

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference

1000 19th St, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

2:00 PM

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee was held at the Virginia Fire-Rescue Conference in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Chair Bettie Reeves Nobles and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Bettie Reeves-Nobles, Committee Chair – General Public
James Calvert –Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)
Jerome Williams - Certified Fire Service Instructor
JM Snell II –Board of Housing and Community Development
Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal
Dennis Linaburg – Virginia Chapter, IAAI
Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Abbey Johnston, *ex officio* – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director
Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Adam Schuknecht	Gary Fisher	Lee Williams	Richard Constantino
Joe Krallinger	Vernie Francis III	Eric Dahl	Chris Shaver
Larry Gwaltney	Travis Ford	Rhett Fleitz	
Jim Eicholtz	Melvin Carter	Chris Aley	
Mike Watkins	Eddie Buchanan	Jason D’Antaono	

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No reported changes to the agenda.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

Goochland County Department of Fire-Rescue and Emergency Services spoke on their current Live Fire Training Structure Project and the issues the locality is encountering related to the International Building Code (IBC). Captain Brandon Proffitt and Deputy Chief Mike Watkins provided comment stating that National Fire Protection Association standards lay out the standards for a structure, but some IBC requirements do not make sense for burn buildings, such as accessibility. NFPA standards give proper guidance on the structure components of burn buildings. Proffitt provided documentation to the committee on his comments and thanked the committee for their assistance. Watkins stated it was his 3rd year in a row presenting on the topic. He stated that Goochland was instructed to go to procurement in the previous year. He stated they were experiencing challenges with the cooperative contract that Goochland selected. Watkins spoke about how these types of structures help smaller localities train new and current firefighters to effectively serve citizens.

Reeves Nobles stated that the Board allowed the county to build the structure to meet NFPA 1402, 1403, and IBC. Proffitt stated that the motion approving the project stated that they must follow 1402. He stated that IBC creates challenges for the construction of the facilities. Reeves Nobles stated that when approved, there was no draft document for the prototype. A draft document was present in September 2023, which is why the board chose to include IBC requirements for projects such as Hopewell's. She asked if Goochland had addressed the issues from the prior meeting. Proffitt stated that they were working through the process, but he believed it was up to the local building official on whether the structure should be built. He believed the IBC was making this more complex than it is. Watkins stated that Goochland communicates to TSG through the Department of Fire Programs (VDFP). Proffitt spoke in support of Hopewell.

James Calvert questioned if the draft report from TSG was present in September. Calvert believed the draft report was supposed to be submitted in December. This report was submitted in January. Reeves Nobles stated that TSG made a presentation on Prototype 4 in September, and it would be finished in December. Although it was not a draft, information was presented concerning what TSG would include. Calvert stated it was not in a finalized report. Reeves Nobles stated the committee did not have a finalized report. Calvert asked what was submitted in January. Reeves Nobles stated it had to be approved. Theresa Hunter stated that TSG would go through the draft but even with board approval it will have to move through the regulatory process. Calvert stated that a PowerPoint was not a draft report but was a status update.

Spencer Willett stated the draft report from TSG was included in the Board Packet.

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CONSENT AGENDA

a. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (November 2023)

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

Motion: Snell, **Second:** Linaburg

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

b. Approval of the remote participation of TSG

Motion: To approve the remote participation of TSG

Motion: Snell, **Second:** Linaburg

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Participation approved

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Bettie Reeves Nobles asked that presentations or comments on grants be limited to 10 minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Final Report from the Structures Group: Prototype 4

Mike Matthews, virtually, and Joe Krallinger, in person, presented on the proposed Prototype 4 of the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program. Krallinger highlighted the history of the program, the need for state regulation of such structures, issues with maintenance costs, and the background on the recommendations of TSG on container style live fire structures. *The presentation is located in the addendum to the minutes.*

Calvert asked why NFPA 1402 Chapter 6 was applied to live fire training structures, rather than just Chapter 7. Section 3.3.5 lists that containerized structures are listed as live fire training systems in Chapter 7. Krallinger stated that both chapters apply for live fire training structures in terms of the containerized structures. Calvert disagreed and further asked how Chapter 6 is drawn into the definition found in NFPA 1402. Krallinger stated there could be an offline conversation on this topic. Calvert asked further if NFPA 1402 referenced square footage requirements. Calvert stated that the policy should govern safe training structures, giving localities options that meet their needs while remaining

