

**EUREKA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**December 7, 2017**

STATE OF NEVADA )  
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COUNTY OF EUREKA )

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Board of Eureka County Commissioners met pursuant to law on December 7, 2017. Present were Chairman J.J. Goicoechea; Vice Chairman Michael Sharkozy; Commissioner Fred Etchegaray; District Attorney, Ted Beutel; and Commissioner Clerk, Jackie Berg. The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance. The interactive video conferencing system was connected and utilized between Crescent Valley and Eureka for the entire meeting.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Commissioner Sharkozy motioned to approve the agenda as posted; Commissioner Etchegaray seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairman Goicoechea opened the floor for public comments.

EMS Coordinator, Mike Sullivan informed that William Bee Ririe Hospital and Eureka County EMS will be hosting a free community Flu Shot Clinic in Eureka on December 12<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The shots will be administered at the local schools and he will begin posting and distributing flyers immediately.

Chairman Goicoechea welcomed Ethan Lane, who was visiting Nevada from Washington, DC, to attend the Nevada Cattlemen’s Association meeting as well as the Western Caucus Foundation meeting. Mr. Lane serves as Executive Director of Public Lands Council and is federal lands representative to the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

November 20, 2017: Commissioner Sharkozy moved to approve minutes of the November 20, 2017, meeting; Commissioner Etchegaray seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

**COUNTY COMPTROLLER**

Payment of Expenditures: Expenditures were presented for approval by Comptroller, Maureen Garner. She requested approval of an old invoice, which had been billed timely by the contractor, but was sent to an old email address. Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to approve payment to Parsons Drilling, Inc., in the amount of \$4,033.07 for work done at the Eureka Airport in January; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to approve expenditures in the amount of \$223,166.08 for accounts payable, \$237,430.13 for the November 22<sup>nd</sup> payroll, \$354,541.86 for the December 8<sup>th</sup> payroll, \$79,312.68 for a pass through to the School District, \$21,282.27 for a pass through to the State Controller, \$4,540.00 for a pass through to the Nevada Division of Minerals, \$267.33 for a pass through to the Nevada Department of Taxation, and \$8,823.70 in Yucca Mountain expenditures, for a grand total of \$929,364.05. Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0. *(Note: These totals include the \$4,033.07 that was approved separately).*

Fund Balances Report: The Board reviewed and briefly discussed the report of current fund balances.

## **COMMISSIONERS**

Update Reports: Commissioner Sharkozy traveled to Elko on November 27<sup>th</sup> to attend the Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority meeting as well as the retirement party for NNRDA's Executive Director, Pam Borda.

Senate Bill 42 & Justices of the Peace: Recent legislation (SB42) requires Boards of County Commissioners to set minimum compensation for the upcoming term of Justices of the Peace, within their jurisdiction, in the December preceding the year in which the Justice of the Peace will be elected. The Board agreed to table this item until further information on current compensation could be provided. They also asked for a sampling of salaries of Justices of the Peace in other rural counties of the State.

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program and Nevada Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan: The last meeting of the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council was November 9<sup>th</sup> and comments were finalized on the Supplemental EIS being drafted by the BLM on a portion of the Greater Sage Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments (due to the decision issued in US District Court).

Chairman Goicoechea will participate in a conference call on December 13<sup>th</sup> with Congressman Amodei, the BLM, and representatives of the Governor's office regarding the path forward and the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council's stance on the issues.

## **SENIOR CENTERS**

Update Report: Senior Centers Program Director, Millie Oram, reported on activities at the Eureka Senior Center and Fannie Komp Senior Center. Both centers had a nice turnout for their Thanksgiving dinners. In November, Eureka served 612 meals and Crescent Valley served 499 meals. A total of \$7,391.00 was deposited for the month.

## **ROAD DEPARTMENT**

Report on Activities: Raymond Hodson, Assistant Public Works Director, reported on Road Department activities. The southern crew finished work on County Road 101 and JD Ranch Road. They have moved to the Roberts Creek area with two belly dumps, a blade, a water truck, and a dozer. There was one partial day of snow removal.

