

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD

Fire Prevention and Control Committee
Thursday, February 23, 2023
Virginia Beach Convention Center
2:45 PM

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Fire Prevention and Control Committee was held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center. The meeting was called to order by Chair Ernie Little and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Ernie Little, Committee Chair – Virginia Fire Prevention Association
Scott Garber – Local Fire Marshal
JM Snell II – Board of Housing and Community Development
Steven Sites – Virginia Municipal League
Keith Johnson – Virginia Fire Chief’s Association
Ed Zimmer – Department of Forestry

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Dennis Linaburg – Virginia Chapter of IAAI

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director
Ken Brown, Coordinator of Community Risk Reduction
Will Merritt, Marketing and Communications Manager
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

James Dawson

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Committee Chair Ernie Little added a discussion on the Statewide Fire Prevention and Control Plan under New Business.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment given

CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (August 2022)

Motion: To approve minutes from the August 2022 meeting of the Fire Prevention and Control Committee.

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Motion: Garber, **Second:** Sites
Discussion on the Motion: None
Vote: Unanimous approval
Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM THE VIRGINIA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Chief State Fire Marshal Billy Hux offered updates from the State Fire Marshal. He recognized Troy Bower as the new Assistant Chief of Special Operations and Robbie Parker as the new Chief Deputy Fire Marshal for the Central Region.

There have been seven residential fire deaths year to date.

Legislation is moving forward to fully fund the operations of the State Fire Marshal. Chief Hux also spoke about legislation regarding fireworks, thanking localities that sent representatives to speak against this legislation. Hux also spoke about legislation making the State Fire Marshal the authority-having-jurisdiction on state property.

The mobile lab trailer is behind schedule because of a metal shortage. The office has requested an extension on the grant that is providing funding for this.

The special operations section is expanding with support from the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security. A taskforce may be created to address inspecting hotel and motels. The office is also assisting State Police and localities with investigations across the Commonwealth.

Statewide fireworks testing will be March 31st at the Public Safety Training Center in Hanover, Virginia.

Keith Johnson asked Chief Hux about the fee schedule issues. Hux explained he has been working with the Office of the Attorney General on a contract for fireworks inspections. This is a short-term solution to the fees issue. Johnson spoke about the proposed code update to increase some fees for the State Fire Marshal, which had not been updated in 14 years. This item was pulled from the consensus agenda and voted down by the Board of Housing and Community Development. There is opportunity to update this outside the code cycle, but this work is difficult.

JM Snell II spoke to the proposal by the State Fire Marshal's Office to update the fees. He stated that it would be helpful for additional rationale and justification for the fee raises.

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CODES AND STANDARDS SUBCOMMITTEE

Committee Chair Ernie Little reported for the Codes and Standards Subcommittee. The subcommittee had not met since the last Full Board meeting. The adoption date for the new additions of the code will be in January 2024.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Ernie Little spoke about future meetings that will occur to update the Fire Prevention and Control Plan. This will be discussed in New Business.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. VFSB/BHCD Memorandum of Agreement Update

Committee Chair Ernie Little turned the floor over to Keith Johnson. Johnson spoke about inquiries made by the Department of Fire Programs and the lack of response from the Board of Housing and Community Development.

Spencer Willett spoke about his interactions with the Board of Housing regarding the MOU. He stated that the Board of Housing asked for this discussion to occur after legislative season. Willett stated that he will follow up with the Board of Housing.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Fire Prevention and Control Update

Committee Chair Ernie Little stated the committee will look at updating the plan. This was last updated in 2019 after not being updated for many years. Little suggested the plan be more strategic like the five-year training plan drafted by the board. Little spoke about the importance of fire prevention and the need for this type of document in the Commonwealth. Little suggested having a meeting before the next Full Board meeting in September. Steven Sites suggested identifying risks across the Commonwealth by talking with stakeholders. This was agreed to by Chair Little.

Chair Little introduced JM Snell II to the committee, who replaced Claudia Cotton from the Board of Housing and Community Development.

Keith Johnson spoke about a recent fatality as a result of a lithium-ion battery fire in Loudoun County. He stated crews made an immediate attack and rescue, but the victim succumbed to their injuries a few days later. Data from this fire is being given to the U.S Fire Administration and UL. He also gave a report on a meeting with Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Bob Mosier about the code cycle process. Meeting attendees included Executive Director

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Creasy, John Prillaman from the Virginia Fire Chief's Association, Keith Johnson, and members of the Secretary's office. Johnson stated that if the process is not changed more firefighters and civilians will die as a result. He also spoke about stakeholders from fire and EMS becoming disenfranchised by the process because it silences their ability to promote fire safety in the building code.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer R. Willett

