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## **VCOS Board Meeting Clearwater Hilton Clearwater, FL 13 & 17 November 2024**

### **Participants:**

#### *VCOS Board Members Present:*

Chief Rich Cowger, Chair  
Chief Al Yancey, Vice Chair  
Chief Jason Catrambone, International Director  
Chief Spencer Cheatham, Director at Large  
Chief Jason Caughey, Director at Large  
Chief Tim Sendelbach, Director at Large  
Chief Kevin Cooney, Director at Large  
Chief Shawn Stokes, Director at Large  
Chief Jordan Cramer, Director at Large

#### *VCOS Board Members Not Present:*

Chief Fred Windisch, Secretary/Treasurer

#### *IAFC Guests/Partners/Staff:*

Chief John Buckman  
Mr. Scott Beecher  
Mr. Dan Seidberg  
Mr. Troy Markel, VFIS  
Mr. Joe Giorgi, VFIS  
Chief Clyde Wilhelm  
Chief Ron Chevez  
Chief Shane Crutcher  
Mr. Ron Siarnicki  
Ms. Mikel Robinson  
Mr. Kevin McGee, IAFC Liaison  
Mr. Ken LaSala, IAFC Government Relations and Policy Director (*via MS Teams*)

## Call to Order

Chief Cowger chaired the meeting. A roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. The meeting came to order at 1302 hrs ET, 13 November 2024.

## Approval of 8 October 2024 Minutes

Chief Rich Cowger, Chair

**MOTION: 13 November 2024-01**

**Motion made and seconded to approve the October 8, 2024 Board meeting minutes. Motion carried.**

**Catrambone/Caughey**

## Chair Report

Chief Rich Cowger

Chief Cowger discussed providing the complementary VCOS memberships for IAFC members in attendance at Symposium in the Sun again this year since we do not have sufficient data from last year's effort since a year has not elapsed.

**MOTION: 13 November 2024-02**

**Motion made and seconded to provide a one-year complementary memberships to Symposium in the Sun attendees who have IAFC memberships and do not have VCOS memberships. The one-year membership will commence immediately and run through the new IAFC membership cycle. Motion carried.**

**Catrambone/Cheatham**

Chief Cowger reiterated that the 2024 Symposium in the Sun is dedicated to Chief Chuck Flynn. He passed around Chief Flynn's plaque for the Board to review. It will be presented to Chief Flynn's family in the opening General Session.

Chief Cowger announced the following 2024 scholarship and award winners that will be presented at Symposium in the Sun.

### Awards

**Chief John M. Buckman III Leadership Award** (Sponsored by Provident Insurance)

Chief Brian McQueen, Whitesboro (NY) Fire Department

**Retention and Recruitment Award** (Sponsored by VFIS)

Botetourt County (VA) Department of Fire and EMS

**William F. Jenaway Illness and Injury Prevention Achievement Award**

(Sponsored by VFIS and VCOS)

Ashburn (VA) Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department

### **VCOS Chair Award**

Dr Lori Moore-Marrell, United States Fire Administrator  
Provident Insurance  
I am Responding  
VFIS  
Ward Deisel, Scott Beecher, President

### **Scholarships**

**Emerging Leader Scholarship Sponsored** by Gasaway Consulting Group, LLC  
Captain Bob Powell, Finleyville (PA) Volunteer Fire Department

**Emerging Leader Alumni Scholarship** Sponsored by Gasaway Consulting Group,  
LLC and Emerging Leader Scholarship Alumni  
Chief Ethan Holmes, Wyomissing (PA) Fire Department

**Chief James P. Seavey Sr. Scholarship** (Sponsored by VCOS)  
Chief Dan Eggleston, Albemarle County (VA) Department of Fire and Rescue

**Chief Robert T. Bettenhausen Scholarship** (Sponsored by VCOS)  
Chief Administrative Officer Eryn Micallef, Kittitas County (WA) Fire District 7

### **Frank Byrne Memorial Scholarship**

Chief John Winters, Fairview (IL) Fire Department  
Firefighter Kelsey Shriner, South Strabane (PA) Fire and Emergency Services  
Chief Matt McCullough, Riley (IN) Fire Department

Chief Cowger informed the Board that he selected the following three VCOS members to recommend to Chief Josh Waldo, IAFC President to fill vacant IAFC representative NFPA 1720 positions.

