Reno in attendance.

Commissioner Short said a parallel track makes sense, and the City of Reno should not consider that threatening, because it is just a study to gather information to make an informed decision and nothing else.

Mayor Griffin asked why staff believes it is appropriate to study these separately and apart when they do not yet know the effectiveness of the interlocal agreement. Mr. Reynolds said there is no presumption from his viewpoint that a regional fire district will be better. When the parties entered into the interlocal agreement it provided for two different things and the language under the intent and purpose is clear. The decision to move forward or not with a regional fire protection district is not dependent upon the successful evaluation of the interlocal agreement between TMFPD and Reno. It could be determined that a regional fire protection district is not the appropriate thing to do, but there still could be a decision by the TMFPD or the City of Reno that the existing contract is not working and something else could take place.

Councilmember Rigdon said he agrees that the wording is very clear that these two things would be evaluated during the initial term, but nothing says it would be evaluated by the 2003 legislature. Mr. Reynolds said that is correct, but it is prudent to have legislation on the books, in the event they decide that going forward with a regional fire agency is the best thing to do. He said in the existing agreement the parties have to provide notification to the other by October 2002, if they are going to terminate the existing contract, which limits their options if they wait until the 2005 legislature.

Charles McNeely, City of Reno Manager, said as part of the negotiation process it was never Reno's intent to simultaneously study the feasibility of a regional fire agency and evaluate the existing contract. The Council was very clear they wanted to look at the contract provision first and move forward from there.

Chuc Lowden, Reno Fire Chief, stated that he recalls the interlocal agreement was going to be given a chance. The intent of Reno was to evaluate the merger after 18 months and then make a presentation to the Boards, who would then make a final determination. He said opening this up to all of the stakeholders in the County who express an interest in fire protection, creates a whole different group of players in this equation and clouds the issue. He advised that he does not have a lot of staff to complete two separate studies simultaneously.

Chairman Shaw asked if the County's request is perceived as a threat to the Reno Fire Department or the City of Reno that the contract may not be renewed after it expires. Mr. Lowden said it is not for him personally, because he believes everyone is doing an outstanding job for the community.

Commissioner Sferrazza said he understood that a dual evaluation would be conducted, and if it is not, that would be considered renegeing on the part of Reno because that is not the County's understanding of what was supposed to happen.

Commissioner Bond said she will not take the stance that the current contract will not be continued, but other things do need to be considered. She stated that she does not want to limit the scope to just two possible alternatives, continuing the contract or a regional fire district. There are other things that should be reviewed and considered while doing this evaluation. Commissioner Bond asked when the effectiveness evaluation would commence. Chief Lowden responded that they planned to start the study in December or January, which is generally a slower time of the year for the fire department. He said he does not believe the evaluation will take longer then 60 to 90 days. They could then move into alternatives that would improve the efficiencies and services being provided.

Councilmember Hascheff said what the County is requesting is reasonable, and all they are suggesting is to look at other alternatives. The County is going to proceed with this parallel track in any event, and staff will have to attend those meetings to provide input, so why not go forward with the dual study. Chief Lowden said he is not suggesting that cannot be accomplished, but it is another track that they would be responsible for, and they already have a commitment under the interlocal agreement to complete the effectiveness evaluation. Councilmember Hascheff suggested bringing the evaluation back to the joint bodies to consider whether the agreement is working or whether they need to explore another alternative. Chief Lowden said the initial analysis and review would be brought to the Boards, and the second half of the evaluation would be to review other alternatives. He said the County is suggesting that another group be brought in that may or may not have the same goals and objectives.

Councilmember Hascheff said Mr. Reynolds indicated there were some timelines for considering a separate fire district model, so it would be necessary to commence the study as soon as possible. He asked whether the dual study could be postponed if Reno made a commitment to start looking at legislation. Mr. Reynolds said the dual study would still have to be concluded by October 2002, because that is when they would have to provide the notice of a bill draft request. Councilmember Hascheff said in order to meet Chief Lowden's goals to take time to look at the existing agreement, both Boards could start preparing enabling legislation in the event that is how they decided to go. Mr. Reynolds said he would agree with Councilmember Hascheff.

Mrs. Singlaub clarified that one process the County takes is to look at best practices and make sure all alternatives are reviewed. The County absolutely commits to an organized process in order to keep people better informed. They recognize a more thorough and better job can be done, if they have more time as opposed to less time, to conduct the study. If the interlocal agreement is the best alternative, a thorough and objective review would show that, but they are requesting time to pursue legislation. If they choose to wait until the 2005 Legislative Session, this region could not implement any

recommendations until 2006. She said if the community leaders wanted to have an advisory question on the ballot that would need to be completed by July 2002.

In response to Commissioner Galloway's inquiry concerning the different understandings of the vote for approving the interlocal agreement, Chief Lowden said there were a variety of reasons for taking 3 to 4 years to reach an interlocal agreement.

Commissioner Galloway asked what the problem was with going ahead and devoting resources to find out whether a regional fire protection district would work or not. Chief Lowden said there is nothing wrong with that idea and he believes he has said that already.

Mayor Griffin said it is very clear in his mind that the contract does require Reno to evaluate the effectiveness of the interlocal agreement, as well as working jointly on a discussion concerning the creation of some other entity, perhaps a regional fire protection agency. He said the dilemma for Chief Lowden is that the interlocal agreement concerns just Reno and the District, and the suggestion from the County is to conduct a study involving at least a half dozen new agencies regarding alternatives that include a regional fire protection district.

Shaun Carey, Sparks City Manager, said the City of Sparks is looking at the regional fire district on several tracks. They are reviewing a financial feasibility of a contract arrangement for fire service with the City of Reno. He said they welcome the opportunity to study other forms outside of a contract arrangement, because they feel it is important to look at other forms of fire service, even on a regional basis. The concern to Sparks was the output results and how they were going to be used and calls for legislation and calls for advisory votes presume conclusions to data that they do not yet have. One of the things he learned when working on the fiscal equity issue with Reno and Washoe County was that they need to agree what the ends are going to be; and that they need to go through a process that leads the decision making so it does not come apart at the end. Mr. Carey said the most important thing to Sparks is to have self-determination on what is right for Sparks, without being put in a position where a regional train is going down a track that is not appropriate for them. They believe two Sparks City Council members, along with the Fire Chief and technical support staff should be included on any committee, to make sure that the tough political questions get asked of this task force, so those solutions can be worked in with the final outcomes. Mr. Carey said he truly respects Chief Lowden and his staff and commended them for doing a wonderful job with the interlocal agreement with TMFPD. He said they need to get to the study and get those answers and preserve self-determination without getting locked into directions.

Mayor Armstrong said he believes Sparks provides the highest level of protection, given their circumstances, and agreed that Sparks needs to be involved at this point. He said you can only make a good decision if you have good information. Once the study is complete Sparks will have more answers and will be able to move forward on a decision. Mayor Armstrong said Sparks would like to be a participant, but they need to

be careful and determine if the end result would be the best for Sparks. Each entity needs to do the very best they can for the citizens they represent.

In response to Councilmember Doyle's comments, Chief Lowden said staff knew going into this agreement that there was going to be difficulties with personnel and melting these organizations together, who are so much alike and yet so different. He said going from covering just the urban areas to covering the rural areas and expanding Reno's district from 65 square miles to a total of 6500 square miles of responsibility has been a lengthy process, but he believes everyone has done an outstanding job of making things work.

Commissioner Sferrazza said he believes that consolidation has been effective, and by negotiating the contract with Reno, TMFPD took a huge step by being willing to subordinate themselves to the City of Reno. The quid pro quo for that is the language in Article 2, which included "the purpose of the agreement is to serve as an initial means of consolidating the administrations, resources and operations of the District with the consolidated services, while the District and the City jointly work together in exploring the benefits of, and work towards the creation of a unified fire jurisdiction, such as a regional fire protection agency or district, during the initial term of the agreement."

Following further discussion, on motion by Commissioner Sferrazza, seconded by Commissioner Galloway, which motion duly carried, Chairman Shaw ordered that staff move forward and specifically evaluate the effectiveness of the agreement of the consolidated services, while the City and the District(s) jointly work together in exploring the benefits of and working towards the creation of a unified fire district, and come back to the Boards with the information. It was further ordered that any interested parties be allowed to participate in the process.

On motion by Councilmember Doyle, seconded by Councilmember Rigdon, which motion duly carried, Mayor Griffin ordered that the City of Reno work jointly with the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and Sierra Forest Fire Protection District, and any other entities that would be interested in looking at alternatives, including but not limited to a regional fire district, and conduct an evaluation up-to-date on the cost effectiveness of the contract system to include cost savings for streamlining that has been done and impacts on personnel; and come back with recommendations by March 31, 2002.

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**The Board reconvened as the Washoe County Board of Commissioners.**

**10:36 a.m.** Sparks Mayor Tony Armstrong, Councilmember Mayer and Sparks City Manager Shaun Carey left the meeting.

**01-1082      PIONEER INN SITE MASTER PLAN**

Steve Varela, City of Reno, Director of Public Works/City Engineer, said a presentation will be made on 4 alternative master plans for the Pioneer Inn site, which will include Reno's civic center and a future District Courthouse. He said staff from both Reno and the County, and Municipal Court Judges and Justice Court Judges have seen this presentation. Mr. Varela advised that the Boards need to see this presentation before they discuss the interlocal agreement.

Walter Estay and Windom Kimsey from Tate Snyder Kimsey Architects, using the overhead projector, reviewed the Reno Civic Center/Washoe County Courts Masterplan with the Boards, a copy of which was placed on file with the Clerk.

Councilmember Sferrazza-Hogan said she has serious concerns regarding the master plan, and they need to discuss the interlocal agreement first before taking action on the master plan.

Mayor Griffin said he is concerned about the police department being in such close proximity of an office complex. Mr. Kimsey said the entrance to the police department is separate from the other buildings.

Sam Dehne, area resident, stated that this entire proposal is a slap in the face to the citizens who voted down a new courthouse. He said the suggestion by some people that the citizens voted down paying for a new courthouse, not a new courthouse per se, is just nonsense, because unless the Council members and Commissioners are planning on paying for the courthouse themselves, the citizens will end up paying for it.

**01-1083      INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT – COUNTY OF WASHOE & CITY OF RENO – JOINT USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF PIONEER INN SITE AND 195 SOUTH SIERRA PROPERTY**

Councilmember Sferrazza-Hogan said she is concerned about the proposed cost of the Municipal Court without having to finance it, and the proposal today has a price tag of almost \$23 million. Steve Varela, City of Reno, Director of Public Works/City Engineer, explained the breakdown of costs that were included in his October 9, 2001, staff report.

Councilmember Sferrazza-Hogan stated she does not know how Reno is saving any money, because the agreement provides that the City and County would jointly determine cost savings in the operation of the Sierra Street Court building and come back in the future to determine the amount to be shared. She said that issue needs to be decided now, and she believes Reno should receive 100 percent of the savings of efficiencies.

Katy Singlaub, County Manager, stated that the Justice Facilities Working Committee documented some of the operating efficiencies that could occur with the Mu

nicipal Court being collocated with the Justice Court. She could provide the Council members with information that had been provided previously from the Justice Facilities Working Committee.

Councilmember Rigdon expressed his concern about Reno being obligated to build a new Civic Center, if they purchased a portion of the Pioneer Inn site. Dave Roundtree, Washoe County Public Works Director, stated that the County does not have the funds to proceed with the project without the anticipated \$7.8 million payment from Reno. If the interlocal agreement is approved, the building at 195 South Sierra Street will be knocked down to make room for the new Municipal Court and District Attorney (DA) building. The staff currently located in that building will be relocated to leased space, and then following the construction of the DA portion of the joint building they would be moved into that building. In addition, there is the construction of the parking structure that would be built on a portion of the Pioneer Inn site, and with all of these significant expenses the County cannot meet their obligation without Reno's contribution of \$7.8 million.

Councilmember Rigdon said maybe he misunderstood at the last meeting, but he did not intend to obligate himself to build a new City Hall for Reno. If he approves the interlocal agreement, then he is basically committing Reno to build a new City Hall. Mr. Roundtree stated it is an issue of timing and the Reno City Council needs to ask themselves whether this is the appropriate location for a City Hall or Civic Center Complex. The issue of when they want to construct it, or if they want to construct it, is a separate one. The idea of being able to tie up the site at this point is the advantage of working through the agreement. Without being able to tie up the site and work this cooperative venture with the County, the site may not be available in the future, depending on the County's needs and future construction schedules.

