

## Eastern Carolina Firefighters Association

General Virtual Meeting Minutes, January 14, 2021

The Eastern Carolina Firefighters Association held a virtual quarterly meeting via Zoom on Thursday, January 14, 2021.

Vice President Doug Bissette called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The invocation was given by Tracy Mosley.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the October 2020 general business meeting were read. Motion by Pantego VFD (Beaufort Co.), seconded by Grantham VFD (Wayne Co) Approved.

**Treasurer's Report:** Edwin Ezzell gave the Treasurer's report. Motion by Pantego VFD (Beaufort Co) seconded by Avon VFD (Dare Co.). Approved.

**New Business:** Ed Weigl announced the 2020 Fire Chief of the Year. Como Volunteer Fire Department Chief Jason Howell was awarded a plaque by Vice President Chris Smith during the meeting, at the Como VFD. Chief Howell will be forwarded to the NC Chief's for consideration of their awards at the Mid-Winter.

### **Committee / Agency Updates:**

**Nominations:** Tracy Mosley provided the report from the committee. There were two interested in serving on the board of the NCSFA. Tracy introduced David Yergeau and Doug Bissette. Both men were given an opportunity to speak to the members and their platforms will be posted on the ECFA website for review. The vote will take place during the April ECFA meeting

**OSFM.** Shannon Bullock spoke about the Smoke Alarm Canvas program. Grants for smoke alarms are available and information is posted on the website OSFM24. If you received a prior award, you do not have to reapply. There should be enough smoke alarms to fill all requests. There is a replenishment form that will need to be filled out for existing award winners. OSFM is planning on doing a Smoke Alarm Saturday and will be coordinating if the event is able to happen due to current COVID precautions.

Child Protective Seat programs have been halted because of the pandemic. Hopeful to resume in March. The OSFM website is updated with dates and events.

Kim Williams reminded that the "old" firefighter cert classes will end in December. Driver Operator classes have already been converted to the new format. There are several podcasts on the OSFM24 site with great training topics. They are in with the Pocket Tools section.

**NCSFA.** Eastern Director Richard Pulley reminded all about the rostering deadline, which is tomorrow. Very important to certify your roster and update the relief fund trustee information.

Last year continued to be an extremely active year for relief fund usage and approval. We handled 471 requests for a total of \$2,002,770 not including the pre-approved SRP payments. The highest type of requests were for Medical Financial Hardships, or destitution.

Scholarships are now open on-line for 2021. 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.

We also have (8) \$500 training grants available per region. We hope it expands in the future. There were 3 from the Eastern, and one each from the Piedmont and Western. The electronic submission due date for the scholarship and grant applications is March 15.

This year is the beginning of the 2021/2022 two-year session and is normally referred to as the Long Session. Everything resets and all Bills from previous years of away, and we start all over. Any Bills previously considered for the fire service will have to be re-introduced. This includes federal legislation as well since Congress began a new session this month.

The joint Legislative Committee, which includes representation from the NC State Firefighters' Association, NC Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Professional Firefighters and Paramedics of NC have been meeting since late 2020 on issues to be considered.

Potential issues for the fire service this year may include:

Cancer Coverage for Firefighters Possibly by Insurance Policy

Continuation of SAR Funding – Some funding was put in the DPS budget, but it is non-recurring funds.

Separation Allowance for Career Firefighters, continuing to add cancer benefits for LODD

Blue Lights eligible on Rear of Fire Apparatus, Funding for PTSD Programs

Benefits for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers, Fireworks Legislation that we would want to oppose.

Federal Legislation – Continue to Pursue Changes to IRS Regulations that could allow non-profit career firefighters in LGERS

Legislative Day Thus far, Legislative Day has not been scheduled for this year. It will most likely depend upon current issues dealing with Covid-19.

For the past several years we have worked along with the National Volunteer Fire Council to urge Congress to pass VIPRA making it a permanent tax incentive for volunteers. In December of 2020 they did just that.

This year's dates for the SAFRE Conference are August 12-15th, 2021. It is currently scheduled as a full conference, and our hopes and plans are we can hold it without variation.

NCAFC. Eastern Director Jennifer Smith gave an update on the rescheduling of the mid-winter conference May 18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> in Concord. We are close to the required 500 applications for the specialty NCAFC license plates. Check the website to get yours. You do not have to be a member of the association, just a fire officer.

If you have not completed the Fire Service Diversity Survey, go to the NCAFC website for the link to get it. Results will be presented at MWC.

Thank you to Jake Whisnant for his many years of service as the Executive Director of the NCAFC. He is retiring. He is currently working a transition plan with our new Executive Director Wesley Hutchins.

NCFFF. Doug Bissette gave the update for the Fallen. With COVID, donations and merchandise sales are way behind. Please consider a donation to the NCFFF. The foundation continues to serve and work on behalf on NC's Fallen.

There were 44 online participants. Many thanks to Kris Wyatt and the NCSFA for allowing us the use of the Zoom platform!

The next meeting will be Thursday, April 8, 2021 hosted by Trenton VFD.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Glenn Rainey