

Virginia Fire Services Board

Full Board Meeting

Friday, December 1, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

10:00 AM

MINUTES

The Virginia Fire Services Board meeting was held at the Virginia Department of Forestry. 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
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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Services Council
Ernest Little – Virginia Fire Prevention 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

Bejamin Power Eddie Ferguson
Eric Dahl Troy Bower
Mike Watkins Rich Constantino

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CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Motion: Calvert, **Second:** Hart

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Brad Creasy presented. The HB 2175 Report was released and sent to the General Assembly by the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security. The Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) is down to 7 vacancies, with 2 being intentional for budgeting purposes in the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO). This has narrowed from 17. VDFP had three deliverables for 2023. The agency scorecard, which the Deputy Director led the effort to complete, provides updates daily or monthly on projects. The electric vehicle fire training mandated by HB2451 is on schedule for a July 1 release. Online testing had met resistance and is not on schedule at this time. ParSystem had to be abandoned and new beta testing with a new vendor is occurring now. A water rescue training facility has been discussed with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), which oversees 2,000 acres at the Public Safety Training Center. This would expand VDFP's footprint on the site. This project has good momentum and VDFP hopes to receive several hundred thousand for the initial phase of the design. He also spoke about the redevelopment of the VDFP website.

REPORT FROM THE FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Steve Sites presented. The committee met yesterday. The board clerk was questioned if the minutes from the committee required a vote. The board clerk stated they did not. Sites went over highlights from the report from SFMO including an update on National Fire Protection Association 1033 class and the FAST lab project. He also provided an update on the Department of Criminal Justice Services Title 9 Workgroup and feels it is in a better place than in the beginning. This report sits at the Governor's Office currently. The Virginia Fire Marshal Academy (VFMA) has created the 2024 calendar. He explained about potential changes to the Codes and Standards Subcommittee. He explained the majority of work in committee was edits to the Fire Prevention and Control Plan. The proposed MOU between the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) and Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) is being examined at the Office of the Attorney General.

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REPORT FROM THE LIVE FIRE TRAINING STRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Reeves Nobles discussed the review of the grant policy and that the committee planned to revise the live structure grant program, which was last updated in 2020. There was an energetic discussion led by Alan Ambrose from The Structures Group concerning prototype 4 and the design challenges. The committee also discussed two localities that have seen the container style structures and their challenges.

REPORT FROM THE FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Calvert presented an overview of the committee meeting. He explained changes to the train the trainer program and the use of task books in the future. He also highlighted the retirement of Jeff Liebold and changes in curriculum development. Logistics is looking to repair the mobile burn trailers and will be asking the VFSB for assistance in February. Online testing is delayed because of the information technology process in Virginia. The electric vehicle fire training program required by HB 2451 (2023) will be complete by July 1. This is a multi-agency and multi-state effort. Calvert worked with the National Fire Academy on this topic. An update was also provided on the community college system and fire training. Calvert also explained issues with no-shows and late withdrawals, which will be addressed further in February.

REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, POLICY, AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Town of Lebanon and Alleghany County Fire and EMS studies were discussed and will be prepared by February. The City of Lynchburg made an Aid to Localities exemption request for emergency repairs of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

Motion: To approve the exemption request as recommended by committee

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Exemption approved

Johnson also explained updates to the Scope of Study document as presented by staff.

Motion: To approve the Scope of Study as recommended by committee

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Scope of Study approved

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Johnston explained that staff provided an update on fire and EMS study questionnaires. The committee also entertained a recommendation to change the Rules of Procedure by VDFP staff.

Motion: To adopt the Rules of Procedure as recommended by committee

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: Johnson added that this update will make the work of the Codes and Standards Workgroup much easier moving forward.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Rules of Procedure adopted

The Governor's Fire Service Awards and possible expansion was discussed in committee with no action taken. The committee did recommend extending the submission deadline.

