



**OFFICE OF THE COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
EMERGENCY SESSION MINUTES**

Saturday, April 23, 2022, 1:00 p.m.

**1:00 p.m. – Elected Official Briefing on Tunnel Fire
2:00 p.m. – Community Outreach Meeting on Tunnel Fire**

Sinagua Middle School, 3950 East Butler Avenue, Flagstaff, AZ, 86004

Present: Chair Patrice Horstman, Vice Chair Jeronimo Vasquez and Supervisor Judy Begay were present in person. Supervisor Matt Ryan joined the meeting at 1:37 p.m. in person.

Absent/Excused: Supervisor Lena Fowler

Also Present: County Manager Steve Peru, Deputy County Manager/Public Works Director Lucinda Andreani, Deputy County Manager Sue Brown, Public Affairs Director Trey Williams, Program Manager III Gregory Nelson, Sheriff Jim Driscoll, Coconino Forest Supervisor Laura Jo West, U.S. National Weather Service Meteorologist Brian Klimowski, City of Flagstaff Manager Greg Clifton, City of Flagstaff Mayor Paul Deasy, Coral Evans from Senator Mark Kelly's Office, County Director of Emergency Management Wes Dison, Sheriff Jim Driscoll, several forest service personnel and incident command team members and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Lindsay Daley were present in person.

Emergency Session:

1. Update, discussion and possible direction or action regarding the Tunnel Fire Emergency with the Coconino County Board of Supervisors; including updates from different agencies involved; pursuant to A.R.S. 38-431.02 (D) and A.R.S. 38-431.03 (A)(3), the Board may vote to enter executive session if needed.
Emergency Management

County Manager Steve Peru called the meeting to order at 1:13 p.m.

County Manager Peru explained that the meeting is a briefing prior to the 2:00 p.m. community meeting and it is an opportunity to pass on information to each other and he thanked the team for being there.

Everyone introduced themselves.

Randy Johnson from the Type 1 Incident Team (Northwest Team) explained that they took command of the incident at 7:00 a.m. this morning, worked to coordinate appropriately with the needs of the local community. He explained that things are looking well and in a good place as far as the fire is concerned. He also explained that they are working with various agencies and focusing on how to meet the local needs and incorporate them into their planning process.

James Osbourne from the Field Operations of the Type I Incident Team provided an operation update. He explained that the local unit stabilized the incident and there is some cleanup that needs to occur around the area. He spoke about the Tunnel fire being in the old Schultz fire burn area and that they are working in the previous fire scar. He also explained that when shadowing the Type III team there was 500 acres across the road and that transitioned today- multiple spots that kept spotting between down heavy debris that a lot of fuels are still dry but that the moisture helped and that they got a line secured in an area. He further went over a map and explained the work they have been doing around the fire area including dozer lines, utilizing cinder in the area, and looking at opportunities to directly attack the fire. He explained that Flagstaff hotshots have gone towards the head of the fire, working it with helicopters and that the Branch Director flew the area today to see what they have in order to make a plan.

James Osbourne further explained that the team is attacking all affected structures, doing assessments, and mopping up. He also spoke about the team getting familiar with Medicine Valley and Doney Park in case the winds shift so they will know what to do. He explained that they have been in communications with the Sheriff's Office regarding re-entry of the area and opening the highway and will have a final analysis this evening. He also explained there will still be smoke in the area.

Flagstaff District Ranger for the USFS Matt McGrath explained that the fire investigation is continuing to determine if the fire was human caused or lightning caused. He also provided some numbers regarding human caused versus lightning caused fires. Mr. McGrath explained the criteria used to determine when they should have fire restrictions. Lastly, he explained that the Tunnel Fire started in an area that has year-round campfire restrictions and how most of the critical areas around town have had campfire restrictions in place already.

Sheriff Jim Driscoll spoke about re-entry into the area and explained that when the time comes, they will have a check point at Silver Saddle and that the highway will stay closed while re-entry occurs to give at least three hours for people to get in and then they will open up the highway. He explained that they will ask that people not come back with large animals just yet and that they remain on the set status. He explained Sheriff deputies will remain in the area and provide security for a few days.

Chair Patrice Horstman welcomed the Type I incident team and expressed her appreciation for the commitment to the area.

Supervisor Matt Ryan came into the meeting at 1:37 p.m.

Chair Horstman explained it is a worried community and that she has received many thankful comments to the Sheriff's Office and when this happens the community is resilient and comes together. She expressed her appreciation for all that is being done.

Supervisor Ryan thanked those in the room and spoke about it being a team.

County Manager Peru ended the discussion on item #1 at 1:40 p.m.

