



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

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**VCOS Board Teleconference  
Wednesday, February 10, 2021  
3:00 p.m. Eastern/2:00 p.m. Central/1:00 p.m. Mountain/12:00 p.m. Pacific  
Attendees dialed-in via Teams Meeting**

### MINUTES

Present: Chief Charles Flynn, Chief Ed Rush, Chief Jason Catrambone, Chief Rich Cowger, Chief Al Yancey, Chief Kevin Hardwick, Chief Jim Cook, Chief Fred Windisch, Chief Ron Oettel

Absent: Chief Norvin Collins

Guest: Chief John Buckman, Mr. Richard Miller

Staff: Ms. Kelly Ameen

The call started at 3:01 PM.

#### **Welcome/Chair's Report – Chief Flynn**

Chief Flynn welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Motion by Chief Catrambone and seconded by Chief Cowger to approve the January meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.**

We submitted names for representation on NFPA 950/951 to President Carrizzo and are waiting to hear back. We submitted a person from Connecticut and another one from Chief Cook's department.

The IAFC has created a membership taskforce to look at membership database issues, the drop in membership, members in arrears, etc. There were names on the VCOS list but not on New England division list so it looks like something is incorrect there. Chief Rush is willing to help serve on the committee if needed.

#### **NFIRS Project – Richard Miller**

Mr. Richard Miller, IAFC staff, gave an update on the NFIRS project. The NFIRS system is being updated in all states. The new system will be single log-in access for data entry and retrieval. There will be more usable data. The IAFC was chosen by the USFA to reach out the fire service about the NFIRS updates. The IAFC will continue to push out information

and connect chiefs and states with the USFA and assist with transitioning to the new system and promote the new dashboard being released later this year. Better national data will help us look at trends. A special COVID related field was added for a special study going through 2022. With the new system, you can change your password on your own. They are working on ways for departments to best use the system data for funding, recruitment, etc. There is a summary output tool available. The dashboard will be much more streamlined. The new software has already started rolling out in some states and will continue to add new states. Third party vendors have also been notified about some of these changes and enhancements.

February 22-26 will be the first ever NFIRS Week. Chief Flynn and other VCOS board members will be participating in an open townhall panel discussion. Thanks to VCOS for helping!

#### **Vice Chair's Report – Chief Cowger**

Chief Cowger is working on the VCOS committees list and the details for the potential Chaplain Guide project.

#### **International Director's Report – Chief Catrambone**

We need to make decisions soon on whether the Hazmat Conference and FRI will happen in-person or not. There should be a decision about Hazmat in the next week or so. FRI will be decided by early April. Currently, Charlotte only allows 30% occupancy.

#### **Secretary/Treasurer's Report – Chief Windisch**

Chief Windisch sent the VCOS Treasurer's report to the VCOS Board via email. We are financially healthy, and we didn't spend much last year or this year so far. Staff costs have not been added for 2020 yet, but Ms. Ameen did remind the Finance group this needs to be done.

#### **Virtual Symposium in the Sun – Chief Windisch and Chief Buckman**

Overall, we received very positive feedback on the Virtual Symposium in the Sun. Chief Windisch sent out the survey feedback and encouraged the VCOS Board to review it. We did not have as many people at night which lends Chief Buckman to believe most of our attendees are career chiefs in combination departments. In the future, we will gather this data. Chief Cowger mentioned he knows some fully career departments that had people attend. Chief Buckman said he knew some from Indiana too.

We will explore the possibility of having some virtual sessions this year even if Symposium in the Sun happens in-person.

#### **Education Programs Update – Chief Buckman**

We are aiming to do 1 webinar a month.

The graphic designer has started some initial design work for the Yellow Ribbon Report updates.

Mr. Spencer Cheatham provided information on the transitioning training he is working on through the SAFER grant with other VCOS members. Chief Buckman has been impressed

with the direction it is going in. It will help inform the updates to the Red Ribbon Report. Chief Buckman suggests that six VCOS members get trained on the Transitioning course so that VCOS can continue to conduct the class after the grant ends.

We will aim to have in-person VCOS courses in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. We will look to advertise and go through state training directors, divisions, etc. Ms. Ameen mentioned the IAFC has put together some guidelines for conducting trainings during COVID and those should be used when we start doing in-person trainings again.

We are currently working on the speakers for the November Symposium in the Sun. We are looking for a "wow" to enhance the conference experience so think of what that "wow" could be!

Chief Oettel met with Chief Render to talk about marketing, but when they started brainstorming, they realized that we need more of a board strategic direction. We had meetings in 2018 and 2019 but not a lot came out of those afterwards. We need some better pre-planning. It might be better to be really good at a few things rather than biting off too much at once. We need to have a plan forward. Chief Flynn asked that a group be put together to work on this. That group will be Chief Hardwick, Oettel, Cowger, Cook, and Render. They will get on a separate call to flush this out.

#### **Old Business – Chief Flynn**

The VCOS quarterly newsletter will go out this Friday.

#### **New Business**

The VCOS election is currently open through February 26. No submissions from the Western Division can be accepted.

#### **Roundtable, Announcement, and Committee Updates**

Ms. Ameen had to leave the call at 3:58PM so the minutes reflect discussion up until that point.