

**Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
U.S. Fire Administration  
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy  
August 7, 2023  
J-130**

**Attendees:**

The following members of the Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy were in attendance for the Meeting.

John S. Butler (Chairperson)  
Fire Chief  
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department  
12099 Government Center Parkway  
Fairfax, VA 22033

Dr. Michael Macey  
Director of Public Safety  
St. John's College  
1160 Camino Cruz Blanca  
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Dr. Patricia McIntosh (Vice Chair)  
Lifetime Member (Inactive)  
League City Fire Department  
555 West Walker Street  
League City, TX 77573

Steven Dubay  
Deputy Chief  
Colorado Springs Fire Department  
375 Printers Parkway  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Chief Kevin D. Quinn  
Past Chair  
National Volunteer Fire Council  
7852 Walker Drive, Suite 375  
Greenbelt, MD 20770

Kristin Crowley  
Fire Chief  
Los Angeles Fire Department  
200 N. Main Street, Suite 1770  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Thomas E. Romaine, Jr.  
Smokechaser  
Minnesota Department of Natural  
Resources - Forestry  
644 Pfaender Drive  
New Ulm, MN 56073

Dr. Mark A. Rivero  
Site Coordinator  
Southern Illinois University  
1044 Beaver Crest Court  
Henderson, NV 89015

Federal Emergency Management Agency/U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy (FEMA/USFA/NFA) staff in attendance:

Mr. Eriks Gabliks, Superintendent, NFA  
Ms. Deb Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist  
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA  
Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, U.S. Fire Administrator, USFA  
Mr. Lester Rich, Deputy Superintendent, NFA  
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire and Emergency Medical Services Division, USFA  
Ms. Michelle Spielman, Secretary  
Mr. James (Vince) Hodge, Director, Management, Operations, and Support Services  
Ms. Laurie Wivell, Program Analyst, Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch, NFA  
Mr. Richard Sexton, Branch Chief, Prevention Branch, NFA  
Mr. David Brummett, FEMA Office of Chief Counsel

Others in attendance/public attendees:

None

### **Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome**

**Chief John S. Butler, Chairperson, Board of Visitors**

**Mr. Eriks Gabliks, Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

**Chief Tonya Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration**

**Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell, U.S. Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration**

Mr. Eriks Gabliks welcomed everyone to this meeting of the USFA/NFA Board of Visitors. The meeting was being conducted under regulations outlined in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Everyone is a Special Government Employee (SGE). Mr. Gabliks served as the Designated Federal Officer for the meeting to make sure everyone followed the federal requirements.

Mr. Gabliks stated that Ms. Deb Gartrell-Kemp, who did a great job coordinating this group and making this meeting possible, was in the back of the room. She would make sure the meeting stayed on schedule. She also made sure everyone was able to get to the campus for the meeting. Ms. Michelle Spielman is Ms. Gartrell-Kemp's backup in case anyone needed additional help with administrative functions and assisted with travel.

Mr. Gabliks stated that the Board of Visitors agenda is published in the Federal Register. The times listed are approximate, and they might need to adjust the schedule as needed. There should be enough time scheduled for all speakers, comments and questions, as well as for interaction. Mr. Gabliks stated that under the FACA requirements, anyone wanting to send something in to be reviewed had the ability to do so. There were no comments sent in from the public.

Dextera/Leading Solutions support staff, Ms. Jennifer Vanover, would be taking notes and would compile minutes. The minutes would be prepared and sent to the meeting chair within 90 calendar days. All comments and notes would be available for public review forever; they would be archived. Mr. Gabliks advised everyone to be sure to state their name before speaking so the minutes could be recorded accurately. If anyone has notes, they should email them to Ms. Gartrell-Kemp so she can forward them to Ms. Vanover. Mr. Gabliks stated that for the meeting order they would follow Robert's Rules for motions.

Mr. Gabliks convened this meeting of the USFA/NFA Board of Visitors.

Mr. Gabliks introduced himself and everyone in the room introduced themselves. Once everyone had the chance to introduce themselves, Mr. Gabliks stated that the Board of Visitors would be getting updates on all the USFA programs that are on campus, and Mr. David Brummett would give the annual ethics briefing. Mr. Gabliks also went over some of the agenda items and then turned the meeting over to Chief John Butler to start the meeting off.

Chief Butler welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the meeting to order. Chief Butler turned the meeting back over to Mr. Gabliks, who then turned the meeting over to Chief Tonya Hoover.

Chief Hoover welcomed everyone back to the National Emergency Training Center and the USFA and thanked the Board of Visitors for everything they do to help with moving forward. She stated that Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell would be in attendance a little later to speak about all the work going on at USFA. Mr. Gabliks asked if there were any questions, and there were none.

