

Virginia Fire Services Board

Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Department of Fire Programs

1005 Technology Park Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23059

9:00 AM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Administration, Policy and Finance Committee was held at the Department of Fire Programs in Glen Allen, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Chair Abbey Johnston, and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Abbey Johnston, Committee Chair – Virginia State Firefighter’s Association

Walt Bailey – Virginia Fire Service Council

James Calvert – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)

Kevin Duck – Insurance Industry

Keith Johnson – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association

Todd King – Virginia Association of Counties

John Miller – Designee, Virginia State Forester

Charles Sterne – General Public

Steven Sites – Virginia Municipal League

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Nicholas Nanna, Deputy Director

Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer

Jamey Brads, Chief of Training and Operations

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Lee Williams

William Wittenbrook

Jeremy Bennett

John Butler

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

No changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment.

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CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (September 2025)

Motion: Duck **Second:** Miller

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP ADMINISTRATION

Chief Administrative Officer Theresa Hunter provided the report, including two financial reports. The first report related to Aid-to-Localities (ATL), in which payment to 59 localities will go out in two weeks totaling \$11,849,00. The second report was on the Live Fire Training Structure Budget. There is \$1,160,958 million in funding that is unallocated.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Chair Abbey Johnston provided that it was an exciting time to be a part of the Board and to oversee the five million dollars grant for personal protective equipment. She noted the administration of the Mini-Grants could not be done without the hard work of staff the Department of Fire Programs (VDFP). She asked everyone on the committee to be involved in the many opportunities to participate.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. ATL Grant Policy: Fire Reporting as a Condition to Receive

Board Clerk Spencer Willett mentioned that the ATL Grant Policy was presented in Harrisonburg at the September meeting. He stated the policy would go in effect July 1, 2026, but the document would need to go through the regulatory process as a guidance document. Willett also went on to say that the document was out for public comment and provided to stakeholders prior to the meeting. There was no public comment for or against. He further stated that most of the edits were on reporting requirements as a condition to receive funding. It would be up to the localities to distribute the money to those fire departments who are reporting versus those who are not. He mentioned the goal of this is not to stop departments from receiving funding but rather increase reporting. This is a legal requirement.

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James Calvert asked about any impact feasibility studies and how this may impact departments regarding loss of funds. Willett responded that about half of Virginia's fire departments do not report incidents and that hopefully with the ease of the new National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) reporting will be easier. He further mentioned that it is up to the locality not to award funds to the departments if they are not in compliance. There is no way to know how departments will be impacted.

Keith Johnson mentioned that he sits on the Board of Housing and Community Development and that he hears complaints about the lack of data to support code changes. He noted that grant funds had been increased to help localities get the equipment they need to report.

Todd King asked if it was up to the locality to hold back funds, would that locality be able to give money to other departments that are reporting or would they have to send back the funds to the state. Johnston stated it would be up to the locality to decide where those grant funds go and suggested departments who are reporting have those conversations with their jurisdictions.

Motion: To adopt the policy as presented

Motion: Calvert **Second:** Duck

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

b. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Grant Awards

Johnston mentioned that 126 applications were submitted and over nine million dollars in requests. The recommended awards were as follows: applicants that scored eighteen or higher will receive 100% funding, those that received at least seventeen will receive 70% of their funding request. That totaled the five million dollars that is available. Johnston also noted that many of the applicants that got awarded fall within the fiscal stress index list.

Calvert mentioned that the VDFP staff worked hard getting everything together. He was surprised at the amount of need in the Commonwealth.

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Johnston noted that the intent when meeting with Governor Youngkin was to provide these funds to departments that really need it.

Johnson mentioned that the Woodstock Fire Department had invited him, along with a few others, for a reception to celebrate the funding of four sets of PPE. He noted that the department was very appreciative.

Johnston mentioned that it's important to understand each board member's role and why all the hard work goes into these applications.

Sites noted that some of the applications were handwritten and had missing information. He asked if an online application was a possibility.

Motion: To approve the Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Grant Awards as presented

Motion: Sterne **Second:** Duck

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

NEW BUSINESS

a. Board Policy on Disqualification of Grant Applications

Calvert mentioned that there needs to be more specific guidance for reviewing PPE as some departments use their gear more frequently than others. The process should be easier when answering questions on the applications especially involving PPE usage. There was a process when scoring that determined the years the gear was used, but he felt that departments should be able to clarify how often. Some departments provided more information than others. He noted that the process should be improved, especially for the departments that really need it.

Hunter explained the process. Applications are a three-page document including an assessment document that requires an inventory of gear and a section to list what the department does have. Hunter further explained the scoring process.

