

Vermont Fire Service Training Council
Minutes of the March 26, 2020 Meeting

The meeting was held at the Vermont Fire Academy Administrative Building, Pittsford with a conference call-in available and called to order by Christopher Corbin.

ROLL CALL:

Organization Representatives

Vermont Career Chiefs Association	Aaron Collette
Secretary of Education	Absent
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	Absent
Vermont State Firefighters Association	F. Tom Estey
Commissioner of the Department of Labor	Dan Whipple
Vermont Domestic Insurance	Absent
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, Terry Farr, Ben Whalen, William Jones

Modification of Meeting Agenda:

The Chairperson asked for a motion to strike 6a from old business and move to new business as 7a on the agenda and proposed that "Firefighter I and II, and Hazardous Materials curriculum change request" be added to 7a. The motion was made and seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

Lund has a revision to the December 12, 2019 minutes that should reflect that he was present. A motion was made by Collette to accept the December 12, 2019 and March 19, 2020 meeting minutes as amended and seconded by Estey. Motion passes unanimously.

Report from the Executive Director of the Division of Fire Safety: Michael Desrochers

The Director thanks everyone for taking time out of their schedule to attend and thanks the Fire Academy for helping disperse information regarding the pandemic as it comes out. All Division offices are open with a limited staff to keep the permitting going out.

Report from the Chief of Training: Peter Lynch

All classes have been suspended up until April 13th and the Academy will evaluate that date as it gets closer. The Academy is working on options to get us through. The Academy will determine if

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classes that were scheduled to start that had not yet started will start in the late Spring or if it will be pushed to the fall. Students will get caught up to be successful. The Vermont Fire Academy staff is working day to day on the emergency as well as trying to get the online classroom stood up. The Academy is waiting on the publisher then needs to create the classroom while training instructors and training coordinators. The Training Coordinators and Lead Instructors have reached out to the students to see if online training was an option for them.

Program requests for FY2021 are due by May 29, 2020. Departments are also encouraged to submit requests for PADO, RIC, and other lengthy programs. The Fire Academy is still planning to come back to the Training Council in June for approval of the FY2021 deliveries.

National Fire Academy requests are due. The Southern and Northern Training Coordinators have been working on securing hosts locations and identifying the courses they wish to have delivered.

A request has been made for a 6-day NFA Fire Inspection Principals course that will be held in the Lebanon, NH area. This is a joint effort with the New Hampshire Fire Academy.

We are submitting a request for Three State Weekend for next year. At this time, the Three State Weekend set for the end of May is still a go.

The East Cottage work has slowed down. The project manager is working on finalizing wastewater plans to achieve the bed capacity that is desired.

All the Regional Schools with the exception of one has been cancelled for this Spring.

There is a lot of legislation in the works, however a lot of it is on hold. Some of the ones that the Fire Academy are watching are S.243 Responder Wellness Bill, H.742 which is an EMS funding bill which speaks to not taking money away from the Fire Academy but using the same special fund insurance monies for funding EMS. H.707 which has to do with Fire and EMS training at the Technical Centers, S.292 which doesn't affect the Council but is the return of the Blue Light Bill, and the last one is the Department of Public Safety being turned into an agency, which is being studied and talked about. The Chief of Training will have updates at future meetings.

There was a small amount of Homeland Security Unit money that had been left over from last year's grant awards. The VFA applied for \$9,000 and received \$4,500 and the money will be used on Rope Operations training so that Vermont has a certified Rope Awareness and Operations program. The training was scheduled however the Academy will have to push it out a little bit due to COVID-19. The Academy intends to hold the certification testing prior to the grant period ending in late August.

The VFA applied for 2020 HSU money, the number one priority was for development and delivery of an Ice Water Rescue course, Rope Awareness/Operations field delivery, and Vehicle Rescue Operations T-t-t and field delivery. The grant is over a three-year period so the VFA may have aimed high but is hopeful to at least get a portion of the funding needed.

Chief of Training planned to present the Strategic Plan and discuss the Work Plan but he will wait

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until the June meeting when the meeting can be face to face and there is more time to go through it. The request for grant funding for Ice Water, Rope Rescue, and Vehicle Rescue training meets both the Strategic plan and the Work plan.

The VFA submitted a grant application to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program for a total of \$187,350 dollars. If approved the Federal government will fund \$168,614 dollars and the funding will be for equipment to support live fire, ice rescue, a trailer, and a tow vehicle. Unfortunately vehicles and trailers usually get removed from our budget so that we can provide more training so if they could be purchased through a grant it would allow the VFA to provide more training and allows the VFA to work with other parts of the Division, like USAR and the Haz Mat Team.

Up until last year the VFA recieved federal money to support the Instructor and Fire Officer programs. It looks like that money is supposed to be restored in this next fiscal year but the Chief of Training is not sure if it will be affected by the two trillion dollars that is going to be allocated to helping people get back on their feet from the current emergency. However, the Academy is hoping to still see that \$20,000.

The VFA asked for a little more Hazardous Materials grant money than last year. Last year we received \$57,000 to work on a variety of HMEP programs and this year it has been raised to \$80,000. This year Michael Skaza has found some different ways to spend that money than we were able to in the past.

Chris Corbin asked what the VFA's plan is to get those students who cannot finish the program online? The Chief says that the VFA isn't quite sure what those options are or who those people are but the VFA is in agreement that we won't leave them behind and is prepared to find ways for students to finish.

Aaron Collette asked if the Academy is pursuing the other online platforms, like Zoom. The Chief of Training says that the Academy is exploring other online platforms like Microsoft Teams to allow for other learning methods.

The Chief of Training explains that the Academy plans to ask instructors to work on curriculum during this time and that he is not worried about the money being taken away.

Chris Corbin thanks the Chief of Training for all his hard work during this time.

Report from the Council Chair:

No Report

Statute and Rule Revision:

The Rules are completed. The Chair thanks the Division of Fire Safety for their assistance with the process.

Unfinished Business:

The VFA is facing some changes in certification testing processes that are driven by changes to the NFPA professional qualification standards language and accreditation requirements. Michael

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Skaza has spoken about some of these changes previously. To move this forward, the VFA would like to create a committee consisting of two Council members along with some VFA staff members to review the requirements, develop proposed changes in testing process, and make recommendations to the Council. The Pro Board wants to see movement towards making these changes now and the VFA would like to see this by the reaccreditation meeting scheduled for December of 2020. The VFA would need to start using these for the Haz Mat testing that will be in early winter of 2021. Chris Corbin and Tom Estey agree to work on the committee.

The Flammable Gas Curriculum revisions are complete, and it is ready for SME review. Michael Skaza will be pulling together that group and attempting to perform this review through web meetings to keep us moving forward during our shutdown with the goal of being able to offer the course once we are able to meet in groups again.

The Fire Academy will look at holding a “Train-Up/Review Session” for instructors prior to delivery. There is not a huge backlog of course requests for Flammable Gas Control since it has not been available for so long.

New Business:

The Vermont Fire Academy formed a working group of 16 SME curriculum reviewers and 2 additional staff members to review the available Firefighter and Hazardous Materials curricula. The group established review criteria, received in-person presentations from publisher representatives, reviewed curriculum against the established criteria, and had comparison discussions as a group. VFA Staff performed a review to ensure that candidate publishers could meet the business needs regarding pricing, order fulfillment, customer service, and contracting. We have a distributorship with Jones and Bartlett and we are pursuing distributorship with IFSTA which will bring us a benefit in all of our titles, getting us better pricing, availability, and access to their people and their product.

