



**JANUARY 15, 2020
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chamber, Humboldt County Courthouse, Eureka, with Chair Fennell presiding.

2. FLAG SALUTE

3. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Stephen Avis, Estelle Fennell, Debra Lake, Robert McPherson, Troy Nicolini, Paul Pitino, and Mike Wilson*

Members Absent: Virginia Bass

Alternates Present: David Couch, and Skip Jorgensen

Alternates Absent: Sue Long

Staff: Colette Metz Santsche, Executive Officer
Ryan Plotz, Legal Counsel
Krystle Heaney, Clerk/Analyst

*Alternate Member seated in the place of Regular Member

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A) Approval of November 20, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes

B) Approval of Meeting Calendar for 2020

Motion Pitino/Wilson to approve consent calendar. Motion passed by 7-0-0 voice vote.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

A) Designation of Chair and Vice Chair for 2020

At the beginning of each calendar year the Commission must designate a Chair and Vice Chair for the year. Minimal discussion was held by the commission for keeping the status quo.

Motion McPherson/Nicolini to designate Estelle Fennell as Chair and Robert McPherson as Vice Chair. Motion passed by 7-0-0 voice vote.

B) Fiscal Year 2019-20 Mid-Year Financial Report

Executive Officer Santsche presented the staff report on the Mid-Year Financial Report. Most items are current on track to meet budget expectations. The CALAFCO Annual Conference did result in higher than expected expenditures which may result in a budget amendment request before the end of the fiscal year. Chair Fennell provided thanks for managing the budget well and presenting the finances clearly to the Commission.

7. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS - None

8. INFORMATIONAL AND CONTINUING ITEMS

A) Preview of Proposed Rio Dell Fire Protection District Annexation

Executive Officer Santsche presented the staff report on the proposed Rio Dell FPD Annexation. She provided a brief overview of the application package received from Rio Dell FPD and discussed the multi-year effort that took place to make this application happen. The proposal includes consolidation of several different volunteer fire department response areas including Scotia, Shively, and Redcrest. She highlighted the exclusion of commercial forest lands in State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) based on current fire district code of regulations and provided descriptions of the response areas included in the annexation proposal.

An agency referral notice was sent out requesting responses and to date only the City of Rio Dell as responded. They requested that the proposed annexation boundaries consider annexation of areas most recently annexed by the City which would require detachment from the Fortuna FPD. This would require a tax negotiation process between the two districts.

Executive Officer Santsche discussed the tax exchange agreement process for the Rio Dell FDP reorganization. It is expected that the FPD will qualify under county agreement offer number one. She also discussed the terms and discussions outlined in the FDP application regarding funding mechanisms and district organization.

Commissioner Nicolini expressed his support for this process and clarified that the existing volunteer fire departments would retain their community identity as battalions under the Rio Dell FPD. He also inquired about the 218 process for special assessments in the annexation areas. Executive Officer Santsche stated that since the FPD already satisfied the 218 process when the special assessment was originally put in place, another 218 process for the annexation areas is not required.

Commissioner Wilson commented on the vast areas of land in Humboldt County that are not covered by FPD district. He also commented on the section of the fire code that excludes commercial timberlands from being assessed for fire protection services. He stated that the law is unconscionable and that he would like the Commission to advocate for legislative change. He also hopes that other districts in the county take this reorganization as inspiration for future reorganizations.

Commissioner McPherson asked for clarification on what the Commission would be requesting of the timber companies, as in, how would they pay their fair share for services. Executive Officer Santsche stated that the Rio Dell FPD assessment is based on a fee of \$25 per Unit of Benefit per parcel. Most developed residential parcels are assessed at four Units of Benefit. Undeveloped timber is often assessed at one Unit of Benefit which would be \$25.

Commissioner Lake commented that timber companies are assessed for other special districts including hospital districts so it is reasonable to request that they be included in FPD assessments. She added her support for advocating for legislative change.

Commissioner Nicolini was concerned about the timber companies being charged twice for fire protection services since they pay into state funds. It was clarified that the law was enacted before SRAs and that SRA fees are no longer being charged. The timber companies do not have to pay for any fire protection assessments.

Commissioner Pitino added his support for seeking legislative change and there was additional discussion about the need for fire protection and emergency response in forested areas. Chair Fennell opened the item for public comments.

Jim Barsanti, Chairman of the Board for the Rio Dell FPD, commented on the need for long-term fire protection services in Scotia and that the FPD is not interested in large profits, they only seek the means to keep providing services to areas in need.