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b. Development of a Grant Evaluation Process

No additional comments were provided.

c. Electronic Grant Application Submission

Hunter mentioned that there are several vendors, but each locality needs an account, and it could be costly since there are 322 localities. She reported the greatest cost each time someone logs into the system, suggesting that VDFP would be charged. If the board is interested in funding it, a quote can be provided and brought back. Johnson stated that it is worth revisiting and there could be more affordable vendors. He asked for VDFP staff to investigate.

Johnston mentioned that it is worth looking into other vendors, especially ones that other state agencies use. She noted that the process should be easy, especially for the localities that are currently submitting handwritten applications.

Motion: To ask VDFP staff to review costs associated with an electronic grant application process

Motion: Johnson **Second:** Duck

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for the Board

d. Aid to Localities: Fire Department Contacts

Walter Bailey mentioned that changes at the locality level may sometimes prevent state grant funds from being used efficiently. He noted that localities should have to submit a list of contacts so the Board can follow up with local fire departments. He asked if the ATL Annual Report can be amended to supply a list of department contacts.

Johnston noted that funds are given to the localities and not to the departments directly.

Johnson mentioned that some localities may not be able to provide information from every department.

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Bailey asked if every department with a Fire Department Identification (FDID) number could submit contact information. Johnson answered that departments are already reporting to NERIS.

Johnston mentioned that although counties apply for the larger grants, that individual departments can apply for mini-grants and having their information allows the Board to let those departments know about opportunities. She noted that at minimum a contact person, department name and email address be captured for any department operating within that locality's jurisdiction.

Willett asked how the information would be maintained and how accessible does it need to be. He stated that it would have to manually be entered by staff and could be a difficult undertaking. VDFP marketed recent grant opportunities in multiple ways such as the newsletter and agency website.

Johnston asked if localities can electronically enter information if the Board moves to an online platform for applying for grants. Hunter mentioned that VDFP only tracks the contact information of the local staff that completes the applications.

Johnson mentioned that there should be contact information for every fire department in the Commonwealth. There should be a method to require them to submit at least every two years.

Johnston noted that the easiest way to capture that information is by adding it to grant reports.

Bailey acknowledged that there will be a cost involved but it's worth looking into as funding grows.

Calvert mentioned that he does not understand why a roster of members for every department in Virginia is not on file. The United States Fire Administration has data-based programs in place to determine health conditions of firefighters. Virginia could benefit from having something in place to use data, especially from the smaller departments to support increase funding, services, etc. He noted that although there will be a cost it may be worth it.

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Johnston mentioned that it will be wise to encourage departments to keep accurate records of their member rosters.

Bailey mentioned that requesting contacts on ATL reports might be the only way to capture this information.

Motion: To amend the Aid-to-Localities (ATL) reporting form to include contact information from all fire departments within the locality's jurisdiction

Motion: Bailey **Second:** Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

e. Mini-Grant Applications

Johnston mentioned that two members are needed to score the Mini-Grant Applications.

Charles Sterne asked about the timeline of the scoring process. Hunter mentioned that the pair will have until February for the whole process.

Johnston mentioned that out of seventy-nine applications, twenty do not align with the Board's stated priorities.

Johnson mentioned that four other members will need to help score the Governor's Fire Service Awards and that everyone needs to pitch in and help.

Sterne and Duck volunteered to score the Mini-Grant Applications.

Prior to adjourning, Bailey mentioned that this will be the last meeting before the legislative session. There are two bills to increase funding, and it is vital that the Board weighs in on supporting those two bills.

Willett mentioned that no other bills that he is aware of have been posted. Willett encouraged conversations rather than sending a formal letter.

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Johnston mentioned that information had been developed by other fire service associations to be used for speaking with legislators. She encouraged that the Board support the legislative booklet, rather than any specific bills at this juncture.

Willett noted that the agency's legislative agenda had not been finalized and that it must align with the sitting Governor.

Motion: To support the Fire and EMS 2026 Virginia Legislative Priorities and Issues Booklet

Motion: Bailey **Second:** Johnson

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

John Miller mentioned the Dry Hydrant Grant Program through the Department of Forestry and would like to seek an increase from \$100,000 to \$200,000. This program is running more smoothly, and he encourages promoting the program.

Bailey mentioned that when funding is increased it will double the VDFP's budget and legislators previously asked how the agency will use that funding. He noted that Director Creasy is currently working on that plan. Willett mentioned that the Board cannot make any decisions on increasing the funds for the Dry Hydrant Grant Program without the Code of Virginia changing.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

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 Division by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov