

Virginia Fire Services Board

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

Virginia Department of Fire Programs
1005 Technology Park Dr, Glen Allen, VA, 23059
1:00 PM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board was held at the Virginia Department of Fire Programs in Glen Allen, Virginia. 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 Firefighters Association
John Miller – Designee, Virginia State Forester
Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal
Charles Sterne – General Public
Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Service Council
Steven Sites – Virginia Municipal League
James Calvert – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)
Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor
Gerry Maiatico – Virginia Fire Prevention Association
Kevin Duck – Insurance Industry

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

JM Snell II – Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development
Todd King – Virginia Association of Counties
Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Carla Keesee – Virginia Chapter, International Association of Arson Investigators

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Brad Creasy, Executive Director
Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer
Billy Hux, Chief State Fire Marshal
Marc Brade, Chief of Training and Operations
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager
Greg Cavalli, Policy Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT

Larry Gwaltney	Leif Sundberg	Robby Dawson	Lee Williams
Amanda Kennedy	Jill Germroth	Norris Evans	Troy Bower
Andrew Milliken	Amanda Britt	Morgan Hyde	

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CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Board Chair Johnson asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Board Clerk Spencer Willett stated that the Lifetime Achievement Award nominations would be tabled from New Business until the next meeting of the Administration, Finance, and Policy Committee. Kevin Duck requested that badges for dress uniforms be added to New Business, which Chair Johnson approved without objection.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Larry Gwaltney commended the Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) for their work to make the Virginia Fallen Firefighter and EMS Memorial Service successful. He also announced that the Virginia State Firefighters Association will hold its conference in Wytheville in August. He wished Executive Director Brad Creasy good luck in his new position and thanked him for his efforts at the agency.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Board failed to consider the consent agenda. *This will be considered at the subsequent Board meeting.*

REPORT FROM VDFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Creasy stated that the Governor's regional readiness summits continue to be held. There are seven of them, one per division. He noted that VDFP Deputy Director Jamey Brads is attending one today in Charlottesville. The Director spoke about the most recent legislator showcase event, which was held in Loudoun County on June 1, with several legislators in attendance. Regarding legislative updates, he mentioned a letter recommending a 42-hour work week will be sent to all fire chiefs. Director Creasy also mentioned the bill mandating that the agency create mental health awareness training. The agency website has been updated to be more user friendly, easier for stakeholders to access Cornerstone, and provide new online functions for fire marshals.

Johnson asked who was sent the letter about a 42-hr workweek – fire chiefs or locality administrators? Director Creasy answered that it was sent to fire chiefs. Johnson encouraged that the letter should also be sent to locality administrators, which the agency agreed to ensure was done.

The Training & Operations Branch is working on improving the Fire Fighter I modular course as failure rates remain high. Agency staff also visited North Carolina's water rescue facility to

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learn how they completed the project. Creasy reported that the agency will replace the learning management system Cornerstone with Vector Solutions, which the agency expects will increase users' abilities. He added that a facility dog has been assigned for Division 4. Division 4 Chief Chad Stanley will be the handler. This will be a pilot in Division 4 with the possibility of adding dogs in other divisions to support departments without this resource.

a. Comments on the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy

Creasy spoke about changes in the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy (VFMA) with the departure of Chief Tom Berry, who left the agency to accept a fire marshal position in Powhatan. The plan is to move the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1031 and 1033 classes under the VDFP Training & Operations Branch. The Director maintained that this will not result in a loss of staff for VFMA nor will it change the curriculum. Training & Operations Chief Marc Brade said that in FY26, VDFP taught 45 accredited curriculums, and the only courses being taught outside of Training & Operations were the 1031 and 1033 courses. Bringing those courses under Training & Operations provides administrative and accreditation support. With the Basic Law Enforcement (BLE) course, he intends to form an advisory group, hopefully with Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) representatives, to determine the best ways to make BLE better. He also said he is working with Chief State Fire Marshal Billy Hux to attend regional fire marshal meetings to solicit feedback.

Creasy added that he, Chief Hux, and Chief Brade met with the Director and Deputy Director of DCJS about BLE and how to improve collaboration with the two agencies.

Gerry Maiatico asked if the agency will continue to support recertification training for fire marshals, which the Director affirmed. Maiatico also asked about environmental crimes classes. Brade said there are ways to expand those offerings but that the agency must ensure it has qualified instructors.

Steve Sites said that, at the Virginia Fire Prevention Association conference, VDFP staff in attendance said there would be a regional concept for VFMA, which concerned him as there was no communication with stakeholders prior to the announcement. Director Creasy noted that the BLE academy has been a source of complaints. He stated one proposal included Harrisonburg providing a location for BLE. It has been difficult to find a site acceptable to everyone, with previous sites at the Public Safety Training Center and Fort Pickett posing problems for some. This seemed like a good compromise to get a needed BLE course this year.