The northern crew spent several days cleaning culverts around the Dann Road and Spa Road, worked on some cattle guards, and have returned to blading the Geothermal Road.

The Road Department is recruiting for the full-time Temporary Road Maintenance Equipment Operator I and has received some interest in the position. This position is funded under a Memorandum of Understanding between the County and McEwen Mining.

## **PUBLIC WORKS**

Public Works Update: Public Works Director, Ron Damele, reported on Public Works projects and activities. All utility systems are in good working order. The Gourley Well, part of the Devil's Gate water system, has been completely abandoned and reclaimed, due to recent collapse and failure of that well. Water permits have temporarily been transferred to the Eureka Town wells. The Federal Aviation Administration grant, in the amount of \$363,476.00, has been closed out. A meeting will be held the following week in Reno to begin the process for next year's grant. Four employees recently completed a class on water distribution in preparation to test for Water Operator Certification.

The end of the season fire meeting was held December 6<sup>th</sup> at the Opera House and included representatives from the County, Nevada Division of Forestry, and Bureau of Land Management (Elko, Ely, and Battle Mountain Districts). Most of the fire activity this year was adjacent to or north of Interstate 80.

Avgas supply at the Eureka Airport was refilled for the winter. The Opera House, Sentinel Museum, and Swimming Pool have been fairly busy for the season. New speakers are being installed at the Opera House and a sound check will be completed later in the day.

Certificate of Expenditure of Funds: Each year the County must show that monies received from the Department of Energy were expended in accordance with Public Law 111-85 and the Nuclear Waste Policy Act. These funds are distributed to Eureka County as an Affected Unit of Local Government in relation to the Yucca Mountain Project.

Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to sign the Certificate of Expenditure of Funds for Federal Fiscal Year 2017 for the direct payment grant from US Department of Energy for the Yucca Mountain Project; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

Solid Waste Collection Contract: Mr. Damele explained that the current contract for solid waste collection, with Hoss Disposal, will expire April 30, 2018, and contains no further options for renewal. The current agreement includes collection of County garbage as well as a franchise agreement that basically covers the area from the top of Garden Pass to Interstate 80.

Mr. Damele recommended advertising a Request for Qualifications in January, selecting a vendor based on qualifications, negotiating a price and contract, and defining the franchise area and conditions of the franchise. Mr. Damele will notify Hoss Disposal of the County's intentions since the current contract does not contain an option for renewal.

Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to direct Public Works to issue a statement of Request for Qualifications for a solid waste collection independent contractor and to notify Hoss Disposal of current contract status and intent to advertise an RFQ; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

HIAC Appointments: Two letters of interest were received for the vacant seats on the Health Insurance Advisory Committee. Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to appoint Kim Todd representing Courthouse employees for the remainder of a two-year term ending December 31, 2018, and to appoint Tina Hubbard representing Retirees for the remainder of a two-year term ending December 31, 2019. Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

Cost Comparison of Retiree Benefits: Vice Chair, Jayme Halpin, and HIAC Secretary, Joyce Jeppesen, were in attendance representing the Committee. Utilizing general information from the Comptroller's office and estimates from the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) website, Ms. Jeppesen compiled rough estimates of potential future costs to the County.

Because of the number of unknown factors, including when each individual may retire, it would take an actuary to provide true figures over the long term. The Health Insurance Advisory Committee was tasked with providing rough estimates.

The comparison considered the 35 current employees who are eligible for the retiree health insurance subsidy (employees hired after July 1, 2009, are not eligible). Employees were grouped by age and assessed by years of service.

Assuming an average retirement length of 20 years, Ms. Jeppesen calculated individual lifetime subsidy costs for employees with the minimum five years of service (\$28,176.00) up through employees with 20-plus years of service (\$154,960.80). Based on these numbers, if the 35 eligible employees retired now and took the subsidy at their current PERS service credit, for an assumed 20 years of retirement, it would cost the County approximately \$3.8 million.