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safe. Krallinger stated sizes were developed to be more stringent than NFPA 1402 when the program was originally developed in Virginia. Calvert reiterated the need to meet the needs of the locality. Matthews stated these sizes were vetted from 2007-2013 to exceed the NFPA 1402 and NFPA 1403 requirements. The sizes listed in the guidelines cannot be based on the vendor product. Matthews suggested that an architecture/engineering (A/E) firm would need to work with a locality to design a container structure that meets the program requirements. Calvert asked about standard container sizes. Matthews clarified the sizes of containers and the reason for a minimum height requirement in Prototype 4.

Matthews further spoke about Prototype 3's development, which was modular but could be placed on a trailer to be moved around the state. These were intended to be a temporary facility to provide live fire burns. He spoke about how VDFP determined that burn buildings were assets of the state. Calvert clarified the years in which square footage was developed, which Matthews believed was in the 2011 timeframe.

Calvert highlighted how building code language was directly copied into the project manual. The current document references the 2018 code. Matthews stated it had been updated to the 2021 building code during their development of Prototype 4.

Willett stated that the next agenda item would include a discussion of the regulatory process.

Jess Rodzinka asked about Class A fuels in Prototype 4. Krallinger stated Class A fuels were not included and spoke about the limited space in a containers and prioritizing safety. Rodzinka asked if there were plans for a Class A container structure in the future. Matthews talked about Prototype 2 development and how localities could not afford Class B props and needed to move to Class A fuels. The major issue with Class A fuel is the ability to maintain the temperature safely. Class A fuel fires are human dependent. Matthews stated that Class A could be considered in the future.

Calvert asked about the cost differences between Class A and Class B buildings. Calvert stated that he believed there was a cost difference. He talked about a robust NFPA 1403 compliance procedure in Virginia. Calvert further spoke about

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localities asking for repairs for thermal damage. Matthews spoke about Gloucester getting approved for a Class B building initially but built a Class A building instead. VDFP had to consult with the Attorney General over the misuse of funds.

A member of the public requested to comment. The Board Clerk stated that public comment was not to be given during discussions of the committee outside of the public comment period.

b. Live Fire Training Structure Policy Changes

Willett, Regulatory Coordinator for VDFP, outlined the regulatory process in Virginia under Governor Glenn Youngkin. He stated that all grant documents are considered regulatory at VDFP. Executive Order #19 changed the process, which now requires that after VFSB approval, the prototype would have to be included in a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA), which requires approval from the Department of Planning and Budget, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of Regulatory Management, the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and the Office of the Governor. This is a fairly lengthy process and is a heavy lift for the agency. Willett stated he only received comments/edits from two committee members. He emphasized that one update, rather than multiple smaller updates, be sought. Reeves Nobles requested that committee members submit comments/edits to Spencer Willett by the end of March.

Reeves Nobles made the below motion.

Motion: That the Department of Fire Programs, on behalf of the Virginia Fire Services Board, completes the proper paperwork and documentation to seek approval for the updated Live Fire Training Structure Policy and Project Manual for Live Fire Training Structures with a report on progress to be submitted during the June Fire Services Board meeting.

First Reeves Nobles, **Second:** JM Snell *for purpose of discussion*

Discussion on the Motion: Prior to the “second”, Board Clerk Willett reminded the committee a second was needed before any discussion could commence.

Calvert, questioning the motion, asked if the motion was to approve the document as written. Willett stated that the motion was ordering VDFP to work on Prototype 4 paperwork so that it can be submitted in June. Willett clarified that the motion would not approve the recommended prototype. After the second,

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Dennis Linaburg spoke about VDFP being tasked with this without the motion. He questioned whether there was a need for the motion. He agreed that a package is needed so that progress can move forward because VDFP and the VFSB is behind. JM Snell II stated that the logic in the motion was the timeline set for final approval of the revised policy and Prototype 4. Calvert stated he did not support the prototype as presented because it is exclusionary and that many areas need to be addressed.