Mrs. Singlaub said if Reno decides not to go ahead with the Pioneer Inn site, the County staff currently located at 195 South Sierra Street would remain there and continue to use that building. The County has no current need to tear down the building, nor do they have the resources to build anything else at this time.

Commissioner Galloway said he is concerned about any implication that the County has the funds to build a new District Court building. He suggested including in the agreement that the reference to other facilities and plans regarding this contract is merely for determining what portion of the Pioneer Inn site would be available for future use by the County and Reno. It does not represent a commitment to build any specific facility at this time within this contract. The question is, what portion would Reno construct *any* future building on. A parking structure would need to be built to satisfy employee and public parking requirements, but the County would not want to build on the portion that Reno would want for some future site. Similarly, the portion that would be reserved for the County for future related needs, should be specified also. At this point the County does not have the funds to construct a new District Court, but at some point there may be funding available.

Councilmember Harsh stated that the Pioneer Inn site is the cause of concern for the City of Reno, and at this time Reno only wants to build a new Municipal Court. It is a benefit to construct the DA's office with the Municipal Court, but the County cannot afford to do that without the \$7.8 million payment from Reno. She asked how hard it would be to add parking spaces to a parking structure at a later date. Mr. Varela said it would cost more money to do that later. He stated that it would cost money at the initial stage of construction, but would also save money later on.

Councilmember Doyle said she finds the completion date of May 2004 of the Municipal Court and DA offices unacceptable. She said the Barney Ng site is available now and Reno could go back to that site as a potential site for the Municipal Court. Mr. Varela stated if Reno went back to that site they could construct the Municipal Court sooner than 2004, and for less than \$22 million.

Commissioner Bond stated she was under the impression that the County and Reno had reached an agreement in August concerning the Municipal Court and DA's office. She said it is time for Reno to fish or cut bait. If Reno does not want to go forward with the agreement, then vote to not go forward and move on; having this discussion over and over again is a waste of everyone's time.

Mayor Griffin said there has been no change in Reno's interest to work cooperatively with the County, but the timeline has changed to 2004, and the cost to Reno keeps going up. Also the County's requirement for Reno to purchase a portion of the Pioneer Inn site is committing Reno to build a Civic Center, which they do not have the money for.

Commissioner Sferrazza stated that this item should be tabled until Reno makes a decision on what they want to do with their Municipal Court. They can come back and let the County know what they are going to do at the next joint meeting. Mayor Griffin said County and Reno staff should work together in the meantime, and decide what each side can or cannot do at this time.

In response to Chairman Shaw's inquiry regarding the confusion about the amount of money and timeline, Mr. Roundtree said the interlocal agreement is not committing anyone to build anything at this time, but is saying at some point in the future they think this is where that structure would be built, if and when they come up with the funds to construct a facility.

Councilmember Sferrazza-Hogan asked if the parking structure would have to be constructed immediately, or is it something that could be put off until later. Mr. Roundtree said the County is in dire need of parking in the near term. They will not initiate the construction of a parking structure unless it is combined with the proposed project. If the project goes forward, the County would propose to build at least 500 spaces for their use.

Councilmember Sferrazza-Hogan said, if the County is going to finance \$19.1 million, then how come they cannot finance an additional \$7.8 million, because by approving the agreement that is essentially what Reno has to do. Mr. Roundtree said he has been told that the County's resources just do not stretch that far; it is just that much more debt service and that much more obligation from existing programs to support that debt service. He stated he does not even know where the resources to support the \$19.1 million are coming from.

Sam Dehne, area resident, said the County is trying to get Reno to bail them out from their horrible blunder by buying the Pioneer Inn site, and he does not want Reno to do that.

On motion by Councilmember Doyle, seconded by Councilmember Rigdon, which motion duly carried, Chairman Shaw ordered that agenda Items 6 and 7 concerning the Pioneer Inn Site Master Plan and the Interlocal Agreement for the Municipal Court/District Attorney Facility be continued to the November 20, 2001, joint meeting.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

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**JAMES M. SHAW**, Chairman  
Washoe County Commission

**ATTEST: AMY HARVEY**, County Clerk

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*Minutes Prepared by  
Jeraldine Magee, Deputy County Clerk*