Employees have the option of forfeiting the subsidy and instead opting for a PERS service credit buyout, with the County matching the employee's monetary contribution. Utilizing the calculator on the PERS website, Ms. Jeppesen found that buyouts for the 35 current eligible employees could range from \$5,850.00 to \$60,000.00 for additional years. Average purchase of two years with 30 years of service credit is \$36,000.00.

Retiree Health Insurance Premium Subsidy: The subsidy benefit warrants deliberation during budget planning and the Board restated hesitancy towards implementing changes that would affect those already retired. Consideration may be given to requiring retirees to enroll in Medicare upon eligibility and relinquishing the subsidy at that point. Another option may be reducing the subsidy amount by a percentage each year. The Board welcomed any other suggestions. Forthcoming ideas included setting a 'retire by' date for continued eligibility, or even combining the 'retire by' date and a formula for reducing the benefit amount.

Any change should be carefully considered to ensure it is actually beneficial. This would include consulting with the insurance broker. The County must contemplate that reducing or eliminating the insurance subsidy may cause a number of employees to opt for the PERS service credit buyout, which could greatly impact the County.

Insurance Costs: In addition to the expense of maintaining the subsidy, the discussion addressed other issues affecting the County's insurance costs. The high population of retirees on the County's insurance plans (28% of insured) is making it difficult to obtain competitive quotes, which in turn reduces the quality of the plans. The impending Cadillac tax (Obamacare's high-cost plan tax), reportedly scheduled to take effect in 2020, will assess a penalty tax on employers with plans exceeding certain premium thresholds.

## **SHERIFF**

Purchase Replacement Shredder: Sheriff Keith Logan requested authorization to purchase a replacement paper shredder for his department. Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to authorize the Sheriff's Office to purchase a replacement paper shredder, in the amount of \$2,479.00, and to fund it from the Capital Projects budget. Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

## **IT / NETWORK**

Out-of-State Travel: Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to approve out-of-state travel for IT Manager, Misty Rowley, to attend the Cisco Live Conference in Orlando, Florida, June 10-14, 2018. Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

## **FAIR BOARD**

Exchange Steer for Vet Services: Fair Board Chair, Lynn Conley, explained that the Fair Board had to purchase a steer that was injured during the 2017 County Fair. Eureka Veterinary Clinic (Darla Baumann, DVM) provided veterinary care and has fed the steer since August. The Fair Board recently voted to give the steer to Dr. Baumann to offset her fees, but felt the Commissioners should be consulted.

The Commissioners were not aware of anything that would prohibit this. Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to uphold the Fair Board's decision to give a steer to the Eureka Veterinary Clinic in exchange for veterinary services. Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

Direction for 2018 County Fair: Ms. Conley presented a spreadsheet showing expenses and revenues for the 2017 County Fair. Total costs were around \$80,000.00 with revenues of approximately \$30,000.00.

Plans to further reduce costs for the 2018 County Fair include cutting the band to only one day and eliminating the party rentals (mechanical bull, bouncy slide, etc.). The Fair Board has considered shortening the Fair by moving Sunday's events to Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The prize monies for livestock events are already lower, as those were decreased for 2017. The Fair Board requested direction from the Commissioners on areas to further reduce.

The Commissioners agreed with eliminating some of the entertainment costs and felt focus should be on the livestock events since they are the main attraction for locals and visitors. They

avored keeping prize monies competitive to attract participants and preferred keeping a four-day Fair because it benefited local businesses.

Administrative Support: The contract for administrative support to the Fair Board expires at the end of December, so guidance was sought whether to advertise another Request for Proposals or to request an employee. Ms. Conley explained that it is logical to have a contract because there are times during the year when there is no work for an employee. One drawback is that the contractor works on her own computer, so the Fair Board files aren't maintained on County equipment.

The Commissioners provided consensus that the Fair Board should advertise a Request for Proposals. They agreed with concerns over file retention and asked that an item be placed on the next agenda so that a laptop could be purchased by the Fair Board.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Report on Activities: Natural Resources Manager, Jake Tibbitts, reported on recent activities. On November 27<sup>th</sup> he attended the Humboldt River Basin Network Stakeholder meeting where it was decided more groundwork was needed before moving forward with the situational assessment. On December 1<sup>st</sup> he attended the Central Nevada Regional Water Authority meeting, which included a closed legal session to discuss the Southern Nevada Water Authority litigation. Mr. Tibbitts participated in a Sage Grouse Sidebar meeting in Elko on December 5<sup>th</sup> hosted by the Rural & Agricultural Council of America.

