



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES**  
**OFFICE OF EDUCATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT**

**MINUTES**

**FIRE MARSHAL TRAINING COUNCIL**

via Teams

Monday, November 16, 2020

**Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:20 by Chairman Donald Harwood.

**Attendance**

Members present: State Fire Marshal William Abbott, Chairman Donald Harwood, Susan Bransfield, Jamie DiPace, David Marcarelli, Jeffrey Morrissette, Tim Tharau.

Members absent: Victor Mitchell

DAS Staff present: State Building Inspector Joseph Cassidy, OEDM Director Bonnie Becker, Training Program Supervisor Doug Schanne

**Approval of Minutes**

The approval of the June 8, 2017 minutes was waived.

**Communications**

There were no communications.

**Staff Reports**

Office of Education and Data Management

Staff reports from the Office of Education and Data Management were waived.

Office of the State Fire Marshal

The report from the State Fire Marshal was waived.

**Old Business**

No old business was discussed.

**New Business**

Online Training

Chairman Harwood asked OEDM staff what the effectiveness was of OEDM's online training and if people were maintaining their credit hours. Director Becker explained that because of Covid-19 the current fire code inspector class of 41 students was being taught online, but that a hybrid program is envisioned for the future. Regarding effectiveness, Becker explained that last semester's prelicensure training program had to go online halfway through the program, and that the entire class passed their exams.

Doug Schanne remarked on the effectiveness of online career development classes, explaining that OEDM received very good ratings for the 12 one-hour sessions per month with approximately 500 participants per week. Some individuals complained that they want live classes. Schanne added there are more than

300 preapproved continuing education hours through Simpson Strong Tie, the American Wood Council and CFI Trainer all on our website.

The length of the online classes was discussed. Fire Marshal Abbott said that the IAAI online conference was eight hours, and it was too long. Harwood asked if one hour was too long or too short. Becker explained that best practices say one hour is the maximum desired length for learning retention. Harwood relayed that some people wish the classes were longer, that some want three hours at one time, and suggested that OEMD offer 90-minute classes. Jamie DiPace said classes have been good, but he heard comments that fire officials wish the classes were 90 minutes to two hours long; one-hour classes mess up their schedules.

Becker said that the Spring Career Development schedule is ready to go out, and instructor contracts are for one-hour classes. Harwood suggested a compromise with 90 minutes. Becker suggested offering a 90-minute special offering. Schanne explained Building likes the one-hour sessions, but unionized fire departments must pay for a block of four hours, whether the training is one hour or three hours.

Abbott explained that by the Governor's Executive Order 7M, cycle end dates were being extended 90 days. Harwood asked if OEMD provided less training hours due to Covid-19. Schanne explained OEMD shut down live classes in March and was operational in May with online classes, even offering an additional course.

#### Membership of Training Council and Board of Control

Becker read the vacancies on the Fire Marshal Training Council and the Board of Control:

Fire Marshal Training Council has four vacancies: one member appointed by the Board of Regents for Higher Education, two public members appointed by the Governor, and one chief elected official of a municipality greater than 70K appointed by the Governor. DiPace announced his retirement in March 2021, which opens another vacancy from CFMA for a full-time fire marshal.

The Board of Control has three vacancies from the Fire Marshal Training Council: one appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, one appointed by the Senate Minority Leader and one appointed by the Senate President Pro Tempore.

Ideas of how to get the positions filled was discussed. Harwood asked for a request go out and to make this an action item. Building Inspector Cassidy stated now that the State has new leadership, we can start over again and get new people in. He suggested recruiting efforts start in January when the legislative session starts.

#### Qualifications for Fire Investigator and Fire Code Inspector

Abbott explained he requested that Codes and Standards adopt the minimum standards of qualification for fire marshals be applied to fire code inspectors and fire investigators. Harwood expressed concern that this would limit the pool of applicants.

Becker explained that from a workflow perspective getting the letter documenting qualifications upfront would make the system cleaner. Abbott said the statute already requires three years of experience, and that he is looking for the three years of experience upfront. DiPace said he thought it was supposed to be upfront. Becker added she thought that was the intent of the statute, but the way it is written now – a candidate only must be 18 years old or have a high school diploma. DiPace said that the documentation needs to be upfront.

Becker reported there are 60 individuals who hold fire code inspector and fire investigator certifications, but do not have their three years of experience documented, so they cannot be fire marshals. Jeff Morissette asked who makes up the 60 people, Becker said it is a combination of UNH students, independents, and sponsored individuals. Comment was made that most career candidates have the experience.

Harwood said he wanted the council to weight in on this decision, and since the council agreed to making fire code inspectors and fire investigators meet the minimum standards of qualification, Harwood will be in favor of the motion at Codes and Standards.

**Miscellaneous**

Abbott expressed his wish that to become a fire marshal, a candidate must go through the class.

A request for the budget report was denied as it falls under the auspices of the Board of Control.

Tim Tharau recognized DiPace for his service to the Council over the past 25 years. Sentiment echoed by the group.

**Adjournment**

At 10:00 Chairman Harwood motioned to adjourn, seconded by Susan Bransfield. All in favor. None opposed. Motioned carried.

*Donald Harwood*      BB

Donald Harwood, Chair  
Fire Marshal Training Council