The Working group recommended IFSTA as the Firefighter and Hazardous Materials Awareness/Operations curriculum of choice based on the content being most workable for Vermont, usability of produced materials, and strength of online products to allow for hybrid instruction. The VFA made it clear to the committee that the Strategic Plan calls for us to seek alternate learning platforms to push us forward. Subsequent to that, we performed a VFA Staff review which concluded that this is a viable publisher for both business needs and curriculum content.

While the new edition of NFPA 1001 does add some content, it is not appreciable in length and in VFA Staff review of the lesson outlines found that we will have to shuffle some hours between topics but we will not need to increase the overall length of the Firefighter Programs.

As with any new curriculum adoptions, there is work that needs to be done to prepare the product for delivery and Michael Skaza outlines what that will look like:

- Each chapter of the approved curriculum will undergo a SME review using VFA Training Staff and Instructors. There will be a small number of SMEs working on each chapter. This review will suggest and prepare course outline and lesson plan modifications as well as modifications to instructional materials such as PowerPoint presentations and skill

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drills. This is an opportunity to enrich the materials with appropriate videos and activities.

- Once the SME work is complete, it will undergo a SME group review for final adjustments and vetting.
- The VFA will procure current NFPA 1001 certification test banks and form a SME group to perform test item validation over the summer. Skill evaluation sheets will undergo the same review per accreditation requirements. The VFA will apply for an extension of accreditation to the new edition of 1001 by July so that we are able to start testing to the new edition of 1001 according to Pro Board requirements by the deadline, which is September.

The Academy will be looking at this curriculum layout with a focus on using alternative instructional methodologies that reduces the number of hours spent in the traditional classroom and increase the number of hours for psychomotor practice or incorporates the classroom lesson into the practical setting. The Academy will be using online lessons for some content that does not have psychomotor components and empowering instructors to utilize a flipped classroom format. This will require instructor training and the Academy is working on providing that through several web-based training segments as well as at instructor development day.

If the Council chooses, it is the intentions of the Academy to continue supplementing the published curriculum with the National Traffic Incident Management course, ANR Wildland course, FEMA ICS 100 and 200 courses to accomplish those JPRs. We are still exploring best options for the provision of CPR and First Aid Training but will ensure that whatever path is chosen will comply with adequate coverage of the JPRs.

The Academy is seeking the Training Council's approval of the IFSTA Essentials of Firefighter 7th Edition for Firefighter I, II, and combined programs as well as Hazardous Materials for First Responders 5th Edition for Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations.

Aaron Collette asks if CPR and First Aid is in the seventh edition? The answer is yes. The bare essentials within NFPA 1001 requires that firefighters are taught bleeding control, CPR, and shock management, however the VFA goes above and beyond with offering the AHA Heartsaver First Aid course. The VFA asks the Council if they want the content the same and continue to cover all the content that exceeds the minimum requirements of NFPA 1001 or would they like to have it pared down to what is minimally required by the standard? The second question, which is more of a business standpoint, what's the appropriate product for that? American Heart is a good product but it does come with a significant expense and there are other products out there that are written to the ECC and First Aid standards that may be more cost effective and be just as adequate of a learning tool.

Is it important that the students leave with a Heartsaver or Red Cross card, or some of equivalent card or is it okay to just cover the content and not have them leave with that extra merit badge card? Many states take that approach, they just include it as content within the Firefighter I and don't issue a separate CPR and First Aid card, but they cover the required content.

Aaron Collette asks if the CPR content was reviewed by an SME group. Michael Skaza says that

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while it was not reviewed by a member of the curriculum SME group he did review the content and it is basic and covers the minimum that is required by the standard, but it is technically correct.

Aaron Collette is willing to make the motion to accept new curriculum however there is still the issue of CPR and First Aid but that can be addressed as a separate issue. Michael Skaza says his goal would be to land on a solution and mentions that they still have the June meeting to address the issue. No matter what is decided the VFA will make sure that all the JPR's are covered. Michael Skaza asks if the Council has a particular direction they would like to go today, then we should discuss it. It is decided to wait until the June.

Motion to move ahead with the adoption of the IFSTA Essentials of Firefighting 7th Edition and IFSTA Hazardous Materials for First Responders 5th Edition curriculum by Collette, seconded by Estey. Motion passes unanimously.

The Chairperson asked that the CPR discussion be placed on the June meeting agenda. The VFA agrees and says that they will provide an update on of the curriculum review at that meeting as well.

Chris Corbin wonders as we discuss the First Aid portion is a way to incorporate Stop the Bleed style training. Would replacing some of the First Aid content with more relevant training from the Stop the Bleed training? The VFA agrees to look into this.

Standard Operating Guidelines:

Accommodations for Disabilities SOG:

Michael Skaza explains that this is documentation of the VFA current and past practice and that the Academy will continue to provide accommodations very liberally to the students who request them in our Firefighter and Hazardous Materials programs. These accommodations include providing examinations orally, giving them a separate quiet room for testing, and extending the time limit by 50% when requested. These accommodations can not be offered in many of our upper level programs where reading comprehension, decoding, and interpretation is part of the JPR. This occurs at the Fire Instructor level and above and for some content within Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations where there is reading comprehension requirement.

Chris Corbin asks if the SOG was reviewed by legal counsel? The VFA responds saying that the SOG was not reviewed by legal, however the Department of Justice ADA Assistance Center was consulted in the development process. ***Motion to approve the Accommodations for Disabilities SOG, motion was made by John Marcus to approve and seconded by Tom Estey, motion carries unanimously.***

Registration Process SOG:

Collette asked about what a two course window is in 10 a number 3. There was a discussion about what a two course window is. At the end of the discussion it was decided that the language should be changed to: Students applying within the two instructional sessions following orientation will have 24-hours to submit certifications after receiving the application acknowledgement email. ***After no additional comments were offered on the revised***

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Registration Process SOG a motion was made by Aaron Collette to endorse the SOG with the changes discussed. The motion was seconded by Tom Estey, motion carries unanimously.

Course Module Equivalency SOG:

After no comments were offered on the revised Course Module Equivalency SOG, *a motion was made by Tom Estey to endorse and seconded by Collette, motion carries unanimously.*

There were no comments on the Campus Use SOG that was sent out as an FYI.

Coalition Report:

The last meeting was cancelled so there is not a report.

Vermont Career Chiefs: (Collette)

The Seminar scheduled for April 3 rescheduled for November 3, refunds have been issued.

Vermont State Firefighters Association: (Estey)

No Report

Vermont Fire Chiefs: (Perkins)

Absent

Professional Firefighters of Vermont: (Christopher Corbin)

No report however the IAFF is putting out a lot of good information regarding to COVID-19.

Agency of Natural Resources: (Lars Lund)

They have cancelled everything. The Director asks Lars about issuing a statewide burn ban. Lars explains that a statewide burn ban can only be ordered if there is an extreme fire hazard. However, Fire Wardens can issue no burn orders in their towns. He is working with Emergency Management to put out a press release. Only an Executive Order could change that. Whipple asks if one can be put out at a local level. Lund explains that the Fire Warden could stop issuing burn permits.

Department of Education: (Rob Evans)

Absent

Department of Health: (Dan Batsie)

Absent

Department of Labor: (Whipple)

Reminder that EMS and Fire Service personnel should be following the CDC and Department of Health guidelines regarding PPE use. Chris Corbin asks what the Department of Labor is getting for complaints? Prior to the Executive Order people were making complaints about not enough hand sanitizer, social distancing not being followed, and now that the Executive Order is out people are filing complaints about “why is my business open we aren’t essential”?

Vermont Domestic Insurance: (Miles)

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No Report

General Public: (Marcus)

Thanks the Fire Academy for the hard work trying to move to online platforms so quickly with a small staff.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 11 at 10:00 am at the Vermont Fire Academy in Pittsford.

Lars Lund makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Tom Estey. Motion passes unanimously.