Calvert offered a counter motion to postpone the discussion until the June meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee. The Board Clerk advised that Reeves Nobles would have to accept the motion as friendly or a vote would need to be taken on the original motion. Reeves Nobles asked Calvert to clarify what areas need more work concerning Prototype 4. Calvert spoke about Class A fuels not being included and the exclusionary components imposed by the square footage. Calvert does not understand why the board has a 354-page manual when much of it could be incorporated by reference. Calvert stated that the historical knowledge is not based in fact or a technical document. He offered that the document could be reduced by 300 pages.

Snell thought that the consolidation would be looking at edits to the document to alleviate issues as Calvert suggested. He asked for clarification of the motion by the Chair. Reeves Nobles reread the original motion above. Deputy Director Nicholas Nanna spoke to the issue and that VDFP could provide an update in June. He stated that the disparate views of the board, as well as the small section of VDFP that would have to carry out the order, make this timeline difficult to meet.

Calvert, in a point of parliamentary procedure, asked if a chair could make a motion. Willett stated that a committee chair could make a motion if seconded just as any other member. Willett reminded the committee of the motion on the floor and the counter motion.

Reeves Nobles stated she did not accept Calvert's counter motion as a friendly amendment. She asked if a progress report could be submitted in September rather than June. Nanna stated a review could be made in June, but if the board has not made a final decision, it makes creating this report difficult. He does not

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believe that VDFP could meet the timeline of having a final document to approve in June.

Calvert moved for a vote. The Clerk read the original motion. Calvert moved for rollcall vote.

Vote: 4N-3Y Motion fails

Name	Vote
Bettie Reeves Nobles	Yea
Billy Hanks	Nay
James Calvert	Nay
Jerome Williams	Yea
Dennis Linaburg	Nay
Jess Rodzinka	Nay
JM Snell	Yea
Abbey Johnston, <i>ex officio</i>	Nonvoting

Action: Motion fails to report to VFSB

Reeves Nobles made the below motion following the vote.

Motion: That any further requests for a container style structure outside of the current, adopted Project Manual for Live Fire Training Structures be laid on the table pending approval of the revised policy and project manual through the regulatory process.

Motion: Reeves Nobles, **Second:** JM Snell *for purpose of discussion*

Discussion on the Motion: Reeves Nobles spoke about the danger of approving further buildings without the Prototype 4 standards being implemented. She stated that the committee needed to develop a policy for a new prototype to make sure localities know what to do and how to do it safely. She understood that these types of structures are economical and meet the needs of localities. Reeves Nobles stated that to be good stewards of state funds, that the prototype needs to be developed first.

Calvert spoke about the Goochland project meeting NFPA 1402 and that NFPA 1402 cites the IBC in the referenced publications. Although the board did not require it in the motion, they must still follow the IBC as cited as a component of the nine reference publications in NFPA 1402. He believes this is the design basis

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document for these types of structures. Reeves Nobles disagreed and suggested that the committee should have waited for the projects that were already approved. She highlighted the additional requirements in other prototypes in the program.

Calvert moved for a rollcall vote on the motion. Snell believed there was still discussion on the motion. Rodzinka stated that he did not support an external group dictating training for firefighters in the Commonwealth. He stated that training in burn structures such as these can be done at a much higher rate and that they are good structures. The board is making firefighters wait for training products that can better train firefighters.

The Clerk reread the above motion.

Vote 6N-1Y Motion fails

Name	Vote
Bettie Reeves Nobles	Yea
Billy Hanks	Nay
James Calvert	Nay
Jerome Williams	Nay
Dennis Linaburg	Nay
Jess Rodzinka	Nay
JM Snell	Nay
Abbey Johnston, <i>ex officio</i>	Nonvoting

Action: Motion fails

VFSB Vice Chair Johnston highlighted that approving structures with taxpayer dollars must be done in a safe manner. She also stated that this discussion needs to have meaningful action taken to address the use of these structures and their need. She will be recommending a meeting of the committee tomorrow at the VFSB meeting to be conducted in the Spring.

c. Fluvanna County Extension Request

County Administrator Eric Dahl presented on their extension request and conversion to a container style building. *The presentation provided is located in the addendum to the minutes.*

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Motion: To approve the conversion of the Fluvanna County Grant to a containerized training structure compliant with NFPA 1402 and a no-cost extension to the grant through Nov 15, 2025.

First Hanks, Second: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: Snell asked if the original grant was for another type of structure and what type it was. Hunter stated that the original grant was for a Prototype 1A, it was then changed to a Prototype 2B, and eventually a Prototype 2A. Snell clarified this was over 6 years, which was confirmed by Hunter.

Johnston suggested that the motion be amended to include a requirement to meet NFPA 1402. Reeves Nobles asked to amend the motion to grant an extension to 2024 for a one-year extension. Hanks did not accept the amendment to reduce the extension to one year.

Vote: By voice vote, a contested motion with yeas presiding

Action: Conversion and extension for Fluvanna County recommended to the VFSB

d. City of Richmond Extension Request

Melvin Carter and Travis Ford presented on the city's issues. Carter stated that the training center is in Henrico County. The department attempted to identify a site in the city but ran into issues with certain residents in the area where the facility was going to be built. The decision was made to place the new structure at the existing site, which requires demolition of the current live fire structure. This has delayed the project.

Snell asked what the original grant was approved for. Carter stated it was a container type structure. Ford clarified the project was approved at the same meeting as Goochland County.

Motion: To accept the revised date for an extension to December of 2026

First Calvert, **Second:** Linaburg

Discussion on the Motion: Willett asked the exact date being requested. The clerk reread the motion as presented. Hunter clarified the timeline because the project should be complete in July of 2025. Ford stated that the city wanted a 1-year extension. Hunter stated this would be in 2026. Ford talked about the issues that require the extension. Carter confirmed the city desired an extension to December of 2026. Calvert agreed with the amended motion.

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Vote Unanimous

Action: Extension of grant to December 2026 recommended to VFSB

NEW BUSINESS

a. VDFP Mobile Burn Trailer Application

Chair Reeves Nobles temporarily transferred the Chair role to JM Snell.

Chief Jamey Brads presented on behalf of the Department of Fire Programs. He also spoke on documents presented to the board related to the grant request. *These documents are found in the addendum to the minutes.* He spoke about fully updating 2/3 trailers where possible. He also spoke about staggering the purchase of new units to make replacement of said units easier. The current three units are 14 years old.

Snell asked why update 2/3 units, rather than all three. Brads explained that they were trying to prioritize 2 units to get them to a higher level of service. Brads stated that they could utilize the 3rd unit as a reserve unit or for other purposes. Johnston asked about NFPA 1402, procurement requirements, and if funds were available. Brads stated that VDFP would meet all requirements.

Rodzinka asked how much longer these units would last with the update. Brads stated 10-12 years, which meets the 20-year service life expectation of the grant program.

Motion: To approve the revised grant submission for the refurbishment of two mobile burn trailers with all options.

First Calvert, **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the motion: Snell clarified that the motion approved the full refurbishment of two trailers. This was confirmed, which Snell agreed with. Snell further stated that if the agency felt a new trailer was needed, spending funds on refurbishing two rather than all three made sense. The clerk read the motion back to the committee.

Vote Unanimous

Action: Application approved and recommended to VFSB

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Calvert highlighted the outstanding job of VDFP Logistics to keep these trailers in service as long as they have been. He would like to see VDFP plan for long-term replacement of these trailers since they serve a vital role.

Hunter stated that localities must adhere to the Virginia Public Procurement Act, which requires that contracts be competitively bid. She further stated that SourceWell, a cooperative contract, is not a contract that meets these requirements. She suggested that Fluvanna and the City of Richmond go through a competitive bid process. Calvert asked if the bid process required the locality to choose the lowest bidder. Hunter stated that a locality did not have to choose the lowest bidder if they can justify that the lowest bidder cannot meet the requirements of the project.

Reeves Nobles stated that the committee works hard to create safe and effective live fire training structures. She hopes the committee can work together with TSG to develop these standards for the program. She believes requiring only NFPA 1402, NFPA 1043, and IBC is not enough for the structures. She reiterated that a prototype needs to be developed so that localities have a policy to go by. She stated that committee members need to work on this topic rather than just be vocal during meetings. She thanked the committee for its dedication.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Clerk
Spencer R. Willett