

TAHOE DOUGLAS FIRE PREVENTION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
**January 27, 2016**

**Those Present:**

Chairman Larry Schussel  
Vice Chairman Greg Felton  
Trustee Bill Kirschner  
Trustee Kevin Kjer  
Trustee Steve Seibel  
Fire Chief Ben Sharit  
Assistant Chief Scott Baker  
Legal Counsel Devon Reese  
Fire Inspector Todd Stroup  
Battalion Chief Jim Antti

Battalion Chief Todd Moss  
Battalion Chief Rich Nalder  
Forester John Pickett  
Crew Supervisor Keegan Schafer  
Foreman Matt Fogarty  
Engineer Will Darr  
Office Manager Kate Warner  
Accounting Specialist Carrie Nolting  
Administrative Assistant Casey O'Neill  
Alan Wechsler, RKG Lawyers  
Guest Ann Grant

**1. Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 2:33 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance.**

Pledge of allegiance was led by Trustee Kirschner.

**3. Roll Call**

Chairman Schussel, Vice Chairman Felton, Trustee Kirschner, Trustee Kjer and Trustee Seibel were present. A quorum was present.

**4. Approval of the Agenda**

Trustee Kjer motioned to approve the agenda. Trustee Kirschner seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-0.

**5. Public Comment**

None.

**6. Approval of the Consent Calendar.**

Items:

- a. Approval of Minutes 12/02/2015
- b. Monthly Expenditures
- c. Financials 10/31/15 & 11/30/15
- d. Goals and Objectives – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Update

Trustee Kirschner motioned to approve the Consent Calendar items as presented. Trustee Seibel seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

**7. For Possible Action: Consent items moved forward**

None.

**8. For Possible Action: BOT Election of Officers**  
Chairman Larry Schussel

Trustee Seibel motioned to nominate Trustee Felton as the 2016 Chairman to the Board. Trustee Kirschner seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

Trustee Kjer motioned to nominate Trustee Kirschner as the 2016 Vice Chairman to the Board. Trustee Seibel seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

Chief Sharit recognized Trustee Schussel for his service as Chairman to the Board in 2015.

Note: A three minute recess was granted to re-arrange seating and to pass the gavel from Trustee Schussel to Chairman Felton.

Meeting called back to order by Chairman Felton.

**9. For Possible Action: Appoint Board of Trustees representatives to work on the Board Goals for FY 2016-17.**  
Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Chief Sharit congratulated newly elected Chairman Felton and looks forward to working with him this year.

Trustee Seibel and Vice Chairman Kirschner were appointed to work on the board goals in fiscal year 2015-16 and will need to appoint two new trustees to lead the board goals in 2016-17.

Trustee Schussel and Trustee Kjer volunteered to work on the board goals.

Vice Chairman Kirschner motioned to approve the action item with Trustees Schussel and Kjer appointed to draft the FY 2016-17 Board Goals. Trustee Seibel seconded the motion.

Trustee Kjer thanked Trustee Schussel for serving as Board Chairman last year and appreciated all his hard work.

Motion approved 5-0.

**10. For Possible Action: Discussion and possible adoption of Resolution #01-2016 which designates four (4) Chief Officers the authority to enter into a Cost Share Agreement on behalf of Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District in the event of major wildfire/urban interface fire event or other disaster within the fire district jurisdiction.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

These three resolutions are required to update and designate Chief Officers to enter into Cost Share Agreements on behalf of TDFPD in the event of an emergency. These are being updated to add Assistant Chief Scott Baker

Vice Chairman Kirschner motioned to adopt Resolution #01-2016. Trustee Schussel seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

**11. For Possible Action: Discussion and possible action to adopt Resolution #02-2016 which designates four (4) Chief Officers the authority to sign a Transfer of Authorization "Delegation of Authority" on behalf of the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District in the event of a major wildfire/urban interface fire event or other disaster within the fire district jurisdiction.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Trustee Schussel motioned to adopt Resolution #02-2016. Vice Chairman Kirschner seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

**12. For Possible Action: Discussion and possible action to adopt Resolution #03-2016 which designated two (2) Chief Officers the authority to institute a request for a “Declaration of Emergency” on behalf of the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District in the event of a major wildfire/urban interface fire event or other disaster within the fire district jurisdiction.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Trustee Seibel motioned to adopt Resolution #03-2016. Trustee Kjer seconded the motion.

Chairman Felton asked for clarification on what declaring an emergency means for the district.

Chief Sharit replied that declaration of emergency allows the district to access the county and state emergency management system. The district would not need board approval if already delegated the authority to the fire chief and assistant chief.

Motion approved 5-0.

**13. Presentation: Fuels Management – 2015 Fire Season Review and 2016 planning and projections.**

Forester John Pickett

**Forester Pickett presented a retrospective look at the 2015 fire season’s accomplishments and future projects in 2016.**

TDFPD and the Lake Tahoe Fuels Reduction efforts consist of the Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC) and the Tahoe Fire and Fuels Team (TFFT).

These agencies came together after the Angora Fire with the common goal to protect life and property in the Lake Tahoe community. Collectively, this group met to create a multi-jurisdictional fuels reduction strategy. From this, the group works together to redefine the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), which identifies landscapes needing work in order to modify fuel behavior, so that firefighters can safely defend the community.

Initially, the size of the WUI was significantly under-estimated; however, in 2014 we improved on this by redefining the WUI zones in the updated Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

The Tahoe Douglas Fire District is broken into individual labeled project areas, which documents the history of permitting and any work that has ever been done on that area. Every planning area in the fire district in the WUI now has a historical database to back it up.

There is a new national policy called the National Cohesive Strategy; a strategic push to work collaboratively among all stakeholders and across all landscapes using best science, to make meaningful progress towards three goals:

1. Resilient Landscapes – Forest thinning and pile burning
2. Fire Adapted Communities – Motivating and educating homeowners to work on defensible space
3. Safe and Effective Wildfire Response

The TDFPD wildfire prevention program meets the National Cohesive Strategy with their active forestry program that assists homeowners to create defensible space through education and consultations; with access to grants and free residential chipping; and by enforcing local ordinances for roofing, siding and sprinklers and by responding to wildland fire starts. Therefore, the planning in the Tahoe Douglas Fire District and the CWPP is now in alignment with the National Cohesive Strategy, providing opportunities to apply for fuels reduction grants in order to help with funding these efforts around the lake.

During the 2015 season, the Zephyr Crew completed 157 acres of pile burning. And a total of 1,389 acres since the fuels program formed in 2008.

The fuels program also facilitates the Curbside Defensible Space Program implemented in 2010 to educate and assist homeowners in making their surroundings more fire safe. TDFPD completed defensible space inspections for all 2,500 properties in the district in 2015. Inspections will repeat for all homeowners in the district every four years. This past year fifty-two properties are currently in enforcement with the program because they failed to complete the work within the designated time frame.

One hundred and ninety-five full defensible space inspections were completed last year; a significant drop from the previous year due to State Farm requiring insured homeowners to have the fire district inspect and sign off on defensible space compliance. State Farm dropped those who failed to comply.

The Compost Your Combustibles provides a means for homeowners to dump yard waste for free. This program will run again from Memorial Day through July 4<sup>th</sup> this summer.

Furthermore, homeowners will receive a letter notifying them of the date the crew will be in their neighborhoods for the 2016 Community Work Days. This program utilizes the Zephyr Crew to assist homeowners in the district with defensible space work.

Trustee Schussel asked if many of the non-compliant properties are second homeowners.

Forester Pickett stated generally second homeowners do not have a problem hiring someone to do the work; it's a matter of them not knowing who to contact, which in that case, will give them a list of TRPA approved vendors to do the work. It is the impaired properties (in some state of foreclosure) that are not getting the work done. Also, those homeowners who are disabled and/or low income may not have the resources to get the work done.

Chairman Felton asked if those enforced properties are primarily resistant for reasons other than financial because they have opportunities to apply for grant assistance.

Pickett responded, to a large extent most of the work that can be done is relatively inexpensive, with the exception of tree removal. Generally, fires carry on ground, so raking pine needles and cutting brush can be completed by the homeowner or on a community work day with the help of the crew. And, if grants are available, will help with tree removal. However, if the homeowner is clearly making an effort, they will not end up in an enforcement situation.

Chairman Felton asked in general, if those who received enforcement notices, are resisting for other reasons.

Pickett responded, we are identifying at risk people in the community who have larger challenges to overcome, so they are in that group as well. And of course, there are some who refuse to comply.

Chairman Felton asked what enforcement means in this situation.

Chief Sharit replied enforcement means failure to meet the law and citing those who do not comply. Due to the early snow, the deadline for compliance has been extended to the spring. The goal is to work with our residents before applying enforcement.

Vice Chairman Kirschner asked if the \$308,000 received in grants is used toward this program.

Chief Sharit stated no, it is location specific, so it is used for designated fuels projects around the district. Community work days are used to help the homeowners with defensible space work. The goal is to guide the community and educate them on these days.

