

IN A SPECIAL JOINT MEETING OF THE WHITE PINE COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION AND THE BAKER AREA CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD HELD ON JULY 31, 2019 IN THE BAKER HALL IN BAKER, NEVADA

The Following Were Present:

Fire Commission
Richard Howe, Chairman
Travis Godon, Vice-Chairman
Ian Bullis, Commissioner
Shane Bybee, Commissioner
Laurie L. Carson, Commissioner
Susan Lujan, Deputy Clerk

The Following Was Absent:

Nichole Baldwin, Clerk of the Board

Baker Area Citizens Advisory Board

Craig Baker
Dan Hathaway
Dave Kuiper
Elizabeth Woolsey
Carol Ferguson

Also Present
Elizabeth Frances, WPC Finance Director
Ben Roberts, Baker VFD Fire Chief
Margaret Pense
Josh Vann
Patricia Dore
Gretchen Baker, Fire/EMT
Theodore Stazeski
Mike McDonald
Meg Horner, EMT
Alicia Wheeler, Garrison, UT/EMT
Joyce Brown
Robin Crouch, Hidden Canyon
Caroline McIntosh, Great Basin College
Kay McMurray, Ely Times

Fire Commission Chairman Richard Howe called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Ian Bullis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE/SILENT INVOCATION

This was duly observed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Caroline McIntosh, representing the Ely Center of the Great Basin College, advised of new workforce programs. They are Diesel Mechanics and Electrical Systems, running 3 and 2 semesters respectively. Students can graduate with a High School diploma and also obtain their certifications. She added that with so many mines in our area, there are always demands for employment. Kristi Fillman was the recruiter, and Caroline is filling the gap since Kristi had to leave. If anyone is interested, she added, there is plenty of financial aid available for these courses.

Ben Roberts, Baker VFD Fire Chief, had a letter submitted last April from Ryan Baker, who was the Acting Fire Chief while Ben was absent. He read the letter into the record and noted many things on today's list are similar to the list submitted last April. He added that WPCFD Admin. Coordinator Ralph McClintock is doing a great job so far; they're still looking for some stability.

Mike McDonald commented that closed door meetings, making decisions without other people's input, and also not voicing those decisions to other people should not be happening. He added that "you are costing people's lives." Chairman Richard Howe halted that line of discussion, noting the Board won't tolerate accusations. He clarified that Public Comment is an opportunity for the public to express their opinions. Mr. McDonald continued that the Board's opinions should be more publicly oriented and shouldn't be done behind closed doors, that's wrong. People should be made aware of what's going on before everything gets changed.

Gretchen Baker is here today representing the Snake Valley Trails Partnership; she thanked the Board for writing letters of support for 2 grants, i.e. the SNWA grant to improve the Sagebrush Discovery Trail and also the BLM travel plan, which was recently approved for \$350,000. She added the NDOT Transportation grant for a 1-mile paved trail (under Snake Valley Trails) is bringing \$700,000 into the Baker community. She noted that will be a boon for both the residents and the tourists.

Snake Valley Volunteer Fire and EMS Department
200 Etchebarren Avenue
Baker, NV 89311



White Pine County Commissioners
801 Clark Street, Suite 4
Ely, NV 89301

April 17, 2019

Dear White Pine County Commissioners,

We are submitting this letter to make you aware of what we need in order to provide effective fire and emergency medical services (EMS) in Baker, Nevada. We are known as the Snake Valley Fire and EMS Department or Station 3. We provide fire and EMS coverage not only to the town of Baker, but also Great Basin National Park, and areas near and far from our station, such as Pleasant Valley, in remote eastern White Pine County. Snake Valley Fire and EMS also supports Millard County by responding to incidents on the Utah side of Snake Valley.

Snake Valley is a small but growing community made up of young families, retirees, ranches, local businesses, three schools, and over 150,000 visitors a year that come to see Nevada's only national park. We have a variety of medical and trauma calls each year, wildfires, motor vehicle accidents, search-and-rescue incidents, and an occasional structural fire.

Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds. Many have lived in Baker and Snake Valley for over ten years, with some having spent their entire lives here. We are a close knit community, and we want to provide the best patient care and fire protection possible to our family, friends, and visitors.

In order to do that, we need the County to ensure that the following items will continue to be met:

- Continued mutual aid agreement with Millard County for fire and EMS. Garrison, UT is just 8 miles away from Baker and Eskdale, UT is only 20 miles away. Although both communities are small and have just one engine each, they can provide assistance faster than any units coming from Ely.
- Continued mutual aid agreement with Great Basin National Park. Many of our medical and trauma calls originate in the park. Park Fire and EMS staff are often available to assist Snake Valley Fire and EMS on incidents, and the Baker ambulance is the closest ambulance transport option for the park.
- Maintenance and upkeep of fire and ambulance buildings and vehicles, including keeping the Baker ambulance stocked to state certification levels.
- Training opportunities, including some in Baker, NV

- For EMS runs, having a county or city ambulance meet the Baker ambulance in route (typically half-way) so patients can receive a higher level of care sooner. Snake Valley EMS is a BLS service. This also allows the Baker ambulance to be back in service sooner. Snake Valley volunteers already spend 2-3 hours on a call when they are able to meet a county ambulance from Station 1.
- Clear medical direction and fire and EMS protocols that are updated regularly.
- For all calls, Ely staff or volunteers are dispatched concurrently with Station 3.
- Upkeep of radio repeaters, pagers, and other communication mechanisms.
- Help with volunteer recruitment and retention.
- Assist with maintaining EMT, EMR, and ambulance driver certifications for volunteers.
- Assistance on fire and EMS calls that exceed our department's capabilities.
- On fire incidents, the County/City Fire Chief responds and serves as incident commander.
- New paid positions should be filled at the Advanced EMT/Fire Fighter 1 and 2/HAZMAT qualified level to meet existing standards. Paid staff should maintain higher qualifications in support of volunteer personnel.
- Hire a full-time County Fire Chief position to help manage outlying volunteer stations. A part-time position will not provide the level of support needed to maintain an acceptable level of fire and EMS service in outlying communities.
- Provide a detailed outline for interim patient care/transport and fire response to volunteer stations. A lack of county fire and EMS staff at Station 1 will affect response procedures, patient care and response times for outlying volunteer stations over the next several months.

Providing Emergency Response for the entire county is the responsibility of the White Pine County Commissioners. We trust that you will provide reliable and efficient emergency services that will be the best for those who live and visit White Pine County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Baker".

Ryan Baker
Acting Fire Chief
Acting Fire Chief, Snake Valley Fire and EMS Department

WHITE PINE COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION AND BAKER AREA CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD:
DISCUSSION ONLY REGARDING THE NEEDS OF THE BAKER VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPT.
AND ITS FACILITY AS THEY RELATE TO THE FOLLOWING: STRUCTURAL REPAIRS AND/OR
UPGRADES, EQUIPMENT, PERSONNEL, AND/OR TECHNOLOGY

At this point, Chairman Richard Howe advised the Fire Commission has come out here seeking support and input from each community, to listen and take in their comments and do all we can to make this much better. He noted that Baker VFD Fire Chief Ben Roberts has brought up some items we can address. On August 9th a new WPCFD Fire Chief, Brett North, comes on board, and Coordinator McClintock is bringing him up to speed. Chairman Howe continued that all the outlying fire stations are what comprises the WPC Fire District, and that this Board is 100% dedicated to them. He cited the fire truck and all the other requests that are being made, and that we will try to find and do as much as we can to keep your equipment and staff fully equipped and staffed; "You are our first priority." He continued that Baker is vital to us, especially with respect to Highway 6 and the Great Basin National Park; we need and respect each one of you. He added that we're in transition; all the upgrades will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, but we do have some of that available now. Brett North will be the Fire District Chief; we don't have enough applicants to fill the Emergency Management position yet, but we are expanding our scope to hire someone qualified for us. Chief North has lots of dedication and experience; Coordinator McClintock will transition out September 1st, but both he and Chief North will come to all the outlying areas to note all their needs. At this time he asked the Board for their comments.

