

**Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
December 18, 2019
Building H, Room 300
Teleconference**

Attendees:

The following members of the Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy (NFA) 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

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

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

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

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

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:

Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, USFA
Mr. Stephen Dean, Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA
Mr. Ken Farmer, 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, Superintendent, NFA
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Russell Kuck, Branch Chief, Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch, NFA
Dr. Denis Onieal, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA
Ms. Michelle Spielman, Secretary
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center
Ms. Laurie Wivell, Program Analyst

Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome/FACA Training
Mr. Andrew Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors
Dr. Denis Onieal, Deputy Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, 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 the 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 I will be serving as the 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, whose work with FACA officials at FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have made this meeting possible and made my work immeasurably easier and more productive. I want to thank both Deb and Ms. Laurie Wivell, who work as a team, officially.

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. He thanked Chief Hoover for the opening remarks, and he asked Ms. Gartrell-Kemp to handle the roll call. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp took attendance then advised that a quorum was not met. Mr. Pantelis stated that without a quorum, the committee would not be able to take any votes; however, the reports could still be read. He asked Chief Hoover if she was in agreement, and she indicated that would be acceptable.

Dr. Denis Onieal stated that this will be his last Board of Visitors meeting due to his upcoming retirement. He thanked the board for all their hard work and dedication. Dr. Onieal reported the following:

- Mr. Peter Gaynor's nomination to lead FEMA is awaiting Senate approval and appointment by President Trump. He and Mr. Gaynor recently visited four out of five fire stations that have reopened in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The fifth fire station was scheduled to open the day before their visit. The stations were able to reopen due to the National Fire Incident Reporting System's (NFIRS's) data that was used to support the issuance of a FEMA grant.
- The FEMA Administrator's Annual Planning Guidance mentions the USFA by name, which is indicative of Chief Keith Bryant's work. The guidance calls for the USFA to work on wildland urban interface (WUI) training and programs.
- The continuing resolution for the federal budget ends in two days, and it appears that a budget will be in place prior to the deadline. FEMA's budget is set to increase; however, there is a mandated pay rate increase for staff along with a set maintenance budget. The enabling language for the state training grants is being incorporated back into the budget. There is no additional money added into the budget for the grants, and there are only two days left to advocate for additional funds.
- Two branch chiefs will be retiring soon. Chief Richard Patrick is currently looking at reorganization/realignment. Dr. Onieal would like to see all areas do this. There are currently three studies in place that are looking at recruitment and retention.
- There are contracts in place for projects that will assist with WUI and NFIRS data use and understanding.

Dr. Onieal indicated that Mr. Al Fluman will be discussing the facility later during this meeting.

Dr. Onieal asked if there were any questions, and there were none.

Note: During Dr. Onieal's report, the quorum was met for the meeting due to the arrival of another board member.

Chief Hoover advised that Ms. Traci Silas was going to provide some FACA training, and she asked if Ms. Silas was on the call. Ms. Silas covered the following:

- Identify yourself by name prior to talking and be sure to speak clearly.
- If there is a need to step away, hang up the phone instead of placing the call on hold. She advised that some people do not realize there is music when they place their phone on hold.
- When a vote takes place, there should be another roll call to ensure there is still a quorum in attendance. Also, when voting, state your name. Ms. Silas also expressed thanks for the actions taken earlier in this meeting to note there was now a quorum.

Ms. Silas thanked the board for the great work being completed, including the training programs that enhance the NFA. She also commended Chief Hoover for all her work and the documents that she creates. Ms. Silas stated that she oversees 25 committees. She asked the board to reach out if they have any questions about the work being done in other areas. This is important so that work is not duplicated. Ms. Silas also talked about the word cyber now being a term that affects national security. She asked that the board look into things that will enhance security, in addition to continuing the important work that is already being completed. Ms. Silas stated that she will continue to advocate for the board.

Ms. Silas explained that she may not be able to attend the entire meeting. If she needs to drop off, another representative, Mr. Dwayne Baker, will join the call to answer any questions.

Chief Bryant spoke about the reinstatement of the state training grants and the deferred maintenance budget. He stated that the reinstatement of the grants is due to the efforts of people, and he asked for concerns to continue to be voiced. Chief Bryant also said that additional funds were not secured for the grants, and a set maintenance appropriation was provided; therefore, the reinstatement of grants will come at a cost to something else. He asked the board for direction on this. Chief Bryant also stated that he was advised that there was never any intent for the grants to be taken away, even if it was not specifically stated in the budget. Chief Bryant also talked about the upcoming retirements of Dr. Onieal and Dr. Kirby Kiefer. He stated that these are critical positions, and the process to fill those positions is underway. The deputy administrator position has been narrowed down to four people who will be interviewed. He indicated that announcements for both positions should be made soon.

Chief Bryant asked if there were any questions or comments. On behalf of the board, Mr. Pantelis thanked Chief Bryant for his continued work on behalf of all fire organizations. Chief Bryant stated that he was happy to help and be a part of the staff that assists the fire service.

**USFA Data, Research, Prevention and Response
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center**

Mr. Bill Troup reported on behalf of Chief Patrick. Mr. Troup discussed the following:

- Chief Rick Ziebart will retire at the end of December, and Chief Sandy Facinoli will retire at the end of January. The new point of contact for Fire is Everyone's Fight™ will be Ms. Abigail Bordeaux. The new NFIRS outreach position has been filled by Mr. Greg Williams. Mr. Williams will start in January.
- New smoke alarm technology is now commercially available to consumers. This advanced technology was developed through a partnership between the USFA and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory to decrease false alarms.
- There is a new volunteer retention and recruitment initiative with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) that will involve local-level governments. Mr. Troup noted that Chief Kevin Quinn, who is in attendance at this meeting, is a part of the NVFC Board of Directors.
- The NFIRS has had a high of 28.5 million reported incidents annually. This year currently has the lowest number of on-duty firefighter fatalities since the report started.

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

Mr. Fluman advised the board that winter preparation has been completed. The proper equipment, salt, etc., is ready for the snow and ice. Mr. Fluman also reported on the following campus projects:

- Fire alarm system: The new system has been installed in five buildings.
- Solarium: Barring any bad weather, the new roof being installed on the solarium at the Command Post Pub and the overhang adjacent to Building B should be completed soon.
- Building O: Demolition has begun. The basement will become offices, and the staff from the first floor of Building D will be moved there. The first floor of Building D will be converted back into dorm rooms.
- Furniture: Over the holiday break, prior to the arrival of students in January 2020, 105 rooms in Building A and 83 rooms in Building C-East will get new dorm furniture. This is part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 19 budget, and the furniture started to arrive today.

Mr. Fluman also talked about FY 20 projects. He stated that Building L will be renovated, and Building J remodeling will resume. The basement demolition of Building J was already completed, and there will be funds this year to convert the area into technical classrooms for the arson program

and office space for staff. Mr. Fluman also stated that solar panels will be installed on Building S in FY 20 and on Building J in FY 21. These two buildings will complete the solar panel projects.

Dr. Keifer added that the first round of online admissions has been completed. Everything appears to be running smoothly. Dr. Kiefer advised that the online admission process will be moved to off-campus courses once those procedures are finalized.

National Fire Academy Updates on Developments, Deliveries, Staffing and Admissions

Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent

Chief Hoover advised that Ms. Wivell has been filling in as acting branch chief due to the retirement of Ms. Terry Gladhill. A tentative offer has been made to fill the position permanently, and an announcement will be made when the time is appropriate. Chief Hoover also indicated that the NFA will be starting the interview process for the online mediated position under Mr. Ken Farmer's branch.

Mr. Russell Kuck reviewed the Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch courses and stated the following:

Courses	In delivery	In contract development	In-house revisions/updates
Two-day	24	1	3
Five-day		1	
Six-day	21		2
10-day	3		1
Hybrid (mediated and six-day)		1	
Mediated	5	2	1
Self-study	9	3	1
Total	62	8	8

Mr. Kuck explained that the 10-day courses have decreased to three as a result of the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program changes being completed. He also stated that the two-day and five-day courses under development should be ready by May. Mr. Kuck reported that the recent hybrid course pilot went well. The course will be extended from eight to 10 weeks, and it will be piloted again in March. He also said that the self-study course being revised in-house is for NFIRS and should be available in March.

Additionally, Mr. Kuck announced that Mr. Keith Heckler will replace Mr. Woody Stratton. Mr. Heckler has a start date of January 5.

Mr. Stephen Dean reviewed the Response Branch courses and stated the following:

Courses	In delivery	In contract development	In-house revisions/updates
Two-day	35		1
Five-day			
Six-day	22		2
10-day	15	2	
Hybrid (mediated and six-day)			
Mediated	10		8
Self-study	17		1
Total	99	2	12

Mr. Dean explained that the two courses under contract development are hazmat courses. The development meetings have been held, and work has begun. He also stated that the in-house revisions include the entire arson program. The program includes two capstone courses and one report writing course. Mr. Dean also said that four of the six courses are being piloted; two of them are in progress and will end on December 20. He added that all except one of the health and wellness courses are in development, along with two of the Emergency Medical Services courses.

Additionally, Mr. Dean discussed the EFO Program. He advised that two of the students in the Mediated 1 class, which started on December 1, have dropped out due to the time commitment needed to complete coursework. He stated that Mediated 5 will start on January 26. Mr. Dean also stated that Residential 1 is still in development and will start on March 16. In addition, the subject matter experts (SMEs) have met regarding Mediated 2 and Residential 2, and in April the SMEs will meet for Mediated 3 and Residential 3.

Ms. Wivell reported the following:

- The course schedule for FY 21 should be completed and sent to admissions prior to December 31.
- Student evaluations continue to be reviewed for items that need to be addressed or changed.
- The NFA is applying to the International Association for Continuing Education to become an Accredited Provider who can grant continuing education units for its courses. For several years, the NFA has been issuing continuing education units for its courses under the Emergency Management Institute's (EMI's) Accredited Provider status because at one point both schools were in the same organization. EMI is currently renewing their provider status; because both schools fall under different organizations with different leadership and mission statements, the NFA is now required to become a separate Accredited Provider.
- Ms. Gartrell-Kemp is the backup person for the budget.

- Ms. Caitlin Brown has replaced Ms. Michelle Spielman, who is now Chief Hoover's secretary.
- The American Council on Education (ACE) reviewed 41 courses this year. All of the courses were accredited. The course list for ACE review in FY 20 has been started. There will be approximately 30 courses submitted for accreditation.

Dr. Kiefer added that ACE approved all 41 courses this year with no conditional requirements. He said that typically conditions, such as an exam needing additional questions or objectives needing some revision, are required.

Mr. Farmer discussed the following:

- A pilot for the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Program was tested in the field. There were a couple of software presentation issues that will need to be resolved. Dr. Kiefer explained that BYOD is a change for students attending two-day, off-campus courses. He said that adjustments will be made based on the pilot, and the work on this program will continue.
- The State Fire Training Director's Training held in October was well attended. Another training is being planned for July 2020.
- One hundred and sixteen colleges are currently participating in the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education-approved program.
- There are currently six coffee break bulletins. One bulletin is a video format, which takes a little longer to process.

Mr. Farmer also stated that he would like to reinforce that mediated courses require teamwork from all staff members. Integration of staff is necessary to ensure that development is being completed properly for a successful delivery. Mr. Farmer said that an example of this is the staff involvement currently taking place during development of the revised EFO Program.

Chief Hoover asked Mr. Farmer to talk about the national training weekend. Mr. Farmer explained that the NFA campus was opened up for a national training weekend that was open to students from all states. There was no stipend for this weekend; however, it was well attended. Two national training weekends are being planned for next year.

Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Reports

Professional Development Initiative

Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Dr. Kiefer spoke on behalf of Dr. Patricia McIntosh. Dr. Kiefer explained that some background material to help with professional development is being put together. This material will assist

individuals on the subcommittee with being on the same level to study and answer key questions. This process will be completed prior to asking the board to create a subcommittee.

**National Fire Incident Report System
Mr. George Stapleton, Chairperson**

Mr. George Stapleton stated that there was nothing to report.

Final Comments/Adjournment

Mr. Pantelis asked if there was any additional business that needed to be discussed. Chief Quinn congratulated Dr. Onieal on his upcoming retirement and offered his sincere gratitude and appreciation for all that he has done. Mr. Pantelis seconded his remarks, and he added that he appreciates his friendship, commitment and dedication.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:28.