

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

TUESDAY

10:00 A.M.

FEBRUARY 23, 2010

PRESENT:

David Humke, Chairman
Bonnie Weber, Vice Chairperson
Robert Larkin, Commissioner
Kitty Jung, Commissioner
John Breternitz, Commissioner

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

11:33 a.m. The Board convened simultaneously as the Board of County Commissioners, the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Sierra Fire Protection District, and the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District with all members present. The following business was conducted in regular session in the Commission Chambers of the Washoe County Administration Complex, 1001 East Ninth Street, Reno, Nevada:

10-11SF AGENDA ITEM 3

Agenda Subject: “Review and consideration of acceptance of final version of the January 2010 Fire and Fire Based Emergency Medical Services Master Plan, and possible direction to staff to return to the March 23, 2010 meeting with a proposed implementation plan for the recommendations contained within the Master Plan. (All Commission Districts)”

Chief Kurt Latipow, Fire Services Coordinator, noted there was an addendum to the staff report that contained various emails and documents submitted by stakeholders. He said the submissions were not in any particular order and most were consistent with testimony heard at the recent Board of County Commissioners Special Meeting on February 22, 2010. He stated the Diamante study was never intended to include an in-depth analysis or development plan for each recommendation. After carefully reviewing the original scope of work that commissioned five tasks (see pages 2 and 3 of the staff report), he indicated the consultant’s contract was completed after submission of the Diamante study.

Chief Latipow explained his staff report organized the issues into seven major themes, with the study’s key recommendations and staff comments provided under each theme. For example, under the theme of governance he emphasized the key

recommendation was to consider the development of some type of new unified fire services agency. He pointed out the financial analysis had changed since the consultants first looked at it and was subsequently re-reviewed with the assistance of County Financial Consultant Mary Walker. He cautioned the review was not an in-depth analysis and suggested there should be an in-depth analysis of all of the finances of any interested parties before moving ahead with anything related to financing. He commented the County was fortunate to have a very active group of volunteer fire agencies involved in daily operations and it was his opinion the volunteer program would also benefit from a unified approach. He requested staff direction to draft an implementation plan and bring it back for the Board's consideration at their March 23, 2010 meeting. He observed such a timeline would allow staff about a week and a half to finish drafting a report.

Commissioner Larkin requested a brief sketch of Chief Latipow's vision for the implementation plan. Chief Latipow said he envisioned drafting a spreadsheet-type document. As an example, he noted the study's first recommendation was to pursue a shared governance model. Although the consultants used the term Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), he indicated the key recommendation was for some form of unified governance. He stated staff would work to identify the steps necessary to achieve each recommendation. The columns of the spreadsheet would identify such items as the length of time and associated costs for each item in the implementation plan. He anticipated working with the Board to determine a "yes or no" for each of the items. He observed some of the recommendations were already on the verge of being accomplished. For instance, he said he was very proud of the teamwork that had gone into updating the building code, the wildland-interface code, and the fire code. He pointed out the code project was currently in the hands of the County's legal staff and the next steps would include meeting with the City of Reno's legal staff and the County's external partners before bringing it back to the Board for consideration.

Commissioner Larkin indicated there had been several suggestions regarding emergency medical services (EMS) in general and the Regional Emergency Medical Services Agency (REMSA) in particular. He commented EMS issues were clearly outside the scope of an implementation plan because they fell under the jurisdiction of the District Board of Health. He suggested one of the implementation items might be to make a recommendation to the District Board of Health that they consider and elaborate on those issues. He observed the agenda item provided a good forum to discuss specific items for the implementation plan and suggested that Chief Latipow remain open to additional comments and considerations. Chief Latipow acknowledged there were items within the recommendations that would drive meetings and committees. He characterized the implementation plan as a basic road map rather than a "down in the weeds" document. He requested the implementation plan be kept at a fairly high altitude that would allow staff to get down in the weeds as more information was presented to the Commission and decisions were made.

Commissioner Larkin said it was his perception the project was still a staff-driven process. Although the Board of Fire Commissioners was interacting with staff, he indicated the project would not really be the Board's work product until the

implementation plan came back to the Board for consideration. He stated it was his suggestion the Fire Services Coordinator still needed to be the point of contact for specific recommendations and concerns.