Pickett added that we will not have homeowner defensible space grants this year. This does not mean do not give us a call; if tree removal is identified as a primary defensible space issue, than we can table that issue. Other work can still be done if the person cannot afford to have a tree removed. Simple yard work such as raking pine needles makes a difference. Again, it is getting assistance to the community.

**Crew Supervisor Schafer presented on Zephyr Crew operations.**

The crew is a Type II Initial Attack (IA) hand crew, which is a nationally recognized certification. The crew conducts hand thinning projects (over a hundred acres per year) with manual treatments using chainsaws on the ground. Then, there is a shift from thinning to maintenance and prescribed burning with an overall mission to stump growth and prevent catastrophic fires from happening in the community. And finally, the crew is utilized as a firefighting resource. They understand fire behavior from pile burning, which is invaluable when fighting wildland fires in and outside of the district.

Schafer sited the project work done by the crew in Glenbrook, Shakespeare Rock, Kingsbury Station, the Eastern Slope of Kingsbury and Elks Point. The following shows total forest thinning and pile burning acres completed in 2015:

Forest Thinning Acres:

Upper Haines Canyon – 30 acres

Palisades 2 - 33 acres

Shakespeare Rock – 40 acres

Kingsbury Corridor – 34  
USFS Parcels – 13 acres  
Small Projects (community work days) – 7 acres

Pile Burning Acres:

Edgewood Creek – 20 Acres  
Friday's Station – 25 Acres  
Palisades II – 30 Acres  
Kingsbury Region – 17 Acres  
Various – 10 Acres  
Community Pile Burning – 2 Acres

A video of the Zephyr Crew's prescribed fire operations was shown to the board. The video demonstrated how the crew burns heavy fuels on the ground to replicate what Mother Nature would have done in a natural wildfire.

Chief Sharit added that the pile burning re-energizes the forest's health and increases growth. Collectively with the TFFT, we are trying to re-educate the public on why we administer prescribed fire operations. We must remember that our homes and vehicles are fuels and must defend the surrounding areas.

In 2015, the crew completed ninety-nine chipping requests, half of which were from community work days. During the work days, the chippers blanket different neighborhoods and urban lots in the district. The crew completes demonstrations, chainsaw work and manual labor for homeowners as well. The crew now runs two chippers for use at the work days and for individual requests. The program has become so popular that the crew added an extra day in each neighborhood to give people another opportunity to utilize the crew and chippers.

Fuels Management Grants:

FEMA Pre-disaster Mitigation (PDM) – Total Grant \$799,171, Match \$268,319 – 400 Acres

- Glenbrook Region – Grant \$416,865, Match \$138,955
- Kingsbury Region – Grant \$382,306, Match \$129,364

Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) Round 13 – Grant \$67,115, Match \$9,871 – 100 Acres

- Shakespeare Rock Fuels Reduction Project



SNPLMA Round 14 – Grant \$213,061, No Match – 100 Acres

- Upper Haines Canyon Fuels Reduction Project

SNPLMA Round 15 – Grant \$308,760, No Match – 100 Acres

- Upper Haines Canyon Fuels Reduction Project

Stevens Authority – Grant \$678,755, No Match – 270 Acres

- Glenbrook - \$238,420 – 90 Acres
- Kingsbury Region - \$154,335 – 50 Acres
- Provisional Highway 50 - \$286,000 – 130 Acres

Chairman Felton asked what was that fundamental change when Pickett stated the defensive zone turned out to be much larger than previously thought.

Pickett stated that the defense zone area in the WUI should not have a greater flame length than four feet during the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile fire weather. This zone has been greatly expanded due to a better understanding of wildfire. After the Angora Fire, the defense zone was re-assessed and expanded out by at least a quarter mile and some areas beyond a quarter of a mile.

Chairman Felton asked that since every property in the district has been assessed for defensible space; can they request the assessment report.

Pickett stated that TDFPD is a publicly funded organization and anyone can request this information; however the TFFT decided not to publish the mapping of work completed on a website. The TRPA does publish tree removal permits issued on a database on their website.

Felton asked if there is a reason why the grant funding can only be used in five years.

Pickett stated that we have 1.5 million dollars sitting and theoretically the work can be done immediately, however this cannot be done with all the required maintenance work. The goal is to manage land capability, not areas. It is more about time and how vegetation re-grows over time. Pickett was approved to attend training on forest vegetation simulators to be used to forecast over time on how the maintenance will occur.

**14. Report Item: Review of Monthly Fire District Activities. No action will be taken.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Chief Sharit thanked Trustee Schussel for his time and commitment serving as Chairman last year. Also, today is Inspector Stroup's birthday, Happy Birthday to Todd.