Commissioner Laurie Carson asked if the Finance Director has had copies forwarded to her, since she keeps an eye on IT stuff like pagers, radios, etc. She also does inventory work; we're trying to get a count of everything we have. She asked if the Baker list has specific priorities they would like the Board to focus on first. Chief Roberts cited the first

bullet point pertaining to an EMT certification. The EMT was unable to take the test because the day the training was held, she was bringing home an adopted child; she needs to take the test. When he sent emails to the City regarding the reason, their reply was that the EMT needs to go find where the testing is done and then take it. He asked who is responsible, who should they be talking to? It was noted the date for the test was on June 8th or 9th. Robin Crouch advised that she has budget concerns that could delay some of the requests, but communication needs to be improved so that they would know who would be responsible for certain things, and that protocols need to be established. One huge priority would be who to contact about obtaining supplies. Commissioner Carson agreed that the really big concern involves lack of communication; she is hoping that will improve quickly as we go forward. She will be the liaison to the WPC Fire District, and will try to be as helpful as possible. She clarified that people with questions should contact Coordinator McClintock first, and then contact her as needed.

Commissioner Travis Godon asked if there was anything structurally at the Fire Station that would need attention; Chief Roberts noted it's in pretty good shape. He did add that there should be a washer/dryer in there so that the firefighters/EMTs don't bring contamination home to their families after an incident. He added the heater has been fixed; but the toilet and shower aren't working. The driveways are fine.

Commissioner Shane Bybee noted all their rolling stock are running, which is good. Chief Roberts noted they have the "best second-hand equipment in the County!" Everything is in good running order, and they got some new batteries for their water tender from Coordinator McClintock. He added the new wildland truck is an amazing addition; they've needed one for years. Also, they can talk on some of the Utah channels now on their radios/pagers. There's also a pair of binoculars in every piece of their equipment.

Commissioner Ian Bullis asked about their building maintenance, and if the mutual aid agreement had expired. Chief Roberts advised that there was an agreement with EMS that expires in April 2020. There is also an agreement with Millard County, from 15-20 years ago, and it's unknown if that has expired. If there's a fire, he continued, they call the White Pine County Sheriff's Office, and they dispatch Baker. While it's not an actual agreement, they do provide the mutual aid. Commissioner Bullis felt they should be task-oriented; Coordinator McClintock is checking things to get them done. With respect to maintenance on the buildings, while the County has the money there's a State law that we can't spend it all at once; he felt that some of it could be deferred, though. Also, we won't wait for our Road Dept. to get things done; we're packaging things up with a contractor, enticing them with a bundle of work instead of just one or two projects. He added an apology that communications aren't that great yet, but when Chief Brett North is on board, his only job will be to ensure the outlying stations get whatever they need; there will be more funding available. He agreed it's been messy but they're sorting it all out.

At this point, Gretchen Baker noted there had been a fire at Big Springs, in a remote area of the County. They had Eskdale, Garrison, the BLM, the City of Ely, and 3 of their engines there as well. The question was, who was ultimately in charge of the incident? An Acting Incident Commander, who was the first person there, worked out great; but none of us are trained as such, she noted. When the Ely BLM came and saw it was on private land, they couldn't take charge; the City noted the fire was mostly resolved by the time they arrived. Everyone wanted to know the proper chain of command. Commissioner Travis Godon noted the first on the scene would apply; the City of Ely wouldn't take that away unless Baker wanted them to. Commissioner Bullis felt some Incident Commander training would be in order; Commissioner Bybee felt that once we have our permanent Fire Chief in place, much of all that would be alleviated.

Chairman Richard Howe noted that besides being a joint meeting between BACAB and the WPC Fire Commission, we are here also to listen to concerns from the citizens. He clarified that we want to be able to provide some assistance and help you in whatever you may need.

