

Consolidated Reno-area fire departments going their separate ways

By Brian Duggan, Reno Gazette-Journal

Reno officials continued to push on Wednesday for a “regionalized” fire service plan that fell apart when it was presented to Washoe County Commissioners last month.

That \$45 million plan would have consolidated fire services in Reno, the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District and the Sierra Fire Protection District under an independent fire board and reopened all labor contracts with firefighters if the county and city agreed to it.

Commissioners ultimately nixed it, saying they couldn’t live with the plan’s \$2.1 million deficit closed by reducing payments to the county’s fire services reserve funds.

Reno Fire Chief Michael Hernandez said while the plan wasn’t perfect the fact that labor contracts would be renegotiated would result in cost savings.

“Every single article is on the line and that’s where management and the financial analysts sit with the bargaining groups and say this is the pot of money that we have,” Hernandez said. “We have to live within our means.”

Dennis Jacobsen, the president of the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 731, agreed every article would be open to negotiation because the fire fighters would be creating a new agreement with a new fire department.

“We would certainly want to maintain our benefits and rights to our members that we’ve worked so hard on, but we would also look at it with an eye of sustainability,” Jacobsen said. “We

understand that.”

Meanwhile, the news conference on Wednesday marked latest salvo in the ongoing divorce between Reno and Washoe County.

Since 2000, the county has paid the city about \$11 million a year to provide fire services in the Truckee Meadows Fire Protection District made up of county neighborhoods that surround the city.

That agreement will come to an end on July 1 when the county is expected to stand up its own fire department.

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