

# **VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD**

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Full Board Meeting  
December 2, 2022  
Loudoun Fire and Rescue  
751 Miller Drive, Leesburg, VA 20175

The Virginia Fire Services Board meeting was held in Loudoun, Virginia at the Loudoun Fire and Rescue Building.

Board Chair Keith Johnson called the meeting of the Full Board to order and asked if everyone would take a moment of silence to remember those in public safety that had lost their lives.

## **BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Keith Johnson, Chair – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association  
Abbey Johnston, Vice Chair – Virginia State Firefighters Association  
R. Scott Garber – Local Fire Marshal  
Bettie Reeves-Nobles – General Public  
James Calvert – Member of Industry Representing SARA Title III/OSHA  
Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry  
Steve Sites – Virginia Municipal League  
Donald Hart – Virginia Association of Counties  
Jerome Williams - Certified Fire Service Instructor  
Claudia Cotton – Housing and Community Development

## **BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Services Council  
Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Firefighters Association  
Dennis Linaberg – Virginia Chapter International Association of Arson Investigators  
Ernest Little – Virginia Fire Prevention Association  
Rob Farrell – Virginia State Forester

## **AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT**

Theresa Hunter	Michael Parris	Nicholas Nanna
Brad Creasy	Ken Brown	
Amanda Kennedy	Will Merritt	

## **GUESTS PRESENT**

## **CHANGES IN THE AGENDA**

James Calvert would like to add the conversation of VALORS and LODA benefits for VDFP staff to the agenda. This will be discussed in New Business.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

Board Chair Keith Johnson asked for approval of the minutes

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from the previous meeting in August 2022.

**Motion:** Move to approve- Donald Hart, Second- James Calvert

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Minutes Approved

## REPORT FROM THE VDFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chief Brad Creasy, VDFP Executive Director, reported on the progress of the agency. He thanked everyone for the hospitality. He announced some key agency vacancies that were recently filled since the last meeting including:

- Nicholas Nanna (Deputy Director)
- Taylor Paige Roberts (Senior Intelligence Analyst)
- David Stewart (Division II Chief)
- Chief Liebold (Curriculum Chief)
- Matt Dewhirst (Chief Safety Officer),
- Tracey Frame (Receptionist)
- Dominique Gash (Lead Accountant)
- Dashaun Steele (Grants Analyst),
- Iris Dean (Procurement)
- Spencer Willett (Government Affairs)
- Chief Michael Parris (Deputy Chief of Training and Operations)

Creasy hopes to continue to fill vacancies in Division IV and VII. Since the last meeting, Governor Youngkin visited the agency, and his office is very supportive of the agency's efforts. VDFP continues to hold schools with some good training. Chief Creasy mentioned visiting various training sites and Alleghany County to assess their needs. He mentioned the Governor's Awards and asked that everyone spread the word to get more submissions in. The process is a little easier this year with less documents to fill out. Chief Creasy mentioned that in the past testing results have not been as fast as he would've liked and was happy to report that the process faster now. The only setback was filling some of the vacancies. He further mentioned that Virginia is one of the few states that provide training at your doorstep. A question was raised by Dr. Calvert on whether we were going to continue a volunteer and career award winner for each category, and Chief Creasy mentioned that was the plan. He also hopes to get the Governor to attend the ceremony in the future.

Chair Keith Johnson thanked Chief Creasy and the rest of the VDFP staff for what they were doing. He could see a big difference and was glad to see everyone was happy to come to work. He echoed what Chief Creasy said about the Governor's Awards and mentioned a lot of times firefighters don't want to be recognized, but it's such an honor. He reemphasized that member consider submitting or nominating, especially the small localities that don't always get recognized.

## FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL COMMITTEE REPORT

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Board Chair Keith Johnson mentioned that the committee had not had a chance to meet since the last Full Board meeting. The only request was the MOU, which was submitted to the Board of Housing and Community Development. Board of Housing and Community Development representative Claudia Cotton will follow-up on that to see where it is on the housing side.

## **REPORT FROM STATE FIRE MARSHAL**

Virginia State Fire Marshal Billy Hux spoke to the newly created roles within the agency. These roles will support special events and fireworks. The southwestern part of Virginia especially has a lot of explosives. With the mandates in place, and a lot of jurisdictions falling under the state, it will require the extra positions.

To date this year there has been:

62 fire deaths in the Commonwealth with the median age being upwards of 65 years old. Some of these people had mobility issues.

4,663 inspections have been performed so far in 2022

State Fire Marshall Billy Hux attended the National Fire Marshal Conference in Boston, Mass. He also got the chance to participate in a study group with the VSFA looking at standards. The State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO) is looking to help some of the smaller localities with extra hands. VFMA, along with Chief Goff, has worked towards getting investigators trained. SFMO has been trying to work with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) on hazardous materials related incidents and enforcement. They are also increasing customer service with the 62+ jurisdictions and partnering agencies, including Virginia State Police.

## **REPORT FROM DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY**

No report.

Board Chair Keith Johnson will reach out to Rob Farrell to see if he has anything to contribute as he is an important part of the group, but unfortunately had not been able to attend the last couple of meetings. He mentioned having the US Fire Administrator, Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell attend a future meeting, and possibly speak at the conference.

## **CODES AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Board Chair, Keith Johnson spoke on behalf of Andrew Milliken who was not able to attend. He mentioned being in the middle of the 2021 code adoption cycle. The cycle will end in 2023. Keith Johnson has served as a part of the Board of Housing and Community Development for five years and is on his 2<sup>nd</sup> term along with Claudia Cotton who also is on the Board. Each sit on a committee to have representation. Over the various regulatory cycles there have been many improvements. Keith Johnson provided an update on the workgroup for Agritourism. A House Bill was presented this past session to help with the safety of such facilities that fall into this category, such as breweries, wineries, etc. that are exempt from the fire code. There are two fire service organizations in this group. The Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) has a seat, which Keith Johnson holds. Originally it only included the Virginia Fire Protection Association. Chris Berry has

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been selected to serve on this legislative group, as he was on the original workgroup. Keith Johnson also attends the meetings along with Sean Ferrell from the Board of Housing. They are not official members but do actively listen to the discussions. Meetings are continuing after about three, and most of the members have a desire to change and promote safety at these Agritourism facilities. Such things as exit lights, panic door hardware, and fire alarm systems were discussed. The main goal of the workgroup is to work towards a way to get people out of these buildings should something happen. This is not retroactive, but rather for new buildings going forward. The challenge lies with how to incorporate it into existing code and how to enforce it without over-regulating this industry, as it is a vital economic source for Virginia.

Andrew Milliken and his committee have been hard at work and have met several times during the year to go over the various codes. These are open to the public and if one person objects to a code proposal then it becomes non-consensus. The process for submitting code proposals has improved.

Fee Structure discussion on the need to increase permit fees to support the infrastructure of State Fire Marshal operations and investigations was held previously, and Board Chair Keith Johnson gave the floor to State Fire Marshal Billy Hux to speak on the matter. Billy Hux mentioned that this was necessary to make the increase, as it had not been adjusted in quite some time and was needed especially with the cost of conducting business. Along with board member Steve Sites and Board Chair Keith Johnson, they had reached out to various localities to see if these increases would align with what others were charging. Since SFMO serves over 62 jurisdictions it was necessary for the increase to stay within the budget. Two other code concerns were brought up at the meetings involving fire extinguishers in buildings with quick response fire sprinkler systems and active shooter response.

49 code proposals were brought up at the meetings that were considered non-consensus. Board Chair Keith Johnson briefly discussed some of the proposals including sprinklers in townhomes and requiring carbon monoxide detectors. Also, there were proposals on energy storage buildings, vehicle charging stations, and habitable attic space. Unfortunately, a block of proposals was contested without any additional chance for comments.

These proposals will return to the Board of Housing and Community Development on December 12 for final approval.

Board Chair, Keith Johnson asked for approval to provide a letter to governor's office outlining the process and changing the way consensus vs non-consensus is classified in the code process.

**Motion:** Move to approve- Steve Sites, Second- Abbey Johnston

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion Approved and Carries

There was no unfinished or new business.

## LIVE FIRE TRAINING STRUCTURE COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Chair, Bettie Reeves-Nobles spoke about the previous day's committee meeting.

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## Unfinished Business:

There are five burn building projects open and three burn building renovations.

## New Business:

Goochland County requested an exemption to the VDFP prototype for a Drager pre-engineered burn structure which generated discussion and the need for an additional meeting to review their proposal.

Dr. Calvert mentioned that Goochland had provided approximately 22 exemptions that correspond to the 2013 policy. He had looked over the proposal for about two hours. What was presented should not be a safety concern with the firefighters. Dr. Calvert stated the proposal seems to be appropriate and what really needs review is the 2013 standard to bring the document up to date, especially involving burn building props.

Board Chair Keith Johnson presented that they had more than adequately met the service need and their proposal was lower than the standard, which is better, but the policy needed updating. He further mentioned several localities are already using similar burn buildings, that were not funded by VDFP. A motion could be made to approve or go back and update the 2013 document, which will take some time getting input from various stakeholders.

Abby Johnston mentioned she would be comfortable supporting Goochland, as there was an opportunity for those to speak at the meeting, and that the safety concerns were addressed. Additional comments were made in favor of Goochland by board members.

Theresa Hunter asked if this was just a one-time exemption or if the standard would be changed for all future prototypes, and noted the size of the rooms were smaller.

Committee Chair Bettie Reeves-Nobles mentioned this could open the door for others. She thinks another meeting is needed to address these concerns.

Dr. Calvert mentioned that the company doing the prototype, Drager, is a very reputable company in the fire service industry, and this could be a fourth design option.

Hunter mentioned that \$30,000 of the funding would go towards Drager's engineering cost.

Board Chair Keith Johnson agrees with everything Dr. Calvert said, but feels another committee meeting is needed instead of approving at Goochland at the current board meeting.

Motion to ask the Live Structure Committee to have an additional meeting to determine the next steps on approving these types of structures.

**Motion:** Motion to approve –Keith Johnson, Second- James Calvert

**Topic Discussion:** The meeting will take place on January 13 or 20, 2023, at VDFP headquarters in Glen Allen, Virginia

**Vote:** Unanimous

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**Action:** Motion Approved & Carries

## FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Chair Scott Garber mentioned sitting down with the Chief of Training and Operations, Jamey Brads. Garber outlined they were on track with the five-year plan and what training wants to accomplish. The Chair turned the floor over to Deputy Chief of Training, Michael Parris.

Report from the Chief of Training -Deputy Chief Michael Parris

Everyone received a memo from Jamey Brads, but Parris went into further explanation about some issues that started in Division VII. Due to not having testing with some of the courses, it was not allowing the student to get full credit. That affected about 1150 students across about 58 fire departments. As soon as they uncovered that in October, they put together a plan utilizing the accreditation branch and had to bring in some administration assistance. Trained staff from across the state came together to get everything caught back up and should be finished within 90 days. Chief Baker had retired as of November 30, and they are going through the process to fill that position. Hopefully both the Division VII and Division IV Chief position will be filled at the start of the year, along with the hiring of some additional adjuncts. VDFP will be piloting online testing soon. Also, Parris outlined the need to get the funding for hotspots in the underserved areas. The hope is to get results back to the students within 12 to 24 hours. The modular FF I & II is online and will be piloted soon.

Statistics –

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

1754 individual sessions

21,703 students

215 cancellations

849 no shows

132,695 instructional hours

July 1, 2022 to date

636 individual sessions

5,020 students

119 cancellations

188 no shows

50,543 instructional hours

Abbey Johnston wanted to let the board and staff know that Walt Bailey wanted to offer his tremendous gratitude for the modular FF I program that they are doing in Charlotte County. There are about 31 students in the program and nine more trying to get in. Multiple localities have asked to host one including Prince Edward County, Halifax, Appomattox, and Campbell County that surround them. In Charlotte County's history they've never had more than 6 students taking the class.

Dr. Calvert brought up that a complaint arose by email that he was copied about a class that ended in July, but the paperwork wasn't delivered to the division office until November. Dr. Calvert

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emphasized the need to help and support the division offices, and that understanding all aspects of an issue is important. Other divisions helped to get train-the-trainer's accomplished, and lots of other wonderful things being done that might not be known about. Another concern was raised about DPO training in that some localities do not have the pumps to be able to do the training, especially at the volunteer level. Also, he touched on getting more people to attend the National Fire Academy and asked about how registration was going.

Deputy Chief Michael Parris mentioned that they had to expand some of the classes, with one being moved to the auditorium to be able to accommodate more students. To date there is about 115 students registered for the National Fire Academy.

Dr. Calvert asked about the Charlie Singleton Training Award and to please consider bringing it back.