Upcoming Meetings: Upcoming meetings include the Western Caucus Foundation Annual Winter Policy Meeting in Las Vegas December 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>; a webinar for governmental entities on WOTUS (Waters of the US) on December 12<sup>th</sup> hosted by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers; a Groundwater Management Plan meeting on December 13<sup>th</sup>; and a hearing on December 14<sup>th</sup> related to Nevada Department of Agriculture's proposed changes to the noxious weeds list, which will be broadcast to Cooperative Extension.

Roadside Fuel Breaks Project: The Battle Mountain District BLM recently issued the FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) and a Decision Record on the Roadside Fuel Breaks Project, so will move forward with implementation. This project is intended to reduce severity of wildland fires. The BLM plans to hold a meeting in January to prioritize which roads will receive treatment. They will coordinate with the County sometime in December.

Sage Grouse Issues: The County's comment letter on the Supplemental EIS was submitted by the December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline. Laura Granier, of Holland & Hart, assisted in preparing the scoping comments. Chairman Goicoechea commended Mr. Tibbitts for all of the efforts he contributed, including updated science and a lot of specific information.

Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to ratify the comment letter on the Supplemental EIS for the BLM and US Forest Service Greater Sage Grouse Land Use Plan Amendments; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

Gunman Plan of Exploration EA: The Gunman Plan of Exploration is a Cyprus Development Corporation project on the east slope of the Diamond Mountains in White Pine County. Mr. Tibbitts prepared a comment letter to the Ely District BLM on the Environmental Assessment. The letter states that Eureka County supports mining when it is done right, but points out some concerns with the EA.

Concerns include lack of coordination with local government; lack of analysis on effects to groundwater; no recognition of impacts to livestock (impacts to wildlife are addressed); and inclusion of analysis on Land with Wilderness Characteristics without a public process or any of the required coordination, including the fact that identified lands don't meet the LWC criteria.

Commissioner Etchegaray motioned to submit the comment letter to the BLM regarding the Gunman Plan of Exploration EA; Commissioner Sharkozy seconded the motion; motion carried 3-0.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Correspondence was received from: Tina Hubbard; Kim Todd; Natural Resources, Jake Tibbitts; EMS Coordinator, Mike Sullivan (2); Medical Clinics Advisory Committee; Recreation Board; Eureka Business Network (2); Nevada Assoc. of Counties (3); Central Nevada Regional Water Authority; William Bee Ririe Hospital; Tri-County Meeting; Nevada Div. of Water Resources (3); Nevada Div. of Environmental Protection (5); Nevada Dept. of Agriculture; Nevada Div. of Minerals; Nevada Dept. of Taxation; Nevada Div. of Child & Family Services; Nevada Health Foundation newsletter; University of Nevada Reno; and National Assoc. of Counties (3).

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chairman Goicoechea called for public comments. Commissioner Etchegaray asked about some purported land transactions, where he heard the mines were trading private lands for sage grouse habitat.

Chairman Goicoechea and Mr. Tibbitts clarified that, similar to conservation easements, some mines were entering into Sage-Grouse Bank Enabling Agreements, but it didn't involve a land trade.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

*Approved by vote of the Board this 20<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2017.*

/s/ J.J. Goicoechea  
J.J. Goicoechea, Chairman

*I, Jackie Berg, Commissioner Clerk, attest that these are a true, correct, and duly approved minutes of the December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, meeting of the Board of Eureka County Commissioners.*

/s/ Jackie Berg  
Jackie Berg, Commissioner Clerk

*I, Beverly Conley, Clerk & Treasurer of Eureka County, acknowledge and accept the attached minutes as approved by the Board of Eureka County Commissioners and attested to by the Commissioner Clerk.*

/s/ Beverly Conley  
Beverly Conley, Clerk & Treasurer