

STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 18, 2022

Members Present: Edward S. Tochterman, Chairman
Mark Bilger
Emily Devan
Michael Faust
Randy Sanger
Daniel Stevens

Members Absent: Kevin Simmons, Vice Chairman
Douglas Alexander
Stacy Welch

The Fire Prevention Commission held a public meeting August 18, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. at the Savage Volunteer Fire Station in Savage, Howard County.

Chairman Tochterman called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Chairman thanked Howard County and the Savage Volunteer Fire Company for their hospitality and use of the facility.

The Chairman acknowledged the guests in attendance:

- Mike Penn, Acting Commissioner and Chief of Compliance - Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (DLLR). Following the deaths of three Baltimore City firefighters, the DLLR issued a letter to Baltimore City and the State Fire Prevention Commission regarding firefighting tactics in vacant and deteriorating buildings.
- Kevin Panizari, Captain - Howard County Fire Marshal's Office
- Terin Hopkins, Public Fire Protection Specialist - National Fire Sprinkler Association
- Gretchen Yingling, Bureau Chief - Baltimore County Fire Department
- Matt Shanks, Senior Permitting Services Specialist - Montgomery County
- Antonio Concha, Assistant Chief Howard County Fire Marshal's Office
- Jason Mowbray, Chief Deputy Fire Marshal - State Fire Marshal's Office
- Ken Bush, Chief Fire Protection Engineer - State Fire Marshal's Office

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Chief Deputy Fire Marshal (CDFM) Jason Mowbray presented State Fire Marshal Brian Geraci's report. Fire Marshal Geraci is attending the Truman Fire Symposium in Missouri.

To date in 2022 there have been twenty-nine fire fatalities associated with residential fires, three associated with vehicle collisions involving fire, and five in other settings involving fires. Three of the residential fires involved multiple fire fatalities. Five causes of death are pending the medical examiner's determination. Further information can be found at <http://mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal>.

The Fire and Life Safety Information Exchange Program website is www.mdlifesafety.org and the OSFM blog site is <http://mdosfm.wixsite.com/blog> where fire fatality data and sprinkler and smoke alarm saves can be reported.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) was notified of two injuries and nine fires involving fireworks during the 4th of July holiday period. The fires resulted in a total dollar loss of \$24,300. There were no reported issues at any public fireworks displays

The OSFM second quarter 2022 statistics include 897 plan reviews with a backlog of 189; 188 investigations—135 fire related, 39 explosive related, and 18 other; 12 criminal cases closed with the arrests of 32 persons; and 3,159 inspections conducted.

The OSFM Bomb Squad recently participated in training with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) personnel at the Baltimore/Washington International Airport. It was a good opportunity to network and understand the TSA's role in screening luggage and packages and responding to any security issues.

Several OSFM personnel in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies participated in National Night Out events throughout the State. The annual event presents a good opportunity to create partnerships with other agencies and reach out to communities and families to build better relationships. In addition to providing fire and life safety displays, the OSFM canine teams and Bomb Squad robots were demonstrated at several events.

Several Western Region Deputy Fire Marshals participated in the Garrett County Public Safety Day held this past weekend where the Western Region Fire Investigation Unit vehicle was on display. Several fire service and public safety agencies participated in the event.

In response to an inquiry from Chairman Tocherman, CDFM Mowbray reported that a man and young child were transported to the burn center in Pittsburgh as a result of injuries sustained in a vehicle fire in Oakland, Garrett County. The vehicle was on fire and was being driven around for a short time before the driver stopped and removed a five-year-old child who was in a safety seat on the back seat. Both escaped the vehicle but sustained second- and third- degree burns to their upper bodies and torsos. They were initially stabilized at a hospital in Oakland before being transported to Pittsburgh. Preliminary investigation indicates the fire may have originated in the bed of the truck. Investigators are scouring the neighborhood for witnesses and any surveillance videos. Hopefully the driver's medical condition will improve soon so that he can be interviewed.

Regarding the submission of 2021 Maryland Fire Incident Reports, CDFM Mowbray reported there were considerable delinquencies. For Fiscal Year 2022 complete submissions were received from Baltimore City, Carroll County, Calvert County, Harford County, and Washington County. The OSFM is working closely with other jurisdictions through technical issues. Firehouse software was bought out by another Company, ESO, and the transition was not as seamless as anticipated. Data is being rejected during the uploading process. OSFM staff are working with those jurisdictions and are optimistic the issues will get resolved. In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Bilger if this technical glitch will cause 508 funding from being distributed to fire companies, CDFM Mowbray deferred to Fire Marshal Geraci to find out and report to the Commission. Fire Marshal Geraci will be attending the Maryland State Firemen's Association executive meeting this weekend and will discuss how to best remedy the situation. Each jurisdiction can select the software they want to use to fulfill their obligation to submit and upload reports and Firehouse was the most prevalent one in use nationwide. So this change has affected the fire department community throughout the State of Maryland and the country. For the January to June 2022 period, reports have been received from Calvert, Carroll, and Harford counties.

There is no update on the request for ten additional inspectors but the Fire Marshal is still advocating for them.

So far there have been no issues with the new Garrett County Fire Marshal and several transition meetings have taken place. The OSFM has offered to provide training and technical assistance to the new Fire Marshal until he gets fully operational. The OSFM was handling all permits up to July 11, 2022, so there are many projects applied for prior to July 11, 2022, that the OSFM is still handling until completion. Some contractors have confirmed they have submitted plans to Garrett County in a third-party review system with receipt being acknowledged and formal responses to be sent at a later date. At this point the OSFM is optimistic Garrett County will perform its duties in accordance with the State Fire Prevention Code. In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Bilger, CDFM Mowbray advised Garrett County did adopt its own fire code and as part of that adoption it acknowledged it would be enforcing the minimum requirements of the State Fire Prevention Code and that any appeals will be handled by the State Fire Prevention Commission.

Commissioner Bilger inquired as to the ongoing investigation of Maryland State Police hiring practices and if has any effect on the OSFM. CDFM Mowbray reported the OSFM hiring practices are part of the overall Department and subject to the same reviews and validations the troopers go through via the Department's Human Resources Division. As such, any Departmental changes in the hiring process would filter down to the OSFM. The OSFM hires within the parameters of State regulations and the process is always reviewed by the Fair Practice Unit before any final hiring of employees or processing of applicants. To the best of his knowledge the OSFM has not received any specific requests or has been advised of any concerns from the Attorney General's Office.

CDFM Mowbray reported the City of Baltimore has had some staffing issues with its bomb squad technicians and recent retirements which have created a sudden situation with safe and effective response levels. The OSFM is coordinating with the Baltimore City Police Department on providing supplemental support mostly for special operations and special events such as professional sporting events, Fleet Week, the Baltimore Marathon, etc.

CDFM Mowbray reported Fire Marshal Geraci has received a letter regarding the inimical hazard designation for non-sprinklered high-rise buildings. The Commission also received a copy of this letter. The Fire Marshal has referred the letter to its Assistant Attorney General representative and has also forwarded the letter to local authorities in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. He encourages everyone to stay the course and evaluate the letter but not make any abrupt response or changes until further information is gathered and processed.

Fire Marshal Geraci extends his appreciation to the Commission for its hard work in making Maryland fire safe.

CHIEF FIRE PROTECTION ENGINEER REPORT

Chief Fire Protection Engineer (CFPE) Kenneth Bush reported the Western Region engineer Dan Hoang has retired again. He attended the April Commission meeting. The Western Region engineering duties are currently being handled by the Headquarters engineer Derek Murgatroyd. A candidate was interviewed for the open Western part-time contractual position and is proceeding through the hiring process. There are still another part-time contractual and full-time engineer positions unfilled in the Western Region.

CFPE Bush is working with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) regional representative Robby Dawson on training for the code updates. They continue to work on the training program for the 2021 editions of NFPA 1 and NFPA 101. As soon as that is complete arrangements will be made to offer the training to state and local jurisdictions. It appears the easiest way will be to hold the training virtually. NFPA is able to host 500 participants for each training session. The OSFM will handle the registration and two sessions will be offered. The Delaware State Fire Marshal's Office is also interested in participating.

Regarding the Maryland Stadium Authority and school construction and inspections, State Fire Protection Engineer Harry Bradley (Northeast Region) has been working closely with them on projects and the Stadium Authority is acting as a source to distribute State funds to local jurisdictions. Currently there are two schools under construction in Baltimore City and Montgomery County has requested State assistance for the construction of two new schools. The Stadium Authority is considering how best to approach Montgomery County's request and may use a third-party consultant, which it has used in the past. If a third-party consultant is utilized, it will be one approved by the OSFM. Use of third-party consultants provide additional resources that may not be available from State agencies and will help keep projects moving along in a timely fashion.

Another major current project is the upgrade of the fire alarm systems at Morgan State University. All new buildings have complete fire alarm systems installed and all existing buildings are having their fire alarm systems completely replaced. The OSFM is working with the University and the design engineering firm EBL Engineers out of Baltimore. A new 800-student dormitory was recently opened for which the plan reviews and inspections were conducted by the OSFM.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Tochterman reported the Commission's final Fiscal Year 2022 budget expenses totaled \$4,935.30. A copy of the expense report was previously distributed to the members.

Secretary Ritchie has prepared the Commission's Annual Fiscal Year Report which will be sent to the Governor. A copy of the report was previously distributed to the members.

The Chairman met with Commissioner Matt Helminiak and Mischelle VanReusel from DLLR on July 8th as well as with Mr. Penn who is in attendance today. The topic of discussion was Garrett County and the interference and misinformation from real estate agents during the sale of vacation rental homes in the county. DLLR will provide contact information for the Maryland Real Estate Commission in order follow-up on this issue.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Bilger reported arrangements for the annual Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference are being finalized. Johns Hopkins has agreed to allow animals inside the facility so a workshop to help educate first responders on dealing with animals while on a scene trying to provide treatment will be offered. Johns Hopkins is requiring all attendees to show proof of COVID vaccination or documentation of a recent negative test.

Motion by Commissioner Faust, second by Commissioner Sanger, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June meeting.

The Chairman offered the guests an opportunity to make comments. No comments were made.

Next Meeting: Thursday October 20, 2022 — 10:00 am.

Location: To Be Determined

There being no further business, motion by Commissioner Faust, second by Commissioner Sanger, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting.

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



Heidi Ritchie, Secretary