

WNCAF Quarterly Meeting
Advance Fire Department (Davie County)
April 19, 2023

18:37 – President LaCount called the April quarterly meeting to order with 92 members, representing 16 counties, present.

President LaCount introduced Advance Fire Department Chief Rodney Miller, who welcomed the association to the Advance. Davie County Manager Brain Barnett also gave a welcome to the association.

Invocation was given by: Advance Fire Department Chaplain Will Pryor.

Pledge of Allegiance: Advance Fire Department Junior Firefighters Eloney Medrano & CJ Smith.

18:45 – Meeting recessed for the meal. Meal sponsor: Atlantic Emergency Solutions. The meal was catered by A Full Measure 1995 Hwy 801 South, Advance, NC 27006

19:20 - Meeting Reconvened.

19:20- President LaCount recognized the 2023 WNCAF Officers

- President Shane LaCount – Mooresville Fire Department
- 1st Vice President Earl Withers III – Dallas Fire Department
- 2nd 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

Past President Recognition

President LaCount presented Past President Robert Griffin with an axe on behalf of the association for his dedicated service to the association as the 2022 president.

19:25 - Scholarship Presentation

Gene Gladdin Scholarship: Lindy Cockrell
Dean Coward Emergency Services Scholarship: Ronald Miller
WNCAF Member Scholarship: Elias Phipps
WNCAF Dependent Scholarship: Emma Ellingson

19:30 – North Carolina Sheriffs’ Association

Anna Martin from the NC Sheriffs’ Association addressed the WNCAF about the programs that are offered through the sheriffs’ association. Local government units and fire departments are able to purchase vehicles through the sheriffs’ association procurement program. Coming in June 2023 there is a First Responder Supplies and Equipment Contract where first responders will be able to purchase equipment through nationwide vendors. The sheriffs’ association also has a program for any technology equipment needing to be purchased. WNCAF members are encouraged to reach out to Anna for more information at procurement@ncsheriffs.net.

19:35 – Treasurer’s/Secretary’s Reports

Treasurer Dean Coward presented the treasurer’s report. Joey Webb moved seconded by Brian Piercy to accept the treasurer’s report as presented. Motion Passed.

The January meeting minutes were emailed out to the association and posted to the website. Todd McMurry moved seconded by Trevor Lance to accept the secretary’s report as emailed and posted to the website. Motion Passed.

19:36 – Agency Reports

NCSFA – Tim Bradley

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

- At the end of the reporting cycle for Certified Rosters and BTR’s, January 15th 2023, only 7 fire departments out of 1279 failed to report their rosters, but we had over 30 fire departments fail to get their BTR’s reported. This was after a huge effort by NCSFA staff to email and call Chief’s. Normally by the last day we have to have a major push to find the last 150 or so Chiefs.

➤ Relief Fund Financial Requirements

- In 2014 the NC General Assembly established a minimum and maximum account balances for local Relief Funds. We have had several fire departments miss out on their annual distribution because they went over the maximum, which is \$2,500 per rostered member. Unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement Program and Account, that \$2,500 per rostered member is a fixed number, and if you’re over it by \$1 you will not get a check. Please make sure your local relief fund treasurer and Chairman are aware of this and keep an eye on the balance. Balances need to be below the maximum by June 30th unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement Amount approved by NCSFA. Your Treasurer should have received a letter if you are over but it’s a good idea to check anyway.

➤ Scholarships and Grants

- NCSFA Scholarships and grants are now closed 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. There are also training grants available. These will be announced soon

➤ Legislation

- This year is the session, or the start of the two-year 2023/2024 session. We are tracking over 60 bills that have been introduced, but the joint legislative committee of the NCSFA and NCAFC established priorities for the 2023 session.

- Legislative Priorities

- The NCSFA and the NCAFC’s held a joint Legislative Committee meeting in December to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming session. 1st Vice President Richard Pulley from the NCSFA chaired the meeting. Several Legislative Priorities were discussed and decide upon. 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 \$5 increase in benefits with a \$5 increase in premiums. We are pursuing sponsors to get this added. SB 728 was introduced raising the premiums \$10 dollars to \$20 Dollars, and raising the benefit from \$170 to \$200. Also establishes an annual inflationary factor for future years.

- Secure continuation funding for the Cancer Insurance Pilot Program going into the future. We have met with legislators and have identified a funding source. Introduced as (SB 326). SB 326 has passed Senate Finance and is moving through the Senate. It established the Cancer Insurance as a permanent, statutorily defined program in GS 58-86A, and funds it permanently with funds from the Gross Premium Assessment.
 - Revise the Background Check Law for the fire service allowing alternatives for applicants who have lived in NC for five years and exempting junior members. (HB 378) (Also included in the text of SB 381)
 - Continue to pursue the use of blue lights on the rear of fire apparatus. This is being met with continued resistance from law enforcement groups.
 - Oppose any legislative increase in use or sell of fireworks such as SB 470.
 - Monitor and discuss any additional legislation introduced. See additional bills below we are tracking that were not on our priority list.
- We are monitoring over 65 bills, but here are a few key ones. Several of these have been introduced in both chambers:
 - [H 0025](#) | Volunteer Rescue Worker Tax Credit
 - This bill allows an income tax credit to volunteer fire and rescue personnel for expenses incurred while volunteering based upon expenses paid.
 - [H 0046](#) | Eliminate Tax on Gov't Retirees
 - Makes income received from a NC State or Local Government Retirement Plan or Federal Retirement plan exempt from State Income Tax. (Similar to previous us bills aligning with the Bailey Act).
 - [H 0055](#) | Fire Investigation Law Revisions
 - Expands the investigative powers of the State Fire Marshal related to Arson.
 - [H 0349](#) | Firefighter PFAS Management
 - Appropriates funds to address and minimize exposure of firefighters to PFAS in firefighting foam.
 - [H 0363](#) | The Gabe Torres Act
 - The Gabe Torres act, to expand those eligible under the public safety employees' death benefits act. This would allow travel to and from duty as well as to and from training to be considered covered under the LODD act.
 - [H 0370](#) | Responsible Firefighting Foam Management Act
 - Forbids use of firefighting foams containing PFAS chemicals for firefighting training or testing purposes. This only covers training and testing of class b foam, not its use in actual emergencies.

- [H 0387](#) | Medal of Valor Award for Emer. Responders
 To award the "Medal of Valor Award" to a first responder upon recommendation from the highest-ranking official within a department or agency employing first responders. The Governor may award up to two medals of valor to first responders each calendar year. The Governor may also award one Medal of Valor to an entire unit once each calendar year. If two recipients have already been awarded for the calendar year, the Governor may award a third recipient under special circumstances. The Medal of Valor 16 Award shall be for first responders that have performed great acts of heroism, while under threat of personal risk to their safety, beyond the call of duty in the field. For the purposes of this subdivision, a "first responder" includes any firefighter, paramedic, law enforcement officer, emergency medical services personnel, or rescue squad member."
- [H 0428](#) | Volunteer Firefighters Property Tax Exclusion
- Expands property tax homestead exclusion relief to volunteer firefighters, which exempts the first \$45,000 of tax evaluation on the property.

- [H 0523](#) | First Responders Mental Health
- Establishes a supplemental insurance policy for first responders diagnosed with mental health conditions to be housed within the department of insurance.
- [H 0565](#) | Study Volunteer Firefighter Incentives
- Directs the department of insurance and the labor and economic analysis division of the department of commerce to study ways to incentivize the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.
- [S 0004](#) | Eliminate Tax on Gov't Retirees
- Makes income received from a NC State or Local Government Retirement Plan or Federal Retirement plan exempt from State Income Tax. (Similar to previous us bills aligning with the Bailey Act).
- [S 0247](#) | Amend Use of Defensive Force
 Provides that the presumption of a person having a reasonable fear of imminent death or serious bodily harm to himself or herself or another when using defensive force of home, motor vehicle, or workplace does not apply if the person entering or attempting to enter the property is an emergency medical services personnel or firefighter.
- [S 0470](#) | NC Consumer Fireworks Safety Act
 Permits the sale, possession, and use of certain consumer fireworks and to levy an excise tax on the sales of consumer fireworks
- [H 0597](#) | 25-Year Retirement for First Responders | 04/13/2023 | 04/17/2023 - Ref to the Com on Pensions and Retirement, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House | Mike Clampitt |
 Allows first responders (law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel) who are members of the teachers' and state employees' retirement system or the local governmental employees' retirement system to retire with unreduced benefits after achieving twenty-five years of creditable service and making conforming changes.
- [H 0661](#) | Emergency Services Peer Counseling Privilege | 04/17/2023 | 04/18/2023 - Ref to the Com on Judiciary 1, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House | Matthew Winslow |
 Expands the scope of various peer support group counselor provisions

➤ **SAFRE Conference**

- This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 9-12, 2023 and we will be back at the Raleigh Convention Center. On-line registration is up and we have a great lineup of classes and hands on trainings for you this year. Our keynote speaker is baseball legend, Ned Yost, World Series winning manager AND member of Dale Earnhardt Sr.'s 7th championship pit crew. The SAFRE expo floor is very nearly sold out and will feature some new exhibitors. As always it will feature the latest in apparatus, gear, fire service technology and so much more. Whether you come every year or this will be your first time, we encourage and challenge you to bring a friend with you to SAFRE this year. The SAFRE week is a great opportunity for fellowship, mentorship and leadership from/with your peers in the fire service. What can you learn, what can you teach and who can you meet? Join us Aug. 9-12 at SAFRE 2023!

➤ **Summit**

- We plan on hosting a Summit Tuesday this year this year at SAFRE conference like we did in 2022. 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 NC Fire Marshal's Association and OSFM.

➤ **NCSFA Historian Work**

- Our Statistician, Dennis Pressley, has continued work under the new responsibility of Historian, as predicated by the bylaw change in 2018. This will be an annual update so we don't have to catch up in the future if we produce another history. There may also be some special historical articles related to the history of the NCSFA.

NCAFC – Wesley Hutchins

➤ **NCAFC Mid-Winter Conference**

- The North Carolina Association of Fire Chiefs annual Mid-winter conference was held in Concord on the first of February 1 – 3, 2023 with great success. Over 450 attendees and more than 100 vendors participated in the conference. We would like to congratulate our annual award winners – **Career Chief**, Jerry Brooks from The Clemmons Fire Department, **Volunteer Chief**, Kenneth Jackson, Jr. from Plain View Fire Department, **Career Officer**, Don Crafford from Thomasville Fire and Rescue and **Volunteer Officer**, Robert Shuford, from Polkville Fire Department.

➤ **Fire Prevention School**

- The NCAFC, NC Department of Insurance and Cape Fear Community College hosted the annual Fire Prevention School at Carolina Beach March 20 – 24, 2023. Over 160 students participated in 4 fire prevention sections, thanks to all departments who sent someone to the school. Thanks as well to Charlie Johnson and the planning committee as well as Chief Alan Griffin and Carolina Beach FD for the planning and support.

➤ **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 is open and hotel venues are listed on the Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs web site – 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. Once again Chief Tracy Mosley is heading up the grant and information and the application is on the NCAFC web site.

➤ **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 3, 2023.

➤ **NCAFC License Plate**

- The original NCAFC License plates have been issued. We are working on the final application and link on the NC DMV web site for new orders. We will get the notice out when the process is completed. Thank you to everyone who helped support HB435 and push this through.

OSFM Davie Summey

➤ **GIS**

- Developed new interactive Fire Fatality map viewer for OSFM website.
- Presented at the NC GIS conference on how GIS has helped certain OSFM projects increase productivity and efficiency.
- Worked with multiple fire departments to help analyze the impacts of adding or moving a station.
- Completed Dashboard to track AFFF foam inventory and usage.

➤ **AFFF**

- Inventory is 99% Complete with 120,246 gallons identified to date with 1152 sites inventoried to date.
- 2 site visits for usage where conducted in which one was a major incident that used 535 gallons of AFFF foam for a fuel tanker incident.

➤ **Grants**

- Closing out 2022 Rescue Grants due April 15th
- Working on finalizing the 2023 Fire Grant Applications
- Finalized a State Audit of the Fire Grants for 2021 and 2022
- 7 Direct Grants continue to be worked on

➤ **Ratings and Inspections**

- Inspections staff has incorporated an updated ISO Water Haul program into our inspection process which now allows us to assess tanker nurse operations.
- Inspections staff has reached a five-year cycle on fire department inspections across the state.
- Inspections staff has built the Everyone Goes Home Advocate Team for NC and now has 11 members across the state. There have been 23 class offerings across the state with 247 attendees.

- **Training**
 - New trainer retired captain from Concord Rick Gilleland
 - Technical rescue school at Buncombe County training center May 5th- 7th. Details can be found on the training webpage or our Facebook page.
 - Opening in training field staff closes April 28th.
- **Commission**
 - Western Position opened until April 28th.
 - Eastern Position opened until April 28th.
 - TR Committee for rewrite has been made and no other information at this time is available.
 - High School Challenge applications have been sent out for June 19th -23rd.
- **Fire Investigations**
 - New Fire investigator has been hired from Catawba County starts May 8th.
 - 33 Fire fatalities to date across the state
- **Community Risk Reduction**
 - Smoke alarms Saturday is on June3rd. smoke alarms grant will close April 30th, For information contact Jason Nesbit 919-892-5006
 - Safe Kids Conference is May 23 at the Great wolf in Concord NC
 - New Supervisor – Troy Davidson

North Carolina Fallen Firefighters' Association – Rick Wood

- **North Carolina Fallen Firefighters' Memorial**
 - NC Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service to be held on Saturday May 13, 2023 at the Fallen Firefighters Memorial located in Nash Square in Downtown Raleigh.
 - Parade will start at 10am and proceed down Salisbury Street to Hargett to Nash Square.
 - Departments that have experienced a Line of Duty Death that wish to have an apparatus or department vehicle in the parade on Saturday morning is asked to contact Jeffrey Shaw. His contact is jtshaw81@yahoo.com or contact via cell at (252)532-2648
 - Honor Guard personnel are asked to participate as a Color Guard and escorts for the apparatus
 - Memorial Service will begin at 1pm in Nash Square.
 - Families of those honored this year will be brought in beginning around 12:45 through a Sea of Blue.
 - This year we will be inducting 22 honorees. Names will be at the end of the report.
 - Honor Guard personnel are asked to attend and participate in the memorial service as well as the Candlelight Service on Friday. Numerous assignments to be filled. Sea of Blue, a Color Guard, Flag and Rose Bearers and participation in the Processional in and Recessional out. Honor Guard Commanders can contact 2nd VP Rick Wood, Honor Guard Commander via email at richmondwood1966@gmail.com or by cell (828)674-1899.
 - Pipers, Drummers, Pipe Bands are requested to be a part of the parade on Saturday

- A Survivor's Dinner for our fallen firefighter's families will be held on Friday evening starting at 6:30 at Raleigh Station 1, directly across the street from Nash Square. Just before 8pm, the families will move over to the Memorial for a candlelight service.
- **Line of Duty Death**
 - Departments that experience a potential Line of Duty Death should contact NC Office of State Fire Marshal; we also asked that they contact their NCFFF Regional Director or an NCFFF Board Member. The correct FULL NAME of the member, Department associated with and name and Contact for the Chief of the Department, the date of death and family contact information is needed.
- **NCFFF Support**
 - Please support the NC Fallen Firefighters Foundation at numerous fire schools located across the State. Visit our website at www.ncfff.org, Facebook page or Twitter. New merchandise will be coming out during the May Memorial.
- **NCFFF Western Representatives**
 - Rick Wood, 2nd Vice President 828-674-1899, rwood@skylandfire.com
 - Dennis Mathney, Western Region Director, 828-287-6854, dgmthney@bellsouth.net
 - Bob Benfield, Western Region Director 828-217-1416, rben333@aol.com
- **NCFFF Board Meetings**
 - NCFFF holds monthly board meetings all across the state.
 - April Mills River FD, Henderson County.
 - May, Annual Memorial Service, Raleigh.
 - June, Waynesville FD, Haywood County.
 - July, Bethlehem FD, Alexander County.
 - August, SAFRE Conference, Raleigh.
 - September, Verona FD, Onslow County.
 - October, NC State Fair Booth, Raleigh.
 - November, Annual Meeting Cleveland FD, Cleveland NC.
- **Local Assistance State Team (LAST)**
 - The NCFFF participates as members of the State LAST Team alongside NCOSFM staff. We provide support to local fire departments in the event of a firefighter death.
- **2023 Memorial Inductees**
 - Richard S. Aman. Piney Grove Fire Department (Sampson County).
 - Charles Barnett. Asheville Fire Department (Buncombe County).
 - Perry Barnett. Asheville Fire Department (Buncombe County).
 - Thurman C. Bishop. Fayetteville Fire Department (Cumberland County).
 - Willie L. Bunch. Oak City Fire Department (Martin County)
 - Gary G. Butner. Gumtree Fire Department (Davidson County)
 - Kenneth K. Cameron. Pocket Fire Department (Lee County)
 - Michael D. Canada. Bear Grass Fire Department (Martin County).
 - Arthur Duckett. Asheville Fire Department (Buncombe County).
 - Gregory K Faulk. Ocean Isle Beach Fire Department (Brunswick County).

- Samuel Gorman. Asheville Fire Department (Buncombe County).
- James D. Hensley. Brendletown Fire Department (Burke County).
- Keith Jones. Shiloh-Daniel-town Oakland Fire Department (Rutherford County).
- June McNeil, Jr. Pine Terrace Fire Department (Robeson County).
- James Radford. Polly Watson Fire Department (Wayne County).
- Benjamin H. Smith. Edenton Fire Department (Chowan County).
- Charles W. Spry. La Grange Fire Department (Lenoir County).
- William D. Stalls. Oak City Fire Department (Martin County).
- John R. Stroup. Salem Fire Department (Burke County).
- Clinton L. Whitley. Ferrells Fire Department (Nash County).
- Harry Williams. Asheville Fire Department (Buncombe County).
- Grady D. Wilson. Asheville Fire Department (Buncombe County).

North Carolina Fire Marshal's Association – Amy Fileg

➤ **Legislative**

- Legislative Bills we are watching:
- -S378 - to amend Building Code Council and change residential code from 2 dwelling to 4
- -S463 - allows code qualification board to charge fees for review of and offering continuing education classes

➤ **Training**

- NCFMA is offering classes this spring on Emergency Responder Communications Systems
- Also partnering with the NC Home Sprinkler Coalition - first initiative will be education for firefighters about Home Sprinklers

North Carolina Forest Service – Alan Huskins

➤ **Spring Fire Season**

- Thanks to all the departments who have helped out during the spring fire season. In the western 23 counties there were 90 reported fires in one day.

➤ **Aircraft**

- The NCFS is taking delivery soon of a new airplane.
- The NCFS will have another helicopter stationed at Hickory.

➤ **Bridge Crews**

- The bridge program is back up and running with about 35-40 personnel. Any departments that need assistance around the stations with some work. Please reach out and request assistance from the bridge crews.

NCIAAI – Wayne Delancey

- **2023 Spring Conference**
 - May 15-19, 2023
 - Dennis A Wicker Civic Center
1801 Nash Street
Sanford, NC 27330

- Expert Witness Courtroom Testimony Course
 - November 1-3, 2023
 - Graham, NC

20:13- Old Business

1. 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.

20:13 - New Business

1. Meeting Dates For 2024
 - The January 2024 meeting of the WNCFAF will be hosted by the Mooresville Fire-Rescue Department.
 - The April 2024 meeting of the WNCFAF will be hosted by the Miller's Creek Fire Department.
 - The July 2024 meeting of the WNCFAF will be hosted by the Waynesville Fire Department.
 - If any department is interested in hosting the October 2024 meeting or any meeting in 2025, please reach out to 2nd VP Brian Buchanan at firemedic1138@aol.com.

2. Nominating Committee for 2024 WNCFAF Officers
 - President LaCount appointed the following past-presidents to the nominating committee; Robert Griffin, r.griffin@edneyvillefire.com. Todd McMurry, pvfd1288@yahoo.com. and Brian Piercy, bpiercy1115@gmail.com. Any member of the WNCFAF wishing to serve on the board as 2nd Vice President or any member who is from the Mountain Region who wishes to serve the board as the Mountain Regional Director should get in contact with one of the three past-presidents listed above. The 2nd Vice President position is filled by election and can be any member of the WNCFAF. The Mountain Region Director is filled by election and can be any member from the following counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Burke, Caldwell, McDowell, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey.

3. Next Meeting
 - July 19, 2023
 - Ranger Fire Department (Cherokee County)
155 Little Ranger Road
Murphy, NC 28906

Meeting adjourned at 20:30

Submitted: Secretary Anthony Penland