Mr. Gabliks stated that the USFA is working on an updated strategic plan that has not been released yet and that Dr. Moore-Merrell would talk more about it. The Board of Visitors needs to select board officers for fiscal year (FY) 24. Chief Butler will be staying as a Board of Visitors member, but Dr. Patricia McIntosh will be leaving because her term is up. Mr. Thomas Romaine and Chief Kevin Quinn are done with their time on the Board of Visitors. Chief Kristin Crowley is joining the Homeland Security Advisory Committee and cannot stay on the Board of Visitors. Dr. Michael Macey and Mr. Steven Dubay will remain on the Board of Visitors. The terms are staggered with the new members coming on board so they will always have enough members.

Mr. Gabliks stated that the new members will be Mr. William (Nelson) Bauer, Ms. Megan Schuth, Mr. Scott Somers, Ms. Tiffanye Wesley and Mr. Edward Davis. Those members will join once the other members' terms are up. Mr. Gabliks turned the meeting back over to Chief Butler to select a chairperson and vice chair.

Chief Butler opened the floor up for nominations for chairperson and vice chair. Mr. Dubay motioned for Chief Butler to stay on as the chairperson. Mr. Romaine made the second motion. Chief Butler was asked if he wanted to stay as the chairperson; he replied that he would be honored. All were in favor, and no one opposed.

Chief Crowley asked the remaining members if anyone was interested in being vice chair. Mr. Dubay replied that he would be interested. Chief Crowley motioned for Mr. Dubay to be vice chair. Chief Quinn made the second motion. All were in favor, and no one opposed.

Mr. Gabliks turned the meeting over to Dr. Moore-Merrell.

Dr. Moore-Merrell welcomed everyone to the meeting. She apologized for not being able to be at the meeting in person. The next summit will be on campus on Oct. 10. It will be opened to the public this year, and there will be a limited number of people. There are a lot of high-ranking officials who have begun to take interest in the issues. The roundtable will be in the morning, and it will be an update of the 6 issues. They will be adding Underwriters Laboratories (UL) to the table this year to bring forward emerging technology and energy transition. The groups will deliver a 3-minute testimony to the federal leaders at the table. Then there will be a question-and-answer session on the subjects. There will be a factsheet on each strategy along with the testimony for each leader at the table. The strategies are:

- Wildland urban interface (WUI) fire: looking at personal protective equipment and training for the firefighters.
- Recruitment and retention.
- Firefighter cancer: looking at screening for firefighters along with the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances issue.
- Behavioral health: looking at suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder and mental resilience.
- Elevation of the fire service within the federal government.
- Building codes and standards: looking to keep the codes from being watered down.

Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that once the roundtable is done, there will be a discussion and notes taken on what the audience reactions were to what they heard in the roundtable discussion. They will then do the State of Science in the afternoon. They have top experts from each of the subjects that will present for 5 minutes. These will include:

- Fire and emerging technology panel.
- Fire and health safety panel.
- Emergency medical services (EMS) panel.
- Climate change and wildfire panel.
- Community engagement panel.

Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that there needs to be community engagement to get the messages out. FEMA External Affairs will lead the community engagement panel. There will be a half a day afterwards to have a discussion of what happened at the summit and discuss what needs to be done to go forward. They can only register about 400 people. There will be a virtual broadcast of the entire day.

Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that she would talk a little bit about the new data system, National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS). The contract has been awarded from Science and Technology at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to UL's Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI). UL will build the new system; it will be a cloud-based system. Developers are in

place, and the first of the new data standards are being launched; that will be the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) standard. They are working to get CAD vendors to standardize themselves. The NERIS is in the research and development process right now. They are trying to capitalize what is being done by other groups and bring those pieces together so they do not have to reinvent anything that is already being done. They hope to have an operating component before year-end and start testing a few departments on that. They are hoping to be fully transitioned by next year. Departments should be transitioned over based on which CAD system they are on. Once the departments get on the new system, they will come off the old system. By January 2025, they plan to start decommissioning the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). Everything will be archived. The NERIS system will be external, and it will continue to be operated by FSRI.

Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that as the data gets pushed from local fire departments through the state to the national level, a lot of data gets dropped from the state to the national level. Depending on the systems being used for the data, a lot of the systems have different codes for different things. The local departments will now go straight through the system. The data that will come from the new system will be real-time data. Dr. Moore-Merrell asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Dubay asked how much EMS data NERIS will collect or whether EMS will be through a different system. Dr. Moore-Merrell replied that they will know if the call was an EMS call. They are working on capturing the type of call. They may be able to track the high-level medical calls. They will get data from the National Emergency Medical Services Information System (NEMSIS) also. The codes will get changed when they go into the NEMSIS system. The challenge is going to be matching the codes. They need to know how the departments are putting information into the systems.

Mr. Dubay asked how Dr. Moore-Merrell liked the tours she had done. Dr. Moore-Merrell replied that they were fantastic. They had a lot of time to bond and build relationships and that was an added bonus to what they were doing. There is a lot of excitement in the fire service going forward. She said she is open to ideas about what will be next.

Chief Butler asked if the system could distinguish advanced life support from basic life support. Dr. Moore-Merrell replied that that might be an option. They will have that conversation with the panels. Invitations are going out for panels. There will be a senior leader panel which will be Dr. Moore-Merrell's panel for the USFA. They will be regularly briefed and talk about strategy that is better for the fire service. There will be a technical panel for UL consisting of scientists, software engineers, developers, etc. The panels will be made up of people hand-selected based on their expertise. When this system is rolled out, it will be very baseline and not perfect.

Mr. Gabliks asked if Dr. Moore-Merrell could go over the USFA strategic plan. Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that she hoped it would be out by now. They have 4 main goals in the strategic plan:

- Reestablish the USFA as the leader of the fire service. It is the leader of the nation's fire service. The metro chiefs have been leading it in the past. They are working together, but USFA should be the leader.

- Make sure that the USFA is preparing the nation's fire and EMS. They need to prioritize what they are training the fire and EMS to prepare for in today's world.
- The USFA will be the lead and inspire fire service research and technology. They need to be relevant with the front-line issues in research and technology. They are working on bringing a very strong research lead that will run the research branch.
- Establish a prepared, resilient and engaged USFA workforce. There have been a lot of challenges within USFA and the workforce. They are focusing on enabling people to be bold. Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that they have established a leader's intent at the USFA.

Dr. Moore-Merrell stated that the USFA needs to work on the first responders' behalf because they are on the front lines. They need to reduce the risks of the people responding to incidents. Mr. Gabliks asked if there were any more questions; there were none.

**National Fire and Emergency Medical Services Division  
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire and Emergency Medical Services  
Division, USFA**

Mr. Gabliks introduced Chief Richard Patrick as the director of the National Fire and Emergency Medical Services Division (NFEMSD) and turned the meeting over to Chief Patrick for updates on NFEMSD.

Chief Patrick stated that he is also the acting director for the National Fire Data and Research Center. He showed a slide of where the NFEMSD is located on the USFA organizational chart. Chief Patrick stated that they are in the end phases of the reorganization. There have been delays in getting vacancies filled. Chief Patrick stated that he would talk more about NERIS later.

Chief Patrick stated that under NFEMSD there is fire prevention, community risk reduction, WUI and mitigation practices. Fire prevention and special operations are under 1 branch. The Fire Is Everyone's Fight<sup>®</sup> campaign is housed in this division. The Fire Marshal Interchange is on the prevention side. There is a secure site on the DHS information network that anyone with a government email address can participate in, and there is a special site where fire marshals can collaborate, coordinate and share information. There are other programs that operate there as well. Pictographs were created to send a fire and life safety message without words to any language.

Chief Patrick showed some slides with charts showing fire death rates and estimates. They show that the deaths keep rising each year. The fire rates are inclining but not drastically, but the death rates are skyrocketing. Mr. Romaine asked if the trend was proportional to the population or if it was higher? Chief Patrick replied that the chart is showing how drastically the fire deaths go up when they correlate the chart with the population.

Chief Patrick stated that they developed a dashboard with home fire fatalities and social vulnerabilities that is now live on the FEMA Geographic Information System portal. It shows where the highest risk areas are in the country. They do have to populate it on a regular basis. It

will give a county and city risk assessment on social vulnerability. Chief Patrick stated that there are staff that comb through social media systems daily for all the information.

Chief Patrick stated that 67% of NFIRS data is EMS responses across the nation with about 24,000 fire departments reporting. There are roughly 6,000 fire departments that do not report to NFIRS. The chart shows that, at a minimum, 67% of all fire departments in the United States respond to EMS-related incidents.

Chief Butler asked if issues like behavioral health, mental health, etc., are also captured in the information. Chief Patrick replied that most fire departments are not using the NFIRS model, and that is the problem. From the NFIRS data, that question cannot be answered. From the NEMSIS data, that can be answered, and Chief Patrick stated that he could get that information. With the new NERIS system, they will be able to have real-time data for that information once that system has been active for a while.

Chief Patrick stated that in NFIRS, there are more than 30 million incidents a year, and about 67% are EMS incidents. There is a need for more unity with fire and EMS. They are in the process of hiring more people, and they had a new EMS specialist start recently. There are other positions in the works. Chief Patrick stated that he does meet regularly with Dr. Moore-Merrell.

