

WNCAFF Quarterly Meeting
Polkville Fire Department (Cleveland County)
January 19, 2022

18:40 – President McMurry called the January quarterly meeting to order with 85 members representing 16 counties.

President McMurry, as chief of Polkville Fire Department, welcomed the association to Polkville and Cleveland County.

Pledge of Allegiance: Jacob Shuford

Invocation was given by: Chaplain Paul Scott, Polkville Fire Department.

Meeting recessed for the meal. Meal Sponsor: Atlantic Emergency Solutions.

19:15 – Frank Suggs addressed the association about the products and services that Atlantic Emergency Solutions offers to fire departments.

19:20 – **Annual Chief/Chief Officer and Firefighter of the Year Awards**

Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year: Chief Tony Sullivan - Green Hill VFD

Career Fire Chief of the Year: Chief Jamie Guillermo - Spindale FD

Career Company Officer of the Year: Brian Piercy - Woodlawn/Sevier FD

19:23 - **President Griffin recognized the 2022 WNCAF Officers. The Officers Oath was administered by Past-President Brian Piercy.**

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

President Griffin presented an appreciation award to outgoing President Todd McMurry. Past-President McMurry thanked the association for their support during his time as president.

19:25 - **Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports**

Motion moved by Brian Piercy seconded by Joey Webb to accept the secretary's report as mailed, emailed and/or posted to the website. Motion Passed.

Motion moved by Quentin Cash seconded by Brian Piercy to accept the treasurer's report as presented. Motion Passed.

NCSFA – Tim Bradley

➤ **Relief Fund Update**

- Last year continued to be an extremely active year for relief fund usage and approval. We handled 529 requests as opposed to 471 requests in 2020, for a total of \$2,579,961 not including the pre-approved SRP payments. That was a \$600,000 increase over 2020. The highest type of requests was still Medical Financial Hardships, or destitution.
- I would remind everyone that it is critical for those at or near their maximum of \$2,500 per rostered firefighter to watch their balance closely. We still have fire departments submitting reports that are over their maximum. This will result in them not being able to receive their check at the end of the fiscal year from DOI. Several departments with investment accounts exceeded their maximum this year due to increased investment results, so monitor your accounts for growth rather than relying on the usual balance.

➤ **Scholarships and Grants**

- Scholarships are now open on-line for 2022. There are 15 scholarships per region awarded each year. The scholarships include \$2,000 Associate's, \$8,000 Bachelor's and \$10,000 Master's Degree awards.
- We also have (8) \$500 training grants available per region. We hope it expands in the future. There were 3 from the Eastern, and one each from the Piedmont and Western.
- The electronic submission due date for the scholarship and grant applications is March 15.

➤ **Legislation**

- **Senate Bill 105 – Appropriations Bill/**
 - **Section 8.10 Water Safety Act/Firefighting Foam Registry**
 - Amends Chapter 58-82B and creates an AFFF (foam) registry of foams that contain PFA's. The registry is to be managed by OSFM within DOI, requiring fire departments to report annually items such as inventory, AFFF foam needing to be disposed of, and usage of AFFF at incidents. OSFM then reports combined information to the Environmental Review Commission.
 - **Section 30.2 Volunteer FD Grant Program Changes**
 - Creates base allocation matchless grants of \$10,000 from a special fund to eligible departments to mitigate the impact of Covid 19, and additional \$35,000 grants upon application. It also requires the Commissioner to hold \$1,000,000 in reserve for 2021-2023 for emergency fire department request. Eligible fire departments are those eligible for the VFD Grant program in GS 58-87.
 - **Section 30.3 Workers Compensation Fund for Fire and EMS**
 - For fiscal years 2021-2-22 and 2022-2023 eligible units using the VSWC Fund shall not be required to pay premiums. This would mean reimbursement for those who have paid 2021-2022 premiums.

- This upcoming year is the ending of the 2021/2022 two-year session and is normally referred to as the Short Session. Bills that include money, or passed one of the two chambers last year can be considered normally, however, there are ways around those rules by legislators.
- **Federal Legislation**
 - Continue to Pursue Changes to IRS Regulations that could allow non-profit career firefighters in LGERS.
- **Legislative Day**
 - Thus far, Legislative Day has not been scheduled for this year. It will most likely depend upon current issues dealing with Covid-19.
- **BCBS Grant**
 - In December, Blue Cross contributed \$500,000 to our non-profit organization, the North Carolina Firefighters Fund, to use in fire service programs with the NCSFA. Half of it went in the form of direct grants to small rural departments through OSFM like the previous year's grant, but we are excited that \$250,000 will be used this year to provide assistance to firefighters seeking treatment and assistance with PTSD and mental health issues. An application will be available hopefully by Feb 1st that Chiefs can submit on behalf of their personnel.
- **SAFRE Conference**
 - This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 10th-13th, 2022. On-line registration will be available in the next couple of weeks. Course selections have already been made and I can tell you this year we will have some great classes. We have 2 great keynote speakers this year, one of Thursday and one of Friday, Dr. Denis O'Neil, former Deputy US Fire Administrator and former Superintendent at the National Fire Academy and Commander Rorke Denver, retired Navy Seal. We'll have more as the time grows closer, but please mark your calendar for that week. We look forward to a great week of fellowship, education and seeing what's new and innovative in apparatus, technology and equipment for the fire service and our first responders.
- **Summit**
 - We plan on hosting a Summit Tuesday this year this year at SAFRE conference. We've normally held it at Mid-Winter, but scheduling this year was difficult. This will include the Board members from the NCSFA, NCAFC's, and the Boards from all three regional associations (Western, Eastern, and Piedmont). It will also include representatives from the Fire Marshal's Association and OSFM. More will be provided as we get nearer to the Date.
- **Video Series**
 - The Board and staff of NCSFA have begun production of an informal series of informational videos concerning topics of current events in the fire service. Example includes legislation, relief fund, and PTSD. As these are produced, they'll be placed on our webpage and social media for viewing. Held to 2 – 3 minutes each, they would provide information to chiefs and firefighters on a host of topics. Production began January 14th, and hopefully within a few months some of them will be available.

➤ **NCSFA Historian Work**

- Our Statistician, Dennis Pressley, has continued work under the new responsibility of Historian, as predicated by the bylaw change in 2018. Mike Legaros, from Raleigh, has begun formulating historical information. Some of this was displayed at the Annual Conference last year. The Board hopes to have a history book ready for this year's conference, but it will depend on several factors coming together. They also hope to provide copies to fire departments.

NCAFC – Joey Webb

➤ **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. **Looks to be a great conference line-up.**

➤ **Planning Retreat**

- NCAFC Board of Director held their annual planning retreat the first week of September 2021. The board of directors continues to work on the seven initiatives to help grow and strengthen the NCAFC.

➤ **Board Positions**

- Chief Donnie Hall from New Hanover County Emergency Services has returned to our board of directors to fill a couple of unexpired terms of members who have dropped off the board.

➤ **Fire Prevention School**

- Carolina Beach
- March 14 – 18, 2022.
- Registration is now open; links are on the NCAFC and Cape Fear CC web sites.

➤ **NCAFC Dues Increase**

- Beginning this month and retroactive to the member's renewal date our annual dues will increase from \$30 to \$35.
- The five-dollar increase will go directly to the North Carolina Fallen Firefighter's Foundation to help with their programs and continued support of North Carolina Line of Duty Deaths.

➤ **AD&D Insurance**

- Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance has increased from \$20K to \$25K.
- This is for all of our members 24/7.

➤ **HB 435**

- The NCAFC License Plate bill is stalled in the Senate and looks as though it will not pass this year; last action on the bill was May 21, 2021, when it was referred to the committee on rules and operations of the Senate.
- The NCAFC is still diligently working to get this passed. Any support from your senate representatives would be helpful. Please reach out if you have any questions or suggestions that would be appreciated.

NVFC – Quentin Cash

- The NVFC fall meeting was held in Jackson, WY, in October. During the meeting, Sarah Lee was named CEO of the NVFC. She had been serving as interim CEO after we lost our longtime CEO Heather Schafer in March. The NVFC also presented its annual fire service achievement awards at the meeting. The 2022 spring meeting takes place in April in Arlington, VA, and the fall meeting will be held in October in Wilmington, NC.
- The NVFC’s Health and Safety Training Summit will take place June 24-25 in Orlando, FL. This event brings together volunteer responders and leadership from across the country to learn about important health and safety issues impacting the volunteer fire and emergency services. Registration is expected to open before the end of this month, and travel stipends will be available to help offset the costs of attending. The web site to learn more is www.nvfc.org/summit.
- January is Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month, and this is a great time to check out the Lavender Ribbon Report Update that was recently released by the NVFC and IAFC-VCOS. This new supplement to the original Lavender Ribbon Report further expands on the 11 actions you can take to protect yourself and your crew from exposure risks. Find it at www.nvfc.org/lrr.
- The Protecting America’s First Responders Act was signed into law in November, which included items that were legislative priorities for the NVFC. The bill clarifies that fire police are public safety officers and eligible to receive Public Safety Officers’ Benefits, makes it easier to qualify for PSOB Disability, and extends for two years a presumption that public safety officers who die from COVID-19 contracted the virus in the line of duty.
- We continue to add new courses into the NVFC Virtual Classroom. In the last few months we added a course for family members of first responders, called “For Those Who Love a First Responder” as well as courses on “Creating a Psychologically Healthy Fire Department” and “Your Role in Community Safety Education.” All courses are free to NVFC members. Check it out at virtualclassroom.nvfc.org. The NVFC also hosts a free monthly Train Strong webinar series as well as a monthly Facebook Live series that focus on different topics impacting the fire and emergency services. You can find upcoming events from the NVFC’s online calendar at www.nvfc.org/events. Past webinars can also be viewed in the Virtual Classroom.
- As a reminder, resources are available through the NVFC’s Share the Load program to assist with addressing behavioral health in your department. These include the Psychologically Healthy Fire Departments: Implementation Toolkit, the Directory of Behavioral Health Professionals, and training. Find these and more at www.nvfc.org/help.
- You can also find resources for recruitment and retention from the Make Me A Firefighter campaign. These include a recruitment materials generator, ready-to-use PSAs, and national database of volunteer opportunities, training, and more. The department portal is located at portal.nvfc.org.
- North Carolina continues to be the state most represented in the NVFC membership. The current membership rate is just \$21 and comes with a variety of benefits, including an AD&D policy, free Virtual Classroom training, and access to the Volunteer Voices member community. Learn about all the benefits and join at www.nvfc.org/join.

OSFM – Michael Caviness

➤ **BUDGET & LEGISLATIVE MANDATES**

- VFD Grant Funding (COVID Impact Grant) - \$10,000 to each VFD that meets GS 58-87-1. (\$8M)
- Supplement Grant for VFD's – Up to \$35K equipment grant with no match.
- Emergency Reserve Grant – Up to \$50K for Emergency Disaster Funding for all FDs (\$1M)
- Fire Safety and Awareness – Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Funding (\$60K recurring) will be divided between the Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) and CRR Division for prevention and education activities and Vision 20/20 Statewide Collaboration and Engagement Framework (SCEF) Survey.
- 2 FTEs for Forensic Fire Investigators for FIU.
- 2 FTEs CID Arson Fraud Investigators assigned to FIU to include K-9 program.
- 1 FTEs for Building Code Enforcement Engineer II – To assist with Education and Fire Interpretation needs.
- AFFF Foam Reporting Program with UNC Collaboratory – Will require 3 FTEs and funding to run the program which will be paid by the Collaboratory by MOU and will utilize Image Trend Elite for storage and incident reporting.
- \$3.5M for Land Development for NC Training Center – Will hire a Project/Construction Manager to Develop. Remaining funds to be sent to the county by an MOU to go toward the Training Center.
- \$28M grant to Stanly County to building NC Emergency Training Center as a Public/Private Partnership with OSFM, NCANG, and Stanly County.
- Firefighter Cancer Benefit Program Insurance Policy – FF Cancers that are identified by the CDC - \$25K lump sum plus \$12K for out-of-pocket expenses per cancer (limit 2 per this 2-year program) plus a disability benefit of up to \$5k for paid and \$1,500 for volunteer firefighters. (\$15M) DOI will follow state statute and run the policy through the NC Association of Independent Insurance Agents and the NC Association of Insurance Agents (Big I and NCAIA).
- 23 Disaster Building Inspectors and Trainers to be deployed in the counties affected by Hurricane Florence to catch up on the rebuild. Funded by NC Disaster Recovery (NCORE).
- Cancer Benefit Program – \$7.5M shall be used to establish and administer a pilot program to provide health benefits to eligible firefighters with a new diagnosis of cancer on or after 1/1/2022. The pilot program will end on June 30, 2023, but claims for health benefits filed by that date shall be paid as long as funds appropriated for the pilot program are available.
- The department is conducting the required 5-year audit of the Fund.
- For the 2021-2022 fiscal year and the 2022-2023 fiscal year, no eligible unit or eligible entity shall be required to submit to the State Fire & Rescue Commission any payment to participate in the Fund. How refunds will be executed is still to be decided.
- \$200,000 for two new regional offices.
- High School and Middle School Catastrophic Athletic Insurance.

➤ **SPECIAL FUNDING**

- \$250,000 for a VFD Grant of \$5K to the 50 lowest funded departments in NC.
- \$250,000 for a FF Mental Health Treatment Assistance Program.

➤ **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION RESOURCE FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE CHIEFS**

- www.ncosfm.gov/VFBasicTraining

19:50 - Old Business

1. Bylaws Revision

- Bylaws Revision were sent out to the membership after the October 2021 meeting and posted to the website for comment. Secretary Anthony Penland reviewed some of the changes with the association during the meeting. Motion moved by Jeff Cash seconded by Joey Webb to adopted the bylaws as presented. Motion Passed.

20:10 - New Business

1. North Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs' (NCAFC) Western Director Position

- At the April meeting an election will be held to elect a director from the western membership district of the NCAFC. Three association members have expressed their intention of running for this position. Each one was given three (3) minutes to address the association.
 - Jay Alley - Gerton Fire Department
 - Tom Kelly – Riceville Fire Department
 - Earl Withers – Dallas Fire Department
- Motion moved by Trevor Lance seconded by Phil Welch to accept these nominations. Motion Passed.

2. North Carolina State Firefighters' Associations' ((NCSFA) Western Director Position

- At the April meeting an election will be held to elect a director from the western membership district of the NCSFA. Two association members have expressed their intention of running for this position. Each one was given three (3) minutes to address the association.
 - Jay Flynn – Denver Fire Department
 - Todd McMurry – Polkville Fire Department
- Motion moved by Quentin Cash seconded by William Hunt to accept these nominations. Motion Passed.

3. WNAF Mountain Regional Director

- The Mountain Regional Director's position of the WNAF is vacant due to a resignation. In accordance with the association bylaws the position shall remain open until such a time that members in the regional area can elect a new director. Motion moved by Andy Webster seconded by Jay Flynn to vote on a new director at the April meeting.
- Members from the Mountain Region who are interested in serving as the director need to contact one of the nominating committee members. Those members are Todd McMurry, Brian Piercy, Trevor Lance, Rick Livingston and/or Andy Webster.

4. WNAF Scholarships

- The application process for the Gene Gladdin, Dean Coward and WNAF scholarships is now open. The application can be found on the website at www.wnaaff.com. The application process will end on March 31, 2022.

5. Next Meeting

- **April 20, 2022**
 - Cullowhee Fire Department
 - 4267 Little Savannah Road
 - Cullowhee, NC 28723

Meeting adjourned at 20:25

Submitted: Secretary Anthony Penland