

Workgroup to Develop Fire Safety Best Practices for Pre-1974 High Rise Apartment Buildings

October 2, 2024

Meeting location: Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, University of Maryland, 4500 Campus Drive, Classroom 3, College Park, Maryland. Virtual option: meet.google.com/uem/ajqi-jxn or phone +1 -301-969-5253, PIN: 778 740 499#

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, Acting Fire Marshal Jason Mowbray at 10:09 am.

Present in person were workgroup members: Acting Fire Marshal Jason Mowbray, Edwards S. "Ted" Tochterman, Jr., Robbie Blackiston, Chief Michael Rudasill, Terin Hopkins, Jeanne Schmager Tebera, Abiodun "Babs" Shonaiya, Bradley Patrick, Sr. and Yasia Daniels. Attending virtually, member Dr. Jamie McAllister. Absent workgroup members: Senator Sara Love, Delegate Mary Lehman and Bob Phillips. Members of the public in attendance: Ashley Powell, and Hugo Canto. Staff in attendance: Tom Elder DLS, Penny Doty MSP, Ken Bush MSP and Tom Williams MSP. Workgroup staff: Catherine Kelly MSP.

Roll call was completed by workgroup staff. Staff confirmed there was a majority present. After which the charter of the workgroup was reviewed which included the background, mission and purpose, objective, structure, and operating procedures.

Dr. McAllister asked how the term "other fire safety technology" is defined. Ken Bush responded at the Chair's request that both active and passive systems define the reference in question.

Ms. Tebera asked about the reporting requirement timeline and asked if the report is truly due December 31, 2024. It was confirmed that the report is in fact due on that date. Which opened discussion regarding the will of the group to the best approach to reach the objectives outlined in the law. It was determined by the group that subcommittees should be created to address the fire safety risks and the current strategies and technologies that mitigate fire risks. Ms. Tebera also asked if there was an existing list of this class of buildings. Terin Hopkins shared that a group he is associated with has an informal list that contains a good portion of the buildings in Maryland included in this class. Mr. Hopkins agreed to share the information with the workgroup members.

Two subcommittees were created. Subcommittee (i) will focus on studying the fire safety risks in high-rise building that do not have automatic sprinkler systems or other fire safety technology. Members who volunteered to serve are: Dr. McAllister, Edward S. Tochterman, Jr., Jeanne Schmager Tebera and Terin Hopkins. Dr. McAllister agreed to lead the group.

Dr. McAllister asked if the focus of the workgroup is the whole class of high-rise buildings constructed prior to 1974 rather than individual buildings in the class. It was confirmed her assumption was correct.

Subcommittee (ii) will focus on studying current strategies, practices, and technology to mitigate fire risks, maximize evacuation of occupants, and allow for greater access and more expedient responses by emergency response professionals. Members who volunteered to serve are: Abiodun "Babs" Shonaiya, Robbie Blackiston, Terin Hopkins, Bradley Patrick, Chief Mike Rudasill, Dr. McAllister and Yasia Daniels. Yasia Daniels agreed to lead the group.

Meeting schedules were discussed and the following meeting dates and times were agreed upon:

Subcommittee (i) will meet on October 9, 2024 from 0900 to 1100, and on October 17, 2024 from 0900 to 1000.

Subcommittee (ii) will meet on October 10, 2024 from 0900 to 1100, and on October 16 from 1100 to 1300.

The full workgroup will meet on October 23, 2024 from 0900 to 1100 and on November 6 from 0900 to 1100.

All meetings of both subcommittees and the full workgroup will be held virtually, as agreed upon by the members.

Chair Mowbray asked the leads of the subcommittees for any guidance to the members of their groups. Each provided that they will assess the tasks and discuss roles and assignments at the upcoming meetings.

At this time each workgroup member introduced themselves and provided their background and interests in the subject at hand. Workgroup staff reiterated the scheduled meeting dates and times and confirmed all meetings will be virtual.

Chair Mowbray asked if there was any additional business the group members wished to address, hearing none the meeting was adjourned at 11:32am.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Catherine A. Kelly.