

TAHOE DOUGLAS FIRE PREVENTION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
**January 21, 2015**

**Those Present:**

Chairman Kevin Kjer  
Vice Chairman Larry Schussel  
Trustee Greg Felton  
Trustee Steve Seibel  
Incoming Trustee Bill Kircshner  
Outgoing Trustee Ann Grant  
Fire Chief Ben Sharit  
Legal Counsel Mike McCormick  
Assistant Chief Mark Novak

Battalion Chief Tim Allison  
Battalion Chief Jim Antti  
Fire Marshal Eric Guevin  
Captain Kevin Green  
Captain Ralph Jones  
Zephyr Crew Supervisor Keegan Schafer  
Office Manager Kate Warner  
Accounting Specialist Carrie Nolting  
Administrative Assistant Casey O'Neill

**1. Call to Order.**

Meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance.**

Pledge of allegiance was led by Assistant Chief Novak.

**3. Roll Call.**

Chairman Kjer, Vice Chairman Schussel, Trustee Felton, Trustee Kirschner and Trustee Seibel were present. New Trustee Kirschner was sworn in prior to meeting. A quorum was present.

**4. Approval of Agenda.**

Trustee Felton motioned to approve the agenda. Trustee Seibel seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

**5. Public Comment.**

None.

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

Items:

- a. Approval of Minutes 12/17/14 and 12/30/14
- b. Monthly Expenditures
- c. Goals and Objectives – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Update – FY 2014-15
- d. Personnel Policy – 5.3.2 Work Schedules – Rev. 01-2015

Vice Chairman Schussel motioned to approve the Consent Calendar items. Trustee Kirschner seconded the motion. Motion approved 5-0.

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

None.

**8. Presentation: Employee Recognition for Assistant Chief Mark Novak.**  
Fire Chief, Ben Sharit

Chief Sharit recognized Assistant Chief Novak's years of service to the district and presented a brief history of his accomplishments demonstrating his dedication to the district and our residents. Chief Novak is a 31 year fire service veteran and has been employed with TDFPD for the past 25 years. He started working for Tahoe Douglas as a firefighter in 1990, and was sent to paramedic school by the district shortly after, officially becoming a Firefighter/Paramedic in 1993. In 2003, he was promoted to the position of Captain and, in 2006, promoted to Battalion Chief for the Fuels Mgmt. Division. Chief Novak facilitated the growth of our Fuels Management and Fire Prevention Programs, which included the creation of the Zephyr Fire Crew. He was an integral part of identifying the long term financial needs of the Fuels Division by planning and leading our tax override to form the district's Fire Safe Community Fund. In 2009, Chief Novak was promoted to Fire Marshal and Assistant Chief. At this time, he was the main developer of the Curbside Defensible Space Inspection program and of the revised MOU for the removal of trees with the TRPA and their permitting process. In 2011, he was promoted to Assistance Chief of Operations and was in charge of the hiring and training of 12 new firefighters into the fire district. Furthermore, Chief Novak has been a participant, firefighter and a leader in several of the large campaign fires in our history, including the Gondola Fire, Angora Fire, Washoe Fire and the Caughlin Ranch Fire. These are just a few accomplishments from Chief Novak's career and we look forward to sharing more at Monday night's Goodbye and Good Luck reception. Chief Sharit closed by thanking Chief Novak and his family for his dedication to the district.

Trustee Felton added that it has been a pleasure working with Chief Novak. He has always known that he would get an honest opinion from Chief Novak when requesting it, which he truly appreciated. Trustee Felton stated further he has no doubt that Vail is going to benefit

immensely from having Chief Novak as their Fire Chief and at the same time, it will be a huge loss for the fire district. Congratulations.

Vice Chairman Schussel also congratulated Chief Novak and added that they had worked with each other for many years as firefighters and enjoyed seeing him move up along the ranks. He also thanked Chief Novak for his hard work and wished his family the best.

Trustee Seibel concurred adding that he appreciated Chief Novak's dedication to the district and has valued Chief Novak's input no matter what. Congratulations on the new position.

Chairman Kjer stated he first met Chief Novak when starting the Chimney Rock Fire Safe Chapter and was inspired by him to run to become a Trustee. His professionalism and dedication to excellence was very impressive; and he thanked Chief Novak for all he has done for the district.

Chief Novak thanked the board for their support and emphasized that it has been a distinct honor and pleasure working for them.

**9. Presentation: Acknowledgement of Outgoing Board Trustee.**  
Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Chief Sharit presented a Distinguished Service Award to Ann Grant in appreciation and in recognition for her years of service as a Trustee. Chief Sharit noted that Grant is another powerful leader in our district. She has been a board member for the past four years and was a fire safety chapter leader in our district, which was an integral part of the Fuels Management program. As a Trustee, Chief Sharit knew she would always be there when you needed her and she still is. She was the first Trustee to volunteer for Firefighter ride-a-long's with the engine companies on a regular basis. Grant really loves the fire service and we thank her for her service.

Grant stated that it was her pleasure serving on the board. It has been one of the best experiences of her life, other than with her children and husband. She really appreciates the fire district and the support she had from Chief Sharit, Chief Novak, former Chief Lefever, Fire Marshal Guevin and Forester Pickett in becoming a Fire Safe Counsel Chapter leader. Her Chapter would not have been as successful without their support. Grant worked with other fire districts throughout the state with the Nevada Fire Safe Counsel and really sees TDFPD as one of the top. She appreciates the experience she had as a board member and the support she has received from all the firefighters.

Trustee Felton added that it has been a pleasure working with Grant on the board. She was a veteran when he first joined and appreciated all the help she offered to him as a new board member.

Vice Chairman Schussel thanked Grant for all the time and effort she put into being a Trustee. It has been much appreciated by everyone who works here and the board is left in a lot better condition from her efforts.

Chief Novak noted that Grant has also been recognized by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Association of State Foresters and the National Fire Protection Association. She was the first winner ever of the Wildfire Mitigation Pioneer award. This goes to speak of her continuous dedication to the community, not only in Tahoe Douglas, but throughout the region. She has attended local meetings, as well as, meetings throughout the state to make sure wildfire mitigation carries on. Chief Novak thanked Grant for this and her service.

Grant stated she will be receiving the Wildfire Mitigation Pioneer Award on March 25, 2015 at the Peppermill Casino.

Chairman Kjer thanked Grant for all the volunteering she has done throughout the basin with wildfire prevention. Thanked her for all the work she has done for the community over the years.

Trustee Seibel really appreciated being on the board with Grant. He stated it was an honor to have served with her and we will miss her.

**10. For Possible Action: BOT Election of Officers for 2015.**

Chairman Kevin Kjer

Trustee Seibel motioned to nominate Vice Chairman Schussel as the Chairman to the Board for 2015. Trustee Felton seconded the motion. No public comment. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

Chairman Schussel motioned to nominate Trustee Felton as the Vice Chairman to the Board. Trustee Kirschner seconded the motion. No public comment. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

Chief Sharit recognized Trustee Kjer for his service as Chairman to the Board in 2014. He also thanked current Chairman Schussel for his work as Vice Chairman to the Board in 2014.

Note: the gavel was passed from outgoing Chairman Kjer to newly elected Chairman Schussel to continue the meeting.

**11. For Possible Action: Appoint Board of Trustees representatives to work on the Board Goals for FY 2015-16.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Chief Sharit stated that the fire district will need two Trustees to participate in the establishment of the board goals for FY 2015-16. Last year Chairman Schussel and Vice Chairman Felton were the representatives. Trustee Seibel and Trustee Kirschner volunteered to be the representatives.

No public comment.

Trustee Kjer motioned to appoint Trustee Seibel and Trustee Kirschner to be the board goals committee. Vice Chairman Felton seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

**12. Presentation: Discussion of the Retirement Benefits Investment Fund mandate.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

We are currently working on the GASB 45 report for 2015, 2016 and 2017. Information was provided from the Public Employee's Retirement System on how they set their annual rate of return on projected investments for not only NVPERS, but also for the Retired Benefits Insurance Fund. Their financial investment officer said their projection is currently at an 8% return. Chief Sharit's recommendation is to set the RBIF at an 8% return. The board can choose a lower or higher rate depending on what they feel is the projected revenue return on our investments for the RBIF. This presentation should appear on an upcoming board meeting agenda as an action item. Please bring any questions you may have to Chief Sharit over the next couple of weeks.

