

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD

Live Fire Training Structure Meeting
Thursday, December 1, 2022
Loudoun County Fire Rescue
751 Miller Drive, Leesburg, VA 20175
1:30 PM

Minutes

The Virginia Fire Services Board Live Fire Training Structure Committee meeting was held in Leesburg, Virginia at the Loudoun County Fire and Rescue Building. The meeting was called to order by Chair Bettie Reeves-Nobles and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Johnson, Ex-Officio, VFSB – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association
Bettie Reeves-Nobles, Committee Chair – General Public
James Calvert – Member of Industry Representing SARA Title III/OSHA
Jerome Williams - Certified Fire Service Instructor
Claudia Cotton – Housing and Community Development
Steve Sites – Virginia Municipal League

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Firefighters Association
Dennis Linaburg – Virginia Chapter, IAAI

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Theresa Hunter	Jared Goff	Will Merritt
Amanda Kennedy	Ken Brown	Spencer Willett
Billy Hux	Nicholas Nanna	

GUESTS PRESENT

Brandon Proffit	Cathie Hutchins	Eddie Ferguson	R. Scott Garber, VFSB
Michael Matthews	James Eicholtz	Abbey Johnston, VFSB	Donald Hart, VFSB
Stuart Dalton	Mike Watkins	Ben Reedy, VFSB	

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No Changes in the Agenda

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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Jim Eicholtz representing various companies and representing WHP Training Towers. He has worked on this for thirty years. The board started off distributing \$300,000 per year and it was a celebration when the legislature passed that in 1994 and 1995. A criterion was developed that the board administers regarding grants and people eventually twisted that around. When Matthews came onboard, he developed the prototypes that adhere to the criteria. This was a great thing for vendors and established a baseline with x amount of dollars, which have been raised over the years. This made it easy to provide the minimum as opposed to projects that were proposed and would not meet VDFP requirements. Once funds are encumbered no one else can use them. A locality is supposed to have one year, but some have gone on and on and now funds are stuck. Mr. Eicholtz suggested to give \$30,000 when a locality applies and ask them to bring back a plan to explain how a locality will pay and finance by quarter. One locality has been bidding for five years without the funding, causing the vendor to spend thousands of dollars. Vendors are running around and doing work on behalf of a faulty grant from the start.

Bettie Reeves-Nobles requested that Mr. Eicholtz restate who he represents.

Jim Eicholtz stated that he owned his own company but was representing WHP towers which has 20+ projects in the Commonwealth for federal facilities and state facilities. He stated that Mr. Matthews and he did not always agree but have always agreed on the prototype system. He further suggested that the board tour burn buildings across the state.

Claudia Cotton asked if Mr. Eicholtz's message was to look at altering the process of the grant? Mr. Eicholtz agreed with Ms. Cotton.

Bettie Reeves-Nobles stated that all the information is submitted at one time. This includes the money needed in addition to the \$450,000. Mr. Eicholtz stated that this is not adhered to.

Bettie Reeves-Nobles and Claudia Cotton state that they do not understand the message that Mr. Eicholtz is conveying over failure to adhere to the grant. Jim Eicholtz explained that site work is more expensive and this is not known until a study is conducted. It comes in overbudget for the grantee.

Bettie Reeves-Nobles reiterated that localities know they cannot get any more money than awarded to them by us.

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Jim Eicholtz stated there have been some with issues. The county has been told they don't have to pay a penny. Bettie Reeves-Nobles stated she had not experienced that in her tenure. The locality either turns the money in or walks away. Reeves-Nobles state that committee will look into it.

Theresa Hunter, Assistant Chief of Administration at the Department of Fire Programs, suggested that Mr. Eicholtz is suggesting a change in the award process. Instead of making the full award, the board gives them a portion. The remainder would be awarded after a locality does the research. Mr. Eicholtz is correct that sometimes the bid comes back high. The board still cannot exceed the \$450,000.

CONSENT AGENDA

The previous meetings minutes (June 2022) will be voted on in the Full Board Meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Bettie Reeves-Nobles stated she was glad the committee is together again. She suggested the committee look at the grant policy again to look at possible changes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bettie Reeves-Nobles stated that VDFP had provided a packet with updates. There are five projects currently open and 3 repair projects that are ongoing.

NEW BUSINESS

Goochland County, Virginia Fire requests a prototype exemption.

Deputy Chief Mike Watkins and Captain Brandon Proffitt from Goochland County Fire-Rescue presented on their exemption request.

Bettie Reeves-Nobles questioned where in relation to the cold building the new building will be placed.

Goochland Fire officials stated the new building will be beside the old cold building, which is still used for other training purposes. They also emphasized that the safety features of the structure they are requesting the exemption for are compliant with the most up to date NFPA standard.

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Eddie Ferguson, Fire Chief for Goochland County, spoke about the process and thanks the board for the opportunity. Goochland County has appropriated the money and if the board approves this project it would go out for procurement.

Captain Proffitt suggests that Goochland County could test this concept in the hopes the board could create an additional prototype for small localities to use in the future.

Ben Reedy questioned if Draeger give a life expectancy on the structure?

Brandon Proffitt stated that the company will not give a definite answer. He spoke to the fact that the standard says 20 years but also suggested that Draeger have assured Goochland that the training schedule will allow the structure to last that long.

Mike Watkins suggested that the mobile burn trailers owned by VDFP are 12 years old and are still functioning well. This design gives more flexibility to Goochland to provide training for live fire, mayday, and other evolutions.

Ben Reedy asked how Goochland is completing burns now?

Watkins and Proffitt discussed how Goochland has utilized other localities including Henrico and Chesterfield. They have also used the mobile burn trailer, but this is difficult with the layout of their training site. Watkins explained that sometimes the trailer is used at other locations in the county.

James Calvert questioned the timeline for moving the facility to a proposed public safety training center. Watkins stated it is in the 10–15-year plan for the county, but the land or location has not been found.

James Calvert further questioned if the structure has the automatic shut offs? Brandon Proffitt stated to his knowledge, the unit automatically shuts off at 500 degrees.

James Calvert questioned Michael Matthews from TSG over any proposed changes in 1402 that would affect this project. Matthews stated that changed in 1402 would not alter this concept or prototype.

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James Calvert questioned if Draeger is the inhouse engineering group and if using a third party versus an in-house engineering group is something to be considered. Brandon Profitt reiterated this is just a concept. Draeger will not do anything more than a concept because Goochland has not made it to the procurement stage. This is like buying a fire engine, where once procurement goes into place a project manager will be assigned until the keys are turned over.

James Calvert asked if these exemptions come from a 2015 document from VDFP for design prototypes? Michael Matthews stated that these were created as criteria to be minimum guidelines for building. Any kind of creative conception is supposed to comply with the 46 guidelines in the manual.

Brandon Profitt stated Goochland has a matrix that compares the Draeger structure and the exemptions they are asking for. Theresa Hunter stated this was on page 13.

James Calvert stated he would need to understand the exceptions more to look at the design issues, roof issues, and other differences mentioned.

Brandon Profitt said any of the exemptions being asked for are because this is a metal box. It cannot have a sloped floor as the policy states because it is a box, but it does have a drainage system that does the same thing.

Bettie Reeves-Nobles pointed out that this is a lot of information that the committee will have to work through. If the committee needs additional information, Goochland can be contacted.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn

Motion: Bettie Reeves-Nobles, Second James Calvert

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Committee Adjourned