

Fire School Advisory Board Minutes

Quarterly Meeting: February 8, 2017



MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mike Norket, Bruce Burding, Brian Horton, David Laird, Brad Maness, Justin McClellan, Joel Rogers, Shannon Tanner, and Terry Sheriff

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mike Benoir, Barry Davis, Tommy McDowell, and Diane Woods

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Steve Graham, Skip Hannon, and Les Woods

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENTS: Joe Palmer and Nathan Ellis

VISITORS PRESENT: Phillip Russell, Jonathan Jones, Phil Jolly, Bonita Watters, Ashley Bolton, Lenny Busby, Farrar Stewart, Melina Lewis, Lenny Busby, and Greg Gerber

Chairman Norket called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. A quorum was present.

Phillip Russell opened the meeting with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Norkett noted the Agenda was posted and sent to the media 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Mike Norket-Chairman

- Chairman Norket approved the August 10, 2016 meeting minutes.
- The November 9, 2016 minutes were reviewed. A motion was called for approval of these minutes. Stephen Graham noted a misspelled word.
- The agenda was reviewed.

Phillip Russell-Interim Superintendent

- Phillip Russell discussed the Advisory Committee Report.
- He discussed, in detail, the budget, revenue, and the cafeteria.
- He introduced Farrar Stewart.

Farrar Stewart-

- Discussed the CPIP plan in detail aided by a power point presentation. This presentation encompasses the sewer, HVAC, LP Gas projects, and dam renovations. Also included were projects not in the original CPIP plan, but had to be addressed – i.e. replacing vaporizers.
- Concerning the renovation projects, several options were offered on the timeline including projects running simultaneously. The majority of the Board was in favor

of this option, but the tentative decision is projects will be staggered - starting with the fire station and commencing with the dorms - once the fire station is about 70 percent complete.

- Farrar explained the design Phillip developed including two stairwells, two classrooms, an additional bathroom, and a glass day room.
- A suggestion made by Brian Horton is, for liability purposes, this project be managed by a third party and not by Fire Academy staff.
- Horton also asked if inflation adjustments were considered when creating this budget. Farrar Stewart responded a new CPIP budget is submitted every year in March and the Division is not locked into the current budget.
- Steve Graham asked about a long term plan to ensure we are not in this same position again in 20 years. Phillip Russell explained the CPIP is an ongoing process and construction improvements will last longer than the original construction.

Lenny Busby- Interim Maintenance Manager

- Discussed the ongoing maintenance projects currently underway including the reinstatement of the old Class A building, the replacement of the vaporizers, the dam and pond cleanup, the surplus project, and the new maintenance request tracking system. Also discussed were the DHEC dam inspection and required tree removal process, the scope of work for sidewalk installation from the Denny to the cafeteria, and the new five year inspection project.
- Joe Palmer inquired about the life expectancy of the Class A building. Lenny stated with some modifications, it should suffice - as long as the fires being built in it are not too big. Mike Norkett asked about the price of a new burn building. Phillip stated the cost ranges from \$600,000-\$800,000.

Phillip Russell-Interim Superintendent

- Advised the board about the office swap with York County for training. A formal agreement is expected soon. Currently looking for similar arrangement for Region 4.
- An updated Fire Academy Catalog is being compiled.
- Explained the need for a new LMS system.

Bonita Watters – Curriculum Manager

- The curriculum department currently does not have any pending accreditation requirements.
- Discussed upcoming Fire Escape event and displayed the poster.

- Joe Palmer asked about changes in reciprocity and equivalencies. There are no changes concerning reciprocities. However, going forward, equivalencies will be given for a period of 120 days. The student must challenge the exam he is applying for equivalency. If, after the 120 days, he has not challenged an exam, the equivalency will be removed from the transcript. Any student who was given equivalency on his transcript, before this took effect, will be able to keep it.
- Brian Horton inquired about the pre-employment status checks completed by the Academy. Phillip Russell explained due to the volume, the Fire Academy is no longer able to process requests. He also recommended pre-employment checks for top candidates only - instead of one for each applicant. Joe Palmer suggested adding a pre-employment check fee.
- Mike Norkett inquired about any movement on higher education. Bonita responded she will contact local colleges to attend the Fire Escape program. The Academy is waiting for the articulation list, before a decision can be made. Mike suggested a meeting to discuss.
- Working to schedule a date for the 2103 Fire Officer III program. The cost is \$13,000 per class and divided into two individual parts (with a one month break in between). There is also a LMS piece involved in the course. This course has extensive prerequisites and a matrix, along with a selection committee to determine who it accepted into the course.

