

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WASHOE COUNTY, NEVADA

TUESDAY

1:30 P.M.

MAY 26, 2015

CONCURRENT MEETING

PRESENT:

Marsha Berkgigler, Chair
Vaughn Hartung, Commissioner
Jeanne Herman, Commissioner
Bob Lucey, Commissioner

ABSENT:

Kitty Jung, Vice Chair
Nancy Parent, County Clerk
John Slaughter, County Manager
Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel

The Washoe County Board of Commissioners convened at 1:38 p.m. with the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District/Sierra Fire Protection District (TMFPD/SFPD) Board of Fire Commissioners and the Reno City Council in special 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:

Paul Lipparelli, Legal Counsel, said due to the pending litigation between the City of Reno and the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, there should not be any discussion regarding the matters in litigation, which concerned accounting, workers' compensation and performance under the old Interlocal Agreement.

15-0421 AGENDA ITEM 4 – PUBLIC COMMENT

Agenda Subject: "Public Comment. Comment heard under this item will be limited to three minutes per person and may pertain to matters both on and off the Board of County Commissioners agenda. The Board of County Commissioners will also hear public comment during individual action items, with comment limited to three minutes per person. Comments are to be made to the Commission, Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District Commission, Sierra Fire Protection District Commission, and Reno City Council as a whole."

George Newell said he was against any consolidation with the City of Reno due to the Warm Springs area now having a better response time, the service was less costly, and all of the volunteers with the Warm Springs Volunteer Fire Department would be lost. He hoped everything would be kept like it was right now.

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Jerry Gamroth advised the City of Reno submitted an amendment proposal to SB 185, which was never given to the citizens and was a ruse to go forward with consolidation by using regionalization as a buzzword. He said the Interlocal Agreement was unsatisfactory, expensive, and did not provide the best service in spite of previous comments. He stated he was involved in one emergency medical service (EMS) experience under the consolidated operation that was unsatisfactory and a second with the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD), which was an outstanding response. He said the District was an excellent fire-service provider with Advanced Life Support (ALS) paramedics on every engine, and it needed to stay independent with a simple automatic aid agreement. He encouraged the Commission to contact the Assembly Committee indicating it supported SB 185 without any convoluted amendments. He said automatic aid should go forward for the protection of life and property.

Carol Fineberg said she was concerned about the potential consolidation/merger. She stated the TMFPD exemplified due diligence where money, staffing, and the volunteer program were all handled in an appropriate and efficient manner. She said she wished she could say the same for the City of Reno and the Sierra Fire Protection District having four people on every call, more Chiefs than already existed, no volunteers, and mandatory union firefighters, which sounded a lot like what had not worked in the past, and was why there was a TMFPD. She said she hoped for a mutual aid situation where the closest agency would respond to an emergency call and would bill the other agency for the time. She felt that would be fair, equitable and would best serve the people in the City of Reno and the County.

AJ Lyon stated she strongly endorsed what Ms. Fineberg said. She said it was time to use some common sense, and to say the volunteers could not be used lacked common sense.

Cliff Low stated the three Fire Protection Districts in unincorporated Washoe County were each a separate legal entity from the County and were not funded by the County's General Fund. He said the Districts were funded by dedicated revenues to provide emergency services to the geographical areas that paid those taxes. He stated the fact that the Board of Fire Commissioners was made up of the same people as the Board of County Commissioners did not change the fact that the TMFPD was a separate entity. He said he spoke about all of this at a recent Reno City Council meeting and about SB 185, but his comments were ignored. He said the TMFPD was not the County and it was not the County's fire department, but was a Fire District.

Ken Koeppel said he lived long enough to gain knowledge by experience. He stated an attempt to unify the Oakland, California public schools failed. He believed this would also fail because bigger was not always better. He said he was opposed to the City of Reno's amendment.

Robert Parker commented on the City of Reno's proposal for a Regional Fire Protection District and his reasons for being opposed to the proposal. A copy of his comments was placed on file with the Clerk.

Cathy Brandhorst spoke about issues of concern to herself.

15-0422 AGENDA ITEM 5

Agenda Subject: "Overview of current fire department organization, governance, funding and operation: a. Presentation, discussion and potential direction to staff on the City of Reno Fire Department and b. Presentation, discussion and potential direction to staff on the Truckee Meadows/Sierra Fire Protection Districts."

