

**Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
June 9, 2020
Zoom Meeting**

Attendees:

The following members of the Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy were in attendance for the teleconference.

John S. Butler
Fire Chief
Fairfax County Department of Fire and
Rescue
12099 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22033

Eriks J. Gabliks
Director
Oregon Department of Public Safety
Standards and Training
4190 Aumsville Highway
Salem, OR 97317

Dr. Patricia A. McIntosh
Emergency Management Coordinator
College of the Mainland
1200 N. Amburn Road
Texas City, TX 77591

Andrew K. Pantelis (Chair)
District Vice President
International Association of Fire Fighters
3060 Mitchellville Road, Suite 217
Bowie, MD 20716

Chief Kevin D. Quinn
First Vice Chair
National Volunteer Fire Council
7852 Walker Drive, Suite 375
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Thomas E. Romaine, Jr.
Smokechaser
Minnesota DNR-Forestry
644 Pfaender Drive
New Ulm, MN 56073

George M. Stapleton
Operations Chief
South Carolina State Fire
141 Monticello Trail
Columbia, SC 29203

Federal Emergency Management Agency/U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy (FEMA/USFA/NFA) staff in attendance:

Mr. Dwayne Baker, Lead Analyst, Office of Partnership and Engagement, DHS
Mr. Kevin Brame, Training Specialist/Acting Branch Chief
Mr. David Brummett, FEMA Office of Chief Counsel
Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, USFA
Mr. Stephen Dean, Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA
Ms. Tomeika Evans, Training Specialist
Mr. Ken Farmer, Branch Chief, Education, Training and Partnerships Branch, NFA
Mr. Al Fluman, Director, USFA/NETC Management, Operations and Support Services Division
Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA; Superintendent, NFA
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Ms. Ellen Newlin, Program Specialist
Mr. Lester Rich, Training Specialist/Acting Branch Chief
Mr. Tyler Shaw, Training Specialist
Ms. Michelle Spielman, Secretary
Ms. Roxane Strayer, Fire Program Specialist
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center, USFA
Ms. Tiffany Warren, Branch Chief, Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch, NFA
Ms. Lori Welch, Fire Training Specialist

Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome

Mr. Andrew Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors
Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, National Fire Academy
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Chief Tonya Hoover welcomed the board with opening remarks:

Good morning, and welcome to this meeting of the USFA/NFA Board of Visitors. This meeting is being conducted under regulations outlined in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

I want to thank you for volunteering your time, diligent work and also for completing the necessary security and ethical processes to serve as Special Government Employees.

My name is Tonya Hoover. I am the Superintendent of the NFA and will be serving as Designated Federal Official at this meeting. My role is to serve as liaison between the Board of Visitors and the USFA. I am also responsible for ensuring that all the provisions of the FACA are met regarding the operation of the Board of Visitors. You know Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp and Ms. Michelle Spielman, whose work with FACA officials at FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security have made this meeting possible and made my work immeasurably easier and more productive. I want to thank them officially. I also want to thank FACA representative Dwayne Baker for joining us.

Meeting the ethics and disclosure requirements is critical to our operation; you have already been briefed by our ethics lawyer and FACA officer so that you understand those ethics requirements.

We have an agenda as published in the Federal Register. The times listed are approximate, and we may need to adjust the agenda to accommodate schedules. We must ensure that time for deliberations is adequate and that the public has ample time to make comments.

Dextera/ZAI support staff will be taking notes and will compile minutes. Minutes will include matters discussed and conclusions reached by the board. As Designated Federal Official, I am responsible for preparing the minutes and ensuring that they are certified by the meeting chair within 90 calendar days. All comments and notes will be available for public review forever.

You will be asked to prepare a report to the FEMA administrator as required by our enabling legislation.

Mr. Andrew Pantelis called the meeting to order.

Mr. Pantelis welcomed everyone. He asked that each participant remain on mute unless they are addressing the committee. He stated the chat and hand-raise features of Zoom will be monitored and asked participants to use those functions if they would like to speak. He added that if anyone who called into the meeting speaks, they should identify themselves by name. Mr. Pantelis indicated that there is a new normal for everyone in the world and that each person has their own set of challenges in their respective environments. He stated this meeting will address some of those challenges in a detailed briefing that is being provided. Mr. Pantelis thanked everyone for their continued work and due diligence.

Chief Keith Bryant stated he was glad to be here, it was good to see everyone, and he hoped everyone was doing well. Chief Bryant indicated that the virus is challenging everyone in various ways, and now new events have been added on top of that. He believes there will be additional factors added due to the start of wildland fire and hurricane season. Chief Bryant expressed his appreciation for everything being done. He said that Chief Hoover will go over the plan for the NFA to move forward. Chief Bryant stated that the USFA has been actively working with FEMA on the details of the plan. He said that the NFA is a part of FEMA; therefore, the plan must be in alignment with what they are doing. Chief Bryant indicated that the plan will take a phased approach with certain benchmarks and criteria to be met as we move throughout the phases. He expressed that it is important to get students back on campus as safely as possible. He said that there is some concern that the criteria being put into place will change the student experience. Chief Bryant indicated that this is one of the challenges being faced and advised that he has been a part of those discussions. He stated that the things being put into place are for the health and safety of everyone.

Chief Bryant reported that interviews for the NFA superintendent position have been conducted. He said they were all good, quality candidates, and it was tough to decide which one to choose. He stated that the recommended appointment has been moved to FEMA, and the applicant is now awaiting capital appointment, notifications and background checks to be completed. Chief Bryant is confident the process will be completed, the individual will do a wonderful job and that everyone will be happy with the selection.

Dr. Kirby Kiefer reported that Mr. Stephen Dean will be the new NFA deputy superintendent, and there will be two acting branch chiefs that will rotate until his position is filled.

National Fire Academy Update on Classes on Campus
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator/Superintendent
National Fire Academy, U.S. Fire Administration

Chief Hoover thanked everyone for joining the meeting, and she explained that the purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the USFA/NFA in-person class deliveries for both on-campus and in-state deliveries.

Chief Hoover reported that off-campus classes delivered by the states on behalf of the NFA had some cancellations due to the stay-at-home orders that states put into place. She said that as states start to loosen up the orders, more and more states are ready to resume classroom deliveries. Chief Hoover said that some states requested classes for June, July and August. She explained that the process involves getting approval from FEMA headquarters to deliver the class, and part of the approval process is ensuring NFA requirements are being communicated. A predesigned email has been drafted to collect state data which includes the state's number of COVID-19 cases and state-specific requirements. This data is sent to the administration office for review and approval. Chief Hoover indicated that two June class approvals have been successful, and the turnaround time was quick. She indicated that the NFA notifies the states once the approval is received, and she added that the process has been working well so far. Chief Hoover indicated that the July class delivery requests will be sent to the administration next, and an answer should be received by the end of the week. There were no questions for Chief Hoover regarding the state deliveries.

Chief Hoover reviewed the plan to resume on-campus class delivery. She explained that NFA staff is being repopulated based on FEMA requirements, using a phased approach. At this time, the campus is still in a maximum telework mode due to the safety of employees, families and people around them. Employees have been asked who is interested in coming back and who prefers to stay home based on the phased procedure outlined. Phases are set up for 25% of employees to return to work every 30 days. After each 30 days, statistics will be checked before the new phase begins. She indicated that before students can return, the staff must be back. Chief Hoover stated that the comprehensive plan will be approved by headquarters. NFA Management, Operations and Support Services (MOSS) will provide the plan to Chief Bryant before it is reviewed by the administrators. She explained the repopulation of staff and students must be the same for both the NFA and the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP). Therefore, if the NFA plans to resume classes in August, the CDP plan would be the same. She said that MOSS has been working on the plan since the depopulation began, and the plan is based on staff coming back. The NFA plan is solid and has been shared with the CDP. Both plans are aligned well with one another.

Chief Hoover stated that when students return, the campus will look and feel different. She reported that there has been a lot of painting completed and carpets replaced, along with other projects that are difficult to complete when the campus is occupied. She said the campus looks amazing, and students will likely be pleased. Chief Hoover explained that student interactions on campus will be different based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requirements that are being taken. Students will be required to wear a mask and social distance while being

transported, temperatures will be taken before they get on the bus as well as when they arrive on campus, and masks will be required while in the classrooms. There will be no mandate of masks when outside. The gym, pool and pub will remain closed. Chief Hoover indicated that discussions are being held to find ways to uphold the sharing of experiences among students while maintaining social distance. She stated that this may take place outside while the weather is good. Chief Hoover also explained that due to classroom size, occupancy is limited to 15, including the two instructors, which allows 13 students per class. She also stated the cafeteria will be different. There will be a limit on time to eat, barriers such as plexiglass in place and no self-serve drinks. Bottled water and drinks will be served, and the cafeteria may also offer box lunches for those who prefer not to eat in the cafeteria. Chief Hoover said that the breakout rooms will be also be limited, and any food placed in the break rooms will be prepackaged. In addition, Chief Hoover explained that there will be increased sanitization measures, including additional hand sanitizer and a return of paper towels. She stated that regular temperature checks will be in place for those who go off campus and come back. Chief Hoover explained that there will be a big difference in the social dynamics. She said the campus will be limited to 200 students; therefore, the Emergency Management Institute and the NFA will each be allowed 100 students. These impacts will remain for the rest of this fiscal year and into the next one. She also advised that there will likely be another round of class cancellation. She explained that there are many moving pieces to resume classes; however, safety and health is paramount, and the number one focus. The NFA staff wants to bring the students back as soon as it is safe to do so with the protocols necessary. The target is for August with the priority being given to classes with an immediate need. Classes for the legacy executive fire officer (EFO) and managing officer programs, pilot classes and high-demand classes will be the priority. Chief Hoover stated that with the limited space and time, this is the belief of how things will look through the near future. The plan is awaiting approval and should move to the administrator's office next week.

Mr. Pantelis thanked Chief Hoover for the detailed update. He asked if there have been any positive variances with the budget and if it was being offset by expenses of physical things on campus. Chief Hoover explained that the budget has been offset with paying for airline change fees, etc., converting classes to online and mediated platforms, and using it in facility areas where work could be done since there were no people on campus. She indicated that the circumstances have allowed a quicker move of some classes to be converted and developed into an online or mediated platform. She added that Mr. Al Fluman has been busy overseeing projects that include painting, carpeting, the conversion of Building J basement to accommodate space for the fire investigation program, and replacement of classroom equipment, such as boards and screen projectors.

Dr. Patricia McIntosh asked Chief Hoover if she heard anything about the budget moving forward, specifically if there has been any negative impact. Chief Hoover advised that she had not heard anything about the budget. Chief Bryant stated that the budget looked to be on the positive side before the pandemic started, but he is not sure where it stands now. He said that there has been no directive or guidance received stating that any funds will need to be moved.

Dr. McIntosh stated the new generation of EFOs has a greater emphasis on distance learning. She asked if there were any enduring changes based on the class developments during the pandemic and the work of the new EFO program using a combination platform. Chief Hoover said that some minds within the NFA have changed, and she has seen more openness of getting classes moved to online platforms as comfort levels have increased. She stated that last month, in May, a community

risk reduction class was put online, and within the first couple of days 85 students signed up. The final sign-up count was over 100, and more than 90 students completed the class. Chief Hoover stated that the same training specialist is now interested in using that environment for a high-demand class. The class is being looked at for the possibility of offering it as a mediated class because it is unknown when a classroom offering will occur. She said there was some hesitancy at first; however, in going through the process of using videos in place of the on-campus activities, the class is close to the same experience. Chief Hoover indicated that it is hard to convert a class from a classroom offering to a mediated platform. There are many challenges in it; however, there is a very strong team in place now to allow a move forward. Mr. Dean added that a two-day class is going to be put out on a Zoom broadcast to see how it works. If it does well, there are other training specialists interested in doing the same thing. Chief Hoover said that she is optimistic about it, and she thanked Mr. Dean for sharing. Dr. McIntosh stated that she was glad to hear Zoom was being used. She said that she personally gets more out of a Zoom video conference, and from a training specialist perspective, she feels that this could radically expand outreach. Dr. McIntosh added that her husband is an instructor who is also excited about Zoom and what he has been able to learn using it. She stated that these unfortunate circumstances may move online class developments forward by many years. Chief Hoover advised that while the hope is to maintain Zoom on a long-term basis, it is not currently a permanent fixture. She added that the use of different models is being engaged by the instructional systems specialists and the training specialists.

Final Comments/Adjournment

Mr. Pantelis asked if anyone had any comments before closing the meeting.

Mr. Eriks Gabliks stated that this meeting was likely bittersweet for Dr. Kiefer. He has worked with Dr. Kiefer for a long time and would like to make a motion for the committee to write Dr. Kiefer a congratulatory note for his never-ending passion for the fire service and his commitment to the education of fire service members. There was a second motion by Mr. Thomas Romaine. Mr. Romaine also congratulated Dr. Kiefer on his retirement. Mr. Pantelis stated that he could not agree more with the comments regarding Dr. Kiefer. He added that Dr. Kiefer's son is a proud firefighter in his hometown department who does tremendous work and has the same work ethic. The board members voted and unanimously approved the motion.

Chief Kevin Quinn stated that he would like to recognize staff and leadership for making things happen and expressed his appreciation for all that is being done. Chief Hoover added that the staff has done an incredible job in a difficult time with complicated issues that no one thought we would have to face. She stated that brand and reputation have been their focus the entire time, and they are doing their very best. Mr. Pantelis stated that regular recognition has become a part of these meetings and the challenges are understood and recognized.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:22; Mr. George Stapleton motioned for adjournment and Dr. McIntosh seconded the motion; all were in favor.