Commissioner Breternitz said he wanted to make sure the implementation plan included objective discussion about setting a direction. He questioned whether the plan would include things such as the discovery of information and the generation of financial reports, or would just identify how the recommendations could be taken care of. He emphasized he was not completely sold on all the items contained within the Diamante study. County Manager Katy Simon replied it absolutely was not the proposal for the implementation plan to become a map for implementing all of the study recommendations. She suggested a better choice of words might have been an action plan to identify the steps needed to bring all of the information needed by the Board to make informed decisions about any of the recommendations addressed in the Diamante report. She emphasized there was no assumption to endorse or approve anything in the Diamante study. She clarified the requested Board action under the agenda item was to accept the report and give staff direction to spend more time bringing back each of the study recommendations, so the details of the financial analysis, operating impacts, and stakeholder input could be fully vetted and researched. She stated staff wanted the Board to have an opportunity to make individual decisions about any of the study recommendations and the discussion might generate other options that were not in the Diamante report. Chief Latipow commented there were many recommendations in the study that were totally separate from the formation of a JPA. He noted there were things the Board might wish to consider even if nothing was done about a governance model.

Commissioner Breternitz pointed out it was possible to predetermine some things by how an implementation plan was put together. He observed there were a large number of people in the community who were very interested in the process. He expressed concern that a few staff people sitting in a room coming up with an implementation plan would cut off the ability to really pose the issues and the plans in the most beneficial ways. He said he wanted to know that the people who shared different points of view would be included so the Commission could make the best educated decisions. Ms. Simon indicated it was always staff's preferred approach to involve affected stakeholders in the implementation of any major initiative in Washoe County. She suggested a project team might be one of the components that staff could bring back for the Board's review. She explained Chief Latipow had been working with a team that included volunteer fire chiefs, chiefs from other fire service entities, and other stakeholders. She stressed that the team members were not making policy decisions but would bring proposals back for the Board to say "yes," "no," or "bring us something different." Although the policy decisions would be vetted at properly noticed public meetings, she did not recommend a committee structure that had to follow open meeting law, take minutes, and post notices just to do the staff level work. Commissioner Breternitz agreed it would be great to describe it as a project team. He stated it was his belief there would be a better final product if the people who shared different points of view helped to formulate some of the pathways to be taken in getting to a conclusion. He suggested REMSA and other such stakeholders should be on the project team.

Commissioner Jung agreed with staff that high altitude in the implementation or action plan was necessary so that staff and other special interests did not set policy for the Board of County Commissioners. She said she believed it was the responsibility of the Commission to make sure the process was deliberative, and that it migrated toward efficiency in terms of the issues noted in the study as well as in terms of fairness to the taxpayers. She appreciated the participation of different stakeholders and indicated those stakeholders could better inform the Commission as to whether the process was working for them or not. She observed it was clearly not for staff to set policy, but to show the Board the positives, negatives, and pathways of any given course of action. She commented that is what she thought Chief Latipow had intended.

Commissioner Weber also agreed the Commission needed to make the final determinations. She related a suggestion made to her by an audience member that a representative from each of the stakeholder groups, as well as some financial specialists, be put together in a room to discuss all of the issues. She indicated the stakeholders had the best knowledge of what could be done in the community. She expressed concern that a JPA would come out of the process, although Chief Latipow was not calling it that. She said she was afraid of a JPA. Commissioner Weber questioned why a report needed to be done by the meeting on March 23, 2010. Ms. Simon noted it did not need to be done by March 23rd and staff was only trying to keep the process moving forward. She pointed out the Board had given direction to advance the questions and to appropriately advance the resolution of the questions. She said staff was also being responsive to a June 30, 2010 deadline related to the Interlocal Agreement with Reno and wanted everyone to have a chance to comply with their contractual responsibilities. She indicated staff would follow whatever process was directed by the Board. Chief Latipow said staff would be more than happy to go beyond March 23rd.

Commissioner Weber asked if there had been any explanation or discussion about all of the steps involved in the Interlocal Agreement. Ms. Simon recalled there had been an agenda item about six weeks past. Chief Latipow observed there was an upcoming item on the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) agenda that would facilitate more discussion. Commissioner Weber said it would be helpful to have some sort of bulleted list showing what has to happen with the Interlocal Agreement by what date.

