

Fire Service Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 2, 2014 10:10 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.  
League of Minnesota Cities

**Members/alternates present:**

Bob Johnson, Insurance Federation of Minnesota – Chair  
Mark Dunaski, Designee MN Commissioner of Public Safety  
Dan Winkel, MN State Fire Department Association  
Nyle Zikmund, MN State Fire Chief's Association  
William Goede, League of Minnesota Cities  
Don Smiley, MN State Fire Chief's Association  
Kip Lamotte, (Alternate) New Brighton Fire Marshal

**Members/alternates absent:**

Sue Iverson, League of Minnesota Cities  
Shane Schmidt, MN State Fire Department Association  
Mark Kulda, (Alternate) Insurance Federation of Minnesota – Acting Chair  
Steve Zaccard, Fire Marshals Assoc. of MN/International Assoc. of Arson Investigators  
Rick Loveland, MN Professional Firefighter's Association  
Jim Fisher, MN Association of Townships  
Chris Parsons, MN Professional Firefighters Association

**Others present:**

Bruce West, State Fire Marshal  
Sherry Munyon, Capitol Access  
Joe Kelly, HSEM  
Angela Geraghty, Department of Public Safety – Secretary

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bob Johnson at 10:10 a.m.

Nyle Zikmund moved approval of the September 4, 2013 and January 8, 2014 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Dan Winkel and the minutes were approved without objection.

**Fire Safety Account**

FY14 collections through March total \$10,693,813.04. Collections are expected to total nearly \$14M for the fiscal year even with the reduced rate of .50%.

**Fire Service Needs Assessment Report**

Nyle Zikmund discussed the Fire Needs Assessment Report. The report has proven challenging because the amount of comparative data available is limited. Answering the question of how safe is safe enough is difficult because the question is subjective. The public relies on public safety professionals to define how safe is safe enough. The insurance industry may be able to help answer that question. Chair Bob Johnson stated there is data available to the insurance industry that may assist with the Fire Needs Assessment Report. It was agreed that after session, Chair Bob Johnson and Nyle Zikmund would meet, along with others interested, to review this data and incorporate it into the Fire Service Needs Assessment Report.

**2014 Legislative Session**

Sherry Munyon provided an update on the 2014 legislative session. The \$1.3M supplemental appropriation and the initiative to legislatively reinstate the Fire Service Advisory Committee are moving

forward in the House and Senate. Language in the bill regarding the FSAC not only reinstated the committee but endorsed all actions the committee has taken since it was legislatively eliminated in 2009. The committee does not have a sunset date under the new bill. Dan Winkel questioned whether FSAC members now must be reappointed. Assistant Commissioner Dunaski stated it was his understanding member reinstatement was not necessary because the legislature endorsed action taken by the committee during the sunset period.

Sherry Munyon stated the Senate Chairman was supportive of an open appropriation to the Fire Safety Account in the second year of the biennium so that money collected after the legislature adjourned but before the end of the fiscal year could be distributed with recommendation of this committee and approval by the Commissioner of DPS. This maintains the legislature's control and oversight of the Fire Safety Account but eliminates the need for supplemental appropriation.

### **Volunteer Income Tax Credit**

Fire departments continue to struggle with staffing. In an attempt to address recruitment and retention issues in the fire service, legislation was drafted to provide a \$500 per volunteer income tax credit to fire and EMS volunteers. If implemented statewide, costs would total \$9.5M and this may be difficult legislation to pass in a non-budget year. The House was interested in this discussion and made the proposal into a three-year pilot project to include seven Minnesota counties: Martin, Faribault, Freeborn, Steele, Watonwan, Waseca, and Blue Earth. Volunteers in these counties who serve 12 months in calendar years 2014, 2015, and 2016 would be eligible to receive a \$500 stipend for payment in 2015, 2016, and 2017. At the end of the three years, growth and retention of firefighters in these counties will be measured against growth and retention of firefighters in the surrounding counties of Brown, Cottonwood, Dodge, Jackson, Le Sueur, Mower, Nicollet, and Rice. If proven to aid in recruiting and retaining volunteers, the House is willing to look at this as a statewide program. The original bill for the income tax credit with a fiscal note of \$9.5M was heard by the Senate Tax Committee yesterday.

### **Rail and Pipeline Safety Bill**

Assistant Commissioner Mark Dunaski discussed the rail and pipeline safety bill. A special revenue account (SRA) for rail and pipeline safety will be established under the Department of Public Safety. Originally, the SRA was to be funded by \$2.5M one-time general revenue, pipeline assessments of \$1.25M annually and rail assessments of \$1.25M annually. The pipeline was successful in removing themselves from the bill on the Senate side. As the bill currently sits the SRA will contain one-time general revenue funding of \$2.5M and annual rail assessments of \$1.25M.

After July 1, study on rail safety in the state of Minnesota will be fast-tracked and a determination will be made on how SRA funds will be divided between fire, HSEM, law enforcement, etc. The Fire Service Advisory Committee will make recommendations to the Commissioner of Public Safety for expenditures from this SRA on the fire side. Initial awareness training put on by the rail service for firefighters on and adjacent to these lines will be conducted. The cost of this training is estimated to be approximately \$1.5M. Firefighters are specifically eligible for compensation and overtime costs associated with this training and this program will be set up as a reimbursement program through MBFTE. SRA funding dedicated to the HSEM side will be administered via grants through HSEM. This bill was crafted in such a way that existing resources such as the FSAC, MBFTE reimbursement program, and HSEM grant program are being utilized to minimize administrative costs to the state.

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Mark Dunaski stated the FSAC will need to be prepared fairly quickly to make recommendations if this passes. General revenue money will be put into the SRA immediately and it is likely the legislature will want to move quickly on the initial awareness training for firefighters.

Sherry Munyon stated there will be a report at the three year mark to review whether goals have been met, whether funding sources should be amended and whether it makes sense to continue with the sunset date, which is set at five years.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The FSAC meeting schedule was discussed. After seeking input, Chair Bob Johnson stated at this point the meeting schedule will remain as it is, with meetings scheduled quarterly on the first Wednesday in March, June, September and December. However, the committee's June 2014 meeting date will remain flexible and notification will be sent out at a later time to confirm the date.

### **Member Retirement**

Dan Winkel informed the committee that this will be his last meeting as he will be retiring in May. He has spoken with MSFDA President Schmidt and they are working to find his replacement. Chair Bob Johnson thanked Dan for his work on behalf of the committee throughout the years and wished him well in his future endeavors.

Minutes recorded by Angela Geraghty