Chief Patrick stated that Ms. Deanne Criswell issues an annual planning guidance each year, and EMS was included in this round. The USFA is actively working on preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery efforts. Dr. Moore-Merrell and others have opened up doors for more education and sharing of information that they did not have in the past. They are working hard to get people to understand that EMS is a big part of emergency response. Ambulances were not getting reimbursed for services provided because they were listed as transportation only.

Chief Patrick stated that there is a contract of EMS needs assessment with the International Association of Fire Chiefs that will be coming to an end. It was a preliminary report of the gaps that exist in the U.S. government roles of EMS. Federal Interagency Committee on Emergency Medical Services (FICEMS) is an entity that brings everyone in prehospital emergency together. FICEMS started in the USFA back in the 1990s. In the federal government, EMS is talked about through every conceivable lens. They are trying to find out what research has not been done or what needs more research involving the prehospital arena for EMS. They can also collaborate with other partners and stakeholders to get that information.

Chief Crowley asked if Chief Patrick could explain a little bit more about the ambulances and the transportation part. Chief Patrick talked about the lead agency of EMS, which is the Department of Transportation's Office of EMS within the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The real voice of EMS in the federal government is FICEMS, and he talked about how it is not funded. Chief Patrick explained a little bit about the process of recommendations going to the Department of Transportation and then they send recommendations to FICEMS.

Mr. Romaine asked if the EMS Licensure Compact works with the wildland fire scenarios and emergency medical technicians and paramedics going all over the country. Chief Patrick explained that the EMS Licensure Compact is fully engaged under the U.S. Constitution to allow for the

portability of licenses to go across state lines. Of course, this depends on the state's rules and regulations. Chief Patrick talked about a system where drones could take off and drop off automated external defibrillators or stop-the-bleed kits to places that need those supplies and do not have resources that are close.

Dr. McIntosh asked if anyone on the Board of Visitors is primarily EMS. Mr. Gabliks replied that there is not an EMS standalone provider on the Board of Visitors.

**National Fire Data and Research Center Division**  
**Chief Richard Patrick, Acting Director, National Fire Data and Research Center Division, USFA**

Chief Patrick stated that Mr. William Troup was the research lead for this division. He has retired, and they are currently looking to hire a new branch chief.

Chief Patrick stated that NFIRS is continuing to do what it was intended to do, but NERIS is in development. There are questions and answers about NERIS on the NFIRS website. The new system has its own subject matter experts to answer all the questions. The new system is going to be an analytical platform and not just a data capturing system. It is designed to give real-time data.

Chief Patrick stated that they have about 25 projects that are currently being developed and worked on. There is an aggressive one on electrical vehicle fires and lithium-ion batteries. There is a roadway safety project that just got awarded. It will study first responder roadway safety issues for injuries and fatalities.

Mr. Gabliks asked if there were any more questions; there were none.

**National Fire Academy Updates on Developments, Deliveries, Staffing and Admissions**  
**Ms. Laurie Wivell, Program Analyst, Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch**

Ms. Laurie Wivell stated that there are 14 staff position in this branch. There are currently 2 vacancies. The program support specialist position should be getting a certificate of eligibility soon. The fire program specialist position application period was extended to Aug. 9.

Ms. Wivell stated that they are currently waiting on trying to get new seating for the Building J auditorium. September 2022 is when courses started being offered on the learning management system (LMS). There were 9 resident courses and 1 instructor-led course. Before the end of this calendar year, 8 more resident courses and 2 new instructor-led pilot courses will be available. Ms. Wivell stated that they are trying something new to address the rising costs of instructor bids.

Ms. Wivell stated that the application period closed on July 10, 2023, for the State Fire Training Systems Grant. There were 32 states that applied for the grants. Last year only 25 states applied.



Each state receives \$20,000, and that is for direct delivery of government-funded courses in their states. In 1 year, an average of 12 classes were completed, which trained an average of 162 students. They are trying to close out some grants that are old. They have done 60 grant closeouts and continue to do those daily.

Ms. Wivell stated that each quarter they must report on the percentage of supervisors of students trained who believe their staff are better prepared as a result of NFA training. The target for that is 87%, and so far this year, Quarter 1 was 87.5%, Quarter 2 was 94% and Quarter 3 was 90.5%. In Quarter 3, the number of students trained was 3,000, and there were 177 resident and off-campus offerings. The Women's Weekend was a great success. There were 7 courses delivered and over 200 students that attended. Ms. Wivell stated that the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) redesign is now complete. There were 295 completions, and the program graduated 21 students in FY23. Some challenges are that they have a low response rate from supervisors responding to questionnaires. They have people explain that it is important to do the evaluations. It took 2 years to get the LMS running, but it is going well currently.

Ms. Wivell stated that 17 courses were reviewed by the American Council on Education (ACE). There were 2 new courses and 15 were re-reviews. The 2 new courses were EFO courses, and they received a credit recommendation for 3 semester hours at the graduate level. All the courses that are in the EFO Program are at the graduate level. ACE is impressed with the way things continue to improve when they do the reviews.

Chief Crowley asked if there was an overall matrix they are trying to meet for training with the grant money. Ms. Wivell stated that each state that applies gets \$20,000, and they can use that to deliver whatever training they want. Some states are very active, and some states do not do any training. They also use that money to pay for contract instructors. Mr. Gabliks stated that the states that do not apply say it is not worth it because of the different variables. Some states still have money that they did not use because of the pandemic. They will get more information about where that money is going and what is being done with it.

Dr. McIntosh asked if the money that is left can be used for the states that do apply. Mr. Gabliks replied yes and no. The money left is reallocated for additional 2- and 6-day classes to the state delivery system. Dr. McIntosh asked if they were all local deliveries. Mr. Gabliks replied that they were.

### **National Fire Academy Updates on Prevention Branch Mr. Richard Sexton, Branch Chief, Prevention Branch**

Mr. Gabliks introduced Mr. Richard Sexton and turned the meeting over to him for the Prevention Branch updates.

Mr. Sexton stated that to prepare for this role he had to look at the curriculum. They had to assess the curriculum report and look at recommendations for implementation. They will look at the summit's 6 initiatives and integrate them into the curriculum. With retention and recruitment, there is going to be a new generation entering the fire service. There are technically 5 generations in the

fire service currently. They need to integrate the technology and things people are seeing currently in the workforce and be able to model that on campus. They just purchased a sprinkler system demonstration item that will teach a student to put tactile learning in place and be able to touch it instead of just showing a slide. They need to make sure they have instructors that are current in the field and have historical knowledge. They have implemented a presentation for the training specialist to be able to look at what is available and use them. They need to look at how the courses fit and teach current things to provide to the fire service for them to be better. Recruiting is open for a wildland training specialist; it closes on Aug. 16. They are focusing on the technology needed for the curriculum area.

Mr. Gabliks stated that the prevention branch has a great team put together.

### **National Fire Academy Updates on Leadership and Partnership Branch Mr. Lester Rich, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

Mr. Gabliks stated that Mr. Lester Rich was going to give the updates for the Leadership and Partnership Branch because Ms. Christine Spangler had some other obligations to attend to. Ms. Spangler did get another job offer so she will be leaving her current position.

Chief Quinn stated that Ms. Spangler did a phenomenal job with everything.

Mr. Rich stated that currently the branch chief position is vacant. They are still struggling with staffing. They have a vacancy for an educational specialist who will be a representative working with Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE), the partnerships, colleges and universities, etc. There have been 2 new staff added: Mr. Derrick Sawyer is the training specialist for the Leadership and Executive Skills Series classes, and Mr. Daniel Newland is a training specialist with the prevention branch. There is a Program Decision Option (PDO), and that is a way USFA can push requests forward for additional funding, people and resources to FEMA and DHS for consideration in the budget 2 years from now. It would upsize the staffing for the EFO Program and the Managing Officer Program.

Mr. Rich stated that the focus of this branch has not changed. They have received those materials for the “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Fire Service” 2-day class. There were a lot of corrections and changes to the material, so that was passed back to the contractor. It has not piloted yet, and the next step should be the walkthrough.

Mr. Rich showed a slide with an update of the EFO Program and the number of students remaining in the different courses. The EFO website was updated as well as the graduate website. The EFO application process should open in January to February 2024. They are limiting it to 500 applications. There is now a contract with Columbia Southern University (CSU) to manage and deliver the M5104, “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I” research course. Once students complete M5203, “Exercise of Executive Leadership: Community,” they can enroll for M5104 as a class with CSU, and that will be paid for by the USFA. Students will have 6 months to finish the class under the guidance of the CSU faculty. The students will have access to everything they need for the research project.

Chief Crowley asked what the normal application limit was for the applicants. Mr. Rich replied that he was not sure what it used to be. They have limited it to 1 applicant per department, but that did not work. The limit now is based on what is projected to be their ability to evaluate the applications in a 2-month period. Chief Crowley asked if it would be first come, first served. Mr. Rich replied that it would. The application process going on now is brand new.

Ms. Spielman asked how many of the 500 applications are accepted. Mr. Rich replied that he does not know yet.

Dr. McIntosh asked how the process of CSU came about. Mr. Rich stated that there was an existing partnership there. It is a 1-year contract, and if it does well, it will go out for bids in the following years.

Dr. Macey asked if there were any discussions of the CSU contract that would cause the EFO Program to drift away from the NFA. Mr. Rich replied that there were not any. Mr. Gabliks stated that they only had issues with supporting the research project course, and the other courses are fine.

Mr. Rich stated that the Managing Officer Program is getting paused. It will be getting a complete revision. There are 10 students left to complete Year 1 in September. Year 2 courses are scheduled; there will be 115 students that will start in 2024 and wrap up their program. The Managing Officer revision will go through the normal process. They will be looking into 4 brand new courses. There will be 2 6-day resident courses and 2 mediated courses. The capstone will probably be part of the last course. Mr. Gabliks stated that the mediated option allows for people to not have to come to campus because some people cannot commit to 4 weeks in a 2-year period.

Mr. Dubay asked how long they anticipate the rewrite of Managing Officer will take. Mr. Rich replied that it would take at least a year but maybe 2.

### **National Fire Academy Updates on Response and Special Operations Branch Mr. Lester Rich, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

Mr. Rich will be giving an update for the Response and Special Operations Branch. He stated that the Response and Special Operations Branch includes fire investigation, EMS, hazardous materials and behavioral health and safety. The behavioral health and safety position is still vacant after 2 years. They will soon be doing interviews for that. The wildland training specialist is on the job listing section of the USFA website. The branch chief position will be put back out on the website also.

Mr. Rich stated that the “Hazardous Materials Incident Management” course was revised and piloted in June. They are making a few changes, but it was well-received. The “Special Operations Program Management and Leadership” course was piloted in July and is now back with contractors getting some revisions. The “Chemical Hazard Analysis for Risk-Based Response” course will be piloted this month. That was formerly known as the “Chemistry for Emergency Response” (CER) course. There is a 2-day hazardous materials terrorism course being developed. Mr. Rich stated

that there is a brand new 2-day EMS class that has been piloted and was very well-received. It was piloted during the Women's Weekend. There is also a brand new 2-day course called "Fire Investigation: Fire as a Weapon."

Mr. Rich stated that the USFA now has a partnership with CAL FIRE and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in California. USFA is hosting and paying for the FI-210, Wildland Origin and Cause Determination class that the USFS and CAL FIRE are going to teach for students in Redding, California. That will be piloted the last week in September at the Northern California Training Center in Redding.

Mr. Dubay asked how many students will be going to the class. Mr. Rich replied that they are setting it at 32 students. They are not sure how many applied, but they did get a lot of calls of interest. Mr. Dubay asked about the housing situation. Mr. Rich replied that the USFA will pay for the students' airfare and lodging. The students will get their own meals and rental cars. Mr. Gabliks stated that they were going to try to get a class on campus but there was too much involved logistically, and they have everything already in California. They are hoping to do a spring and fall opportunity with this class every year.

### **National Fire Academy, Superintendent's Updates**

#### **Mr. Eriks Gabliks, Superintendent, National Fire Academy**

Mr. Gabliks stated that their largest issue is the length of time to get positions filled. With the hiring process, it takes 6 months to a year to get a position filled. Ms. Spangler accepted a new position in the FEMA training section. Mr. Rich's position as branch chief will be filled by Ms. Tammy Pimentel-Matthews. She starts next week, and she comes from the Department of State. People keep being moved around to fill in the gaps.

Mr. Gabliks stated that they are working well with their national organizations and the state and regional partners. They have had good success with the affinity group outreach. They had a Women's Weekend last month on campus. They had more than 200 women attend from 32 states plus the District of Columbia. More than 80% of those attendees had never been to an NFA class. The feedback was very good, and they are setting a date for FY24.

Mr. Dubay asked if the USFA paid for the travel for the women to come to campus for the Women's Weekend. Mr. Gabliks replied that they had paid for their own travel. Mr. Gabliks affirmed that they will do affinity weekends for any groups that want to do them. There were a few men that came to the Women's Weekend, and they enjoyed it.

Mr. Gabliks stated that they are working diligently with their wildland partners and collaborating with them. The USFA has participated in every regional compact meeting to share their work and create cross-pollination.

Mr. Gabliks stated that Pennsylvania was the last state weekend for FY23. They did fill the house and there were no beds available. All the FY24 state weekends are scheduled. They are going to add a few national weekends also.

Mr. Gabliks stated that this coming year, they are going to be moving to a quarterly application process instead of 2 times a year. This may be more beneficial for people's schedules.

Mr. Dubay asked what the time frame was for applications. Mr. Rich replied that the process will go from January 15 to February 15, for classes in June. This will match up with instructor contracts.

Dr. McIntosh asked if anyone was going to do a deep data capture for the diversity, equity and inclusion of the affinity weekends. Mr. Gabliks stated that they did do a deep dive into the admissions and participants for the first Women's Weekend. They will keep tracking that. They did share with the women about all the classes available at the NFA both on and off campus. They also shared information about the classes at NFA at the National Volunteer Fire Council meeting.

Chief Butler asked if they were going to be marketing CAL FIRE classes and the affinity groups. The Board of Visitors would like to know when CAL FIRE classes and the affinity groups are going to be scheduled. Mr. Gabliks stated that as they share information with their partnerships, the information does spread out among different people. The women that attended the Women's Weekend were sharing it with other women.

Mr. Romaine stated that he has gone to the regional fire department association in Minnesota for 40 years and the state training director never talks about the NFA. When Mr. Romaine goes to the meetings, he does talk about the NFA, and a lot of people do not know about it. Mr. Gabliks stated that the way people communicate is changing rapidly and that it is a struggle to keep up with what is new.

Mr. Gabliks stated that they are making available additional 6-day classes off campus with money that fell back into the budget. They do have a few new classes coming. There are 10 classes that are old and going to be retired. Chief Hoover gave permission last week to open up campus for international students again. They will be allowed 1 international student per class.

Mr. Gabliks stated that until they get the FESHE position filled, they are just limping it along. They did approve a new addition, which is California State University, Los Angeles, and they are now a member of FESHE. There are 3 other groups that are working on their applications to get in. A rebuild cannot be done until they get the staff position filled. The last FESHE conference scheduled for on campus was not that successful as far as turnout. Mr. Gabliks stated that their vision for FESHE, once the position is filled, is to refresh the FESHE process and curriculum. They do have 4 agreements with colleges that are not FESHE members but want to be partners from the leadership perspective. FESHE wants to do more things that are not supported through NFA, which may cause FESHE to branch off and set up its own organization. Mr. Gabliks stated that once they bring the FESHE coordinator on board, they need to restructure how the NFA communicates with the FESHE group because of the FACA. Mr. Gabliks asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Macey asked how the NFA chooses which classes are delivered with the staffing issues being the way they are. Mr. Gabliks stated that they schedule classes for the next FY based on historic data of where the numbers are coming from and how many classes they need to offer. When there are not enough students that apply, the class gets cancelled. When a class gets cancelled, the staff

fill in the gaps by adding a class that will get enough students. Mr. Gabliks stated that “Fire Investigation: Essentials” is the most popular class on campus. Mr. Rich is working with admissions every week to see where additional needs are. Mr. Gabliks stated that he can send out a spreadsheet with that information on it.

Mr. Dubay asked if there are any remaining 10-day courses. Mr. Gabliks stated that there are still a few 10-day courses. Some courses are required to be 10-day, but most are 6-day courses.

## **Ethics Training**

### **Mr. David Brummett, FEMA Office of Chief Counsel**

Mr. Brummett is the embedded attorney and the ethics counselor who advises the NFA and the Board of Visitors. Mr. Brummett stated that all of the current Board of Visitors members had had this briefing, and that there have been no ethics issues from any board member this past year.

Mr. Brummett proceeded with delivering the annual ethics briefing as required for SGEs. The briefing consisted of a PowerPoint presentation tailored for the board by the Office of Chief Counsel.

Mr. Brummett offered to take questions from the members, either in the room or directly by email or phone. Mr. Brummett thanked everyone for listening and concluded the briefing.

## **Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvements on the National Emergency Training Center Campus**

### **Mr. James Hodge, Director, Management, Operations, and Support Services**

Mr. Gabliks introduced Mr. James Hodge and turned the meeting over to him.

Mr. Hodge stated that the most popular improvement project that is complete is the burn range. The building has a lab, shower and washing area to decontaminate. It also has restrooms. The visitor center and the security area’s heating, ventilation and air conditioning repair has been completed. That took a few months. They did elevator upgrades campuswide that have been completed. The fire alarm system was completed (going on since 2018). The tunnel repair work has been completed. They replaced about 175 meters of the superstructure that is the overhead part of the tunnel. Mr. Hodge showed some pictures so the Board of Visitors could see the work done. There was moisture leaking into the tunnel from above. They removed all the equipment and steam pipes that were used for the steam system years ago. They did a lot of reinforcement on the tunnel.

Chief Butler asked if the steam system contributed to the damage. Mr. Hodge replied that it could have. The water was leaking into the tunnel when it rained. All that work had to be submitted through the state historical preservation society.

Mr. Hodge stated that there was some work that was unplanned due to storms. A tree came down by the cabin and took down the bridge that crosses Tom’s Creek. The work to fix that was

completed in July. There were a lot of campuswide plumbing projects, and they were completed. They were unable to get the sewage lift stations installed but will probably do that the week of Labor Day. There was a campus wide Wi-Fi upgrade that has been completed. There were 200 access points replaced and 20 switches. There is now a pavilion by Building B. This supports the student recreation center. There is a grill and sink. The Walk of Honor was funded by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. That project is 95% done. The heated sidewalk will keep snow off the walkway and keep the machinery away.

Mr. Dubay asked if they were using geothermal properties to heat the sidewalks. Mr. Hodge replied that he would find out, but he was not sure. Before the end of the day, Mr. Hodge was able to verify and report back to Mr. Dubay that the heated sidewalks are indeed tied into the geothermal system that supports the campus.

Mr. Hodge stated that some of the fence needs repaired, which was not planned. The fencing has been ordered. They had an arborist come to campus and analyze the trees and remove the dead ones. The parking lot by Building K has been paved and restriped. The sidewalk near Building K was redone. They are purchasing picnic tables with umbrellas, and they will have a solar-powered component on them. They will be able to charge phones, laptops, iPads, etc. They are getting 6 of those picnic tables, and they will go between the memorial and Building S.

Mr. Hodge stated that the FEMA bus had unplanned maintenance. They cannot figure out what is wrong with it. They do know it is an electronic issue. They are researching other options for transportation. They have been renting buses for NFA transportation. They have ordered another bus through FEMA, but they are not expecting it until 2025. They are trying to get that here sooner, and it will be a hybrid.

Chief Butler asked how old the bus is. Mr. Hodge replied that it is 11 years old.

Mr. Hodge stated that the renovation project on Buildings G & R is in progress. The Publication Education and Communication Branch is located in Building R. They are going to relocate a bioretention pond. The trenching and directional drilling work is complete for the last building to put solar panels on. They are putting in laundry machines in Building C. They have a linen contractor, and when they cannot deliver enough linen, this will be a backup plan. They have submitted a PDO for the Wellness Center. That did not make the cut with the last round of PDOs. They are resubmitting that this year.

Mr. Hodge stated that they did get a PDO approved for \$10 million for the information technology infrastructure upgrade. They will be doing a lot of trenching and running fiberoptic lines across campus. Some funds will cover the transferring of NFIRS to NERIS. The facilities maintenance recompetes was finalized and will be awarded before the end of FY23. Building E needs a portico repair which was approved. The exterior painting and repair on Building K will be done in FY24. Mr. Hodge listed some projects that they want to do but they do not have to do. If they still have funds near year-end, they can put that money toward the projects they want to do.

Dr. McIntosh asked if they were going to get a chief information officer staffed since they are getting all this technology. Mr. Hodge stated that they have Ms. Debra Stottlemeyer who has been

here for 30 years as a contractor. Mr. Hodge stated that she does the work of the chief information officer. She was involved in the Wi-Fi upgrade. Mr. Hodge stated that he is comfortable with the way things are going right now with that position. They have not submitted any PDOs for an extra position. Mr. Gabliks stated that the position Mr. Hodge was talking about was a vacant position that was upgraded to have an IT background.

Mr. Dubay asked if the unplanned projects affected any of the FY23 projects that were approved. Mr. Hodge replied no. They were able to use funds from elsewhere.

## **Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Reports**

### **National Fire Incident Reporting System Chief Kevin Quinn, Chair**

Chief Quinn stated that there is nothing to report on at this time.

### **Professional Development Initiative Update Dr. Patricia McIntosh, Chair**

Dr. McIntosh stated that there is nothing to report on at this time.

## **Final Comments/Adjournment**

Chief Crowley made the first motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. McIntosh made the second. All were in favor, and no one opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m. There were some weather issues, so the Board of Visitors planned to discuss the walkthrough the following day.

Dr. McIntosh called the meeting back to order at 9:00 a.m. to discuss the walkthrough.

The Board of Visitors thanked Mr. Hodge and the staff for all the work that has been done. It was great that the unplanned fixes did not hurt the budget for the planned fixes. The burn range work was essential, and they appreciated the staff coming out with Mr. Hodge to show them around. The maintenance staff is well organized with prioritizing the facilities needs and keeping everything within the budget. Everyone liked the interaction with the students and seeing how they are doing in the classes. All the students seemed very appreciative of all the upgrades to the facilities. The students were saying that the instructors were very knowledgeable. The students had all positive things to say about the campus. There were professionals at a wide range of ranks around campus. Some students mentioned having more course offerings for the courses that are more popular. Some students mentioned that there were long waiting periods for some classes. There was mention about the admissions process having a fast turnaround for letting students know that they were eligible to take the courses. There was also mention of increasing charging stations for electric vehicles. The students had all positive comments and a few suggestions.



Dr. McIntosh stated that in the past there was mention of switching from twin beds to double beds. Did that happen? Ms. Gartrell-Kemp replied that they did get new mattresses; some are double, and some are twin. Dr. McIntosh asked if they have made any rooms accessible for service animals, because that was mentioned in the past. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp replied that she would have to ask about that, but she did see someone in Building S with a service dog. Per Management, Operations, and Support Services (MOSS), there are 4 rooms in Dorm F that can support service animals. In addition, MOSS confirmed that Building C West was converted from twin to double beds.

The meeting was adjourned for the day.