

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee
Thursday, September 21, 2023
Conference Room C
Hampton Roads Convention Center
1610 Coliseum Drive Hampton, Virginia 23666
9:00 AM

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Administration, Policy and Finance Committee was held at the First Responder Virginia Conference. 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

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Donald Hart – Virginia Association of Counties
Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Service Council
Ben Reedy – Insurance Industry

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Theresa Hunter, Interim Assistant Chief of Administration
Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations
Will Merritt, Marketing and Communications Manager
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Monty Willaford
Billy Hanks

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Spencer Willett requested an additional agenda item be added to review the VFSB Rules of Procedure. Committee Chair Abbey Johnston approved the addition.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment

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CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: To approve the minutes of the previous meeting (February 2023) and the special meeting (April 2023)

Motion: Calvert, **Second:** Johnson

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP ADMINISTRATION

Theresa Hunter provided information on the previous fiscal year (FY2023), the FY2024 budget, and grant requests to the committee. This included ATL payments and those who forfeited their funds. She provided this documentation prior to the meeting and asked committee members if they had any questions.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Johnston welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that the committee had a full agenda for the day.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Virginia Fire Services Board Studies Review
 - i. Sussex County Fire and EMS Study Report

Motion: To approve the Sussex County Fire and EMS Study Report

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

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Report approved for Full Board

- ii. Amherst County Fire and EMS Study Report

Motion: To approve the Amherst County Fire and EMS Study Report

Motion: Sites, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Report approved for Full Board

- iii. Town of Lebanon Fire and EMS Review

Johnston stated this was a review rather than a full study. A conference call was held on 9/18 to begin planning this trip with the locality, Walt Bailey,

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and Spencer Willett. Willett stated that Sussex and Amherst County's studies were completed. VFSB and VDFP staff will be visiting the Town of Lebanon in November. There is no EMS involvement in this study and the report is expected to be smaller than typical studies. He also stated the Alleghany County was slated for early October and should be complete by the February VFSB meeting.

Keith Johnson thanked the VFSB members that attended and the VDFP staff that assist.

iv. Alleghany County Fire and EMS Study

b. Fire and EMS Study Process Review

Willett presented on the Fire and EMS Study Manual, which outlines in writing the fire and EMS study process. The process is similar to what most VFSB members are used too, except a more limited Type II Fire and EMS Review is being created to address more limited requests. The VFSB will be limiting full studies to 4 every 18 months.

James Calvert asked if it was becoming a trend for localities to have private entities complete studies. Willett stated that a recent study completed by the VFSB was presented at the same time as a private study, which is why there is selection criteria contained in the manual.

Reeves Nobles asked if the manual included information on following up with localities. Willett stated it did not, but that follow ups with localities was now in place. The manual is meant as a document for the public to better understand the studies.

Johnson asked why 18 months was chosen rather than a year. Willett stated that trying to do four studies in 12 months is often a difficult task for VDFP staff and the VFSB members. The 18 months provide a buffer for the agency and the board to get these studies complete. Johnson also asked if information on FOIA was included. This is important because of recent guidance the VFSB received regarding the number of VFSB members that can participate on studies. Willett stated this was not

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included because all VFSB members are provided with copies of FOIA when they join the board.

Motion: To adopt the Fire and EMS Study Manual

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

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Manual approved for Full Board

NEW BUSINESS

a. VFIRS Grant Award

Hunter stated that VDFP received five applications that would affect 8 departments. VDFP staff recommend the approval of all five applications.

Motion: To approve the VFIRS Grant Award Requests in the amount of \$5,600

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

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Grant award request's approved for Full Board

Sites asked if a list was provided. Hunter stated the list was provided in the board packet.

b. Regional Fire Services Training Facility Grant

i. King and Queen County

Deputy Chief Monty Willaford from King and Queen County spoke about the grant request and the need by his locality and other localities in the region. He stated the equipment would make training much easier and less time sensitive for volunteers and career staff. Middlesex County and King and Queen County are partnering on this grant with a total of 8 volunteer departments effected and career staff. A regional burn building in Gloucester is nearby but it is difficult to use because of the NFPA 1403 requirements and the logistics of live burns. This grant would pay for a live fire simulator that creates a live fire like scenario using technology and a smoke generator system.

Jimmy Calvert questioned the total cost of the project and the localities' ability to pay for the project. Willaford spoke about possibly getting an 80/20

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grant because of the small size of their jurisdiction. Two other jurisdictions had to decline the application because they could not afford their share.

Calvert asked if funds were available to provide additional funds through an 80/20 grant to King and Queen. Hunter stated the funds are available as long as it is under the total amount of money allocated for the grant. Johnson asked if this was the only application, which Hunter confirmed was true.

Calvert recommended an 80/20 grant based on hardship.

Johnston asked about whether this system would take the place of live fire training. Deputy Chief Willaford stated this would not replace this training and that personnel will still conduct normal burns. Most of their volunteers and personnel have live fire training, this system would be in addition to that.

Johnson spoke about the value of an 80/20 grant and recommended this for the grant request.

Motion: To approve an 80/20 grant for King and Queen County

Motion: Johnson, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Grant approved for Full Board

- c. Updates to VFSB Grant Policies
 - i. Aid to Localities Program
 - ii. Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program
 - iii. VFIRS Hardware Grants
 - iv. Regional Fire Services Grant Policy

Willett stated that Executive Order #19 from Governor Glenn Youngkin requires agencies and boards to reduce regulatory requirements by 25%. Grant policies and State Fire Marshal documents are listed as guidance documents, which required reduction. The above-mentioned programs or policies were reduced, with an emphasis on keeping safety requirements and examples for localities. A public safety exemption could not be utilized for these policies. Some of these policies will need to be reduced further.

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Reeves Nobles asked if the reductions had been made. Willett stated that was the case, but some need further reduction. VDFP wants to make sure safety requirements remain. Clarification is also being sought about what reduction looks like, whether it is per document or in total.

Johnston asked if these can be voted on as a block. Willett stated this was the case.

Calvert spoke about the \$30,000 architecture and engineering allotment and asked if this was appropriate. He further spoke about the \$50,000 limit for repairs. He also talked about the possibility to require NFPA 1403 documentation when localities request repair funding. This would help determine who is damaging these structures. Willett stated that the documents presented today were for regulatory reduction and not an overall review. Willett suggested that the group look at larger changes at another point. Hunter added that inspections are sent in annually and that the total grant amount of \$450,000 is usually not adequate. Hunter stated that the \$50,000 repair threshold is when it must go to the VFSB for approval.

Sites spoke about the VFIRS Hardware grant and that further changes may be needed to all the grant programs. He spoke about the Fire Prevention and Control Committee revising the Fire Prevention and Control Plan and how grant changes must support this.

Reeves Nobles asked how changes to the policies can be made. Willett stated that if three members want to discuss policy, this would be a publicly posted meeting. Changes will eventually have to return to the committee for public discussion and approval. Hunter stated the last time changes were made, a workgroup was formed to review and recommend changes.

Motion: To approve the updated VFSB Grant Policies

Motion: Johnston, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: Unanimous

Vote: Policies approved for Full Board

d. Board Appointment and Selection Process

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Vice Chair Johnston spoke about how she, VDFP staff, and Chair Johnson met with the Director of Board Appointments in the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Assistant Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to discuss issues with the appointment process. Johnson spoke about updates to the website on the Secretary of the Commonwealth's page. Johnston spoke about how some positions were incorrectly posted and other issues on the website.

e. Rules of Procedure Update

Willett apologized for not including this on the original committee agenda. He recommended that the full reports from each committee be struck in the order of business. Willett does not feel that each committee's full business needs to be disposed at the full board meeting. He recommended that a report from the committee chair be done instead. He provided an example.

Johnson supported this and spoke about how the board has two-day meetings or one day meetings. He stated that asking people to travel for 2 days to hear the same information does not make sense. Reeves Nobles supported the update.

Johnston talked about the honor and commitment of being appointed to the board and that attending committee meetings is an obligation.

Motion: To approve the Rules of Procedure

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

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Rules of Procedure approved for Full Board

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer R. Willett