

**Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
August 31, 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. David Brummett, FEMA Office of Chief Counsel
Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, USFA
Mr. Stephen Dean, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Dave Donohue, Training Specialist/Acting Branch Chief, Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch, NFA
Mr. Ken Farmer, Branch Chief, Education, Training and Partnership Branch, NFA
Mr. Al Fluman, Director, USFA/NETC Management, Operations and Support Services Division
Ms. Juliann Frantz, Training Specialist, Education, Training and Partnership Branch, NFA
Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist
Ms. Joyce Glass, Program Specialist, Education, Training and Partnership Branch, NFA
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA; Superintendent, NFA
Ms. Dawn Long, Statistician, Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch, NFA
Ms. Ellen Newlin, Program Specialist
Mr. Richard Sexton, Training Specialist/Acting Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA
Mr. Tyler Shaw, Training Specialist, Education, Training and Partnership Branch, NFA
Ms. Michelle Spielman, Secretary
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center, USFA

Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome

Mr. Andrew Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors

Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA; Superintendent, NFA

Mr. Stephen Dean, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Mr. Stephen Dean 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 for completing the necessary security and ethical processes to serve as Special Government Employees (SGEs).

My name is Steve Dean, I am Deputy Superintendent of the NFA and will be serving as Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO) for 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. Deb Gartrell, whose work with the FACA officials at the FEMA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have made this meeting possible and made my work immeasurably easier and more productive. Ms. Michelle Spielman and Ms. Ellen Newlin are Deb's back-ups, and I want to thank them officially.

Meeting the ethics and disclosure requirements is critical to our operation; you will be briefed by our ethics lawyer and FACA Officer so that you understand those ethics requirements later today.

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. We received one comment from the public that is attached to the meeting invite notes.

Dextera/ZAI support staff, Ms. Tina Mumpower, will be taking notes and will compile the minutes. Minutes will include matters discussed and conclusions reached by the board. As ADFO, 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. Please be sure to state your name before speaking so the minutes can be recorded accurately. If you have notes, please email them to Deb today so she can forward them to Tina.

As members of the Board of Visitors, you will be asked to prepare a report to the FEMA administrator as required by our enabling legislation. This report is compiled during the August meeting.

On August 21, 2020, the U.S. Fire Administrator (on behalf of the FEMA administrator) announced the name of the new NFA superintendent. We are pleased to congratulate Mr. Eriks Gabliks, who will be assuming the role in early November. We have begun the process to fill the position which Eriks holds on the Board of Visitors.

Chairman Mr. Andrew Pantelis, I convene this meeting of the USFA Board of Visitors to you. Please begin with the roll call.

Mr. Pantelis called the meeting to order and asked Ms. Gartrell-Kemp to handle the roll call. The roll call was taken, and it was established that a quorum was present. Mr. Pantelis advised that the agenda would be followed closely, but changes may occur. He stated that most everyone is aware of how Zoom calls and virtual meetings function. He asked those in attendance to place themselves on mute/silence when not speaking. He also explained that the showing of hands and chat were not being required but would be monitored if used.

Mr. Pantelis thanked the Board of Visitors and the NFA staff for their hard work and dedication during this unique and challenging environment where classes and meetings have become virtual due to the COVID-19 environment. He also stated that hurricane season is now impacting staff and facilities as well. Mr. Pantelis said that an update regarding the upcoming vacancies on the Board of Visitors will be provided later. He asked for Chief Keith Bryant to provide any opening remarks. Chief Tonya Hoover advised that Chief Bryant would be joining the meeting later, and she provided opening remarks.

Chief Hoover thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She stated that the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) campus is not fully operating but that staying connected with each other is important. Chief Hoover explained that she will provide USFA and NFA comments together when NFA activities are discussed, provided that was satisfactory with Mr. Pantelis. Mr. Pantelis agreed. Chief Hoover asked Mr. Dean if he would like to provide any opening remarks.

Mr. Dean stated that he did not have anything to add at this time. He said that there has been a lot of work completed on campus that Mr. Al Fluman will report on later. He also explained that updates for the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) and Managing Officer programs are part of the meeting agenda and will be talked about then.

The USFA Strategic Plan update was provided by Chief Hoover. She explained that meetings have been held every three months to ensure forward movement. Chief Hoover advised that tasks related to each initiative have been assigned. She indicated that the document has not changed but that the tasks have, and the website should show those changes. Chief Hoover stated that one area getting a lot of attention is the wildland urban interface (WUI) component. She advised that Ms. Nicole Larosa, who is an advisor to the administrator, has been charged with looking across all agencies to make sure that WUI efforts are coordinated and aligned as much as possible. Chief Hoover stated that Ms. Larosa is doing a great job connecting everyone and indicated that WUI efforts will be discussed more with the NFA and National Fire Programs (NFP) activity reports.

Mr. Pantelis advised that the Board of Visitors officer positions of chairperson and vice chairperson need to be filled for fiscal year (FY) 2021. He stated that his second term expires on September 30, 2020. He expressed his appreciation and said that it has been a pleasure to serve as chairperson. Mr. Pantelis congratulated Mr. Gabliks on his appointment to NFA superintendent, and he explained that this leaves a vice chairperson vacancy. Mr. Pantelis asked if Chief Hoover could advise eligibility for the positions to be filled. Chief Hoover advised that there has been no communication from the White House regarding requested appointments. She asked that Ms. Gartrell-Kemp review the status list with the board members. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp provided the following information:

- This will be Mr. Gabliks' last Board of Visitors meeting as an SGE.
- The current appointment history is as follows:
 - Vacancy for Mr. Steven Westermann (expired 9/30/19); a replacement is needed.
 - Mr. Gabliks awaiting reappointment from 9/30/19 (will now need to use back individual).
 - Chief Kevin Quinn awaiting reappointment from 9/30/19.
 - Dr. Patricia McIntosh requested reappointment (expires 9/30/20).
 - Mr. Pantelis expires 9/30/20.
 - Mr. Thomas Romaine requested reappointment (expires 9/30/20).
 - Chief George Stapleton expires 9/30/20.
 - Chief John Butler expires 9/30/21.
- Ms. Traci Silas is working on the vetting process with the White House.

Mr. Gabliks nominated Chief Butler for chairperson and Dr. McIntosh for vice chairperson. There was a second motion from Chief Quinn. Mr. Pantelis called for a vote for Chief Butler to fill the position of chairperson and Dr. McIntosh to fill the position of vice chairperson for the term of October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. All were in favor; no opposition.

Chief Quinn expressed his concern about meeting a quorum for future Board of Visitors meetings. He stated that being unable to meet a quorum happened in the past, and he asked Ms. Gartrell-Kemp what constituted a quorum. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp stated four people are needed, and she explained that as of September 30, there will no longer be a quorum. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp advised that no meetings will be scheduled until the vetting process is complete. Mr. Pantelis stated that he would like to hear about the vetting process from Chief Bryant if he is able to attend the call later. Chief Quinn stated that he would like this item included in the annual report if Chief Bryant is unable to address it. Chief Quinn expressed the importance of the process and that awareness needs to be provided that the board does not want to be in a state where a quorum cannot be met.

**Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvements on the NETC Campus
FY 2020 Budget/Budget Planning
Mr. Al Fluman, Director, USFA/NETC Management, Operations & Support Services
Division**

Mr. Fluman reported on NETC staff, classes, construction and projects. He advised that work continues to ensure COVID-19 capacity guidelines are being upheld and that people on campus are safe. The following information was provided:

- Staff.
 - Campus staffing permitted to be at 50% per FEMA guidelines.
 - As of July 15, 2020, the actual number of staff on campus is around 305, which is approximately 30%.
 - There have been no COVID-19 cases or issues. The following safety measures are in place:
 - Temperature screening requirements for all arrivals.
 - Mask/face covering required for entering campus.
 - Mask/face covering worn when around people on campus.
 - Social distancing being maintained on campus.
 - Cleaning as an ongoing process.
- Classes.
 - A plan for the resumption of NETC resident training is in place. When ready to assume risk, training can start in a week.

- Resident training has been suspended since the week of March 16.
- Training is currently suspended through the end of the FY, September 30.
- Suspension of October classes is expected.
- Student notifications for NFA and Emergency Management Institute (EMI) course cancellations:

Round	Course Dates	Date Students Emailed
1	March 16 - April 11, 2020	3/12/2020
2	April 12 - May 9, 2020	3/20/2020
3	May 10 - June 6, 2020	4/10/2020
4	June 7 - July 4, 2020	4/22/2020
5	July 5 - August 1, 2020	5/22/2020
6	August - September 2020 (EMI)	6/11/2020
6	August - September 2020 (NFA)	6/30/2020
EMI	E0427/E0428 September	7/1/2020
EFO	EFO August - September	7/14/2020
7	October 2020 (EMI)	TBD
7	October 2020 (NFA)	TBD

- Current construction.
 - Main gate project: Trenching for all utilities is complete, all arm-gates are installed, bollard placement is completed, concrete is poured, asphalt is completed, lines are painted on asphalt, one guard building is installed (phone and data operational), arm lifts are functional, additional guard building for the visitors entrance will arrive soon, and security building/visitor center is under construction off site.
 - Building A: Gravel parking lot area is being prepped for asphalt.
 - Building E Server Room: Heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) replacement.
 - Building E: Removal of large television satellite dishes.
 - Building N, third and fourth floors: Energy-efficient lighting installation continues; all other locations on campus are completed.
 - Building N: Exterior painting and repair to this historic 1870 building; scaffolding has been erected around the entire building.
 - Building V (front): Sidewalk replacement as part of ongoing sidewalk replacement project.

- Operation fire hydrant refurbishing: All hydrants are being checked and repaired as necessary; limited grass damage.
- Completed construction (FY 2020).
 - Building A: Curtains replaced.
 - Building B: Sidewalk removal and replacement and solarium roof replacement.
 - Building G (north side): Patio replaced.
 - Building G: Attic insulation.
 - Building H: HVAC.
 - Building H: Attic insulation.
 - Building J: Handicap access ramp on south side of building as part of the basement renovation.
 - Building J: Exterior painting and cleanup.
 - Building J: Interior painting, carpeting and new curtain installation.
 - Building R: HVAC upgrade to install an additional HVAC unit to increase load in building.
 - Building S: Solar panel installation on roof.
 - Carpet projects: Building C-East, Building K second floor, Building I, Building M, Building S.
 - Painting projects: Building M.
 - Sidewalks: Two new sidewalks on the south side of Building J; sidewalks replaced between Buildings J and H, between Buildings N and F, and in front of Building H (entrance to the weight room). Sidewalks look very nice, and disturbed grass is growing back.
- Future construction (with FY 2020 funds).
 - Campus fire alarm upgrades: Five additional buildings. Contract will be awarded by September 30, 2020.
 - Building E: Stair tower roof replacement.

- Building H: Roof replacement.
- Building J: Basement upgrade/renovation. Contract will be awarded by September 30, 2020.
- Building L: Renovation. Contract will be awarded by September 30, 2020.
- Building N: Cupola repair and painting. Contract awarded; awaiting start date.
- Building O: Basement upgrade/renovation. Contract will be awarded by September 30, 2020. Historic window repair underway; many windows have already been refurbished by a historic preservation expert.
- Other campus projects.
 - Tree and stump removal are ongoing. Another round of dead trees was taken down late last week; working on stumps, fill and grass seed.
 - New trees being ordered to replace dead trees; trees will be planted in the fall.
 - Carpet cleaning and floor polishing is ongoing.
 - Window cleaning (inside and outside) is ongoing.
 - Gazebo beautification upgrades completed along with several other picnic table areas and garden beds.
 - Bees found in large trees at Building G and Building N were successfully moved to new homes.
 - Mulching efforts underway.
- Larger projected projects (anticipated for FY 2021).
 - Solar panel installation on the roof of Building J.
 - HVAC replacement in Building N.

At the conclusion of Mr. Fluman's report, Chief Quinn expressed his appreciation to Mr. Fluman and his staff. Chief Quinn stated that a lot of work has been completed over the last six months. He said that in listening to this report, it is apparent that these accomplishments are a silver lining during this time of COVID-19. Chief Quinn said that these efforts are remarkable and thanked Mr. Fluman and his entire team for the work being done. Mr. Pantelis agreed with Chief Quinn's comments. He expressed his thanks to Mr. Fluman and his team as well.

Mr. Pantelis asked Mr. Fluman if there was any update on when the solar panels will pay for themselves. Mr. Fluman advised that the data is currently being reviewed. He stated that solar panels are now on the barn roof and Buildings L, M, R and S roofs. He explained that the data for the recent installation of Building S is not available yet; therefore, the full impact is currently unknown. Mr. Fluman added that technology has also improved. He plans to seek permission for panels to be placed on C-East and C-West, although that will only be a minimal gain. He added that the new visitor center will also get solar panels. Mr. Fluman advised that electric bills have been reduced to \$300,000 to \$400,000 at most, which includes the savings from the LED lighting and HVAC upgrades. He stated that this is down from \$2 million when the campus was receiving steam from the Daughters of Charity. He believes that once all the solar panels are installed, the campus will be close to net zero. Mr. Fluman added that if the campus does not have the ability to purchase adjacent land, there may be a need to put additional solar panels on the current property down by the cabin.

Mr. Pantelis thanked Mr. Fluman and asked if anyone had any additional questions. Chief Butler asked if there were any engineering controls being put into place as permanent thoughts regarding COVID-19. Mr. Fluman replied that the HVAC system, other than Building N, is now complimented with the distribution of air flow. He said that from that standpoint, nothing further can be done at this time. Mr. Fluman also stated that from a COVID-19 perspective, even at 50% capacity, with the current social distancing guideline, the campus will be at a disadvantage. He said that there is a solid plan in place to serve meals to the students; however, only 50 of the 200 students will be allowed in the cafeteria at once. Plexiglass has been installed, and some of the tables and chairs have been removed. He explained that other facilities have opted for bagged meals, and while this option has not been chosen at this time, it can be done if desired. Mr. Fluman also advised that six large tents were purchased and will be set up to encourage outdoor dining and classroom activities as the weather permits. He added that there is a good, sound COVID-19 plan in place for when classes resume, including isolation plans that may be needed. Chief Butler thanked Mr. Fluman for his detailed answer.

Mr. Pantelis asked Mr. Fluman to discuss the new budget. Mr. Fluman advised that the only change to the funding is for the Building J solar project and for renovations to Building D and Building F. He explained that there are staff on the first floor of both those buildings, and the plan is to relocate them to the basement of Building O. The funds will be used for renovation to convert the office space to dormitory space. He added that new carpet in these areas is planned for 2021. Mr. Fluman also advised that if there are additional preventative maintenance funds, they will be used for HVAC in Building N and new roofing for Buildings D, E and F. The roofs are past the life cycle and need to be replaced. Mr. Fluman also advised that the budget for 2021 remains the same. Mr. Pantelis thanked Mr. Fluman for budgeting the money well. Mr. Pantelis stated that all the accomplishments with completed projects during this time definitely shows that.

National Fire Academy Activities

Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA; Superintendent, NFA

Chief Hoover reported that based on the budget, the NFA will have the ability to offer additional off-campus, mediated courses in place of contracted instructors. She stated that Mr. Fluman has

done an exceptional job operating with limited staff; however, a new process that requires coordinated efforts to align the NFA with the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) can sometimes create challenges. Chief Hoover explained that this alignment with CDP has changed procedures such as the determination of an opening date and student notifications. She further explained that messages to the students must now be communicated up the chain of command before being sent out. Chief Hoover indicated that these learning opportunities are being embraced. She explained that the October courses have now been suspended. Once the approval is received from external affairs, the communication to advise students will be sent out. She explained that the communication is currently 10 days behind what the NFA typically does and was hopeful it would be sent out by 2:00 p.m. that day. Chief Hoover continued by advising that the evaluation of November classes will now take place in September in order to meet the 45-day stipulation.

Chief Hoover explained that the opening of campus requires review at national and local levels. She said that the national level must be assessed due to students traveling from numerous states, and the local criteria for Frederick and Adams counties must be looked at in order to prevent a negative impact. Chief Hoover said that some limitations exist with typical COVID-19 processes that other institutions have put into place. She explained that some facilities are requiring students to isolate for 14 days once they arrive on campus. During that time, students use mediated learning before they return to classroom training. This is not an option for the NFA since students only attend classes for six to 10 days. Additionally, most NFA students have jobs, so they cannot be asked to isolate at home. She added that students also cannot be sent surveys to ask for personal information, nor be asked health questions prior to coming to campus. Chief Hoover advised that the risk must be understood prior to bringing students back to campus, and there must be a realistic approach to protocols if/when a case is presented. The plan must be coordinated and sent through the FEMA administration, and it must be communicated so that everyone understands. Chief Hoover is hopeful that students will be able to come back soon; however, the health of individuals is at the forefront like everything the fire and emergency services does.

Chief Hoover provided the NFA staffing update. She reported that Mr. Dean is the new NFA deputy superintendent, and Mr. Gabliks will be moving from Oregon over the next few months and starting as the new NFA superintendent in November. Chief Hoover added that she will be moving to Building N. Chief Hoover stated that due to Mr. Dean's promotion and Mr. Russ Kuck's retirement, there will be two new branch chiefs. The interview process has been completed for the positions, and the paperwork is being completed by human resources. She is hopeful to announce the new chiefs within the next 30 days. Chief Hoover advised that Mr. John Carnegis retired in the spring, and the position he held was reviewed and modified to an administrator position. Interviews for that position should start next month, and the new superintendent will have the opportunity to review applications and interview candidates. She also explained that a full-time employee position was moved to an instructional systems specialist (ISS) position. This position will help eliminate the need to rely on contractor services. She is hopeful to fill this position next year. Chief Hoover also stated that due to changes, there are some funds available to assist with the move from D2L to Blackboard, an approved federal space for online learning.

Chief Hoover reported that a program decision option (PDO) that would move WUI into a robust place was submitted. The approval of the PDO would add a training specialist position that would work across all program areas and with the NFP. The focus would be on course development and

strengthen the work completed by the NFP. The PDO has passed through FEMA and is now moving forward with the DHS to be moved into the 2022 budget. She is very encouraged with the movement.

Chief Hoover discussed that all off-campus course deliveries must now be sent to the FEMA administrator office for approval. She explained that it is not business as usual; there is now a multitude of layers in order to move things forward. All off-campus delivery requests are sent from the NFA to the administrator office for review and then sent back to the NFA. This new process has been successful and has not caused a lot of delay.

Chief Hoover stated that EMI Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Stern is working with a contractor on a risk assessment process for possible use in the NETC learning environment. As part of the collaboration between NFA and EMI, this will be used by both entities once completed.

Mr. Dean advised the board that he is learning a lot in his new position. He indicated that there are a lot of tasks to handle, and he is doing his best. Mr. Dean stated that the entire staff has been phenomenal in the COVID-19 work environment, and they are always there when he reaches out to them. He said that it is working for the staff to see each other virtually instead of in person, and he foresees tremendous work being completed as things continue to move forward.

Mr. Dean reported that before Dr. Kirby Kiefer retired, they went through the Managing Officer Program applications and made the selections for the coming year. He explained that COVID-19 created challenges due to students not being able to attend classes. He said that courses have been moved, and he is hopeful that the 2021 schedule will be finalized by September 1. Mr. Dean stated that all applicants were able to be placed into the program, and he advised that the late applicants will be evaluated for the next group.

Mr. Dean advised that results of the new EFO Program are still being reviewed. He explained that legacy students remain, Cohort A students have completed M1, and Cohort B students will begin M1 shortly. The plan was for Cohort A to be the pilot group, Cohort B to be the second pilot group, and Cohorts C and D to be the first regular group. Due to COVID-19, Cohorts A and B will now join together as the pilot group, Cohorts C and D will be the second pilot group, and Cohorts E and F will be the first regular group.

Mr. Dean talked about revisions and virtual classes. He reported that the fire investigation course has been done three times, and the reaction is positive. He explained that Mr. Lester Rich is doing the course from the classroom with newly purchased equipment. Mr. Dean said that a learning curve exists with facilitators as they get used to virtual training. He also said that student feedback is different and not immediate with Zoom. Mr. Dean advised that the mediated courses that have been rolled out have been perceived well and that more courses are being revised to allow for mediated delivery. He said that Mr. Dave Donohue has also been successful with mediated courses, and Mr. George Morgan's safety curriculum courses are coming soon. Mr. Dean also spoke about the transfer from D2L to Blackboard. D2L will no longer be used after September. Mr. Dean advised that the legacy EFO courses, "Executive Leadership" (R0125) and "Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management" (R0306), are in the process of being converted to a virtual delivery. The symposium for the legacy group is being planned for spring.

Planning is being done based on the best possible environment and will be adjusted for any COVID-19 guidelines as it gets closer.

Mr. Dean said that he is hopeful to be able to have students on campus soon. He stated that currently only 100 students will be allowed on campus at a time, and only so many people will be allowed in a classroom at a time. He explained that a class of 25 would use two classrooms, and that only 50 people are allowed in the auditorium instead of 300. Mr. Dean said that Mr. Fluman is assisting with what can and cannot be done as things change on a regular basis. Mr. Dean advised that there is an interest in courses, but the right delivery platform must be found and used in order to deliver the quality product that the NFA is known for. Chief Hoover advised the board members to be aware that the October application period for the NFA will be suspended. She stated that students can no longer be moved due to course rescheduling, and they will need to reapply. Chief Hoover indicated that instead of two course instructors, there will now be four instructors in two separate rooms. She stated that the admissions department currently has enough applications for the next year; therefore, new students cannot be placed until the fall of 2021. Students who need to reapply will do so in March 2021 instead of October 2020. Chief Hoover advised that mediated delivery is being used and explained that everything possible is being done to assist with getting students into classes. She added that the instructors must also feel comfortable. She said that the NFA does not want to lose the respect or enthusiasm of its brand, so it is being careful about what is being offered.

Dr. McIntosh asked that with all the shifts taking place, if there is any anticipation that more courses will move online and virtual? Chief Hoover responded by stating that she believes it is important to look at location and what the NFA campus means to people. She would like to see the curriculum enhanced by online and virtual training and not replaced by it. She added that when people are brought together on campus, valuable things happen, such as problem solving. One example of this is Mr. Rich's classes where there are a lot of hands-on experiences not suited for a virtual environment. Chief Hoover indicated that the NFA is trying to find the balance of when to take advantage of online and virtual training based on where learning is enhanced by in-person delivery, especially for individuals who are not comfortable in a virtual environment. Dr. McIntosh indicated that she periodically reaches out to talk about the NFA, and she believes that there could be a benefit for students to have a virtual experience that would lead to an interest in an on-campus experience. She does not want to deter people from coming to the NFA campus and believes that virtual training could be a segue. Chief Hoover indicated that some people believe that the NFA should be able to be strictly virtual; however, some people do not understand the student population and how some things should not be substituted to allow for a virtual environment. She also stated that the NFA needs to show that the academy is for everyone, both paid and non-paid fire service members, and that a robust internet connection is not available to everyone.

Mr. Pantelis thanked both Chief Hoover and Dr. McIntosh for their comments. Mr. Gabliks spoke to reiterate that some areas do not have internet capabilities and some areas do still have volunteer fire service members, especially in rural areas. He explained that in Oregon, there are now school buses equipped with hotspots that drive to rural areas and sit so that children can attend virtual school. He said people need to understand that everything will not be able to toggle over to being virtual. He expressed that there is a need for balance as mentioned by Chief Hoover. Mr. Pantelis agreed and stated that the annual report for this year should reflect that. He said that it should be

highlighted that a blended/hybrid environment can be beneficial, but an entirely virtual environment would exclude some of the fire service members. Mr. Dean added that Mr. Donohue has worked with tribal nations, and while connectivity in some areas is robust, there are large areas where it is nonexistent and even a cellphone will not work. Chief Stapleton asked if there were any restrictions to an “academy on the road.” Chief Hoover explained that that is what is being done with approval from the administration. The NFA classes are being provided to the states to be offered within the state. She added that sometimes the instructor is scheduled to come from out of state but is unable to do so. Chief Hoover stated that Chief Bryant does not want business stopped. She stated that the cancellation of state weekends created missed opportunities, and the NFA is working to deliver classes in the states instead of on campus.

Mr. Ken Farmer reported that the National Professional Development Symposium October meeting was rescheduled. The new plan is to hold a virtual leadership meeting in November and the symposium in the spring of 2021 that will also be virtual.

Mr. Farmer advised that learning management system (LMS) staff is in the final stages of signing a contract with a new LMS provider. As part of the move from D2L to Blackboard, reviews for things such as checking links are being completed, and these are time-consuming tasks. During the transition, there will be a gap of approximately one month. A move is being made to the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) to provide online classes for the Managing Officer and EFO programs for two months. The HSIN is being provided at no cost. Mr. Farmer said that the current work focus is to transfer all courses from the D2L system to the new provider and to the HSIN on a temporary basis. Mr. Farmer also advised that the NFA is working with admissions to create a new shared FEMA-driven oversight position.

Mr. Farmer indicated that state-based programs continue to be offered under COVID-19 safety restrictions. He said that the state weekend program is shut down for now, but some states (South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina) are hosting the event at their state facilities with NFA-provided instructors. He added that work is being completed with staff to support the development of new online classes for delivery.

Mr. Farmer stated that three or four new colleges have been added to the higher education program. He also advised that the state grants are being done and the deliveries are being worked on.

There were no questions for Mr. Farmer.

Ms. Dawn Long stood in for Ms. Tiffany Warren. She reported that the Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis (TAPA) Branch continues to adjust course schedules in response to COVID-19. The current agreement with FEMA Headquarters is to review the on-campus schedule in 45-day increments; however, this timeline can also change. Ms. Long advised that the current goal of TAPA is to continue communication efforts to the contract instructor base to keep them apprised of any changing requirements. Ms. Long also advised that in preparation for a possible change in administration due to the election, FEMA Headquarters has requested input from the USFA to provide informational materials in the event that there are new political appointees at FEMA. This is an opportunity for the NFA to raise issues of budget, resource and policy to senior officials of the new administration.

There were no questions for Ms. Long.

Mr. Dean advised that Mr. Donohue, acting branch chief for the Leadership and Community Risk Reduction (LCRR) Branch, and Mr. Richard Sexton, acting branch chief for the Response Branch, would be providing the updates for those divisions.

Mr. Donohue reported the following:

- LCRR is working on the fire prevention packages for the FY 2021 funding updates.
- Two self-study fire prevention courses have been released, and one mediated course is online in the final pilot.
- The EFO project continues to be worked on. Leadership is involved to assist with getting it completed.
- “Management Tools for Emergency Services Leaders” (Q0880), an online, self-study course, was released earlier this year. This course provides an introduction into programs that can assist with an initial analysis of data.
- Online courses will continue until late September. Once the new LMS is ready and funding is secure, courses will be scheduled and advertised. He added that there are several hundred people currently on waitlists for online, mediated courses.
- “Training Supervision,” a two-day distance learning course, is in the final edits and will be delivered via Zoom.
- “Campus Fire Life Safety I: Risk Assessment” (W/F/O0193) course revisions are in the final stages for a pilot as a mediated delivery.
- “National Fire Incident Reporting System: Program Manager” (0489) and “Introduction to NFIRS 5.0” (0497) are being updated to reflect the data warehouse. The program manager course will remain an on-campus course, and the introduction course is an online, self-study course.
- FY 2021 contracts are underway with two new courses planned:
 - An advanced data course that builds on management tools. This is a self-study course that looks at what the impacts of data are and how to effectively convey information.
 - A planning for catastrophic and unusual events course that looks at planning for natural and man-made disasters and special events. This will be a four- to six-week mediated, instructor-led class.

Mr. Sexton reported the following:

- Responder health and safety and hazmat courses are being reviewed for changes in delivery. There is a concentration on the NFA brand to determine course eligibility.
- Work is being completed with state partners on how to address instructors coming into the states that can offer virtual classes.
- There is a concentration on WUI courses, modules, etc., to determine what can be implemented to address and assist with wildland fires.
- Prior to COVID-19, virtual reality was introduced to show wildfires to firefighters who are not familiar with them. There were 100 participants in four classes with four headsets. This will provide great teaching opportunities.
- Some exercises were developed with a hands-on approach which creates challenges when trying to apply them in a virtual environment. The technology challenges are being reviewed to address how to handle them.
- COVID-19 measures are being explored to determine what can be kept in place.
- There is capability to integrate technology in virtual classroom environments. This has been tested twice with 200 students to ensure that there are no technology issues. This allows learners to engage and keep the quality of learning that is done on campus.
- Classroom connections are being tested. If two classrooms are connected and there are four instructors, this will allow more students.

Mr. Pantelis asked if there were any questions. There were none. He asked if Chief Hoover or Mr. Dean had any further comments. Mr. Dean stated that the overviews provided were sufficient without providing all the details. He explained that there is a lot going on at the NFA, including activities that involve other areas on campus. Chief Hoover stated that it is important to know that things continue to move forward even though staff is not on campus. She also thanked the board members for their support over the years.

Mr. Pantelis continued the meeting with the following public comment reading.

“The National Fire Academy Board of Visitors should review the focus on, and means to improve, wildfire and wildlands fire management, prevention, and protection of life and property. There are a number of courses on-line and on site on the wildland fire management issue, but the Board of Visitors should review lessons learned from recent wildfires in California and elsewhere, including means to notify persons of wildfire in their vicinity, even in the middle of the night. They should also consider how community wildfire prevention and mitigation in advance during a wildfire season can be promoted to prevent spread of wildfires, or gaps to prevent fires, and means to prevent accidental fire causation by electrical lines or other means, such as line de-energization systems.

Coming into the 2020 wildfire season, lessons learned, how to prevent wildfires, how to prevent or slow their spread, and means to manage wildfires through, for example, dropping fire retardant as being developed at Stanford University, should be examined as part of the oversight of the National Fire Academy.”

Mr. Pantelis asked for Chief Hoover’s comments first. Chief Hoover stated that the comment describes the work that the NFA wants to be able to do. She said that the request aligns well with the PDO and the requested training specialist position, along with the new ISS design position. The work of these individuals would add WUI as a curriculum area. Chief Hoover also said that Mr. Sexton was previously sent to a wildfire location in California where he had the opportunity to be directly with a team and learn. Mr. Sexton’s experience was shared with all curriculum areas. Mr. Pantelis stated that the board will incorporate the comment into the annual report, and they will record what is already being done by the NFA to address it.

Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Reports

National Fire Incident Report System Chief George Stapleton, Chairperson Chief Kevin Quinn, Co-Chair

Chief Stapleton reported that there has been no activity; therefore, he has nothing to report.

Professional Development Initiative Dr. Patricia McIntosh, Chairperson Chief John Butler, Co-Chair

Dr. McIntosh explained that the committee has not met; however, she has spoken with Mr. Farmer and Mr. Michael McCabe. She said that the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2021. Dr. McIntosh advised that the FESHE working group was scheduled to meet in October, but the meeting has been postponed. She said that there is a tentative plan for the group to meet in November; however, there is currently no firm date. The focus will be on updating learning objectives and matrices and to develop new content. Dr. McIntosh advised that although nothing has been finalized, activities have not ceased. Mr. Pantelis expressed his understanding of the challenges presented during this time. Dr. McIntosh responded by providing appreciation that the NFA has remained more active than the subcommittees. Chief Quinn asked if there was a list of the working group available. Dr. McIntosh explained that the group consists of fire leadership across the country and focus area. She has a list and will ask Mr. McCabe to distribute it.

USFA Data, Research and Response Support Initiatives Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center, USFA

Mr. Bill Troup attended the meeting in place of Chief Richard Patrick. Mr. Troup congratulated Mr. Gabliks on his appointment to NFA superintendent before reporting the following information:

- Staff.
 - Ms. Caroline Hassler started as the new USFA librarian effective August 31. This is an important position because the library is a key component to support the NFA.
 - Mr. Michael Pritchard will start on September 13 as the new NFP Prevention and Information Branch Chief.
 - There is still a vacancy for the NFP Emergency Response Support Branch Chief.
- FEMA/Health and Human Services (HHS) Pre-Hospital Health Care Resilience Working Group.
 - USFA has dedicated some of its staff to the FEMA/HHS COVID-19 Pre-Hospital Health Care Resilience Working Group.
 - USFA has provided extensive fire and emergency medical services (EMS) subject matter experts for COVID-19-related efforts. These efforts include personal protective equipment, first responder testing, crisis standards of care, data, stakeholder engagement cross-cutting, telemedicine, rural EMS and response best practices.
 - There is now a dedicated COVID-19 resource page on the USFA web site: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/coronavirus/index.html>.
- National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS).
 - Database.

This is the world's largest national, annual database of fire incident information. It is currently being used by over 24,000 fire departments throughout the U.S. Nearly 29 million incidents are reported annually. The hope is to soon increase to 30 million incidents yearly.
 - COVID-19 Special Study.
 - The USFA is using the NFIRS to conduct a national-level special study on fire department responses to COVID-19. The goal of the study is to help fire departments consistently document fire department calls to suspected or confirmed incidents involving COVID-19.
 - The ability to set up custom special studies has always existed for state and local level NFIRS participants; however, this is the first time a special study was set up to capture responses for a national-level situation.
 - From January 1 to August 23, 1,819,441 incidents were reported.

- From January 1 to August 25, 366,811 fire service personnel responded to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 incidents.
- NFIRS Modernization 10.
 - USFA continues work to improve the effectiveness and usability of NFIRS. The modernization is scheduled for release in October 2020. This will enhance participants' use of applications.
 - This modernization is mainly needed to meet federally mandated security requirements and upgrade applications.
 - Updates of the web-based tools and a more efficient portal to access those tools will allow data to be used immediately and keep accounts current.
 - There will be an extensive outreach to update NFIRS State Program managers in addition to the help desk so that assistance will be available as needed. All state program offices have access to the data warehouse reports tool, as well as an increasing number of fire departments. This tool helps with program management and identifying data quality issues and assists departments in using their NFIRS data in a beneficial and meaningful way.
- National Fire Estimation Methodology project.

The project focus is to develop a method to compute national estimates using NFIRS data alone. This approach allows for more overall consistency and transparency. The final statistical program code from this project is in the beginning stages of testing.

- Research Studies.

- In partnership with the Oklahoma State University/International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA), an "Emergency Services Ergonomics and Wellness" report was developed. This report will be released soon and update the 1996 "Fire and Emergency Medical Services Ergonomics" document.
- Outreach partnership with International Association of Fire Chiefs:
 - Work continues on the American fire problem based on "America Burning." The focus is on the nationwide fire problem in the U.S. and not just the fire service. It involves a broad constituency of fire service and new non-fire service constituents.
 - Work on the WUI version of "America Burning" is in the beginning phases.

- A new emergency vehicle and roadway operations study is being conducted with a projected time frame of approximately one year.
- Additional ongoing studies (some delayed due to COVID-19):
 - EMS responder safety study with the International Association of Fire Fighters.
 - Volunteer retention and recruitment with the National Volunteer Fire Council.
 - Residential flashover control system study, phase 2 with Mr. Dan Madrzykowski of Underwriter Laboratories Delaware County Emergency Service Training Center tests.
 - Alternative funding document with IFSTA.
 - Emergency warning lighting study with the Cumberland Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association.
 - Pandemic preparedness study (new).

Mr. Troup also indicated that a research staff member moved into a FEMA position. The individual was involved in fire service, detection and suppression technology and worked with the design of sprinkler systems for FEMA mobile housing units used by disaster survivors.

Mr. Pantelis thanked Mr. Troup for his report and asked for questions. There were no questions.

Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, USFA

Mr. Pantelis welcomed Chief Bryant. He stated that he looked forward to Chief Bryant's report.

Chief Bryant stated that most updates were probably already shared, and he addressed the reopening of the NFA. Chief Bryant said that the reopening of the NFA is an ongoing issue, and while there may be an aspect of frustration, the campus is at a FEMA facility. He said that the NFA is not the only education facility under FEMA, and he understands the need and desire to coordinate and be consistent although the NFA is unique and sometimes the plans do not always line up. Chief Bryant expressed the need to open safely and responsibly. He said that the NFA is ready to take students; however, the evaluation of the admission policy currently being done every two weeks does not always line up. He added that the NFA will probably be affected for the remainder of the calendar year and that work will continue with FEMA in order to do the best that can be done.

Chief Bryant congratulated Mr. Gabliks on his new position. He is looking forward to getting him in Emmitsburg and working with him as part of the team. Mr. Gabliks expressed his appreciation, and he stated that he is looking forward to it.

Mr. Pantelis thanked Chief Bryant for his remarks. Mr. Pantelis stated that one area of concern is regarding the lag for appointments, particularly considering board vacancies. He asked if Chief Bryant was a part of any conversations being held regarding the lag. Chief Bryant stated that he

was also concerned, and he said that no conversations have been had at the department level. He added that although it pertains more to personnel than to appointments, the hiring process has become quicker than it was previously. He explained that that may be due to more things being front loaded and starting the selection process earlier. Chief Bryant said that there has been better success knowing when vacancies will occur, and if that same capability exists, the appointment can be looked at prior to the actual vacancy to streamline the process and possibly help with the gap. Chief Bryant advised that he would check into the appointments, although the decisions are made at the White House, and no one else has any control over it. He is not sure there will be much influence, but if a contact or liaison can be found, they could be tried to see if it helps. Chief Bryant also indicated that while the NFA can look into it, the Board of Visitors may have more influence. He explained that there was a situation where the international fire chiefs were able to get things moving quickly by going directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the board might want to consider that. Mr. Pantelis thanked him and advised that many, if not all, of the board members have concerns. Chief Quinn advised that in a month, the Board of Visitors will not have a quorum and will be in hiatus. He explained that when this happened before, there was a segregation that was hard, and it is difficult to value the Board of Visitors when this happens. Chief Quinn said that the Board of Visitors probably needs to discuss this further and see if there is a liaison who can be worked with to assist in the process. Chief Bryant stated that during his tenure, he has learned how processes work, and at the NFA level, he gets recommendations. He said that it may be possible for the process to start earlier and more follow-up can be completed once it is submitted to the FEMA administrator. Chief Bryant added that he is happy to make calls and send emails if that will help. He expressed appreciation for the board's support and said he knows that things are challenging. Chief Bryant also stated that some changes currently happening will be more permanent, and that will give Mr. Gabliks a challenge. Chief Bryant indicated that he has a personal concern regarding virtual classes. He hopes that virtual training is not provided at the expense of in-person classes. Chief Bryant explained that he is happy about virtual courses being offered, but he believes there needs to be a balance in order to not hurt on-campus, in-person training.

Federal Ethics Briefing

Mr. David Brummett, FEMA Office of Chief Counsel

Mr. David Brummett used a PowerPoint slide to review federal ethics. He explained that last year the presentation was done in private; however, there was nothing in the slides that could not be seen by individuals who are not directly affected. Mr. Brummett provided his contact information, and he asked for people to reach out to him with any concerns or questions.

FACA Overview

Ms. Traci Silas, Senior Director, Federal Advisory Committees

Mr. Dwayne Baker, Lead Analyst, Federal Advisory Committees

Mr. Dwayne Baker advised that Ms. Silas was unexpectedly called into another meeting and would be unable to provide a report to the Board of Visitors. Mr. Baker addressed the board members' concern regarding the delay in the vetting process. He explained that the names have been

submitted and are at the White House. Mr. Baker stated that there seems to be a hold in place for unknown reasons, and that other committees are having the same challenge. He said that this is occurring with every agency, not just FEMA. He added that at this time, there is nothing that can be done about it. Mr. Baker advised that the secretary has been asked to intervene to see if the committee members can be vetted. He also advised that he does not recommend the Board of Visitors schedule any meetings, and Ms. Silas agrees. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp asked if Ms. Silas should be rescheduled to meet with the Board of Visitors. Mr. Baker advised that would not need to be done at this time.

Report Writing Session

The Board of Visitors worked diligently on preparing a draft of the “Board of Visitors Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report.” Once the report is updated with the information requested by the board, a copy will be sent out to each member for review.

Final Comments/Adjournment

Chief Quinn thanked Mr. Pantelis for his dedication to the Board of Visitors. He said that it has been outstanding working with him, and he also looks forward to working with Mr. Gabliks in his new position. Mr. Pantelis stated that the last six years have been an honor and a privilege. He said that the NFA staff does tremendous work, and the entire team does well regardless of circumstances such as natural disasters and COVID-19. Mr. Pantelis expressed his confidence in the new chair and vice chair selections.

Chief Hoover stated that it has been a pleasure to work with Mr. Pantelis and Chief Stapleton. She said that Mr. Pantelis did an outstanding job as chairperson and thanked him for serving on the Board of Visitors. Chief Hoover thanked Chief Butler and Dr. McIntosh for accepting their new positions on the Board of Visitors. She is looking forward to working with Chief Butler to continue the incredible work that is done by the committee. Chief Hoover thanked the entire board for their support of the NFA and USFA.

Mr. Dean stated that he wants all members to understand how much the entire staff appreciates their support and what they do. He said that there is always an interest in what is being done by the board, and it is well known that the NFA relies on them for support.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:52 Eastern Time.