**13. For Possible Action: Discussion and possible action to authorize the Fire Chief to reinvest up to \$1,000,000 with Edward Jones in Certificates of Deposit by March 1, 2015.**

Fire Chief Ben Sharit

Last month we had a presentation from Edward Jones on our current money market balance, which is approximately \$1.1 million. This is an action item to direct Chief Sharit to invest the funds. The financial advisor's recommendation from last month was to invest in 2-4-6 month CD's and return by July, so the cash is in the money market account before the fire season. Chief Sharit reassured the board that the fire district's assets are sufficient to invest in the short term. The information presented to the board last month about the interest rates possibly increasing by summer would allow these CDs to mature in case we want to reinvest in early Fall.

No public comment.

Trustee Seibel made a motion to approve the action. Trustee Kjer seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved 5-0.

**14. Presentation: Fuels Management – 2014 Fire Season Review and 2015 planning and projections.**  
Assistant Chief Mark Novak

Chief Novak stated that amongst the things that have made his career here at Tahoe Douglas unique, exciting and challenging is the Fuels Management Program and that it has been an honor to have the opportunity to develop this program and to see it grow into what it is today. The right people are on the bus to lead this organization in the future. It takes a tremendous amount of work every year to hire on 28 new employees for the Zephyr Crew. Thanks to the administrative team for their help with this process (Nolting, Warner, O'Neill) and our Crew Supervisor Keegan Schafer. What he does every single year is very unique. He takes 18-25 year old young men, sometimes right out of high school, and creates people of honor with great customer service and at times, people of valor. Every year he attacks this challenge with a great deal of enthusiasm and does a great job with those people. The last part of our program is Forester John Pickett. Forester Pickett is an incredibly intelligent individual. He has talents and capabilities that he brings to this job that are unique. He was formally a CPA and has his Master's Degree, and brings his educational and background experiences to the job. He thinks outside of the box looking for new opportunities on how to run the program, how to fund the program, how to make it better and how to provide better customer service. For example, this year, we had people in our district who were going to have their insurance dropped because of where they live and Forester Pickett developed a program to meet the needs of the homeowners and the insurance companies.

A PowerPoint Presentation on the 2014 year-end review for Fuels Management was delivered by Crew Supervisor Keegan Schafer and Forester John Pickett.

Crew Supervisor Schafer added that he is frequently asked by his peers why the TDFPD Fuels Management Program is such a success, and he gives credit right back to the top. It really takes good leaders in order for the success to stick.

Vice Chairman Felton asked how much time the Zephyr Crew spends on thinning and fire prevention versus fighting actual fires.

Chief Novak said that during the middle of implementation/fire season, even if the crew is off on a fire, they must continue with the projects and goals set for each given year. The breakdown of their time is about 65% thinning and 35% firefighting with separate prescribed/pile burning occurring off season with a fewer number employees. The firefighting resource is important for local fire suppression, maintaining a confident fire crew and retention of employees.

Trustee Felton asked what percentage of the curbside defensible space inspections either passed initially or subsequently after fixing the problems?

Forester Pickett answered that 60% of those inspections substantially passed. Substantially meaning they have taken actions that have materially modified fire behavior. Although 40% of the properties are still not passing, they are coming along rapidly. Three hundred ninety six (396) full defensible space inspections were requested by homeowners in 2014, compared to only one hundred eighty (180) in 2013. This demonstrates more people in the district becoming motivated and aware of the fire dangers.

The Curbside Defensible Space Program was established in 2010 and operational in 2011. This program involves each engine company completing inspections for a portion of the properties in the district each year. There are about 2,500 properties total in the district and we have completed defensible space inspections for every single property as of 2014. Every property owner in the district has received a notice regarding defensible space since 2010 and this will repeat every 4 years. Finally, of those properties selected for the curbside program in 2014, all but 10 were found to be compliant.

Chairman Schussel asked if South Tahoe Refuse benefits from participating in the *Compost Your Combustibles* program other than being a good neighbor. Do they sell the fuel dumped for combusting (pine needles, branches, debris)?

Forester Pickett explained that South Tahoe Refuse receives diversion credits for all of the tonnage that comes out of the *Compost Your Combustibles* Program. However, they are contributing financially to this program, since it is free to dump combustibles at Heavenly Boulder Lodge and normally there is a fee to have STR pick up your combustibles from your property.

Former Trustee Grant added that there was great foresight in this fire district with former Chief LeFever, Chief Novak and Chief Sharit working to get the tax override in 2008. This money allows the district to match grants because you cannot match a federal grant with federal monies. The taxes coming into the district qualify as a match on these grants.

