

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD

Full Board Meeting
Friday, September 22, 2023
Conference Room C and D
Hampton Roads Convention Center
1610 Coliseum Drive Hampton, Virginia 23666
10:00 AM

Minutes

The Virginia Fire Services Board Full Board meeting was held at the First Responder Virginia Conference. The meeting was called to order by Chair Keith Johnson and a quorum was present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Johnson, Chair – Virginia Fire Chiefs’ Association
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
Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Services Council
John Miller, on behalf of Rob Farrell – Virginia State Forester
Ernest Little – Virginia Fire Prevention Association
Dennis Linaberg – Virginia Chapter of IAAI

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Brad Creasy, Executive Director
Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director
Theresa Hunter, Interim Assistant Chief of Administration
Billy Hux, Chief State Fire Marshal
Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations
Will Merritt, Marketing and Communications Manager
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Richard Harris Tracey Rusillo
Jeff Flippo Larry Gwaltney
Nancy Rodrigues Amanda Kennedy

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CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Spencer Willett recommended that the Virginia Public Safety Foundation presentation be moved to directly after public comment. This recommended change was adopted without discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Gwaltney from the Virginia State Firefighters Association thanked everyone for coming to the conference and welcomed those in attendance. He congratulated Walt Bailey as the new president of the organization. He also reminded those in attendance of the lunch occurring at Noon.

PRESENTATION FROM THE VIRGINIA PUBLIC SAFETY FOUNDATION

Nancy Rodrigues and Tracey Rusillo of the Virginia Public Safety Foundation (VPSF) spoke about the changes to the organization and the organizational challenges they encountered when they assumed their roles with the group. They provided due dates for applications, upcoming projects such as a virtual wall, and the new application process the organization has adopted. They also presented on how space is running out on the wall, and how fundraising will need to begin to expand the wall. Additionally, funds need to be raised to pay for expenses such as engraving and for the ceremonies. There have been no contributions since 2019 outside of VPSF board members. The expansion of the wall could cost 3 million dollars at least. Brian Moran, former Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, is leading the fundraising effort. They also spoke about their intentions to expand representation on the board of the VPSF. They highlighted the need for information to support those names on the wall so that the story can be told to future generations.

Brad Creasy supported the comments made by the VPSF representatives.

Keith Johnson thanked them for attending. He asked about how a name is placed on the wall. He told a personal story about his confusion during a recent line of duty death in his locality and how he thought it was automatic in Virginia. Nancy Rodrigues stated that the application through VPSF is the way to get a name on the wall. She spoke about how they use LODA criteria but do not simply rely on LODA benefits because some agencies do not use LODA. She mentioned how the Virginia Retirement System separates LODA into two categories: \$100,000 and \$25,000.

Keith Johnson welcomed Billy Hanks as a new board member.

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CONSENT AGENDA

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

Motion: Bailey, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Brad Creasy provided updates for the Department of Fire Programs. He spoke about a new organizational chart that moved the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy to the State Fire Marshal's Office and regional division chiefs under Deputy Chief of Training Mike Parris. He spoke about the agency operating at close to capacity regarding personnel and thanked staff for improving moral and the work of the agency. Current initiatives include online testing, new attendance-based classes, and a basic aerial operator class. The amended budget included \$103,000 for electric vehicle fire training. He spoke about the Public Safety Training Center and the agency's request for a water rescue training facility.

FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL COMMITTEE

a. Report from the Fire Prevention and Control Committee Chair

Chief Sites provided an update from the committee including the Fire Prevention and Control Plan, the BHCD/VFSB MOU, and SB 1046. A workgroup is editing the Fire Prevention and Control Plan with a final presentation scheduled for December. Sites emailed the Department of Housing and Community Development regarding the MOU between the two boards. There was discussion on SB 1046 and the workgroup established by the Department of Criminal Justice Services. One meeting occurred and no one has heard anything since. A final report is being produced, but this has not been forwarded to the fire service members. Sites stated he felt the group needed to meet again.

b. Report from the Virginia State Fire Marshal

Billy Hux, Chief State Fire Marshal, provided a report on the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO). This included an update on new staff, new equipment, the FAST lab project, and legislative updates related to fire marshal law enforcement authority, additional funding, and additional positions. Chief Hux also spoke about the SFMO's attempts to create a fee through the Board of Housing and Community Development for food truck inspections. Chief Hux presented updates on the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy, including updates to the NFPA 1031 class, additional classes scheduled in 2023, and classes that are set to be held

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in 2024. Chief Hux also presented on the number of continuing education hours at the First Responder and Fire Rescue Conferences’.

- c. Report from the Department of Forestry
John Miller stated that the agency has 24 requests for dry hydrants and 7 repair requests. This program is going well with two contractors with multiple crews completing the work statewide.
- d. Report from the Codes and Standards Subcommittee
Sites provided comments on the subcommittee that met on 9/12. This was an organizational meeting. Sites hopes this group can help strengthen the Statewide Fire Prevention Code, which has been stripped in recent years. He also spoke about Willett’s comments in committee concerning how this subcommittee may need to be reworked or retitled. Willett stated that since it is a subcommittee, these unappointed members must follow the same rules as full board members.

Sites thanked Chair Johnson for being appointed as chair of the committee.
- e. Unfinished Business
 - i. Fire Prevention and Control Plan Updates
 - ii. BHCD/VFSB MOU Update
 - iii. Update on SB 1046: Workgroup: Local Fire Marshals
- f. New Business

LIVE FIRE TRAINING STRUCTURE COMMITTEE

- a. Report from the Live Fire Training Structure Committee Chair
Bettie Reeves-Nobles presented for the committee.
- b. Unfinished Business
 - i. Report from the Structures Group: New Live Fire Prototype
An update on the prototype program was provided by Reeves Nobles. She spoke about how the group mentioned the need for a new prototype, as well as design requirements and concerns over maintenance. In December, they are expected to provide sample drawings and specifications for prototype 4. There was discussion concerning the name, whether it would

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be container or modular. Reeves Nobles explained that modular would be more encompassing and cover container buildings and other types.

c. New Business

i. City of Winchester Renovation Application

Motion: To approve the renovation application as presented

Motion: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Grant approved

ii. Fluvanna County Extension Request

iii. City of Hopewell Live Fire Structure Application

Johnson spoke about the approval in the committee meeting the day prior. He stated that after the presentation by the Structures Group and further review, there were concerns by VFSB members. Johnson spoke about the need for these buildings, but also the need for the VFSB to consider the report and specifications from the Structures Group (TSG).

Motion: To table the extension request by Fluvanna County, and the prototype 4 (container structure) request by Fluvanna County and the City of Hopewell until the December 2023 Meeting

Motion: Johnson

Discussion on the Motion: Jimmy Calvert and Keith Johnson spoke.

Calvert spoke about the building code and making sure that these structures meet it. He felt this discussion was muddled during the discussion in the committee meeting. Calvert spoke with subject matter experts and stated that these structures could be classified as offsite structures. The building code would only come in during installation, but he yielded to those more involved with the building code. Calvert supports the motion by Johnson. Reeves-Nobles stated she spoke with TSG after the committee meeting to better understand the difference or similarity of the modular and container buildings. She further spoke about how Harrisonburg had a modular building in 2019 that was not a container building. Sites spoke about how modular buildings have been separated from the rest of the building code for years. He stated that DHCD is the governing authority over modular buildings until installation, where the

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local building official comes into play. Johnson asked Reeves Nobles to work with Theresa Hunter to get the TSG report on prototype 4 for the December meeting.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Fluvanna County and the City of Hopewell applications are tabled until the December 2023 meeting of the VFSB.

iv. Halifax County Live Fire Structure Application

Motion: To approve the Halifax application as presented

Motion: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Application approved.

FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

a. Report from the Fire Education and Training Committee Chair

Jimmy Calvert thanked the Chair for allowing him to lead the committee. He asked the Deputy Chief of Training and Operations Mike Parris to introduce the division chiefs in the room. Chief Parris introduced the division chiefs present, including Marc Brade, Dave Stewart, Chad Stanley, and Dennis Price. Chief Brads also introduced other training staff located in the room including Amanda Kennedy and Jeff Liebold.

b. Report from the Chief of Training

Chief of Training and Operations Jamey Brads provided an update based off his attached report.

Calvert spoke about the community college system's efforts to assist VDFP with both online testing and electric vehicle (EV) fire training, as well as firefighting courses. This is specific to Central Virginia Community College, which Calvert teaches for. The next meeting is in October to discuss a firefighter course at the community college. Calvert believes industry should be helping with EV fire training, which Calvert has had multiple meetings about. A large corporation is considering supporting this effort and Calvert stated he would work with VDFP if this occurs.

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Calvert also spoke about the National Fire Academy and how complimentary they are of Virginia's involvement.

Calvert spoke about his involvement in the Secure and Resilient Commonwealth Panel. At their last meeting, there was discussion over the number of hazmat trained personnel in the Commonwealth. Calvert mentioned that there could be discussion about creating a technician level course through VDFP, which he supports. Brads spoke about the agency's conversations with the Department of Emergency Management regarding this training and how VDFP provides awareness and operations level hazmat training.

