

WNCAFF Quarterly Meeting
Salisbury Fire Department (Rowan County)
October 20, 2021

18:45 – President McMurry called the October quarterly meeting to order with 61 members representing 14 counties.

President McMurry introduced Chief Robert Parnell of the Salisbury Fire Department who welcomed the association to Rowan County and the Salisbury Fire Department.

Pledge of Allegiance: Battalion Chief Lauren McCulloh, Salisbury Fire Department.

Invocation was given by: Chaplain Dan Peters, Salisbury Fire Department.

Meeting recessed for the meal. Meal Sponsor: Civic Federal Credit Union. Meal provided by “The Smoke Pit BBQ.

19:20 – Loren Pittman from Civic Federal Credit Union spoke about the products that Civic offers and the promotional contest that is being conducted by Civic. Civic is giving away a new F-150 Hybrid Lightning Truck and Grill.

19:28 - **President McMurry recognized the 2021 WNCAFF Officers.**

- President Todd McMurry – Polkville Fire Department
- 1st Vice President Robert Griffin – Edneyville Fire Department
- 2nd Vice President Shane LaCount – Mooresville Fire Department
- Secretary Anthony Penland – Swannanoa Fire Department
- Treasurer Dean Coward – Saunook Fire Department
- Past President Brian Piercy – PG Fire Department
- Foothills Region Director – Earl Withers III – Dallas Fire Department
- Highlands Region Director – Bryan Buchanan – Waynesville Fire Department
- Mountain Region Director – Geoff Woolard – Mooresville Fire Department

19:30 - **Secretary’s and Treasurer’s Reports**

Motion moved by Andy Webster and seconded by Jerry Starr to accept the secretary’s report as mailed, emailed and/or posted to the website. Motion Passed.

Motion moved by Quentin Cash seconded by Andy Webster to accept treasurer’s report as presented. Motion Passed.

19:31 – Agency Reports

NCSFA – Ed Brinson

➤ **Board Update**

- Our new officers were sworn in at conference, and Quentin Cash from Cherryville/Shelby FD's is your new President.
- Doug Bissett is our newest Board member, representing the East.
- Past President AC Rich has rotated off the Board after serving 7 years.

➤ **Relief Fund**

- The relief fund financial report and supporting financial statements are due October 31st, based upon the year closed at June 30th.
- Please remind your relief fund Treasurers the system is open for them to complete their reports on line.
- As a reminder, all of the bank and financial statements that support the relief fund report must also be submitted by October 31st.
- As of today, there are about 350 departments that have not submitted their reports.

➤ **Certified Membership Roster**

- The certified membership rostering period starts December 1, and runs through January 15, 2022.
- Chiefs please make sure you get your roster certified and submitted during this period so your personnel that participate in the Fire & Rescue Pension fund get credit for their 36 hours of training during 2021.
- In addition, your relief funds Board of Trustees reports need to be completed during the same period. Once you complete and certify your roster, you will be automatically prompted to update and certify your Board of Trustees Report. This is a one-stop shop and done with the same log-in. Complete the roster, then the Relief Fund Board update. If the Board hasn't changed, still be sure and verify and confirm. Save and submit!

➤ **Conference Update**

- This year's conference was a huge success, even given Covid concerns. Our attendance was on par with previous years for the most part, and to our knowledge, there was not any Covid cluster creation during conference.
- Planning for the 2022 South Atlantic FIRE RESCUE Expo is well underway. It will be held Aug. 10-14, 2022 at the Raleigh Convention Center. SAFRE exhibitors can begin signing up for space around Nov. 1, 2021.

➤ **NC Fire & Rescue Squad Pension Fund Beneficiary Form**

- Members who are participating in the NC Fire & Rescue Squad Pension Fund must have the beneficiary form 2FR on file at the pension fund office in Raleigh.
- Form can be found on the website at www.myncretirement.com.

