

**Local Emergency Services Study Group**  
**Minutes**  
**Tuesday November 10, 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, Bret Russell  
City of Portola: Tom Cooley, Pat Morton, Lauren Knox  
EPRFPD: Jeanne Graham, Ronnie Couto  
Gold Mtn. CSD: Rich McLaughlin, Rene St. Pierre, Bill Seney, Bill Robinson  
Sierra Valley Fire Dept: Wayne Despaine  
Quincy Fire Department: Robbie Cassou  
Plumas LAFCo: Jennifer Stephenson (participated telephonically)

2. Approval of Minutes

Jeanne Graham noted that her notes from the October 7, 2020 meeting, item #4, reflected that Daniel Smith had stated that Beckwourth would be able to contribute \$30,000 toward the consultant and that the City had offered to pay something. Daniel Smith explained that his point was that if funding was an issue with obtaining a consultant that Beckwourth would be willing to pay more than its share and the \$30,000 figure was an example. It was determined that the addition of this note in these minutes was sufficient to allow approval of the minutes of the October 7, 2020 minutes presented.

A motion was made by Daniel Smith, seconded by Ronnie Couto, to approve the minutes of the July 29, 2020 and October 7, 202 meetings. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

3. Agency Reports

Tom Cooley suggested that items #3 and 4 from the agenda be combined here with each agency reporting on the action of their respective boards.

*Beckwourth Fire Dept.* – Daniel Smith reported that the Board had unanimously approved the committee’s recommendation to work toward formation of a new district. He also noted that he had spoken with the newly elected District 1 Supervisor Dwight Ceresola and asked if he was aware of a 5% tax for fire services that was discussed at the previous meeting and Mr. Ceresola was unaware of any such tax. Mr. Ceresola was also

open to meeting with the group at any time, not feeling the need to wait until he was formally appointed.

*Gold Mountain CSD* - Rene St. Pierre reported that the CSD board had also approved the committee's recommendation to work toward formation of a new district. He noted that the only concern discussed was how long it would take, they would like it to move faster than the reported time it took for the two Quincy CSDs to combine.

*Sierra Valley Fire Dept.* – Wayne Despaine explained that they had a couple meetings and invited the public to comment, he noted that they did not have very positive feedback. They would like to know why the City of Portola lost their fire department and since their department works fine they do not see the need to fix what isn't broken.

Tom Cooley explained that the reason the City's fire department had been disbanded was not due to money. It was due to poor management on the part of the City Council and the City Manager at the time. Once the City received reports from oversight agencies such as NorCal EMS, CHP and PCSO that members of the City's fire department were performing tasks without the proper certifications the City had no other option than the shut down the department. Once the City Council realized that they did not have enough qualified volunteers to support the department they then reached out to neighboring departments and were able to obtain contracted services.

Mr. Despaine then asked if it was true that the City of Portola gives LAFCo \$50,000 per year and what does the City get for that.

Mr. Cooley explained that LAFCo was created by state law and the law also provides requirement for how it is funded. Each county provides 50% of LAFCo's annual budget with the cities within the county funding the other 50%, since Portola is the only city in Plumas County the City funds 50% of LAFCo's approximately \$100,000 annual budget. He noted that there is a provision in the state law for special districts to participate in LAFCo but it is not mandatory. If special districts participate then there is another formula for funding but in Plumas County the special districts are not members of LAFCo. Mr. Cooley requested Jennifer Stephenson to confirm his statements and she agreed with his reporting.

Quite a bit of further discussion regarding various aspects of the fire department structures and funding took place. Mr. Despaine then related that the subject of creating one new district to replace the existing six districts had been discussed among board members, with the public during a recent fundraising event and with a prominent land owner. Mr. Despaine summarized the conclusion of those discussions by stating "If it isn't broken, don't fix it." With that in mind, Sierra Valley Fire does not support the Study Group's decision to proceed with further investigation of creation of a single new district.

*EPRFPD* – Jeanne Graham reported that their board had approved the committee's recommendation to work toward formation of a new district. She had been asked when the committee would be required to follow the Brown Act and allow the public to participate and if the meetings were being recorded.

Mr. Cooley explained that the committee is not subject to Brown Act and early on the members had decided to meet without the public until a clear path forward had been determined. There will be a time for public meetings in the future. Although this meeting is being recorded the previous meetings had not been, he asked if she would like to have future meetings recorded. With an affirmative answer from various members it was determined to record all future meetings.

*City of Portola* – Pat Morton reported that the City Council had unanimously approved the recommendation of the committee to work toward formation of a new district.

Tom Cooley noted that with EPRFPD being the proxy for C-Road CSD there were 5 agencies that had approved moving forward with the formation of a new district. This item satisfied agenda item #4

4. Report on actions of agency boards – see above

5. Discussion of options for selection of consultant or consulting firm

Daniel Smith suggested the committee work to develop a feasibility study using information from the MSR's and current agency budgets. He felt with using the sample from Sonoma County this could be done by agency representatives and would develop a scope of work to be put into an RFP. It was the consensus of the agencies present to move in that direction.

6. Review options for determining amount of financial contributions of agencies

Representatives from Beckwourth, Gold Mountain and Portola all expressed that they would be willing to provide extra funding for the initial consultant part of the process in order to keep the process moving forward. Later in the process there will be a need to determine some formula for the amount funded by each district.

7. Discuss status of MSR updates

Jeanne Graham asked to have the EPRFPD MSR sent electronically as she wasn't able to find it. Each agency agreed to work on updating their MSR's.

8. Update on grant opportunities

Rick McLaughlin reported that had made a quick grant request submittal for funding of the feasibility study and would require matching funds but they had over 200 submittals and only funded 11. He indicated that he would continue to look for opportunities and asked to be forwarded contact information for the North Tahoe Fire Dept. Chief that had grant experience.

9. Next Steps

Work on updating MSRs.

Continue looking for grants.

Schedule meeting with County representatives, re: tax sharing

Reschedule regular meetings to 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday at 9am to allow for County Supervisors to attend.

Next meeting will not be scheduled until after meeting with County.

10. Adjourn

Respectfully Submitted

Leslie Chrysler, Secretary

DRAFT