

Vermont Fire Service Training Council
Minutes of the October 7, 2021 Meeting

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	Troy Ruggles (proxy for Aaron Collette)
Secretary of Education	Absent
Vermont Fire Chiefs Association	Walter (Skip) Bothfield
Commissioner of the Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation	Lars Lund
Professional Firefighters of Vermont	Christopher Corbin, Chairperson
Commissioner of the Department of Health	Bambi Dame
Vermont State Firefighters Association	Robert Schlachter (proxy for F. Thomas Estey)
Commissioner of the Department of Labor	Absent
Vermont Domestic Insurance	Matt Miles
Division of Fire Safety Director	Michael Desrochers
General Public	John Marcus, Vice Chairperson
Commissioner of Public Safety	Absent

Other Attendees: Peter Lynch, Michael Skaza, Jessica Pomainville, William Jones

Modification of Meeting Agenda:

Quorum may be lost at 11:00 a.m. so the agenda is adjusted so that items that require a quorum are addressed first.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion made to by Marcus and seconded by Lund to accept the June 10, 2021 minutes. Motion passes unanimously.

The Student Minimum and Maximum SOG revision is seeking endorsement. The change is in section 9 and says that out of state students will not be accepted after the application deadline has passed. *Motion to endorse Lund, second by Marcus. Motion passes unanimously.*

Nominations of officers is moved up on the agenda. *Marcus nominates Chris Corbin as the Chairperson of the Council for 2022 and Troy Ruggles seconds. Motion passes unanimously.*

Nominations for Vicechair. *Marcus is nominated by Lund and seconded by Desrochers. Motion passes unanimously.*

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

The Central Office of the Division of Fire Safety is relocating to Waterbury to the Department of Public Safety Headquarters on October 22nd. There will be a different process to access the office of Fire Safety there.

The Governance committee oversees access, use, contracts, and capital bills. When the Governance committee last met, they started the process to spend the \$50,000 that was provided last year to design a fix to the water leaks in the firing range and to fund a consultant to look at the main building and see what enhancements can be made to it.

The Division budget did not end well last year and will take legislative action to fix it. One of those fixes is seeking their approval to raise the cigarette tax. There is a Fire Marshal and a part time temporary Regional Assistant position open in Rutland. A new Fire Marshal was hired for the Barre office.

The Memorial service held at the Fire Academy was well attended.

The Director said that he does not see any big legislative pushes that will affect the Division of Fire Safety. He does believe there will be discussions about rental housing.

National Association of State Fire Marshals Conference was held in Stowe in September and had a good turnout.

Report from the Chief of Training: Peter Lynch

The Memorial Service that was held was very successful and the Director was the emcee of the service and led everyone through the memorial.

All of the FY21 training programs have been finished.

There have been minor adjustments in how we deliver live fire trainings that will make it better for students and instructors.

There were several program and course requests for FY22 and for the most part the announcement of the approved programs brought positive responses. Chief Lynch has met with Franklin County to discuss some options for their departments to receive the training that they want. There are a total of 157 students registered in the six Firefighter programs that were approved. This does not include those that are interested in the Firefighter II portion offered with the combined programs.

The FYI SOG that was sent out addresses the costs for out-of-state students. While the cost did not go up dramatically for out-of-state students, it did go up in order for the Fire Academy to recoup the true cost of materials.

Students enrolled in a Firefighter I/II program now have the ability to test out at the Firefighter I level. Simultaneously, students will be allowed to enroll in just the Firefighter II portion of the

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program provided they meet the prerequisites and space allows. Students who continue on to the Firefighter II portion who are enrolled in the I/II (combined) will only be able to take the combined exam at the end of the program. They will still have the option to attend the Firefighter I challenge that is offered annually.

There will no longer be a ten or twelve hour live fire day. The Fire Academy has broken the day into two. Students will conduct the pad work on one day and the burn building on a separate day.

The Pumping Apparatus Driver Operator program has been very popular recently. Between the small instructor core and the fact that the Academy only has one trailer to support the program the Academy can only offer the core part of PADO one-at-a-time. The Academy has discussed how to build the instructor core and the equipment, but there are challenges to both. There are two PADO programs currently underway and four in the queue.

Flammable Gas is back, and requests are coming in. The first delivery was two weeks ago.

There have been a lot of requests for Live Fire Training. These are live fire training events that are not connected to a Fire Academy Program.

The Academy is working to get Rope Rescue Operations, Ice Water Rescue Technician, and Vehicle Rescue Operations courses off the ground.

The Leadership Academy development has been moving forward.

Fire Officer I/II is going to be delivered in a hybrid format and meeting on nights and weekends. There are currently 20 students enrolled and more on the waitlist for the program.

All training requests have been frozen until spring unless it is a short one instructor course or something that someone is running in-house (self-sufficiently) and only requires an exam. The Fire Academy felt that this was necessary given the volume of requests versus resource and budgetary limitations.

The Academy is still working on the COVID response. The Academy has been working with Fire Departments to assist with testing in schools as well as providing information to the fire service.

The renovations in the East Cottage are underway and taking longer than expected. The interior finishes are being completed in the East Cottage. There have been supply chain and labor issues dragging the process out. The dorms are tentatively scheduled to be completed by Christmas. Requests are being made to use the dorms.

Recertification is well underway. Departments are slow to respond but they are being processed as they are received.

The Reaccreditation Application has been reviewed by the Pro Board Technical Analyst and a site visit is scheduled for November 3 and 4.

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The Fire Academy is working with the Acadis implementation team. Meetings are held on a weekly basis to work on the buildout work. The Academy is also talking with other Fire Academies who utilize Acadis to make sure everyone is getting the most out of the application.

The two Regional Schools scheduled for the fall were cancelled due to low enrollment. A meeting with all the schools is scheduled for October 27.

The coalition is gearing up for the next legislative session.

Wayne Babcock, the former Fire Academy Executive Director, has passed away.

Todd Poole and Kevin O'Brien have resigned from the Academy. Terry Farr is no longer with the Vermont Fire Academy.

The Academy will be interviewing six instructor candidates next week.

Since COVID it has been a struggle both nationally and at the Fire Academy to get instructors to work more.

The Fire Academy was awarded \$198,694.20 through AFG and the match is \$19,869. The Academy will be utilizing this money to buy equipment for the burn building, PPE, and other various equipment.

The National Fire Academy (Fire Administration) awarded us \$20,000 for use in Fire Officer and Fire Instructor delivery.

HMEP funding was exhausted in June and the Fire Academy was just awarded this year's money.

The Fire Academy is projected to finish this year at \$0 or a small deficit and will use carry forward money as necessary.

The Fire Academy is going to request again this year to move the full-time positions out of special fund and into general fund.

John Marcus asked what the room rate will be for the dorms. Michael Skaza explains that a decision has not been made on the exact rate however it will be low and based on what the price of the linen is. Whatever the cost is it will be similar to what the cost is at the Police Academy. There is an SOG that states that if a student is enrolled in a program the cost of the dorm will be covered by the Fire Academy.

John Marcus asked if electric, solar, or alternate power subjects are being covered in Fire Academy programs or courses. There was discussion that there are stand-alones being offered and the Fire Academy is rolling those into programs.

BETA is a new company in South Burlington that is building battery powered planes in Chittenden County and Chris Corbin asks if they have contacted the Academy. They have not.

Report from the Council Chair:

None

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Committees:

Certification Testing Committee (Skaza) – Will be picked up after reaccreditation has been approved.

Governance Committee (Desrochers) – No update. They are meeting regularly.

New Business:

The Manchester program is the only hybrid program. The Fire Officer will be the next hybrid program and the Academy will monitor it as well.

A survey was sent to instructors to get feedback on the curriculum and there were minor changes and corrections. All feedback was acted on.

Work will be getting underway to transition Fire Instructor I to the new edition of NFPA 1041. The Academy plans on adding Fire Instructor II, and maybe III.

Fire Officer I and II will also need to be updated to the next edition within the next two years.

NFPA is trying to merge all the professional qualifications standards into one document, which will bring them all into the same edition.

Unfinished Business:

None

Standard Operating Guidelines:

There is no discussion of the FYI SOG's.

Coalition Report:

There are two new members to the coalition, the Career Chiefs have new representation as well as the PFFV.

Vermont Career Chiefs: (Ruggles)

On Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at the Hilton in Burlington Waterfront the Career Chiefs will be hosting their annual convention. Chris Guam will be presenting Fireground Leadership and Operational Excellence: Old School Principles for Today's Demanding Fireground.

Vermont State Firefighters Association: (Schlachter)

Annual meeting is scheduled for November 6 in Addison County. And there is an Executive Board meeting schedule for October 17 to prepare for the November 6 meeting.

Vermont Fire Chiefs: (Bothfield)

Absent

Professional Firefighters of Vermont: (Corbin)

Brad Reed has resigned as the President. Chris Dube, who is the Secretary, is the acting

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President.

Agency of Natural Resources: (Lund)

Student workbooks are being uploaded to the VFA online classroom so that students can review prior to the first night of class.

Department of Education: (Evans)

Absent

Department of Health: (Dame)

The EMS rules are out and open for public comment until November 3. The public hearing is on November 18 in Burlington. EMS is heavily involved in vaccination clinics and testing.

The new EMS level has been approved and has had several requests across the state.

The EMS office is looking at standardizing the EMS classes.

Department of Labor: (Whipple)

Absent

Vermont Domestic Insurance: (Miles)

Absent (was unable to call-in)

General Public: (Marcus)

No report.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 10:00 am and the location will be determined.

Schlachter makes a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Marcus. Motion passes unanimously.