

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

TUESDAY

4:00 P.M.

JANUARY 9, 2007

PRESENT:

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

**Amy Harvey, County Clerk**  
**Katy Singlaub, County Manager**  
**Melanie Foster, Legal Counsel**  
**Joseph Reinhardt, Interim Fire Chief**

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:

**07-01SF      AGENDA**

In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, on motion by Commissioner Humke, seconded by Commissioner Weber, which motion duly carried, Chairman Larkin ordered that the agenda for the regular meeting of January 9, 2007 be approved.

**07-02SF      MINUTES – NOVEMBER 28, 2006**

On motion by Commissioner Weber, seconded by Commissioner Sferrazza, which motion duly carried, Chairman Larkin ordered that the minutes of the regular meeting of November 28, 2006 be approved.

**07-03SF      MINUTES – DECEMBER 12, 2006**

On motion by Commissioner Humke, seconded by Commissioner Weber, which motion duly carried, Chairman Larkin ordered that the minutes of the regular meeting of December 12, 2006 be approved.

**07-04SF      LEASE AGREEMENT – STATE LAND AT 4000 JOY LAKE ROAD  
– STATION 39**

Commissioner Galloway asked about plans at the end of the five-year lease term. Interim Chief Joseph Reinhardt stated that a bill draft request had been submitted to facilitate deeding of the land to the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD) in the long term, per the Interlocal Agreement approved by the Board June 8, 2006.

On motion by Commissioner Humke, seconded by Commissioner Weber, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the lease agreement between the State of Nevada and the Sierra Fire Protection District for the lease of land for the Sierra Fire Protection District Station 39 located at 4000 Joy Lake Road, Reno, APN 046-131-20 be approved and the Chairman be authorized to execute the same.

**07-05SF      REPORT – FUELS MANAGEMENT PROJECTS**

Battalion Chief Mike Heikka conducted a Power Point presentation, which was placed on file with the Clerk. He pointed out that the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD) and Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD) jointly funded the fuels management program and the Nevada Division of Forestry provided a \$60,000 grant toward labor and equipment in the Galena Creek Regional Park project. Seasonal firefighters were assigned to a crew to work on fuels management projects. According to Chief Heikka, discussions were held with Nevada Fire Safe Councils, the Washoe County Parks Department and local homeowner association groups, and recommendations were taken from the Washoe County Community Wildfire Risk and Hazard Assessment to identify priorities.

Chief Heikka described work done by the SFPD Crew One at Galena Creek Regional Park, Crystal Peak Regional Park, and County property and common areas in Galena Forest Estates. Some limited work was also done at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park. A great deal of slash was generated by SFPD Crew One, as well as by homeowners and a crew hired by the local Fire Safe Chapter in Galena Forest Estates. Chief Heikka explained that, where possible, the slash was chipped and spread to prevent erosion. The slash was piled in areas not accessible to a chipper. Many of the piles were burned and this work would resume during the spring season as conditions allowed. Firewood sales were held at County parks to dispose of wood over six inches in diameter.

Chief Heikka identified the reduction of fire danger as the primary benefit of the fuels management program. Other benefits were to provide safer access for firefighters in the event of a catastrophic fire, to open the areas up and make them more appealing, and to promote the health of the surrounding forests.

In addition to its fuels management work, Chief Heikka stated that the SFPD Crew One responded to 12 wildland fires in Washoe County during the past fire season and assisted the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service with wildland fires in northeastern Nevada and California.

Plans outlined by Chief Heikka for 2007 were to increase the crew size to about 16, to continue working with the Nevada Fire Safe Councils, local homeowner associations, and the Parks Department, and to reduce the fire hazard ratings in Washoe County communities.

Chairman Larkin complimented Chief Heikka on the utilization of the fire crew. He asked if a professional forester was used for selective cutting of trees, and Chief Heikka affirmed that John Copeland with the Nevada Division of Forestry provided assistance with marking trees and managing the project. Chairman Larkin asked if a timber management plan was in place. Katy Singlaub, County Manager, responded that such a plan did not yet exist.

Commissioner Galloway asked how soon the slash could be removed from between the houses in Galena Forest Estates. Chief Heikka responded that this was a priority and the crew was scheduled to go back in the first part of March 2007. He stated that other means would be explored if conditions were too dry to burn the slash piles, such as the purchase of a smaller wood chipper that could be pulled in by an ATV. Commissioner Galloway urged that this be done before fire season and asked that a report on the disposition of slash piles be placed on a future SFPD agenda.

Commissioner Galloway asked about lowering fire ratings and related information he had received that insurance companies would improve a home's rating if a fire engine was housed in a heated building within a certain distance of a group of homes. He inquired if that could be looked into. Chief Heikka stated that SFPD was looking at fire station locations in their jurisdiction and the information would be passed on to the new Fire Chief, Michael Greene. Interim Fire Chief Joseph Reinhardt commented that a joint study already planned between SFPD and TMFPD could take this proposal into consideration.

Chief Heikka said that there would be a fuels management update at each of the monthly SFPD Board meetings. Chairman Larkin suggested that a field visit be made available to the Commissioners as well.

**07-06SF      LEASE AGREEMENT – STATE LAND AT 4001 OLD HIGHWAY  
395 – STATION 30**

Interim Fire Chief Joseph Reinhardt explained that the station would be located next to the Bowers Mansion Regional Park. The Interlocal Agreement approved by the Board June 8, 2006 provided that the Nevada Division of Forestry would retain ownership of Station 30, with SFPD responsible for any improvements during the term of the lease. Chairman Larkin asked Chief Reinhardt to inquire as to the Nevada Division of Forestry's long-term intent for the station.

