

# **Virginia Fire Services Board**

Fire Education and Training Committee

Friday, February 23, 2024

Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference

1000 19th St, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

9:00 AM

## **MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Education and Training Committee was held at the Virginia Fire-Rescue Conference in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair James Calvert and a quorum was present.

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

James Calvert, Committee Chair – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)

Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor

Abbey Johnston – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association

Donald Hart – Virginia Association of Counties

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters

Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Services Council

Ernie Little – Virginia Fire Prevention Association

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT**

### **AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT**

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director

Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

### **GUESTS PRESENT**

Larry Gwaltney

Lee Williams

Chris Shaver

Jim Hawley

Taylor Goodman

Priscilla Pardue

Amanda Kennedy

Jeff Flippo

Scott Garber

Mike Moles

Vernie Francis III

Joey Bona

Darrell Hudson

Mike Watkins

Robby Dawson

Richard Constantino

### **CHANGES IN THE AGENDA**

No changes were reported to the agenda.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comment provided.

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## **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

**Motion:** Bailey, **Second:** Johnston

**Discussion on the Motion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Minutes approved

## **REPORT FROM THE VDFP CHIEF OF TRAINING**

Chief Jamey Brads reported on a realignment of resources in the Training and Operations branch. Divisions' 1, 3 and 7 will be processed by the Accreditation section, as well as localities with delegated authority on testing. The division chiefs are still handling the scheduling of classes and day to day operations. Administrative assistants in these divisions are being reallocated to the Learning Development and Accreditation sections. In July, the remainder of the division offices will see a similar process begin. There will still be a presence in each division area geographically, but the process will be centralized for consistency. The new realignment went into effect February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Chief Brads mentioned that David Jolly in Accreditation and Amanda Kennedy in Learning Development are working together to make sure this is happening correctly. Also, Division Chief 7 Marc Brade has stepped into the role that was once held by Jeff Liebold related to curriculum development in addition to his Division 7 duties. Jeff Liebold is returning as an adjunct instructor and Division Chief 6 Dennis Price is set to retire at the end of March, but also plans to come back in an adjunct status.

Chief Brads also gave an update on Special Operations. He highlighted the reaccreditation of technical rescue classes under the 2021 edition of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1006. The Logistics Division has acquired new equipment from other state agencies to help with conferences and events across the commonwealth. VDFP continues to build out trailers to enhance training, although there are maintenance issues with some of the trailers.

The Learning Development section has assisted with making 20 online courses available on demand through Cornerstone. Training staff is continuing to rectify issues in Cornerstone for stakeholders. VDFP held its annual Instructor In-Service, with 572 instructors participating. Brads stated that technical difficulties resulted in some instructors missing the meeting. Locality instructors were also invited to participate, and this type of event will continue to occur every six months. There were three Instructor Symposiums in 2023 that netted about 600 train-the-trainers at the locality level, as well as adjunct instructors for VDFP. Instead of utilizing pre/post-testing and shadow time, the agency is moving towards a task book to gain approval as an instructor.

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The Accreditation section issued 13,000 ProBoard Certificates in 2023. On average, the agency usually produces about 10,000. The agency is absorbing the cost, which saves the localities and firefighters funds.

The agency is currently in the final stages of securing a vendor to provide online testing. The first vendor that was selected did not work out due to technological requirements. The new vendor is used by some Virginia jurisdictions already, so the agency feels it is a step in the right direction. The project will take another 60-90 days, followed by the implementation of online testing. This will be completed in phases. There will be an update on this at the June VFSB meeting.

Lithium-Ion training related to electric vehicles mandated by the General Assembly is being developed by a group of nationally recognized instructors from Virginia that are collaborating with agencies around the country that provide this training. They are working with a videographer to shoot video and determine how it will be delivered on Cornerstone. The agency is on track to deliver that program within the timeframe set by the General Assembly. The Modular Firefighter I pilot program is complete and the results on testing and retesting were high. The agency did identify some issues where the students were not grasping the material early on. The second pilot will be finished by the end of the month. There has been feedback on some parts of the class not aligning, which the agency will review. Chief Brads shared statistics on the classes offered by the agency, which were included in his written board report.

## **COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Chair James Calvert spoke about a recent stance on ICS 300 and 400 that affects a student's ability to take other classes based on when they took the prerequisite classes. Chief Brads mentioned that the agency currently has a workgroup with the Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) to look at bridging the gap between the old program and the new one. Chief Brads also mentioned that some vital information is included in the new version.

The Chair asked for the division chiefs to raise their hand and mentioned the importance of students getting to know them within their locality. He also mentioned the importance of the Logistics Division.

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## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **a. EV Fire Training Update**

The Chair chose to move forward since this was discussed during the Chief of Training's Report.

### **b. Virginia State Weekend at the National Fire Academy Update**

The National Fire Academy (NFA) state weekend is March 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The Chair mentioned that the agency is paying for it and encouraged everyone to go back to their departments and encourage people to attend. The lodging, class fees and meals are all paid for. The only cost involved is the travel to get there. Chief Brads mentioned that several of the classes are full since it is a joint state weekend between several states. It is a two-step process including registration on Cornerstone and filling out the NFA application.

### **c. Hazardous Materials Program**

The Chair stated that he received feedback from students that want hazmat technician classes but are not able to secure a spot. This process is handled by VDEM which runs a Virginia specific hazmat technician program. Some departments are sending personnel to Alabama or other states to take the 40-hour class that is International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and ProBoard accredited for Hazmat Technicians under federal standards. Calvert questioned why more hazmat technician classes could not be offered.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. North Carolina Modular Firefighter I Program**

The Chair yielded the floor to Walt Bailey to discuss North Carolina's program. Bailey spoke about the history of modular firefighter training in Virginia as mandated by the General Assembly and the current format. He further stated that some departments had concerns about getting the program in Virginia when compared to the North Carolina class. He spoke with the Assistant Fire Chief in Durham, NC, as well as other officials in North Carolina, about their version of the program. The goal is to get students the same training as someone who graduated from a recruit school of a career department. The program is separated into 18 modules and about 400 hours. The modules align with the semester breakdown of the high schools, which account for 53 programs within the state. About 58 community colleges also teach the course and its free to attend amongst the fire service. In North Carolina, you can attend either the high school or college training

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depending on a person's schedule. The class is taught using Jones & Bartlett materials and there is a test that is recorded at the end of each module. By the end of the 18 modules, a firefighter is certified as a Firefighter II, as well as in traffic incident safety, safety and survival of the firefighter, hazmat and a 16-hour EMS module unless they are already a certified EMT or paramedic. Students can enter the system at any phase even if the program has already started. The high school program is a 2-year commitment and has been very successful. There is no minimum number of students needed for the class, though most likely it will not be held for just one person. The cost is \$35 per student per module. Bailey reported that other states have followed this program and are also having success. He requested a group of VDFP stakeholders visit North Carolina and meet with officials there.

Deputy Director Nicholas Nanna mentioned that he, Executive Director Brad Creasy, and Chief of Training of Operations Jamey Brads are planning a trip to see how Pennsylvania operates its fire training programs at the state level, but will add North Carolina to the list. They also plan to visit other states to look at best practices. Pennsylvania has a good program that is delivered through the community college system.

## **b. New and Emerging Technology in Fire Training –**

The Chair turned the floor over to guest speaker Jim Hawley with Draeger to speak on emerging technology, specifically fire training structures. The Chair stated the presentation was not meant as a sales pitch. Hawley spoke on Class A and B containerized burn buildings and masonry burn buildings, some of which are starting to be condemned because of their usage, weather, and other issues. Some, if renovated or added on to, can still meet the NFPA 1402 standard and be a combination masonry and steel building. A live fire structure is any building that allows for repetitive live fire burns. Draeger follows NFPA 1402 guidelines when building their product, as do most manufacturers. He stated that containers were very flexible and showed a video of a 4-level system. Most of them can handle several levels and props. Most containers are very self-sufficient when they go into the field. Container manufacturers work with the locality to design it to their specifications and needs. He also stated the ability to move these structures is an added benefit. Draeger works with the fire department's budget to build these training structures in phases. The ability to change fire dynamics is also an added benefit. Most containers are maintenance free, but do require training in order to properly use and train with the prop safely. Hawley mentioned that the containers are also a good learning tool for instructors because they can manipulate what's going on inside

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the container, learning how changes affect fire behavior. He showed the Committee and those in attendance videos and pictures from various departments that were using containers across the country.

**c. Dept. of Fire Programs Testing and Certification –**

The Chair chose to move forward since this was discussed during the Chief of Training's Report.

**d. OSHA Emergency Responder Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Discussion –**

The Chair mentioned that the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) is considering a new Emergency Response Standard that covers not only fire brigades but also volunteers. He mentioned this could have a significant impact to the whole nation and Virginia. This change could save lives among firefighters by requiring training, but concern remains related to how this effects volunteer firefighters. Twenty-two NFPA standards will be incorporated by reference, which means they will hold the force of law if this comes to pass. Currently, there are no mandated fire training programs in the commonwealth. Public comment is still being accepted online through May 6<sup>th</sup>. Calvert encouraged people to comment on the proposed changes. OSHA violations could be very costly, ranging from from \$16,000- \$160,000. He mentioned that a willful violation that results in a death could result with management being criminally liable for that violation if it was known and not corrected. The proposal also includes a requirement to follow manufacturer specifications, which is usually 10 years for turnout gear. Calvert mentioned that during many of the Board's studies, a significant amount of gear was beyond the 10-year period. The Chair stated that this new standard has a very good chance of being implemented. Calvert would like to present on the topic during the First Responder Conference if the Virginia State Firefighters Association approves.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The Chair called for any final thoughts, and hearing none, the Committee adjourned.

Clerk of the Committee

Spencer R. Willett