

**STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**  
**August 20, 2015**

Members Present: Charles D. Davis, Chairman  
Mark F. Hubbard, Vice Chairman  
K.C. Harrington  
Anthony J. Spencer  
Stacy Welch  
Richard L. Yinger

Members Absent: Timothy F. Dayton  
Martin J. LePore

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at the Laurel Municipal Center in Laurel, Prince George's County.

A moment of silence was observed in remembrance of the three Washington State firefighters who perished while battling a wildland fire.

### **FIRE MARSHAL REPORT**

Fire Marshal Brian Geraci reported that John Grothe was hired as a Deputy State Fire Marshal (DSFM) on August 5, 2015. He is assigned to Headquarters until completion of his law enforcement academy. Polygraphs have been scheduled for applicants to fill two more DSFM positions. The process to fill four Fire Safety Inspector (FSI) and two contract FSI positions is ongoing. More than 200 applications have already been received for the FSI position in the Western Region. FSI Heather White has resigned to take a position with the Ocean City Fire Marshal's Office. A hiring exemption request to fill her position is pending. Salaries are an issue and the Fire Marshal has requested a salary review for inspectors. Interviews for the computer specialist position are expected to take place soon. Several recently hired DSFMs are veterans and/or volunteer firefighters. One DSFM currently in the academy is a former Marine and is Class President and also top of the class. Chairman Hubbard inquired as to where the academies are located. Fire Marshal stated there are several throughout the state but he will check if there are any others that may have classes starting sooner than 2016.

Most local jurisdictions have signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM). Only a couple more still need to be completed. Baltimore City has agreed to inspect State buildings in the city limits.

Fire fatalities total 36 this year compared to 38 for this time last year. There were no reported fatal fires during the month of July. More information at <http://firemarshal.mdsp.org>.

Five fireworks injuries were reported during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. Three adults and two juveniles received minor injuries of burns and soft tissue damage from the misuse of legal and illegal fireworks. Four fires were reported in Hagerstown as the result of fireworks—three were intentionally set with legal ground-based sparkling devices. Vice Chairman Hubbard was aware of one injury in Harford County when a neighbor set off a legal device which fell over and struck a woman, setting her clothing on fire.

The National Association of State Fire Marshals offers on-line training pertaining to pipeline safety, LNG emergencies, fire incident data, evaluating fire risks, residential sprinklers, and crowd managers. There is no cost for some of the training. More information at <http://nasfm-training.org>.

Fire Marshal Geraci recently met with Senator Hershey, representing the Upper Eastern Shore region, regarding residential sprinklers. Representatives of several Eastern Shore counties are discussing residential sprinklers and it is anticipated legislation will be filed for the 2016 legislative session to amend

or repeal the requirements for new one- and two-family homes. If an attempt to repeal the requirement is made, the Fire Marshal would appreciate a letter in support of sprinklers from the Commission. The President of the Maryland Homebuilders Association supports residential sprinklers. There are a lot of misconceptions about residential sprinklers but the Maryland State Fireman's Association is doing a good job staying on top of all the discussions. Members of the Caroline County volunteer fire service are on the agenda to discuss residential sprinklers at the August 25<sup>th</sup> County commission meeting. Although the commissioners are members of the fire service, they are not in favor of residential sprinklers. Some sprinkler contractors are taking advantage of the new requirement by raising prices. The Fire Marshal has reached out to the National Fire Sprinkler Association and the American Fire Sprinkler Association regarding this practice.

Fire Marshal Geraci recently met with Roger Compos, Business Ombudsman. The Governor's Office of Business Ombudsman supports the needs of businesses in their interaction with state agencies. Chairman Davis reported the Washington Post recently had an article regarding the creation of a task force to review regulations and residential sprinklers were a main concern.

The OSFM has sent three legislative proposals to the Maryland State Police legislative office for review and submission; the repeal of Public Safety Article (PSA) 6-313 Chimney Fire Reports, the repeal of PSA 6-314 Reports of Losses by Insurers, and the prohibition of the sale of nine-volt battery smoke alarms in Maryland. The smoke alarm proposal was turned down last year. Commissioner Yinger inquired if any legislation is being submitted on hoarding. Fire Marshal Geraci stated he did not formally submit any but the OSFM continues to work with other agencies and associations to combat the problem.

In his Fiscal Year 2017 budget request, the Fire Marshal has requested new vehicles, three additional fire protection engineers, eight additional inspectors, and an annual salary review for inspectors. He eventually would like to completely separate the investigation and inspection divisions so that DSFMs can concentrate on investigations. Colonel Pallozzi has also requested funding for new vehicles for the department. He understands the OSFM vehicle issues and is supportive of the agency's needs.

Fire Marshal Geraci spoke with Maryland Insurance Commissioner Redmer at a recent MACO Conference. The Fire Marshal thanked him for his response to the Commission's letter inquiring about local jurisdictions' non-compliance with residential sprinkler requirements. Chairman Davis noted the response basically states that the lack of local non-compliance most likely will not prevent homeowners from obtaining insurance. The Fire Marshal will be participating in several conferences this year to promote residential sprinklers. Chief Fire Protection Engineer Larry Iseminger reported the local jurisdictions have come on board with adopting the requirements. Cecil County's adoption was a significant achievement. To the best of his knowledge Allegany County is the only jurisdiction still in question.

The Fire Marshal reported 100% compliance in 2014 with all departments reporting into the MFIRS system.

## **CHIEF ENGINEER REPORT**

The proposed amendments to COMAR 29.06.01 and 29.06.07 are moving forward in a timely manner for adoption January 1, 2016. Training seminars have been scheduled for November 17, 18, and 19 for a one-day refresher and December 8-9 for a two-day seminar for new code enforcement personnel. All classes will be held at MFRI College Park. Registration information will be distributed in the near future. Secretary Ritchie reported the proposed amendments have been forwarded to the Division of State Documents for publication in the Maryland Register. The Commission should anticipate scheduling the public hearing for its October meeting.

The Dominion Power Cove Point project is huge. It is taking the Southern Region's Engineer Derek Murgatroyd a lot of time to conduct the reviews. Headquarters' Engineer C.J. Giblin is providing

assistance. It's an amazing and interesting operation; LNG is both off-loaded from and on-loaded to ships for distribution. Multiple fire pumps and millions of gallons of fire protection water are to be provided.

## **CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Chairman Davis thanked the OSFM staff for their hard work. The Southern Region has been very busy with fires. With the current inspector vacancies, inspections are falling behind but the Fire Marshal has temporarily assigned an inspector from Northeast to provide assistance. The Fire Marshal also reported he has allowed two sprinkler contractors to self-certify their residential 13D sprinkler installations on a temporary basis due to the backlog of inspections.

The Chairman encouraged members to attend the Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference on September 29<sup>th</sup>. Although he will be unable to attend this year, the conference offers a variety of good speakers and topics. The Fire Marshal has approved funding.

As motioned at the June meeting, Chairman Davis will arrange a meeting with the Fire Marshal to discuss budget issues and concerns.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Motion by Commissioner Spencer, second by Commissioner Harrington, and unanimously carried to send letter in support of residential sprinklers to MSFA Legislative Committee Chairman Stephan Cox.

Motion by Commissioner Harrington, second by Commissioner Spencer, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2015, meeting.

Vice Chairman Hubbard proffered congratulations to Russell Strickland who recently was appointed Executive Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency.

## **MEETING SCHEDULED**

The next meeting has been scheduled for

Thursday, October 15, 2015 9:30 a.m.  
Laurel Municipal Building, Council Chambers  
8103 Sandy Spring Road  
Laurel, Prince George's County

Respectfully submitted,



Heidi Ritchie, Secretary