➤ **State Legislative Report**

- The budget bill, SB 105, as previously released in draft includes several major fire service provisions. Although the budget talks will continue for a few weeks, are mostly closed door discussions, and will likely be mid-October before passage, here is a general description on several items that may be included in the budget based on previous drafts:
 - \$15,000,000 in funding to the Department of Insurance to Establish and administer a pilot program (firefighter cancer insurance) to provide health benefits to firefighter diagnosed with cancer after January 1, 2022
 - A registry of fire department stocks and usage of AFF foams containing PFA's, maintained by OSFM.
 - Adding PTS as a workplace injury for firefighters and other emergency responders by modifying the Workers Compensation Statutes under GS 97-53;
 - Eliminates premiums for the Volunteer Safety Workers Compensation Safety Program for member departments through 2023, meaning departments will not need to pay premiums for Workers Comp if they are under this program until 2024;
 - Adds two additional types of cancer to LODD (Oral and Pharynx), and changes Intestinal Cancer to Cancers of the small Intestine.
- What is included in the final budget will depend upon negotiations currently underway with the leadership of both Chambers. More information will be provided once these items are passed as budget provisions, but currently they provide several items of huge benefit to the fire service. **Firefighter Cancer insurance was a priority for our Legislative Committee this year and it is currently included.**

➤ **Federal Legislative Report**

- Our Federal Legislation efforts on retirement issues for non-profits lost a lot of momentum when our provision was removed from the Brady Retirement Bill due to IAFF opposition. If you follow federal legislative issues, you've seen where indications are the Brady bill will pass this session. Since the House Ways and Means Committee removed our provision, we've been working with Senator Burr's Office to try and get it put back in when it crosses to the Senate. If you are interested in this effort, please contact Senator Burr's office or Senator Tillis and ask them to add it back when it crosses to the Senate. It's an uphill battle but that is our best hope to see this language passed.
- **Federal legislation Currently Under Consideration (Provided by NVFC)**
 - **Fire Police Fairness Act**
 - **OVERVIEW:** The Fire Police Fairness Act clarifies that members of fire departments who perform traffic incident management duties at the scene of emergencies and planned special events – commonly referred to as “fire police” – are firefighters for the purposes of eligibility for the Public Safety Officers' Benefit. This would simplify the process by which fire police officers are able to qualify for PSOB, which has become unnecessarily complicated in recent years.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** On June 10, 2021, the U.S. Senate passed the Protecting America's First Responders Act (S. 1511), which contained the Fire Police Fairness Act language. H.R. 2936, House legislation identical to S. 1511, was introduced by Representatives Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) on April 10, 2021.

- **HERO Act (H.R. 1480/S. 2700)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** The HERO Act establishes a series of programs designed to address public safety behavioral health issues, including:
 - Creating a grant program for peer-support behavioral health and wellness programs at fire and EMS departments.
 - Directing the U.S. Fire Administration in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to develop and make publicly available resources to be used by the federal government and other entities to educate mental health professionals about the unique behavioral health issues that firefighters and EMS personnel face.
 - Establishing a system for collecting data on suicide deaths of public safety officers.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** The HERO Act was introduced on March 2, 2021 by Representatives Ami Bera (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA). On May 12 the House passed H.R. 1480.
- **Volunteer First Responder Housing Act (H.R. 4377/S. 2316)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** The Volunteer First Responder Housing Act would increase access for qualified volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel to two existing federal housing assistance programs. The bill would expand eligibility for qualified volunteers to receive a loan through the Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It would also make qualified volunteers eligible to participate in the Good Neighbor Next Door Sales Program, through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** H.R. 4377 was introduced on July 7, 2021 by Representatives Cynthia Axne (D-IA) and Mike Bost (R-IL). S. 2316 was introduced on July 12, 2021 by Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Jon Tester (D-MT), and Kevin Cramer (R-ND).
- **Current Level of Federal Appropriations Under Consideration**
 - **Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** The AFG program provides funding to fire departments and some non-fire-based EMS agencies to purchase equipment, training, and apparatus. The SAFER grant program provides assistance for the hiring and retention of career firefighters as well as recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Both programs direct funding to recipients based on criteria established by the fire service and a competitive, peer-reviewed grant process.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** Congress provided \$360 million each for AFG and SAFER in FY 2021, a \$5 million increase from the level provided in FY 2020. H.R. 4331, the FY 2022 Homeland Security Appropriations Act, provides \$370 million each for AFG and SAFER.

