

STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 16, 2018

Members Present: Charles D. Davis, Chairman
Joseph L. Scheffey, Vice Chairman (via speaker phone)
Douglas Alexander
Mark A. Bilger
Edward Tochtermann, Jr.
Stacy Welch

Members Absent: K.C. Harrington
Mark F. Hubbard

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

The Commission welcomed recently appointed Commissioner Douglas Alexander. He will represent the Western Maryland region as a volunteer fireman.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Chief Fire Protection Engineer (CFPE) Ken Bush presented Fire Marshal Brian Geraci's report. The Fire Marshal is attending the National Association of State Fire Marshals Conference in Salt Lake City.

CFPE Bush extended congratulations to Commissioner Alexander on his appointment.

William Pennock from Virginia Beach and Michael Redding formally with Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Explosives Division have recently been hired as Deputy State Fire Marshals (DSFM). DSFM Pennock is currently attending the Law Enforcement Academy on the Eastern Shore. DSFM Redding will be assigned to the Bomb Squad Unit. Michele Hunt assigned to Headquarters has recently resigned. The agency wishes her well and thanks her for her years of service.

In addition to the 40 fatalities noted in the Fire Marshal's written report, a fire fatality occurred last week in Hagerstown City and another in Baltimore County, bringing the total to 42 which is the same number compared to this time period in 2017.

In the second quarter of 2018, the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) conducted 493 investigations—353 fire related and 115 explosive related. Eighteen criminal cases were closed with the arrest of 29 persons. 6,196 inspections were conducted and 626 plans were reviewed. There is a backlog of 266 plan reviews which has been reduced with the hiring of an engineer for the Eastern Shore and a part-time contract engineer for the Western Region. The full-time Fire Protection Engineer position for the Western Region continues to be advertised.

More than 20 fireworks related fires and injuries were reported during the Fourth of July holiday, some serious in nature. Property loss totaled over \$100,000. The Worcester County Fire Marshal's Office seized a large number of illegal fireworks valued at \$4,000. Several commercial firework displays reported various incidents.

Explosive K-9 Rosie and handler DSFM Matt Wrenn recently completed the ten week ATF canine training course in Front Royal, Virginia. They are currently assigned to the bomb squad.

The investigation into the cause of the large dwelling fire in Clarksville, Howard County, that resulted in the line-of-duty death of Firefighter Nathan Flynn has concluded. The fire was the result of a lightning strike that traveled into the house along the propane gas line.

The www.md lifesafety.org and <http://mdosfm.wixsite.com/blog> websites continue to be routinely updated with new information.

State Fire Code update training classes have been scheduled for October 16-18 and 22-23 at MFRI College Park. Contact may be made with Heidi Ritchie for further information and registration. Steve Sawyer with NFPA will be the instructor. He has been with NFPA for many years and is very knowledgeable of the codes and Maryland's adoption process.

The 59th Annual Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference is scheduled for September 25 at the Kossiakoff Conference Center in Laurel. Registration is being handled by MFRI.

The commission discussed Baltimore City's proposal to amend its fire code to reduce the width of driveways and roadways purportedly to encourage the use of bicycles and to provide bicycle lanes and parking. It was unknown if the bill has been signed by the Mayor. CFPE Bush noted that the State Fire Code still requires a minimum 20-foot width for fire department access.

CHAIRMAN REPORT

Chairman Davis thanked the staff of the OSFM for their hard work investigating numerous fires in St. Mary's County.

The appeal hearing scheduled for today has been postponed and will be rescheduled for October.

OTHER BUSINESS

Motion by Commissioner Tochtermann, second by Commissioner Bilger and unanimously carried to approve the June minutes with one correction. The missing code book for the Commission's library is the 1988 edition of the BOCA Fire Prevention Code, not the 1982 edition.

Motion by Chairman Davis, second by Commissioner Tochtermann and unanimously carried to approve the Annual Report to the Governor as prepared by Secretary Ritchie.

Commissioner Scheffey reported that the high-rise workgroup has developed three options and members are working on the details before presenting any proposals to the Commission. The workgroup is scheduled to meet again on September 12.

Commissioner Alexander thanked the Chairman for his welcome and he hopes to be a positive addition to the Commission.

Commissioner Bilger recommended the Chairman, the State Fire Marshal, a representative of the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA), and MFRI Director Cox meet to discuss the future of the Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference. The commission is charged by law with offering an annual training program yet offers no funding or support other than to have a representative on the conference steering committee. Chairman Davis noted there are no funds in the Commission's budget to offer. The MSFA and Maryland Fire Chiefs Association contribute funding every year, MFRI provides in-kind services by printing various materials and handling registrations, and the OSFM provides staffing on the committee and on the day of the conference. As a government agency there may be ethics rules regarding sponsorships or private donations. Conference Chairman Giblin has made it clear he no longer wishes to chair so Debbie Gartrell from Carroll County has basically taken on those responsibilities temporarily. Two MFRI committee members will not be there after this year and it is unclear what involvement MFRI will continue to have. The committee members are looking for guidance and leadership. Chairman Davis recommended Commissioner Bilger pursue a meeting after this year's conference has taken place.

MEETING SCHEDULED

The next meeting is scheduled for
Thursday October 18, 2018 – 9:30 a.m.
Laurel Municipal Building, Council Chambers
8103 Sandy Spring Road
Laurel, Prince George's County

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
(as summarized from transcript provided by Hunt Reporting),



Heidi Ritchie, Secretary