

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

September 11, 2025
Tele-conference
Gaithersburg, Maryland

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Commissioner Anita Powell, Chair
Commissioner Mark Dempsey
Commissioner Jane Callen
Commissioner Tony Coleman
Commissioner Robert Ford
Commissioner Matthew Green
Commissioner Mike VanBrocklin

STAFF PRESENT:

Fire Chief Corey Smedley
Assistant Chief Ben Kaufman
Battalion Chief Ashley Robinson

OTHER:

Lou Kaufman, President WVRS
Marcine D. Goodloe
Captain Michael Green
Captain Clinton Kraft

100 – CALL TO ORDER

Chair Anita Powell called the meeting to order at 1902.

101 – REPORT OF THE COMMISSION CHAIR

Chair Powell would like to set up a meeting with the Fire Chief and other commissioners to have a conversation about the structure of the Commission, role and responsibility as it relates to the Fire Chief. Chair Powell asked if any other commissioners would like to work with her to come up with an agenda for the meeting with the Fire Chief. Commissioners Green, VanBrocklin and Callen offered to assist, and Chair Powell instructed that she would get back to them with the details.

Chair Powell asked about the final stages of the updated policy (Policy 03-07AM Procedures for Amoss, EMST, and ESPP Funds) involving grant funding for the volunteer fire departments that Chief Kelley referred to at the last meeting. Chief Smedley offered that the policy was started under Chief Goldstein, and when Chief Smedley took office, the Office of the Fire Chief reviewed the policy, met with the MCVFRA, and the policy is currently with the Division Chiefs for a final review. Once their review is completed, the policy will go back to Battalion Chief Robinson who will begin the Notice & Opportunity process. The Commission will receive the policy once it finishes the Notice & Opportunity process.

102 – REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Green expressed that he believes that commission members should have appropriate identification to show at the firehouses and any other public events, to make sure there is no question of a commissioner's identity. Commissioner Green believes the identification can take any form that the Fire

Chief and other commissioners feel is important. The Fire Chief was unsure of the overall protocol for commissioner identification; and, offered, if there is nothing that precludes/prevents commissioners from having an identification, he would work with Battalion Chief Robinson to move forward with identifications. Commissioner Dempsey believes that all commissioners go through a background check and didn't believe there would be any issue with getting a County identification. Chair Powell offered that at one point the commissioners did have County IDs and believed it could happen.

Commissioner VanBrocklin visited both Sandy Spring stations near where he lives. He met with Captain Ney and Lieutenant Hamner, introduced himself and spoke of his background and thanked them for their service to the community. Captain Ney told Commissioner VanBrocklin about the Emergency Preparedness Fair that the Office of Emergency Management is hosting on September 13, 2025, 1100-1500 at Wheaton Regional Park. Commissioner VanBrocklin stated it would be a good event to go to in order to get out to the public. Commissioner Dempsey offered that Wheaton Rescue Squad will be doing standby for the event and extended an invitation to the other commissioners that they are welcome to visit the firehouse.

103 – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion passed to approve the August 2025 meeting minutes.

104 – FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Fire Chief Smedley expressed that the Office of the Fire Chief can do a better job in onboarding our commissioners. An onboard process will be put together by Battalion Chief Robinson to acclimate commissioners with an introduction of the fire service and how the department works, how the department is structured, and addresses of the different facilities. This action will help clarify questions about the organization.

MCFRS is in the early stages of the FY 2027 budget process and are beginning to schedule preliminary meetings to get guidance from the Office of Management and Budget. MCFRS is at the stage where the organization is reviewing enhancements, asking for new items, or reductions.

The recruitment office is doing amazing work and for the career aspect, there are no recruiting or retention challenges. Class 57 with 31 people are currently in the academy and will graduate in December. The recruitment office is currently putting together class 58 with approximately 60 candidates, which will begin in January 2026. Further, the recruitment team has begun the process for recruit class 59 who have already received their test scores, background packets and have begun the candidate physical agility process. The MCVFRA just hired a volunteer recruiter through a SAFER grant, who has already met with the current recruitment team, where they will come together as an MCFRS recruitment team, recruiting for volunteers and career.

Higher education universities in the area, such as The Universities at Shady Grove, are having a career day. Battalion Chief Raphael Gibson has reached out to them to see how we can influence college students joining the fire department as either a volunteer or career opportunities.

The Fire Chief and MCVFRA met with a marketing company to update some of their marketing space to advertise the benefits/incentives of becoming a volunteer. There is discussion about updating the nineteen LFRD websites with the MCVFRA's website in order to do some automotive marketing that will help target residents that could be interested in volunteering with an LFRD in their area. There will be a follow-up meeting with potential next steps.

Assistant Chief Adam Jones has been working on the volunteer safety officer program, which has started. The volunteer safety officer program will align with the career safety officer program. The next step is to get information and clarity to the MCVFRA and the LFRDs. There are volunteer chief officers that have

current certifications. Division Chief Kelley, Assistant Chief Adam Jones and Assistant Chief Tim Burns are working to finalize the program.

Division Chief Kelley and Assistant Chief Tim Burns are working closely to finalize the Volunteer Fire Office Program, which is similar to the Company Officer Program on the career side.

In order to bring real life experiences to personnel in a controlled environment, the training academy has built out the high bay to have mock apartments with appliances, smaller versions of propane tanks, spongy floors, etc. The Fire Chief expressed his excitement and gratitude to the PSTA for getting this project completed.

The Girls Wired for Fire event received a grant award of \$5,000 from the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Fire Chief Smedley acknowledged the day was September 11 (09/11). The Fire Chief had the opportunity and ability to represent public safety partners, to include law enforcement, along with Fire Chief Donnelly of the DC Fire and EMS Department, at the 9/11 National Day of Service, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. The 9/11 Day of Service seeks to change the theme of what is known as the tragedies of 9/11 to be a day of service. There were hundreds of volunteers that showed up to assist in the day of service along with two moments of silence.

Chief Smedley also did a tour of the DC Fire Operations Center (FOC), which is a facility that gives a larger picture of operational awareness using resource management from different partners. The FOC is able to communicate, in real-time, to assist with capacity and resources during major events occurring simultaneously within the department. MCFRS is currently building a Public Safety Joint Operations Center (JOC) program, which will include emergency management, fire/rescue, and law enforcement. There will be a meeting to discuss policy and procedures, position descriptions, how it will be staffed, tools used, technology, and funding.

The father of community member Melanie Diaz, who passed away at the fire at the Arrive apartment building in Silver Spring in February 2023, is donating \$10,000 to MCFRS to help keep people safe so that no other family has to go through what his family has gone through with their loss. MCFRS had already been looking at smoke escape hoods – which will prevent residents from breathing in carcinogenic air while escaping a building in smoking conditions. MCFRS has already implemented the floor-below nozzles and smoke curtains, which keep the community, residents and first responders safe during fire events.

Negotiations will begin with the IAFF and MCVFRA. Initial conversations with Labor Relations have begun. Negotiations will work to improve wages and benefits, working conditions, health and wellness, and any other discussions that need to be had in order to support the community.

There have been a lot of front-line officer promotions recently. There was recently a Battalion Chief exam and now a new list to promote from. An announcement was recently made for an Assistant Chief exam. In the upcoming month, a new Battalion Chief and Assistant Chief will be announced. There will be some restructuring at the Assistant Chief level in order to diversify skill sets and offer succession planning in the Assistant Chief ranks.

200 – BUSINESS ITEMS

None

300 – DISCUSSION

None

301 – OLD BUSINESS

- Chair Powell thanked Commissioner Callen on her work/efforts on the 2023 annual report. Commissioner Powell pointed out that Commissioner Callen shared that there was some missing information which still needs to be researched.
- Electing a Vice-Chair – Chair Powell asked Battalion Chief Robinson to take over the meeting for the election process of electing a new Vice-Chair. Chief Robinson explained the process as needing to be anonymous. Commissioner VanBrocklin and Commissioner Green were both nominated for Vice-Chair and both discussed their backgrounds.

Commissioner Green offered that he has taken on other responsibilities outside of the board and explained that he does not know enough about the fire department that he feels he can be effective as Vice-Chair and abstained the nomination. The voting process continued via poll to Chief Robinson's email for an anonymous vote which concluded with four votes for Commissioner VanBrocklin, one abstained, and two commissioners did not vote. Motion presented to the commission to accept the ballots by Chief Robinson, accepted by Commissioner Callen, seconded by Commissioner Coleman. Motion passed and congratulations were sent to Vice-Chair Commissioner VanBrocklin.

302 – NEW BUSINESS

- Discussion about the 2024 annual report – Chair Powell requested a public member to take on the responsibility of chairing a special committee to lead the efforts for completing the 2023 annual report and beginning the 2024 report. Commissioner Green offered and was accepted to chair the special committee.

400 – Resource Group Comment

None

500 – Public Comment

None

600 - Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Chair Powell, seconded by Commissioner Callen. The meeting was adjourned at 2016.

Respectfully submitted,



Anita Powell, Chair

Written and posted by:



Ashley Robinson, Battalion Chief
Montgomery County Fire Rescue