Chairman Humke summarized there had been discussion about starting the process at the 40,000-foot level and progressing toward ultimate solutions, as well as having a team confer with stakeholders who would provide input to staff. He observed the commissioners all seemed to agree the process should be a staff effort that was not under the Open Meeting Law, but would include meetings without the elected officials present. He noted staff would periodically report back for Board direction concerning policy. He indicated the process would continue until the drop-dead date for the Interlocal Agreement, which might be renegotiated to alter the timelines. He urged that ordinary taxpaying citizens be brought into the process. Chief Latipow said he would refer to the plan as a draft action plan rather than a draft implementation plan.

Chief Latipow wondered if it was the Board's direction to have the plan put together by a committee. Commissioner Larkin said that was not the direction. In order to provide maximum flexibility, he indicated it would be a staff-driven process and Chief Latipow would employ the best practices that were necessary to get the job done. If that meant the formation of subcommittees or getting all the stakeholders in a room, then Chief Latipow should do what he felt was appropriate within the confines of what the Board had discussed. He stated those players who were relevant to moving forward with the process needed to be involved.

Chairman Humke agreed Chief Latipow was to be the staff point person who would determine when it was time to go before the Commission. He said he had previously described his vision in a private conversation with Chief Latipow. He listed the following agencies and stakeholders: North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District, Sparks Fire Department, Sierra Fire Protection District, Reno Fire Department, Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District, Airport Authority Fire Department, REMSA, Washoe County Volunteer Fire Association, dispatch personnel, and citizens. He described his concept as a huge table where the various agencies might or might not choose to take a chair. He stated it was not logical to exclude any agency that wished to adhere to the concept.

Commissioner Breternitz voiced concern about getting to the next Board presentation. He said he considered Chief Latipow to be like the CEO of the process and a good CEO took input from others. He agreed Chief Latipow would make the final decision as to what was presented to the Board but encouraged him to take advantage of the people around him in formulating the action plan. Chairman Humke observed there were no Commissioner objections to casting the process in that manner.

In response to the call for public comment, Robert Ackerman applauded the Diamante report's recommendations for a JPA as well as the construction and staffing of a new fire station in Arrowcreek. He said he was disappointed to see little or no discussion about the Joy Lake Fire Station. He observed the County agreed to pay Reno the cost of operating six fire stations in 2001, but had annexed a large portion of the County since that time. He wondered how many of the County stations had either been annexed or were surrounded by the City and should be sold to them. He supported termination of the current Interlocal Agreement with the City of Reno and the creation of a JPA that would ensure equal fire and paramedic protection for all of the citizens.

Steven Perez indicated whatever the County decided to do in the future would be different from the current Interlocal Agreement with the City of Reno, so the Board should make a separate decision concerning cancelation of the Agreement. He stated that he and other individuals in the Mt. Rose area thought it should be canceled. He advocated combining the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD) and the TMFPD, but allowing them to retain their autonomy as a County fire service.

Donna Peterson, a resident of St. James Village, talked about the importance of having a voice. She pointed out the SFPD was currently the only fire service that was accountable to the Commission. She observed the citizens had no voice as long as the Commission had no voice, and wondered how such governance could be in the citizens' best interests.

Dr. Bob Parker stated he was a Galena resident who previously supported an increase in his taxes to improve the SFPD. He indicated SFPD Fire Chief Michael Greene and his staff involved the residents, and the residents volunteered to help with data analysis, project management, and assistance with emergency evacuations. He discussed the contrasting difficulties in getting data from the TMFPD and EMS contractors. He noted that transparency, openness, respect, and trust were required for agencies to partner with the community. He suggested the Board had an opportunity to change the community's perception and to improve services.

Klark Staffan, representing the management staff at REMSA, reminded everyone that REMSA was a not-for-profit organization that operated with no tax support or other subsidy. He stated REMSA was heavily regulated and independently monitored on a regular basis by the District Board of Health. He indicated the dispatch inefficiencies observed in the Diamante report were very fixable with a dispatch center link that REMSA had been suggesting for quite some time. He pointed out there was nothing in the federal privacy regulations that prevented such a dispatch link and there were no REMSA-created delays in getting resources to the scene. He said the recommendations previously submitted to the Board were based on scientific medical research on EMS systems and patient care. He encouraged the Board to continue an open dialogue among all the stakeholders to ensure that decisions were based on factual information and indicated REMSA was ready to participate in such a process.

