

**Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Fire Administration
Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy
March 5, 2020
Building H, Room 300
Teleconference**

Attendees:

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

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

Eriks J. Gabliks (Vice Chair)
Director
Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards
and Training
4190 Aumsville Highway
Salem, OR 97317

Dr. Patricia A. McIntosh
Emergency Management Coordinator
College of the Mainland
1200 N. Amburn Road
Texas City, TX 77591

Andrew K. Pantelis (Chair)
District Vice President
International Association of Fire Fighters
3060 Mitchellville Road, Suite 217
Bowie, MD 20716

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

Thomas E. Romaine, Jr.
Smokechaser
Minnesota DNR-Forestry
644 Pfaender Drive
New Ulm, MN 56073

George M. Stapleton
Operations Chief
South Carolina State Fire
141 Monticello Trail
Columbia, SC 29203

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

Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, USFA
Mr. Stephen Dean, Branch Chief, Response Branch, NFA
Mr. Ken Farmer; Chief; Education, Training and Partnerships Branch; NFA
Mr. Al Fluman; Director; USFA/NETC Management, Operations and Support Services Division
Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp, Program Support Specialist
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Deputy Fire Administrator, USFA; Superintendent, NFA
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, NFA
Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire Programs Division
Ms. Michelle Spielman, Administrative Assistant
Ms. Tiffany Warren, Branch Chief; Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch; NFA

Convene Board of Visitors Meeting/Welcome/FACA Training

Mr. Andrew Pantelis, Chairperson, Board of Visitors
Chief Keith Bryant, Fire Administrator, U.S. Fire Administration
Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent, National Fire Academy
Dr. Kirby Kiefer, Deputy Superintendent, National Fire Academy

Dr. Kirby Kiefer welcomed the board with opening remarks:

Good morning, and welcome to this meeting of the USFA/NFA Board of Visitors. This meeting is being conducted under regulations outlined in the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

I want to thank you for volunteering your time, diligent work and also for completing the necessary security and ethical processes to serve as Special Government Employees.

My name is Kirby Kiefer. I am Deputy Superintendent of the NFA and will be serving as Designated Federal Official at this meeting. My role is to serve as liaison between the Board of Visitors and the USFA. I am also responsible for ensuring that all the provisions of the FACA are met regarding the operation of the Board of Visitors. You know Ms. Debbie Gartrell-Kemp and Ms. Michelle Spielman, who took the place of Ms. Ellen Newlin, whose work with FACA officials at FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have made this meeting possible and made my work immeasurably easier and more productive. I want to thank them officially.

Meeting the ethics and disclosure requirements is critical to our operation; this year's briefing will be coming soon by our ethics lawyer and FACA officer so that you understand those ethics requirements.

We have an agenda as published in the Federal Register. The times listed are approximate, and we may need to adjust the agenda to accommodate schedules. We must ensure that time for deliberations is adequate and that the public has ample time to make comments.

Dextera/ZAI support staff will be taking notes and will compile minutes. Minutes will include matters discussed and conclusions reached by the board. As Designated Federal Official, I am responsible for preparing the minutes and ensuring that they are certified by the meeting chair within 90 calendar days. All comments and notes will be available for public review forever.

I will now turn the meeting over to Mr. Andrew Pantelis, Chair of the Board of Visitors.

Mr. Pantelis called the meeting to order. Mr. Pantelis explained that he was in an area with a lot of background noise; therefore, he will be placing his call on mute. He asked Dr. Kiefer to handle going through the agenda items. Mr. Pantelis asked for the attendance to be recorded. Ms. Gartrell-Kemp took attendance, and she reminded everyone to always state their name before talking.

Chief Keith Bryant spoke on behalf of the USFA and indicated the following:

- USFA Deputy Fire Administrator, Dr. Denis Onieal, retired, and Chief Tonya Hoover was selected as Dr. Onieal's replacement. He is happy to have Chief Hoover in that position. Chief Bryant explained that Chief Hoover will now have an increase in duties as she will remain superintendent of the NFA until the hiring process, which has already been started, is complete for her position.
- There was a significant increase in the budget. Chief Bryant is happy about this; however, in looking at the details, Chief Bryant does not see it as an increase since it will be depleted by the salary increases, the reinstatement of the state fire training grants, and deferred maintenance items.
 - Chief Bryant explained that last year there was no direct language to provide state grants and that other budget items took priority. This year the language returned; however, the funding was not provided and will come from the NFA budget. Chief Bryant further explained that he was not consulted during the process and hopes to be involved in the future. He stated that difficult decisions will be made to adjust the NFA budget, as providing the grant money will reduce funds available for other items such as NFA programs. Chief Bryant is hopeful that additional funding for the state grants will be added in the future.
 - Chief Bryant said that the funds needed for salary and benefits are more significant this year. Main agencies were briefed last week on this topic, although what will be impacted is not known at this time.
- Chief Bryant explained that some Program Decision Options (PDOs) will be submitted to request money for specific things not funded. He noted that PDOs can be used for things such as the wildland work and specific facilities projects. Chief Bryant added that the performance guidance specifically directs FEMA/NFA to assist with wildland fire education, and this is a positive step forward since there is typically no mention of FEMA/NFA. The directive creates an awareness that additional funding will be needed.

Mr. Eriks Gabliks asked Chief Bryant if he had any advice for the Board of Visitors board members that will be attending a meeting next week regarding the update of the “America Burning” report. Chief Bryant indicated that it has been 17 years since the last update and that nationwide issues should be discussed as well as what the industry believes we need in order to address them. He will be a part of this work being completed and is looking forward to it. Chief Bryant also indicated that a stand-alone specific version will be an important part of this so that a document can be given to policymakers to make them aware of the situation.

Chief Hoover spoke about the open positions for superintendent and deputy superintendent of the NFA. She indicated that the application period for the deputy superintendent is complete, and a list of eligible candidates should be received next week. The candidates will go through the interview process before a recommendation is provided for whom to offer the position. Chief Hoover indicated that Dr. Kiefer will continue in the position until the process is complete, and she thanked him for staying. Chief Hoover stated that the superintendent position will close in the middle of March, once it has been open for 28 days. She explained that the process for this position differs from the deputy superintendent and takes considerably longer. Individuals will go through a senior executive service (SES) panel interview. The SES panel will submit highly qualified candidates to the USFA. Panel interviews will be conducted by the USFA. Chief Bryant will do one-on-one interviews.

Chief Hoover also reported on new staff:

- Ms. Tiffany Warren replaced Ms. Terry Gladhill as chief for the Training, Administration, Planning and Analysis Branch. Ms. Warren has worked in other areas of FEMA and is a great resource. Chief Hoover looks forward to everyone meeting her.
- Ms. Tomeika Evans has been hired under the Education, Training and Partnership Branch, Mr. Ken Farmer’s area. Ms. Evans is a retired veteran with a bachelor’s degree in communications and a master’s degree in educational design, along with experience in the online mediated space.
- Chief Hoover also indicated that in the near future there should also be a part-time individual to assist Ms. Betty Riffle.

Chief Hoover stated that state fire training grants’ notice of federal funding opportunities should be coming soon.

USFA Data, Research, Prevention and Response Chief Richard Patrick, Director, National Fire Programs Division

Chief Richard Patrick reported on the following:

- “America Burning”: Chief Patrick stated that this was discussed previously in the meeting; however, he would be happy to answer any further questions surrounding this topic. There were none.

- National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS): The last major upgrade was 20 years ago, and the next update in the cycle is due January of 2021. A modification is underway to update the system's core service and architecture. The objective is to modernize the system, which will also allow for ease in making enhancements. Most changes will be behind the scenes. There is also a marketing project underway. A contractor is developing a marketing strategy to allow the fire service to better understand what NFIRS data is and what it is not, and to educate on the front-end data and how it affects the back-end reports. The National Fire Programs division is also working closely with NFA on another data warehouse class. This class will allow state NFIRS managers to dive into the warehouse and how it works. There was a pilot last fall and currently a lot of momentum around this project.
- Pictographs: There are 32 more pictographs on the website.
- Smoke alarms: The upcoming time change is also a good time to change the batteries in smoke alarms, upgrade to a new 10-year battery, or better yet, install a new alarm with the latest technology that can distinguish between nuisance and real alarms. The National Fire Programs division was instrumental in leading the new smoke alarm technology that can distinguish between nuisance alarms and actual emergencies. Over the next three to five years, all alarms should be replaced with this new technology.
- Staff: There is a new staff member who will be working on fire prevention and the Fire is Everyone's Fight™ campaign. A second new staff member, who came from the National Fire Protection Association, will look at projects and initiatives around loss of life and wildland-urban interface (WUI).

Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvements on the NETC Campus
Mr. Al Fluman, Director, USFA/NETC Management, Operations & Support Services
Division

Mr. Al Fluman reported on campus projects, indicating the following:

- Current projects (from fiscal year (FY) 19 funding):
 - National Emergency Training Center (NETC) main gate/security building: This upgrade to campus access is for safety and compliance purposes. Mr. Fluman is excited that the project will remove the last trailer on campus. The project will include construction of a new security building, in addition to a campus truck entrance. Groundbreaking is scheduled for March 31, 2020, with a projected completion date of Sept. 30, 2020. The main gate will be closed during this construction project.
 - Roof replacement, portions of Building B: Construction is now complete.

- Heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system upgrade, Building H: Construction is underway and should be completed in approximately six weeks.
- Energy efficient lighting installation, Building N: Construction is underway and should be completed by May 2020.
- Campus fire alarm building installation, Building M: Construction is underway and should be completed in March 2020.
- Building generator upgrades, Buildings E and L: Completion should occur over the next couple of months.
- Energy Management System: Installation throughout campus should be completed in May 2020. Mr. Fluman will be able to control heat and air conditioning to all rooms and offices from his office.
- FY 20 funded projects:
 - Buildings J and O basements renovation/upgrade: This space will be used for classrooms and offices. Once complete, staff will be moving from other locations, which will free up space to increase campus dormitory room capacity to enhance training missions on campus. Dormitory capacity will increase from 426 to 451 rooms.
 - Buildings D and H, and Building E stairwell roof replacement: Project due to deterioration and unsafe conditions.
 - Building L renovation: This is a past-due deferred maintenance and will be completed during the first six months of 2021.
 - Building S roof solar panel installation: This project is part of the energy efficient campus initiative, working toward net-zero electricity. The final contract was recently awarded.
 - Campus fire alarm system, Buildings B and H: Upgrades continue to improve the campus building fire alarm system to meet code.
 - Campus information technology (IT) infrastructure assessment: A third-party assessment will be conducted to assist with future construction and installation improvements. A request to totally upgrade campus IT, including fiber, telephone, etc., will be submitted to FEMA headquarters. The request will attempt to secure funding to allow upgrades to work on issues over a period of time.

National Fire Academy Updates on Developments, Deliveries, Staffing and Admissions**Chief Tonya L. Hoover, Superintendent
NFA Staff**

Mr. Stephen Dean reported the following:

- Leadership and Community Risk Reduction Branch: The arson rewrite continues. There are two pilots currently in progress and three courses still in development.
- Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program: The M1 cohort is complete and enrolled in the thesis portion. Cohort A will be on campus soon for their first resident offering of the new program.
- NFIRS: Changes will be incorporated into courses. This will be completed with the least amount of confusion possible.
- Hazmat courses: There are two courses under development.
- Course review: There are 14 six-day courses for which the hours may be able to be reduced down to five days. These changes will occur slowly.
- American Council on Education (ACE): A review is coming up in November. There have been 25 current courses identified for review. Fourteen courses that were done in 2017 will be sent for another ACE review, and seven courses that are being revised will need a new name and/or course number. There are 12 new courses that will go through the process.

Dr. Kiefer added that feedback has been solicited from the first EFO Program group, and they were very generous with their feedback. There are some items that are reasonable and changes can be made. Some feedback is in regard to the rigorous nature of the course. Dr. Kiefer asked that if anyone is approached, to know that there are things that can be fixed; however, the program is very rigorous as intended.

Mr. Farmer reported the following:

- A new mediated software is needed to replace D2L. D2L is a Canadian-based company, and the government looks down on that. The search has been narrowed down to three or four, and a request for information will be completed.
- On-campus State Fire Training Director training will be held July 29-30.
- EFO Program mediated courses are currently posted.
- There are five mediated courses being worked on by Mr. Dave Donohue.
- Fourteen state weekends and two national state weekends are scheduled for 2020.

Ms. Warren reported that the bidding for July, August and September instructors occurs between March 1 and April 1. The results should be posted by May 1. Dr. Kiefer added information regarding the background on the bidding process. He explained that approximately every five years, the procurement office looks at the system to ensure it is fair. Although the system is fair, an internal suggestion was made on how to document when the lowest bid is not the bid awarded. This documentation will make things clearer when the bid is awarded based on best value instead of lowest bid, which allows top-notch instructors to be used.

The following questions were asked:

Mr. Gabliks referred to the previous report from Mr. Fluman, asking if part of the IT infrastructure long-term strategy is to have cloud-based distance learning. Mr. Fluman responded yes; however, he advised that this may not happen. Mr. Gabliks followed up by asking if there are any short-term solutions for the IT infrastructure, such as splitting the infrastructure into two: one for the students to use and one for staff. Mr. Fluman indicated that he is hoping to have separation in the next couple of years. Dr. Kiefer added that one current short-term solution that has been working is a computer that is not hooked up to anything that was placed in a classroom. This computer allows students to use a thumb drive to share information. Mr. Gabliks stated that he wanted everyone to be aware that his question is not a criticism to staff, and he understands that there are network limitations that are hard to fix. Additionally, Mr. Gabliks spoke about the EFO Program academic rigor feedback. He indicated that this is the highest level of education at the NFA, and the goal of the new program was to make it harder to achieve. He asked if additional information can be shared during the on-campus meeting this year. Dr. Kiefer stated that at that time there will be a lot more data since there has only been one class so far, and additional feedback can be provided.

Mr. George Stapleton asked if the NFIRS subcommittee will become more active to address the changes being made or if it should be eliminated. Chief Hoover stated that there is a place for the subcommittee. One place moving forward will be within the budget area to produce PDOs. She stated that their assistance will be needed to keep the changes moving forward and could entail gathering information throughout the process in order to get the appropriate funding. Chief Hoover was confident that the subcommittee will have things to do as well as provide input. Mr. Stapleton also said that he was in agreement with Mr. Gabliks' comments regarding the new EFO Program. Chief Hoover provided some additional information on the feedback. She indicated that the comments ranged from time constraints to doing tasks that did not seem related to an academic program. Chief Hoover stated that the goal is to make the program something the students can actively participate in and be what the Board of Visitors want to allow the students to be successful. Dr. Kiefer asked that if there are any interactions with the students, to refer them to the NFA, but also try to obtain some details of what can be done better to make improvements. Mr. Gabliks added that he recently witnessed facilitated learning in some classes, and the student interaction was tremendous. Dr. Kiefer kindly expressed thanks for the feedback.

Dr. Patricia McIntosh informed Dr. Kiefer that she would like to hear more about the EFO Program feedback being received. She explained that she was at the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) Leadership Development Symposium about a month ago and spoke with one of the speakers afterward because he referred to being an old-school EFO, not part of the "EFO-lite stuff" being done now. Dr. McIntosh explained that she feels positive about the feedback regarding the

new EFO Program being too rigorous. She hopes the program is a balance between being engaging and challenging on one hand, and built for immediate and long-term success on the other.

Board of Visitors Subcommittee Activity Reports

Professional Development Initiative

Dr. Patricia McIntosh, Chairperson

Chief John Butler, Co-Chair

Dr. McIntosh indicated that she was unable to attend the last Board of Visitors meeting so she will be backing up a bit on the content provided in order to provide context. She reported the following:

- Last September the NFA hosted the National Professional Development Leadership Workshop from September 20-22. Various organizations attempted to consider the current state and future needs of professional development in the fire service. Unfortunately, most of the discussion was about the meaning of “professional.” The positive outcome of the meeting was a large list of individuals who volunteered to collaborate on identifying a path forward. The list of volunteers may need to be reduced in order to function efficiently.
- Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) leadership met on January 30 to discuss the future of FESHE. (It is important to note that FESHE is only one facet of professional development.) The call and correspondence surrounding the call emphasized the need for clarity and consistency regarding the mission, leadership, planning and delivery of FESHE efforts and meetings.
- FESHE curriculum work groups will meet this month at NETC. NFA is providing the space and lodging, but is not directing the meeting. Groups and meeting dates are as follows:
 - Emergency Medical Services Management Curriculum work group: March 14-15.
 - High School Pathways, Associate, Post-Secondary, Graduate, and Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting: March 20-22.
- Dr. Kiefer and Mr. Michael McCabe have been working on a document that summarizes the NFA’s position and efforts on professional development. This is nearing completion and should be released to the Board of Visitors soon.
- The Board of Visitors is being asked to weigh in on the role of the USFA in fostering professional development: What role does the NFA serve in a changing training and educational environment? Are there activities that are no longer needed or appropriate? Are there gaps that are not being served?
- Once we have seen the professional development overview from Dr. Kiefer and Mr. McCabe, with input from Chief Bryant and the feedback on “America Burning” update efforts, Dr. McIntosh would like to consider the creation of some sort of focused effort/team/ad hoc group to inventory and investigate the state of professional development and the path forward.

Dr. Kiefer stated that the world has changed and other educational institutions are now doing some of the same teachings as the NFA. The NFA needs to focus on the things that personnel are uniquely qualified to do. The Board of Visitors, students and citizens can help shape the future. A fact sheet can provide a common understanding/baseline to know where to go in the future. Chief Hoover added that a large group of people at the meeting stood up showing they are a very passionate group. She indicated that a wide range of experienced people need to be involved in order to create a diversified group that will bring in a wide range of ideas.

National Fire Incident Report System
Mr. George Stapleton, Chairperson
Chief Kevin Quinn, Co-Chair

Mr. Stapleton indicated that there is no report at this time due to the committee still being inactive at this point.

Final Comments/Adjournment

Mr. Gabliks referred to Dr. Kiefer's comment surrounding the uniqueness of what the NFA does. He stated that the NFA is a place that brings career and volunteer personnel together into one setting and tries to blend education and training. Mr. Gabliks stated that there is a balance created in doing this, and decisions will need to be made on how to continue the education model and keep people engaged and looking forward to things.

Dr. McIntosh agreed with Mr. Gabliks' comments and indicated that the NFA and the WUI services are not much different.

Chief John Butler thanked Dr. McIntosh for her report and stated that he is excited to learn more about professional development.

Mr. Gabliks congratulated Chief Hoover on behalf of the Board of Visitors, and he thanked Dr. Kiefer for staying until his replacement is hired. Mr. Gabliks motioned for adjournment which was seconded by Mr. Stapleton.

Meeting adjourned at 2:04 Eastern Time.