

Virginia Fire Services Board

Friday, September 25, 2026
Amazement Square
27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504
10:30 AM

MINUTES

A meeting of the Virginia Fire Services Board was held in Lynchburg, Virginia. The meeting was called to order by Chair Abbey Johnston, and a quorum was present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Abbey Johnston, Chair – Virginia State Firefighters Association
Steven Sites, Vice Chair – Virginia Municipal League
John Miller – Designee, Virginia State Forester
Billy Hanks – Local Fire Marshal
Charles Sterne – General Public
James Calvert – Industry (SARA Title III/OSHA)
Jerome Williams – Certified Fire Service Instructor
Gerry Maiatico – Virginia Fire Prevention Association
Kevin Duck – Insurance Industry
Todd Lupton – Virginia Fire Chiefs Association
Edward L. Senter Jr. – Virginia Fire Service Council
JM Snell II – Virginia Board of Housing and Community Development
Todd King – Virginia Association of Counties

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Jess Rodzinka – Virginia Professional Fire Fighters
Carla Keese – Virginia Chapter, International Association of Arson Investigators

AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT

Marc Brade, Chief of Training and Operations
Theresa Hunter, Chief Administrative Officer
Andrew Utt, Assistant Chief State Fire Marshal
Sarah Kenny, Coordinator of Community Risk Reduction
Michael Parris, Deputy Chief of Training and Operations
Spencer Willett, Government Affairs Manager
Greg Cavalli, Policy Analyst

GUESTS PRESENT

Walt Bailey Andrew Milliken
Candace Brown Allen Carwile

Virginia Fire Services Board

Friday, September 25, 2026
Amazement Square
27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504
10:30 AM

CHANGES IN THE AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion: Approval of the minutes of the previous meetings (February 2026 and June 2026)

Motion: Calvert **Second:** Maiatico

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Minutes approved

REPORT FROM VDFP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) Chief of Training and Operations Marc Brade spoke on behalf of the agency as Acting Executive Director Jamey Brads could not attend. He stated that the agency has submitted its budget and legislative initiatives to the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and is awaiting approval of these. The agency was tasked by SB 233 with leading a workgroup to review the formula used to award grants from the Aid to Localities (ATL) program. The group recommended no changes to the ATL formula and instead urged that the Fire Programs Fund be increased. Chief Brade stated that VDFP will be supporting the Governor's Unified Readiness Summit, both by attending and by providing logistics, at Richmond Raceway on October 7, where there will be approximately 900 attendees. The Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security's office has interviewed several candidates for the Executive Director role. VDFP is hiring for a new position to administer the cancer screening program. Andrew Utt was promoted to Assistant Chief State Fire Marshal, Tony Carroll was hired as the new chief in Division 7, and Rebecca Smith was hired as the new chief of the Virginia Fire Marshal Academy (VFMA). VDFP now has a facility dog named Chas and the agency is considering expanding that service. VDFP's Training and Operations Branch has moved to new offices with new training and meeting rooms. Reaccreditation has been completed with both ProBoard and the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC). VDFP is accredited for 60 programs now with a goal of achieving 70 accredited programs by the end of 2027. He said that the agency aims to be the most accredited state in the nation. Chair Johnston thanked him for the agency's work on the SB 233 ATL formula workgroup and noted that the Lynchburg Fire Department had a very positive visit from Chas, the VDFP facility dog.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

10:30 AM

REPORT FROM THE FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Gerry Maiatico reported on the meeting of his committee. He informed the Board of the updates on the State Fire Marshal's Office provided by the new Assistant Chief State Fire Marshal, Andrew Utt. He also reviewed the presentation provided by VDFP's Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Coordinator, Sarah Kenny. He noted her statement that she needs more data to do her job and stated his intention that the committee will take the lead on promoting National Emergency Response Incident System (NERIS) reporting requirements to support her initiatives. Committee Chair Maiatico next summarized the report from Codes and Standards Workgroup Chair Andrew Milliken on the 2024 code development process. Workgroup Chair Milliken also provided updates on agritourism issues and reviewed the work of several Department of Energy workgroups that have drafted model ordinance language on energy storage systems, a report on electric vehicle charging stations, and are working on creating an online permitting process for residential solar panels.

REPORT FROM THE LIVE FIRE TRAINING STRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair James Calvert reported that there are currently five open projects for new construction totaling \$2.4 million, of which \$112,500 has been paid to date. There are also four open repair projects with a cost of \$157,156.80 and four open renovation projects with a cost of \$480,760.84. Altogether, these projects have a total cost of \$3,037,917.64.

He stated that the committee approved a motion to allow a 12-month extension for the City of Roanoke live fire training structure due to building permit issues, which will require a vote by the full Board. Board Clerk Spencer Willett clarified that the extension was for six months.

Motion: Approval of a 6-month extension for the City of Roanoke

Motion: Senter

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: The extension was approved for 6 months

REPORT FROM THE FIRE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Kevin Duck reported on updates provided by VDFP Chief of Training and Operations Marc Brade on the development of mental health awareness training and the National Fire Academy State Weekend, which will occur on March 20 and 21, 2027.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

10:30 AM

REPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, POLICY, AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair and Board Vice Chair Steve Sites stated that his committee had nine action items and suggested a block vote to approve all nine. The committee discussed nominations for the Lifetime Achievement Award, and the recommendation to approve the nomination of Chief Richard Mabie from Warren County for that award. The committee also voted to approve extensions for regional fire training facility grants for the City of Roanoke for twelve months and VDFP for twelve months. The committee declined to pursue expanding Governor's Fire Service Awards categories to create a new award for emergency dispatchers, as they may already be nominated in the category of Outstanding Fire Department Response. The Board has received the Prince Edward County Fire and EMS Study report and there will be a new Fire and EMS Study conducted next week in Washington County. The new policies for the cancer screening program and ATL were approved by the committee. After debate, the committee voted to move funds from the Mini Grant Program to the Fire Incident Reporting Grant Program due to the large number of grant applicants because of the NERIS reporting requirements. Two members of the committee volunteered to review the applications for Fire Incident Reporting Grants.

Vice Chair Sites asked Board Clerk Willett to review the motions from the committee in detail. Board Clerk Willett listed each item to be voted on in a block and asked members to state whether any items should be removed from the block. Calvert requested that the Firefighter Cancer Screening Grant Program Policy be removed from the block without objection. Items in the block include: Lifetime Achievement Award for Chief Richard Mabie, Regional Fire Service Training Facilities Grant extensions for the Department of Fire Programs and City of Roanoke, a Regional Fire Service Training Facilities Grant for the City of Roanoke, the Prince Edward County Fire and EMS Study report, the Washington County Fire and EMS Study request, the Aid to Localities Grant Program Policy, the Mini-Grant Program Policy, and moving \$699,000 to the Fire Incident Reporting Grant Program.

Motion: Approval of the block of action items from the Administration, Policy, and Finance Committee

Motion: Calvert

Discussion on the Motion: None

Vote: Unanimous

Action: All action items listed above were approved

Calvert moved for a roll call vote on the Firefighter Cancer Screening Grant Program Policy.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

10:30 AM

Motion: Roll call vote for approval of the Firefighter Cancer Screening Grant Program Policy

Motion: Calvert **Second:** Sterne

Discussion on the Motion: Calvert stated he supported cancer screening for Virginia's firefighters, but did not support only screening career, paid firefighters as the budget language required of the Board. This excludes over 70% of Virginia's fire service.

Vote: Unanimous with one abstention (Calvert)

Action: The policy is adopted

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Chair Johnston recognized former Board member Walt Bailey for his years of service and contributions to the Board. Chair Johnson presented former Board member Walt Bailey with an award to thank him for his contributions to the Board. Bailey asked the Board to continue to pursue avenues with the current administration for increased funding for the fire service. He also encouraged the board to continue efforts to create a modular training program which would benefit both career and volunteer firefighters.

She asked new members, Chief Loy Senter and Chief Todd Lupton, to introduce themselves and receive their VFSB badges.

FULL BOARD BUSINESS

a. Unfinished Business

b. New Business

a. Report from the VFSB Clerk

Board Clerk Spencer Willett asked the Board to complete and sign their travel forms. He stated that December 2 will be the next VFSB meeting, which will be virtual. The times of the meetings have not yet been determined. The next in-person meeting will be at the Virginia Fire and Rescue Conference on February 17-19 in Virginia Beach. The Governor's Fire Service Awards will take place on Wednesday, February 17, beginning at 10 AM. All four committees will meet on Thursday for one-hour blocks, and the full Board will meet on Friday at 9:30 AM. At the February meeting, the calendar for 2027 will be set by the Chair along with the Board. Staff will be working with the Board to determine the location for the September 2027 retreat meeting. Board Clerk Willett also gave an update on the uniform badges proposed by Kevin Duck, as they are currently in the procurement process and the hope it that they will be ready in time for the February meeting.

Virginia Fire Services Board

Friday, September 25, 2026

Amazement Square

27 9th Street, Lynchburg, VA 24504

10:30 AM

Chair Johnston stated that there is a report not on the agenda from CRR Coordinator Sarah Kenny. Kenny informed the Board of the upcoming release of the new Community Risk Assessment dashboard on October 6. This dashboard was created specifically for Virginia using NERIS data as well as other information such as demographic profiles to provide a geospatial tool that will be available to leaders across the Commonwealth, as well as the general public. She demonstrated the dashboard for the Board members.

ADJOURNMENT

Clerk of the Committee
Spencer Willett

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