Calvert mentioned that a subcommittee be formed to look at the hazmat issue, including Calvert and Abbey Johnston.

- c. Unfinished Business
 - i. Online Testing Update
 - ii. HB 2451 EV Fire Training Update
 - iii. Community College Firefighting Courses

- d. New Business

- i. No-Show and Late Withdrawals at VDFP Courses

Brads recommended this be discussed in a future Education and Training Committee. There were 1,071 no shows in FY23, which is up 250 from FY22. Withdrawal numbers and no shows are going up. There were 579 sessions that only had 9 people in the class. This is a reoccurring issue that needs to be addressed. Brads recommended a no-show policy.

ADMINISTRATION, POLICY, AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

- a. Report from the Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee Chair
Committee Chair Johnston recognized staff, including Theresa Hunter, Spencer Willett, Amanda Kennedy, Will Merritt, an SFMO staff. Firefighters like the momentum in the state.
- b. Report from VDFP Administration
- c. Unfinished Business

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- i. Virginia Fire Services Board Studies Review
 - 1. Sussex County Fire and EMS Study Report

Motion: To approve the report in full

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Report approved

- 2. Amherst County Fire and EMS Study Report

Motion: To approve the report in full

Motion: Reeves Nobles

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Report approved

- 3. Town of Lebanon Fire and EMS Review

- 4. Alleghany County Fire and EMS Study

Johnston stated that a meeting occurred earlier in the week to plan the site visit for the Town of Lebanon. She also stated that a study team would be traveling to Alleghany County in October, which Walt Bailey corrected to November.

- ii. Fire and EMS Study Process Review

Motion: To approve the Fire and EMS Study Manual in full

Motion: Reeves Nobles

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Manual approved

Donald Hart talked about his enjoyment at the Amherst County Fire and EMS Study. He thanked the team for their work. Johnson thanked him for joining the study team.

- d. New Business

- i. VFIRS Grant Award

Motion: To approve the five VFIRS Grant requests

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Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Grants approved

ii. Regional Fire Services Training Facility Grant

1. King and Queen County

Motion: To approve the grant award as recommended in committee

Motion: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Grant approved

iii. Updates to VFSB Grant Policies

1. Aid to Localities Program

2. Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program

3. VFIRS Hardware Grants

4. Regional Fire Services Grant Policy

Motion: To approve the grant policies as recommended in committee

Motion: Reeves Nobles

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Grant policies approved

iv. Board Appointment and Selection Process

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Keith Johnson thanked the State Firefighters Association for hosting the VFSB and thanked the board members and VDFP staff. The relationship between VDFP and the VFSB has never been stronger. He spoke about the changing times in the fire service. The challenges faced by the fire service, specifically related to technology, require new training, new standards, codes, and work by all those related in the fire service. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep firefighters and the public safe.

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FULL BOARD BUSINESS

a. Unfinished Business

i. Update from the Clerk of the VFSB

Willett stated that the December meeting dates are November 30th and December 1st in Charlottesville. He spoke about how the Governor's Fire Service Awards is now open for applications year-round. The Marketing and Communications team created a page on the VDFP website for this. There is also now a direct link for the VFSB component of the website to the application to become a board member. Tracey Frame will now be the primary contact for lodging, per diem, and other issues for VFSB members. Please reach out to Spencer Willett with any issues.

b. New Business

i. Virginia Fire Services Board Rules of Procedure

Motion: To approve the revised Rules of Procedure

Motion: Linaburg

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Rules of Procedure adopted

ii. Service to Others: A report on the Commonwealth's Fire and EMS Service

Willett provided an update to the HB 2175 Workgroup. This report was completed and submitted to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security. It has cleared the secretary's office, as well as other components of the governor's office. Walt Bailey was a member of this workgroup. Willett highlighted how volunteerism is declining, call volume is up by 40%, and state funding has risen by around 6%. Bailey spoke about how funding for this workgroup never came through, but highlighted the hard work of VDFP, Office of EMS, and groups like the Virginia Association of Counties and others. Bailey stated that numbers for firefighters is significantly lower than thought. A meeting will occur October 10th between stakeholder groups to discuss what to pursue from the report.

Johnson spoke about legislative season and the Oilville meeting between fire and EMS stakeholder groups that occurred a few weeks prior. Another meeting is occurring October 10th to discuss legislative proposals related to HB 2175's Report.

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ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Board
Spencer R. Willett

