



Volunteer & Combination Officers Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs



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VCOS Annual Meeting

**July 29, 2021
Charlotte Convention Center
Charlotte, NC**

MINUTES

Present: Chief Norvin Collins, Chair Charles Flynn, Chief Jim Cook, Chief Ed Rush, Chief Ron Oettel, Chief Al Yancey, Chief Kevin Hardwick, Chief Brita Horn, Chief Paul Sterling

Absent: Chief Jason Catrambone, Chief Fred Windisch, Chief Rich Cowger

Guests: Second Vice President Donna Black, Chief Josh Waldo (candidate for IAFC Second Vice President), Chief Trisha Wolford, VCOS Members, VCOS Supporters

Staff: Ms. Kelly Ameen and VWS staff

The meeting started at 2:01 PM ET. There were about 60 attendees.

Introduction and Welcome – Chair Flynn

Chair Flynn called the meeting to order and welcomed those attending the VCOS Annual Meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted. He reviewed the agenda for the meeting with the group and introduced the VCOS Board of Directors. He also acknowledged IAFC Second Vice President Donna Black. He recognized past VCOS Chairs and IAFC staff.

Election Committee Report – Chief Flynn on behalf of Chief Florentino

Chief Flynn reviewed the 2021 VCOS Election Results.

The following chiefs were elected to 3-year terms:

- Fire Chief Brita Horn, Rock Creek (Colorado) Volunteer Fire Department
- Assistant Fire Chief Paul Sterling, Jr., Millville (Delaware) Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.
- Fire Chief Al Yancey, Jr., Minooka (Illinois) Fire Protection District

Motion by Chief Collins and seconded by Chief Oettel to accept the election results as presented. Motion carried.

Chief Ed Rush polled the VCOS board for interest in the Executive Committee positions. Only the current Executive Committee members expressed interest, so the Executive Committee remains the same going forward.

Outgoing Board Members – Chief Flynn

Chief Flynn recognized Chiefs Rush and Oettel for their outstanding work on the VCOS Board. They were each presented with a plaque of appreciation.

Swearing-in of VCOS At-Large Directors – IAFC Second Vice President Donna Black

President Black swore in the newly elected officers. This included the 2021 elected at-large directors mentioned in the Election Report above as well as Chief Kevin Hardwick who was elected in 2020 but was unable to have an in-person swearing-in due to COVID-19 and FRI being virtual.

IAFC Second Vice President Candidate – Chief Josh Waldo

Chief Waldo spoke about his candidacy for IAFC Second Vice President. He and Chiefs Butler and Wolford have partnered on a Member First initiative. Using this 3-person approach, they hope to have more consistency, and this allows them more time to implement ideas and make an impact. Chief Wolford also shared a few words and complimented VCOS on many of their resources.

FirstNet Authority Update – Chief Mike Varney

FirstNet would like to get more feedback from the responder community. Deployables are now available as an additional service to help with connectivity. These are free of cost to current FirstNet subscribers. Contact Mr. Varney for more details and for any feedback.

IAFC Government Relations Update – Mr. Evan Davis and Mr. Ryan Woodward

They have been busy on Capitol Hill. The Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA) was made permanent. Volunteers can receive up to \$600 in incentives without being taxable. They are advocating for AFG and SAFER programs and funding. They are working on the Next Generation 911 program funding as well. The IAFC Government Relations' "Hot Sheet" is available on the IAFC website.

International Director's Report – Chiefs Flynn and Black

Since Chief Catrambone was not in attendance, Chief Flynn summarized some IAFC updates. The IAFC is excited to have an in-person FRI this year. Financials have stabilized and the IAFC is on solid ground. Part of the original IAFC office space is being sub-leased to save money.

Chief Black reported that the IAFC Executive Committee met on Sunday at FRI. The full IAFC Board meeting was on Monday. The IAFC is on an upswing. There are many forward-thinking initiatives and ideas coming out from the IAFC Board. The IAFC has made a positive turn. Chief Catrambone has been a great addition to the IAFC Board. Chief Black is proud of the IAFC Board and where they are headed. Thanks to the IAFC and VCOS membership for getting us through a difficult time.

VCOS Supporter – Chief Oettel

Chief Oettel thanked all the VCOS supporters over the years. The work of the VCOS could not be accomplished without the dedication of our sponsors and supporters. He highlighted some of the top sponsors that contribute to the VCOS and encouraged VCOS members to use their services.

Lavender Ribbon Report and Cancer Initiatives – Chief Collins

Chief Collins presented on cancer prevention efforts by the VCOS and the joint efforts of the VCOS and the NVFC. He recognized the importance of the partnership to create the Lavender Ribbon Report and the efforts of both organizations to expand upon the project. An update to the original Lavender Ribbon Report will be available at the end of August. VCOS is also working to update the Yellow Ribbon Report on mental wellness.

VCOS Strategic Direction – Chief Al Yancey

The VCOS Board started strategic discussions in February and did a SWOT analysis. They then met in April to identify high, medium, and low priorities. They also conducted a virtual roundtable with other chiefs to get input. The IAFC Board will be briefed on the Strategic Direction document as well. Chief Yancey then reviewed the high priorities with the group.

Accomplishments 2020-20221 – Chief Cook

Chief Cook reviewed VCOS accomplishments since the 2020 annual meeting including the following:

- Released quarterly e-newsletter and monthly Report from the Chair e-blast
- Held a successful Virtual Symposium in the Sun in January 2021
- Conducted VCOS Board Meeting in Clearwater Beach Florida in April 2021
- Monthly VCOS webinars in 2021, quarterly in 2020
- Projects with Volunteer Workforce Solutions:
 - Guide to Creating an Inclusive Department
 - Content development for a transitioning course (online and in-person)
 - Culture climate survey
- Yellow and Red Ribbon Reports will be updated soon

Get Involved – Chief Rush

Chief Rush reported that as of July 2021 VCOS has 2,120 members. VCOS is always looking for articles for the quarterly newsletters

Treasurer/Secretary's Report – Chief Collins on behalf of Chief Windisch

Chief Collins went over each of the VCOS budget codes. The VCOS General Fund and Pierce Fund each had an overall increase in 2020 – more revenue came in than expenses incurred. The other budget codes had no activity in 2020. Symposium in the Sun was cancelled in 2020 and a virtual event was held in January 2021 instead. Symposium in the Spring was cancelled and had a loss of about \$18K. At this time, we do not plan to continue Symposium

in the Spring in the future. Overall, VCOS is stable and in good shape financially. The pandemic negatively affected 2020 operations and revenue streams. A modified zero-based budget was submitted in May 2020 with reduced revenues and expenses due to the pandemic. Future revenues are expected to fall without investments in more partnerships. VCOS has ongoing efforts to improve VCOS marketing and branding to help with this.

VCOS Educational Opportunities – Chief Collins

Chief Collins reviewed all the VCOS educational courses. Many were put on hold in 2020 due to COVID-19. There are some classes planned for this Fall. We have been doing monthly VCOS webinars.

Training Officer Award – Chief Collins

The 2020 Training Officer Award winner, Deputy Chief Karl Neubecker of Ellington Fire Department (CT), was presented an award. In addition, the 2021 winner, Volunteer Training Coordinator James Hedrick of Fairfax County (VA) Fire and Rescue Department was given his award. Thanks to Vector Solutions for sponsoring this award. Each winner spoke about their training programs and how they had to adjust during the pandemic.

Awards and Scholarships – Chief Yancey

Chief Yancey reviewed the various VCOS awards and scholarships. It is a great way to get involved and get to these great conferences like FRI and Symposium in the Sun. We encourage you to apply in the future. The Symposium in the Sun awards and scholarships should be opening in the next few weeks so keep an eye out.

FRI Scholarships – Chiefs Yancey and Rush

The 2021 FRI scholarship winners below were given their scholarship checks and congratulated for their applications.

- Chief Jim Baldis, Simsbury (CT) Volunteer Fire Company
- Director of Fire & Rescue Services Steven Hoffmann, Town of Farmington (CT) Fire Department

Connect with VCOS – Chief Hardwick

Visit the VCOS website for all the latest VCOS news, resources, and materials. Also make sure to connect with us on social media. If you want to get more involved, email us at vcos@iafc.org.

VCOS Business – Chief Flynn

Chief Kevin Cooney reported he continues to represent VCOS on the NFFF Advisory Committee and that it has been an honor to do so.

Chief Flynn mentioned he attended a First Responders Center of Excellence meeting in Florida focused on cancer in the fire service.

Chief Collins commented on the continued need to address mental wellness in the fire service.

Chief Wall encouraged VCOS to continue with partnerships at the Division and state chief levels.

Good of the Order – Chief Flynn

Chief Black stated that VCOS does great work and that she is proud she started off with VCOS and it helped her get to where she is now. She thanked everyone for their support of her IAFC leadership role.

Chief Tim Whitham continues to represent VCOS on the IAFC Program Planning Committee. If you have any ideas, thoughts, or feedback please get in touch with him.

Motion by Chief Collins and seconded by Chief Yancey to continue to support Chief Whitham on the Program Planning Committee. Motion carried.

Mr. Troy Markel thanked Chief Cooney for his work on the NFFF Advisory Committee.

Closing Comments – Chief Flynn

Chief Flynn mentioned a few reports that VCOS may work on in the future including one on relations with government/elected officials and another report on data collection.

He encouraged attendees to get involved if you aren't already.

Motion by Chief Horn and seconded by Chief Collins to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed.

The meeting adjourned at 3:17 PM ET.