**Employee Years of Service Recognition:**

Captain Brandon Spry	10 Years of Service
Captain Brandon Brady	10 Years of Service
Engineer Steve Prather	10 Years of Service
Captain Justin Rossi	9 Years of Service
Captain Kevin Green	9 Years of Service
Engineer Ben Pratt	9 Years of Service
Forester John Pickett	5 Years of Service

**Updates:**

Bank account signers will be updated by next month's meeting with the new Chair and Vice Chair.

**Stateline Re-development Plan (RDP)**

Alan Wechsler from Reese, Kintz & Guinasso presented on the re-development plan and how it will impact the district.

The concern is that the Stateline RDP will end up with more demand for service calls in the district with less money coming in. Over the past few months, Chief Sharit, Chief Baker, Fire Marshal Guevin and Wechsler have been in contact with various people in the community informing them of the public safety problem. It is a difficult problem because by law, the money that goes toward the re-development cannot be used to pay the fire district for the next thirty years. Therefore, there will be limited funds and an increase in demand.

Additionally, Wechsler, Chief Sharit and Trustee Seibel attended meetings with representatives from the South Tahoe Association of Resorts (STAR) Alliance and Douglas County. Both meetings went well and both groups are concerned about the problem and are committed to addressing the problem with specific solutions. The fire district is not opposed to redevelopment, but not at the expense of public safety. The STAR Alliance emphasized the importance of re-development with an overall goal to

improve the economy. Additionally, nine to ten percent of the advalorem tax revenue from the district comes from the properties in the redevelopment area with about ninety percent coming from areas outside of the re-development. If the economy improves in those areas with more property taxes than this benefits the district. The plan cannot be postponed because if they do not capture the tax increment before Edgewood builds out, than they will not have the funding to do it. Therefore, it must be done by March 15<sup>th</sup> or else it will not happen.

Wechsler then reviewed possible mechanisms on how the fire district can bring in additional funds; however, they are not set in stone due to unknowns with the redevelopment:

1. Under Nevada Law, the county re-development agency can pay money directly to the fire district in lieu of property taxes for properties that have moved within the re-development area (RDA). We expect that the county will own some of these properties and can give us some additional funds this way.
2. When the county leases or sells back properties it owns in the RDA, such as the concert venue, they can require paying for additional fire services.
3. The fire district has a permitting process when new buildings go up and can collect fees this way as well.
4. New buildings will have to apply for environmental impact statements with TRPA and the district could have input over this process as well.

Chief Sharit and the fire district's legal counsel has requested that both the STAR Alliance and Douglas County make statements on public record that they acknowledge the problem and ensure that the fire district will get sufficient funds to pay for the increase in service calls.

The board has two options:

- a) To recognize the importance of the RDP for the economy and in turn the fire district's economy and do not oppose the RDP.
- b) To oppose the RDP with a public campaign if other mechanisms to bring in revenues are not sufficient.

Vice Chairman Kirschner asked where the money is initially coming from to set up the RDP.

Wechsler stated there is an economic feasibility study that is part of the RDP, which is a combination of things such as bonds, but is not sure of all the details. The district will be capped at the current tax rate for those properties in the RDA for the next thirty years.

Trustee Schussel asked who the groups are in the valley that may be opposed to the RDP.

Wechsler stated that he believes there is always some tension between the valley and lake, and because some bonds may have to be issued, there may be some opponents in the valley.

Trustee Kjer asked will the district's tax rate still be capped for the next thirty years if the plan fails.

Wechsler stated no; if approved the March 15<sup>th</sup> tax assessment is when it will be capped, if property values do not get better, than will not losing anything. If it fails, the district loses nothing, if it does well, however the district does not receive any extra money.

Trustee Seibel understood that we would not receive any tax benefits from projects such as the Edgewood Lodge. He asked if anyone stood up in opposition to the RDP at the last board of commissioner's meeting.

Wechsler stated correct.

The only people that spoke at the last meeting were Mike Bradford, representing the STAR Alliance and the Assistant to the DA, Zach Watley. They voiced the concerns made by the fire district.

Chairman Felton asked for clarification on the four potential mechanisms assumed to generate revenue for the fire district, two of which were methods in which the district could force negotiation.

Wechsler stated correct.

Chairman Felton commented with both the statements made, he is concerned that the focus has been on the increase in quantity of calls, not on the increase in operational costs. Even if there is no increase in the call volume, over thirty years it will still become more expensive to run service calls.

Wechsler stated that yes; it is essentially a declining revenue stream, which is a problem for the district. It is a legitimate concern and he has discussed the fact that it goes beyond just call volumes with these groups.

