

WNCAF Quarterly Meeting  
Caldwell County Chiefs' Council and Caldwell County Firefighters' Association  
(J.E. Broyhill Center)  
January 18, 2023

18:35 – President Griffin called the January quarterly meeting to order with 112 members, representing 17 counties, present.

President Griffin introduced Lenoir Assistant Chief Ken Nelson, who welcomed the association to the City of Lenoir. NC Representative Destin Hall addressed the association on the upcoming legislative session. Caldwell County Manager Donald Duncan also gave a welcome to the association.

Pledge of Allegiance: Caldwell County Emergency Services Chief Dino Dibernardi.

Invocation was given by: Caldwell County Board of Commissioner's Chairman Randy Church.

18:50 – Meeting recessed for the meal. Meal sponsor: Atlantic Emergency Solutions.

19:23 - Meeting Reconvened.

Chief/Firefighter of Year Awards:

Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year: Chief Jamie Howell, Bills Creek Fire Department.

Volunteer Firefighter of the Year: Ryan Franklin, Cool Springs Fire Department

19:25- **Incoming President Shane LaCount recognized the 2023 WNCAF Officers. The Oath of Office was administered by Past President Todd McMurry.**

- President Shane LaCount – Mooresville Fire Department
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Earl Withers III – Dallas Fire Department
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Bryan Buchanan – The Upper Hominy Fire Department
- Secretary Anthony Penland – Swannanoa Fire Department
- Treasurer Dean Coward – Saunook Fire Department
- Past President Robert Griffin – Edneyville Fire Department
- Mountain Region Director – Trevor Key – Colletsville Fire Department
- Foothills Region Director – Tim Tench – East Lincoln Fire Department
- Highlands Region Director – Zac Cicillian – Skyland Fire Department

19:27 - **Secretary's and Treasurer's Reports**

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

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

## 19:30 – Agency Reports

### NCSFA – Tim Bradley

#### ➤ **Roster Reporting Requirements**

- Rosters were due by January 15th. This includes the Board of Trustees Report, membership roster, as well as the certification of firefighters.

#### ➤ **Relief Fund Update**

- Last year continued to be an extremely active year for relief fund usage and approval. We handled 566 requests as opposed to 529 requests in 2021, for a total of \$2,591,051.19 not including the pre-approved SRP payments. That was an \$11,089.67 increase over 2021. The highest types of requests were supplemental insurance followed by 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 2023. 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.
- The electronic submission due date for the scholarship and grant applications is March 15, 2023.

#### ➤ **Legislation**

##### • Legislative Priorities

- The NCSFA and the NCAFC's held a joint Legislative Committee meeting in December to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming session. There will obviously be other bills that are introduced affecting the fire service, but the priorities established by the committee are:
  - Increase in Fire and Rescue Pension Benefits. This would include a \$10 increase in benefits with a \$5 increase in premiums.
  - Secure continuation funding for the Cancer Insurance Pilot Program going into the future.
  - Continue to pursue the use of blue lights on the rear of fire apparatus.
  - Amendment to the background check legislation passed in 2022 (HB 315). This would allow for a simple background check through the County Clerk of Court for any applicant who has lived in NC for more than 5 years.
  - Oppose any legislative increase in use or sell of fireworks.

##### • Federal Legislation

- We continue to Pursue Changes to IRS Regulations that could allow non-profit career firefighters in LGERS. The Retirement Act, Secure 2.0, passed Congress without our amendment due to opposition by the IAFF. As the new Congress gets underway, we'll try to find a means of getting it introduced again.

##### • Legislative Day

- Legislative Day has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 3, 2023. Please mark your calendars. More information will be coming out in the future as planning proceeds.

- **New Legislative Tracking Software**
  - We have changed legislative tracking software from Capital Impact, which is being phased out, to a program called Engagifi. This is an enhanced program that allows more options for use here, and well as you as users. If you have signed up previously in the past for Capital Impact, you will still receive emails regarding legislative items. You should, in the near future, receive an email to sign up for additional options on tracking legislation, such as bill review and comments.
  
- **Blue Cross Blue Shield Grant**
  - In 2021, 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 \$250,000 was to be used to provide assistance to firefighters seeking treatment and assistance with PTSD and mental health issues. An application is available that Chiefs can submit on behalf of their personnel.
  - We are also working with BCBS going into 2023 to acquire an additional amount to offer grants to volunteer departments to be used for Cancer Screening. If this becomes available, we hope to offer funding to be used to supplement efforts to provide screening for early detection of cancer.
  
- **SAFRE Conference**
  - This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 9th-13th, 2023. 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. Keynote speaker selection is underway for the Thursday morning opening ceremony. This year we are only doing a Thursday General session, and not an additional one on Friday as we did in 2022. This should allow for additional class and exhibit time. We've cut the number of class offerings to provide better classes and try to increase numbers in each of the classes. 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 again this year this year like we did last year. 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 continued production of an informal series of informational videos concerning topics of current events in the fire service. Examples include 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 of last year several of them are available on our website.
  
- **NCSFA Historian Work**
  - Last year we published a book history of the NCSFA and copies were provided to each fire department. We have a limited number of these books available for sell to individuals for cost and shipping. The NCSFA Board and staff plan to continue updates each year so when the history is reprinted in the future the updates will be available.

- **New NVFC Director**
  - Quentin Cash has been selected by the Board to replace Jeff Cash at the spring meeting of the NVFC as one of the two NC Directors. He will service along with Tim Bradley.
- **New Fire and Rescue Commission Director**
  - Steven Roberson was nominated by the NCSFA Board and selected by Commissioner Causey to serve on the Fire and Rescue Commission representing NCSFA. He will replace Phil Welch who has served several terms as one of two representatives on the Commission from NCSFA.

### **NCAFC – Joey Webb**

- **NCAFC Planning Retreat**
  - The NCAFC annual Planning retreat was held in early November in Hickory, NC. The NCAFC Board reviewed the annual work plan, adopted a few new initiatives, and completed more work on their policy manual.
- **Joint Meeting With NCSFA**
  - The NC Association of Fire Chiefs participated in a joint meeting with the North Carolina State Firefighters Association in early December to review the initiatives of each organization.
- **NCAFC Mid-Winter Conference**
  - The annual NCAFC mid-winter conference will be in Concord, NC January 30 – February 3, 2023. The trade/vendor exhibition is sold out and we look forward to a great educational program and our keynote speakers will be in our morning sessions on Wednesday and Thursday. The banquet on Friday evening will recognize the Fire Chiefs and Fire Officers of the Year.
- **Fire Prevention School**
  - NCAFC will co-host the annual Fire Prevention School. The school will be back in Carolina Beach March 20 – 24, 2023. School and hotel reservations are now open.
- **Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs' Conference**
  - The NCAFC along with New Hanover County Fire Rescue and Wilmington Fire Department will co-host the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs Conference in Wilmington, June of 2023. Registration for the event will be opening soon – for additional information contact Chief Donnie Hall at New Hanover County F/R.
- **Recruitment and Retention**
  - NCAFC has been awarded another Recruitment and Retention grant to assist North Carolina Volunteer Fire Departments with their initiatives on recruiting and retaining members.

## NVFC – Quentin Cash

### ➤ **First Responder Helpline**

- The NVFC launched the First Responder Helpline in October. Offered through Provident, the Helpline provides NVFC members and their household family members with assistance and resources relating to a variety of behavioral health issues and work-life stresses. Learn more about it at [www.nvfc.org/helpline](http://www.nvfc.org/helpline).

### ➤ **NVFC Annual Awards**

- The nomination period for the NVFC's annual awards is open until January 20. Submit your nominations now for the Lifetime Achievement Award, Chief James P. Seavey Sr. Health & Wellness Leadership Award, Junior Firefighter of the Year, and Junior Firefighter Program of the Year. Go to [www.nvfc.org/awards](http://www.nvfc.org/awards) to submit your nominations.

### ➤ **NVFC Regional Wildland Symposium**

- Registration is open for the NVFC's inaugural Regional Wildland Symposium, which will take place March 17-18 in Box Elder, SD. Classroom sessions and idea exchange will focus on wildfire response and mitigation in the Plains Region. Travel stipends are available, but the deadline to apply for a stipend is January 20. Learn more at [www.nvfc.org/symposium](http://www.nvfc.org/symposium).

### ➤ **NVFC Training Summit**

- The next Training Summit will take place June 23-24 in Oklahoma City, OK. This conference features classroom sessions, keynote speakers, and idea exchange regarding responder health and safety, leadership, and recruitment and retention. Registration will be opening later this month, but you can pre-register now to stay informed as updates are announced. Visit [www.nvfc.org/summit](http://www.nvfc.org/summit).

### ➤ **NVFC Virtual Classroom**

- New online courses are routinely added to the NVFC Virtual Classroom. In addition, the New Recruit Track was recently released, which features seven courses that cover introductory topics for new emergency responders. Departments can use this as part of their onboarding process to ensure these essential topics are covered early and consistently in the recruits' experience. As a reminder, all courses in the Virtual Classroom are free for NVFC members, and membership is just \$21 a year. Access the full catalog at [www.virtualclassroom.nvfc.org](http://www.virtualclassroom.nvfc.org).

### ➤ **Assistance To Firefighters Grant**

- The application is open for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant. If you need guidance on how to write a grant narrative, the NVFC offers a course in the Virtual Classroom on grant writing.

### ➤ **Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month**

- In honor of Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month in January, the NVFC is hosting a live panel discussion on Facebook and Zoom on January 25 at 2pm Eastern Time focusing on the exposure risks firefighters face and actions you can take to reduce those risks. Find the link to register for this and other upcoming live training opportunities at [www.nvfc.org/trainings](http://www.nvfc.org/trainings).

➤ **NVFC Giveaway Programs**

- The NVFC has several giveaway programs in 2023, including the MSA and DuPont Globe Gear Giveaway, which opens on February 15, and the Anheuser-Busch Emergency Drinking Water for Wildland Firefighters Program, which opens on March 15. You can go to the NVFC web site to learn more about these and other giveaway programs coming up.

➤ **NVFC North Carolina Membership**

- North Carolina continues to be the state most represented in the NVFC membership. The membership rate is just \$21 and comes with a variety of benefits, including access to the First Responder Helpline, 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](http://www.nvfc.org/join).

**OSFM Training – Bruce Hodges**

➤ **50/50 Grant**

- Now open. The application period will close on March 1.

➤ **Under 18 Firefighters**

- Junior Firefighters who have completed Fire Operations 1-8 and need Fire Operations 9 (Fire Control). OSFM is developing a path that would allow those junior firefighters to take Fire Operations 9. A form would have to be signed by the parents, the fire chief, the instructor and the delivering agency.

➤ **Moving Office**

- OSFM is moving out of the Albemarle Building in Raleigh to another location. Please be patient with them during this move.

➤ **580-G**

- OSFM is developing a path that would allow firefighters to take training at their departments to meet the 240 hour ISO requirements then are able to take a written test and practical evaluations to be certified in some classes. The written test and practical test would be administered by OSFM with places to be determined.
- This is in early stages of development and there will be more information to come.

**OSFM Community Risk Reduction – Norman Franklin**

➤ **NC Fire and Life Safety Conference**

- February 8-10, 2023
  - Great Wolfe Lodge, Concord N.C.

➤ **Smoke Alarms**

- Fire Departments are encouraged to participate in the Smoke Alarm Program with OSFM.
- We need to make sure that we get smoke alarms in the houses of our citizens.

## **North Carolina Fallen Firefighters' Association – Rick Wood**

### ➤ **North Carolina Fallen Firefighters' Memorial**

- The 2023 Annual North Carolina Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend will be held May 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the State Monument located in Nash Square in Raleigh, NC.
- Friday May 12<sup>th</sup> will be the Survivors Dinner for returning families and the families of the 22 inductees for 2023 beginning at 6:30 pm at Raleigh Station 1 located across the street from the monument. There will be a short candlelight service at 8pm following the dinner.
- Events on Saturday May 13<sup>th</sup> are still in the works. Awaiting approval from the City of Raleigh whether or not we will have a parade of LODD apparatus through downtown Raleigh ending at the memorial. An incident that occurred during the Raleigh Christmas Parade has placed stricter guidelines on parades and approval by City Council.
- This year we will be inducting 23 fallen firefighters. Nine (9) from previous years that includes six (6) from Asheville Fire.
- Three (3) inductees from the Western Region from 2021/2022:
  - James D. Hensley, Brendletown Fire Dept., Burke County
  - Keith Jones, SDO Fire Dept., Rutherford County
  - John Stroup, Salem Fire Dept., Burke County
- Six (6) inductees from Asheville Fire Department are:
  - Perry Barnett 8/27/1891
  - Samuel Gordon 8/27/1891
  - W.E. Winston 8/27/1891
  - Arthur Duckett 3/7/1966
  - Harry Williams 10/20/1944
  - Grady Wilson 6/28/1948

### ➤ **National Fallen Firefighters' Foundation**

- The NC Fallen Firefighters Memorial weekend was changed due to the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial changing their annual service from the first weekend in October to the first weekend in May. Many of our surviving families as well as personnel from NCFFF participate in the National Memorial Service in Emmitsburg.

### ➤ **Memorial Expansion**

- The increase in Line of Duty Deaths amongst firefighters in the State of North Carolina has caused the Foundation Board of Directors to begin the process of possibly having to expand the memorial site located in Nash Square. The Board has already begun communication with the City of Raleigh and the State Parks Service in looking into expansion possibilities.

### ➤ **Website/Social Media**

- Our website and Facebook page is being updated with changes and information regarding the annual memorial service and any other information pertaining to firefighter deaths across the state and the memorial site.

➤ **NCFFF Western Representatives**

- Rick Wood, 2nd Vice President 828-674-1899, [rwood@skylandfire.com](mailto:rwood@skylandfire.com)
- Dennis Mathney, Western Region Director, 828-287-6854, [dgmathney@bellsouth.net](mailto:dgmathney@bellsouth.net)
- Bob Benfield, Western Region Director 828-217-1416, [rben333@aol.com](mailto:rben333@aol.com)

**NC Emergency Management – Russell Greene**

➤ **EM Mid-Winter Forums**

- EM Director Ray is currently participating in a series of mid-winter forums with local Emergency Managers to:
  - To get ideas and feedback concerning the framework and distribution of Emergency Management Program Grant funds.
  - Feedback and local feelings concerning the under development All Hazards Statewide Sheltering Plan. Survey went to Local EMs on Friday.
  - Thus far the forums seem to be beneficial with a great exchange of thoughts and ideas.

➤ **Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement**

- The current Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement is undergoing a much-needed update.

➤ **Public Assistance Simplified Procedures Policy**

- On January 9th FEMA released Public Assistance Simplified Procedures Policy. If you did any documentation for reimbursement during COVID you understand the need.

➤ **Public Health Emergency For Covid**

- The Biden Administration renewed the Public Health Emergency for COVID on 11 January 2023, recognizing that a public health emergency still exists. This has been renewed multiple times since its original inception on 31 January 2020.

➤ **Disaster Assistance Program**

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently announced two changes to their disaster assistance programs.
  - Phase 2 of the Emergency Relief Program (ERP) provides assistance to producers who suffered crop losses due to wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, and qualifying droughts occurring in calendar years 2020 and 2021.
  - The Pandemic Assistance Revenue Program (PARP), a new program that provides support for agricultural producers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

➤ **Training**

- Virtual Public Information basics course February 6-10, with an advanced course in March.
- Western Branch Training week will be held July 31 – August 4 in Iredell County at Mitchell Community College. All classes should be listed in TERMS (Training Exercise Records Management System) by mid-February.
- If you have not used it take time to search classes in TERMS. Simply set up your profile and look at all the offerings across the state.



## *North Carolina Fire Marshal's Association – Amy Fileg*

### ➤ **Farm Bill**

- Any farm building located on a bona fide farm or any building rented by or purchased by a farm that is not actually on the farm, those buildings do not have to meet the NC Fire Code and/or Building Code. They have to meet the electrical code.
- The farm does have to place a sign on the building showing the building is Ag exempt.

### ➤ **Valet Trash**

- It is now permissible for residents of apartment buildings to set their trash outside in the hallway for someone to come and pick up.
- The trash has to be in a certain type of can and is not permitted to be out in the hallway for more than five (5) hours.

## *20:11 - Old Business*

### 1. Proposed Bylaws Change

- Secretary Penland presented the proposed bylaw amendments from July of 2022 and the amendments needed due to the amendments in the NCAFC bylaws as it pertains to the election of a NCAFC Western Director. In accordance with association bylaws all of the amendments were presented at the October 2022 meeting and were posted to the website in October 2022 in preparation for a vote in January 2023. Motion moved by Tom Kelly seconded by Brian Piercy to accept the amendments as presented. Motion Passed.

## *20:11 - New Business*

### 1. WNCAF Scholarships

- The application period is now open for the WNCAF Scholarships. The application needs to be filled out online at [www.wncaff.com](http://www.wncaff.com). The application period will close on March 31, 2023 at midnight.

### 2. Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs Conference

- June 13-15, 2023
- Wilmington Convention Center  
10 Convention Center Drive  
Wilmington, NC 28401
- Hosted by: Wilmington Fire Department and New Hanover County Fire.

### 3. Next Meeting

- April 19, 2023
- Advance Fire Department  
169 Fire Station Road  
Advance, NC 27006

Meeting adjourned at 20:18      Submitted: Secretary Anthony Penland