Vice Chairman Felton asked what the awareness is of the general population for these programs offered by the district.

Chief Sharit stated it is a continuous process as we interact with the community. We send letters out to the property owners and attend community meetings to create that interaction. The fire district staff does a great job interacting with the community and Chief Sharit feels very comfortable with the majority of the residents understanding the programs. The struggle is reaching out to the second homeowners, but even those people are receiving correspondence over the phone and by mail by administration.

Former Trustee Grant added that she was elected to the Fire Adapted Community Advisor Board and hopes to get the chapters back active again to help with spreading more awareness throughout the community.

**15. Report Item: Review of Monthly Fire District Activities.**  
Fire Chief Ben Sharit

**Employee Years of Service Recognition:**

Captain Brandon Spry	9 Years of Service
Captain Brandon Brady	9 Years of Service
Engineer Steve Prather	9 years of Service
Captain Justin Rossi	8 Years of Service
Engineer Kevin Green	8 Years of Service
Engineer Ben Pratt	8 Years of Service
Forester John Pickett	4 Years of Service

**Updates:**

Acknowledged **Brian Zabel's promotion** from Engineer to Captain and **Brad Petersen's promotion** from Firefighter/Paramedic to Engineer. Both positions were filled due to Captain Bob Child and Engineer Greg Peterson's retirement earlier this month.

Accepted **Engineer Jesse Rowan's resignation**. He is going back to work at Reno Fire Department. He was laid off from Reno Fire five years ago and came to Tahoe Douglas Fire shortly after. He has done a great job for our district.

**Exit Interviews** – Started doing these with our seasonal employees and now are completing these for our retiree's and anyone that leaves the district. It is a great process that allows us to draw insights on how to grow and improve our service levels.

**Wells Fargo** –The district periodically reviews our different services and contracts for services and as part of that process Office Manager Warner and Chief Sharit met with the government Vice President from Wells Fargo to review our three accounts: Ambulance Lock Box, Community Involvement Fund and Cafeteria Plan. Reviewed all the costs, fees and services making sure we get the best product available and the best cost to the tax payers. It is staff's intent to review our accounts an annual basis.

**Goodbye and Good Luck Party for Chief Novak** – Monday, January 26 at 5:00 pm in the Station 23 classroom. Chief Novak was hired as **Fire Chief in Vail, Colorado** with the Vail Fire Department.

**Trustee Training** – New Trustee Kirschner to attend. Training will be spread out over the next few meetings/months. Trustee Seibel pointed out that we may be able to coordinate with Douglas County because they will be offering this training for their board members soon. All other Trustees are invited to attend.



**Financial Summary** – Directed by the board to purchase CDs this month. Will be in contact with Wayne Omel from Edward Jones.

**Attachments:**

**Thank you card** received from Trustee Grant for flowers sent from her surgery.

**Firefighters Local 2441 Zephyr Cove Elementary Jacket Donations** – Article written in the Tahoe Daily Tribune on 12/19/14 about our firefighters donating 44 coats to elementary school children.

Vice Chairman Felton asked if the coat drive was need based.

President of the Local 2441 Captain Ralph Jones stated the program “Keeping Warm” is run entirely by firemen throughout the state of Nevada. Last year TDFD firefighters helped donate, but it was very last minute, and all the donations went to Reno. This year they wanted to bring the program to our community. There were 40-45 kids who were basically going to school without coats. A U.S. manufacturing company made the coats for the kids with their sizes and the firefighters helped to distribute the coats at Zephyr Cove Elementary. Some coats also went up to George Whittell, as there are middle school aged children at this school.

Fire Marshal Guevin added Kiwanis of South Lake Tahoe also had a program in place, however, they lost money this year and were not able to give out as many coats. Since Tahoe Douglas Fire helped out this year, many more coats were available for South Lake Tahoe students as well.

Vice Chairman Felton asked if the **Hard Rock Hotel** is on track to open on January 28<sup>th</sup> as scheduled.

Fire Marshal Guevin responded yes, but it will be a phased approach on the opening.

- 16. Discussion: Confirm next meeting with a proposed date of Wednesday, February 25, 2015 with a start time of 3:00 pm and possible agenda items.**

Meeting confirmed for Wednesday, February 25, 2015 at Station 23 in the classroom.

Suggested agenda items:

**N/A**

**Adjourn**

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

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

This meeting was recorded on audio tape.

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

APPROVED