

Virginia Fire Services Board

Live Fire Training Structure Committee

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

Department of Fire Programs

1005 Technology Park Drive, Glen Allen, VA 23059

1:00 PM

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Motion: Hanks **Second:** Sterne

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Calvert mentioned that much work has been done on the committee, and he thanked the committee members for their efforts.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Report from the Live Fire Training Policy Subcommittee

Steve Sites, Chair of the Subcommittee, stated that there were two meetings which produced four recommendations on November 6 and November 12. The meetings were scheduled after Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) Chairman Keith Johnson voiced concerns to the Board about the thermal lining requirements based on the five-year inspection of the Loudoun County burn building. The meetings examined National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1402 and 1403. He, JM Snell, and VFSB Chair Johnson represented the Board in the meetings. Board Clerk Spencer Willett added that the Board received the report as part of the board packet.

Sites spoke about the four recommendations made by the subcommittee. He said there was concern that if a locality has an engineer doing their annual inspection, and then the engineer retained by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VD FP) conducts the five-year inspection, what happens if there is a disagreement? The first recommendation addresses this by requiring the localities and the structural engineers to have the approved drawings that the structure was built with, which indicate what is load bearing and what is not. If the drawings are missing, then the locality should hire design professionals to create new ones to represent the existing structure. The second recommendation says VD FP should update the training structures grant program. The second engineer retained by VD FP would render an opinion to act as tiebreaker when the original engineer for

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VDFP and the locality engineer disagree. The third recommendation is for VDFP to cease contracting engineers to conduct five-year inspections. Every locality should be responsible for its own inspections, hiring its own structural engineer or design professional. The subcommittee is not recommending that funding the inspections be ceased. There should be a mechanism for the Board and VDFP to provide funds in the event of financial hardship. Also, the VDFP would still retain engineers, but those engineers would no longer conduct five-year inspections. Fourth, for the Live Fire Training Structure Committee to fully review the grant policy, specifically Item 13, Program Criteria. The subcommittee found that Item 42 requires interior thermal protection on the vertical surfaces of a burn room. This is outside the scope of NFPA 1402. This is a discrepancy that creates a burdensome requirement for thermal lining, and it is unknown why this requirement is in the policy.

Chair Calvert stated he understands recommendation 1 but, regarding recommendation 2, he asked if the committee believes that, if a qualified engineer designs and builds a structure, oversight from the Board and VDFP is still necessary? He suggested that having a qualified engineer building the structure and a design bearing the professional engineering approval stamp is oversight enough. Sites replied that nowhere in NFPA 1402 provides requirements for credentials for design professionals. The local building official looks for the stamps, but the individual stamping the design may not have experience in live fire structures. For this reason, he believes there is value in retaining an engineer with the proper background.

Keith Johnson agreed with Sites. He discussed the requirements laid out in the grant policy and the disagreements between engineers are exacerbated by the items that go beyond NFPA 1402 and 1403. Calvert asked if a second professional engineer is needed. Jess Rodzinka asked if pre-engineered structures were discussed in meetings. Sites said no, that in general NFPA 1402 would cover them as well. Johnson said that NFPA 1402 is the guiding document in his opinion. He said there is still value in VDFP providing guidance and doesn't want to throw all 50 items in the policy away. He discussed how the policy compares with the requirements in NFPA 1402 and 1403.

VDFP Training and Operations Chief Jamey Brads mentioned that every building used for training has signs that identify that the building meets the standards for accredited training. If the policy items being discussed were dropped, the signage would need to

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change. Board Clerk Willett added that there are two signs on each training structure and reviewed what each sign indicates.

Snell said that the committee is still in the middle of the process and does not need to make substantive changes at that moment. He said they can wait until February to do that, which will allow more subject matter experts to be included.

Sites suggested that the subcommittee meeting scheduled for tomorrow should be rescheduled to a later date when more of those experts can be included. Board Clerk Willett noted that canceling means notice must be posted on the Virginia Regulatory Townhall and the VDFP website. He added that there will be many more experts who will be available at the February meeting. He also stated that canceling the December 3 meeting meant that the minutes from the previous subcommittee meetings must be voted on today in full committee. Chair Calvert called for a motion to cancel the December 3 subcommittee meeting.

Motion: To cancel the December 3, 2025 meeting of the Live Fire Training Policy Subcommittee

Motion: Sites **Second:** Rodzinka

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board

Chair Calvert asked the committee members to further research the grant policy to prepare for discussion at the February meeting. He called for a motion to accept the meeting minutes for the subcommittee meetings on November 6 and November 12. Board Clerk Willett asked for clarification if the subcommittee will be meeting again, or if the discussion will be undertaken in a meeting of the Live Fire Training Structure Committee. Sites stated that it should be the full committee making decisions on updating the grant policy.

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Motion: To approve the minutes of the Live Fire Training Policy Subcommittee meeting held on November 6, 2025

Motion: Snell **Second:** Williams

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

Motion: To approve the minutes of the Live Fire Training Policy Subcommittee meeting held on November 12, 2025

Motion: Snell **Second:** Sterne

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved.

Johnson said that motions made in the subcommittee will be tabled until February meeting.

Motion: Defer the Live Fire Training Policy Subcommittee motions to the February meeting of the Virginia Fire Service Board

Motion: Snell **Second:** Rodzinka

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Motions to be considered in February

NEW BUSINESS

a. City of Richmond Extension Request

Bailey Martin, representing the City of Richmond, requested an 18-month extension. Sites asked if 18 months is a realistic timeline suggesting that two years might be better. Chief Bailey agreed. Chair Calvert asked for a motion.

Motion: To grant the City of Richmond a two-year extension

Motion: Sites **Second:** Rodzinka

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for the Board

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b. Fluvanna County Extension Request

Eric Dahl, representing Fluvanna County, requested a one-year extension.

Motion: To grant Fluvanna County a one-year extension

Motion: Sterne **Second:** Rodzinka

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for the Board

c. Town of Blackstone Renovation Cost Increase Request

Lee Williams represented the Blackstone Volunteer Fire Department. Blackstone had initially requested \$382,000 in March 2025 to bring their training structure up to standards. Chair Calvert had suggested dividing that amount into two separate funds, one for maintenance and the other for thermal protection. \$141,000 was earmarked for maintenance, and the other \$243,943 for protection was tabled contingent on the resolution of the issues being considered by the Live Fire Training Policy Subcommittee. They have \$50,000 for repairs related to thermal issues, but not specifically linings on vertical walls. Blackstone is asking for \$50,000 of the tabled funds to be released for other structural elements. Williams wanted to ensure that their grant application does not need to be resubmitted, as it has been two years since the original request.

Motion: To grant the Town of Blackstone the release of \$50,649.50 for structural repairs

Motion: Rodzinka **Second:** Snell

Discussion on the Motion: Sites asked Williams for clarification whether the elements intended to be repaired with the released funds had thermal protection when the structure was built. Williams said that they did not, and the addition of thermal protection was prompted by the five-year structural report.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Approved for Board. From the original \$243,943 tabled, \$193,293.50 remains tabled until February.

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ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

Spencer Willett

Minutes completed by Greg Cavalli

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

