

**Vermont Fire Service Training Council**  
*Minutes of the June 11, 2020 Meeting*

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The meeting was held virtually 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	Rob Evans
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, William Jones

**Modification of Meeting Agenda:**

None.

**Approval of Minutes:**

*Motion made to by Collette and seconded by Marcus to accept the March 26, 2020 minutes. Motion passes unanimously.*

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

The Director thanked first responders and the Fire Academy for all the hard work. The Division is going to have several fiscal constraints in the coming years. The Division is trying to reduce costs without negatively impacting customers. Regional offices may be shifting to other locations to cut costs. The Division is open and busy with permits.

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

The Academy is open and working. At this time each Academy staff member is required to work at least two days in the office and then remotely for the remainder of their work week. The Academy has worked very hard in a short amount of time to get online training set-up. 94 students were moved to online training. Those who could not participate with online training have been offered alternatives to finish. A total of 75 students have been able to complete the online work for the program that they were enrolled in. Students are now able to train face to face and whenever

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that occurs, students are being screened, wearing masks, and social distancing. There have been comments that it hard to wear the masks. The hope is to finish this year's programs by late July/early August. Classes may be postponed as training is being held during the hot summer months however the Academy is training to mitigate and plan accordingly. As far as the emergency goes, the Fire Academy continues to be the conduit between the fire service and the SEOC. The Fire Academy has developed a number of guidelines and procedures for fire department training, is distributing hand sanitizer to emergency service agencies, and is providing online training opportunities to the fire service. Council members are encouraged to check out the Fire Training Friday training segments that are being produced.

On March 16<sup>th</sup> the Instructor program was stopped after one session. On April 16<sup>th</sup> the program resumed using the online platform. Certification testing began on June 9<sup>th</sup> and will end on June 16<sup>th</sup>.

Vermont and New Hampshire have worked together to request an NFA 6-day course offering of Fire Inspector Principals I due to the high demand the Fire Academy received for the Fire Inspector program that was held earlier that year. This offering will be held in the Lebanon area.

The Vermont Fire Academy Instructor Development day scheduled for August of 2020 has been postponed to late winter/early spring. In the meantime, the Academy continues its work to schedule online instructor development training.

The East Cottage project has slowed down but is still moving forward. There was an unforeseen issue with the wastewater permitting and they have had to design a new leech field. The hope is that bids will be out by the end of July with a deadline of mid-August. The projection is to have construction completed by October of 2021.

The Regional Fire Schools made the decision to cancel through 2020. The plan is to hold a meeting with them in September to talk about 2021.

The Senate bill on Responder Wellness continues to move through however the EMS funding piece was removed and put in Senate Bill 124 and that is moving along. 742, which talked about providing EMS funding using the same funding source as the Fire Service, has been eliminated. H.707 called for fire and EMS training at all technical centers and did not get a lot of support and has been removed from consideration.

Grants make-up a lot of the annual Fire Academy budget. On average, grant make up approximately \$240,000 of the VFA budget. The Academy has applied for a Homeland Security Grant for \$120,000 to fund ice water, rope rescue, and vehicle operations courses. The Academy has received a preliminary award for this grant at the State level but is awaiting final word. The Academy is waiting to hear the results of a \$168,000AFG grant application. The HMEP grant awarded to the Fire Academy has increased a bit and the VFA will use that extra funding towards Flammable Gas Control courses. The \$20,000 federal pass through money that comes from the National Fire Academy to fund Fire Officer and Fire Instructor has been re-instated and the Fire Academy will be applying for this funding.

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The Fire Academy is planning on ending the fiscal year with some carry forward money. The Chief of Training is not certain if the carry forward money will be there for Fire Academy use. The Academy has been asked to reduce its general fund budget by 2 – 8% and has projected its budget with a \$38,000 loss so that the VFA does over-extend itself.

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

No report.

### **Committees:**

Due to competing demands on time and workload, the committee that was scheduled to work on the certification exam process has not been able to meet.

### **Unfinished Business:**

After looking at various options for CPR the Academy is recommending that the Council and Fire Academy continue to use AHA Heartsaver CPR and First Aid within the Firefighter I program.

The Academy looked at the First Aid content and feels the best course of action is to stay with the American Heart Association package. Chris Corbin asks if Stop the Bleed content is covered by the Heartsaver First Aid. Michael Skaza says that the Stop the Bleed course offers three skills – bleeding control by pressure, wound packing, and tourniquet cover pressure. The Heartsaver course does not cover wound packing or tourniquet pressure however to add this content to course it would add an hour of content and require additional training and props. The Academy recommends offering it as stand-alone training down the road.

### **New Business:**

The Vermont Fire Academy feels that July would be a better time of year for recertification to be due from a workflow standpoint. This is being coupled with a high number of phone calls with questions concerning firefighters not being able to get their 24 hours of continued training due to the pandemic. The Academy is seeking approval to change the recertification deadline to July. Collette says it aligns with EMS even though EMS is every other year and endorses the change. Changing recertification to June 30 would ease workload and not affect the VFA financially.

***Motion by Lund to move the recertification deadline to June 30 and that would extend any recertification to June 30, 2021, seconded by Collette. Motion passes unanimously.***

A map of all the 2021 program and course locations was shared. The Academy is trying to distribute training around the state. There will be an additional 26 courses that will be held around the state that are not shown on the map. This number is based on the average offerings over past years. If the Academy can hold additional programs they will.

A map of the Rapid Intervention Crew Training, Rope Operations, and Pumping Apparatus courses was shared. RIC is a three-module course and the Academy believes that module one should be held around the state because it teaches self-rescue and survival. Module two and three will be held at the Academy. The Academy plans on offering it five times throughout the

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state in the fall. Module 2 and 3 will be offered based on student participation in Module 1. Module 2 will be offered at the Fire Academy to ensure space and safe anchoring for the skills performed from a height.

A map of the NFA courses and the Instructor and Fire Officer program was showed and discussed. These locations were selected because the Academy has either not offered courses or programs in those locations recently or because they made a different request that the Academy was unable to approve.

A map of the program locations was displayed. The Fire Academy plans to offer an Officer program this year since they were unable to last year, however the question remains if that will be in the North, South, or at the Fire Academy. There are a lot of benefits for it to be held at the Fire Academy.

There were seven requests for a Firefighter program this year. The budget will support five programs. It is the Fire Academy's recommendation that we offer Firefighter I programs in Colchester, Middlebury, Ryegate, and Wilmington and a Firefighter II in Newport City. In order for the Academy to get started with next year's programs the Academy has to finish this year's programs and maintain and test equipment. Due to these factors, this year's programs will not begin until after October 1. The Academy felt it was in the best interest of the students to not offer a combination program due to the length. Stowe will be an alternative location if another program must be cancelled. If Stowe is not awarded a program the Fire Academy will offer them stand-alones and a challenge exam.

There was a late submittal for a Firefighter I host that was made by Global Foundries and they were turned down and asks to re-apply next year.

Question on whether the VFA has concerns about connectivity especially in Ryegate if we have to switch back to an online platform. The Vermont Fire Academy is working with hosts and trying to think outside the box. The Academy plans to deliver 26 additional courses and up to \$60,000 worth of other programs as well.

***Estey makes a motion to endorse the program delivery locations as recommended by the Academy, motion seconded by Marcus. Motion passes unanimously.***

The Academy is asking the Council to consider a hybrid Firefighter I program if the number of programs running in FY21 drops below four. The Council supports it as long as VFA is prepared.

Typically, the Fire Instructor program is held twice a year, one in the north and one is the south, however the Academy won't be able to financially support two Fire Instructor programs and the Fire Officer program without taking money from the special fund. The Chief of Training is asking that the Council allow the Academy to run a hybrid Instructor program out of the Academy. This would be run on a nights and weekend format since last year was on a weekday format and students would do some of the work by themselves, some would be virtual, and some portion would in-person at the Academy.

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***Rob Evens makes the motion to support a hybrid Fire Instructor I program seconded by Estey. Motion passes unanimously.***

Some students are unable to obtain the pre-requisite work required for certification, this really only applies to students who wish to Challenge, however this would not apply to applicants who do not have Haz Mat Operations since that is a certification program itself. The Academy is asking the Council to allow those students to take the certification exam and the Academy would withhold the Pro Board certification. The applicants would have a 60-day period to provide the required training before their results would be thrown out. Since we are not certifying candidates the Training Council was agreeable to this under the circumstances.

**Standard Operating Guidelines:**

There were no SOG's for approval, endorsement, or FYI for this meeting.

**Coalition Report:**

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

**Vermont Career Chiefs: (Collette)**

No report.

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

No report other than the Conference was cancelled this year.

**Vermont Fire Chiefs: (Perkins)**

Absent.

**Professional Firefighters of Vermont: (Corbin)**

No report although having a virtual Convention next week.

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

Upcoming Wildland course in Thetford and will have to modify it a little bit since Jones and Bartlett doesn't cover all the material ANR usually covers. ANR is considering developing online modules in case COVID affects the Fall. ANR may also look at IFSTA curriculum as well.

**Department of Education: (Evans)**

School Safety and drills requirement and how to do these drills in a COVID environment. Would like to see a collective conversation about that with the Division. Rob asked if the Chief of Training would help him find a contact within the Division.

**Department of Health: (Batsie)**

Absent.

**Department of Labor: (Whipple)**

Working with ACCD to keep employers at the front of requirements as the gradual re-opening

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occurs.

**Vermont Domestic Insurance: (Miles)**

No report.

**General Public: (Marcus)**

No report.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 8 at 10:00 am at the Division of Fire Safety Central Office in Berlin.

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