

Virginia Fire Services Board

Full Board Meeting

Friday, February 23, 2024

Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference

1000 19th St, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

10:00 AM

MINUTES

The Virginia Fire Services Board meeting was held at the Virginia Fire-Rescue Conference in Virginia Beach, VA. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Abbey Johnston and a quorum was present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Abbey Johnston, Vice Chair – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association

Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal

Bettie Reeves-Nobles – General Public

James Calvert – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)

Steve Sites – Virginia Municipal League

Donald Hart – Virginia Association of Counties

Jerome Williams - Certified Fire Service Instructor

JM Snell II– Board of Housing and Community Development

John Miller, on behalf of Rob Farrell – Virginia State Forester

Dennis Linaberg – Virginia Chapter of IAAI

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters

Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Services Council

Ernest Little – Virginia Fire Prevention Association

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Keith Johnson, Chair – Virginia Fire Chiefs’ Association

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Brad Creasy, Executive Director

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director

Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer

Billy Hux, State Fire Marshal

Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Larry Gwaltney

Brandon Proffitt

Robby Dawson

Jimmy Poindexter

Eddie Ferguson

Taylor Goodman

Billy Creasey

Jeff Flippo

Glenn Dean

Lee Day

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CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Board Clerk Spencer Willett recommended adding the presentation of service awards immediately after the committee reports. Without objection the board added this agenda item.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Gwaltney provided comments related to the death of former VFSB member Jim Stokely.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: To approve the minutes of the previous meeting (December 2023)

Motion: Bailey, **Second:** Little

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Brad Creasy presented. Creasy discussed agency initiatives including online testing, changes to the Training and Operations Branch, and VDFP support of stakeholders during legislative session. Creasy also outlined the agency's support of Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Terry Cole meeting with fire chiefs. He recently met with firefighters and chiefs in Virginia Beach. Director Creasy also thanked Hanover Fire-EMS for hosting Secretary Cole and VDFP at their live fire training structure where the Secretary was able to conduct one evolution to experience live fire.

REPORT FROM THE FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Steve Sites provided the report. He stated that the State Fire Marshal provided an update on the mobile FAST lab, which is a long overdue project as a result of the pandemic. The committee also discussed fire prevention related legislation in the General Assembly, including legislation concerning fireworks and to create a workgroup that would examine single stairwells in R-2 buildings. Both the Department of Housing and Community Development and VDFP are opposed to the legislation. The Fire Prevention and Control Plan was discussed, and the final draft will be presented to the VFSB in June. The committee also reviewed the VFSB and Board of Housing and Community Development Memorandum of Agreement. A meeting is planned soon to discuss getting this agreement moving forward. Consistent fire prevention messaging year-round was discussed by the committee, which would include partnering with VDFP Community Risk Reduction Coordinator Ken Brown.

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REPORT FROM THE LIVE FIRE TRAINING STRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Bettie Reeves Nobles provided the report. She stated that a final report from The Structures Group was presented to the committee. Mike Matthews provided answers remotely to questions posed by the committee. Reeves Nobles asked committee members to submit recommended edits/changes to the policy to VDFP. These changes will have to go through a regulatory process, which Spencer Willett presented on. This process could take 6-8 months to complete. Requests for edits to the policy made in December only warranted two recommended updates. Reeves Nobles has asked the committee to make changes and come prepared to discuss at the next meeting. She discussed a remote meeting possibly being held in April.

Fluvanna County and the City of Richmond spoke on their grants and requested extensions. Fluvanna County, in their request, also asked for a conversion of their grant to a container style structure. Both requests were approved by the committee. VDFP also requested funds to upgrade and refurbish their mobile burn trailers, which was approved by the committee. Goochland County also provided comments on their project during public comment.

Motion: To approve the Fluvanna County, City of Richmond, and Department of Fire Programs requests recommended from the Live Fire Training Structure Committee as a block.

Motion: Reeves Nobles

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Fluvanna County, City of Richmond, and Department of Fire Programs requests approved as a block

Walter Bailey stated his support for the committee examining Prototype 4 because of the cost effectiveness of the structures. The funds available have not increased and costs to produce standard buildings is increasing. The modular concept is more cost effective in most cases. Bailey questioned what the cost of a container style structure, built using TSG's recommended Prototype 4 plans, would cost. If the cost is substantial, the board is wasting time.

Motion: To convene a working meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee before the June meeting of the VFSB to address Prototype 4 and the grant program.

Motion: Johnston, **Second:** Linaburg

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: The Live Fire Training Structure Committee must meet prior to the June VFSB meeting.