Dave Cochran, Reno Fire Department Interim Chief, conducted a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Reno Fire Department's response and prevention, organizational structure and governance, organizational chart, staffing - personnel and stations, funding and budget, and the 2014 calls for service. A copy of the presentation was placed on file with the Clerk.

Commissioner Hartung asked how the calls were counted. Interim Chief Cochran said one incident number was assigned to each call regardless of the number of apparatus responding.

Fire Chief Charles Moore stated a lot had been said publically about the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) raising taxes and reducing services, and he hoped to clear the air with some facts regarding the TMFPD's finances. He said when the housing bubble burst in 2007 and there was a substantial decrease in assessed values, local governments had to determine how they would deal with that loss of revenue, which was shown on the District Overview slide. He said there had to be operational adjustments to match service delivery with revenues when 27 percent of the TMFPD's revenues were lost. He stated the TMFPD was unable to reach an agreement with the City of Reno on how to do that, which was why the contract was negated. He said 62 percent of the TMFPD's revenues came from property taxes and 28 percent from the consolidated tax (C-tax). He said no revenues were received from the County or the City of Reno. He discussed the City of Reno wanting to remove the annexation credit, which would add another \$1 million to the loss in revenue for the TMFPD, for a total of \$3 million. He said in 2015-16 the TMFPD revenue was within \$60,000 of the revenues in 2007-08, which he felt did not indicate there was a big tax increase. He said with respect to the loss of service, the District had to have flexible staffing, and the Union worked with the TMFPD to reach an agreement that four firefighters per engine would no longer be required.

Chief Moore stated all of the TMFPD's stations were fully staffed 100 percent of the time, had a projected ending fund balance of 25 percent at the end of 2015-16, all engines had at least one advanced life support (ALS) paramedic and at least three firefighters with a reserve firefighter being added occasionally. He said there were 144

volunteers, the TMFPD had no debt, the Hidden Valley Fire Station was opened, two new stations were constructed to replace old stations, they acquired six new Type 1 structural engines, three type 3 brush engines, a hazardous materials trailer, two water tenders were being purchased, and most of the handheld radio equipment was being replaced. He noted the passage of AB 333 would allow the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD) to be dissolved sometime in the next year and the TMFPD would assume the boundaries of the SFPD, so there would only be one taxing district. A copy of the presentation was placed on file with the Clerk

Chief Moore discussed the Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating and the breakdown of calls slides. He noted structure fires made up one-half of 1 percent of the total call volume and less than one-fourth of 1 percent required two in and two out, and he discussed how that was dealt with by using a transitional attack. He provided an example of how the TMFPD was really making a difference in people's lives due to having ALS paramedics. He said the Regional Emergency Medical Services Authority (REMSA) was largely concentrated in the core, while the TMFPD was concentrated in the outskirts. He stated sometimes a call from the TMFPD was in a best effort response-time zone for REMSA, which was why the change to a three-person crew with a paramedic was made.

Reno City Councilmember Paul McKenzie said the downturn caused a reduction in assessed property values and would that be returned as assessed values came back. Chief Moore said the tax rate was increased, but it did not increase the net amount of tax revenue but instead reduced the amount of the decline, and on average no one saw an increase on their tax bill. Councilmember McKenzie stated people felt it was a tax rate increase even if the increase offset the decreased values. He asked if the Fire Districts would return as the assessed values returned, so the citizens would not get a tax increase. Chief Moore said that was too far in the future for him to be able to answer the question. He said he did not see giving any of that back because there were other things to do.

Councilmember Brekhus said she had not been aware that the C-tax helped fund the TMFPD/SFPD. She asked if they had taxing authority or did the C-tax money flow through the County and was the C-tax only collected in the unincorporated areas. Vicki Van Buren, TMFPD Chief Fiscal Officer, advised it was distributed through the County and dedicated to the TMFPD/SFPD through the Department of Taxation, but she was not sure about the taxing authority. Robert Chisel, City of Reno Finance and Administration Director, said the portions of the C-tax were collected countywide and others were collected statewide and distributed to the entities identified by the Nevada Legislature. Reno City Councilmember David Bobzien said the formula for how the C-tax was distributed was complicated and it would be almost impossible to isolate it by geography. Reno City Councilmember Naomi Duerr stated Reno residents paid sales tax in the County and a portion of that tax went to the TMFPD. Mr. Chisel replied that was correct.

