

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1:30 PM

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Administration, Policy and Finance Committee was held at the Virginia Department of Forestry. The meeting was called to order by Board Vice Chair and Committee Chair Abbey Johnston and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Abbey Johnston, Committee Chair – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association

Keith Johnson – Virginia Fire Chief’s Association

Bettie Reeves-Nobles – General Public

James Calvert – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)

Steve Sites – Virginia Municipal League

Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry

Donald Hart – Virginia Association of Counties

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Service Council

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Greg Wormser Troy Bower

Deshaun Steele Billy Hux

Brad Creasy

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Motion: Reeves Nobles, **Second:** Johnson

Discussion on the Motion: None

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1:30 PM

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP ADMINISTRATION

Theresa Hunter provided an update and reports on the budget, including Aid to Localities and the Live Structure Budget. No questions were asked by committee members.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Abbey Johnston thanked Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) staff for their diligent work over the past year.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Virginia Fire Services Board Studies Review**
 - i. Town of Lebanon Fire and EMS Study**
 - ii. Alleghany County Fire and EMS Study**

Board Clerk Spencer Willett presented on the two studies. VFSB members and VDFP staff will be visiting the Town of Lebanon in December and the report will be complete by the February VFSB meeting. Alleghany County's site visit was conducted earlier this fall and the report is being developed for the February VFSB meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. City of Lynchburg Aid to Localities Exemption Request**

City of Lynchburg Fire Chief Greg Wormser presented on their exemption request to the VFSB for the emergency repair and flow testing of air packs. Wormser stated that Lynchburg removed the flow test cost since this is not covered by Aid to Localities. The new cost for the emergency repair of air packs is \$23,689.28. He did not believe that the request needed to be made prior to the submission of documentation because C7 in the grant policy did not list that the exemption needed to be made prior.

James Calvert asked how the deficiencies were discovered. Wormser stated it was originally found during routine maintenance by fire department staff and that 78 air packs had issues that required repair outside of the departments normal service capability.

Johnston asked if the issues were found during flow testing or in house prior to the flow testing. She further asked if the repairs could be made in house. Johnston asked if

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1:30 PM

Theresa Hunter had any comments. She stated that the committee had been provided the invoices.

Motion: To approve the amended amount of \$23,689.28 for emergency SCBA repair for the City of Lynchburg

Motion: Calvert, **Second:** Sites

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Exemption approved, sent to VFSB

b. Fire and EMS Scope of Study

Committee Chair Johnston gave the floor to Spencer Willett to explain the need for a revised Scope of Study. Willett stated that these changes will better hold a locality accountable for their role in a fire and EMS study. For example, this version is more specific about how a locality will advertise for public comment. This will also require a locality to disclose if the locality has had a prior fire/EMS study.

Bettie Reeves Nobles asked if there was a requirement for the locality to give reasons to why they did not adopt recommendations of a prior study. Willett stated that is not in this document. He outlined that the new policy adopted by the VFSB already sets this as criteria for approval. Reeves Nobles is still curious to know why the locality did not adopt recommendations from prior studies. Willett stated that a locality will probably cite a change in leadership for this. Johnston asked if the questionnaire includes a question on if a locality has previously had a study. Willett stated this question is present in the questionnaire.

Calvert asked if the feedback that is now required will be brought back to the VFSB. Willett stated this was the plan, but it would most likely be included as a part of the committees' packet at the meeting immediately after the locality is surveyed.

Motion: To approve the revised Scope of Study as presented

Motion: Hart, **Second:** Reedy

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1:30 PM

Action: Scope of Study adopted as presented, sent to VFSB

c. Fire and EMS Study Questionnaire

Willett explained that this is the revised questionnaire. VDFP staff has reviewed the pre site questionnaire, as well as the site visit questionnaire. The site visit questionnaire has now been separated between fire, locality, and EMS questionnaires. The Office of EMS has been asked to create the EMS questionnaire. This required no action by the committee.

Reeves Nobles commended staff for the work on this project.

d. Rules of Procedure Update

Willett spoke about issues pertaining to the Codes and Standards Subcommittee. This subcommittee is made up of citizens who were not appointed by the Governor but the VFSB itself. This is not within the scope of authority of the VFSB since these citizens cannot represent the VFSB. To remedy this issue, the group will be recreated as a workgroup of subject matter experts who will advise the Fire Prevention and Control Committee.

Keith Johnson stated this was a step in the right direction because of how fluid this type of work is.

Motion: To approve the Rules of Procedure as presented

Motion: Johnson, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Rules of Procedure adopted as presented, sent to VFSB

e. New Categories for Governor's Fire Service Awards

Willett stated this agenda item was added because a fire chief requested a company officer award since they do not necessarily fall under the fire chief or firefighter category. Willett stated there has been a significant decrease in the number of applications and recommended against adding additional categories. VDFP has marketed this for months and the application is now open year-round.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1:30 PM

Johnson asked if a letter must be written for each category. Willett stated that all categories require one letter of recommendation, a letter from the highest-ranking person, and an executive summary. Johnson stated that if a fire chief recommended one person, then they would have to write a letter twice.

Calvert asked if an email would suffice for approval from the chief. Willett stated that was being accepted as approval by VDFP. Willett did state that VDFP has received some pushback from nominators who state this is difficult to complete. Johnston stated she felt the process was not cumbersome and that for awards at this level, it should require complete and approved nominations. It is up to the VFSB and the committee to push the awards forward. She did not agree with decreasing the requirements.

Willett suggested the extension of the submission deadline. This deadline was earlier this year to account for extended processes for approval. He suggested a 1–2-week extension.

Ben Reedy asked Keith Johnson how long it took him to complete a nomination, which Johnson stated was approximately 30-40 minutes. He did have to write two letters since he was the chief and the nominator. Johnson mentioned that his department has also seen a decrease in award submissions and suggested targeting leadership.

Reedy asked if marketing could be improved or strengthened. Johnson stated he had seen more announcements about the awards from VDFP than ever before and suggested tying it to grants, which was suggested in jest. Calvert echoed the idea to target fire service leadership to increase applications.

Steve Sites asked if John Miller and the Department of Forestry submit nominations, which Miller stated is done when warranted. Sites wanted to verify that the categories fit the need in that regard.

Johnston stated that there was a need for the fire service to highlight the work of firefighters to better support other goals in the fire service for additional resources.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Virginia Department of Forestry Headquarters

900 Natural Resources Drive

Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

1:30 PM

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

Motion: Reedy, **Second:** Reeves-Nobles

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Submission deadline extended by 7 days from December 1, 2023, sent to VFSB

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

Spencer R. Willett