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REPORT FROM THE FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair James Calvert recognized the Division Chiefs from VDFP, where the rubber meets the road for VDFP. He also recognized the work of the Logistics Division in maintaining the equipment needed for VDFP training classes behind the scenes. He provided an update on the realignment of the Training and Operations Branch to better meet the needs of students. Special Operations has updated seven programs and the Logistics Division has updated their audio/visual capabilities. The trench trailer has been updated and the mobile burn trailers are approximately 14 years old. Two of the trailers will be updated and a capital planning process is being implemented to examine the long-term replacement of these trailers. An annual instructor update was held where 573 instructors participated. VDFP has also processed over 13,000 ProBoard certificates.

Calvert also spoke about new and emerging training. It is imperative that the board consider different training props and equipment as the fire service develops. He also spoke to Virginia State Weekend at the National Fire Academy. Calvert stated Virginia should have the best showing because of how great Virginia's fire service is. He also spoke about how every fire chief should submit nominations for the Governor's Fire Service Awards. These awards are prestigious, and the awards committee should have copious amounts of applications to review.

Calvert provided an update on proposed regulatory changes related to emergency response by OSHA. This would be an unfunded mandate in many areas. Calvert stated he would work with Spencer Willett to provide the weblink for public comment, which is due by May 6th. The proposal would add 22 NFPA standards by reference, making them requirements for certain fire departments related to industrial firefighting. This could increase costs for fire departments. Virginia would have 12-18 months to comply.

REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, POLICY, AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Abbey Johnston provided the report. The committee approved the Alleghany County Fire and EMS Study Report, received an update on the Town of Lebanon Fire Report, and approved changes to the VFSB Rules of Procedure.

Motion: To approve the Alleghany County Fire and EMS Study Report and VFSB Rules of Procedure as a block

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Alleghany County Fire and EMS Study Report and VFSB Rules of Procedure approved.

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PRESENTATION OF SERVICE AWARDS

Vice Chair Johnston presented Lee Day, Scott Garber, and Jimmy Poindexter a plaque commemorating their prior service on the Virginia Fire Services Board. Board Clerk Willett read a biography for each member for the board and assembled guests.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Board Vice Chair Abbey Johnston spoke to the tragedy experienced by Loudoun County, the Sterling Volunteer Fire Department, and Board Chair Keith Johnson. Johnson appreciates the outreach and support from across the fire service and the board. She spoke to the honor of supporting not only the public, but each other. Johnston also read an email from a member of the public concerning Keith Johnson. The email highlighted his hard work, the challenge of being Chair of the VFSB, and the role representing the fire service on the Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD). Johnston recognized his strong work representing the fire service on that board.

Johnston recognized the hard work of VDFP and mentioned how many simply see the issues experienced when working with VDFP. She called attention to the many good things being done by the agency and its staff that go unnoticed. She specifically highlighted the legislative process and its burden. She thanked all in the room who were involved in the process and participated in lobbying for fire service issues. She also thanked members of the board and specifically the committee chairs.

FULL BOARD BUSINESS

a. Unfinished Business

Bailey spoke to HB2175 (2023) and how the VFSB did not have the time to review this before legislative season. Bailey believes the board should have a position paper to express to the Governor the crisis in the fire service related to fire/EMS funding. He stated that the board should support the recommendations contained in the report.

Steven Sites reported on the recent meeting of the BHCD to discuss reductions in building and fire codes as required by Executive Order #19. The Department of Housing and Community Development suggested that BHCD reopen the 2021 codes. Keith Johnson made a motion to deny this and instead look at reduction to regulations during the 2024 code cycle. BHCD voted in favor of Chief Johnson's motion. Sites stated that the Office of the Governor may count reductions already completed during the 2021 code cycle.

b. New Business

a. Information from the VFSB Clerk

Board Clerk Spencer Willett provided housekeeping updates including travel and future meetings of the board. Willett implored the board to

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remain active to make sure that staff can adequately reflect its wishes related to policy and decisions for the fire service.

b. Future Meetings of the Virginia Fire Services Board

Willett spoke to future meetings, including the planned meeting for the First Responder Conference in September. The board still needs to set meetings in June and December. The June meeting will be one day at VDFP in Glen Allen. Willett requested that members submit their availability. The December meeting should be hosted by a board member. Last year it occurred in Charlottesville, hosted by the Department of Forestry and Jess Rodzinka. He asked interested board members to express interest.

Reeves Nobles asked about a timeline for the Live Fire Training Structure Committee to meet. Willett stated that it would need to be coordinated between the board, VDFP, and TSG. Johnston stated it only needed to include VDFP and the board. Reeves Nobles asked if Willett could coordinate the meeting. Willett stated he could coordinate the meeting as is done normally.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Board
Spencer R. Willett