Josh Fulbright-Community Risk Reduction

- Josh is working on a home safety visit plan for firefighters so they know what to look for when they go inside a home. He would like to have a reference in place for when there are issues and would also like to work with home health care workers on fire plans.
- He is in the process of hiring four part-time staff members.
- He is traveling the State to form partnerships.

Phillip Russell-Interim Superintendent

- Discussed the removal of instructors who have not met the minimum teaching hour requirement from payroll. He conceded an email should have been sent to the students, in addition to the mailed letter. Several people in attendance expressed their dissatisfaction with how this process was handled. They also suggested part time instructors were underpaid - which may be why they were teaching so few hours and deserved additional compensation.
- Phillip explained those instructors are eligible for rehire, but they would have to reapply and go through the application process. Those rehired will be based on

merit, knowledge, skills, and experience - not on whom you know in the Fire Service. These instructors are required to work a minimum of 48 hours per calendar year.

- Joe Palmer asked if there is a way for instructors to be reinstated or remain on payroll if they have not taught 48 hours in a calendar year. Phillip replied not at this time.
- There were several recommendations from attendees including more oversight, an appeals process, and individual consideration for these instructors. Joe suggested a 1099 be issued, instead of being added to payroll. Phillip explained if you are under the retirement systems program, you cannot receive a 1099. Melina Mann suggested a letter be mailed, in advance of the final notice, and Nathan Ellis advised management was aware of the issue and a process was being instituted to avoid this in the future.
- Farrar explained this is a result of a statewide audit as it was noticed there are people on payroll who have not been paid in a long time. They decided to "clean up the system." Farrar also stated HR is looking at comparable pay for instructors at the Criminal Justice Academy and agreed specialty instructors should be paid more.
- Joe Palmer wants to distinguish between true instructors and book readers. Steve Graham wants a better way to evaluate the instructors; preferably an online evaluation instead of a paper method. Phillip is working to be able to complete this process using the Fire Portal.

OLD BUSINESS

Replacing Southeastern Fire School - Phillip discussed replacement and the new programs. Part of the SEFS rebranding is to change it from spring to fall. Stephen Graham suggested SCFA try to secure nationally known speakers. Joe Palmer offered to combine his quarterly, with SCFA, in order to help make SEFS a success.

NEW BUSINESS

- Phillip made the suggestion to create a new Communications Committee. The purpose is to communicate between the S.C. Firefighters' Association and the Advisory Board about any rumors or problems being circulated throughout the fire service. A motion was made and seconded. The motion did not pass. This was due in part to the frustration of some board members of the already existing committees that do not meet. Joe Palmer would like to add the existing committees to the agenda.

- Joel Rogers explained the Finance Committee has no practical function, but has to exist because it is written into the law. The finance budget is monitored by state legislation.
- Everyone agreed communications between the board, Fire Academy, and Firefighters' Association needs improvement. One suggestion was email.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Fire Rescue Conference is June 12-17, 2017, at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach SC. NFIRS will be featured at this year's conference.
- Les Woods stated that the Fire and Life Safety Education meeting is February 23, 2017, at 4:30pm. Registration is not required.
- Legislative Day is scheduled for March 8, 2017. Everyone will meet there at 10:00 am.
- The Firefighter Memorial is scheduled for April 12, 2017, at the South Carolina Fire Academy.

NEXT MEETING – May 3, 2017, at 10 a.m. at the SCFA conference room A.

ADJOURN

This meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Phillip Russell

Disclaimer: The attached minutes are DRAFT minutes. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, statements and decisions recorded in them, their status will remain that of a draft until such time as they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting.