

WNCAFF Quarterly Meeting
Cullowhee Fire Department (Jackson County)
April 20, 2022

18:10 – Voting: Three (3) different elections occurred at the meeting. A Mountain Region Director of the WNCAF, Western Director Positions of the NCSFA and NCAFC were voted on at the meeting.

18:45 – President Griffin called the April quarterly meeting to order with 150 members representing 18 counties.

President Griffin explained the voting procedure and criteria around the voting.

President Griffin introduced Cullowhee Fire Chief Tim Green who welcomed the association to Cullowhee and Jackson County.

Pledge of Allegiance: Matthew Taylor

Invocation was given by: L.G. Painter

18:50 – Civic Federal Credit Union Loren Pittman addressed the association about the products that Civic has to offer to the NC fire service. He spoke about the construction of the new Cullowhee Fire Station. He introduced several individuals in attendance that assisted with designing, constructing and decorating the station.

Products Civic has to offer:

- * 1.99 percent interest of financing on car loans
- * .75percent interest on money market accounts
- * Business accounts not only for the fire departments but also for members who own a business.

18:55 – Meeting recessed for the meal. Meal sponsor: Civic Federal Credit Union. Meal catered by Granny's Kitchen, Cherokee NC.

Voting took place during the meal and prior to the meeting being reconvened. Announcement was made that voting would stop at 19:50.

19:50 - Meeting Reconvened.

Guest Speaker: T.J. Francis representing the Woodmen of the World presented to the association about a life insurance program being offered by the Woodmen.

President Griffin asked the association to take a moment of silence in memory of Becky Rawls. Becky was a huge supporter of the NC Fire Service as a member of the Atlantic Emergency Solutions Team. President Griffin presented the Atlantic team in attendance with a memorial plaque.

President Griffin recognized the 2022 WNCAF Officers.

- 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 – Fletcher Fire Department
- Mountain Region Director – Vacant
- Foothills Region Director – Tim Tench – East Lincoln Fire Department

20:00 - Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports

Motion moved by Andy Webster seconded by Quentin Cash to accept the secretary's report as emailed and/or posted to the website. Motion Passed.

Motion moved by Jeff Cash seconded by Joey Webb to accept the treasurer's report as presented. Motion Passed.

20:05 – Agency Reports (Agency reports where not presented due to the presentation of the NC Cancer Program. Reports received will be mailed out with minutes)

NCSFA – Ed Brinson

➤ Roster and Relief Fund Board of Trustees Report (BTR)

- At the end of the January 15, 2022 reporting period for Certified Rosters and Board of Trustee Reports, 7 fire departments out of 1279 failed to report their rosters, and 14 fire departments failed to submit their Board of Trustee Reports.
- March 31st was the deadline for paying NCSFA membership dues. Currently, there are 7 departments that have not paid their dues.
- The Fire Chief of these departments was notified by Certified Mail on April 1st that their NCSFA benefits were suspended until their dues payments are received.

➤ Relief Fund Financial Requirements

- In 2015 the NC General Assembly established a minimum and maximum account balances for local Relief Funds. The maximum balance is \$2,500 per rostered member on January 1st of the relief fund reporting year.
- On June 30, 2021, 83 fire departments were over their maximum balance based on the January 1, 2021 roster count and they will not receive their annual DOI relief fund distribution after July 1, 2022.
- Please make sure your local relief fund Treasurer and Chairman are aware of the maximum balance and to monitor their relief fund projected balance for June 30, 2022 based on the January 1, 2022 membership roster count. Fluctuations in membership counts will greatly affect your minimum and maximum relief fund balance.
- Balances need to be below the maximum by June 30th unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement Amount approved by NCSFA. You're Treasurer and Fire Chief should have received a letter in February from the NCSFA on how to calculate the relief fund balance compared to the January 1 roster count.

➤ Scholarships and Grants

- The NCSFA Scholarship and Grant application period closed on March 15th. 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. There are also (8) \$500 training grants awarded to each region annually. This year we had 587 applicants submit scholarship applications. We will announce the scholarship recipients on May 1, 2022.

➤ **Legislation**

- The North Carolina Fire service had several wins during 2021 legislative session. This year is the short session, or a continuation of the long session, and our plans are to evaluate the fire service bills that did not pass in the long session. With the shifting dates of primaries and uncertainty regarding voting districts, our ability to have bills amended during this legislative session may be limited.
- **The priority focus of the joint legislative committee was the Firefighter Cancer Insurance Bill that was included and passed in the budget bill. This is a two-year Pilot Program.**
 - The legislation provided \$7.5 million for the years 2022 and 2023 to the Department of Insurance to create a Pilot Supplemental Firefighter Cancer Insurance policy for all rostered firefighters diagnosed with malignant cancers after January 1, 2022.
 - The legislation requires the firefighter be on a certified roster at the time of diagnosis, have a minimum of 5 continuous years of service prior to the diagnosis, and file a claim before June 30, 2023.
 - The legislation excludes benefits if the firefighter is receiving Workers Comp benefits for the same cancer. It provides reimbursement up to \$12,000 for out-of-pocket medical expenses per diagnosis, a lump sum benefit of \$25,000 for each diagnosis up to a \$50,000 maximum lifetime benefit, and disability benefit of 75% of monthly pay for career firefighter up to \$5,000 per month, and volunteers a monthly benefit of \$1,500.
 - Disability benefits are limited to 36 months and this is a coordinated benefit if the firefighter has another employer provided disability benefit policy.
 - VFIS of NC was chosen by NCDOT to administer the program, and each agency including the NCSFA has program information on our respective websites.
 - The NCSFA is assisting OSFM and VFIS of NC with confirming a member's eligibility for the cancer benefit.
 - We have received 15 inquiries of eligibility for the benefit from VFIS. One was declined because the member was not active on a roster at the time of diagnosis.

