

**Vermont Fire Service Training Council**  
*Minutes of the February 14, 2019 Meeting*

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The meeting was held at the Vermont Fire Academy in Pittsford and called to order by Christopher Corbin.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Organization Representatives**

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Vermont Career Chiefs Association                            | Troy Ruggles                    |
| Secretary of Education                                       | Sunni Erikson (phone)           |
| Vermont Fire Chiefs Association                              | Absent                          |
| Commissioner of the Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation | Lars Lund                       |
| Professional Firefighters of Vermont                         | Christopher Corbin, Chairperson |
| Commissioner of the Department of Health                     | Dan Batsie                      |
| Vermont State Firefighters Association                       | F. Tom Estey                    |
| Commissioner of the Department of Labor                      | Dan Whipple (phone)             |
| Vermont Domestic Insurance                                   | Matt Miles & Jeffrey Pryce      |
| Division of Fire Safety Director                             | Michael Desrochers              |
| General Public   | John Marcus, Vice Chairperson   |
| Commissioner of Public Safety                                | Absent                          |

Visitors: Peter Lynch, Michael Skaza, Jessica Pomainville, William Jones, Terry Farr, Ben Whalen

Introduction of Matt Miles who will be taking over for Jeff Pryce as the Domestic Insurance representative on the Council.

Wendall Mansfield has been admitted to a care facility due to health issues. The Council expressed their best wishes to him.

The Chairperson advised the Council to strike agenda item 7(a) under New Business, "Exemptions from training for full-time firefighters pre-1987", as it will be discussed at a later meeting.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**A motion was made by Estey and seconded by Ruggles to accept the previous meeting minutes of October 11, 2018 with the update that the Career Chief representative was present at the prior meeting and the Vermont Fire Chief representative was not. Motion passes unanimously.**

**Report from the Executive Director of the Division of Fire Safety (Michael Desrochers)**

Director Desrochers reported that he testified at House Appropriations Committee in favor of adding \$60,000 to the VFA General Fund for curriculum development work. The VFA used to

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have nine full time staff, currently they have seven, and for a few years we there were only five. This money will allow for the Academy to use temporary employees to help with curriculum development.

The Director is currently working on a short-term rental and rural economic development initiative. The State is trying to come up with a Master Plan for the permit process to build in industrial parks so that developers can do the permitting work on the front end of projects.

Ann Ross was hired as the new plumbing inspector. The Fire Safety Engineer, Matt Lindheim, has left the Division and the Director is contemplating converting that position over to a third plumbing inspector to work in the Springfield region.

There was a meeting between BGS and the Academy regarding PFOA's and PFOS's that are present at the training grounds. It is suspected that there will be additional ground water testing and additional work will be done in the future. They are looking for a solution that will close this issue so that no future monitoring is required on this site.

**Report from the Chief of Training: Peter Lynch**

Firefighter I and I/II programs are more than half way complete. The accelerated programs are moving forward. The first Live Fire Exercise is scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup> and this is the earliest that we have ever had one. This is due to the new burn building and the installation of the concrete pad surrounding the building.

A Fire Instructor I class held at St. Michael's College has completed. There are 13 students currently enrolled in a second offering of Fire Instructor I that is currently underway in Poultney.

Fire Officer I/II will be starting at the end of March and will be held in Williston. The schedule may not be the traditional five days a week for three weeks, but instead be three days a week for six weeks. There will be an update on his program at the June meeting.

The East Cottage funding has been secured but it has taken longer for the work to get started than originally planned. A meeting was held with prospective architects. Construction is set to start in the fall or early winter of 2019. There may be 12 months of construction. The Chief of Training hopes that it is done in time for the next instructor development day, which is scheduled for August 29, 2020.

Instructor Development Day was held on January 12, 2019 and 58 instructors attended. Jim Esden attended on behalf of ANR. Including Fire Academy Staff, a total of 70 people attended the day.

Instructor Performance Evaluations have started with our newest employees and 27 evaluations have been completed to date. This is a great initiative focused on bringing quality improvement and professional development opportunities to our instructors.

New Instructors have been hired from Bristol, Poultney, Barre, Grand Isle, Pownal, Proctorsville, and Burlington.

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Three instructors have resigned, two of which could no longer find the necessary time in their schedules and the third stepped down due to declining health.

### **Curriculum update:**

The Rope Rescue Operations and Awareness Working Group is working to use the CMC textbook for additional program support.

The revision of Pumping Apparatus Driver Operator is complete and has been piloted once. The VFA received Pro Board Accreditation for the current edition of NFPA 1002. This approval included Pump and Mobile Water Supply certifications. The second pilot will begin in Bristol next week. By the next meeting the VFA hopes to be able to ask the Council to take this program out of pilot and allow it to be a full program offering.

Aerial Apparatus Driver Operator (AADO) is currently being worked on by one of the VFA's Fire Service Training Specialists and the VFA hopes that by the next meeting the VFA will be able to seek approval to bring AADO into pilot.