Motion: To extend the deadline for the Governor's Fire Service Awards by 7 days as recommended by committee

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: Johnson spoke about the lack of awards submitted and encouraged those in the room to solicit submissions, as well as a desire for the Governor to attend the ceremony.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Extension approved

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Chair Keith Johnson stated that the 2021 code cycle has been complete. These will go into effect on January 18th, 2024. He thanked the Department of Forestry for hosting the meeting and the hospitality in Charlottesville. Johnson and VDFP staff attended the November 18th Virginia Public Safety Foundation (VPSF) memorial service. Thirty names were added to the wall. The 2nd Saturday of September will be the annual date to add the names of the fallen. The HB 2175 (2023) report was sent to the VFSB this morning. The Office of the Governor has not released it, but it is a public document. The Virginia Fire Chief's Association was lead on this effort. This report focuses on dedicated funding for fire and EMS. All will be involved in efforts to bring it to the attention of legislators. Walt Bailey, Brad Creasy, and Spencer Willett were involved in this report. The 2024 Fire and EMS Legislative Priorities Booklet was released. Johnson also spoke about the Office of Emergency Medical Services funding issue that is affecting all, which falls under the Department of Health. Johnson also presented on the final report from a workgroup created to look at agritourism facility safety. The VFSB sent a letter referencing issues with the work being completed by the workgroup with little action. Johnson spoke about the need for this group to continue its work to improve safety at

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agritourism facilities, which are exempt from the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) and Uniform Statewide Building Code. The only recommended safety practices include one fire extinguisher, a safety plan, and signage that alerts the public that the building does not meet SFPC.

Johnson recognized the strong work of Vice Chair Johnston during the wildland fires in Virginia during the Fall of 2023. He also advised the VFSB to see the board clerk to complete travel reimbursement information.

FULL BOARD BUSINESS

a. Unfinished Business

Johnson turned the floor over to Bettie Reeves Nobles. Reeves Nobles made the below motion regarding Fluvanna County.

a. Fluvanna County Live Fire Training Structure Extension

Motion: To refer Fluvanna County's request back to the Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Motion: Reeves Nobles, **Second:** Williams

Discussion on the Motion: Johnson asked if Reeves Nobles had further information on the motion. She explained that more information was required and that the locality had received multiple extensions. There were concerns that the committee would like to address. Johnson stated this was approved by the committee. Calvert clarified if it was a container building. Nobles said yes. Calvert stated he believed that the design requirements for containers are due in December and this would make it easier to review the application.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Request referred to Live Fire Structure Training Committee

b. City of Hopewell Live Fire Training Structure Application

Johnston returned the floor to Reeves Nobles, who suggested an amendment to the approval granted by the Live Fire Training Structure Committee. She wanted to remove the word "if" to clarify the approval.

Motion: To approve the City of Hopewell Live Fire Training Structure application to meet National Fire Protection Association 1402, 1403 and International Building Code requirements until prototype 4 is complete on December 31.

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Motion: Reeves Nobles, **Second:** Linaburg

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Application approved

b. New Business

Calvert highlighted the National Fire Academy state weekend with Connecticut in March. He recommended this training program and stated Virginia should fill the seats and lead in attendance. He also spoke about the need for the VFSB to push the Governor's Fire Service Awards. He stated that every chief or officer should be submitting someone in each category.

Reeves Nobles highlighted the Women in Public Service conference which will occur in March in Portsmouth, VA along the waterfront. It will include training and social events.

Theresa Hunter requested clarification on the City of Hopewell. Reeves Nobles stated that the award was approved. Willett clarified that Hopewell needed to meet NFPA and IBC requirements. Reeves Nobles stated that Hopewell needed to meet these until prototype 4 was ready on December 31. Willett requested further clarification since prototype 4 has not been adopted and the grant could not be awarded to comply with it. Johnson and Reeves Nobles confirmed that Hopewell must meet NFPA and IBC requirements.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Board
Spencer R. Willett