

**BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS, SIERRA FIRE
PROTECTION DISTRICT**

TUESDAY

4:00 P.M.

MAY 8, 2007

PRESENT:

Bob Larkin, Chairman
Bonnie Weber, Vice Chairman
Jim Galloway, Commissioner
David Humke, Commissioner

Amy Harvey, County Clerk
Katy Singlaub, County Manager
Melanie Foster, Legal Counsel
Michael Greene, Fire Chief

ABSENT:

Pete Sferrazza, Commissioner

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

07-18SF AGENDA

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Commissioner Weber, seconded by Chairman Larkin, which motion duly carried with Commissioner Sferrazza absent, it was ordered that the agenda for the May 8, 2007 meeting be approved.

07-19SF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM UPDATE

Michael Greene, Fire Chief, said he felt reconfiguring the volunteer program to have separate job descriptions was working out very successfully.

Chairman Larkin noted the five Chiefs were now called Deputy Chiefs. Chief Green confirmed he would be the Chief for all departments.

Commissioner Weber commented Chief Greene's report at the volunteer meeting was very well received. She said the Truckee Meadows volunteers requested the Chief's Report be presented in writing, and she would like that same report given to the Commissioners. Chief Greene said he would submit the report.

No action was taken on this item.

07-20SF UPCOMING WILDFIRE SEASON REPORT

In response to Chairman Larkin, Michael Greene, Fire Chief, agreed it was unusual that wildfires occurred during the winter. He said all indications were it was going to be a very busy fire season. He stated it was difficult to project the magnitude of the season, but the conditions were there for it to be a big one.

Chairman Larkin asked if Chief Greene could explain what was being done to let people know that they lived in a wildland-urban interface. Chief Greene said a pilot program was being conducted in Washoe Valley with the Fire Safe Council to go door-to-door handing out information and that program would be the building block in notifying people. He stated fuels reduction was also being done in cooperation with the Truckee Meadows Fire Department and the Nevada Division of Forestry.

Chairman Larkin commented Channel 2 was very open to broadcasting messages relating to fire safe conditions. He asked if other television channels or print medias had contacted Chief Greene about doing the same. Chief Greene said he had not been contacted yet, but he would be contacting them.

Commissioner Galloway felt it was good to distribute information, but sometimes timing was everything. He believed a great time to deal with defensible space would be when a property sold. He suggested the Fire Department could be notified when a property was sold so they could consult with any real estate agent who wanted an evaluation of whether or not the defensible space requirements were being met. He bet 9 out of 10 times bringing it into compliance would become a condition of the sale. He also suggested contacting the new resident with the defensible space guidelines before they started work on landscaping the property. He felt those two things could really do something to help. Chief Greene responded that sounded like a good idea.

In response to Commissioner Weber, Katy Singlaub, County Manager, said she was not aware that the Nevada Association of Counties (NACO) had declared this was Nevada Wildland Fire Awareness Week and that resolutions had been adopted statewide on January 26, 2007.

Commissioner Humke related the incident that was reported at the West Washoe Valley Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) about the fire at a Bed and Breakfast that had been covered by dirt and later reignited. He said the citizen's concern was the stoppage of traffic and that people were not allowed to go through the area to attend to their pets, horses, and other livestock. He asked if there was a County protocol that the Chief could report back on so the public could be better informed about what was going on. Chief Greene confirmed he would.

07-21SF CHIEF'S REPORT

Michael Greene, Fire Chief, stated a 300-question questionnaire that was being gone through internally would help the SFPD personnel understand the organization's infrastructure so the infrastructure's needs could be identified. He said this process began as part of strategic planning, but it was decided to just focus on the infrastructure right now and then to move forward with the strategic planning process.

In response to Chairman Larkin, Chief Greene replied that with the new Fire Coordinator's help, they were trying to obtain a baseline of SFPD's resources and capabilities before moving forward with aligning their strategic plan with those of the City of Reno and the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District.

07-022SF FISCAL YEAR 2008 TENTATIVE BUDGET

Mary Walker, District Financial Consultant, explained the District's budget was cut by approximately \$180,000 when it was found sales taxes were coming in lower than was projected. She said next year's budget was built based on that lower level.

She believed a first for the District was Chief Greene putting into the budget some aggressive funding for a public outreach program. She discussed the budget's highlights as outlined in the staff report dated April 18, 2007.

In response to Chairman Larkin, Ms. Walker replied the State had not agreed to help with the increase in retiree benefits and all of the equipment titles had been located except for a two.

Ms. Walker said the budget was fiscally sound and met all operating and capital funding requirements. She stated the budget might be fine-tuned before bringing it back for approval on May 21, 2007.

In response to Commissioner Galloway, Ms. Walker said that, per the agreement with the employees, the employees were offered retiree group medical benefits. She explained that future liability was funded based on the actuarial report, which was determined by when employees would be retiring. She stated it was important to note that the SFPD had several employees that would be retiring within the next three to five years. She said the intent was to fund 100 percent so there would not be huge liabilities in the future. Commissioner Galloway asked if it trended up or down over time. Ms. Walker replied she had been doing actuarial estimates for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) every year and it would be up one year, then down, and then up. She explained she estimated the amount from the TMFPD actuary because the SFPD did not have one when it was transferred to local control from the State. She stated she would have an actuarial report done in July for SFPD's audit.

Commissioner Galloway asked if the federal government was tightening reimbursement guidelines for fighting fires in the urban/wildland interface, and if that

would affect the amount of catastrophic fire reserves. Ms. Walker replied the analysis looked at SFPD's experience for the last 10 years with large fires and the last three years on every fire. She stated the average was \$100,000 a year and \$350,000 was budgeted for a contingency. She explained large catastrophic fires would be in the \$1 million range with the SFPD paying \$250,000 due to cost sharing with the federal government. She said even if the federal guidelines were tightened there was still a built in margin.

Ms. Walker said the SFPD had learned it was important to start recording costs right at the start of a fire.

In response to Commissioner Humke, Ms. Walker confirmed no new staff was needed at this time.

Ms. Walker said the SFPD and the regional fire coordinator were going after large fuels management grants, which would remove a lot of the wildfire danger.

Commissioner Humke asked what dollar percentage was used to prevent fires. Michael Green, Fire Chief, indicated 95 cents out of every dollar was spent on fire suppression. He stated the federal government indicated that spending at least 25 cents out of every dollar would cut loss rates by 75 percent. He said fuels management cost \$1,000 an acre but to put the fire out cost \$9,000. He explained money was set aside for a catastrophic fire, but the 75 percent cost sharing was only if a grant was secured from the federal government. He noted that the federal government was trying to cost shift a lot of those costs back to the local providers.

In response to Commissioner Humke, Chief Green replied the government was trying to shift costs from when the fire was actually burning, such as calling for aircraft support, back to the local level. He stated the federal government indicated structure protection was the SFPD's responsibility.

Upon recommendation by Mary Walker, District Financial Consultant, on motion by Commissioner Galloway, seconded by Chairman Larkin, which motion duly carried with Commissioner Sferrazza absent, it was ordered that the fiscal year 2007/08 Tentative Budget be approved and staff be directed to prepare the fiscal year 2007/08 Final Budget for a public hearing set for Monday, May 21, 2007.

COMMISSIONERS'/STAFF COMMENTS

Commissioner Galloway said he had a very good meeting with Michael Green, Fire Chief, who wanted to find out what each Commissioner thought about what the District should be doing. He wondered if Washoe County had the ability to require defensible space be maintained and if the County had the ability to require a defensible space assessment be disclosed to a buyer during a real estate transfer.

Commissioner Humke said he would prefer having the Chief approach realtor organizations and trade-industry groups first. He felt if the Chief put a bug in their

ear they would do it on a voluntary basis. Commissioner Galloway agreed it made sense to do first things first.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned.

ROBERT M. LARKIN, Chairman
Sierra Fire Protection District

ATTEST:

AMY HARVEY, Washoe County Clerk
and Ex-Officio Clerk, Sierra Forest
Fire Protection District

*Minutes Prepared By
Jan Frazzetta
Deputy County Clerk*