

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL WORKSHOP MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF  
THE TWENTYNINE PALMS WATER DISTRICT AND CITY OF TWENTYNINE PALMS  
TO REVIEW MATTERS RELATED TO THE POTENTIAL TRANSFER OF THE  
TWENTYNINE PALMS FIRE DEPARTMENT TO THE CITY**

**TWENTYNINE PALMS FIRE DEPARTMENT – STATION 422  
3834 LEAR AVE, TWENTYNINE PALMS, CA 92277**

**MARCH 10, 2008**

Call to Order

City Councilmember Steve Spear called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., 3834 Lear Avenue, Twentynine Palms, California. Director Jim Yockey led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Those responding to roll call were City Mayor Pro Tem Steve Spear and Councilmember Jim Harris and District Directors Alan Anthony and Sam Moore. Also present were City Manager Michael Tree, Fire Chief Jim Thompson, and District Secretary Annie Alexander.

Additions/Deletions to the Agenda

Mayor Pro Tem Spear requested an addition to the agenda following item #4 allowing the committee members take a straw vote to see which of the options being discussed would be most favored. The Committee members unanimously agreed to add the item to the agenda (see item #5).

Public Comments

Ms. Anita Mercy addressed the Committee regarding her concerns related to the potential transfer.

1. Review and Discuss Options

- A. Water District retains jurisdiction of the Fire Department.

Chief Thompson reviewed the Department's current level of service and indicated that the Department was capable of responding to emergencies but could not effectively provide any other services due to revenue constraints. In addition, Chief Thompson stated that when the voter approved special tax was passed in 2005, the Department committed to continue the current level of service for 8 years. After June 30, 2013 the Department will have difficulties maintaining the current level of service without additional revenue. Additional funding could be provided by an increase to the voter approved special tax or by forming a Community Facilities District to tax new development. By forming a Community Facilities District, it could be possible to keep the existing tax structure close to what it is today for current residents, only newly developed properties would pay higher taxes. Chief Thompson then responded to questions from the Committee.

- B. Water District and City establish a Joint Powers Authority to manage the Fire Department.

Chief Thompson explained that a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) would require an agreement between the District and the City to co-manage the operations of the Fire Department. Forming a JPA would not have to be a permanent arrangement and could be an interim step before transferring the Department to City jurisdiction. City Manager Tree indicated that the formation of a JPA would work best if there were an immediate benefit from doing so which may not be the case in this situation.

- C. Fire Department jurisdiction is transferred to the City within City boundaries and the Water District contracts with the City for fire service in the unincorporated areas.

Chief Thompson explained that this process would involve LAFCO and would transfer the jurisdiction of all areas within City boundaries from the District to the City, including revenue received from the voter approved special tax. As part of this process, the Water District would need to identify how the unincorporated areas of the District would continue to receive fire protection services. The Water District could contract with the City to provide this service. To begin this process both agencies would need to adopt a resolution supporting the transfer of jurisdiction. Chief Thompson then responded to questions from the Committee. The Committee then discussed the importance of maintaining the level of service for the unincorporated areas of the District and the potential benefits of transferring the Department to the City. The benefits discussed were as follows:

- The City would be able to increase the special tax if needed by a majority vote versus a 2/3 vote needed by the District.
- Having both the Police and Fire departments under a unified command structure would be critical to public safety in regards to future development and emergency preparedness.
- Public safety, fire inspection and code enforcement programs could be enhanced.

The Committee also discussed grants available to fund the Department and possible advantages to securing grant funds if the Department was under City jurisdiction.

D. San Bernardino County Fire Department

1. Fire Department is annexed into the County Fire Department.

Chief Thompson explained that the Water District could request fire service be annexed into the County Fire Department. This would involve LAFCO and all local control of the fire service would then belong to the County. With this option, there is a possibility that the current level of service could be diminished or even discontinued in some areas.

2. Contract with the County Fire Department for fire service.

Chief Thompson also explained that the Water District could contract with the County Fire Department to provide fire service. The County Fire Department would only provide a level of service based on available revenue or identify the cost required for the level of service the Water District desired. This option would be extremely costly to the District.

2. Approve Minutes of the Special Workshop Meeting held on January 28, 2008  
Director Anthony made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Director Moore and unanimously approved.
3. Future Agenda Items and Direction to the Staffs of the Water District and City  
Mayor Pro Tem Spear requested to move discussion of this item to follow agenda item #5.
4. Comments from Task Force Members  
Director Moore had no comments. Director Anthony, Councilmember Harris and Mayor Pro Tem Spear all stated that they felt pursuing option 1C was the most viable.

Chief Thompson responded to questions from Director Moore regarding the possibility of the City providing an ambulance service.

5. Straw Vote to Decide Which of the Options is Most Favored  
Councilmember Harris made a motion to adopt option 1C, Fire Department jurisdiction to be transferred to the City within City boundaries and the Water District to contract with the City for fire service in the unincorporated areas at the same level of service that currently exists, seconded by Director Moore. The motion was approved by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Mayor Pro Tem Spear, Councilmember Harris, Director Anthony and Director Moore  
NOES: None

Director Jim Yockey then addressed the Committee regarding the potential transfer.

3. Future Agenda Items and Direction to the Staffs of the Water District and City  
Mayor Pro Tem Spear requested staff of both agencies to return to their legislative bodies and request a resolution supporting the transfer of jurisdiction to be adopted no later than June 1, 2008. Following discussion, this date was changed to July 1, 2008. Mayor Pro Tem Spear also requested staff to provide the committee with a draft contractual agreement between the District and the City and a policy statement describing how the City would proceed to acquire the Department, including its assets and equipment, while providing the same level of service. In addition, Mayor Pro Tem Spear requested City staff to hire an outside auditor to review the financial assets of the Fire Department including any possible financial impact related to retirement plans, salaries and medical benefits. This report is to be brought back to the committee for review at the next meeting.

The next meeting of the committee was scheduled to be held May 19, 2008 at 6 p.m. at the Water District offices.

The meeting was then adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

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Jim Thompson, Fire Chief