

STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION
MINUTES
August 17, 2017

Members Present: Charles D. Davis, Chairman
Mark F. Hubbard, Vice Chairman
Mark A. Bilger
K.C. Harrington
Edward Tocherman, Jr.

Members Absent: Joseph L. Scheffey
Stacy Welch

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

A moment of silence was observed for Commissioner Richard Yinger who passed away July 2, 2017.

FIRE MARSHAL REPORT

Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal (CDSFM) Gregg Der introduced himself and presented Fire Marshal Brian Geraci's report in his absence.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) currently has three sworn and six civilian vacancies. A job announcement has been posted for the sworn positions and interviews for other vacancies are being conducted. Maryland State Police (MSP) has absorbed a sworn position for a deputy who has been on extended military leave for five years. This will open a vacancy to fill his position. Deputy State Fire Marshal (DSFM) Bruce Bouch will be retiring to accept the position of Fire Prevention Specialist with the U.S. Fire Administration. He was a huge asset and did a lot of work handling public safety information and affairs for the agency.

Fire fatalities currently stand at 42 compared to 33 for the same period last year. Baltimore City has had the most with 20, those being fairly equal between both accidental and incendiary causes to the best of CDSFM Der's knowledge. Hopefully all the fire deaths and the causes are being properly reported. There were no reported fire fatalities in July. Efforts are still ongoing to assist Baltimore City with its fire investigations. ATF has also offered its assistance. More information on fire fatalities may be found at the website <http://mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal>. Fire fatalities and sprinkler/smoke alarms saves can be reported at the OSFM blog <http://mdosfm.wixsite.com/blog>.

At the end of the second quarter, the OSFM conducted 507 investigations of which 370 were fire related; 33 criminal cases were closed by arrest with 62 individuals arrested of which 22 were juveniles; 6,174 inspections were conducted; and 810 plans were reviewed. The plan review backlog for this period was 328.

During the July 1-10 period, six fireworks related injuries were reported, three of which were traumatic hand injuries and one of which was a traumatic eye injury. Several fires were the result of fireworks, one which caused \$50,000 damage to several boats and a trailer. A fireworks stand in Baltimore County was intentionally set on fire by a disgruntled customer. A public display at a country club in Montgomery County had a rack of fireworks explode but there were no injuries. The Bomb Squad is following up on this incident. DSFMs from all regions confiscated 818 pieces of illegal fireworks. Personnel also responded to a private fireworks display that was utilizing professional grade products at the Elks Club in Cambridge. A similar situation was found at the Elks Club in Queen Anne's County. These resulted in two large confiscations. The clubs advised they had been doing the displays for years and were not aware it was illegal.

All of the regional offices participated in National Night Out activities on August 1st, partnering with local and state law enforcement agencies. Fire and life safety prevention information was provided to communities, bomb robots and K-9s provided demonstrations, and explosive response vehicles were displayed.

The next Community Risk Reduction Weekend is scheduled for October 21-22. Fire departments are requested to check and install smoke alarms and provide safety information in their communities.

The National Association of State Fire Marshals held its annual conference in Charleston, South Carolina this month. The Board of Directors approved the 2019 conference to be held in Annapolis, Maryland. The OSFM will participate with Virginia and Delaware State Fire Marshal Offices. Maryland fire service partners will help with the organization's 30th anniversary event.

The Maryland Fire and Life Safety Information Exchange Program website is www.md lifesafety.org.

CHAIRMAN REPORT

Chairman Davis reported he has not received any official notice of appointments to fill vacancies. CDSFM Der advised he was also not aware of the status. Commissioner Hubbard has agreed to serve until replaced. The Appointments Office was in the process of selecting his replacement but no official notification has been received. With Commissioner Yinger's passing, his at-large volunteer fire service position is open. Former Commissioner Spencer's at-large member of public position is also open. His may be difficult to fill since the member cannot qualify for any other representation, such as being a member of the fire service, industry, building contractor, or architect/engineer.

Chairman Davis entertained a motion to approve the annual report draft that had previously been distributed by Secretary Ritchie. Motion by Commissioner Bilger, second by Commissioner Harrington and unanimously carried to send the report to Governor Hogan.

The Governor's Office and State Police do not support the Commission's proposal to adopt a new \$100 sprinkler license reinstatement fee. However the other two proposed amendments dealing with electronic signatures and specialized work will proceed through the process. Chairman Davis entertained a motion to proceed with the proposed amendments to the sprinkler contractor licensing regulations without the additional fee. Motion by Commissioner Bilger, second by Commissioner Harrington, and unanimously carried to proceed without the fee.

The 2018 NFPA codes will be published this fall so a Code Update Committee will need to be formed. Commissioner Welch served on the Committee for the last code cycle and she will be contacted to see if she wishes to serve again. Commissioner Tochterman expressed an interest in serving.

At the October meeting, arrangements have been made for two presentations by the Prince George's County Fire Marshal's Office and the College Park Volunteer Fire Department on the under-construction large apartment building fire that occurred in College Park on April 24, 2017. The official investigation report has not yet been released for public dissemination.

On behalf of Richard Yinger's family, Chairman Davis thanked everyone who attended the funeral, viewing, and sent expressions of their condolences. The family was very appreciative. Commissioner Yinger will be very, very missed.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Harrington motioned to approve the June minutes. Second by Commissioner Bilger, and unanimously carried.

Commissioner Bilger reported registration is on-going for the Mid-Atlantic Life Safety Conference scheduled at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel on September 26th. Members interested in attending should advise Secretary Ritchie of their workshop selections.

Commissioner Tochtermann reported he had the opportunity to visit the Hagerstown State Police Barrack in which the Commission's Office and the Western Regional Office of the Fire Marshal are located. He met Secretary Ritchie, of whom he has heard glowing reports on how she performs her duties and responsibilities. He also met some members of the Western Regional Staff who were very nice. The way they conducted themselves and the office itself were very impressive. CDSFM Der stated he would pass the compliments on to the regional commander.

MEETING SCHEDULED

The next meeting has been scheduled for
Thursday October 19, 2017 – 9:30 a.m.
Laurel Municipal Building, Council Chambers
8103 Sandy Spring Road
Laurel, Prince George's County

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted
(as summarized from transcript provided by Hunt Reporting),



Heidi Ritchie, Secretary