Councilmember Duerr said she understood going from a four-person to a three-person crew was driven by the budget, but she asked if a four-person crew was the

norm. Chief Moore said with the risks of the high-rise buildings in the downtown urban core, it was appropriate to have four-person crew, but it became less necessary in the outlying areas where most buildings were single-family structures and would not require a ladder truck. He felt the strategy to protect this area should be to use concentric rings with the resources concentrated in the downtown core but, as you moved towards the suburban and rural densities, it would drop to a three-person crew; and on the very rural fringe, volunteers would be used at least as a first response. He said as far as he knew the City of Reno was the only fire department in Northern Nevada that used a four-person crew.

Councilmember Duerr understood the City of Sparks' contract was for a four-person crew, but Sparks went to a three-person crew due to budget cuts. Chief Moore said that was what drove the TMFPD's crew size because, if that had not happened, it would have been necessary to close stations. He said because the TMFPD's stations were more spread out, the Board of Fire Commissioners decided to keep all of the fire stations open. Interim Chief Cochran said the City of Reno had an ISO rating of 2, which was driven by the four-person crew. He stated a four-person crew was the nationally recognized standard, which was a goal and not a requirement. Councilmember Duerr said rather than having a conversation about crew size, she would rather have a conversation about what was the best service to provide to keep people safe.

Reno City Councilmember Oscar Degado asked if Chief Moore supported SB 185. Chief Moore said the Board supported SB 185. Councilmember Degado said the City of Reno was opposed to SB 185 because they felt it was a Band-aid approach, and he was confused because the TMFPD was doing so well and were presenting they did not need the City of Reno's help. He asked if it was felt consolidation or automatic aid would support the TMFPDs overall mission as a Fire District or were we stepping into something we should not. Chief Moore believed automatic aid was what could be done right now to help the citizens. He stated there were places where the TMFPD could help the City of Reno and others where the City of Reno could help the TMFPD.

Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve asked what the District's startup costs were. Chief Moore stated it was documented in the Internal Auditor's report. Interim Chief Cochran stated the budgeted amount was about \$1.2 million, but he was not sure what the final cost was.

Commissioner Lucey noted the 2014 calls for service slide showed Stations 7, 11, and 19 had a significantly smaller number of calls. Interim Chief Cochran said those stations were in an area with a lower call volume, and Station 7 and 19 were browned out a portion of the time.

Commissioner Hartung asked if there were areas in the City of Reno that did not have fire hydrants. Interim Chief Cochran replied there were roughly 10,000 hydrants throughout the City of Reno. Commissioner Hartung asked how an immediate or delayed detection time fit into fighting a fire. Chief Moore said every fire was different, and getting more firefighters on the scene quicker would not always result in

less damage because when the fire was detected was the key. He said detection was the key to getting the fire department on its way and reducing the time between when the fire was detected and when the water was applied. He stated that was a variable, one that the fire departments and governments could not control except through technology. He stated that was why the TMFPD made a very diligent effort to get working smoke detectors into every home, because it was proven that surviving a fire doubled with a working smoke detector. He stated another factor affecting a fire was how many combustibles did a building contain or were accelerants applied. He said if accelerants were involved, the fire would be out of control by the time the firefighters could arrive. He stated more firefighters and a more robust response in every case would not always result in less damage. He advised fire departments could only respond when the fire was detected, and no matter the location, some fires were fully involved on arrival. He said if that was the case, there was not much that could be done except to confine the fire to the structure of origin or, if lucky, to the room of origin.

In response to Mayor Schieve's earlier question, Allison Gordon, Washoe County Internal Auditor, said the transition costs were \$1.4 million, which did not include the station development for Mogul or Hidden Valley. Mayor Schieve noted the amount for building the stations could be significant.

Councilmember Bobzien said the value of today was talking about how we could work together to better to serve everyone. He asked if we could come up with a plan and the funding, would we see some of the stations staffed with four-person crews. Chief Moore said staffing projections would see Sun Valley going to a six-person crew with an engine and a light rescue to handle a lot of Sun Valley's medical calls, which often came in simultaneously. He stated the employees worked hard and deserved higher wages, but the existing costs would go up, which would be very difficult to forecast. He believed the 3 percent increase was not that far off from simple inflation.

Mayor Schieve said we should be looking forward and not backward. She stated yesterday an Assemblywoman said the people did not care about our problems, but only wanted them fixed, and she agreed with that statement. She said this was the time for a positive new start and what had happened was water under the bridge. She stated dispatch needed to be looked at, because five different entities doing dispatch was detrimental to our citizens. She said it did not matter where the firefighters came from if someone had a fire, because it was about saving lives. She commended the Chiefs for doing a great job. Chief Moore said Mayor Schieve was correct with respect to dispatch. He stated having a regional dispatch would go a long ways to getting the fire trucks out the door faster. He felt there were great opportunities for improvement in the dispatch processes.

In response to the call for public comment, Sarah Chvilicek, Blue Ribbon Committee Chair, spoke about the work of the Committee and the Committee's recommendation on putting an automatic aid agreement in place before doing anything else, which would be in the best interests of the citizens. She said to achieve legitimate regionalization of services, there needed to be a fully independent Board with

autonomous authority for regional fire services. She stated there should be a discussion regarding time, costs, and providing an opportunity for flexible spending and staffing across the region. She said all discussions should be transparent.

Sam Dehne spoke about being in favor of the fire merger 15 years ago and against the breakup. He said Chief Moore did a fantastic job in putting together the new District.

Vicky Maltman spoke about the Volunteer Fire Department where she was raised in Pennsylvania that had 350 volunteer firefighters. She said she only had good things to say about the TMFPD and the volunteer fire fighters. She believed public service meant something, and she hoped everyone could come to an agreement that whoever got there first got there first, because the citizens did not care what the name on the responding vehicle was if there was a fire or a medical emergency.

Russell Earle thanked everyone for having a more open mind than they have had in the past. He said he spoke against deconsolidation three years ago. He stated the people were getting service, but there were areas that could be improved for the citizens of both the City of Reno and the County. He said the TMFPD was financially sound, but annexation created a patchwork of service over the years. He said there either needed to be a regional fire service or we needed to work together in a cooperative effort.

There was no action taken on this item.

15-0423 AGENDA ITEM 6

Agenda Subject: “Overview of Automatic Aid: opportunities and challenges: a. Presentation, discussion and potential direction to staff on the City of Reno Fire Department and b. Presentation, discussion and potential direction to staff on the Truckee Meadows/Sierra Fire Protection Districts.”

Dave Cochran, Reno Fire Department Interim Chief, conducted a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the automatic and mutual aid definitions, automatic aid location advantages, and automatic aid opportunities and challenges. He said at the end of the day it was about what was fair and cost effective to both jurisdictions. He stated the challenges were greater than the opportunities, which could be overcome, but as they were overcome the move would be more towards a regional model instead of an automatic aid model. A copy of the presentation was placed on file with the Clerk.

Reno City Councilmember Paul McKenzie said the City of Reno’s engine companies were not set up to fight a fire without a fire hydrant. Interim Chief Cochran said all of the engines carried water just like the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District’s (TMFPDs) engines did. Councilmember Paul McKenzie asked how long a fire could be fought if the area had no hydrant. Interim Chief Cochran replied about five minutes at full volume. He said another engine would be right behind the first with another 750 gallons, but that would be inadequate for a structure that had a major fire. Councilmember McKenzie said if there was a major structure fire, the Chief would have

to send in a water tender to help support the engine. Chief Moore said dispatch notified the responders if there was a hydrant or not, and a water tender would not be sent if there was a hydrant. Councilmember McKenzie asked if the fire was in the County and the City arrived first, who would take command of the scene. Interim Chief Cochran replied the first arriving apparatus would take command, but typically the jurisdiction that owned the fire would ultimately take command. He said that was not spelled out in SB 185.

Councilmember McKenzie asked how often the jurisdictions and the County's volunteers trained together. Interim Chief Cochran replied they currently did not train together nor did the City of Reno train with the volunteers. He said that was one of the safety and cost issues. Councilmember McKenzie stated what he was getting at was the existing language in SB 185 did not give them the opportunity to sit down and resolve those issues, but the proposed amendment by the City of Reno would give us the change to hash those issues out.

Commissioner Hartung asked if any of the City of Reno's fire stations were browned out. Interim Chief Cochran said Stations 7 and 19 were not always open.

Reno City Councilmember Naomi Duerr said Southern Nevada had a unified dispatch and automatic vehicle locators (AVL). She stated she understood Storey County and Washoe County had automatic aid. Interim Chief Cochran said he was not aware of them having an automatic aid agreement, but only the one with the City of Sparks. He stated the City of Reno also had an automatic aid agreement with the City of Sparks. Councilmember Duerr asked if a unified dispatch was needed to have automatic aid. Interim Chief Cochran said unified dispatch was the best practice, but there were workarounds, but a unified dispatch meant the dispatchers operated with a common practice and system and every vehicle position was available by looking at a screen. He said unifying dispatch was being worked on, but he had no idea how long it would take to achieve. He said his hesitation in saying how long it would take was because he was not making the policy and financial decisions needed to get there.

Commissioner Lucey asked if SB 185 went into effect without the amendment, how difficult would it be to enact an automatic aid agreement. Interim Chief Cochran said if both parties came to the table to negotiate in good faith, an agreement could be done in 60 to 90 days. Commissioner Lucey said this meeting was about hashing out those issues and coming to some sort of resolution. He said this would be a step in working towards regionalization, but right now we were just talking about automatic aid.

Commissioner Hartung asked what training standards were used. Chief Moore replied the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) was the standard every fire department used except for California. Commissioner Hartung asked if we had an automatic aid agreement with the City of Sparks. Chief Moore said that was correct and the TMFPD conducted training with the Sparks Fire Department. He stated on a daily basis either the TMFPD was providing fire and/or medical aid to the City of Sparks or vice versa. Commissioner Hartung said he thought Sparks' dispatch was located with the Sparks Police Department. Chief Moore stated that was correct.

Commissioner Hartung said the original agreement with the City of Reno was crafted before any members of this Board and the City Council were elected. He said it was a contractual arrangement and not a consolidation, and it seemed we all wanted the same thing, which was a safe, healthy, and secure community. He stated at the end of the day we needed to come to the table and decide what was best for the community and how agreements could be crafted that would protect the community.

Reno City Councilmember Neoma Jardon said with automatic aid came the frustration of multiple entities sending multiple pieces of equipment in response to a call and not sifting out what the most appropriate response would be and by whom. She asked if a unified dispatch would help get rid of the duplication. Interim Chief Cochran said by definition, automatic aid would result in two apparatus going to every call, which did result in a duplication of services where only one apparatus might be needed. Councilmember Jardon said if mutual aid could be requested prior to actually arriving on the scene, who could make that request. Interim Chief Cochran stated that was identified in the mutual aid agreement. He said there was no fixed formula, but was whatever the jurisdictions agreed to. He said the decision to call for mutual aid could be based on the nature of the call or the location. He stated if it was a structure fire, aid would be needed right away. He said the agreement with the City of Sparks was defined geographically.

Commissioner Lucey asked if SB 185 would negate the City of Reno and the TMFPD from working on solutions. Interim Chief Cochran said the concern was SB 185 only mandated the closest apparatus respond, which would trigger some challenges. He said if the City responded to a call in the County, that area of the City would be left unprotected. He said an agreement could build in a mechanism to provide for that situation but, as written, SB 185 did not provide the ability to negotiate that. Commissioner Lucey asked if there was anything regarding the City of Reno's firefighters union that would inhibit those negotiations if SB 185 was enacted as currently written. Interim Chief Cochran said he did not want to speak for Local Firefighters Union 731, but in his experience they had always been open to discuss any reasonable points.

Chair Berkbigler said she understood if dispatch was regional, the dispatcher would be the person to call out the nearest vehicle. Interim Chief Cochran advised technically the computer would call up the closest vehicle. Chair Berkbigler said the dispatcher would not be calling Reno's backup or the TMFPD's backup if only one engine was needed. She stated she was concerned about the example that automatic aid would result in more vehicles arriving on the scene. She felt automatic aid could not be done unless there was a unified dispatch, so the dispatchers could see what was going on. Interim Chief Cochran said with automatic aid two apparatus would respond, which typically would be needed for a fire but not for an emergency medical call. Chair Berkbigler asked even if dispatch only sent one apparatus. Interim Chief Cochran said that was transitioning into a regional department and not an automatic aid situation, because the jurisdiction having authority always responded. Chair Berkbigler asked if that could be worked into the agreement. Interim Chief Cochran said that would be up to the parties during the negotiations. Chair Berkbigler said she would prefer to have