

Vocational Education & Extension Board
of the County of Suffolk
Monday, January 22, 2024
Meeting also conducted Via-Zoom

Present: Gary Schaum, President; John Sipala, Vice-President; Ronald Barz, Alan Groveman, Robert Kutch, Terence Mawn, Patrick Murphy, Brendan Pilkington, William Sanok, Scott Davonski, Deputy Director; Louise Scarola, Treasurer; Gloria Morano, Clerk; Patrick Beckley, FRES Commissioner.

Mr. Schaum called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Minutes of the Meeting: On a motion offered by Mr. Sanok and seconded by Mr. Murphy the Board approved the Minutes of the December 18, 2023, meeting as submitted.

Treasurer 's Report:

County Budget: Louise emailed the 2023 and 2024 budget to the Board prior to the meeting. The 2023 County funds have been spent and a small amount of state funds will be carried over into 2024. The 2024 budget includes the 2% and \$125,000 increase. Currently Louise is waiting for the 1st quarter advance that was submitted to FRES in December. The amount submitted was based on the 2023 budget. The County still needs to send over the 2024 amendment paperwork in order for the Academy to request the budget amounts. She is hoping this will be resolved before the second quarter advance.

State Aid: Louise reported that we received the award letter for the 2025 State funding. The amount we will receive is \$112,265, which is close to 2024.

TSA: Starting 2024 the Academy will be required to offer everyone including the per diem staff the option to enroll in our 403b plan. Steven Fox from AXA Equitable will be contacting Louise with more information that she can pass along to our instructors.

County Reports: are current.

Accounts Receivable: is current.

On a motion offered by Mr. Sanok and seconded by Mr. Sipala the Board voted to approve the Treasurer's report as submitted.

Treasurer: Louise addressed the Board on her retirement.

FRES Report:

Deputy Commissioner: Chief Rudolph Sunderman has been appointed the new Deputy Commissioner for FRES.

Daily Brief: Commissioner Beckley reported that updates are being made to the FRES daily brief. These enhancements will better serve first responders.

Homeowners Insurance: Commissioner Beckley had a meeting with the NYS Financial Services to advocate for firefighters who are being dropped from homeowners' insurance. This trend is due to the more frequent storms occurring in the past years.

Fire Marshals: FRES is in the process of hiring two more fire marshals. Once the positions are filled, they will have nine full-time and two part-time fire marshals.

Emergency Operation Center: EOC has been activated three times this year for winter storms, with USAR joining on the last one. FRES is waiting for the After-Action report which is required by the resolution creating the team.

Deputy Director Report:

Student Contacts: The total number of classes for 2023 is 2,068 and student attendance is 51,459.

USAR Activation: Chief Davonski reported that the USAR team was activated and used the Academy Building to meet. When finished, the building was left unsecure. Moving forward, we have a system in place to prevent this from happening again.

Instructor Interviews: The first round of instructor interviews was held on January 3rd. The six applicants have been narrowed down to four and will return tomorrow for the second part of the interview process.

Treasurer: Chief Davonski reported that ten applicants were interviewed for the treasurer position over the last two weeks. It was decided that the selected three were to come back today for a second interview by the Board prior to the meeting.

State Aid Funding: Suffolk and Nassau Fire Academy had a positive meeting with Senator Martinez and staff to discuss additional state funding. Her office asked for additional documentation which we provided.

Budget: The amended budget was sent over to FRES showing the 2% increase and the additional \$125,000. These additional funds are to be utilized for Lithium Ion, Junior/Cadet, BEFO/IFO and Cold Water/Surface Water Rescue training.

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Website: The Hazmat Ops Refresher is updated and back up on the SCFA website. Dr. Groveman suggested ending the Hazmat Ops 2024 classes around December 15th to avoid a delay for the new year. Our vendor Infrastructure is in the process of setting up the Lithium-Ion and Safety Officer courses on our website. The Academy is working with the NYS Fire Police Association to roll out the virtual Fire Police Refresher Course in the future.

Capital Projects: Chief Davonski updated the Board on capital projects. This included the Media Room, the Truck Fire prop, Confined Space Prop, the mezzanine in the Pump House was installed, and the ground break for the Garden Apartments which includes drainage and electric sometime in the spring.

FFI Textbooks: IFSTA will be coming out with a FFI 8th edition this year. The Academy will be keeping limited quantities on hand until we transition in 2025.

OSHA 1910: A discussion was held relating to training hours, more to follow.

Building & Grounds: The committee is pleased with the appearance of the field.

Curriculum: The committee sent out a report prior to the meeting stating that they received great feedback from the recent FFI class with instructor Robert Lee. The Confined Space Lesson plan was emailed to the Committee with the LIRR lesson plan to follow. Mr. Murphy asked Chief Davonski to start sending older lesson plans for the committee to review digitally in the upcoming months.

Policy Review Committee: Dr. Groveman reported there are no recommended changes at this time.

Safety: No report

Personnel: will be held in executive session.

New Academic Instructor: Chief Davonski reported that he will have more information next month after instructor interviews have been completed.

Medal of Valor: Notifications have been emailed to all the Fire Department Chiefs. Applications are due back by March 1st. As per the agreement made last year the Academy will forward all applications to the Suffolk County Volunteer Fireman's Association.

Board Appointment: Brendan Pilkington is currently waiting for the Legislature approval.

Program & Awards: No report.

Old Business: There was a board discussion about the status of a donated ladder truck.

New Business:

Resignation: Mr. Kutch offered a motion, seconded by Dr. Groveman, and approved by the Board to accept the resignation of Rudolph Sunderman's position as Executive Director effective January 21, 2024. **(Resolution # 2024-1)**

Instructor E-mails: A discussion was held about Board Members emailing Fire Academy instructors.

On a motion offered by Mr. Sipala and seconded by Mr. Murphy the Board voted to go into Executive Session at 3:38 p.m.

On a motion offered by Mr. Kutch and seconded by Mr. Mawn the Board returned to Regular Session at 4:37 p.m.

Treasurer: The Board approved the recommendation of the personnel sub-committee to offer the position of Treasurer as discussed in executive-session at the approved salary.

Interim-Executive Director: Mr. Kutch offered a motion, seconded by Mr. Barz, and approved by the Board to appoint Chief Scott Davonski as the Interim Executive Director effective Monday January 22, 2024, with compensation /stipend to be determined. **(Resolution # 2024-2)**

Fire News: Mr. Kutch offered a motion, seconded by Dr. Groveman, and approved by the Board to post the following positions in the February edition of the Fire News Newspaper:

The position of Executive Director vacancy with the resumes and certificates to be submitted by the end of business on February 23, 2024.

The anticipated vacancy on or about May 1, 2024, of the Deputy Director position with resumes and certificates to be submitted by the end of business on March 1, 2024.

(Resolution # 2024-3)

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There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Schaum requested a motion for adjournment. On a motion offered by Mr. Sipala, seconded by Mr. Kutch and approved by the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Morano
Clerk

The next Board meeting will be on Monday, February 26, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.