

VCOS Election 2018

Fire Chief John Mohler, Bloomfield (New Mexico) Fire Department

Let me start by saying thank you for supporting the volunteer fire service. If you are reading this, you obviously take what we do seriously, as we all should. The volunteers that serve our citizens do so entirely out of the goodness of their heart and deserve the full support the VCOS provides. With that said, I would appreciate your consideration, and hopefully vote, for a position on the VCOS board of directors.

I have served the Bloomfield Fire Department for twenty-three years, both as a volunteer and career firefighter. In these years I have gained experience on how a fire department operates from the volunteer firefighter through Chief level. This department has grown from all volunteer to a combination department during my tenure, giving me a unique perspective of what VCOS could do. I would like to continue learning within the fire service by gaining admittance into the VCOS board of directors.

I have attended the Symposium in the Sun, as well as Symposium in the West and have been impressed with what VCOS represents. I previously served as the VCOS representative on the IAFC UAS (Drone) Task Force. With that, I see a VCOS board position as an opportunity to work for the fire service community on a level beyond my local jurisdiction, helping it grow into the future. Thank you for your consideration.

Fire Chief Michael Mulligan, Atascocita (Texas) Fire Department

My name is Mike Mulligan and I am asking you to elect me as an at-large director of the IAFC, VCOS Board of Directors. As a 20+ year veteran of the volunteer fire service and the chief of a growing combination department, I hope to bring a new perspective to the VCOS board. The fire service struggles with recruitment and retention of members, the VCOS must stay in touch with its roots and strive to understand the challenges presented by today's ever changing social and economic environment. As the retention silo leader for the VCOS Vision Project, I came to realize just how great the potential is for motivating individuals to continue their careers with volunteer fire departments. Likewise, I see every day how full or part time paid personnel can be motivated by rewards other than money and will build pride and ownership in their departments, when welcomed in.

I have been active in the volunteer fire service since 1985, serving on four fire departments. Along with my wife Nia, I raised my family during those years and I understand the challenges faced by today's firefighters. With the continuous pull of home, work and social life, finding time to volunteer is daunting. I worked my way through the ranks of two fire departments and know how demanding that process is, and how rewarding it can be. The paid side of the fire service demands no less of a person and I've been there too. Hiring and promotional tests, side jobs, continuing education, etc. all weigh on every firefighter. "How do I make it all work?" **Maintaining focus on the needs of and ensuring a voice for those that follow is what I plan to bring to the VCOS board.**

Please vote for me during the upcoming election.

Fire Chief Ron Oettel, Lititz (Pennsylvania) Fire Department

I have had the good fortune to serve in the volunteer fire service for the past 38 years, serving 23 of those as the chief of a wonderful all-volunteer fire department. We are a department that respects the great traditions of the volunteer fire service but are equally progressive. We have been a leader in many regards: training, certifications, adaptability to changing times, and much more.

As chief of this organization I have fostered a culture where we are all of equal value and all contributors. We are a culture of “we,” “us,” “our,” and not “me,” “mine,” and “I.” Far from perfect, we are a shining example of how we can cope and succeed during challenging times for the volunteer fire service.

In addition to the ever-evolving world of managing an active, moderately busy department, I have been involved with many local, state, and national organizations. I served on a State Senate appointed committee to address the many problems and concerns of the volunteer fire and emergency services in PA and charged with finding reasonable, workable solutions. Many of our programs have come to fruition with positive benefits. Among other leadership roles and positions I most recently was involved with the design and deployment of a P25 radio system for Lancaster County, PA. This was a 15 year project involving many meetings, organizational challenges, tasks, and efforts to bring the system to a workable conclusion.

I have been very lucky to spend the past 17 years in close relationship with the VCOS and its many leaders over that time. I worked for a company that is a corporate partner to the VCOS and that allowed me to attend most of the board meetings and a variety of other events during that time. I have a deep and thorough understanding of how the VCOS works and performs to achieve so many great successes. I know that I can hit the ground running and am excited to contribute to the next chapter of the great work this organization does.

I am presently an independent business owner with a long history of business experience. My degree is in accounting and marketing. My fire service experience, business experience, and education give me a solid base on which to support and advance the efforts of the VCOS.

I humbly ask for your support to serve the VCOS. Thank you!

Fire Chief Edward Rush, Hartsdale (New York) Fire Department

I have had the honor of representing you on the VCOS board for the last four years, and I am asking for your help to allow me to continue to serve you as a VCOS board member. I have been a volunteer firefighter for almost 42 years, including serving as Past Chief of the Elmsford Fire Department, currently serving as Chief of the Combination Hartsdale Fire Department, and being a member of the Government Affairs Committee of the NYSAFC. This country was built on the spirit of volunteerism. Organizations such as the VCOS and the IAFC are essential in keeping the volunteer fire service strong. No one department can go it alone. We all need to work together. I believe that my background in both the volunteer and career fire service, government, and private sector give me a unique perspective and a set of skills that will enable me to continue to help the VCOS and the IAFC to fulfill their missions. As a board member, I have been able to see firsthand the great work that VCOS does. Recruitment and retention, funding, training and firefighter health are major challenges that we all face daily. The VCOS Board is working diligently to help all your departments overcome those challenges. My fellow board members

and I are committed to continue bringing you resources, such as the various ribbon reports dealing with topics such as Mental Health and Cancer, scholarships and grants to allow you to attend training, regional classes such as FROG and Beyond Hoses and Helmets, Symposium in the Sun and West, and our newsletters and other publications. I am very excited to continue being a part of the leadership of this vital organization and I ask you for your help in voting to keep me on the VCOS board.

Thank you and stay safe.

Deputy Fire Chief James Seavey, Sr., Cabin John Park (Maryland) Volunteer Fire Department

I was honored to have been at the inaugural meeting that formed the VCOS in 1994. Between then and now, I have seen the VCOS grow into the great organization it is today. It is great because of our commitment to the section, the fire service, and our departments. When I embarked upon the journey to be elected and to work even harder for all of us in the VCOS, I had a sidebar agenda of working to bring the NVFC and VCOS closer together on issues of mutual interest. However, it is never as easy as first expected. Now, 6 years later as a Board member, I have been fortunate enough to not only be able bring the VCOS and NVFC closer, but also to be involved in many exciting VCOS programs and projects.

Once on the Board, it became quite clear to me that I either had to “put up or shut up” on the many projects that VCOS was addressing back then. Now, we handle so much more; it is both daunting and amazing! I do believe, however, that there is a committed, dedicated group making up your Board, and they are perfectly situated to work in unison to address the issues of today and tomorrow. Having been involved at the inception and representing each and every one of you today as your Board member gives me the focus, dedication, and drive to maintain the continuity we need in the section, tying our past to today and the future.

Over my years as a board member, I have worked on the VCOS 20th Anniversary project by designing the challenge coin associated with that event. I have been a principle designer of the FROG educational program and continue to present that course to this day. Along with 3 fellow Board members, I helped to establish the process of visiting local departments while at conferences and board meetings. This process was instrumental in leading the VCOS to develop the Symposium in the West.

It is for this truly fraternal and dedicated reason, along with my personal quest to help lead the VCOS and the IAFC as your personal representative to both the National Fire Service Occupational Cancer Alliance and its Steering Committee that I have made the humble decision to ask for your support in my re-election to the VCOS Board of Directors.

Your support would be most appreciated

Fire Chief John Whisenant, Beaver Lake (Arkansas) Fire Department

John Whisenant is fire chief of the Beaver Lake Fire Department (BLFD), Rogers, Arkansas. He has been a member of the IAFC, SW Division, and VCOS since becoming chief in 2015. Chief Whisenant began his fire service career in 2003 as a volunteer for the Gallatin Fire Department, graduated the Arkansas Fire Academy in 2005 and began working as a contract firefighter in Iraq in 2006. Chief Whisenant spent four years in Iraq, working through the ranks to fire prevention officer. During his service in Iraq, John worked with a diverse group of men and women from across the US taking initiative as a member of the

NFPA 1500 committee in country, and as an instructor for base fire safety programs. Chief Whisenant returned home and in 2012 took a position as a dispatcher at NW Arkansas Regional Airport before being hired as an aircraft rescue firefighter.