The Board of Supervisors took a break at 1:40 p.m.

Present: Chair Patrice Horstman, Vice Chair Jeronimo Vasquez, Supervisor Judy Begay and Supervisor Matt Ryan were at the meeting in person.

Absent/Excused: Supervisor Lena Fowler

Also Present: Sheriff Jim Driscoll, National Weather Service Meteorologist Brian Klimowski, Flagstaff District Ranger with the USFS Matt McGrath, County Health and Human Services Director Kim Musselman, many members of the community affected by the Tunnel Fire.

2. Presentation and update to the community regarding the Tunnel Fire Emergency; including updates from different agencies involved regarding fire conditions, potential flood risk, and evacuation status. **Emergency Management**

Chair Horstman called the community meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

There was a sign language interpreter present at the meeting.

Chair Patrice Horstman thanked everyone for being there. She spoke about neighbors helping neighbors and thanked the Type III Incident Team and explained that the Type I Pacific Northwest Team is now overseeing the fire as of this morning. She went over who will speak at the meeting and that they will take questions at the end.

Vice Chair Supervisor Jeronimo Vasquez thanked everyone for being at the meeting. He explained that it is a difficult time for the community and thanked the community partners that have come to help support the community. He thanked the Type I Team and thanked the county staff for working through this. He also thanked the residents and shared information about the community crisis phone line and the Community Assistance Center.

Type I Incident Management Team representative Randy Johnson spoke about the team being made up of individuals that work for different agencies. He spoke about the good work done by the Type III local team on the fire to mitigate the incident. He explained that they transitioned this morning to the Type I Incident Team and shadowed the Type III Team yesterday. He explained that success to them is to respond, engage, stabilize and mitigate the incident, and that they are looking forward to interacting with the community.

Type I Incident Team Operations Section Chief James Osbourne explained that what the local team did was setting them up for success. He went through the map of the fire area and spoke about the work being done regarding the fire. He also spoke about the work they are doing in the old Schultz fire scar, including putting out spot fires and putting up dozer lines. He spoke about the 420 road being the control feature and how they are mopping up the fire. He explained their efforts in working the fire and that with less wind they have been able to do helicopter bucket drops. He continued to explain the map and what they are doing to patrol, mop up and secure the area regarding fire. Mr. Osbourne also spoke about the power company securing the powerlines in the area and energized the powerlines as well as service panels and

how they are working with the Sheriff's Office to determine when the community can go back into the area.

National Weather Service Meteorologist Brian Klimowski spoke about the weather yesterday with some showers and winds and now cooler temperatures and that there will be lighter winds through Monday; the winds will shift from north today to the east by Monday. He explained that smoke will start coming into the Doney Park area tonight. Lastly, he explained that the next couple of days will have lighter winds and more favorable fire-fighting conditions.

Flagstaff District Ranger with the USFS Matt McGrath spoke about an email he received from a resident regarding information he provided at the last community meeting related to fires caused by humans versus lightning. He spoke about how fires are caused in northern Arizona. He showed a table of human caused and lightning caused fires in the area from the past. He explained there is a permanent, year-round campfire restriction surrounding the City of Flagstaff, which is where the Tunnel Fire started. Mr. McGrath explained how they depend on assistance from other agencies as well as the community to help spot and prevent fires. He thanked the community for calling in the fire.

Sheriff Jim Driscoll spoke about the re-entry process being difficult as staff needs to ensure it is safe and orderly and requested that citizens be cautious as they re-enter when the time comes. He further explained what to expect upon re-entry with identification needing to be shown and that the highway will be opened a few hours after the area is open to the residents. Sheriff Driscoll also explained that the residents will remain in "set" status upon re-entry into the area and asked that residents wait at least a day before bringing livestock back to the area. He thanked the community for their patience and mentioned that the cooperation from city, state, county and federal government has been phenomenal.

County Health and Human Services (HHS) Director Kim Musselman explained that it is necessary to be cautious upon re-entry and to be mindful of the hazards. She also spoke about food in refrigerators and freezers likely being contaminated and needing to be disposed and that the County will be putting dumpsters out for people to dispose of spoiled food. She also spoke about smoke coming back into the impacted areas. She further explained that the Community Assistance Center can assist in-person and online and that it is located at the Guidance Center and open daily 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., as determined by need. She also gave out information regarding the call center information line and that FedEx is storing packages at 5700 S. Pulliam drive for residents to pick up packages.

