

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

9:30 AM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Fire Prevention and Control Committee was held in Lynchburg, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Gerry Maiatico, and a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Gerry Maiatico, Committee Chair – Virginia Fire Prevention Association

Charles Sterne – General Public

JM Snell II – Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development

John Miller – Designee, Virginia State Forester

Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal

Steven Sites – Virginia Municipal League

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Carla Keese – Virginia Chapter, International Association of Arson Investigators

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Marc Brade, Chief of Training and Operations

Sarah Kenny, Community Risk Reduction Coordinator

Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager

Greg Cavalli, Policy Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT

Andrew Milliken

Earl Copes

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

9:30 AM

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting (February 2026)

Motion: Miller **Second:** Hanks

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM THE VIRGINIA STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Andrew Utt, the newly appointed Assistant Chief State Fire Marshal, spoke for the State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO). He stated that SFMO and the Department of General Services (DGS) are in the final stages of negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement allowing SFMO to bill for inspections of new state construction projects. The office anticipates that this will provide for a new construction management division. He said that college dormitory and county school inspections began in August. SFMO's two-year strategic plan has been completed and will be published soon. Utt stated he will represent SFMO at National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) headquarters in October for a meeting between that organization and fire marshals. SFMO has begun shifting all its fire marshals into Ford Explorers and F-150s, depending on their location and job description. College football season has begun and SFMO is providing oversight for games that feature flame effects and pyrotechnics. State Fire Marshal Billy Hux represented SFMO at 9/11 memorial events at the White House and in Manhattan. Chief Hux will also participate in the Governor's Advisory Board on Unmanned Aircraft.

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Committee Chair Maiatico thanked the committee members for their participation. He stated that he has been working on an issue on the subject of agritourism. The Technical Review Board (TRB) of the Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) has issued an interpretation to ask BHCD to better define the term "agritourism" in the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC). He stated that Codes and Standards Work Group Chair Andrew Milliken will speak more on this later in the meeting. Committee Chair Maiatico added that he, along with Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) staff, is monitoring the Department of Energy's (DOE) request for feedback on the draft model ordinance language relating to energy storage systems. Additionally, he announced that the Virginia Fire Prevention Association fall conference will be in Lynchburg next week for sixteen hours of continuing education training.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

9:30 AM

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Report from the VDFP Community Risk Reduction Coordinator

VDFP's Coordinator of Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Sarah Kenny spoke about her vision for what CRR can become with the new data from the National Emergency Response Incident System (NERIS) and VDFP's efforts to incorporate geospatial technology. She said that she would like to hear the committee members' perspectives on what works and what does not work when it comes to CRR. Kenny stated that her goal is shift the focus of CRR to complement and supplement the work of localities. She wants Virginia to be a nationwide leader in CRR, with a broader outlook and a focus on partnerships with localities, using CRR's role to provide technical expertise. Kenny said that innovation is important. She understands that not every initiative will succeed; however, by attempting bold changes, the agency will be able to expand what CRR can accomplish. To that end, she would like to integrate all areas of VDFP into CRR's mission to create a risk reduction portfolio.

Kenny stated that there are three items from the FY24-28 fire control plan that she believes are integral to her goals for CRR. The most important of these, she said, is fire incident reporting from NERIS. She stated that this data is necessary to be able to do her job and that is why she has been working with the national NERIS team. Regarding Aid to Localities (ATL) funding, she is working on ensuring compliance with reporting requirements for grant awards. She intends to speak with local leaders on the reasons why incident reporting is so important. Data literacy is critical to getting local buy-in.

Next month she will be launching a community risk dashboard which includes a public facing component. Anyone will be able to access it, and it will serve as a means to reach both legislators as well as the public. There will be a tiered system where local leaders can contribute their own data and collaborate with other leaders.

Lithium-ion battery safety is something she has set as a priority as Fire Prevention Week is upcoming. She would like leaders to provide research and information on this topic to the public.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

9:30 AM

JM Snell mentioned that, without a reward, it will be difficult to get volunteers to follow through on NERIS reporting requirements, and he asked what that reward would be. Kenny answered that there will be a biannual compliance report that will identify which localities are not in compliance and will not receive their ATL grants as a result. This also includes individual departments within larger government subdivisions like counties to ensure no disbursement.

Committee Chair Maiatico noted Kenny's stress on the need for data to do the job and agreed with that point, noting that this has historically been a challenge in Virginia. He mentioned the discussion in the Administration, Finance, and Policy Committee regarding shifting money from the Mini Grant Program to the Fire Incident Reporting Grant Program to assist localities with being able to fulfill their reporting requirements.

Steve Sites said he believes there is a challenge in getting fire prevention efforts informed by data because the data does not always provide a full picture of what happened in the incident. He asked how that data can be made to work for prevention efforts. Kenny believes that stakeholder relationships will be a key to ensuring that localities will respond to the more in-depth data requests she is asking them to provide. She said that she would like to see local leaders use the geospatial tool from the dashboard to conduct their own analysis. This is a low-cost tool that can clearly demonstrate to a locality what demographics, critical infrastructure, and other key data points are and how to use them to craft fire prevention strategies.

In the future, some goals Kenny said she plans to pursue include efforts to work directly with local risk reduction efforts, implementing more emerging technology, and assisting with recruitment and retention efforts. Her overall focus is to change the culture of CRR into a more ambitious and innovative one than what it has historically been. To be successful, this needs to be shown to be sustainable. Right now, Kenny stated that CRR is at a proof-of-concept stage. She also anticipates a need for more staffing as these efforts progress.

b. Update from the Codes and Standards Workgroup Chair

Workgroup Chair Andrew Milliken said the 2024 stakeholder portion is largely complete. The Board of Housing and Community Development (BHCD) will meet again in December to vote to approve proposed regulations, and there will then be a sixty-day comment period for those regulations. Following that, BHCD vote again in the spring of 2027 to approve the

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

9:30 AM

final form of the new regulations, which will then be published in August 2027 and take effect in October.

Workgroup Chair Milliken provided an update to the Committee on two issues pertaining to agritourism. The first is a request from legislation to consider the duration temporary tents can be up for agritourism events. The duration is currently set at 180 days, and the proposal is to extend that to one year. He believes that this is not a significant change and it does not present cause for concern. He does believe the other item is more significant. Earlier this year, the Technical Review Board (TRB) made a determination that, if a site is conducting agritourism activities, it could then qualify for the farm exemption that exempts structures from building and fire codes. Workgroup Chair Milliken does not believe that this would be consistent with the current code requirements. BHCD is putting together a work group for that but that will not likely happen until early next year. The definition of agritourism activities in the *Code of Virginia* is broad, including any rural activities held at a farm facility.

The second issue is there are several stakeholder workgroups convened by the Department of Energy (DOE) through legislation. Workgroup Chair Milliken highlighted three of these. The first was established by HB 895/SB 448, which worked on the model ordinance requirement discussed by Committee Chair Maiatico earlier. He stated that the State Fire Marshal's Office contributed to this group, and that the proposed model ordinance appears to be well written and beneficial for localities. The second of these groups was tasked by HB 833 to draft a report on electric vehicle (EV) charging in residential, commercial, and industrial developments. The Codes and Standards Workgroup shared its concerns about the risks and hazards with the expansion of EV charging. The report is due by November 15. The last group was convened by HB 590/SB 382 to establish an online permitting process for residential solar panels. There is a July 1, 2027, deadline to enact this online platform. He related that there are concerns from building officials as DOE would be issuing building permits for these panels, but this would contradict the established permitting process in the SFPC. He thanked CRR Coordinator Kenny for her efforts, as the emphasis on more data will aid code development efforts. Committee Chair Maiatico thanked Workgroup Chair Milliken and CRR Coordinator Kenny for their presentations.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Fire Prevention and Control Committee

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

9:30 AM

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee

Greg Cavalli

Minutes completed by Greg Cavalli

Documents related to this meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board may be requested by contacting the Government Affairs Division by emailing PolicyOffice@vdfp.virginia.gov