Deputy Chief Michael Parris responded to the DPO question and said it had been addressed and will be looked at during the next revision cycle. He also mentioned that Chief Creasy had tasked him with reaching out to other stakeholders and looking into some classes that they teach such as Elevator rescue, etc. A virtual meeting was held in November on how to bring some of these programs to VDFP. They would be non-certified but would be very good training.

Dr. Calvert mentioned that the testing centers of the Virginia Community College System would be good for the online classes, especially for the underserved areas. He mentioned he would be willing to speak to some of the colleges about using the facilities.

Deputy Chief Michael Parris mentioned that they are looking into the colleges but there is also challenges including going through VITA, which include buying and uploading the testing software that's being used.

Board Chair Keith Johnson touched on the Charlie Singleton Training Award and said he would defer to Dr. Calvert who was more familiar with it.

Amanda Kennedy mentioned the award was taken away from the division offices and allowed the public to nominate so that it would be unbiased. A division chief could still submit a nomination.

Jerome Williams spoke on the pass/fail system versus using scores. He asked if it would be possible to give the instructor the score so that they could sit down with the student and find out if it is a learning disability or where their strong areas are.

Chief Creasy said that some of the things they are looking at include having the analytics for online testing show the students what areas they are needing help in. Also, it is his desire to get the results back to students by the time they get home but not instantly due to some concerns with students getting possibly upset with their scores at the testing sites. Another change will be sending out retests with the packets so that academies can let their students take retests within 24 hours and graduate on time.

There was no unfinished or new business.

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## ADMINISTRATION, POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Chair Abbey Johnston mentioned that summary of the legislative stakeholder's summit packet was given out to everyone for review. She encouraged everyone to share the information and get involved with the legislative process. The last meeting of the committee was held earlier in the day at 9:00 a.m. Johnston also thanked Will Merritt for his help on the Charlotte County study. The committee also went over Aid-To-Locality (ATL) funding, burn building projects, and budgets with VDFP administration.

There was no unfinished business.

### New Business

There was a motion to approve the Charlotte County study.

### MOTION

Motion from the Administration, Policy and Finance Committee to accept the Charlotte County Study.

**Motion:** Bettie Reeves-Nobles

**Topic Discussion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion Approved & Carries

Committee Chair Abby Johnston mentioned that there was a review of applications by Scott Garber and Bettie Reeves-Nobles regarding Bedford and Rockingham County.

### MOTION

Motion to accept the applications from Bedford and Rockingham County.

**Motion:** Garber Second- Dr. James Calvert

**Topic Discussion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion Approved & Carries

### MOTION

Motion to approve the VFIRS applications.

**Motion:** Johnston Second- Donald Hart

**Topic Discussion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion Approved & Carries

### MOTION

Motion to send a letter to the current Governor's Administration for a dedicated funding stream for the fire service from the VFSB.

**Motion:** Abbey Johnston, Second- Scott Garber



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**Topic Discussion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion Approved & Carries

## COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Board Chair Keith Johnson asked VDFP Administration to investigate getting outgoing board plaques. Scott Garber mentioned that they may have been purchased from a company called Liberty Artworks. Keith Johnson also wanted to show gratitude for Deputy Secretary Maggie Cleary for attending the VFSB event the previous evening.

The next Full Board Meeting will take place at the Virginia Fire Chief's Conference and lodging will be arranged.

## FULL BOARD BUSINESS

### OLD BUSINESS

Dr. Calvert brought up the VALORS resolution and requested an update. Board Chair Keith Johnson referred to the Governor Affairs position, Spencer Willett, to speak on that.

Spencer Willett mentioned that the proposal was presented to the Governor's Office but was denied, so VDFP cannot present legislation on the matter till next year.

Board Chair Keith Johnson said the reason that similar legislation was not approved for dispatchers was because Virginia State Police wanted to be included. There is a study being done on it. There is cost involved and it could end up being locality mandated versus voluntary. Additional agencies have come forward wanting to be a part of the packet as well.

Spencer Willett stated that the bill concerning VALORS for dispatchers is still on the docket.

## NEW BUSINESS

Bettie Reeves-Nobels mentioned that she had talked with the Grants Manager, Theresa Hunter, about possibly getting TSG to do a new prototype that can be considered in light of Goochland's request. She also narrowed the dates for the next Live Structure Committee meeting to the 13<sup>th</sup> of January.

## ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn.

**Motion:** Motion- Jerome Williams, Second- Abby Johnston

**Topic Discussion:** None

**Vote:** Unanimous

**Action:** Motion Approved & Carries