Dr. Mary Anderson, Washoe County District Health Officer, provided a brief overview of the REMSA agreement and the oversight that was in place. She explained the well-regulated medical model that was currently in place evolved from a 1994 cooperative study by participants from all the governmental entities, fire services, and hospitals in Washoe County. She stated the oversight was provided through the District Board of Health, which was composed of elected and appointed officials from all three governing bodies and one member elected by other Board members. While no system was perfect and every system required ongoing evaluation to improve, she said it was her opinion the EMS system functioned with a high standard of professionalism and in the best interests of those who were served.

Marty Scheurman identified himself as a resident within the SFPD who retired after 35 years with the TMFPD and Reno Fire Department. He noted he had been the last Fire Chief of the TMFPD before it merged with Reno. He applauded the Commission for their regional approach. He characterized the Interlocal Agreement with Reno as the first step in an evolutionary process. He stated the next step in the evolution of the region's emergency services would take the political will of the Commission and its partners to make it happen. He said he thought the Agreement with Reno had been

good for the TMFPD as well as for the residents and visitors, and should be used as a bridge to the next step. He suggested it was extremely important for the Board to continue its due diligence and to look at everything. He pointed out the REMSA system would stand on its own and the decisions would be evident if the system was really that good. He emphasized the Commission owed it to the stakeholders and the public to make things better if they could.

Lee Leighton, a resident of Spanish Springs Valley, stated he had been a participant in public safety for a number of years before retiring. He agreed with former Chief Scheuerman's comments. He stated the scope of what the staff was being asked to do was a little overwhelming, and recommended the Board narrow the scope down. He observed governance seemed to be the number one issue and the rest of the issues in the report would come around if governance was dealt with. He noted it was important for the Commission and the citizens to have an equal say so. He thanked the Board for the work they were doing and for taking the opportunity to try to make some great changes.

Chairman Humke referenced the remarks of one citizen who suggested staff was being asked to do too much. He expressed confidence that Chief Latipow would be able to get it done and to prioritize the important stuff so that other items could fall into place.

On motion by Commissioner Larkin, seconded by Commissioner Breternitz, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the final version of the January 2010 Fire and Fire Based EMS Services Master Plan Analysis be accepted. Staff was directed to begin the development of an Action Plan to be completed by March 31, 2010 and to be brought back for consideration at the Board's first meeting in April 2010. It was further noted that the Action Plan was to contain a suggested timeline for each item.

12:34 p.m. The Board reconvened as the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Sierra Fire Protection District with all members present.

10-12SF AGENDA ITEM 2A

Agenda Subject: "Approval of Agenda for the February 23, 2010 SFPD Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting."

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 2A be approved.

10-13SF AGENDA ITEM 2B

Agenda Subject: "Chief's Report."

Fire Chief Michael Greene updated the Board on progress related to the proposed Arrowcreek Fire Station. He stated an environmental impact statement was required and the elements of a budget were under review with the assistance of Dave Solaro, Washoe County Capital Projects Division Manager. He indicated the goal was to build the station per the grant guidelines and code requirements at 100 percent funding. He noted he would meet with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to determine the amount of the grant before bringing the item back before the Board.

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 2B be accepted.

10-14SF AGENDA ITEM 2C

Agenda Subject: “Approval of volunteer reports.”

There was no public comment on this item.

On motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Jung, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that Agenda Item 2C be approved.

10-15SF AGENDA ITEM 4

Agenda Subject: “Commissioner’s/Managers announcements, requests for information, topics for future agendas and statements relating to items not on the agenda. (No discussion among Commissioners will take place on this item.)”

There were no announcements.

10-16SF AGENDA ITEM 5

Agenda Subject: “Public Comment and discussion thereon. The Sierra Fire Protection District Board of Commissioners welcomes courteous and respectful public comment and input. Due to the amount of business the District Board conducts, public comment is limited to two minutes per person.”

There was no response to the call for public comment.

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12:38 p.m. There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion by Commissioner Breternitz, seconded by Commissioner Weber, which motion duly carried, the meeting was adjourned.

DAVID E. HUMKE, Chairman
Sierra Fire Protection District

ATTEST:

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

*Minutes Prepared by:
Lisa McNeill, Deputy County Clerk*