



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

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**VCOS Board Teleconference
Wednesday, June 10, 2020
1:00 pm Eastern/12:00 pm Central/11:00 am Mountain/10:00 am Pacific
Attendees dialed-in via Teams Meeting**

MINUTES

Present: Chief Charles Flynn, Chief Al Yancey, Chief Donna Black, Chief Rich Cowger, Chief Ron Oettel, Chief Fred Windisch, Chief Ed Rush, Chief Jason Catrambone

Staff: Ms. Kelly Ameen, Ms. Catherine Lugo, Mr. Spencer Cheatham

Absent: Chief Jim Cook, Chief Norvin Collins

The call started at 1:06 PM.

Welcome – Chief Flynn

Chief Flynn welcomed the VCOS board to the call. Chief Flynn addressed the letter sent by President Ludwig regarding the IAFC financial situation.

International Director Report – Chief Black

The accounting firm contracted by the IAFC has been managing the ongoing financial challenges. The firm provided suggestions for moving forward, which included staff reductions. Mr. Rob Brown will be working with staff on rebuilding and restructuring within the organization.

IAFC SAFER Grant Update – Mr. Cheatham

Mr. Cheatham presented an overview of the National SAFER 4 grant awarded in November 2019. The grant includes a national survey, online and in-person training, and generalized resources for volunteer and combination departments. Mr. Cheatham outlined six projects as part of the survey: collecting previous exit surveys given by fire departments across the country; conducting a scholarly works review regarding the motivation and economic factors involved in volunteerism; creating a survey for top performing people in a department to determine their motivation; conducting exit surveys for people who have left the volunteer fire service; asking current volunteer firefighters about their reasons to join; and asking people who are not in the fire service what prevents them from volunteering and what would incentivize them to join their local fire department.

A team of Subject Matter Experts, including Chief Cook representing VCOS, will help develop a course on how departments can transition from a volunteer to combination system. The final piece involves an in-person course with roleplaying scenarios to effectively build a collaborative team between volunteers and paid personnel. The online course is anticipated to be released in Spring 2021. Generic applications, social media content, and administrative job descriptions will also be added to the A-RIT system.

Chief Yancey shared potential updates to the Red Ribbon Report, tying into the analysis component of the National SAFER 4 grant. The goal will be to illustrate what the combination transition would entail, provide tools for departments to determine the costs involved, and to educate local officials on the process.

Fire-Rescue International – Chief Flynn

FRI is currently still moving forward with the status continuously being monitored. The Training Officer Award application period is open until June 26.

Symposium in the Sun – Chief Windisch

Chief Windisch sent the speaker list for Symposium in the Sun. Due to staffing changes, Ms. Ameen reported that the conference staff contact will be determined.

VCOS Election – Chief Rush

The election is open until June 17. There is currently not an update on voting numbers.

Communications Committee – Chief Rush

The spring newsletter included articles related to COVID-19. The next newsletter will likely concentrate on recovery following the effects of the pandemic. Chief Black suggested including an article about creative ways to continue training during COVID-19.

Ms. Lugo continues to run VCOS social media and can post any content VCOS would like to share.

Education Update – Chief Flynn

Yellow Ribbon Report

The committee is reviewing the survey results.

Beyond Hoses & Helmets: Putting the Pieces Together

The classes are going forward while being mindful of potential travel restrictions.

Lavender Ribbon Initiative

Three webinars remain. The next webinar will be held August 11.

Roundtable, Announcement, and Committee Updates

Many expressed gratitude and provided an overview of the COVID-19 situation in their state and jurisdiction.

Chief Yancey: I'm wondering if anything will come out about financial incentives especially for volunteer firefighters. What resources are out there in addition to the stimulus?

Ms. Ameen: Send me an email and I will forward that question to our Government Relations team.

Chief Yancey: I know membership numbers are down. How has that affected section membership?

Ms. Ameen: I will find out that information.

Chief Black: We used the membership decreases we saw in 2008 as a rough estimate for what to expect.

Chief Yancey: We're doing a panel discussion in Illinois talking about the effects of COVID-19 and civil unrest on the volunteer fire service. Chief Rush will be part of that panel.

Chief Oettel: There is not much to report from the COVID-19 committee. Information on sponsorships hasn't advanced as much as I had hoped. I hope to bring more to the next meeting.

Chief Rush: Is there an update on the staffing plan moving forward?

Ms. Ameen: Staff is currently working on that and will have an update.

Ms. Lugo: The next Chair's Report is scheduled to go out June 11. It will include a reminder about the election and Training Officer Award announcement, so hopefully that will help get more nominations in.

Ms. Ameen: We will reorganize and restructure due to the staffing changes. This will hopefully bring everyone together to create an even better IAFC.

Chief Flynn: I was interviewed for an article on behavioral health for Fire Chief magazine. Once we have more information about staffing updates and FRI, we will have another call to share any changes.

Chief Flynn thanked everyone for attending the call.

The call adjourned at 2:03 PM.