

**Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
March 19, 2019
Building H, Room 300
Teleconference**

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
Chairman
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
Finance Chief
South Carolina State Fire
141 Monticello Trail
Columbia, SC 29203

Steven P. Westermann (Vice Chair)
Central Jackson Fire Protection District
1609 NE Scarborough Drive
Blue Springs, MO 64014

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

Mr. John Carnegis, Fire Program Specialist, NFA
Mr. Stephen Dean, Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA
Mr. Ken Farmer; Chief; Education, Training and Partnerships Branch; NFA
Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist
Ms. Terry Gladhill; Branch Chief; Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch; NFA
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, NFA
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Mr. Russell Kuck, Branch Chief, Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch, NFA
Ms. Ellen Newlin, Secretary, NFA
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire Programs Division
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center

Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome

Mr. Andrew K. Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors

Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, NFA

Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA

Dr. Kirby Kiefer 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 Kirby Kiefer. I am Deputy 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. Ellen Newlin, 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 them 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 K. Pantelis called the meeting to order.

Chief John S. Butler was sworn in to office by Dr. Kiefer. (Note: Chief Butler will be sworn in again at the next meeting because the signed letter for his position has not been received.)

Mr. Pantelis congratulated Chief Butler. He also expressed his gratitude for the outstanding work done by the NFA surrounding the government closure. He indicated that it was very impressive how the NFA staff handled communications with students and course rescheduling. He pointed out that he received comments from several students regarding how well they were kept updated on these matters.

Chief Tonya L. Hoover thanked Mr. Pantelis for his comments and added that it was challenging during the 35-day government shutdown. She reiterated that the staff did stellar work to communicate with students and provide them the information they needed. She expressed her appreciation for the efforts being recognized. Chief Hoover advised that there will be some updates to the course programs, as will be discussed today. She also thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting.

USFA Data Research and Response Support Initiatives
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire Programs Division
Mr. Bill Troup, Branch Chief, National Fire Data Center

Chief Richard Patrick thanked everyone for the opportunity to provide an update. Chief Patrick stated that there are several things that have transpired, including the addition of pictographs on the website. He explained that there are 30 new pictographs in testing this year, which include life-safety issues in addition to fire safety. There are currently 51 pictographs published on the website. He also informed everyone that Dr. Denis Onieal stated at a previous Board of Visitors meeting that pictographs are the next biggest thing to smoke alarm/detectors and fire sprinklers.

Chief Patrick also indicated that there is now a USFA LinkedIn account, and there are about a half a dozen people who are currently authorized to submit comments. He also informed everyone that this year marks the 45th anniversary of the NFA and the USFA. Activities are being worked on, and more information will follow.

Chief Patrick advised that a soft launch on the Homeland Security Information Network for the Fire Marshal Interchange is being worked on. This is a SharePoint concept for first responders. He asked that if there are fire marshals who would like to participate in the soft launch, to please let him know. The launch for the public will be in the next few weeks. Chief Patrick also asked if anyone, or any members of their organizations, would like to be involved in a usability study of the website, which is underway.

Chief Patrick reported on the current study of wildland fire severity across the country. The USFA has been asked to engage with the DHS Science & Technology Directorate on a technology initiative. This initiative will look at the existing technology to determine what currently exists that could aid in the reduction of loss-of-life during these catastrophic events. Currently, there have been table-top exercises in California and one in Tennessee following the Gatlinburg fire. There is a team in California this week who will submit 48 deliverables to administrators who will then determine the path forward.

Chief Patrick asked Mr. Bill Troup to provide an update on the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). Mr. Troup indicated that there are 24,000 fire departments participating with NFIRS. These departments report over 27 million incidents yearly, including 1.2 million fires. The NFIRS brochure is currently being updated and will be distributed along with other pamphlets. He also explained that the NFIRS help desk is now staffed. Mr. Troup advised that Chief Keith Bryant will speak at the International Association of Women in Fire & Emergency Services 2019 conference being held April 7-9. He also reported that the volunteer fire and emergency services retention and recruitment study is on-going and explained that a key staff member involved in the study has retired. He explained that there is the possibility of a survey to find the true numbers of volunteer firefighters as several individuals belong to multiple departments. Mr. Troup also informed the group that the advertisement for a fire program specialist to assist with the collection of firefighter fatality information closes on March 25.

Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvements on the National Emergency Training Center Campus

Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, NFA

Chief Hoover spoke in place of Mr. Al Fluman. She announced that there will be a new admissions system in place for the NFA course enrollment period opening on April 15. Online applications will now be available for both Emergency Management Institute and NFA students applying for courses. There will be an internal testing of the system next week. Staff will become imaginary students and enroll in imaginary classes to ensure that the system is working properly. Students are being informed of the online application availability and being advised that supervisors must go in and approve their applications within 10 to 15 days, or their application will be dropped from the system. Chief Hoover is very excited about this new process after 21 years in the making.

Note: the roll-out of the new admissions system may be delayed.

National Fire Academy Activities NFA Staff

Dr. Kiefer advised that the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program rewrite is rolling along well. The government shutdown has impacted this work due to the loss of one month's work. He explained that they have hired temporary contract instructional systems design staff to convert the concepts of curriculum once the subject matter experts complete their work in April. The hope is for this to be completed by January 1, 2020, and he will keep everyone informed. The curriculum will now include online mediated class work to be completed before the first two-week campus courses; more online work will be accomplished in the six months prior to another one-week campus course, and then a final two-week experience on campus, during which the students will graduate. Dr. Kiefer also advised that students will be working on their capstone papers, which will be defended before their peers and others. The first pilot test of this defense project is being tested with "Executive Leadership" this week.

Mr. Eriks J. Gabliks shared that he received a call indicating disappointment that the EFO Program was being watered down. The individual had not read the document and was informed that technology is now being embraced. After this conversation and looking at the document, the concern was resolved. Dr. Kiefer indicated that he has fielded that concern a lot, and he looks at the program as being concentrated, not watered down. Mr. Gabliks suggested that the Board of Visitors/USFA put an article in the United States fire service magazines to explain the changes.

Mr. John Carnegis reported on the EFO program symposium being held April 26-28. There are 141 attendees registered and space for a total of 225. The symposium is competing with the congressional fire service dinner, which could be good or bad. The topic is "Today's Challenges on Tomorrow's Opportunities." Registration is open until March 31. Dr. Patricia A. McIntosh asked where the agenda could be found. The agenda will be emailed after the meeting by Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp.

Mr. Ken Farmer reported on the Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education Recognition Program. He indicated that there are 108 colleges participating. The colleges deliver six core courses which are run by the schools, who send in the paperwork. The schools choose the content and support it themselves. Mr. Farmer also indicated that they are holding off on holding a conference and will have a strategy meeting with about 30 stakeholders to obtain their input and find out what their goals are. Mr. Gabliks asked if one of the goals is to know how to diversify and bring in women, people of color, etc. Chief Hoover advised that this could be an item discussed, but an agenda has not been set yet. Mr. Gabliks expressed that they are trying to reach out to others besides white males. Chief Hoover explained that they see the need for diversity and inclusion and it is being discussed as it pertains to the National Development Program, the NFA and the EFO Program. She indicated that we must learn how to go from looking like we are not inclusive to showing that we are.

Mr. Russell Kuck discussed the curriculum development. In the Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch, there are 61 courses that are in delivery (23 two-day, 18 six-day, four 10-day, five mediated and 11 self-study). There are 19 courses in development (five two-day, five six-day, five mediated and four self-study). This does not include the EFO Program revisions. There are currently three courses with in-house revisions consisting of small tweaks. We issued a contract for instructional design support services to help us with the instructional design services. This allows us to provide 16 courses to them for development. This contract is being looked at for expansion.

Mr. Stephen Dean reported that under command and control, Hazmat, fire investigation Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Responder Wellness and Safety, there are 71 current courses; six are in development, of which five are the entire curriculum for fire investigations. Revisions are being completed over the next year.

Ms. Terry Gladhill provided information on state training delivery. She indicated that the enfranchisement program was discontinued about seven years ago. There were several cases where six- and 10-day courses were being delivered in the field with no quality control and needed to be cleaned up. The NFA will be working on course standard operating procedures. If departments want to deliver a course, they will submit a request. The staff will pull the request and work with the training specialist to go over curricula, admissions and systems needed, which will allow students to receive credit recommendation. Once they are satisfied that all criteria can be met, they will write a letter of agreement. The host will pay for instructors, materials, etc. Beta testing will be completed with the Hazmat program. Mr. Wayne Yoder has had several requests and will be the first to go through the process.

Ms. Gladhill reported that the NFA currently has 30 self-study courses. She also indicated that through the online learning management system, the NFA is supporting 14 courses/exams for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). There are also three new courses being launched in the next several weeks. Ms. Gladhill indicated that there will be an upgrade to the system in May, which will require a brief downtime. She does not anticipate any problems with this as the upgrades are typically done overnight. Ms. Gladhill stated that the Memorandum of Understanding with the NWCG is in the process of being renewed. She advised that while we will continue to collaborate, the branded environment in the self-study learning management system will be decommissioned. Within the next six to nine months, they will be standing up their own environment and, along with this, the interagency funding will end.

Ms. Gladhill indicated that the members of the mediated online team are working on several courses. They have also been actively involved with the EFO Program rewrite. Ms. Gladhill also stated that D2L will still be used until a new system is in place. They are currently in the process of setting up a meeting with the Chief Information Officer to discuss a plan of action. Ms. Gladhill indicated that the mediated learning system is also being used to support a number of resident courses. The EMS, Arson, Fire Prevention Management and Training Program curriculum areas have been using the system for pre-course work, lesson assignments and exams.

Ms. Gladhill also reported that the NFA releases its Coffee Break Bulletins several times a month and reached 622,212 subscribers during Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. Mr. Farmer thanked Ms. Gladhill for all her hard work.

Ms. Gladhill provided information on the NFA's Technology workgroup and advised that they meet quarterly. The workgroup has determined that the basic technology setup in the classrooms will be continued. In FY 2019, the projectors will be the only thing replaced. Ms. Gladhill advised that the use of the computers in the classroom has been reduced due to the Bring Your Own Device Program, and they will be removed from the back of the classrooms. There will be computers placed in the breakout rooms for any students who need them. This will assist with replacement costs. Dr. Kiefer explained that wireless printing has been used by students from their own devices. He also indicated that he looks forward to the new online application system.

Ms. Gladhill reported that she will be recruiting a secretary for Chief Hoover.

Mr. Gabliks asked if it would be possible for the online application process to be accessed by tablets as well as computers. Chief Hoover stated that she believes it was to be tested on all devices — phones, tablets, etc. — and that the SharePoint site regarding this information can be shared with the Board of Visitors (from Management Operations and Student Support) if someone would like to see it.

Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Report

Professional Development Initiative

Dr. McIntosh reported that there are no updates. The meeting was canceled due to the government closure.

NFIRS

Mr. George M. Stapleton advised that there was nothing to report. He asked if it is anticipated that the committee will become more active with the NFIRS or if the committee should remain on hold with this topic. Dr. Kiefer advised that this will remain on hold for now.

Dr. Kiefer asked if there was anything else to share. Mr. Gabliks stated that on behalf of all fire directors, he wanted to express appreciation for the staff's work with the states regarding the American Council on Education. Mr. Troup advised that he gave committees updated reports and if there are questions, to let him know. Dr. Kiefer advised that the next meeting will be May 6 by teleconference.

Mr. Pantelis thanked Dr. Kiefer for his work and a smooth meeting. Dr. Keifer asked if Mr. Thomas E. Romaine was present. Mr. Romaine explained that he signed in to the meeting at Central time and apologized.

Meeting adjourned 2:30.