- **U.S. Fire Administration (USFA)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** The USFA provides training to more than 80,000 fire and emergency services personnel each year. USFA also performs research and collects data specific to the fire service and fire service **activities** and educates the public on the importance of fire safety. The long-term health of USFA and its National Fire Academy (NFA) are critical to the fire service.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** In FY 2021 Congress provided \$49.3 million for USFA, a \$2.5 million increase over the level provided in FY 2020. H.R. 4331, the FY 2022 Homeland Security Appropriations Act, provides \$53.212 million for USFA.
- **Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** VFA is a grant program that provides funding to rural fire departments on a 50/50 cost share basis to pay for training, equipment, and protective clothing to help them prepare for wildland fires. VFA is administered by the U.S. Forest Service and funds are distributed by state forestry agencies.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** Congress funded VFA at \$19 million in FY 2021, a \$1 million increase over the level provided in FY 2020. H.R. 4372, the FY 2022 Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Act, provides \$20 million for VFA.
- **National Firefighter Registry (NFR)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** In July 2018, Congress passed the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act, directing the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to establish a National Firefighter Registry to collect, on a voluntary basis, health, occupational, and other information from firefighters on an ongoing basis. That information will be maintained in the Registry until such time as one of the participating firefighters contracts cancer, at which point the information will be identified and matched with data from existing state cancer registries. The idea is to create a large dataset from which public health researchers and others can draw from learn more about the causes of firefighter cancer in order to better treat and prevent it.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** The Firefighter Cancer Registry Act authorizes \$2.5 million per year to be spent by the CDC for the purpose of developing and maintaining the NFR. In FY 2021 Congress provided the full \$2.5 million for the NFR. H.R. 4502, the FY 2022 Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Act, provides \$2.5 million in funding for the NFR.

- **Rural EMS Training Grant (SIREN Act)**
 - **OVERVIEW:** In December 2018, Congress passed the SIREN Act, establishing the Rural EMS Training Grant program at the Department of Health and Human Services for rural EMS agencies to help pay for equipment, training, and staffing. SIREN Act grants are capped at \$200,000 and there is a ten percent local matching requirement. Public and private, non-profit EMS agencies that serve rural areas are eligible to apply for SIREN Act funding.
 - **CURRENT STATUS:** In FY 2021 Congress provided \$5.5 million for SIREN Act grants. There is no funding for the Rural EMS Training Grant program in H.R. 4502, the FY 2022 Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Act.
- **Firefighter Deaths From Covid**
 - There seems to be a little confusion concerning Federal PSOB and Covid-19 related deaths. Some people think that you can get NC's LODD for Covid, but not Federal PSOB. This is not correct. There was a "presumptive bill" passed in Congress in last August for Covid and PSOB, making the assumption that if a public safety officer died of Covid, unless there was specific medical evidence that he died of something else, it would be considered and assumed it was an occupational related death and the benefit would be provided through the end of 2021. In other words, it is our understanding if you die of Covid and you meet the definition of a public safety officer, it is a presumed PSOB covered LODD, with no proof required that it was an occupational exposure. A link to the copy of the Bill is listed below.
 - <https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ157/PLAW-116publ157.pdf>
 - To receive an LODD award from North Carolina, Workers Comp, NCSFA LODD, etc., there must be a record of occupational exposure. The presumption is only for Federal PSOB through the end of 2021.

➤ **Staying Active Legislatively and Capital Impact**

- Right now we have 1722 active Advocates on Capital Impact. That means out of 50,000+ firefighters, just a little over 4%.
- We would prefer to have many more, but the system is designed to allow people to join, not force or bulk sign them.
- If you want to keep up with what's going on and be a part of promoting and getting good legislation passed, join up. At the very least it will give you weekly updates and contact information for all of your representatives.
- Log on to NCSFA, click on the Legislative Banner called Capital Impact, or look under the Legislative Flag. Provide your email, design your own password, and provide your home zip code. It allows for much more, but that is all that is required. It takes less than 3 minutes.