Gary Perea voiced appreciation that the Fire Commission has come down today and he sees some of these issues as short-term since everything is based on finances. He wants to know about the long term, though, i.e. the agreement that gave the City of Ely \$100,000 to begin and then an additional monthly amount. If the City transports a patient, then the City gets the money and is charged for the ambulance call. He agrees it's important that the City meet the Baker EMTs, but if the City is getting all the funds for that run, at some point that will run the funding short. He didn't see the savings at this point. Commissioner Bullis advised that before the change, the Fire District was running \$360,000 in the red; he noted that is no longer the case. He noted that we factored in NOT having the EMS income. Finance Director Elizabeth Frances explained that the budget figure was a national average, which varies as to if we run in the red or the black. A significant turnover, which we have had, results in significant cost. Commissioner Bullis noted that the County had to put more money in from the General Fund in order to keep the Fire District running; but we shouldn't be losing that \$360,000 amount. We actually have \$1.5 million to put towards all of the Fire District's needs and requests. We didn't have a budget for it because we didn't know we were going to have funding for the District. Director Frances advised this is an anticipated conservative estimate; she will update the figures shortly and provide those to the Board.

Mr. Perea was also concerned about us being in the red; the Net Proceeds of Minerals were put into the Fire District to keep it level, so we weren't really in the red. Commissioner Bullis advised that by us getting more income we have a lot more potential; we're leasing Station 1 out to MedX Air One, for example, and they're paying us nearly \$100,000 for the lease. Commissioner Bybee saw the changes that were made as necessary since we were spending a lot of money at Station 1; the City of Ely was only 5 miles away, and we had paid staff and great equipment. We needed a way to free up some of the funds to get them out to the outlying areas, and provide proper equipment. He continued that he's glad the Baker VFD is in great shape, but Ruth can barely get their trucks in and out of the doorways. The McGill VFD doesn't even have a restroom. He agreed a washer/dryer are basic safety requirements, and that keeping the Fire District's stations at optimum operating level is of major importance.

Chairman Howe asked for a show of hands as to who has been active or are currently involved with the Fire/EMS services; over ¼ of the assemblage raised their hands. Dave Kuiper commented that in a normal city there's lots more people, and a lot less hands that would go up. Baker area people are dedicated volunteers, but they're also community activists. Baker has their own Water/Sewer General Improvement District, and many residents deal with such related issues. At any community event held in Baker, we would see these same people in the assemblage today, because they're the ones that make it happen. Where representatives sit on a board, they all plan, "but these guys DO." He asked that the Commission take into consideration any request that comes from any of our small communities, because they don't ask for things unless they really need them.

Chairman Howe welcomed all these responses, and reiterated that this Fire Commission is dedicated to making all the outlying areas work. Coordinator McClintock stepped up and did a good job; he will be here to transition Brett North into the Fire District Chief position.

A gentleman from the assembly asked if the Fire Commission had any clout with NDOT, as it's been 2 years since anyone mowed the shoulders along the highway; he felt that's a fire waiting to happen, all the way to the State line. Gary Perea added that the Baker Cutoff road needs to be done as well. Chairman Howe will call NDOT and also talk with Public Works Director Bill Calderwood about that serious concern.

Margaret Pense asked about incident response time; is the Commission comfortable that there would be enough backup, or are they afraid they would have to drive the whole way in to respond? Gretchen Baker added there are currently only 3 EMTs in Baker, and how it would be if one were to be out of town when they're called out. She recalled the EMT testing concern as well. Commissioner Bullis noted that the County ambulance was 5-6 miles further away than the one that would be responding; also, the City of Ely has 2 or 3 ambulances that could run. Both Station 1 and the City had been half-staffed; that limited calls until the proper number of staff could run on the ambulances. They now have full staff and things have been proceeding.

Robin Crouch advised that when this all came up she was excited about reading the contract, and that gave way to concern because the things that were being asked for and what is being done weren't even mentioned in the contract. She continued that's been confusing for everybody, and some people are still more insecure than others. While the Commission has done an amazing job, there's still no contractual warranties that those things would continue. She hoped in real life this will happen, as it appears to be doing. Still, she would like to see more specific details in the contract. Commissioner Bullis took the blame for it being so simple; he and the District Attorney drafted the contract. The misnomer was that the City would be taking over the Fire District, which was never the case; he clarified that the County was just transferring the responsibility of paid staff to the City. That way, the Fire District could transfer their focus to a Fire Chief that would support the outlying Fire Stations.