Chief Whisenant values public service and continued as a volunteer with BLFD while working as a career firefighter. Whisenant served as training captain for BLFD where in his first 14 months he instructed and/or facilitated thirteen certification courses impacting nine area departments and over seventy personnel. Chief Whisenant seeks out certification courses from other states to learn from a broader group of peers.

Since being appointed full-time chief of BLFD, John has worked tirelessly to improve public safety for his community. John helped to take BLFD from volunteer to a combination model fire department, bringing the department in-line with NFPA standards. Whisenant also began his community's first locally based ambulance service. Within eight months of implementing this Basic Life Support service, Chief Whisenant negotiated a co-operative partnership with Mercy Health which upgraded the ambulance to ALS leveraging existing apparatus, equipment, facilities, and blending BLFD provided FF/EMT's and Mercy provided paramedics. This not only improved the level of care to the community along with response times, this unique blending of personnel utilizes the FF/EMT as an operational member on fire incidents. Chief Whisenant has also instituted the department's first water rescue program purchasing equipment through grants and engaging the community for donations. Further community engagement led to a successful fire dues increase, the first in 10 years. Most recently BLFD improved their ISO rating from class six to a class four.

Chief Whisenant has worked with neighboring departments to improve their training and sharing the resources more available to BLFD which includes having brought a neighboring Fire Chief to FRI 2016. Chief Whisenant also has enhanced automatic aid agreements with area departments to better serve the community's at-large.

Chief Whisenant is active in the NW Arkansas Metro Fire Chiefs, Benton County Fire association, current validation member for IFSTA Marine firefighter for land-based firefighters, previous ambassador for FRI 2017, and enrolled in year two of the Texas Fire Chiefs association Certified Fire Executive program.

Bringing a high level of dedication and a passion to serve as a member of the VCOS Board of Directors, I wish to help advocate improved training and service delivery for and by volunteer and combination departments. I also want to help improve firefighter health and safety.

John is engaged and has two sons Hunter and Skyler, a daughter Bremily, and a daughter due in March.

Fire Chief Timothy Whitman, Edwardsville (Kansas) Fire Department

Please allow me a few minutes to introduce myself, I am Tim Whitham, the Fire Chief of the Edwardsville Fire Department in the Kansas City Metro Area. I am writing to seek your support and vote for the position of the International Association of Fire Chiefs' (IAFC) Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) at-large board member.

I am in my 11th year serving as a Fire Chief of combination fire departments, and have an understanding of the complex issues facing both the volunteer and combination agencies. I have also served as a chief and chief officer of volunteer organizations as well. Many times, volunteer and combination chiefs

attempt to do the best that they can with not only limited resources and staffing, but more importantly limited funding. I believe and practice servant leadership when we put more into those that we serve, the better we can make them and in turn makes the agency better. I intend to bring this mindset and practice with me to the VCOS section.

I have represented the VCOS section numerous times while serving as a peer reviewer for AFG grants, served as the VCOS representative on the Affordable Care Act task force, serving on the VCOS Toolkit for Chiefs Dealing with Federal Regulators committee, as well as serving as your VCOS representative to the Fire Rescue International planning committee. This as well as serving as an adjunct NFA instructor has allowed me to establish numerous contacts in the fire service, and I have heard a variety of issues that are affecting the combination and volunteer fire departments.

Some of the issues I have heard of and will address as your board member include:

- Increased dialog with volunteer fire chiefs and addressing their concerns.
- Recruitment and retention incentives and programs.
- Increased opportunities for fire service training at little to no cost to the individuals or departments.
- Increased health and wellness programs including pursuing legislation to fund these programs, mental health benefits and presumptive cancer benefits.
- Maintaining AFG, SAFER and Fire Prevention Grant funding.
- Reimbursable funding for fire-based EMS transport and First Response services.

As a member of the VCOS board I will push for more interaction of VCOS to the state chief's associations as not only a recruitment tool for more chief officers, but to also highlight what VCOS can do for them. We can make the voice of us heard, we can make the necessary change to make our individual organizations better by being proactive in our pursuit to highlight the needs and concerns of the volunteer and combination fire departments in the United States. But I will need your help to address these issues and the issues that you feel are affecting your agency as well. We must take every opportunity to highlight our needs and concerns at every level from the local level to the federal level. As one voice, we can influence and change the environment we are in. I promise to be available to any member of the VCOS section to listen to your concerns, address your needs and provide guidance within VCOS to elevate the nations volunteer and combination fire departments.

Volunteer and combination agencies serve every aspect of America from the rural jurisdictions and small towns to the suburbs of major cities. I humbly ask for your support and vote Tim Whitham as a VCOS at-large board member in the upcoming election. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please contact me. Tim Whitham 913-461-0300 twhitham@edwardsvilleks.org

Fire Chief Al Yancey, Jr., Minooka (Illinois) Fire Protection District

I have served almost 30 years in the volunteer/combination fire service. The first ten years of my fire service journey I served as a volunteer firefighter, then captain, deputy chief and was appointed as the first full-time fire chief/administrator of the all-volunteer department.

Later I was offered the position as fire chief in a combination department outside of Louisville, Kentucky. I became that District's first full-time fire chief where we transitioned the organization from all volunteer to combination. We focused on staffing fulltime personnel to cover our highest demands for service during the daytime hours and remained committed to maintain our volunteer staffing throughout the evening and overnight.

I became the fire chief at Minooka Fire Protection District, Illinois, in 2003 where I continue to serve today. Since becoming chief at Minooka our organization has transitioned from mostly volunteer to a combination department that rosters civilian employees, cadets, volunteers, part-time, career union and contract firefighter/paramedics; a truly combination organization.

I served as chairman of the Illinois Volunteer and Combination Officer Committee (IL-VCOC) since 2005 when my proposal to establish such a committee was accepted by the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association (IFCA). IL-VCOC operates at a State level like the IAFC-VCOS does nationally. As chairman, I guided our committee on a mission of improving leadership quality in volunteer fire departments across Illinois. We fulfill our mission through annual conferences, weekend educational programs, equipment exchanges and legislative initiatives. We administered a \$1.3 million SAFER grant to provide more than 245 fire departments education and resources to recruit and retain additional volunteer firefighters. In 2017 I was appointed by the president of the IFCA as the first ever IL-VCOC Director, a position similar to the IAFC-VCOC International Director, bringing the IL-VCOC to the decision-making table of the Executive Board.

I am and have been an active member of the VCOS since 2003. In November 2017 I was appointed as a member of the Symposium in the Sun planning committee. In 2011 I represented Illinois at the VCOS Volunteer Summit in D.C., which was the foundation event of the VISION project. The Illinois VCOC has a strong partnership with VCOS in order to promote the work of the VCOS (ribbon reports, education, etc.) in Illinois. I am a strong advocate for VCOS in Illinois for many years.

I am a 2009 Graduate of the Executive Fire Officer Program, hold a bachelor's degree in Fire Service Management from Southern Illinois University and an Illinois certified Fire Officer II. I am married with two children.

The VCOS is one of the most successful Sections of the IAFC, much like VCOC is in Illinois. I know the challenges and issues facing volunteer and combination departments in our country and I'm passionate about helping the volunteer and combination departments be successful in their community. The VCOS has a responsibility to continue providing tools and resources to leaders of volunteer and combination departments so they can be successful in their leadership.

If elected to the VCOS Board, I will be dedicated to maintaining a dynamic section that addresses the needs of the volunteer and combination fire service. I will focus my attention on health and wellness of volunteer firefighters (physical and mental); advanced education for volunteer leadership and minimal costs through increased marketing of our VCOS programs; increased use of the National Fire Academy by advocating for more than one reimbursable visit; and look to the next generation of leaders to get involved with VCOS and bring their talents and knowledge to our section. To learn more, visit my website at <https://yancey4vcos.wixsite.com/yancey4vcos>