

Vermont Fire Service Training Council
Minutes of the July 19, 2022 Meeting

The meeting was held virtually with an in-person location at the Vermont Fire Academy and was called to order by Christopher Corbin at 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL:

Organization Representatives

Vermont Career Chiefs Association	Aaron Collette
Secretary of Education	Rob Evans
Vermont Fire Chiefs Association	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	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	Jennifer Morrison

Other Attendees: Michael Skaza, Jessica Pomainville

Chairperson Corbin turned the floor over to the Director for the recommendation of the Fire Academy Chief of Training.

The Division has been recruiting for a new Chief of Training for over five to six months. The position was posted three to four consecutive times. Under VSA, Title 20 Chapter 179, Section 3154, the Division of Fire Safety, specifically the Commissioner, shall seek the recommendation from the Fire Service Training Council on selecting a Chief of Fire Service Training. The purpose of the special meeting is to seek the endorsement of Michael Skaza for the Chief of Training position from the Fire Service Training Council.

Comments from the group indicated that Michael is very capable of running the Fire Academy and that we are fortunate to have Michael on board.

The Director wanted Michael to be on the meeting so that members could ask any questions about Michael and this position.

Chris Corbin opened the floor for comments and questions.

The Department of Health, EMS Chief William Moran, commented that over the last 18 months he has had the opportunity to work with Michael on projects and EMS really appreciates his leadership collaboration. The EMS office fully supports the Directors recommendation to

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elevate Michael to the position.

John Marcus, as a member of the General Public, asked what Michael thinks is the biggest challenge that the Vermont Fire Service is facing right now?

Michael stated that recruitment and retention is the biggest issue and it goes hand in hand with training. The Academy is looking forward to partnering with others on some upcoming projects that will help to contribute toward bringing some solutions to the recruitment and retention issues that we face. The volunteer service has been faced with this problem for quite some time and now it is being seen as a struggle for the career departments.

Michael has attended meetings with the Career Chiefs Association and the Coalition and has answered questions that they had for him as well. One of the issues that was brought up by the PFFV was that the career firefighters need more advanced training. The Academy will look at that issue, but it will take future conversations with the Council to determine what they would like to see for advanced training offerings.

Collette asked that Skaza challenge the status quo and reevaluate the Strategic plan, because he feels the needs of the Fire Service are changing and it needs to be updated to catch up with this moment in time. There are a lot of pressures that are occurring from the entry level candidate to the aspiring Company Officer. Collette is not certain that the path is clear. The Academy needs to expand our level of service because it is the same faces teaching all the classes. However, he would like the Academy to expand that by hiring more specialist instructors or host guest lecturers from out of state. This would allow for new perspectives from people with a more global view of the Fire Service so that the new and up and coming officers gain more knowledge and vision. And with that, the Director knows it better than anyone, try to continue to advocate for the funding that is needed to meet the needs of the Vermont Fire Service instead of trying to piecemeal through a fiscal year.

Chris Corbin gives Michael the floor to speak.

Given the numerous amount of projects Michael has worked on with Council members he believes that they should know what to expect from him. He thanked the Council and the Fire Academy team for working with him and is excited for the opportunity. Michael is working on scheduling a review of the Strategic Plan for next month since it is the halfway mark of the plan. The Academy will reflect, reevaluate, see what milestones have been hit, and see where adjustments need to be made because things are changing so quickly. He would like to keep the momentum of the last six or seven years and grow the Academy to meet the needs of the Fire Service.

Skip Bothfield has joined the meeting.

The Council Chair, on behalf of the Director, entertained a motion to approve his recommendation to approve Michael Skaza as the Vermont Fire Academy Chief of Training.

Jennifer Morrison made a motion to endorse Michael Skaza as the next Chief of Training, Rob Evans seconded it, and the motion passed unanimously.

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The Director thanked the Training Council for their support. The Governance Committee is working on an RFP for an architectural study and assessment of the training facility in Pittsford, which will take place over the next three to five months. The Council will be able to comment on what they see as efficiencies for the infrastructure and future use of the Main Building and the West Cottage at the Academy. He invites people to visit the East Cottage that has been recently completed.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 13, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. at the Vermont Fire Academy in Pittsford.

***John Marcus made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Michael Desrochers.
Motion passed unanimously.***