Chief Sharit continued with his report item:

**Request for proposals submitted for the district's annual audits** for the next three years.

**Zephyr Crew continues to burn** in the district.

**Fire Academy** – Five TDFPD candidates. Graduation set for Friday February 26, 2016. Location and time TBD. Will send out information to board members once confirmed. (Note: This event had moved to Friday, March 4)

**Financial Summary** - Purchased approximately one million in CD's; some more purchases to make on longer term CDs and with the recent influx in stock market, will work with Edward Jones to make a move when additional funds come in.

**Attachments:**

Recognized **Fire Marshal Guevin – Re-appointed to the Fire Services Board of Nevada.**

Trustee Kjer commented that he appreciates Chief Sharit and staff keeping the board informed on the board goals updates.

**15. Report Item:** Review of Fire District Division Reports. No action will be taken.

**Assistant Chief Scott Baker – Operations/Training/Admin.**

Chief Baker first thanked the board for the opportunity to work for TDFPD. He also thanked Chief Sharit and all staff for their support since he has come on board. He chose to come here due to the quality and has been reassured that it is even better than he thought.

**2015 Call Volumes** – 2,036 calls in 2015, a new record high. Baker noted that we also respond to many out of district calls, which includes our neighbors in South Lake Tahoe, Carson City and East Fork.

**Gas leak at Tahoe Shores** due to construction – Chief Nalder and crew responded.

**Private resident elevator fire** caused by hot ashes left in a bucket. Quick response from Chief Moss and crew.

**Cardiac arrest survivors** – Three of past four survived. One to note occurred on NYE; was able to save patient due to quick action by TDFPD crew and Harvey's personnel.

**NYE** – Unified command working with law enforcement, casinos and neighboring fire districts. No major issues.

**Bomb Squad** – Sweeps done at Snowglobe and NYE.

**Increase in EMS calls** due to winter and skiing activities.

**New Insurance transfer** for all employees this month.

**Kahle Community Breakfast with Santa** - Local 2441 sponsored event. TDFPD firefighters support this event every year.

**FF/PM Chris Wade** completed his probationary requirements. Congratulations to Wade.

**Five TDFPD recruits attending the academy in Carson City** – Started on January 4<sup>th</sup>. Expect all to graduate together.

**Request for Regional AFG to buy new radios** – Joint with East Fork Fire.

**Ballistic vest** training completed and available for use on the B/C rigs.

**Tactical Emergency Critical Care (TECC) training** - quick triage to save the person during a mass casualty event.

**Intern/Ride Alongs** are coming in from LTCC and local high schools.

**IPads are ready for use** - can now look at calls on the iPad, reporting system, complete business inspections, take photos at incidents and electronic patient care reports.

**Tahoe Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** – Volunteers who are trained in all hazards and can be assigned to emergency management and assist with fire district events, etc. Ronna Hubbard is the coordinator for the Douglas County CERT and Ann Grant is the lead team member for Tahoe’s team.

**Thanked Captains Cranch, Green and Peterson** for time training with the recruits at the academy. They are covering their twenty-four hour shifts in addition to work at the academy.

**Equipment Committee** – Looking to fine tune equipment, putting in long hours of research so that the district will successfully procure the right apparatus for the needs.

**Thanked Chief Moss and Captain Green** for working to get EMS recerts. completed.

**Community Paramedicine** – Program for emergency personnel to provide follow up with patients to make sure they are taking care of themselves with the overall goal to prevent re-admissions into the hospital.

**Ash Can Program** – District residents can dump hot ash in the dumpster in the back of Station 23. Residents can request an ash can at Kingsbury Hardware or the Station 23 office. Inspector Stroup recognized the Zephyr Crew for painting the ash cans. Press release with program details to come out soon.

**Hard Rock** – Still on temporary C of O. All floors occupied except for suites at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.

**Fuels Division has secured grant funding to hire seasonal student foresters** to work monitoring plots this summer. Details are being worked out, more to follow.

**16. Discussion:**                   **Confirm next meeting, with a proposed date of Wednesday, February 24, 2016 with a start time of 2:30 p.m. and possible agenda items.**

- N/A

Meeting confirmed for Wednesday, February 24, 2016 with a start time of 2:30 p.m. in the Station 23 classroom.

**Adjourn**

Vice Chairman Kirschner motioned that the meeting be adjourned. Trustee Seibel seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-0.

**Closed Session: Not needed at this meeting.**

This meeting was recorded on audio tape.

**Casey O'Neill  
Board Secretary  
Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District**

APPROVED