

LASSEN COUNTY LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
City Council Chambers 66 N. Lassen St. Susanville, CA 96130

REGULAR MEETING
Monday, December 13, 2021

Meeting called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Members present: Commissioner Hemphill, Commissioner Bridges, Vice Chair Schuster. Absent: Commissioner Stafford and Chair Eid.

Staff Present: John Benoit, Executive Director called into meeting via phone. Ruth McElrath, Building Permit Technician.

Approval of Agenda Motion by Commissioner Hemphill, second by Commissioner Bridges to approve the agenda as submitted. Motion carries: Hemphill, Bridges, and Schuster.

Correspondence: None

Approval of October 18, 2021, minutes Motion by Commissioner Hemphill, second by Commissioner Bridges to approve the October 18, 2021, meeting minutes. Motion carries: Ayes: Hemphill, Bridges and Schuster.

Public Comment: None

Discussion with Fire Agencies regarding Fire services going forward in Lassen County

Mr. Benoit explained the topic was brought up last summer, after hearing from the local fire agencies on how LAFCo can help them.

Paul Smith, Standish-Litchfield Fire Protection District Chief, spoke about the advantages of having a county-wide fire department including sharing equipment and submitting one grant application instead of all the districts competing against each other, having one person in charge would be a benefit, and there would be less time on County staff for billing the numerous districts. He concluded that it costs about \$3,500 to \$3,800 for each district to perform an audit, and that money could be better spent for equipment and training.

Joel Erlich, Janesville Volunteer Fire Department Chief, shared some concerns about having a county-wide fire department. He explained Janesville's tax dollars purchased a brand-new fire engine, and he didn't think the Janesville community would appreciate their tax dollars over on the other side of the valley.

He continued there would have to be a full-time chief with full-time benefits and retirement. He questioned how they would consolidate eight chiefs. There is a lot to think about, it's not a one size fits

all. Mr. Erlich concluded he is all for helping, and his board would be as well, but there's a lot to think about before we jump into all this.

James Moore, Susanville Fire Department Chief, stated he has done his homework on this conversation with respect to the City's future. The best solution is looking at a Joint Powers Agreement. With a JPA being formed, the districts wouldn't lose their boundaries. The JPA is contracted by that board for that district to provide a service into that district.

In his research, that was the most palatable, and there are areas in California that have already done it. Chief Moore added a big report wouldn't have to be done because you aren't moving boundaries and it would be cost-effective for LAFCo. The board will still have to come together to pay the JPA, so it wouldn't lose the control in that model and there is value there.

Commissioner Hemphill responded his concern is there are successful districts, but there are smaller districts that have trouble raising \$100,000 because there is no population. So, one district goes into another area to cover.

Chief Moore responds that already happens. With that model, another district would back fill that district. Right now, he doesn't see anyone willing to take over the little districts. There is not a population model to make it work ... and that's a failure that will continue until it is addressed.

Mr. Hemphill continued he sees redundancy where all the districts must separately pay for an audit and questioned whether you can cut out some of the bureaucracy with a JPA.

Mr. Benoit explained audits are required for the districts regardless of a JPA.

Chair Eid arrives at 3:24 p.m.

There was further discussion regarding sharing equipment.

Mr. Benoit stated he would draft the benefits, negatives, and the process of forming a JPA, and bring it back to the next meeting.

Mr. Erlich said he would like to hear the benefits of a JPA, he believes that is the direction they need to go if we are going to do something.

Introduction of the Lassen Municipal Utility District MSR and SOI update

Mr. Benoit explained LAFCo is required to do a service review of all the districts in the County, and it is LMUD's turn. As part of the report, he looks at the financial and governance capability. There were also a few new additions to the law regarding disadvantaged communities, which most of Lassen County qualifies for and were included.

He determined LMUD is doing its job and there were no negative findings.

One question Mr. Benoit said he is curious is about, is how does LMUD's rates compare with other utilities in California. He stated LMUD is competitive, but it is some information he is going to try to get from the district.

Commissioner Bridges stated LMUD did recently vote to put in the line for Nevada, as well as rate increases to mostly cover that new construction.

LAFCo Policy Amendment regarding proposed language regarding MSR follow up as part of the MSR review process

Mr. Benoit stated he drafted language of a policy amendment, and explained he does the MSR's, and creates a report, which immediately ends up on the shelf. The policy amendment calls for initiation of a follow-up procedure for the MSRs. There are districts in the county that do have a deficiency of some sort, and it's recommended if we find something wrong, we would like to send it to them and have them come back to explain what they've done to correct the problem.

It would also be beneficial to the district and the idea is to get better services for the citizens out there, Mr. Benoit concluded.

Set LAFCo regular meeting schedule for 2022

After some discussion, the commission changed the October 10, 2022, meeting to October 17, 2022, due to a City-recognized holiday.

Authorize payment of claims

Motion by Commissioner Hemphill, second by Commissioner Bridges, to authorize payment of claims for October and November 2021. Motion carries: Hemphill, Bridges, Schuster, and Eid.

Executive Officer's Monthly Report

Mr. Benoit told the Commissioner's he has a new phone number.

He continued his report by explaining AB 361 requires a resolution be adopted when a board or commission wants to do a remote meeting.

Commissioner Reports None

Motion by Commissioner Bridges to adjourn meeting at 3:46 p.m. Motion carries.

Todd Eid, Commissioner

Ruth McElrath, Building Permit Technician

Approved_____