

**STATE FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSION  
MINUTES  
June 18, 2019**

Members Present: Charles D. Davis, Chairman  
Mark Bilger, Vice Chairman  
Douglas Alexander  
Kevin Simmons  
Edward Tochterman, Jr.

Members Absent: Emily Devan  
K.C. Harrington  
Stacy Welch

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at the Roland E. Powell Convention Center in Ocean City, Maryland.

### **FIRE MARSHAL REPORT**

Fire Marshal Brian Geraci reported the Office the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) currently has five sworn and five civilian vacancies. Senior Deputy State Fire Marshal (S/DSFM) John Ray recently left the agency to take a position with the Minnesota State Fire Marshal's Office. S/DSFM Ray is originally from Minnesota and is returning home to be closer to family. Fire Protection Engineer (FPE) C.J. Giblin has left the agency to take a position with the ATF Fire Research Laboratory.

To date in 2019 there have been 36 reported fire fatalities, compared to 39 for the same period in 2018. The annual fire fatality report has been distributed and is available at the OSFM website: <https://mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal>.

During Arson Awareness Week with the theme this year of preventing arsons at construction sites, the OSFM highlighted a cold arson case in the Northeast Region.

During Home Fire Sprinkler Week, the OSFM partnered with the Maryland State Firemen's Association (MSFA) to conduct a side-by-side burn to demonstrate the effectiveness of residential sprinklers.

The OSFM also participated in Family Day at the Jonestown Park in Anne Arundel County on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Canines and the bomb squad robot were present for demonstrations.

The first meeting of the Fire and Explosive Investigation Advisory Workgroup was held May 21<sup>st</sup>. The group is eager to start working on the goals assigned by the Commission. The next meeting is scheduled for September.

The OSFM Bomb Squad is conducting an extensive review of the laws under Public Safety Article Title 11 governing explosives to determine if any updates or corrections are needed. There may be some issues with blasting sites along the purple light rail line which is being constructed.

Many employees from the regional offices participated in Law Enforcement Torch Runs for the Maryland Special Olympics.

The OSFM assisted Frederick County with a row of townhouse fires that occurred on June 7<sup>th</sup>. OSFM personnel used a new 3D scanner to photograph and diagram the scene. Also on June 7<sup>th</sup>, the OSFM Major Incident Response Team assisted Baltimore City with an investigation of an overnight warehouse fire. The team responded but the building was declared unsafe to conduct an investigation at the time.

A media event regarding fireworks will be held June 26<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. at the Howard County Public Safety Training Academy.

## **CHAIRMAN REPORT**

It was reported Worcester County Commissioners have sent a letter to the Governor requesting his support of their efforts to opt out of residential sprinklers in new homes. No response has been received to the Commission's letter to the Maryland Attorney General regarding the lack of residential sprinkler enforcement in Allegany County and the Worcester County efforts to opt out. Having received a copy of the Commission's letter, Worcester County decided not to pursue the proposed local opt out efforts but may seek state legislative action during the 2020 session. The MSFA intends to budget more funds for residential sprinkler education.

Several Commission members are eligible for reappointment this year and Commissioner Harrington's expired seat remains unfilled. He continues to serve until replaced. Contact will be made with the Governor's Appointments Office regarding the status of these seats.

Chairman Davis is working with the Maryland State Police superintendent's chief of staff regarding the reappointment of Fire Marshal Geraci to a second term. As additional information is provided it will be disseminated to the Commission members.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Commissioner Tochterman has been contacted regarding the Maryland Rehabilitation Code Advisory Council. The first meeting will be in July.

Commissioner Simmons suggested the Commission send congratulatory/introductory letters to some newly appointed metro area fire chiefs. The Chairman will contact Secretary Ritchie regarding the letters.

Erin Bradley with the Apartment and Office Building Association of Metropolitan Washington introduced herself to the Commission. She has replaced retired representative Ron Wineholt who had been working with the Commission to improve fire safety in unsprinklered residential high-rise buildings.

Motion by Commissioner Simmons, second by Commissioner Tochterman, and unanimously carried to approve the April minutes.

## **APPEAL 18-02 BLACKWATER DISTILLING, INC.**

The Petitioner, Blackwater Distilling, located in Stevensville, Queen Anne's County, has filed for a judiciary review in Queen Anne's County Circuit Court of the Commission's appeal decision.

## **MEETING SCHEDULED**

The next meeting is scheduled for:  
Thursday August 15, 2019 – 9:30 a.m.  
Laurel Municipal Center  
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