The Vehicle Rescue Working Group is working on creating an Awareness/Operations curriculum. They have reviewed various curriculum packages and selected the IFSTA curriculum. They will continue work to develop that program over the next couple of months.

There is another group working the review of Swiftwater and Floodwater Rescue curriculums.

Flammable Gas is being worked on and making slow progress.

The new Edition of NFPA 1001 has been released. The hope was that the VFA would be able to start curriculum review on those sooner, however there was a delay in the Standard being release due to debate on the content of some of the JPR's coming out of the NFPA committee. This has led to a delay in the release of the published curriculums and only two of three publishers have their package ready to review.

The Entry Level Exterior Firefighter Course has gone to a review committee and is back with the Working Group for final editing. The VFA is ready to schedule a Train-the-Trainer (T-t-T) session. A lot of work has been done on this, the T-t-T date will be set this week.

Dan Whipple asked if there is a method for or if there will be follow-up training for those that take the Entry Level Course. Chief Lynch advised that the hope is that they will take Firefighter I after taking the course. The course is going to be handed off to departments who send members to the T-t-T. Firefighter I and above are required to meet 24 hours of continuing education per year. At the Entry Level the VFA has no way of following those people or documenting their after-training. Whipple suggested using the Regional Fire Schools to maintain the Entry Level course. The VFA has started offering new course delivery methods to Regional Fire Schools courses that have little classroom and more hands-on training.

It is clear that the VFA has to find alternate funding resources to continue moving forward with curriculum work. The VFA has submitted an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) seeking

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funding to purchase equipment in support of our ice and water rescue related courses.

The VFA is applying for a Homeland Security (HS) Grant to support technical rescue courses over the next three years. The courses proposed for this funding include:

- Two Ice Water Rescue deliveries and T-t-T's
- Upgrade the Rope Operations curriculum which would include three deliveries
- Development of a Vehicle Rescue Operations curriculum which would include T-t-T's and two pilot deliveries
- Development of a Swiftwater and Floodwater Rescue course, a T-t-T, and two pilot deliveries

The VFA is hopeful that they will receive some of the requesting HS funding and will move forward with all of those. How quickly this proposal moves will depend on the available funding.

The budget is expected to be at zero at the end of the fiscal year for both the special and general funds.

The Chief of training handed out a report of the 2018 year-end initiatives. This report provided the status of those initiatives and asked the group to contact any VFA staff with any questions or concerns regarding them. Director Desrochers thanked the Academy for all the work they have done over the past year and said that the document is helpful to see what has been done over the last year. He stated that this report is a true reflection of transparency on what the Academy has been doing for work. Corbin asked who the report has been shared with and Lynch stated that the document was shared with the Training Council and the VFA Instructors. The Chief of Training intends to share it with the Career Chiefs and the Coalition at their next upcoming meetings. Corbin agreed with the Director.

Capital for the Day events have been held in Essex, Chittenden, and Lamoille counties since the last Council Meeting. The feedback is similar at each meeting but it is nice to see everyone in the same room.

In June the Chief of Training wants to start talking about allowing Challenge exams for all or more levels of certification. The VFA is going to be adding more and more programs that have certifications attached to them. There are many cases where it might be appropriate for the learning to take place elsewhere and then have the VFA conduct the certification exam for those.

### **Report from the Council Chair:**

No Report

### **Statute and Rule Revision:**

All the Rule Changes and justifications for the changes have been sent to Director of Fire Safety.

### **Unfinished Business:**

Pro Board Accreditation of Rope Awareness/Operations has been approved to the latest edition of NFPA 1006. There were no issues with the Pro Board submittal. VFA seeks approval to start certifying people to 1006, 2017 edition. **Motion for the VFA to begin certifying Rope**

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**Awareness/Operations to the updated NFPA 1006 Standard made by Marcus, seconded by Estey. Motion passes unanimously.**

Chris Corbin reported that he has not received any more input from the PFFV about adding more physical and mental health information to Firefighter I, however there will be a PFFV Mental Health Working Group meeting next week and he plans on asking them for direction on this. He will report back in June.

Certification testing of Hazardous Materials Awareness/Operations to the NFPA 1072, Hazardous Material Responder Professional Qualification Standard has begun. Four programs have been tested and minor adjustments have been made to improve the process.

**New Business:**

Standard Operating Guideline Discussion:

1. Course and Program, Cognitive and Psychomotor Attempts (Approval) – The effective date should read February 13, 2019. This guideline identifies the number of attempts a student has to pass a course quiz or practical when registered in a course or program. This applies to all of our courses and courses within programs with the exception of Wildland and ICS because they have their own requirements. Lars Lund says that Wildland will follow the direction of the VFA, so the VFA can strike Wildland out of 1 and add to e.

Chris Corbin asked how often students fail Live Fire Exercises because they don't have the necessary skills? The VFA has been working with the Lead Instructors to ensure that the skills validation is done prior to coming to Live Fire Exercises. Most students that fail Live Fire Exercises do so is based on their physical inability to perform the skills or meet the minimum criteria established in our Rehabilitation Program. The skills are team based so it is more difficult to fail based on skills. The Live Fire Instructors are performing continuous evaluations during Live Fire Exercises to identify satisfactory performance of the skills.

**Motion to endorse the Course and Program, Cognitive, and Psychomotor Attempts SOG with the change that Wildland be struck from 1 and be added to 2 (e) made by Estey and seconded by Lund. Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Obtaining Certification (revised Approval) – The first time this SOG was written it did not take into account Technical Center students and this version addresses those students. Another revision is an addition that allows the Academy to recertify individuals based on the number of hours recorded in their database. If there are not an adequate number of hours on file then the Fire Chief must sign off on the recertification.

**Estey makes a motion to approve the revised Obtaining Certification SOG seconded by Lund. Motion passes unanimously**

3. Course and Program Student Minimum and Maximum Requirements (revised endorse) – The first change adds Hazardous Materials Operations. The next is an addition needed after conducting the last Rope Operations course. The VFA felt the need to adjust the student

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numbers for safety and equipment logistics reasons. The next change is for the Fire Inspector program student maximum, which needs to be adjusted due to the workload of evaluating the projects. This change will match Fire Officer program and calls for changing the maximum student number from 24 to 20 to more reasonable manage project evaluation. The Flammable Gas course increases from 24 to 25 maximum students to fill match the student to instructor ration requirements in NFPA 1403. The Emergency Vehicle Driver Training course maximum is changed to 20 students to adequately manage the logistical demands during practical skills training.

**Estey makes a motion to approve the revised SOG, seconded by Ruggles. Motion passes unanimously.**

There were no comments on the SOG's circulated as FYI, so no action is required.

**Coalition Report: (Absent)**

Director Desrochers reported on the activity of the Coalition. On February 26<sup>th</sup> the Coalition will have the Cedar Room at the State House and it is a meet and greet with the Legislature. There will be representatives from the VFA, USAR, Public Education, and Haz Mat Team present.

On March 19<sup>th</sup> the Coalition will join Troy Dare, manager of the dry hydrant grant program, in the Card Room at the State House. At 10:00 a.m., there will be a ceremony to recognize Tom McClay, who served for 57 years on the Marshfield Fire Department.

Haley Pero from Senator Sanders Office and Dan Batsie have been attending the Coalition meetings. Haley Pero is working on a retention and recruitment video aimed at the entire fire service.

VTC has cancelled their 2020 Fire Science Degree Program. They only had four students registered. There is an opportunity to restructure that program in the future. A fire service group met and encouraged the VTC President to move the program to Chittenden County. They are trying to set another meeting for March.

The Director has been trying to get the Coalition to get the Volunteer Fire Chief's together in one room to have a meeting.

**Vermont Career Chiefs: (Ruggles)**

In 2018 there was no conference, they are working to hold one in 2019. There have been quite of few changes in Chiefs.

**Vermont State Firefighters Association: (Estey)**

The VSFA Annual Convention will be held on July 19 – 20<sup>th</sup> in Middlebury.

**Vermont Fire Chiefs: (Absent)**

No report.

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**Professional Firefighters of Vermont:**

No report.

**Agency of Natural Resources: (Lund) –**

The Annual Forest Fire Warden Meetings will be the last week of March through April 9<sup>th</sup> and Lund invited anyone in the room to attend. The topics to be discussed are stress first aid, mental health, and critical incident stress management. He asked that if anyone has resources he could use he would like the help.

There is new Director of Forest and Parks.

A survey went out on the forecast/predication program to validate that the program was useful.

The new District 5 employee will take a facilitated instruction course which is required to teach Forest Service courses.

Lars Lund asked for feedback on ANR instructors teaching within the VFA programs.

Lars Lund is the new representation on the Fire Protection Task Force

**Department of Education: (Sunni Erikson)**

Working with schools on lock down and clear the hall drills.

**Department of Health: (Dan Batsie)**

The VT Ambulance Association attended the Coalition meeting for the first time in six or seven years.

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, EMS will be at the Capital talking about the cost of EMS in the VT system. Dan is looking for Chief's to attend to discuss the various issues with reimbursement and paying for EMS in a rural state.

The EMS Training position is still vacant, and interviews start after the 15<sup>th</sup> of February.

**Department of Labor: (Whipple)**

OSHA had a tough year in 2018 with trenching/excavation fatalities nationally. OSHA is seeing more and more and they are happening even in Vermont. There was one in St. Albans this past year. There have been some major water main breaks around the State and a lot of attention is being paid to failing infrastructure. Dan would like to make a cautionary warning to all Fire Departments that when responding to these calls to make sure that Firefighter safety is the number one priority.

**Vermont Domestic Insurance: (Pryce)**

No Report

**General Public: (Marcus)**

No Report

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The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 13th at 10:00 am at the Division of Fire Safety Central office in Berlin

**Lund makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ruggles. Motion passes unanimously.**