NCAFC – Wesley Hutchins

- **Mid-Winter Conference**
 - Mid-winter conference is scheduled for January 24 – 30, 2022. Once again at the Embassy Suites in Concord, NC. Registration is open. You should receive an email link. **Looks to be a great conference line-up.**
- **Career and Volunteer Chief/Chief Officer of the Year Award**
 - Annual Career and Volunteer Chief and Officer of the Year award nominations will open October 8, 2021, and close on December 10, 2021. **Please get the word out and nominate a deserving candidate from your department.**
- **NCAFC Executive Development**
 - First week of the NCAFC Executive Development went well, thank you to everyone who attended or sent someone from your department to the course, we have 52 attendees. Second week is October 25 – 29, 2021.
- **HB435** (The NCAFC License Plate bill)
 - The bill is stalled in the Senate and looks as though it will not pass this year. Rest assured that NCAFC is still working to get this passed. Any support from your senate representatives would be helpful. Please reach out if you have any questions or suggestions, would be appreciated.
- **Retreat**
 - NCAFC Board of Director held their annual planning retreat the first week of September 2021. The board identified seven initiatives to help grow and strengthen the NCAFC.

NVFC – Quentin Cash

- NVFC just completed its first ever Recruitment and Retention Experience in Cleveland, OH last month. It was well attended, and the reviews were excellent. They hope to make that an annual event and move it around the country. So listen up for next year.
- The fall meeting for the NVFC just wrapped up in Jackson, WY on Oct 16th. It was well attended including some NCSFA representation in preparation for next year. The next fall meeting will be in Wilmington, NC at the Embassy Suites and Wilmington Convention Center in October. Chief Jeff Cash will have some more information available come spring as we are working on some planning items for it already.
- The dues will be going up \$3.00 in January and you will still be able to add it onto your NCSFA rostering.
- There are new and improved classes and webinars being offered online through the NVFC please check out the Virtual Classroom.
- Dave Finger, the Political Lobbyist for the NVFC has been working Congress on a number of issues that can be found online that Ed Brinson with the NCSFA just went over. We do ask that you go to the NVFC's website and click on the engage section and sign up for legislative updates. It is similar to Capital Impact from the NCSFA and will help you updated on national issues.
- Interim Executive Director Sarah Lee was promoted to full Executive Director. She was the Deputy Director for former Executive Director Heather Schafer.

OSFM – Brian Taylor

➤ **Grants Division**

- December 15, 2021: Grant recipients will be announced.
- April 30, 2022: Invoices/proof of payment is due to the NC Department of Insurance. Uploads can be submitted via OSFM 24 online portal.

➤ **Injury Prevention**

- “Injury Prevention Division” is now “Community Risk Reduction Division” to better align with the mission of reducing injuries through numerous safety programs.
- Barry Overman is the director of the Community Risk Reduction Division.

➤ **Smoke Alarm Canvassing Grant**

- We have exhausted our alarm supply for the year, but please continue to install alarms and enter surveys into OSFM24. Once you finish your surveys, request more alarms. Your request will be held until we replenish in February and your alarms will be in the first batch shipped!

➤ **Smoke Alarm Saturday**

- We are getting close to the 6-month mark for this grant. Grantees should be finishing up any installations of these alarms and completing their surveys in OSFM24. You must have all alarms installed from this grant and all surveys completed in order to participate in Smoke Alarm Saturday 2022.
- Thank you for continuing in these grants and protecting lives in your community with these life-saving devices!

➤ **Fire and Rescue Commission**

- We have upgraded the Image Trend Fire Bridge to Image Trend Elite.
- Many departments are now looking at changing Records Management Software because Emergency Reporting and Fire House have been bought out and the products prices are going up. We have the perfect solution with Image Trend Elite. It is FREE and is a full RMS system not just NFIRS. Please contact Monna with any questions or a demo.
- NFA State weekend is November 19 – 21. Everyone should have received their email of acceptance along with detail information regarding their COVID policies. You will be required to have the vaccine, have tested negative or you will be required to have a COVID test upon arrival to the NFA. We have 202 currently signed up.

➤ **NC State Fair**

- We have two booths designed to promote fire and life safety – Safety City and the Fire Safety Show. Stop by and visit!

NC Emergency Management – Gregory Atchley

- **Tropical Storm Fred, Hurricane Ida and other Severe Weather Events:**
 - Thank you to all of the agencies who assisted either in their home jurisdiction or deployed to the impacted areas. Recovery continues for Tropical Storm Fred and Hurricane Ida.

- **Covid 19**
 - North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) continues to support our Local and State Partners in the response to COVID-19 with equipment, supplies and personnel.

- **North Carolina Terms Update**
 - The Training, Exercise & Response Management System (TERMS) has recently undergone some updates.
 - Most notable is the web address has changed,
 - New address is: <https://terms.ncem.gov>.
 - If you have not updated your profile in TERMS lately, please take time to make sure your information is correct.

- **Exercises**
 - The Great South East Shake Out Earthquake Exercise
 - o Thursday, October 21, 2021
 - o You are invited to join millions of people who will Drop, Cover and Hold On at 10:21 a.m. in the 2021 Great Southeast Shake Out
 - o Register today at ShakeOut.org/southeast –
 - DuPont Rescue Experience (normally held in November of each year) has been cancelled this year due to COVID concerns.

- **Training**
 - North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) continues to monitor current trends related to COVID-19, including the current positivity rate and medical surge scenarios, and strives to prioritize the wellness of our public safety community. At this time, all state-sponsored course offerings are being assessed and students will be notified with additional information on the method of delivery of their class. –
 - **All Hazard Incident Management Team Academy** (tentatively scheduled)
 - o January 18-21, 2022 – Samarcand Academy, Moore County –
 - See TERMS for other Training Opportunities.

- **Conferences**
 - North Carolina Emergency Management Association – Fall Conference
 - o October 31 – November 3, 2021
 - o Wilmington, NC

NCFFF – Rick Wood

➤ **NCFFF State Memorial**

- Memorial Tablets are full. NCFFF working on the best practice to add more names and possible expansion of the memorial.
- Memorial service was held on August 28, 2021.

➤ **Training**

- Several members of the NCFFF and representatives from the Office of State Fire Marshal going to Emmitsburg for training.

20:10 - Old Business – Nothing to discuss.

20:10 - New Business

1. Bylaws Review

- Some of the proposed amendments were presented to the membership. A full copy of the proposed amendments will be emailed to the contact list as well as posted to the WNCAFF website. A vote on the amendments will take place at the January 2022 meeting. Any questions or comments may be directed to Secretary Anthony Penland at chief@svfd.net.

2. Nominating Committee

- Chairman Brian Piercy presented the nominations for the following positions:
 - **2nd Vice President:** Earl Withers was the only nomination received for the position of 2nd Vice President. Jay Flynn moved seconded by Tim Tench to accept the nomination of Earl Withers as 2nd Vice President and elect Earl by acclamation. Motion Passed.
 - **Secretary:** Anthony Penland was the only nomination received for the position of secretary. Jay Flynn moved seconded by Andy Webster to accept the nomination of Anthony Penland as secretary and to elect Anthony by acclamation. Motion Passed.
 - **Treasurer:** Dean Coward was the only nomination received for the position of treasurer. Tom Kelly moved seconded by Ryan Heavner to accept the nomination of Dean Coward as treasurer and to elect Dean by acclamation. Motion Passed.
 - **Foothills Regional Director:** Tim Tench was the only nomination received for the position of Foothills Regional Director. Ryan Heavner moved seconded by Quentin Cash to accept the nomination of Tim Tench as Foothills Regional Director and to elect Tim by acclamation. Motion Passed.
- **Regional Representatives: NCSFA/NCAFC**
 - Interested members who would like to represent the western district of the NCSFA and NCAFC need to let the nominating committee know of your intentions by December 15, 2021.
 - Nominations will be taken from the floor at the January 2022 meeting. Candidates will be given three minutes to address the association.
 - Nominating Committee: Brian Piercy, Trevor Lance, Andy Webster, and Rick Livingston.

3. Next Meeting

- January 19, 2022
- Polkville Fire Department
4315 Polkville Road
Polkville NC, 28136

Meeting adjourned at 20:31

Submitted: Secretary Anthony Penland