

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Virginia Department of Fire Programs

1005 Technology Park Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23059

10:00 AM

MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Fire Prevention and Control Committee was held at the Virginia Department of Fire Programs in Glen Allen, VA. The meeting was called to order by Chair Steven Sites and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Steven Sites, Committee Chair – Virginia Municipal League
Keith Johnson – Virginia Fire Chiefs' Association
JM Snell II – Board of Housing and Community Development
John Miller – Department of Forestry

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal
Ernie Little – Virginia Fire Prevention Association
Dennis Linaburg – Virginia Chapter of IAAI

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Billy Hux, State Fire Marshal
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager
Will Merritt, Marketing and Communications Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No reported changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: To approve the minutes of the previous meeting (February 2024)

Motion: Johnson, **Second:** Miller

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

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REPORT FROM THE VIRGINIA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

State Fire Marshal Billy Hux provided comments on the FAST lab. The trailer has been procured but the three bids for the installation of equipment were over budget. VDFP Logistics will work to install systems instead. Hux expects the trailer to be feasible in 5-6 months. The SFMO received an additional \$217,000 from the General Fund for fiscal years 2025 and 2026, although the office is still not fully funded. All mandated inspections will be complete by July 1. SFMO will represent VDFP on the critical infrastructure workgroup being created in the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, which will work for 60 days on identifying critical infrastructure. The office has three vacant positions in field operations, two of which will be filled after fiscal year 2025 opens. The office is also planning to hire a part time permit technician to assist current staff with increased workload. The Division of Engineering and Buildings and SFMO have updated a memorandum of understanding so that SFMO can charge for construction services to other state agencies. This is expected to go live by July 1. A new uniform policy is being implemented for SFMO which will be funded with the assistance of VDFP. VDFP will purchase the uniforms that will consist of Class A, B, and a utility uniform. Fireworks testing has been complete, and the office will renew focus on illegal fireworks from out of state. Hux reported an increase in 3rd party companies using IROL. Hux discussed how IROL is used to collect and remedy complaints. He also spoke about how Mobile Food Preparation Vehicles should be permitted by SFMO unless a locality takes on the role. Even large localities are defaulting to SFMO, which is increasing workload on the office. He suggested a future meeting with Secretary of Finance for adjustments to fee schedules and funding issues. Hux will attend the National Association of State Fire Marshals conference in July.

Related to the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy, Hux reported that forty-seven people registered for the basic law enforcement (BLE) academy. The agency cannot handle the number of students in one session, so the office is considering offering two BLE academies. The first academy will start in August at Fort Barfoot. The fire inspector class in Loudoun is waiting for results from the Division of Testing and Accreditation. Hux also highlighted other past courses in Montgomery County and Bedford County, as well as future fire investigator and inspector courses.

JM Snell asked for clarification concerning IROL. Hux explained it was a reporting company that ties into the sprinkler companies and is a bridge between code officials and the systems that require inspection.

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CODES AND STANDARDS WORKGROUP

Committee Chair Steven Sites spoke in lieu of Andrew Milliken. He stated that once information is released from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) that the workgroup will meet and begin working on the new code cycle. Keith Johnson stated that the dates had not been released. Johnson clarified if the group could meet virtually. Willett stated as an advisory group of subject matter experts that the group could meet but would not receive the same level of support like a committee receives.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Steven Sites spoke about the Fire Prevention and Control Plan which will be discussed momentarily. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) and the VFSB is ongoing. Sites stated that he feels that progress is being made but is not sure where it will land. Sites spoke about working with VDFP or the Community Risk Reduction (CRR) section to market fire prevention across the commonwealth.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Fire Prevention and Control Plan

Sites brought up an issue raised by JM Snell under Goal #3 related to sprinklers in townhomes. Point #2 states that legislation should be sought to require sprinklers. Sites suggested this be removed as this board is appointed by the Governor. Johnson disagreed with the recommendation and suggested the wording be changed to encourage localities to pursue legislation. He stated that no one can disagree that sprinklers save lives. Johnson stated it should be present in the goals of the plan.

Snell did not object to the goal but stated it did not seem appropriate to put in the document that the VFSB is seeking the legislation.

Sites suggested changing the wording to encouraging localities rather than the VFSB seeking the legislation. Miller suggested wording that the VFSB provide education and encourage legislation on sprinklers. Sites stated that the information could be collected from the fire service to provide to localities seeking sprinkler legislation. Snell stated he felt this complimented Goal #3. Sites asked if any other sections required change or review. No further comments were provided by the committee. No comments were provided by State Fire Marshal Hux or CRR Coordinator Brown when asked.

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Motion: To approve the Fire Prevention and Control Plan as amended.

Motion: Sites, **Second:** Johnson

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Plan approved, recommended to VFSB.

Sites asked that Willett provide the amended version to the VFSB.

b. BHCD/VFSB MOU Update

Committee Clerk Spencer Willett provided an update on the MOU. He stated that DHCD suggested waiting to hold a meeting between the leadership of both boards until after new appointments are made in July. The two agencies, VDFP and DHCD, have a meeting scheduled in August to discuss agency interactions and the MOU prior to the boards. It is Willett's hope that the agencies can come to an agreement to bring a revised MOU to the two boards.

NEW BUSINESS

No new business discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer R. Willett

Next VFSB Meeting:

September 20th 2024 at the First Responder Virginia Conference
Virginia Beach, Virginia