

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD

Live Fire Training Structure Committee
Wednesday, April 17, 2024
Virginia Department of Fire Programs
1005 Technology Park Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23059
10:00 AM

MINUTES

The Virginia Fire Services Board Live Fire Training Structure Committee meeting was held at the Department of Fire Programs in Glen Allen, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Chair Bettie Reeves Nobles and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Keith Johnson, Ex-Officio, VFSB Chair – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association
Bettie Reeves-Nobles, Committee Chair – General Public
James Calvert – Industry Representing SARA Title III/OSHA
JM Snell II – Board of Housing and Community Development
Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal
Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Dennis Linaburg – Virginia Chapter, IAAI
Jerome Williams - Certified Fire Service Instructor

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Theresa Hunter, Chief of Administration
Will Merritt, Marketing and Communications Manager
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Mike Matthews

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

Bettie Reeves Nobles asked that “Comments from the Chair” be moved to immediately after “Old Business”.

Motion: To amend the Agenda to move “Comments from the Committee Chair” to after “Old Business”

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

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: Agenda amended

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment offered.

CONSENT AGENDA

No consent agenda as a result of the special called meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Live Fire Training Structure Manual

James Calvert spoke about using NFPA 1402 as the basis for the grant program. He also spoke to the need of localities and if buildings met the needs and were compliant with NFPA 1402, then that should suffice. He highlighted the difference between the project manual and the policy itself. His recommendation was that the program be governed by NFPA 1402 and the included reference publications. He also recommended that the project manual be reduced or completely removed. Spencer Willett advised the committee on Executive Order #19 as it relates to regulatory reduction.

Reeves Nobles noted that the committee was discussing the policy rather than the project manual. The committee continued to discuss the project manual. Mike Matthews, representing TSG, the contracted architecture and engineering firm for the Department of Fire Programs (VDFP), spoke about the project manual and its contents. He highlighted that the length of the manual was a result of the reference materials for each individual prototype. Calvert asked if the building code set some of the specifications. Matthews explained that the manual was not a restatement of the building code, but instead offered sample items for potential grant recipients.

The committee discussed the history of the program, the current program documents including the project manual and policy, and the need for changes in the policy. Matthews highlighted the history of the program, as well as the minimum square footage requirements contained in the program. Calvert suggested removing the size dimensions. Matthews spoke about the size requirements being the means to award maintenance dollars on an equitable basis. Keith Johnson asked if the square footage minimum requirements were solely for maintenance grants. Matthews stated the square footage was based on a study of burn room dimensions done at the beginning of the program and to provide adequately sized facilities for firefighter training.

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After discussing the differences between the policy and the project manual, Spencer Willett suggested that the first three to four pages of the manual be incorporated into the policy, with the remaining reference materials being offered as a separate document. This document would be removed as a regulatory document with all requirements being contained in the policy. The committee was receptive to the suggestion by staff.

Motion: Move the program description, program criteria and prototype description from the project manual to the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Policy.

Motion: Johnson, **Second:** Snell

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: VDFP will make appropriate modifications to the policy and project manual.

Motion: Remove the requested information from the project manual and make the necessary changes to make it a reference document instead of a regulatory document.

Motion: Calvert, **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: VDFP will make appropriate modifications to the project manual and begin the process of removing the document as a regulatory document.

The committee discussed increasing maintenance costs and that some localities were not adequately maintaining or burning in the structures. All committee members agreed that structures must be maintained and used properly to ensure they continue to be resources. Calvert suggested that burn documentation should be a required component of the five-year inspection. Matthews spoke to the issues his firm encounters when conducting the five-year inspections.

The committee discussed having a short recess with discussion continuing after its conclusion.

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Motion: The committee take a short recess with discussion resuming at the call of the chair

Motion: Snell, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: Committee stands in recess

Calvert reiterated that the size dimensions might limit a locality's ability to build a structure that fits their need. Calvert stated he would go with the will of the committee if no others felt this was pertinent. JM Snell offered that if a locality has an issue with the size, they should state that on the record for the committee. At this point, no locality has stated this. Snell recommended leaving the size dimensions as is until such time that a locality states there is an issue. Johnson spoke about varying use levels of burn buildings. Larger localities that have more firefighters will see more maintenance costs because the buildings are used more often. Johnson stated he does not have sympathy for localities that do not maintain buildings properly and suggested the committee be stricter with its use of maintenance funds.

Johnson spoke about Class B fueled buildings and the use of props. He highlighted that the buildings are more expensive, but also safer. Calvert spoke about the proposed Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) policy that would affect fire departments. He further highlighted issues related to compliance and potential criminal liability for fire department leadership related to the new OSHA policy. Jess Rodzinka spoke about Charlottesville's live fire structure, as well as Class A fueled buildings.

Snell asked how many Prototype 4 buildings exist and how many buildings VDFP has approved. Theresa Hunter stated Goochland, Fluvanna, Richmond, and Hopewell had been approved. The committee discussed that although Prototype 4 had not been approved, there were several locally funded container buildings across the commonwealth. Snell stated he did not agree with the complaint that the program was too burdensome. He questioned why the committee was having such a hard time with this prototype since it was only a minimum standard. The prototype still allows a locality to build larger or change the configuration. Calvert reiterated his concern over minimum sized structures as stated earlier in the meeting. He does not want the prototype to be exclusive and consider funds available.

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Johnson spoke about building code modifications. Matthews and the committee discussed additions to the International Building Code related to containers. Related to specifications, Johnson asked if WHP met the specifications of the prototypes when designed, which Matthews confirmed as true. Reeves Nobles clarified that Calvert had a problem with the minimum size requirements and that Matthews stated that the size was a guideline. Calvert suggested not having a minimum. Snell stated he thought the minimum should stay since this was precedent. Calvert stated this was a new design. Snell does not believe Prototype 4 should be the exception. Reeves Nobles asked what the size would be, which Calvert stated he did not know. Calvert did not think it was fair to use research from years prior to make comments on the current Prototype 4 specifications. Matthews explained that the research had not changed since it included metal buildings and class B fuels, which were like Prototype 4.

Reeves Nobles spoke about a working lunch, which the committee agreed too. The committee recessed briefly to prepare for lunch before reconvening.

Billy Hanks spoke about the number of containers for the building. Matthews spoke to this and that Prototype 4's specifications included a minimum number to provide Firefighter I and II training. The committee discussed the difference between a live fire training structure, flashover simulators, and single use burn cells. Johnson spoke about flashover simulators and their singular use. Snell asked for clarification on Firefighter I and II training and the needs for burn buildings related to that. The committee discussed the needs related to firefighter training, such as multiple floors.

Calvert asked about a class A fuel Prototype 4. Hunter stated that was up to the committee. Rodzinka stated the committee should address a class A Prototype 4 structure. Reeves Nobles asked why Class A was not recommended by TSG. Matthews stated that research for containerized structures primarily focused on class B. Johnson asked if this could be done with Calvert stating it changes the whole dynamic when the fuel type is altered. Johnson suggested the committee not discuss class A fuels until the committee finalizes the class B prototype. Calvert suggested that TSG look at containerized buildings using class A fuels. Johnson stated he felt it should be preliminary research only, rather than development of a prototype. Johnson further highlighted that the committee cannot jeopardize safety because of cost. He further suggested the need to lobby state and federal leaders for more funds to support firefighter training. Hanks

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questioned if this is something the committee should consider now. The committee discussed class A fuels and determined that preliminary research should be completed.

Motion: To direct TSG to conduct preliminary research on the use of class A fuels in a Prototype 4 style (containerized) burn structure.

Motion: Calvert, **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: VDFP shall direct TSG to conduct preliminary research on the use of class A fuels in a Prototype 4 style (containerized) burn structure.

Johnson asked if these changes were going to fix problems like the ones being encountered with the Goochland project. Rodzinka also questioned the delays related to this project. Willett highlighted issues that VDFP encountered related to the current policy and what it requires versus suggests. Hunter stated that the cooperative contract utilized by Goochland does not meet requirements contained in the current policy or the Virginia Public Procurement Act. Rodzinka questioned if the requirement for an architecture and engineering (A/E) firm was in NFPA 1402. Matthews discussed NFPA 1402 requirements for A/E firms. Rodzinka further asked if it was redundant. Calvert explained it was a non-mandatory recommendation in NFPA 1402. Matthews and VDFP staff emphasized the importance of an independent A/E that works on behalf of the locality.

The committee had further discussion on the prototype, as well as the policy itself. Calvert questioned the square footage requirement again and offered that if no other committee member had issue, that he was content with the prototype. As the committee conducted further discussion related to the policy, staff reminded the committee that the prototype remained unapproved and would need to be voted on to move further.

Motion: To approve Prototype 4B as presented by TSG for inclusion in the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Program

Motion: Calvert, **Second:** Snell

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: VDFP shall include Prototype 4B in the Live Fire Training Structure Program

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The committee began further discussions on the policy itself. Staff presented on issues encountered with the grant policy, including that current language only suggested A/E firms rather than required them. The committee also reviewed suggested changes as recommended by committee members prior to the meeting. After discussing the recommendations by Bettie Reeves Nobles, James Calvert, and staff, the committee determined in concept the changes to the grant policy.

Motion: To approve changes to the Live Fire Training Structure Grant Policy in concept

Motion: Rodzinka, **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous by voice vote

Action: VDFP shall make necessary changes to the policy, providing the changes for review to the committee prior to the June meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board.

b. Review of the Project Manual

This information was reviewed under the previous agenda item.

c. Review of Prototype 4: Container

This information was reviewed under a previous agenda item.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Reeves Nobles spoke about her tenure on the committee and her almost six years spent as chair. She stated she had one year left on her term with the VFSB and desires to help transition someone into the role. She stated that the committee has done strong work that she was proud to be a part of. Johnson commended Reeves Nobles and her leadership of the committee.

NEW BUSINESS

No New Business discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Clerk

Spencer R. Willett