Commissioner Carson felt that no Performance Standards had been addressed in the contract, and perhaps that was part of Robin's concern as well. She thought it might be good to revisit the contract regarding those standards.

Chairman Howe reported the communication so far has been really good, with the Fire Commission's joint meetings in Lund, McGill and Ruth. While there are still some glitches, he reiterated that the Commission is dedicated to the outlying areas. He feels we have a good man coming on board as Fire Chief, after having 4 months without any communication because there was no one to put things into place. He recalled the proper protocol for issues: Contact the Fire Chief first, then the liaison (Commissioner Carson), and then go to the Fire Commission if necessary.

Gary Perea asked if the County has a backup ambulance; Chairman Howe noted we used McGill's ambulance last time. Gary noted that if Baker's ambulance broke down, one would be brought from town and be swapped out so they would have one while theirs is being repaired. He asked if that would continue, or will they have to drive their ambulance to Ely to get it repaired? Commissioner Bybee noted that ambulance is still there, in service; the City would still have access to it, and it's in Station 1.

Dave Kuiper has a meeting set up with the new Fire Chief, and perhaps they could have primary responders meet with him prior to the bigger public meeting and we would be getting feedback both ways. Chairman Howe explained that we're here as a Fire Commission, and we can't make any decisions on anything more than 5 miles away from the County seat. We are able to come to these outlying areas to have meetings, which are informational for you,

but as to making any decisions we aren't allowed to do so. If you were to bring results of your discussions back to us afterwards, in the format of an agenda item, then the Fire Commission can act on things.

Gretchen Baker suggested doing informational meetings like this in the outlying areas once a year, followed by a tour; the Commission felt that was a good idea. During the discussion, it was noted that if Baker felt strongly about having another meeting like this, we'd be more than willing to make the trip; still, he emphasized that no action could be taken, but discussions could be held. Dave Kuiper felt this meeting has cleared the air on a lot of issues, and has been very productive.

Chief Roberts felt that as a board, the Fire Commission comingles with the County Commission; the line isn't as clearly drawn as it should be. A goal of the Fire and the County Commissions should be to more cleanly separate those 2 entities; he feels it's been an ongoing issue that hasn't been dealt with effectively in the past.

Chairman Howe asked if there were any more comments to be made under this agenda item; there were none.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Richard Howe advised the Fire Commission was happy to come here and visit Baker and all of the other outlying areas. He emphasized that we're their representatives; it's been a nice meeting, and he welcomed any Public Comment prior to adjournment.

Finance Director Elizabeth Frances wished to clarify an earlier statement she had made regarding budget figures: Last year's budget was scheduled to have revenues over expenses; this year, it's expenses over revenues. Part of that is due to the agreement with the City of Ely for startup costs only; it would take a year to get those accomplished, and she assured the Board that would not carry forward as a contractual obligation. There is, in the financial analysis, a period of time when we will be able to see how the figures actually come out, i.e., the ongoing costs at Station 1 for a full time Fire Chief and also in the outlying areas with respect to utilities, which will be increasing as requests for IT services begin to come in. This is a learning curve; the actual costs were never segregated, other than having small budgets allocated to the outlying areas. She will keep the Fire Commission informed as to the figures and how they progress. She encouraged everyone that as we get into the next budget year, they should get information to her and our new Fire Chief to ensure everything is included and properly attached in the budget documents. In short, she concluded, if we can budget for it, it's available, but if it isn't in the budget, then it's not.

ADJOURNMENT: THE JOINT MEETING MAY BE ADJOURNED BY AN APPROPRIATE MOTION OF THE WHITE PINE COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION

Chairman Howe voiced his appreciation to everyone this evening and thanked them for coming to participate. At 6:10 p.m., he entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ian Bullis made the motion; Commissioner Travis Godon seconded. Motion carried.

WHITE PINE COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION
STATE OF NEVADA

BY: 

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


WPC CLERK OF THE BOARD