➤ **LODD Cancer Legislation**

- Oral Cavity and Pharynx cancers were added to the state LODD cancer benefit.

➤ **Legislative Day**

- Legislative Day is scheduled for May 25th. This date could change; however, we request that everyone to put May 25th as a place holder on your calendar.
- The purpose of legislative day this year is for attendees to thank their respective members of the General Assembly for the passage of the firefighter cancer legislation and to deliver a gift from the NCSFA to every Representative and Senator.
- We will meet at the DOI building across the Street from the Legislative Office Building at 8:00 AM for the briefing. We are asking those members that attend the briefing to pick up the NCSFA gift for their Representatives and Senator and deliver them to their respective offices and say thank you for supporting the cancer legislation.
- NCSFA Board members and staff will cover those General Assembly members that did not have a fire service representative member attend Legislative Day. Security is strict at the Legislative Building and Legislative Office Building, so leave your pocketknife at home.

➤ **BCBS Grant**

- In December, Blue Cross Blue Shield contributed \$250,000 in a grant to our nonprofit organization, the North Carolina Firefighters Fund, to use for fire service programs in conjunction with the NCSFA.
- We are pleased to announce that the grant will be used to financially aid firefighters seeking clinician level treatment for PTS and other mental health issues. A document explaining the benefit and the application process is available on the NCSFA website.
- The Fund is providing a reimbursement benefit to cover co-pays or a portion of the cost for clinician, psychologist or psychiatrist treatment. There is a maximum benefit of \$2,500 per firefighter.
- If the firefighter does not have insurance or access to an Employee Assistance Program, the funds can be provided for the treatment upfront based on need and the verification by the Chief or Chief Officer. We are hopeful this program will bridge the gap between our Provident Insurance FRAP program and Peer Support so that our members can receive the clinical assistance they need. It is our hope that BCBS will recognize the tremendous assistance this provides for our firefighters and they will be willing to fund this program in future years.

➤ **SAFRE Conference**

- We lost two friends of the conference earlier this year. Darrell Newton from Newton's Fire and Safety and Becky Rawls from Atlantic Emergency Solutions. These fire service equipment and apparatus providers were giants in the industry and they will be greatly missed.
- This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 10th-13th, 2022. On-line registration is available through our website at www.ncsfa.com or at www.safre.mobi.
- Course selections are complete and I can tell you this year we will have some great classes. We have 2 great keynote speakers this year. Rorke Denver, Commander of Seal Team 3, Bravo Company, is the keynote speaker on Thursday morning and Dr. Denis Onieal, former Deputy US Fire Administrator and former Superintendent at the National Fire Academy will deliver the keynote on Friday morning. Mark your calendar for this 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.
- Full Conference registration is only \$100 & includes:
 - All Educational Sessions are on Wednesday, Friday & Saturday.
 - SAFRE Expo on Aug. 12 & 13.
 - Opening Session & Business Session on Thursday with Keynote Speaker, Commander Rorke Denver.
 - The memorial service is on Thursday afternoon at 3:00 in Ballroom C.
 - Special Session on Friday with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Denis Onieal.
 - FREE 2022 Commemorative SAFRE T-Shirt, Sponsored by Rhinehart Fire Services.
 - NCSFA caps will be given away on Friday and Saturday along with the YETI cooler prizes
 - Expo passes are always free!

➤ **Summit**

- We plan on hosting the annual Summit on Tuesday, August 9th this year in conjunction with the SAFRE conference. We will start the Summit at 12:00 and provide lunch for the participants. The Summit participants will include the Board and Staff members from the NCSFA, NCAFC, 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.

➤ **Video Series**

- The Board and staff of the NCSFA have started producing and releasing a series of informational videos that covers topics of current events in the fire service and NCSFA benefits.
- Examples of the videos include Rosters, Legislation, the Relief Fund, Scholarships, and PTSD. As these are produced, they'll be placed on our website and social media outlets for public viewing. Held to 2 – 3 minutes each, they provide crucial information to chiefs and firefighters on a host of topics.
- Production began January 14th, and several videos are posted on our website. The posted videos include:
 1. Keeping Your Beneficiary Form Updated – How to do it and why it is so important.
 2. Post-Traumatic Stress Counseling Reimbursement Program Information – a new program offered by NCSFA and grant funded by BCBS of NC.
 3. Staying Fully Involved – How to remain informed on critical information & dates vital to you as an NCSFA member.

➤ **NCSFA Historian Work**

- Our Statistician, Dennis Presley, continues his work as Statistician and Historian. Dennis has been working with Mike Legeros, from Raleigh. Together they have been collecting and formatting historical information on the NCSFA and the North Carolina fire service. Some of this was displayed at the Annual Conference last year.
- The Board is reviewing the proof copy of the book and has a goal to have the history book ready for distribution at this year's conference.
- Each fire department and NCSFA Past President will receive a complimentary copy. We will have additional copies for sale at the conference.

NCAFC – Joey Webb

➤ **Mid-Winter Conference**

- Mid-winter conference wrapped up – thank you to all that attended. Congratulations to our award winners:
 - Career Chief - Eddie Bowling, Thomasville FD
 - Volunteer Chief – Charles Bryson, Bryson City FD
 - Career Officer – Jimmy Owen, Henderson FD
 - Volunteer Officer – Gary Brock, Beaver Dam FD
- We will be back in Concord for 2023 and 2024, stay tuned.

➤ **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**

- The NCAFC, NC Department of Insurance and Cape Fear Community College hosted the annual Fire Prevention School at Carolina Beach March 14 – 18, 2022. Over 150 students participated in the course, thanks to all departments who sent someone.

➤ **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.

➤ **Legislative**

- We continue to partner with the North Carolina State Firefighters Association on legislative issues that influence the North Carolina Fire Services and look forward to helping support the North Carolina legislative actions. Legislative day is scheduled for May 25, 2022.

➤ **HB 435**

- The NCAFC License Plate bill is still stalled in the Senate with no activity. 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.

NCFFF – Rick Wood

➤ **Annual Memorial Service**

- Saturday May 7, 2022
- Nash Square – Raleigh NC

➤ **Memorial Expansion**

- NCFFF is working on plans to expand the firefighter's memorial. More information will be coming out soon.
- The WNCAF donated \$1,500.00 dollars in memory of Becky Rawls to be used for the expansion project.

NCEM – Danny Gee

- Emergency Management Changes
 - Retired:
 - Director Mike Sprayberry retired in August.
 - Area 14 Coordinator Jimmie Ramsey retired in December.
 - Deputy Director Steve Powers Retired in June.
 - New Faces:
 - Will Ray – Director
 - Don Campbell – Chief of Staff
 - Larry Hembree – Area 14 Coordinator

- Upcoming Events
 - Catawba River Flood/Land SAR Exercise
 - April 27 – May 1
 - Location: Burke, Catawba and Caldwell Counties
 - Registration in TERMS
 - Merle Fest – Wilkes County May 6 - 8
 - RCC West Training Week
 - August 1-5
 - AB Tech Woodfin Campus Fire Training Grounds
 - Registration in TERMS

20:10 – VFIS: Best Practice Recommendations in Fight Against Cancer Presentation

Jeff Cash and Jackie Ireland presented on the NC Cancer Program that was adopted by the general assembly and will be administered by VFIS of NC. Every fire department will be receiving a thumb drive in the next few weeks about the Cancer Program. Information will include, but not limited to, eligibility, how to file a claim, cancer prevention suggestions and best practices. Contact information will be provided.

20:55 - Old Business

20:55 - New Business

1. WNCAF Mountain Region Director
 - Trevor Key - Collettsville Fire Department

2. NCAFC Western Region Director
 - Earl Withers, III – Dallas/Gastonia Fire Department

3. NCSFA Western Region Director
 - Todd McMurry – Polkville Fire Department

4. Educational Scholarship Recipients

- WNCAF Dependent Scholarship
 - Emma Deaver – Canton Fire Department
- WNCAF Member Scholarship
 - Mike Ostrander – Edneyville Fire Department
 - Jarrod Penland – Swannanoa Fire Department
 - John Pless – Center Pigeon Fire Department

- Gene Gladdin Scholarship
 - Landrie Wofford – Cherryville Fire Department
- Dean Coward Scholarship
 - Bryson Walker – Green Hill Fire Department

5. WNCAF Officer Positions

- Any Association member interested in serving in the role of 2nd Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer or Highlands Director needs to notify a representative of the nominating committee.
- Nominations are open until July 1, 2022.
- Due to bylaw change in January 2022, the Secretary and Treasurer Positions will be voted on in October to serve a three year term.
- Nominating Committee:
 - Todd McMurry – Pvfd1288@yahoo.com.
 - Brian Piercy - bpiercy1115@gmail.com.
 - Trevor Lance - tlance@skylandfire.com.
 - Andy Webster - awebster@coolspringsvfd.org.

6. Election Ballots

- Jeff Cash moved seconded by Rick Livingston to discard the election ballots.
Motion Passed.

7. Next Meeting

- July 20, 2022
 - Hosted by Gastonia Fire Department
 - Location:
 - Fuse Stadium
 - 800 West Franklin Blvd.
 - Gastonia, NC 28052

Meeting adjourned at 21:20

Submitted: Secretary Anthony Penland