



Sierra county commission meeting 7/19/2022, a summary



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JULY 21, 2022



NEWS

The Sierra county commission met in their chambers on Tuesday July 19 for their regular monthly meeting. A video of the meeting is available on [Facebook](#). Following are the highlights of the discussion with video viewing times included.

17:30 Public comment followed a hearing and the usual starting formalities of the meeting. Chairperson Paxon began by giving reminder that this was a chance to give public input directly to the commission and to refrain from applauding. Comments were strictly limited to 3 minutes

This month, as for the previous two, the public comment period was dominated by Sierra county's anti-voting machine gang of five: William George Norris, Johanna Tighe, Philip McCabe, Jack Noel, and Kimberly Edgemon. This group has been persistent in trying to convince the commission to ban vote drop-off boxes and dominion voting machines and only use paper ballots.

Dr. Barbara Pearlman, who said she had not been prepared for this discussion, lamented the politicization of the voting issue. "As an educator I believe in democracy and not the tyranny of the minority". In the concluding seconds of her time at the podium, she asked that the commission please support their (Hillsboro's) community center.

There were also statements by Hillsboro Community Center president Kristin Boren and Arrey resident Lydia Belmonte asking that the commission consider projects in their communities that need funding.

Carol Buillon of Caballo asked for a street name change and consideration for future street names. She lives in Seco subdivision and many of the streets/roads/avenues of the subdivision are also named Seco. This causes many difficulties in receiving mail and getting documents with the correct address

50:00 Presentations and Reports followed other meeting formalities. This portion of the meeting is an opportunity for the county departments to inform the commission and public about work accomplished over the past month and also provides the opportunity to thank employees for their service.

Both Travis Atwell, flood director, and Paxon spoke about the post-Black fire issues the county is facing. Both explained that the most devastating parts of the Black fire occurred in the western portion of the county, on the other side of the continental divide. This has been fortunate for the more populated portion of the county because despite nearly 10 inches of rain in the burn scar area, flooding has not been an issue.

Paxon said that the burn has been a severe issue for about 4 ranchers who live in that area. One had his barn flooded and they all have problems with their fencing either because the heat has made wire brittle or because fence poles

were warped or because burned trees are likely to fall on fences. All ranchers in the area have lost grazing to the fire.

Paxon also pointed out that all that the burned area is federal lands and the county has no authority over it. The commission, however is working to help get financial assistance to those with losses.

1:11 In new business The board appointed two to the Sierra Vista Hospital Board, Shawnee Renfro-Williams and Serina Bartoo. All members of the commission were in favor of appointing Renfro-Williams, a nurse with 20 years of experiences. For the second seat Day and Hopkins preferred Serina Bartoo, a former employee of the county since they had worked with her in the past and she knew how the governing board works and “understands how the commission stands”.

Paxon suggested Steve Buckley, who is “very community involved, organized and has a masters in business administration”. However, he said that he also likes Bartoo and if the other commissioners preferred, he would “go with that”.

1:27 Of the several **Resolutions and Ordinances** passed, resolution 110-095, “Presentation to the Board of County Commission” was described by county manager Charlene Webb as needed because of confusion for the process in granting the public time during commission meetings to make presentations. “The web was stating one thing and we were doing another” she told the commission.

Resolution 110-095 does not prohibit members of the public from making comments during the established public comment period of the monthly meeting. It does, however, set out the parameters for allowing members of the public to take 15 minutes of the board’s (and hence taxpayers’) time during a meeting.

For an individual or group to make a presentation, they must first have already spoken on their topic during the regular comment period and the request that is being asked must be within the board’s authority.

Presentations are limited to 15 minutes and the presenter must fill out an Agenda Request Form that provides details of the subject and name and contact information for the presenter. Finally, the presenter must provide a copy of the power point presentation at least 5 days before the presentation

1:32 The commission spent the most time discussing Resolution 110-097, to adopt an infrastructure capital improvement plan (ICIP). Manager Webb provided details on the importance of the plan and on new items in it.

Webb explained that the ICIP serves many purposes. The first five projects need to be those that are deemed most important for the county. Those projects will be seriously considered for funding by the state legislature. However, she emphasized that while the number one project “gets attention” not all projects in the top five may be funded. What does get legislative funding depends on the interests of the legislators and the amount of money available.

Webb further explained that the ICIP also helps in obtaining funding via grants and works as a document for deciding which projects should be funded internally by the county.

Before the commission began their discussion, Webb recommended that they seriously consider internal funding for the \$165,000 roof replacement of the Sheriff/Road departments building at 2501 S. Broadway. The roof, she said, will not take another monsoon season and if the county was awarded the funds they would not be available until next year at the earliest. “One of the mechanics has to move his parts every time it rains”, Webb said.

After Webb allayed commissioner Day’s worries about where the money would come from, it was decided to remove the roof from the ICIP and fund it internally. “We are sitting on a healthy amount of reserves” and that is the purpose of those, Webb told Day.

All commissioners agreed that the top two priorities should be funding the Arrey baseball complex and updating the Hillsboro Community Center’s HVAC system.

“The Arrey baseball complex is a very important to the community of Arrey”, Webb said, but they are having a hard time even getting started due to all the problems with covid, supplies and costs. “My heart really goes out to them” they have been working hard on this, have been patient and are willing to do things on their own, Webb told the commission.

Day asked about getting funding for the complex on “Quality of Life Recreation Grants” that are available from the state. Webb explained that those grants will allocate about \$27.5 million for projects with a regional impact and are going to be highly competitive. If the county were to receive funding for the complex through one of the grants, then the ICIP could be amended. Webb expected to hear if the complex was funded through a grant sometime in late August or early September.

All commissioners agreed that updating the Hillsboro Community Center should also be high priority. Paxon called the building “stellar” and now the civic center for that region of the county.

The other projects that rounded out the top five priorities for the county were obtaining and equipping sheriff’s vehicles, a new emergency operations center and repairs to the parking lot at the Sheriff’s/Road’s departments building. Not quite making the cut but coming in at the number 6 priority was funding for the animal shelter.

Webb told the commission that Lieutenant Baker in the sheriff’s department and she had been working on a USDA grant for the needed vehicles but running into difficulties so Baker added the request to the ICIP list. Commissioner Hopkins requested this be prioritized to 3.

The need for a new emergency operations center became apparent during the Black fire, Webb told the commission. Both Atwell and Emergency Services Director Ryan Williams described issues they had encountered during the fire and that the envisioned building would be multi-purpose and include space for storage and communications. Commissioner Day favored prioritizing this at 4 in part because with the recent fires in the state ‘there may be good appetite’ for emergency centers and more counties are getting them.

Paxon rounded out the top 5 with the parking lot repairs at the Sheriff/Road department building since nothing had been done since the facility was purchased.

Also getting considerable discussion was the need to expand the animal shelter in the city of Truth or Consequences. The shelter serves the entire county including all municipalities and is very crowded. The city requested all jurisdictions in the county place the shelter high on their ICIPs to signal the importance to the legislators. Attorney Pato told the commission that placing it at number 6 would help do that. Webb told the commission that the city was placing it high on their ICIP.

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