#### Principle Urban

Chief Jason Ferguson, Botetourt County (VA) Department of Fire and EMS

#### Alternate Urban

Deputy Chief Andrew Smith, Alternate, West Point (VA) Volunteer Fire Department

#### Principle Rural

Assistant Chief Manual Muzquiz, Laramie County (WY) Fire Authority

### **Vice Chair Report**

Chief Yancey

Chief Yancey provided a Health, Wellness and Safety Committee report by email to the Board in advance of this meeting. The Committee meets regularly and Chief Cramer and Chief Caughey are handling the mental health component.

Chief Yancey informed the Board that the VCOS website now has a Critical Thinking

Academy landing page to promote program outreach.

Chief Yancey provided an update on the Strategic Initiatives implementation to include the need to coordinate with IAFC sections and committees to avoid duplication of effort. The 2025 Strategic Initiatives process will begin soon targeting completion of a draft for Board approval at the Winter in-person Board meeting.

### **Secretary/Treasurer's Report**

Chief Cowger stated that Chief Windisch submitted a Treasurer's report by email to the Board.

Chief Cowger also alerted the Board that any bylaws revision proposals for the 2025 election cycle are due by the Constitution, Bylaws and Resolutions Committee February meeting.

### **International Director Report**

Chief Jaso Catrambone

Chief Catrambone provided an update on work that is being done by the IAFC Board level.

### **Legislative Update**

Mr. Ken LaSala

Ken LaSala reported that the FIRE and Safer Acts have been reappropriated. The Congress and Administration are lame ducks. He expects a continuing resolution from the current federal budget deadline of December 20<sup>th</sup> to March. Lithium battery legislation is in the Senate. He reported on the Firefighter Cancer Registry and the Social Security and Fairness Act. The OSHA hearings are in progress.

### **PIO Academy**

Chief Ron Siarnicki

Chief Siarnicki shared that he is involved in a new private venture with several professional fire service Public Information Officer to offer a PIO Academy. The academy will be offered around the country. Chief Siarnicki is requesting that VCOS join as a partner. They are also developing a recruitment and retention training program.

### **Education Coordinator Report**

Chief John Buckman III

Chief Buckman reported that Symposium in the Sun is sold out. In addition, many fire service people are registering at the counter. Although, no walk-up registrations were allowed, a decision was made to allow these registrations as most were from long distances and believed they were registered. Exhibitors are also sold out.

The hotel contract is good through 2026 being extended a year due to COVID. Chief Buckman is chairing a committee that is evaluating options for a 2027 venue.

Chief Buckman informed the Board that a four month stop gap contract will be offered for webinar service so that a scope of work and competitive bidding process can be conducted with VCOS input into the scope of work. The hourly cost for webinar service was shared with the Board. The IAFC wants one webinar service provider. VCOS webinars will be conducted twice each month down from four per month.

### **Red Ribbon Report** Chief Spencer Cheatham

After meeting for the last 6 months, the Red Ribbon Committee found that the "Transition to a Combination Department" course, developed by the IAFC in 2020 was based on the original Red Ribbon Report, meant to be a significant update to that report and contained all of the information the committee wanted in an update except what was related to consolidations and mergers.

The committee recommends VCOS adopt the IAFC course as the update to the original Red Ribbon Report, that a request from VCOS that the IAFC Workforce Solutions team add VCOS logos and wording to the course, VCOS support adding a module to the course which educates on consolidations and mergers, and consider developing additional educational materials using the "Transition" course such as podcasts, short videos, and whiteboard animations.

