

Local Emergency Services Study Group
Minutes
Tuesday June 23, 2020
9:00 am

1. Call to Order & Attendance

Chair Tom Cooley called the meeting to order. Each attendee introduced themselves, the following were present:

Beckwourth Fire Dept: Daniel Smith, Dwight Ceresola, Bret Russell
City of Portola: Tom Cooley, Pat Morton, Leslie Chrysler, Lauren Knox
EPRFPD: Jeanne Graham, Ronnie Williams, Bob Frank, Elaine Frank
Gold Mtn. CSD: Cary Curtis, Bill Robinson, Rich McLaughlin
Sierra Valley Fire Dept: Wayne Despaine
Quincy Fire Department: Robbie Cassou

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Jeanne Graham, seconded by Pat Morton, to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2020 meeting. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

3. Agency Reports

Sierra Valley

Wayne Despaine noted that pros and cons had been discussed by his agency.

Beckwourth

Daniel Smith reported that they had a standing agenda item do discuss the committee and its progress. He explained that they are receiving positive feedback and feel that the time is right to move forward. With tight budgets and uncertain revenue they feel consolidation is critical for fire service to survive.

Bret Russell noted that he keeps the members updated and informed on the process and has 99.9% backing from them.

Gold Mountain

Cary Curtis reported that their board is very supportive, they understand that although they are responsible for fire protection they are not a fire agency and not experts. They rely on the experts and are thankful for the services provided by Bob & Elaine Frank and Bill Robinson. She explained that the community is continually voicing their concern with the importance of

Fire/Emergency services and support consolidation. Board and community members see it as the correct way to move forward.

Rich McLaughlin noted that the recent fire on A-15 drove home the importance of working together on fire and emergency services. It was a learning experience for all involved.

Bill Robinson reported on bringing community members out to the A-15 fire site to allow them to better understand firefighting response and procedures. He thanked Elaine Frank and Todd Turner for assisting with the walk through. They were able to explain how they fought the fire, cutting fire lines and using the creek as a line. He explained that the fire departments are working well together. It was noted that there is a short video of the fire and they will make it available to the committee.

Portola

Pat Morton noted that they see the need for paid, professional help to guide us through the process.

Lauren Knox noted that she was glad to see such a good turnout for the meeting and hoped everyone was comfortable with the amount of social distancing that was allowed in the room.

Leslie Chrysler reported that an email address had been created for the committee and correspondence should be directed to that email – plumasfirestudygroup@gmail.com

Eastern Plumas

Jeanne Graham indicated that they are supportive but have concerns and questions regarding wildfire issues with the Forest Service and what area will be covered. She also noted the need for all departments to work together.

Ronnie Williams noted that they are also concerned with response times.

Elaine Frank explained that she had continued to research other efforts to consolidate departments and had information from Calaveras County and LA County. She feels the committee needs to determine if they are looking for an operational or jurisdictional consolidation and then insure that the fire departments fit together. After that it's necessary for the people you serve to understand and support the efforts.

Bob Frank expressed his 100% support of the consolidation effort. He knows it needs to happen and it has to be done right.

Quincy Fire

Robbie Cassou indicated that he was attending as an observer and would be happy to answer and questions the committee may have of him. He also was glad to see the turnout and enthusiasm of the committee and reported that other areas of the county are looking at the process as they may need to do the same.

4. Report on LAFCo actions

Tom Cooley reported that LAFCo had included an item in their budget to reduce fees for the consolidation effort up to \$12,000 which should cover approximately 50% of their fees. LAFCo is supportive of the consolidation and is also talking with other fire agencies in the County about the same. He reviewed the process for an individual property owner to annex into a district and explained property not currently in a district would be able to join the new district. The objective would be to have all property included in the district.

5. Update on next steps from the previous meeting

Grant Opportunities

Representatives from Gold Mountain, Sierra Valley and Quincy Fire all indicated that they had either employees or knew of individuals that would be able to assist the committee in looking for grant opportunities. It was the consensus of the committee to accept the help offered by the agencies.

Data Gathering

Tom Cooley presented data that he compiled relating to each agency. He utilized information from Plumas County and census to come up with ways to compare each agencies data. He explained that this information could be utilized to help determine how expenses could be spread across the agencies.

Wayne Despaine noted that the Sierra Valley FD is funded with a significant amount of donations that are raised through their auxiliary and questioned how that could be taken into consideration. He noted that the question from his board would be how much funding would be necessary.

Lauren Knox suggested including the number of housing units in the formula to make sure that the Gold Mountain second homeowners are part of the data.

Jeanne Graham said her board would not want to just agree to a percentage of funding unless they knew the amount that would be requested. She suggested the committee might consider a cap on what they would spend to give each district a set amount to consider.

Rich McLaughlin also noted that the service area should be included to show areas that are not currently in a fire district.

Daniel Smith noted that he would have more on this during his agenda item.

Press Release & Letter to Agencies

Leslie Chrysler reported that a draft press release along with an email to interested agencies had been drafted following the February meeting. The plan had been to distribute them in early March but then the pandemic shut downs started. With no meetings and no newspaper being published there had not been an outlet for publishing or a way to respond to questions. After a brief discussion it was the consensus of the committee to send the press release to Plumas News,

the Susanville radio station and the Sierra Booster. The letter could now be sent to agencies and communication could be routed through the new email.

6. Case Studies and Best Practices

Daniel Smith gave a brief synopsis of his work experience explained that he was employed by the City of Pleasanton and had knowledge of their fire department consolidation with Livermore. He reviewed information he had found on other consolidations and explained that he felt the committee should invite a consultant along with the attorneys for the City of Portola and the Beckwouth Fire Department to make a presentation. Following a brief discussion a Committee was formed to work on research and develop a scope of work. Appointed to the committee were; Daniel Smith, Elaine Frank, Lauren Knox and Ronnie Williams. Links to the information Daniel had discussed would be sent out to the committee members.

7. Public Communications

The committee discussed various avenues available for communicating with the public. Creation of a website would give the public a place to find information and communicate with the committee. Rich McLaughlin indicated that he knows an individual who would be able to develop a simple web site. Direct mailing of a postcard or brochure is another possibility. Ronnie Williams noted that social media outlets are another way to get information out, she volunteered to make a list of local pages.

Cary Curtis discussed the need for a communication plan to determine the exact message and also suggested that a logo for the group should be created. She volunteered to reach out to a graphic artist who would work with the committee.

After further discussion it was the consensus of the committee to have the committee members reach out to the people they knew and request their assistance, the item would be further discussed at the next meeting.

8. Next Steps

Elaine Frank noted again the need to determine if we are looking at an operational or jurisdictional consolidation.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday July 28, 2020 at 9:00 am.

Respectfully Submitted

Leslie Chrysler, Secretary