

**Department of Homeland Security
Preparedness Directorate/U.S. Fire Administration
National Fire Academy Board of Visitors
Conference Call Minutes
July 25, 2006**

Attendees:

The following National Fire Academy Board of Visitors (NFA BOV) members were present for the call:

Dr. Robert S. Fleming (Chairperson)
Professor, Rowan University
1406 Heather Lane
West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380

Chief Art Cota
Shasta College Fire Department
11555 Old Oregon Trail
Redding, California 96003

Chief Donald R. Oliver
Wilson Fire/Rescue Services
307 West Hines Street
Wilson, North Carolina 27893

Captain Jack Reall
President, Columbus Firefighters Union,
IAFF 67
1380 Dublin Road, Suite 103
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Mr. Gary Tokle
National Fire Protection Association
1 Batterymarch Park
Quincy, Massachusetts 02169-7471

The following members were not present for the call:

Ms. Helen Johnson (Vice Chairperson)
Executive Consultant
State Firemen's and Fire Marshals'
Association
5810 Charles Schreiner Trail
Austin, Texas 78749

Dr. Sandy Bogucki
Associate Professor
Section of Emergency Medicine
Yale University School of Medicine
464 Congress Avenue
New Haven, Connecticut 06519-1315

Chief Warren McDaniels (Retired)
100 City Park Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119

Department of Homeland Security /U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) staff in attendance:

Mr. Doug Hoelscher, Executive Director of DHS Homeland Security Advisory Committees and the Homeland Security Advisory Council

Dr. Denis Onieal, Superintendent, National Fire Academy (NFA)

Mr. Ron Face, Director, NETC Management, Operations, and Support Services

Ms. Cindy Wivell, Secretary, NFA

CONVENE BOV MEETING/WELCOME

Dr. Robert Fleming convened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. and welcomed participants.

Dr. Denis Onieal mentioned that Mr. Ron Face is at the Noble Training Center and will try to call in if his schedule permits. Ms. Cindy Wivell noted that Mr. Charlie Dickinson, Acting U.S. Fire Administrator, said that he would try to join the call between 2:30 and 3:30 p.m.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Dr. Onieal introduced Mr. Doug Hoelscher, Executive Director of DHS Homeland Security Advisory Committees and the Homeland Security Advisory Council. Mr. Hoelscher thanked everyone for the opportunity to join in the call and thanked the Board members for serving. He is a big believer that answers come from outside the organization, from folks serving on committees, and hopes to help serve as an advocate on policy. Mr. Hoelscher sees increased coordination among the advisory committees within DHS—there are 28 committees currently in place. He talked about two items that the Council is working towards: 1) building a common culture within DHS and 2) the future of terrorism—where it's going in 5 years, how should DHS strategically adjust, and how should DHS prepare the public? Mr. Hoelscher asked for feedback from the BOV, either individually or collectively. The members may know of some reading material that would be appropriate or know of someone who would be a good candidate to serve. (NOTE: An email was sent to the BOV members on July 26 with Mr. Hoelscher's contact information.)

Dr. Fleming asked if any of the other advisory committees would have work related to that of the Academy's BOV. Mr. Hoelscher said that about half of the department's advisory committees are Coast Guard and are very specific in nature. There may be a few that are close to the BOV's activities. One is the USAR advisory committee housed within FEMA; that committee has been inactive for the past 3 years and is reinvigorating. Another committee is the FLETC advisory committee which resides with Grants and Training within the Preparedness Directorate. With regard to the Fire Administration's Policy Advisory Committee, Mr. Hoelscher does not want to duplicate efforts; therefore, they are currently reviewing the need for it. Also the Emergency Responder Senior Advisory Committee is reinvigorating. One other committee that Mr. Hoelscher mentioned is the State and Local Officials Senior Advisory Committee, which consists of elected officials and part of the Council.

Mr. Hoelscher asked if there were any more questions. The BOV members had none and stated that they were prepared to assist if and when needed.

FACILITY MAINTENANCE

On behalf of Mr. Ron Face, Director, National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Management, Operations, and Support Services Division, Dr. Onieal reported that painting on the windows in N Building was finished and that the painters are working on M Building and others.

Mr. Face joined the call from Alabama. He is currently conducting quarterly reviews at the Noble Training Center. Catching up on the deferred maintenance around campus is starting to show – sidewalks are being replaced, leaking roofs are being fixed, and the air conditioning in several buildings will be replaced.

BUDGET

A briefing is scheduled with the Under Secretary on Friday, who is scheduled to meet with the Deputy Secretary on Saturday. It looks like we may receive some increases.

Dr. Onieal is working on a proposal for a third school at the NETC. The target audience would be political and elected officials at the State and local level.

The FY2007 budget is the subject of activity on the Hill – it appears that USFA will fare relatively well. It is not known if there will be any cuts. Mr. Face reported that we are a little ahead of schedule for FY2006 in getting money out on the street and to work. Procurement packages are ready to go, and USFA is postured to put money to work in case year-end funds become available. That probability is low.

Dr. Fleming asked about security enhancements. Mr. Face responded that plans include widening a road; installing permanent, electronic posts; and constructing a permanent guard house--approximate cost \$2M. The Preparedness Directorate has put it forth to DHS as an unfunded requirement. In 2006 USFA had to take money from “hide” to pay for security staff for which FEMA had been paying. That money was taken out early in the year--working capital that had been set aside. When the actual costs came in, they were significantly less than anticipated.

USFA is working with NETC IT staff to put in a voice-over IP technology – much better than the existing connectivity, and is optimistic that it will be funded.

Mr. Face asked the BOV members to please let him know if there is something that could be done better or that USFA needs to stop doing.

ACADEMY UPDATE

Dr. Onieal gave an update on Academy activities. With Mr. Dickinson serving as the Acting Administrator, Dr. Onieal has been filling in and attending meetings normally attended by the Deputy Administrator. As a result, he is also serving on a number of Preparedness Directorate boards including the Investment Board and Requirements Board. These boards are part of the

Directorate's governance structure; a part of their responsibilities is to conduct program reviews. Examples of some reviews for USFA include course development and the Learning Management System (LMS). So far, USFA has been fairly successful. USFA seems to be doing well within the Preparedness Directorate, mainly because it has been in existence for a while.

Through an Office of Personnel Management procurement, USFA will be able to "hitchhike" to the Plateau LMS. Phase I funding is in place; as soon as we are online, the Web-based courses will be transferred to the new platform. Important IT security paperwork is in process at the DHS level. Until that paperwork is approved, an implementation date cannot be predicted. A request for \$800K for USFA to become a Distance Learning Center was submitted.

An experiment is underway to offer Volunteer Incentive Program courses at the Noble Training Center in Anniston, Alabama. The offerings were formally announced last week, and the response so far has been encouraging.

In trying to reduce the size of the student manuals, a prototype student note-taking guide was developed for one of the HazMat courses. Certain materials would be placed on a CD-ROM. That project is moving forward; however, a few challenges have been presented, one being having two notebooks versus one.

A workgroup, consisting of members from NFA and the National Fire Programs Division, is reviewing processes for instructor procurement /qualified bid lists. It is hoped to have implementation of new procedures by October 1.

Work on appointments for the NFA BOV will begin again. There will probably be some changes.

Dr. Kirby Kiefer, NFA Deputy Superintendent, is currently in Monterey, California, for a site visit to the Naval Post Graduate School which is looking to help other schools. Dr. Kiefer is trying to find out what the Graduate School may have that NFA could use.

The course conversions are proceeding. This is experimental. Staff will be monitoring enrollments. A listing of the courses slated for conversion was provided to the BOV members electronically. Chief Don Oliver has heard from some instructors that they do not like the course conversion.

The Endorsement Program is still doing well. Mr. Gary Wilson who was a big part of that is taking another job. Mr. James Hawke is retiring. In the coming future, it looks like there will be a lot of changes within the State training systems. As a result, there may be more demands on the Academy.

The National Fire Service Responder Credentialing System has been handed off to the National Incident Management System Integration Center. The National Capitol Region has used it as a model for other credentialing systems. The Fire Administration has not heard a word. There has been no movement.

Any day, news on the Fire Administrator position is anticipated.

The Under Secretary has asked for combined efforts from Grants and Training and the U.S. Fire Administration.

FOLLOWUP FROM APRIL MEETING

On a Tokle/Oliver motion, the Board approved the minutes for the April meeting.

NEXT BOV MEETING

The National Fallen Firefighter Memorial is scheduled for October 6-8. It was decided that the NFA BOV would meet at the NETC before the memorial—full days on October 5 and 6 and a half day on October 7.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Fleming asked for a motion to adjourn. All approved. The meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.