Volunteer & Combination Officers Section
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VCOS Board Meeting Minutes
19-20 June 2026
Big Fork, MT

Participants:

VCOS Board Members Present:

Chief Rich Cowger, Chair
Chief Shawn P. Stokes, Secretary/Treasurer
Chief Jason Catrambone, International Director
Chief Kevin Cooney, Director at Large
Chief Jason Caughey, Director at Large
Chief Fred Windisch, Director at Large
Chief Jordan Cramer, Director at Large
Chief Tim Sendelbach, Director at Large

VCOS Board Members Not Present:
Chief Al Yancey, Vice Chair
Chief Spencer Cheatham, Director at Large

IAFC Guests/Staff:
Donna Black, CEO/Executive Director (Via Teams)
Daren D'Ippolito, Provident Insurance
Eric Swanson, VFIS
Skip Gibson, Versik
Matt Shronts, Target Solutions (via Teams)
Chief Norvin Collins (via Teams)
Kate Marquis, CTA Faculty (via Teams)
Kevin McGee, Staff Liaison
Mikel Robinson, Staff Support Contractor
Chief John M. Buckman III, Education Coordinator

Call to Order

Chief Cowger called the meeting to order at 0900 hrs MT. A roll call was made and a quorum was present.

Approval of May 12, 2026 Meeting Minutes
Chief Rich Cowger, Chair

MOTION: June 19, 2026-01
Motion made and seconded to approve the May 12, 2026 Board meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Caughey/Catrambone

Chair Report
Chief Rich Cowger

Chief Cowger provided positive comments regarding working with CEO Donna Black since her appointment. He further stated that he is working with CEO Black on wildland fire issues.

Chief Cowger reported that there was an Executive Committee meeting the previous week. The topic covered involved preparing the agenda for this Board meeting.

Vice Chair Report
Chief Al Yancey

Chief Yancey stated that he is still seeking Board input for the National Framework Summit topic.

International Director Report
Chief Jason Catrambone

Chief Catrambone provided an update on the last IAFC Board meeting. He commented on the openness of information from the CEO and IAFC staff.

Secretary/Treasurer Report
Chief Shawn P. Stokes

Chief Stokes presented the financial report. The Pierce MOU was approved. Chief Cowger sent Pierce management an appreciation email for continuing the funding program. A follow-up letter will be sent as a more formal expression of thanks.

Election Committee Report
Chief Shawn P. Stokes

Chief Stokes informed the Board of the unofficial results of the elections. Chief Cooney, Caughey, and Hoefle are the unofficial winners. The proposed bylaws revision were approved by the membership. The election results will be official after the IAFC Elections Committee meeting.

CEO/Executive Director
Chief Donna Black

CEO Black called in remotely and provided an overview of changes that are

occurring for FRI. Chief Black had Chelsea Lear give an update on Symposium in the Sun. CEO Black introduced COO Laura Smith. CEO Black informed the Board that she is reviewing all internal systems and practices to gain efficiencies so that we can be more organizationally nimble.

Education Committee Report
Chief Jason Caughey

Chief Caughey presented a report on the proposed Critical Thinking Advanced Fire Behavior course. The committee is pursuing a program that does not include learners entering the fire container with exposure to IDLH environment. Partners are being reached out to contribute to the program. Specifically, we are reaching out to the Company Officers Section as a partner.

Education Coordinator Report
Chief John M Buckman III

Chief Buckman III updated the Board on Symposium in the Sun and exhibitor guide. He provided a Critical Thinking Academy update. Chief Buckman III shared a report with program costs and logistics factors.

Chief Buckman III was joined by Chief Norvin Collins for a FROG program update and facilitated a discussion on suggested program improvements. The FROG program ranges from 1.5 hours to 1.5 days. Additional marketing is indicated.

Partnership Updates

Foundational Partners

Daren D'Ippolito, Provident Insurance stated that he is grateful for his organization to support VCOS.

Eric Swanson, VFIS commented that he is stepping into being the VFIS representative to VCOS as Joe Giorgio and Troy Markel are retiring.

Both Daren and Eric provided a detailed status of the insurance industry and its impact on the fire service. The volume and individual costs of preventable claims is creating a crisis.

Partners

Hugh "Skip" Gibson, Versik discussed the new version of the PPC wildfire assessment. He also discussed the interest in obtaining input into the ISO Fire Suppression Rating Schedule process.

Matt Shronts, Vector Solutions provided an overview of the CTA education platform.

Matt also presented an update Target Solutions and its webinars.

At Large Director Updates

Chief Caughey provided a written proposal for the VCOS Hall of Fame.

MOTION: June 19, 2026-02
Motion made and seconded to approve funding for a TV to show the VCOS Hall of Fame recipients at Symposium in the Sun to begin in 2027.

Stokes/Catrambone

Chief Jordan Cramer is seeking to learn what the Workforce Solutions team is planning for a new federal grant.

Chief Kevin Cooney expressed thanks for the support he received in the election. Chief Cooney provided a brief report that the FEMA Task Force is still meeting and preparing its White Paper.

Meeting was recessed at 1525 hrs MT.

20 June 2026

Chief Cowger reconvened the Board meeting at 0901 hrs MT

MOTION: June 20, 2026-01
Motion made and seconded to present two Symposium in the Sun complementary registrations and two $1,500 Symposium in the Sun scholarships to Big Fork (MT) Fire Department in appreciation for their hosting the Board dinner.

Caughey/Sendelbach

Critical Thinking Academy Update

Ms. Kate Marquis provided a CTA faculty report, stating that having LEAD Inc. instructional design contract to prepare a course curriculum is invaluable for the growth of the program and for the possibility to partner with an educational institution for the awarding of college credit in the future. CTA Cohort I & II are both pilot courses. The two pilots have been successful in improving the quality of the program.

A new step involves building a faculty through recruitment and train the trainer development that will involve a large investment, especially if we are to expand to two offerings per year.

It was the expressed pleasure of the Board to continue the CTA program's

advancement.

Support Position Report
Mikel Robinson

Ms. Robinson gave an update on the Training Officer Award and VCOS emails. She informed the Board that there are 1,537 VCOS members.

Staff Liaison
Kevin McGee

Kevin McGee requested the Board to provide their arrival and departure dates for FRI so that the hotel block can be reserved.

Old Business

None

New Business

None.

The meeting ended at 1049 hrs MT.

Minutes submitted by:

Mr. Kevin McGee
VCOS Staff Liaison

Chief Shawn P. Stokes
Secretary/Treasurer

Chief Rich Cowger
Chair

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