

**Fire Rescue Commission Meeting
The LeGrand Center
Cleveland Community College
Shelby, NC**

April 11, 2023

Member Attendees:	Harley Cook, Chair	Ryan Cole	Robert Poe
	Freddy Johnson	Andy Thomas	Kevin Gordon
	Walter Gardner	Tim Henshaw	Scott Mullins
	Steve Roberson	Gary Whitman	Josh Smith

Others present: Monna Gillespie, Mike Williams, Brian Wade, Katherine Burton, Paul Ward, Greg Palmer

Welcome and call to order – Harley Cook 10:00 AM

Invocation – Harley Cook

Ethics Statement – Harley Cook

Ken Hair replacement on CFI Board tabled to give Kevin Gordon time to decide on his nomination.

Walter Gardner reminded everyone to do their ethics statement by April 15, 2023.

Approval of Agenda as presented- Kevin Gordon moved to approve the agenda. Andy Thomas seconded. Motion approved.

Approval of January 10, 2023 minutes – Freddy Johnson made a motion to approve the January 2023 minutes. Scott Mullins seconded. Motion approved.

Board Reports

Certification Board - Chair Kevin Gordon

No report as last meeting was cancelled. They are working to appoint TR committee and meeting. Deadline is the end of the year.

Workers Comp – Mike Hill

See attached report

CFI Board – Freddy Johnson

CFI Applications for 1st quarter 2023 - 15 Applicants , Approved – 8 Denied – 5 Pending – 2
Updating CFI test bank for a new CFI test deadline of July 1, 2023. Board is still approving classes for the re-certification.

Felony Committee – Kevin Gordon

No committee action – waiting on legislative updates

New Business

Harley Cook presented Phil Welch with a Certificate of Appreciation for his many years of service on the F & R Commission Board. Phil spoke a word of thanks.

Agency Reports

OSFM Report – Brian Taylor

New office update – Rock Quarry location
Smoke Alarm Saturday update – Grant is open until April 28th

NCSFA – Tim Bradley - See Attached report

Association of Rescue & EMS – Robert Poe – See Attachment

Association of Fire Chiefs – Kevin Gordon – See Attachment

Department of Community Colleges – Kenny Wetherington – See Attachment

Emergency Management – Jay Goodwin – See Attachment

Society of Fire/Rescue Instructors – Nothing

Professional Firefighters and Paramedics of NC – Scott Mullens/Josh Smith

Josh apologized for missing the last 2 meetings due to a career move that started in October 2022. Office is in DC but he will remain in NC and staying on the board.

Dept of Labor –Mike Greer - Nothing to report

OEMS – Nothing

Forestry – Randy Kearney

Processing grants 239 applicants. Granted 40 extensions. Middle of Spring fire season. Last Resort Fire started in March in Tyrrell County and is still ongoing. 95 % contained.

Dept of Justice – Teresa Postell – See Attachment

No formal report

Other Business

Scott Mullins moved to adjourn at 10:54 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Monna Gillespie

From: cloyceanders@icloud.com,
To: VSWCF@aol.com,
Subject: Fwd: F&R Commission - NCVSWCF
Date: Mon, Apr 10, 2023 8:15 pm

Begin forwarded message:

From: Cloyce Anders <cloyceanders@icloud.com>
Subject: F&R Commission - NCVSWCF
Date: April 10, 2023 at 4:28:37 PM EDT
To: Mike Hill <VSWCF@aol.com>

Current Cash is \$74,800,841

Liabilities are \$19,395,101

Retained Earnings \$55,405,740

Since Inception: Total Number of Claims 19,043, Total Amount Incurred \$158,687,057

There are 2 bills in the current legislative session concerning our fund. Tim Bradley will discuss each bill. All emergency services personnel should strongly support the bill in the Senate.

NCSFA 2nd Quarter Report

April, 2023

Introduce Past Presidents

Introduce Board

Introduce Staff

Roster and Relief Fund Board of Trustees Report (BTR)

At the end of the reporting cycle for Certified Rosters and BTR's, January 15th 2023, only 7 fire departments out of 1279 failed to report their rosters, but we had over 30 fire departments fail to get their BTR's reported. This was after a huge effort by NCSFA staff to email and call Chief's. Normally by the last day we have to have a major push to find the last 150 or so Chiefs.

Relief Fund Financial Requirements

In 2014 the NC General Assembly established a minimum and maximum account balances for local Relief Funds. We have had several fire departments miss out on their annual distribution because they went over the maximum, which is \$2,500 per rostered member. Unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement Program and Account, that \$2,500 per rostered member is a fixed number, and if you're over it by \$1 you will not get a check. Please make sure your local relief fund treasurer and Chairman are aware of this and keep an eye on the balance. Balances need to be below the maximum by June 30th unless you have an approved Supplemental Retirement Amount approved by NCSFA. Your Treasurer should have received a letter if you are over but it's a good idea to check anyway.

Scholarship and Grants

NCSFA Scholarships and grants are now closed for 2023. There are 15 scholarships per region awarded each year. The scholarships include \$2,000 Associate's, \$8,000 Bachelor's and \$10,000 Master's Degree awards. There are also training grants available. These will be announced soon.

Legislation

This year is the session, or the start of the two-year 2023/2024 session. We are tracking over 60 bills that have been introduced, but the joint legislative committee of the NCSFA and NCAFC established priorities for the 2023 session. They include:

The NCSFA and the NCAFC's held a joint Legislative Committee meeting in December to discuss legislative priorities for the upcoming session. 1st Vice President Richard Pulley from the NCSFA Chaired the meeting. Several Legislative Priorities were discussed and decide upon. There will obviously be other bills that are introduced affecting the fire service, but the priorities established by the committee are:

- **Increase in Fire and Rescue Pension Benefits. This would include a \$5 increase in benefits with a \$5 increase in premiums. We are pursuing sponsors to get this added.**
- **Secure continuation funding for the Cancer Insurance Pilot Program going into the future. We have met with legislators and have identified a funding source. Introduced as (SB 326). SB 326 has passed Senate Finance and is moving through the Senate. It established the Cancer Insurance as a permanent, statutorily defined program in GS 58-86A, and funds it permanently with funds from the Gross Premium Assessment.**
- **Revise the Background Check Law for the fire service allowing alternatives for applicants who have lived in NC for five years and exempting junior members. (HB 378) (Also included in the text of SB 381)**
- **Continue to pursue the use of blue lights on the rear of fire apparatus. This is being met with continued resistance from law enforcement groups.**
- **Oppose any legislative increase in use or sell of fireworks such as SB 470.**
- **Monitor and discuss any additional legislation introduced. See additional bills below we are tracking that were not on our priority list.**

We are monitoring over 65 bills, but here are a few key ones. Several of these have been introduced in both chambers:

[H 0025](#) | Volunteer Rescue Worker Tax Credit

This bill allows an income tax credit to volunteer fire and rescue personnel for expenses incurred while volunteering based upon expenses paid.

[H 0046](#) | Eliminate Tax on Gov't Retirees

Makes income received from a NC State or Local Government Retirement Plan or Federal Retirement plan exempt from State Income Tax.
(Similar to previous us bills aligning with the Bailey Act).

[H 0055](#) | Fire Investigation Law Revisions

Expands the investigative powers of the State Fire Marshal related to Arson.

[H 0349](#) | Firefighter PFAS Management

Appropriates funds to address and minimize exposure of firefighters to pfas in firefighting foam

[H 0363](#) | The Gabe Torres Act

The Gabe Torres act, to expand those eligible under the public safety employees' death benefits act. This would allow travel to and from duty as well as to and from training to be considered covered under the LODD act.

[H 0370](#) | Responsible Firefighting Foam Management Act

Forbids use of firefighting foams containing pfas chemicals for firefighting training or testing purposes. this only covers training and testing of class b foam, not its use in actual emergencies.

[H 0387](#) | Medal of Valor Award for Emer. Responders

To award the "Medal of Valor Award" to a first responder upon recommendation from the highest-ranking official within a department or agency employing first responders. The Governor may award up to two medals of valor to first responders each calendar year. The Governor may also award one Medal of Valor to an entire unit once each calendar year. If two recipients have already been awarded for the calendar year, the Governor may award a third recipient under special circumstances. The Medal of Valor 16 Award shall be for first responders that have performed great acts of heroism, while under threat of personal risk to their safety, beyond the call of duty in the field. For the purposes of this subdivision, a "first responder" includes any firefighter, paramedic, law enforcement officer, emergency medical services personnel, or rescue squad member."

[H 0428](#) | Volunteer Firefighters Property Tax Exclusion

Expands property tax homestead exclusion relief to volunteer firefighters, which exempts the first \$45,000 of tax evaluation on the property.

[H 0523](#) | First Responders Mental Health

Establishes a supplemental insurance policy for first responders diagnosed with mental health conditions to be housed within the department of insurance.

[H 0565](#) | Study Volunteer Firefighter Incentives

Directs the department of insurance and the labor and economic analysis division of the department of commerce to study ways to incentivize the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

[S 0004](#) | Eliminate Tax on Gov't Retirees

Makes income received from a NC State or Local Government Retirement Plan or Federal Retirement plan exempt from State Income Tax. (Similar to previous us bills aligning with the Bailey Act).

[S 0247](#) | Amend Use of Defensive Force

Provides that the presumption of a person having a reasonable fear of imminent death or serious bodily harm to himself or herself or another when using defensive force of home, motor vehicle, or workplace does not apply if the person entering or attempting to enter the property is an emergency medical services personnel or firefighter.

[S 0470](#) | NC Consumer Fireworks Safety Act

Permits the sale, possession, and use of certain consumer fireworks and to levy an excise tax on the sales of consumer fireworks.

We will continue to monitor bills as they are introduced.

Follow us on Engagifi.

Federal Legislation – We continue to Pursue Changes to IRS Regulations that could allow non-profit career firefighters in LGERS. The Retirement Act, Secure 2.0, passed Congress last year without our amendment due to opposition from another national fire service organization. As the new Congress gets underway, we'll try to find a means of getting it introduced again.

Legislative Day Legislative Day has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 3rd. Please mark your calendars. More information will be coming out in the future as planning proceeds.

Cancer Insurance Program Update

As of the end of March, close to 130 firefighters have received benefits through this program totaling over \$2 million dollars. Approximately 40 have been denied

due to being ineligible. Reasons for denial are: the cancer was diagnosed before January 1st of 2022; an ineligible cancer or not metastasized; or not on the roster of a fire department.

BCBS PTS Grant

In 2021, Blue Cross contributed \$500,000 to our non-profit organization, the North Carolina Firefighters Fund, to use in fire service programs with the NCSFA. Half of it went in the form of direct grants to small rural departments through OSFM like the previous year's grant, but we are excited that \$250,000 is be used to provide assistance to firefighters seeking treatment and assistance with PTSD and mental health issues. Here are the numbers so far: Since the opening of the grant application process in February, 2021, a total of \$24,957 has been awarded to 14 different individuals to help pay for counseling, in-house treatment or travel. Please make sure all of your members are aware of the availability of these funds to assist those seeking help. The application and more details are available on the NCSFA website. This program can help bridge the gap between insurance and/or employee assistance programs and out-of-pocket costs for the firefighter. The funds are there for use and are very under-utilized.

BCBS Cancer Grant

Over the past few months, NCSFA and representatives from the North Carolina Firefighters Fund, the non-profit arm of the Association, have been working with Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina on an additional grant program to assist with cancer screening costs for volunteers and additional equipment/recruitment grants. An announcement about this will be forthcoming from Blue Cross, so stay tuned for this opportunity. This will be the third year that Blue Cross has partnered with NCSFA and NCFE to provide funds for the NC fire service and we appreciate their generosity.

SAFRE Conference

This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 9-12, 2023 and we will be back at the Raleigh Convention Center. On-line registration is up and we have a great lineup of classes and hands on trainings for you this year. Our keynote speaker is baseball legend, Ned Yost, World Series winning manager AND member

of Dale Earnhardt Sr.'s 7th championship pit crew. The SAFRE expo floor is very nearly sold out and will feature some new exhibitors. As always it will feature the latest in apparatus, gear, fire service technology and so much more. Whether you come every year or this will be your first time, we encourage and challenge you to bring a friend with you to SAFRE this year. The SAFRE week is a great opportunity for fellowship, mentorship and leadership from/with your peers in the fire service. What can you learn, what can you teach and who can you meet? Join us Aug. 9-12 at SAFRE 2023!

Summit

We plan on hosting a Summit Tuesday this year this year at SAFRE conference like we did in 2022. This will include the Board members from the NCSFA, NCAFC's, and the Boards from all three regional associations (Western, Eastern, and Piedmont). It will also include representatives from the NC Fire Marshal's Association and OSFM.

NCSFA Historian Work

Our Statistician, Dennis Pressley, has continued work under the new responsibility of Historian, as predicated by the bylaw change in 2018. This will be an annual update so we don't have to catch up in the future if we produce another history. There may also be some special historical articles related to the history of the NCSFA.

Questions?

NC Association of Rescue & EMS
Fire & Rescue Commission Report
04-11-2023

- Scholarship on-line Application System closed on March 31. We should have those announced May 15
- Directors Meetings for 2023. Sunday April 30, 2023 @ NCEMS Expo, and then in September at our annual meeting .
- Convention / annual meeting is currently to be held in Holiday Inn Biltmore West, Asheville NC September 8-9, 2023. In conjunction with our annual meeting we will host rescue and BLS competitions, as well and rescue and EMS classes. Please mark your calendars.

If we can be of assistance, please feel free to contact us.

Joel Faircloth
Executive Director



**North Carolina Community College System
Report to the NC Fire Rescue Commission
April 11, 2023**

Greetings from Interim President, Dr. William Carver, the staff at the System Office in Raleigh, and all our students, staff and faculty at our great 58 Community Colleges.

It is my honor to once again be the President's designee to the NC Fire Rescue Commission and to provide this quarterly update to you.

Our Office held the Spring Fire Rescue School Directors professional development sessions regionally in March. The meetings were well attended. We offer immense appreciation to our partners at OSFM and VFIS for their participation in our trainings.

I am happy to report that, as of February 1 of this year, colleges have been able to enroll 15-year-old firefighters in selected certification and non-certification fire and rescue training courses, thanks to House Bill 661. As you know, this has been a priority of chiefs for some years, but it was only recently that the Legislature amended the law to allow the State Board of Community Colleges to authorize this, as normally the Community College System is not charged with or authorized to enroll such young students.

As a state, North Carolina should be encouraged that community colleges are seeing double digit enrollment increases for adult learners, despite the impacts of COVID in our communities. Data from 2020-2022 shows that adult learner enrollment increased overall by 10%, with the increase in short-term workforce training -- where our certification and credential public safety programs are provided -- showing a 19% increase. This is encouraging following the COVID years.

Speaking of COVID, I would like to provide some specific public safety data from that period for you.

- Using 2018 as a baseline for comparison, our community colleges served 210,229 public safety students.
- In 2019, the beginning of COVID, the numbers dropped nominally to 209,883. The biggest drop was in 2020, serving 169,556.
- The next year, 2021, saw a positive increase to 179,369. While the decrease is obvious, the three-year average for Public Safety program decline was only approximately 12% while so many things were shut down, including many of our face-to-face college programs.

- As many of our Public Safety programs do not have allowances for online training, we see in the data the dedication and early decisions by our colleges to find ways to continue to serve the Health and Public Safety programs to ensure community had the personnel needed to respond during COVID. Their ability to quickly put in place health and safety measures to allow our needed training programs to continue is to be commended.

The Community Colleges transferred approximately 32, 138 student certification records to OSFM during the 2022 calendar year. This compares to 41,798 records in 2021 and 44,383 in 2020. While I am still researching true causations of this drop, it would seem logical the drop reflects the change in the structure of the courses, specifically Firefighter 1 & 2, from individual topics per course to multiple topics per course. I will continue to provide information if other major causes are discovered.

The North Carolina Community College System led a series of ransomware cybersecurity trainings regionally across the state for community colleges. Approximately 400 individuals attended the training to learn further tools to protect our colleges from and during ransomware attacks. In today's times, it is realistic all of us may encounter this issue and we all need to be prepared.

Our State Board of Community Colleges continues its search for our next System President. The search process is well underway, and the State Board of Community Colleges remains hopeful to have the next President selected in the May-June timeframe.

It is my honor and privilege to serve the 58 great community colleges in our state as they continue to provide excellent educational and training opportunities to their communities and serve the needs of our public safety responders and to represent our system once again to the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,
Kenny Weatherington
President's Designee, NCCCS



North Carolina Department of Public Safety

Emergency Management

Roy Cooper, Governor
Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr., Secretary

William C. Ray, Director

April 11, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: North Carolina Fire and Rescue Commission

FROM: John Rodney "J.R." Griffin II, State NCRRT Coordinator
North Carolina Emergency Management

SUBJECT: Fire and Rescue Commission updates from NCEM

Administrative Rules

- The Search and Rescue Administrative Rules were approved and adopted with an effective date of April 1, 2023
- Work has begun on creating new MOUs with the specialty rescue teams and implementing the bidding process for the contract teams.
- Administrative rules for the Regional Response Hazardous Materials Teams are in the final editing stage before submission to the Rules Commission

State Appropriated Search and Rescue Funding

- Swiftwater Rescue Equipment Funding
 - The swiftwater rescue equipment has been ordered, and NCEM is starting to receive items.
- Urban Search and Rescue Equipment Funding
 - The equipment for USAR Task Forces 2 & 3 has been ordered.
 - Identical purchases for the remaining task forces are scheduled for the next two fiscal years.

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Raleigh, NC 27699-4236
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www.ReadyNC.gov



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1636 Gold Star Drive
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HMEP Funding

Three rollover training props are on order, with one each being in each NCEM Branch. The props will be available for any HazMat team to use for training.

Training

- Swiftwater Rescue
 - Two Advanced Swiftwater / Flood Rescue Boat Operator (ASFRBO) courses have been delivered. The third scheduled class has been canceled due to the unavailability of water at the Bridgewater site.
 - One Swiftwater / Flood Rescue Boat Operator (SFRBO) course has been delivered. As noted above, the April class has been canceled due to the unavailability of water. May's class is still tentatively scheduled.
- Mountain Rescue
 - All of the Mountain Rescue Program training classes were delivered in the first quarter of this year.
- Wilderness Search and Rescue
 - The Wilderness Law Enforcement Operations course was successfully delivered in January.
- North Carolina Helo-Aquatic Rescue Technician
 - NC-HART training continues monthly

Search and Rescue Program Manager Changes

Managers for the various SAR programs have changed

- Wildland SAR manager is Wes Powell
- Mountain SAR manager is Ryan Kenney
- Swiftwater / Flood Rescue and NCHART manager is Chris Bailey
- Urban Search and Rescue manager is Scott Zander

Personnel Changes

- Josh Langdon resigned
- Stefan Coutoulakis was hired part-time to work with the TIER II program and to assist LEPCs. Retired from New Jersey performing the same duties.

JOSH STEIN
ATTORNEY GENERAL



TERESA POSTELL
APPELLATE & POST-CONVICTION
(919) 716-6558

April 11, 2023

Re: April 2023 Meeting

Attorney General Josh Stein is strategizing and working to address concerns about recruitment and retention in the field of law enforcement and recognizes this is widespread and is affecting fire and emergency medical personnel as well. AG Stein has convened a group of law enforcement officers from across the state and is additionally having meetings in local communities to address these concerns. If anyone at the meeting, or anyone you know, have any ideas, feedback or questions, please contact me so I may provide the information you have to share, or any questions you may have, to Attorney General Stein.

Teresa Postell
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