On motion by Commissioner Humke, seconded by Chairman Larkin, which motion duly carried, it was ordered that the lease agreement between the State of Nevada and the Sierra Fire Protection District for the lease of land for the Sierra Fire Protection District Station 30 located at 4001 Old Highway 395, Washoe Valley, APN 046-021-03 be approved and the Chairman be authorized to execute the same.

**DISCUSSION –FIRE SERVICE COORDINATOR POSITION –  
MANAGER**

Earlier in the meeting, the Board convened as the Board of County Commissioners, the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Sierra Fire Protection District (SFPD), and the Board of Fire Commissioners for the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District (TMFPD).

John Slaughter, Management Services Director, explained that the Fire Service Coordinator position was established to serve as an advisor on fire service issues to the County Manager, the Board of County Commissioners, and to the various fire commission boards in Washoe County. He noted that the position had no operational authority over any of the various Washoe County fire agencies and outlined the general duties of the coordinator.

Marty Scheuerman, Fire Chief for TMFPD, stated that TMFPD fully supported the position. He suggested that duties be expanded for the role of liaison between the various fire boards. Chief Scheuerman observed that the Coordinator needed to be the County's advocate for contract administration and to ensure that needs were being met within the various contract agreements. Chairman Larkin asked Chief Scheuerman for his input about qualifications for this position. Chief Scheuerman indicated that a foundation in fire service and administrative ability were both required and he stressed the importance of someone with local jurisdictional background.

Joseph Reinhardt, Interim Chief for SFPD, agreed that a well-rounded knowledge of fire service within the local area was important, as well as the ability to interact with the volunteers.

Commissioner Galloway suggested that the contractual duties and fire service duties might require two people, although not necessarily two full-time employees. He emphasized the importance of independent representation for Washoe County's interests, observing that TMFPD personnel were employed by the City of Reno and might have difficulty remaining impartial.

Commissioner Humke agreed that it might be a good idea to bifurcate the coordinator's duties between those of a fire professional and those of a contract negotiator/administrator. He added that the Coordinator could not be hostile toward the use of volunteers and needed the ability to talk with dispatchers.

Commissioner Weber emphasized the importance of the volunteer component of the Coordinator's position, suggesting that the volunteers needed more of a representative than a liaison.

Katy Singlaub, County Manager, summarized that the Coordinator's position required negotiating skills, local experience and understanding of the local districts, independent representation of Washoe County's interests, a higher level of

engagement and support for the volunteers, fuels management knowledge, and the ability to undertake strategy development. She believed it was important that the Fire Coordinator not be overburdened with the day-to-day activities of volunteer support and stated that the Manager's office would look to address resources for volunteer support in the next budget cycle. Ms. Singlaub suggested that her office conduct recruitment for Fire Coordinator candidates to find the best available combination of skills and then fill in any gaps during the budget process.

Commissioner Humke recommended that the concept of the Fire Coordinator having no operational authority be reconsidered, suggesting that the position be known informally as "Chief of the Volunteers." He reiterated his desire for the Coordinator to work with the dispatch function, stating that the volunteers were not currently being dispatched and that was unacceptable.

Commissioner Sferrazza stated that he disagreed with the summary presented and wanted the Coordinator to have a stronger role within TMFPD, including monthly reports given directly to the Board with the assistance of Chief Scheuerman and the City of Reno.

In response to the call for public comment, Gary Schmidt commented that the community needed someone who would address public concerns and challenge the status quo.

Ms. Singlaub clarified that the Fire Coordinator position encompassed the role of contracts administrator for the fire services, including TMFPD. She explained that the intention was to have a much more aggressive role in the administration of those contracts in the future.

Mr. Slaughter noted that the position would be open for two to three weeks and should be filled within six weeks or so. Ms. Singlaub discussed with Chairman Larkin that she had authority to make the appointment but would bring the recommendation to the Board prior to doing so.

**07-08SF      PRESENTATION TO EMPLOYEES – EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE CERTIFICATES FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER**

Interim Fire Chief Joseph Reinhardt presented the award for November 2006 to Battalion Chief Mike Heikka for his exemplary work on the fuels management program, in addition to his daily duties as a battalion chief.

Chief Reinhardt presented the award for December 2006 to Captain Dave French for volunteering to act as Battalion Chief while Chief Reinhardt served as Interim Fire Chief. He indicated that Captain French had been instrumental in the hiring process for seasonal and operator positions, as well as traveling throughout the west as part of an incident management team.

**COMMISSIONERS’/STAFF COMMENTS**

Interim Fire Chief Joseph Reinhardt thanked the Board for giving him the opportunity to lead the Sierra Fire Protection District over the last six to seven months. Chairman Larkin thanked him for his service.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Gary Schmidt wondered why Sierra Fire Protection District representatives had not attended the previous day’s strategic planning meeting. He discussed the rights of citizens to protect their property and, with respect to the Andrew Lane fire, suggested that the State Constitution did not allow property owners to be barred access to their property during a fire.

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There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

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**ROBERT M. LARKIN**, Chairman  
Sierra Fire Protection District

**ATTEST:**

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

*Minutes Prepared By  
Lisa McNeill  
Deputy County Clerk*