



PUBLIC MEETING
September 21, 2017
MINUTES

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners Public Meeting was held on Thursday, September 21, 2017, at 3:30 PM in Commission Chambers Room 330.

Roll Call

Chairman Andy Hunthausen called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Commissioner Jim McCormick was present. Commissioner Susan Good Geise was out of the office. Others attending all or a portion of the meeting included Roger Baltz, Bob Drake, Leo Dutton, Nicho Hash, Paul Spengler, and Nadine McCarty, Recording Secretary.

Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone recited the pledge.

Consent Action Items

There were no consent action items.

Resolution 2017-138 Declaring Stage I Fire Restrictions (Reinstating the Exemption for Campfires) in Lewis and Clark County Effective 12:01 a.m. Friday, September 22, 2017. (Paul Spengler)

Paul Spengler, Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinator, presented the resolution to amend the current Stage I fire restrictions and to reinstate the exemption for campfires. The recommendation came from the weekly tele-conference call of the fire restriction group to maintain the Stage I restrictions, with a unanimous approval to recommend reinstatement of campfires with fire rings or pits made of solid metal, stone or concrete and not larger than 48 inches across.

Dave Salmon, Fire Chief of East Valley Fire Department and President of the Rural Fire Council, stated all opinions were heard whether or not to stay in Stage I restrictions. Even after the first snow storm a 90 acre grass fire occurred, thus Stage I restrictions remain. The group consists of the Tri-County Fire Area, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), US Forest Service and local fire chiefs.

Bob Drake, Fire Chief of Tri-Lakes Fire, stated how complicated it is to get Federal, State, and local jurisdictions to all do the same thing and the importance of it. The County Deputies are those that have to enforce this. In the past there was not consistency. In order to keep the public consistently informed all parties involved must be consistent. The forecast looks like there will be warm weather in the following week, fire season is not over. The Forest Service runs the Tuesday morning conference calls and there is no limit to the number of participants. The problem is there is a vast

difference in the amount of moisture received from the last storm all the way from 2 inches to less than 0.1 inches.

Leo Dutton, Sheriff/Fire Warden, stated he consults with the Rural Fire Council. The County agreement with the DNRC allows them to fight wildfires on private land or areas with no national forest protection. It also states how mutual decisions are reached. The DNRC, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation (BLR) are all passing this, putting the County in a disparate position if it is not passed. Each fire warden votes on the call and arrives at his vote from the Fire Council input. He suggested that every fire chief converse with the Fire Council prior to the conference call. Stage restrictions are a much larger area than just the county and cooperation with all is necessary. The main counties involved are Broadwater, Jefferson and Lewis and Clark, sometimes Cascade. When fire is of concern they all get on the call.

Discussion was had on what issues could arise if the agreement was modified at the request of the Fire Council and a fire occurred. Sheriff Dutton stated as the Fire Warden he would have to contact the others involved and explain the reasons for the changes. He does not know the County liability if that were to occur. Nicho Hash, Deputy County Attorney, stated the office is not prepared to give a legal opinion as to the County's liability.

No public comment was received.

A motion was made by Commissioner McCormick to approve the resolution declaring Stage I Fire Restrictions and reinstating the exemption for campfires in Lewis and Clark County effective 12:01 a.m. Friday, September 22, 2017 and seconded by Commissioner Hunthausen.

Mr. Hash stated the effective date should be 12:01 a.m. Saturday, September 23, 2017.

A motion was made by Commissioner McCormick to amend the motion to approve the resolution declaring Stage I Fire Restrictions and reinstating the exemption for campfires in Lewis and Clark County effective 12:01 a.m. Saturday, September 23, 2017 and seconded by Commissioner Hunthausen. The motion Passed on a 2-0 vote.

Public comment on any public matter within the jurisdiction of the Commission that is not on the agenda above.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:09 pm.

LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


Susan Good-Geise, Chair


Andy Hunthausen, Vice Chair


Jim McCormick, Member

ATTEST:


Paulette DeHart, Clerk of the Board