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Sites replied that it is critical to get a BLE course started soon. Northern Virginia alone has six or seven individuals who need the course now. He suggested that the agency needs to talk to stakeholders to see if it is feasible to do a class in a location like Harrisonburg, which could be prohibitively expensive. Creasy highlighted that fire marshals could attend a regional law enforcement academy which would not incur the room and board expenses. Sites replied that the material in VDFP BLE is geared towards fire investigation and is not the same as courses offered by other law enforcement training facilities.

Johnson said DCJS and legislators do not understand the role of fire marshals and it needs to be codified better than it is today.

Sites asked if there were issues regarding accreditation. Brade said ProBoard gave the agency items to work on for re-accreditation, and that there have been delays scheduling a site visit. The agency has a ProBoard site visit scheduled in August. Brade mentioned that he has requested to pilot the new standards this summer ahead of reaccreditation. There have been delays as the site visit was originally scheduled to be in March.

Regarding fire marshal training, Chief Brade said the agency is taking a regional approach. Fairfax County is a good location for Division 7 to offer training with delegated authority and identified Henrico County and Virginia Beach as good regional partners for their respective divisions for courses.

Fire Marshal Leif Sundberg from the Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office said that the state has never given delegated authority to teach fire inspector courses. He said Loudoun County can do this and would like the opportunity, and other localities can as well. Loudoun is willing to do this for regional partners but not the entire state. Loudoun encourages the agency to give delegated authority to localities in other regions. Sundberg asked if currently scheduled courses were going to be held. Brade said the intention is that BLE will be held in February 2027.

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REPORT FROM THE FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL COMMITTEE

Although the committee did not meet, Committee Chair Sites provided an update. He talked about the meeting of the Statewide Fire Prevention Code Development Committee about non-consensus proposals, most of which were the State Fire Marshals Office (SFMO) fee proposals. The final vote will be held at the December Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) meeting.

Committee Chair Sites asked Chief State Fire Marshal Billy Hux if he had anything to report. Chief Hux thanked everyone involved in the 2024 code cycle proposals. The proposals represented some progress but not as much as intended. The SFMO proposal asked for a 50% increase in fees, but the BHCD reduced that to 30%, along with a small increase in the hourly rate. Mobile food preparation vehicles were added to the fee schedule. With retail fireworks, 70% of local fire marshals can charge fees but the SFMO proposal to do the same was defeated. HB350 (2026) was signed, which exempted fire marshals from jury duty. Chief Hux added that the SFMO database committee reviewed many options for a new database system and is working with procurement on a new database. With the end of the fiscal year approaching, he said SFMO is on track to complete all initial and follow-up mandated fire inspections. There have been 6,108 inspections from June 1, 2025, through today. Chair Johnson added the code change proposal to move fee authority to VDFP was also defeated. He believes that only a legislative change would allow this. He also lauded the hard work of Andrew Milliken on the Codes and Standards Workgroup. Board Clerk Willett mentioned a memorandum sent by Director Creasy on the issue of fee authority. Maiatico asked for elaboration on the single-exit stairwell proposal. Chair Johnson discussed the compromise of one more story with fire safety enhancements, which came out a sub-workgroup with consensus. However, another party submitted a last-minute, non-consensus, 6-story proposal. Chair Johnson said this is not how the process should work. He expects the 6-story proposal will come back in future cycles.

REPORT FROM THE LIVE FIRE TRAINING STRUCTURE COMMITTEE

a. Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program Policy

Committee Chair James Calvert spoke of the special meeting of the committee in April, bringing forth a proposal for grant program changes. The revised policy was submitted to the Board in its meeting packet for approval. VFSB Chair Johnson noted that there were both additions and deletions to the previous policy. He congratulated the committee on its work to resolve longstanding issues with the policy

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Motion: To approve the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program Policy

Motion: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program Policy approved as presented

Committee Chair Calvert introduced the City of Hopewell request for an extension to its live fire training structure grant to July 1, 2028, as well as renovation requests from Northumberland County and Mecklenburg County. These were all approved in committee.

Motion: To approve the City of Hopewell Extension Request, and the Northumberland County and Mecklenburg County Renovation Requests

Motion: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: The requests were approved

REPORT FROM THE FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

The committee did not meet as Committee Chair Jess Rodzinka was absent. Chair Johnson asked Chief Brade if he had anything to add regarding training. Brade mentioned that he had provided statistics on training to the Board, which were included in the packet.

REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, POLICY, AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Abbey Johnston said the committee reviewed changes to the Fire and EMS Study Manual, which the committee approved and submits for approval by the Board.

Motion: To approve changes to the Fire and EMS Study Manual

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Revised Fire and EMS Study Manual adopted as presented

Committee Chair Johnston said that VDFP Chief Administrative Officer Theresa Hunter informed the committee of changes to the online grants management system, which the Board had asked the agency to pursue in order to streamline the grant application process. They hope the new system will be in place for the applications in the next fiscal year. The Board will appropriate funds for the initial costs, with annual costs to be absorbed by the agency. This request was approved by the committee

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Motion: To approve the new online Grants Management Reporting System and provide the \$168,000 in initial costs.

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: VDFP approved to implement the system with VFSB providing the initial costs

The committee also received a request for a Fire and EMS Study from Prince Edward County, which it approved.

Motion: To approve the Prince Edward County Fire and EMS Study Request

Motion: Johnston

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Prince Edward County Fire and EMS Study Request approved

Board Clerk Willett asked the Board for volunteers interested in serving on the Prince Edward County Study Team, with the study likely to occur in July. Committee Chair Johnston thanked both Director Creasy and Chair Johnson for their efforts and contributions to the agency and the Board. Committee Chair Johnston added that Kevin Duck and Walt Bailey will vet the nominees for the Lifetime Achievement Award and report their findings at the September meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Chair Johnson thanked Director Creasy for his work, saying that the agency has come a long way in four years. His work with the Board and stakeholders has been very productive. As his term comes to an end, Chair Johnson said he will miss his time on the Board. He urged Board members to be as involved as possible and work towards making the most of the Board's work.

FULL BOARD BUSINESS

a. Unfinished Business

i. Election of Chair Pro-Tem

Chair Johnson stated that Kevin Duck would serve as Chair Pro-Tem to preside over the election of new officers.

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ii. **Report of the Nomination Committee**

Board Clerk Willett reported that Abbey Johnston was the sole nominee for Chair of the Board. He also reported that there were two nominees for Vice Chair, one for James Calvert and one for Steven Sites. Calvert said that he will remove his name as he believes Sites will be an excellent choice. There were no nominations from the floor and, as Calvert withdrew his name from consideration, there was no requirement for a nomination committee.

iii. **Election of Officers**

Motion: To elect Abbey Johnston as the Chair of the Virginia Fire Services Board

Motion: Bailey **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Abbey Johnston will serve as Chair beginning July 1, 2026

Motion: To elect Steven Sites as the Vice Chair of the Virginia Fire Services Board

Motion: Bailey **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Steven Sites will serve as Vice Chair beginning July 1, 2026

b. **New Business**

i. **Rules of Procedure Approval and Resigning**

Board Clerk Willett said there were two minor updates to these rules.

Motion: To approve the changes to the Rules of Procedure

Motion: Johnston **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Rules of Procedure adopted

ii. **Request for Committee Assignments and Chairs**

Chair Johnson asked anyone wanting to serve on specific committees, or to chair a committee, to inform Chair-elect Johnston.

iii. **All-Virtual Meeting Policy**

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Board Clerk Willett said there were no changes to this policy, but state law requires it be readopted each year.

Motion: To approve the All-Virtual Meeting Policy

Motion: Bailey **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: All-Virtual Meeting Policy adopted

iv. **Aid to Localities Grant Program Policy**

Board Clerk Willett noted that the policy was already adopted by the Board. However, there were minor technical changes made by the Office of the Governor to Section 5, Page 4, as well as a substantive change to the provision that the locality will forfeit their funds if they knowingly provide funds to non-compliant departments. The change substitutes “maliciously” for “knowingly”. VDFP staff recommends approval.

Motion: To approve the Aid to Localities Grant Program Policy

Motion: Johnston **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Aid to Localities Grant Program Policy adopted

v. **Uniform Badges**

Duck spoke on the proposed VFSB uniform badge that members would wear on Class A uniforms to denote service to the Board. Johnson recommends that these should not be returned upon leaving the Board.

Motion: Approval of the badges for Board members

Motion: Duck **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: VDFP staff directed to procure and issue badges

vi. **2026 Legislative Updates**

Willett provided the group with a legislative update. Highlights included a basic overview of the legislative process, bills tracked by VDFP, and fire service specific legislation. Bailey noted that

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90% of the departments fall under the Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) and he believes that working with VACO will provide the best chances of success for obtaining additional funds. Johnson noted that Del. David Reid asked more about 599 funds at the Loudoun event for legislators, which VDFP is researching

vii. **Report from the VFSB Clerk**

Johnston spoke about the September board retreat and meetings. Bedford accommodations proved too expensive, so lodging will likely be in Lynchburg. Willett said September 23-35 are the days for the meetings. He reminded the Board members to sign and return their travel forms.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer Willett

Minutes completed by Greg Cavalli

Documents related to this meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board may be requested by contacting the Government Affairs Division by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov