

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

1:00PM

MINUTES

A rescheduled meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee was held virtually on Microsoft Teams. The meeting was called to order by Chair James Calvert and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

James Calvert, Committee Chair – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)
Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal
Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor
JM Snell II – Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development
Bettie Reeves Nobles – General Public
Carla Keesee – Virginia Chapter, International Assoc. of Arson Investigators

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director
Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer
Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations
Will Merritt, Marketing and Communications Manager
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager
Deshaun Steele, Grants Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT

Lee Williams	Rob Van Bibber	Matt Ascoli
Larry Gwaltney	Heather Childress	Mike Matthews
Benjamin Powell	Jim Eicholtz	

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No changes in the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment provided.

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CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (September 2024)

Motion: Hanks **Second:** Snell

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Calvert spoke about future items for the committee to look at but wished to wait for their next in person meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Goochland Live Fire Training Structure Award Recognition

Calvert spoke about the hard work that went into the discussions to get the grant approved under the committee leadership of Bettie Reeves Nobles and all the efforts towards the new prototype started by Goochland which was being recognized by the Governor.

b. TSG Prototype 4A Update

Chief Administrative Officer Theresa Hunter mentioned the update in the board packet that went out. The committee chair allowed Mike Matthews from The Structures Group the opportunity to speak. Matthews mentioned that based on their findings of other Class A fuel prototypes that a Prototype 4A should not be developed for live fire trainings due to them easily being damaged and notwithstanding the 20-year life cycle. Calvert mentioned doing some research on the differences between Class A and Class B fires in relationship to cancer prevention. Matthews also noted that their research showed training buildings using both Class A and Class B fuel and that the ones using Class A fuel have prop failure and require replacement. Matthews also mentioned repairs needed from thermal damage in Class A structures.

NEW BUSINESS

a. City of Hopewell's Burn Building Extension Request

No representation from the locality was present. The committee chair moved onto the next agenda item with no action taken.

b. Albemarle County's Burn Building Renovation Request

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Matt Ascoli presented on behalf of the county. The current building is 38 years old and contains three levels with five burn rooms within 4100 square feet. The grant would help with repairs and renovations to extend the life of the building another five to ten years and become NFPA compliant. Calvert asked for the total amount of the request, which was answered by Ascoli at \$200,000. He also noted that they had their own inspection done prior to the inspection conducted by The Structures Group.

Motion: To approve Albemarle County's Renovation Request

Motion: Snell **Second:** Keese

Discussion on the Motion: JM Snell asked for clarification on how Albemarle came up with the figures provided and the cost associated with the high temperature linings, etc. Ascoli mentioned that to get to the \$400,000 overall cost that money was being moved from the linings to renovations and repairs. The ask is \$200,000 and the county will match the other half. Calvert asked how many volunteer fire departments there were in Albemarle vs career. Heather Childress, also representing Albemarle, stated that there were 13 fire departments and 1 rescue squad, although surrounding localities also use their training grounds. Hunter mentioned that they are only eligible for 50% of their request and only up to \$200,000.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Renovation request recommended to the Board.

c. Town of Blackstone's Burn Building Renovation Request

The presenter could not be heard initially. After moving to the the next agenda item, the committee returned to this topic and Lee Williams presented. A memorandum of understanding was created between Blackstone and Nottoway County and the ask is for \$195,000 to help with 20 years of maintenance and renovations with their now 20-year-old burn building. The request will help cover 19 issues that were discovered in the 2010 and 2016 evaluations. Once approved, the locality is prepared to move forward with the project and will not need any additional funding. Calvert asked if the request was based on the most recent inspections, but Williams stated that the 2024 inspection's findings have not officially been provided, but that a lot of the same issues were being covered in the request. Mike Matthews from The Structures Group was asked about their company's recent inspection and would Blackstone's ask cover everything. Matthews recommended to the locality that they wait to compare the 2016 and 2024 findings to make sure they have covered everything and will be NFPA compliant. Williams mentioned that some of the newer findings were covered in the request. Hunter mentioned that they are only eligible to receive 36% and asked about the match. Williams stated that they do have

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~~\$200,000~~ \$20,000 to match set aside, along with \$37,000 they have raised over the last three years. So, the remaining needed is \$175,601. Reeves Nobles recommended waiting to look over the 2024 report to ensure everything has been accounted for. Hunter will send the digital report to Blackstone so they may get a new quote and revise their application.

An amendment to the approved minutes was made to reflect \$20,000 by the Live Fire Training Structure Committee at their meeting on September 24, 2025.

d. VDFP Training and Operations ARFF (Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting) Trainer

Chief Jamey Brads presented. He approached the committee to see if the aircraft rescue firefighting training prop for live fire could be funded by this grant. Further investigation is needed upon reviewing the policy and the exact amount needed. The committee requested staff to provide the most up to date policy and that it would review before the next scheduled meeting.

In other business, Keith Johnson spoke on Loudoun County's burn building and the Five-Year Inspection recently completed. To bring their building up to code, extensive tile work is needed. Johnson mentioned that the vendor is not getting back to them on the quotes and other information needed to move forward. Johnson asked if localities could use another vendor. Mike Matthews mentioned that this specific vendor has the best tiles for live fire training but disagrees with current NFPA and state requirements for thermal lining. Johnson asked if they could set up an offline conversation to discuss the matter.

Willet mentioned that the motions for Blackstone and Hopewell needed to be tabled until the next meeting or they would die on the floor since there was no action taken.

Motion: To temporarily table the Town of Blackstone and City of Hopewell applications until the June meeting.

Motion: Reeves Nobles **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Committee recommends no action and that both applications be revisited in June

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

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Spencer Willett

Minutes completed by Tracey Frame

Documents related to this meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board may be requested by contacting the Government Affairs section by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov

