

STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION
MINUTES
October 15, 2015

Members Present: Charles D. Davis, Chairman
Mark F. Hubbard, Vice Chairman
Mark A. Bilger
K.C. Harrington
Martin J. LePore
Joseph L. Scheffey
Anthony J. Spencer
Richard L. Yinger

Members Absent: Stacy Welch

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at the Laurel Municipal Center in Laurel, Prince George's County.

Chairman Davis welcomed newly appointed Commissioners Mark A. Bilger and Joseph L. Scheffey. Mr. Bilger is a retired Deputy Chief Fire Marshal from the Office of the State Fire Marshal, currently works for the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center, and serves in the volunteer fire service in Carroll County. He replaces Commissioner Timothy Dayton and will serve on the Commission as a representative for the volunteer fire service for the Western Maryland area. Mr. Scheffey is a part-time fire protection engineer with Jenson-Hughes Associates with 38 years of experience and is a University of Maryland graduate. He replaces Commissioner Eugene Jones and will serve on the Commission as a representative for industry for the Washington-Metropolitan area.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Fire Marshal Brian Geraci reported two Deputy State Fire Marshals (DSFMs) and two Fire Safety Inspectors (FSIs) will be hired at the end of October. The inspectors will be assigned to the Southern Region. Three recently hired DSFMs will begin law enforcement academy training on November 9th. Interviews are also being conducted for two contract inspector positions in the Southern and Northeast Regions. Interviews are being scheduled for the computer specialist position. Applications for the Western FSI position are currently being reviewed. The FSI position for the Upper Eastern Shore will be advertised in the near future.

The agency has set up a web page for Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) alumni to help keep in touch: <https://sites.google.com/site/osfmalumni>. Many thanks to retired Deputy Chief John Wagner for assisting with coordinating the alumni group. Several alumni recently attended a luncheon and it was a good gathering. Fire Marshal Geraci expressed the importance of remembering those who helped move the agency forward. Commissioner Bilger recently spoke to Mr. Wagner and retired FSI Jim Towers and they think the website and luncheons are a great idea.

As of this date fire fatalities for 2015 stands at 48, compared to 43 for this period last year. Two fatalities occurred in Charles County a few days ago. Smoke alarms alerted the occupants and four others were able to escape. Commissioner Scheffey inquired if this is comparable to the rate over the last decade. CFPE Iseminger advised that since 1975 when there were 174 fatalities, they have dropped consistently and average about 60 per year now. This is due both to improved smoke alarm laws and media campaigns and to several jurisdictions adopting requirements for residential sprinklers.

The Department of State Police has included all of the OSFM budget requests in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal. This includes \$300,000 for new vehicles over the next five years, three new fire protection engineers, and eight new fire safety inspectors, all of which are over the target requests. The annual salary review for FSIs was also approved for submission.

The OSFM will be getting two used Jeep Liberty vehicles from the Maryland Transportation Authority. One of these 4-wheel drive vehicles will be assigned to the Western Region.

Over 200 participants attended this year's Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference. The topics were well-received in the new format which eliminated a key-note speaker to provide time to host three sets of workshops throughout the day. Several Commission members who attended stated they liked the new format. Chairman Davis was unable to attend due to prior commitments but stated the topics this year looked very interesting.

The OSFM is partnering with the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA) and Maryland Fire Chiefs Association (MSCA) to conduct side-by-side burns on the eastern shore. Four burns are scheduled throughout the lower shore this month. It is hoped burns can also be scheduled in Western Maryland. The National Fire Sprinkler Association helped build the trailers for the demonstrations. None of the Eastern Shore delegation or County Commissioners attended the recently held events. Chairman Davis read a recent news article that the Caroline County delegation plans to submit legislation to repeal requirements for sprinklers in new one- and two-family homes. It is very disappointing that residential sprinklers are not being supported by the Eastern Shore fire service. Charles County is supportive. The Fire Prevention Commission has gone on record in support of residential sprinklers. CFPE Iseminger stated the requirements took effect July 1, 2015, but has met resistance in the eastern and western areas of the state.

Please take the time to visit the Maryland Fire and Life Safety Information Exchange website (www.mdflifesafety.org) and the OSFM Facebook page (<http://facebook.com/MarylandStateFireMarshal>) to review updated information and news releases.

OSFM personnel supported breast cancer awareness month, raising \$300 through the sale of T-shirts.

Delmarva Power will host a media event on October 28th to donate 1,200 10-year smoke alarms for distribution in the areas they serve. The event will be held at noon at Salisbury Fire Department #16, 325 Cypress Street in Salisbury.

Fire Marshal staff will meet with the Maryland Stadium Authority in preparation of conducting plan reviews and inspections for 23 new public schools proposed in Baltimore County. This will put a burden on the FPE and FSI staff until the projects are completed. Seven schools are already beginning the process.

Fire Marshal Geraci presented the Commission with a Governor's Proclamation for Fire Prevention Week.

CHIEF ENGINEER REPORT

Chief Fire Protection Engineer (CFPE) Larry Iseminger is currently surveying sprinkler contractors to gather data on cost estimates. About 20 surveys have been returned so far with costs running from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot, plus additional if a pump and tank are needed. Recent conversations with John Livingston, former Chairman of the Fire Prevention Commission and a licensed sprinkler contractor, indicated he was very disturbed with the misinformation being disseminated regarding the cost of installations and the high bids some sprinkler contractors are providing. His company intends to bid any residential sprinkler installation anywhere in the state in order to keep costs at a reasonable and realistic level.

CFPE Iseminger announced he will be retiring December 31, 2015. He has thoroughly enjoyed working under Fire Marshal Geraci and the previous Fire Marshals during the course of his 38 year tenure, but the time has come to move on and enjoy doing other things. CFPE Iseminger introduced other OSFM engineers in the audience—Ken Bush, C.J. Giblin, and Derek Murgatroyd—all of whom would make excellent candidates for his replacement.

The Governor's newly appointed Regulatory Review Committee has been holding public meetings throughout the state. CFPE Iseminger attended the one in Hagerstown where several issues were brought up regarding excessive regulations and delays in getting permits. Most complaints concerned the State Highway Administration and the Department of Environment, but several persons spoke about regulations enforced by the OSFM. CFPE Iseminger attempted to address these concerns and followed up with a letter to the Committee after he researched the projects and concerns mentioned. FPE Bush attended the meeting on the Eastern Shore but only residential sprinklers came up. Commissioner Scheffey attended the meeting in College Park and sprinklers were not an issue there.

CHAIRMAN REPORT

Chairman Davis inquired as to the status of replacing Secretary Heidi Ritchie who has indicated she intends to resign her commission duties effective January 1, 2016. Fire Marshal Geraci indicated he is having difficulty since other agency administrative staff already have auxiliary duties in addition to their regional responsibilities and have not indicated a desire to take the position. At this time he is unsure what action to take.

Chairman Davis presented outgoing Commissioner Timothy Dayton with a Governor's Citation for his 10 years' service on the Commission. Members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Dayton for his public service stating it was a pleasure serving with him on the Commission. Mr. Dayton indicated it was the highlight of his career and he met many nice and knowledgeable people, learning much during his tenure.

As discussed during the June meeting, Chairman Davis has talked to the MSFA Executive Committee to support the OSFM budget and funding for new vehicles. As budget hearings proceed he will stay in touch with Fire Marshal Geraci and the committee to offer continued support.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Bilger stated it was an honor and touching jester for the Chief Executive Officer of the United States President Barack Obama to attend the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service and to speak of their service and sacrifice.

Motion by Commissioner Spencer, second by Commissioner Harrington, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2015, meeting.

COMAR 29.06.01 and 29.06.07 PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Davis called the public hearing on proposed regulatory amendments to order. CFPE Iseminger reported the proposed amendments call for the adoption of the 2015 editions of NFPA 1 Fire Code and NFPA 101 Fire Prevention Code and amendments thereto, as well as maintaining the sprinkler requirements from Section 903 of the International Building Code. No significant new amendments are being proposed and CFPE Iseminger noted the following:

- The review committee held four all-day meetings to review the 2015 codes and made as few amendments as possible.

- NFPA has discontinued publication of NFPA 1124 pertaining to consumer fireworks since the fireworks industry has not been cooperative nor does the NFPA organization support the use consumer fireworks. Since Maryland has approved the sale and use of certain ground-based sparkling devices, it is necessary to maintain requirements of NFPA 1124 which have been in place for years. To accomplish this, NFPA granted permission for Maryland to copyright the consumer fireworks sections from NFPA 1124 (2006 edition) and insert them into COMAR. The requirements have not changed but instead of being in an NFPA code they are now in Maryland regulation.
- The number of required fire drills in educational occupancies was reduced to eight per year in non-sprinklered schools and five per year in sprinklered schools to correspond with Fire Marshal Geraci's agreement with the Maryland Department of Education. Schools are now required to do a variety of other drills and the committee agreed the reduction was reasonable.
- An amendment was made to NFPA 1, Section 1.7.12.2 to give the AHJ authority to require plans bear the stamp of a registered design professional if they feel there is a need. This requirement is in the building code but has never been in the fire code.
- At the recommendation of University of Maryland representatives based on their long experience with the construction and inspection of laboratories, some requirements pertaining to hazard assessment, material listings, and placarding were added to NFPA 1, Chapter 26.
- Training seminars are scheduled for November and December as previously reported.

Chairman Davis thanked CFPE Iseminger for his report and the committee's work. The proposed amendments were published in the Maryland Register on September 4, 2015 and Secretary Ritchie reported no public comments were received during the required 30-day period. The Commission must wait 45 days from publication before a formal vote can be taken at which time Secretary Ritchie will poll the members for their votes on whether to adopt the amendments as published. The effective date for adoption will be January 1, 2016.

MEETING SCHEDULED

The next meeting has been scheduled for

Thursday December 17, 2015 10:00 a.m.
Maryland State Police Barracks
2nd Floor Classroom
18345 Colonel Henry K. Douglas Drive
Hagerstown, Washington County

Respectfully submitted,



Heidi Ritchie, Secretary