Commissioner Avis inquired about the effects of consolidation on recruitment numbers. Mr. Barsanti replied that they recently lowered their age requirement to 18 which encouraged more volunteers. He also commented that there are those willing to volunteer if they can receive better equipment. The annexation will allow for the purchase of equipment for the battalions. Rio Dell FPD also started a new program where volunteers are paid per call based on how many years of service they have provided. This encourages more responders and helps offset the costs of responding to calls.

Commissioner Wilson commented on the human need for identification with larger groups. He proposed a potential rebranding of the entire district as a more regional organization while still keeping in touch with individual town identity. Mr. Barsanti responded that the branding on local fire engines will not change. He commented that district trainings will rotate through the different response areas so that volunteers can become more familiar with the other areas. He also discussed negotiations with Humboldt Redwood Company concerning takeover of Scotia fire department response area and equipment.

Commissioner Nicolini inquired about how the Rio Dell FPD will be composed after annexation of other areas. Executive Officer Santsche commented that they looked into elections by divisions but felt that it would be difficult to get enough recruits from more rural areas to fill the board. As such, elections will still be held at large. When a seat becomes open, the district will try to recruit from the other response areas so that communities are represented on the Board.

Commissioner Pitino commented that for the Arcata Volunteer Fire Department, they often get questions as to why they are in other communities such as Bayside or McKinleyville even though those areas are within the department's jurisdiction. He encouraged the District to look into branding more to help address such issues.

Chair Fennell commented further on the diligence of those involved with the reorganization process and expressed appreciation for the District's efforts.

B) Status of Expiring Commissioner Terms

Executive Office Santsche presented the staff report on expiring commissioner terms. She stated that LAFCo will be convening the City Mayors Selection Committee and that a special district nominations request was sent out to special districts in the county. She also gave an overview of the public member selection process which includes a public selection committee. It was requested that the committee, which

must include one city, one county, and one special district representative, be appointed. Chair Fennell, Commissioner Avis, and Commissioner Lake volunteered for the committee.

C) Status of MSR Preparations

Executive Officer Santsche presented the staff report for MSR Preparations. She stated that the first part of the year focused on fire services and helping districts with sustainable practices. The second part of the year will focus on MSR preparations for cities and closely associated special districts.

D) Status of Current and Future Proposals

Executive Officer Santsche presented the staff report for Current and Future Proposals. The Garberville Sanitary District proposal is now complete and the final invoice was filed. The Rio Dell FPD annexation was discussed earlier in detail and the Peninsula CSD formation recently received a formation time extension. Future proposals include the Creekside Homes subdivision and other large subdivisions.

Commissioner Wilson commented that it would be good to have more project details on some of the future projects so that the Commission can have a better understanding of the size and extent of the projects. Executive Officer Santsche commented that more details will be included when they are available. Staff can research the projects further and provide originally proposed development numbers.

E) AB 1234 Ethics Training through California Special Districts Association (CSDA)

Executive Officer Santsche presented the Ethics Training staff report. She commented that many of the commissioners receive this training through their representative agencies but for those who do not, this training is available for free through CSDA.

Commissioner Lake commented that she would like to have her whole Board sit down and do the training. She inquired about filing out the reporting sheet for the Board and where to send it.

9. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

A) CALAFCO December 13, 2019 Board of Directors Meeting

Executive Officer Santsche provide a brief introduction for the last CALAFCO Board meeting and invited Commissioner Couch to comment on his attendance.

Commissioner Couch gave a brief verbal report of the meeting which included a new employee status for Executive Officer Pamela Miller. There was also discussion of the new CALAFCO membership fees and the legislative agenda. One of the more pressing legislative concerns is the distribution and sale of water outside of a district's boundary and CALAFCO funding mechanisms.

The water district issue is based on current actions being taken in the Paradise area. Since there is no longer a customer base there the water district is seeking to sell water to other areas. Commissioner Couch inquired about a similar situation in Shasta County as a result of the Carr fire. Executive Officer Santsche commented

on district reorganization in Shasta County and stated that details on the process can be provided as background for the next CALAFCO Board meeting.

B) CALAFCO Daily Legislative Report (January 2020)

Executive Officer Santsche provide a brief overview of the latest legislative report available on the CALAFCO website.

C) CALAFCO CKH Guide (November 2019)

Executive Officer Santsche provided a brief overview of the new CKH Guide and let the Commission know that print copies are available upon request.

10. WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE - None

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m. The next regular meeting of the Commission will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at 9:00 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors Chamber, Humboldt County Courthouse, Eureka.

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