Discussion related to the above involved the following question:

- Does the Red Ribbon Report need something as significant as the update represented by the "Transition" course?
- Is VCOS moving away from "flagship" products which have significantly aided volunteer and combination departments?
- Different committees have worked for years on updating the Red Ribbon Report, but, for varying reasons, nothing tangible has been developed.
- Chiefs Ron Cheves and Clyde Wilhelm, members of the Red Ribbon Committee, reiterated that the update has been ongoing for multiple years. They also stated that the adoption of the IAFC course should not be seen as moving away from "flagship" products, but an evolution based on how the fire service needs the information presented.

The board requested that the committee investigate their recommendations further and report back with their findings and what is needed.

### **Legacy Partners Update**

Mr. Scott Beecher has observed a great deal of good things with VCOS and thanked the Board for involving him.

Mr. Troy Markel said that his firm loves partnering with VCOS and looks forward to the relationship continuing.

### **Policies and Procedures Committee**

Chief Shawn Stokes

Chief Stokes discussed the draft Candidate Endorsement Policy.

**MOTION: 13 November 2024-03**

**Motion made and seconded to approve the Candidate Endorsement Policy. Motion carried.**

**Stokes/Yancey**

### **Critical Thinking Academy Marketing**

Chief Al Yancey

Chief Yancey discussed the marketing need for the Critical Thinking Academy (CTA) with a level of expertise that the CTA workgroup does not have. There was no objection from Board members for the CTA workgroup to seek marketing support when needed.

### **Day 1 Recess**

Chief Cowger recessed the meeting and advised the Board to be prepared to reconvene after the Symposium in the Sun hotwash on Sunday 17, November 2024.

### **Day 2 of VCOS Board Meeting**

**17 November 2023**

Chief Cowger welcomed all and called the meeting back to order at 1212 hrs ET, 17 November 2024.

### **Data Ribbon Report**

Mr. Eddie Buchanan, Chair, Data Ribbon Committee

Mr. Buchanan reported that the Data Ribbon Report is 90% complete. The committee is working on the final points. The VCOS Chair letter and USFA Administrator letters are needed for insertion into the report.

### **PIO Academy Endorsement/Partnership Request**

Chief Rich Cowger

Chief Cowger raised the request regarding the PIO Academy interest to have a VCOS partnership. A request decision was tabled pending Chief Cowger and McGee researching IAFC policy on VCOS option discretion. Chief Buckman will review the PIO Academy curriculum.

### **March 2024 in Person Board Meeting**

The next in person Board meeting will be held tentatively March 6-9, 2025, in the Pittsburg, PA area.

The following in person Board meeting will be held May 15-17, 2025, location to be determined.

### **IAFC Treasurer Endorsement**

Chief Catrambone requested the Board's endorsement of his candidacy for the IAFC Treasurer position in the 2025 election.

**MOTION: 17 November 2023-01**

**Motion made and seconded for the VCOS Board endorsement of Chief Jason Catrambone for IAFC Treasurer in the 2025 IAFC election. Motion carried.**

**Cheatham/Cooney**

### **Old Business**

Chief Cramer reported on a meeting he had with David Dobis the previous day regarding VCOS involvement in the SAFER grant and specifically if the SAFER grant can support the Critical Thinking Academy expenses in some way such as covering travel costs for students. Chief Cramer reported that Mr. Dobis is open to VCOS collaboration on SAFER grants and their projects, recognizing VCOS as having subject matter expertise.

### **New Business**

Chief Cowger informed the Board that the Committee roster is being reorganized and updated.

### **Good of the Order**

None

The meeting was adjourned at 1303 hrs ET.

#### **Minutes submitted by:**

Mr. Kevin McGee  
VCOS Staff Liaison

Chief Rich Cowger  
Chair

*Because electronic mail can be altered, the integrity of this communication cannot be guaranteed.*