Deputy County Manager Lucinda Andreani spoke about working with United Way to mobilize volunteer efforts and collect donations. She explained that dumpsters have been deployed to the area for residents to dispose of spoiled food and maps will be provided to show where the dumpsters are. She also explained that on Monday, grocery assistance will be provided through the Community Assistance Center for residents to be able to restock. She also explained that dumpsters for hazardous materials such as paint and oil will be deployed on Monday and that dumpsters will also be deployed for burned materials. She spoke about the fire being a testament to homes that had defensible space and that property damage assessments will be done in the coming days. She explained that they have been in communication with Rubicon veterans that assist with cleanup for these types of incidents and they will be assisting with this. Lastly, Ms. Andreani explained the County is working with JE Fuller Engineering to do an analysis of what to expect regarding flooding after the fire, which will determine the need for

where sandbags may be needed and mitigation efforts prior to the monsoon season. She also mentioned that of the five watersheds that were impacted from the Schultz fire, there were two watersheds- Copeland and Peaceful drainages in which the residents elected not to have mitigation efforts constructed in the past.

Chair Horstman explained that it is important that the community is firesafe and fire-wise and encouraged residents to sign up for emergency notifications. She also mentioned that citizens can get the latest news and information regarding the Tunnel Fire on the County website.

Chair Horstman opened the meeting up for questions at 2:58 p.m.

Question 1 from an unidentified person thanked the outside agencies that came in and helped them and requested to get information on the number of calls received when the fire broke out and wanted to know why the fire was not stopped. Flagstaff District Ranger with USFS Matt McGrath explained that the fire was called in at 4:22 p.m. on Sunday and that they responded to the fire within 15 minutes, that there were no flames by Sunday night and Monday and then when crews went back out on Tuesday that there were flames and the wind picked up and the fire got away. The unidentified person further asked what agency responded to the initial calls that there was a fire and Mr. McGrath stated it was the Forest Service and explained that she can contact their public information office for specific information on calls received.

Question 2 from Barbara Bartell asked why the Forest Service was not on the fire and explained that she felt that crews should have been out there at all times. She explained that her house was not destroyed but many of her neighbors' homes burned and that she expects there will be lawsuits as a result.

Chair Horstman explained that an outside agency will be investigating the fire and source of the fire and hopefully there will be more information regarding it.

Questions 3 from an unidentified person asked if there is somewhere they can obtain a document that states that residents are not allowed in the area so that they can provide it to insurance. Chair Horstman stated that staff will get him that information.

Question 4 was from Susie who stated she lives in the Fernwood area. She asked why the fire was only contained and not suppressed when the National Weather Service forecasted 50 mile per hour winds and why the fire crews did not stay on site around the clock. Flagstaff District Ranger with the USFS Matt McGrath explained that they managed the fire for suppression from the beginning.

Question 5 was from an unidentified person. He asked why it took so long to get a Type I Incident Team on the fire and explained that it seemed like Crooks fire has more resources. Flagstaff District Ranger with the USFS Matt McGrath explained that the Type I Incident Team was ordered Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. and the team needed to be briefed and they were here by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday and that the two Type I teams in area were already committed so the team had to come down from the pacific northwest.

Question 6 was from an unidentified person. She asked when the re-entry to the area may happen and explained that she was concerned because she is running out of money for food and shelter. Mr. Johnson explained that they have been discussing re-entry and are evaluating the

needs for fire suppression and they will work to make a recommendation to the Sheriff this evening. She spoke about how a United Parcel Service (UPS) worker encouraged her to evacuate the area. She also asked if there will be any assistance to lift the spoiled food into the bins. Sheriff Jim Driscoll explained that when he gets the information this evening then they will plan to let them in tomorrow; however, much is dependent on weather. County HHS Director Kim Musselman explained that they will provide assistance for people to get the spoiled food in the bins and that the Community Assistance Center should be contacted for those that need assistance with funds for shelter.

Deputy County Manager Lucinda Andreani encouraged residents to call the call center if anyone has needs. She also explained the emergency notification system that people can sign up for.

Question 7 was from Helen who stated she lives off of Brandis. She asked how residents will get access to information regarding the investigation and stated that she hopes there is transparency on that. Chair Horstman explained that they will provide information when they get it.


Questions 8 was from Gary Sharp who stated he lives on Monsoon which is off of Brandis. He explained that he had stopped at the fire station when he saw the smoke, but no one answered and that he also called 911 to report the fire. He explained that when he called again on Wednesday that he was told that a controlled burn was being done. He spoke about what he did to save his property- that he was hosing his property down and didn't have help. Flagstaff District Ranger with the USFS Matt McGrath explained that they did not have any prescribed fires this week.

Chair Horstman explained that the County will provide information as they get it.

Chair Horstman adjourned the meeting at 3:25 p.m.

COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

(SEAL)



Patrice Horstman, Chair

ATTEST:



Lindsay Daley, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors