

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, JUNE 28, 2011 at 10:30 A.M.
IN THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
LOCATED AT 1415 MELODY LANE, BUILDING G, BISBEE ARIZONA**

Chairman Call called the Special Meeting of the Board of Supervisors to order at 10:30 a.m. All three supervisors were present: Pat Call, Chairman; Ann English, Vice-Chairman; Richard Searle, Supervisor. Also attending were Mike Ortega, County Administrator; Jim Vlahovich, Deputy County Administrator; Rod Rothrock, Chief Deputy, Sheriff's Office; Marty Haverty, Solid Waste Management Director; Mike Evans, Emergency Services Coordinator; Elizabeth Philhower, Emergency Services Specialist; Karen Riggs, County Engineer; Britt Hanson, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney; Katie Howard, Clerk of the Board; other County staff; Gerry Gonzalez, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist; representatives from the NRCS; representatives from the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team; and the Douglas Emergency Services Facility staff.

PRESENTATION

ITEM 1

Update by County Administrator, Mike Ortega, regarding County activities in response to the Monument and Horseshoe II fires.

Mr. Ortega said the purpose of this meeting is to update the Board on the actions to-date; the County does not have all the answers and he expects a follow-up meeting in the future.

ACTION

Board of Supervisors

ITEM 2

Discussion and possible action to ratify prior actions taken by the County to-date to provide assistance to residents affected by the Monument and Horseshoe II fires and discussion and direction to the County Administrator regarding proposed future actions related to the fires.

Mr. Evans began with the Horseshoe II fire that started on May 8th and recounted history of evacuations over a 7-week history of fire. Twenty-three structures burned; of those nine were residential, but not primary and that number is short of the requirements to receive a FEMA declaration. The fire burned 223 thousand acres, is 100% contained with 51.6 million spent.

The Monument Fire started on June 12th; three major blowouts; 60 residences thought to be primary, burned; 30 thousand acres burned, is 90% contained with 17.5 million spent. Clean up is underway with air support being the biggest cost. The County worked with the state, going out to each property that burned; did assessments regarding damaged or destroyed as part of the process for the FEMA package. We opened an Individual Assistant Service Center to help victims of the fire with assistance from various agencies. Also tracking which businesses were lost, damaged, or closed due to the fire and lost income; information to be sent to the Small Business Administration (SBA) which will make a determination regarding whether to open an SBA loan up to those businesses. Ms. Philhower added if enough businesses have an economic impact, it can help count towards the overall measure of the fires' impact.

Mr. Evans said we are now working on recovery; have ordered 20 thousand sandbags to be delivered to Highways; some will be sent to Palominas and Portal residents. There is a planning team in place including the state (all hazard incident management team) to plan for flooding. They have looked at the areas of potential flooding including Highways 92 and 80.

Mr. Rothrock did not have anything to add on the Horseshoe II fire; for the Monument Fire, his department had 130 officers working the fire with over 3,000 hours of overtime at a cost of \$40,500.

Mr. Ortega gave an overview of the impact on the county including staff and Mr. Evans added that all the equipment and man hours have been tracked.

Mr. Ortega added details on the emergency transfer station and satellite office at Huachuca Oaks Camp; approximately 500 tons of materials/debris have been moved. He could not say enough about neighbors stepping up to assist the County's efforts in aiding fire victims, along with DOC inmates.

Chairman Call reported the satellite office has issued 19 permits so far and residents are very grateful. Stan Greer, and the Sierra Vista Food Bank helped support folks who had lost their homes. There was a special thanks to Dan Syson at Huachuca Oaks for use of the camp. Mr. Ortega added the Planning & Zoning Department had come up with idea to house the satellite office there.

Mr. Ortega continued with the Horseshoe II fire and said staff is available to meet with folks; working through logistics with the Forest Service using DOC labor and County equipment to construct emergency fencing on private property and also using sandbags to protect property but that may flood a neighbor, possibly creating another issue.

Mr. Gerry Gonzalez said there is money for people who have open contracts that will cover costs for fencing. They need to make an assessment and try to work directly with the landowners.

Mr. Ortega said part of the challenge for Portal area is its distance from Douglas and communications challenges in the area; assistance may come from the north. We will be putting roll-offs in Portal, Whitetail and Turkey Creek that will be scheduled and advertised so people know. Also, flooding concerns; part of discussion will be informing folks about flood insurance; FEMA insurance is significantly less expensive.

Mr. Gonzales has had a couple of meetings; working with the Hereford Conservation District and planning to host a public meeting, with the Forest Service, NRCS and the County. He moved on to the Emergency Watershed Program which is run through the NRCS to assist with flooding after it rains. The Forest Service is doing their part on the upper part of the watershed and we want to help private residents. In order to apply and get on the list for funding, the County would be the sponsor and a package would be sent to Washington. Typically as sponsor, the County would need to fund 25% of the costs for obtaining easements, etc. and then develop an agreement to transfer the responsibility to the landowners. A NRCS representative explained the program in detail.

Mr. Gonzalez said the County needs to write a letter about being a sponsor of this program. NRCD investigates and does the legwork for the plan and project costs for the program.

The Board gave administration direction to move forward with a generic letter using the BAER Team assessment of the worst burned areas as a basis for funding. Mr. Ortega outlined the cost estimates received from County

departments and discussed the logistics of recovery efforts. There was a short discussion about current fee waivers for reconstruction permits; vital records and court document fee waivers and adoption of the International Wild Land – Urban Interface Code.

Mr. Evans said this code sets out the protection guidelines Wild Horse and Three Canyons residents had followed for good fire protection (30’ of defensible space around homes); helping save those homes.

Mr. Ortega received direction from the Board about items for further discussion and possible action and then moved on to lessons learned from a County perspective.

The Board and staff discussed the complicated certification process associated with local residents using their own equipment to help because the National Parks and Forest Service were in command of the fire. It is less stringent if the fire becomes an urgent situation moving outside the forest areas.

Mr. Evans said one of the biggest recommendations for approach in the future is to bring in a structure protection specialist with local jurisdiction that knows the area and terrain as opposed to out of area folks. Mr. Ortega said we may also want to consider having some type of Board presence at the Incident Command Center to facilitate dissemination of information.

Vice-Chairman English made a motion to ratify prior actions taken by the County to-date to provide assistance to residents affected by the Monument and Horseshoe II fires. The motion was seconded by Supervisor Searle and approved 3-0.

ITEM 3

Ratify an Agreement for Temporary Use of a Parcel at King’s Ranch Subdivision as an Emergency Solid Waste Staging Area.

Supervisor Searle made a motion to ratify an Agreement for Temporary Use of a Parcel at King’s Ranch Subdivision as an Emergency Solid Waste Staging Area. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chairman English and approved 3-0.

In conclusion, Mr. Ortega commended Emergency Services staff, Mr. Evans and Ms. Philhower for their work on these fires and appreciation of their efforts.

The Board thanked everyone for their hard work.

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Call adjourned the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

APPROVED: _____
Patrick G. Call, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Katie A. Howard, Clerk of the Board