

Alaska Fire Standards Council Special Meeting

Minutes for December 13, 2023, at 1:00 pm

Virtual Council Meeting

Zoom Participation Information

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82149521156>, Meeting ID: 821 4952 1156

1. Call to Order 1:05pm

2. Roll Call

Bones, Tyler (Fairbanks) Public/Over 2500 Residents – Absent

Vacant () Fire Fighter Representative

Grimes, Daniel (Soldotna) Chair, Fire Chief's Association – Present

Vacant () Chief Admin Officer/Fire Chief/volunteer staff

Knowlton, Kevin (Nome) Volunteer Fire Fighter/Over 2500 Residents – Present

Long, Brian (Juneau) Chief Admin Officer/Fire Chief/paid staff – Present

Mathis, Robert (Anchor Point) Volunteer Fire Fighter/Under 2500 Residents – Present

McMichael, Virginia (Chugiak) Fire Fighter Representative – Present

Nakano, Lloyd (Anchorage) State Fire Marshal/Designee – Present

Sprehe, Dorianne (Wrangell) Vice Chair, Public/Under 2500 Residents – Present

Simonds, Benjamin (Anchorage) Alaska Professional Fire Fighters Association – Present

Vacant () Fire Fighter Representative/ASFA

Denise Carbuccia (Anchorage) BFAST Office Assistant II – Present

Lisa Shield (Anchorage) BFAST Fire Training Specialist B Detachment/AFSC Lead – Present

Colt Graham (Anchorage) BFAST Fire Training/AFSC Administrator – Present

3. Visitor Recognition

Dave Boddy, Tony Prior, Gretchen O'Sullivan, Scott Raygor, Craig Warren, Eric Schultz, Jason Craig, Daniel Pratt, Chad Heineken, Frank Bracken, Gordon Descutner, Tod Chambers, Chris Edsell, Todd Russell, Brad Paulson, Geoffrey Coon, Craig Lewis, Kenneth Montero, Forrest Kuiper, Leon Walker, Stacy Skoda, Iain Miller, Daron Solesbee, Karen Macke, John George, and John Prevost.

4. Approval of Agenda

Move to approve – Long

Second – Knowlton

Approved

5. Approval of Fall 2023 Minutes

Move to approve – Mathis

Second – Knowlton

Discussion: none

Approved

6. Introduction of New Administrator

Grimes – Colt Graham is the new Admin, on council for one meeting then hired 6 weeks, later as the Fire Training Administrator for BFAST.

Graham – Thank you, I am interested in what the council has for priorities and direction. In the short time I have been here I have had a quick introduction to the operations of the AFSC Office with the IFSAC Audit and basic office functions.

7. Discussion on council priorities

Grimes – During the 2023 Fall meeting, we made a request to receive a report from the new administrator that would enable us to communicate our priorities effectively. Our primary concern revolves around the workload exceeding the available staff resources.

Graham – One of our top concerns is the CO Issue and it is already scheduled for discussion. We recently underwent an IFSAC audit and have made progress on all but one of the 13 items. We would like to extend our gratitude to Dan Grimes, Rocky Jones, Todd Russell, Stephanie Russell, Virginia McMichael, Scott Learned, Lisa Shield, Stephanie Parker, and Denise Carbuccia for their assistance during the audit. The auditors were highly impressed with the efficiency of our office and the ability of our staff to handle their workload. Today's agenda includes important items such as test banks and the CO Workshop. We understand that there is a need to pursue additional certifications, such as Live Fire, and are committed to moving forward with those initiatives. Additionally, we are interested in hearing the council's perspectives on other priorities that may not be included on today's agenda.

Grimes – As we look back on our past meetings and anticipate the upcoming spring meeting, we aim to prioritize the hiring of two full-time staff members and consider hiring a third employee. This has been an ongoing matter since 2017. Regarding our office operations, what are some apparent actions we should take? Additionally, what certifications are currently not in good standing?

Graham – The completion of HMT is expected within a few days. In addition to this, our focus is on conducting digital testing and implementing a more robust Records Management System (RMS). As a result, there is a possibility of replacing NetExam.

Shield – Based on my recollection, it appears that FESI II & III, as well as Live Fire, were not included in the audit review.

Graham – Our current workforce may not have the capacity to efficiently accommodate additional levels which is why it is a priority of the council to get that funding.

Grimes – I attended the IFSAC Audit and witnessed exceptional performance from the office staff. They promptly addressed any identified gaps and effectively managed their workload. I am grateful for their efforts in making this a successful and enlightening event. Additionally, I would like to inquire about certifications that were previously issued for seals but were not completed during this audit.

Shield – I looked it up and it appears that the previously issued certifications are FESI II & III, Technical Rescue, and Rapid Intervention Crew. In the past, the Marine training was exclusively for Alaska. Additionally, it is important to note that the digital testing is distinct from the RMS system. The RMS system is intended to replace IMPACT, but its implementation may or may not include a digital testing feature. In the event that a digital testing feature is not included, a separate system would be necessary for that purpose.

Grimes – Thank you for providing clarification on the distinction between digital testing and RMS. Are there any additional priorities that other council members would like to discuss or address? Hearing there are no other priorities, it appears that digital testing should be a primary focus. Digital testing is crucial for reducing certification turnaround times, which in turn can support career advancements and address the challenge of hiring due to certification delays. Previously, we were able to help other agencies in making their processes more efficient, but we have since lost our speed and efficiency. It is essential that

we prioritize supporting the fire service by promptly completing the IFSAC paperwork for certifications we sealed on previous levels. Additionally, during our spring meeting, let's create a list of the new certification level priorities to guide our efforts. In regard to the concern that certain certification levels are underutilized, it is likely because our documents have not been kept up to date.

8. Discussion regarding plan for Spring 2024 meeting in Juneau

Grimes – We have requested this meeting in Juneau in order to advocate for two additional positions. In the past we have utilized contractors to assist with office work, providing evidence of our need for these positions. It is essential for us to present a united front and speak with one voice. We have been requesting the opportunity to meet in Juneau since 2018 for this purpose. Our efforts to find alternative funding sources have been unsuccessful, we are now requesting that the Legislature allocate the necessary funds for us to utilize. At the behest of the AFCA and on behalf of numerous others, we are submitting letters to the Governor and Legislature. Unfortunately, our Admin Office request did not reach the highest level within the Department of Public Safety, which is why we are also making this request separately. We have urged the Governor not to veto any support requests and have sent a letter to him and other relevant parties. We have already engaged in discussions with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of DPS. Now, it is imperative that we travel to Juneau as a group to articulate our needs. The scheduled meeting will take place on Sunday the 4th, with the council departing on Monday evening. This schedule will allow us to maximize the number of meetings with them throughout the day on Monday.

Graham – Unfortunately, due to limited financial resources, the council is unable to extend our stay beyond Monday. Additionally, individual council members may have varying schedules depending on their respective flight itineraries.

Shield – The administrative office is unable to assist in scheduling meetings with representatives.

Grimes – Yes, I will gladly assist you with that task. It is recommended to schedule the appointments as soon as possible for Monday, the 5th of February. By doing so promptly there is a higher likelihood of securing an appointment. It has been suggested by an experienced colleague from our organization that they consider your affiliation and donor history before providing a callback. We will create a tutorial to guide you through the process.

Knowlton – I do not know how concrete the 4th is but the Alaska Food Coalition Emergency Management will be there the 12th so that time can be used also.

Grimes – Yes, any time is great to go talk to them about this so if you are there for other reasons that could be helpful. Any other questions? Hearing none we will move on.

9. Administrator's discussion regarding Certifying Officers

Graham – The list of applicant responses from those who received the email in the summer has been received. A follow-up email was sent to reconfirm their interest, and a class has been scheduled for January 27th in Anchorage, just before the Spring Meeting. We anticipate having 10-15 participants, depending on their travel requirements and funding availability. Additionally, we have reached again via the Fire Training List Serve and all Certifying Officers to ask if there is further interest. If you or anyone you know is interested, please contact our office.

Our records indicate that there are currently 16 Certifying Officers who have not participated in at least a year, and 8 who began the training process but did not complete it. This means we currently have 16 active Certifying Officers. Over the past few months, we have had two individuals successfully complete their Step A and B using the new paid process. Internally, we have been discussing how to effectively track and maintain the status of Certifying

Officers.

To address this, we propose implementing the Triennial Agreement Packet (TAP) for all Certifying Officers. This process will include adding an endorsement in IMAPCT. The purpose of the TAP is to enable our office to track and verify the involvement and ongoing commitment of Certifying Officers to the program. It will also facilitate the tracking of refresher training as needed. The requirement for refresher training is important because even experienced Certifying Officers have been found to have inconsistencies or incorrect processes that could have been avoided with this type of program. Furthermore, implementing the TAP will help ensure accurate statistics on the number of active Certifying Officers. In fact, there were some Certifying Officers on the list with expired FESI's until this process was being developed. We have since contacted them to inform them of the steps they can take to become current.

The application for the TAP includes a section where applicants are required to provide the name of their Fire Chief, Supervisor, or Fire Service Reference, whom the Administrator can contact for verification. I am seeking approval for this proposal.

Mathis – Did this get sent out?

Shield – Yes, I have sent it in the email to both the Council and the Public this morning.

Craig Lewis – I did not receive that email.

(Discussion on individuals who did and did not receive the email, and the appropriate list serve they should be enrolled in.)

Grimes – Lisa, can you please provide a summary of the application?

Shield – Yes, the initial page requires the submission of general applicant details and a statement for signature confirming the accuracy of the provided information. Additionally, it includes a section for the applicant to provide their reference's contact information. On the subsequent page, applicants are required to list at least one assignment per year for the duration of the three-year agreement. If they do not possess a yearly assignment, they may substitute up to two assignments with an appropriate refresher course. Following this section, are reconfirmation statements which require the applicant to initial. These statements are similar to those found in the CO Ethics Agreement. If a CO fails to fulfill the requirements and/or their endorsement has expired by over a year, they will need to successfully complete a refresher course and achieve a perfect score in the open book quiz in order to reinstate their endorsement.

Sprehe – On Sheet B between the two sections for documenting hours, the statement is unclear about what the refresher training can substitute.

Shield – I will work on rephrasing it to clarify.

Mathis – On the first page why is there a space for CO years of experience and the most recent expiration? Do we really need this?

Shield – I can see removing them. They are there to give us a quick reference, but we have to validate the expiration anyway.

Graham – Years of service can be removed but expiration can be helpful in the future as a reminder to the applicant and a quick reference for the office staff processing it.

Todd Russell – Please clarify what the refreshers are.

Shield – The refreshers can encompass a range of materials necessary for an individual CO. They are designed to reflect changes and updates to the testing processes, as well as new or revised procedures and policies. The specific type of refresher required is dependent on the unique needs of the CO, which may include a formal class or an informal refresher. These refreshers can be documented either through a formal completion letter or an informal email verification from the AFSC office staff.

Todd Russell – Who has the authority to determine which refresher is necessary?

Graham – I am responsible for making that determination. Some of the refreshers are identified based on the challenges faced by that individual or other CO's.

Grimes – Are you seeking support for implementing this process and application?

Graham – Yes, that is correct.

Grimes – Could we postpone this discussion until after the public comment period, considering we have already heard from T. Russell, who is not a council member?

Graham – Yes, we can wait.

10. Discussion regarding test bank reduction and/or changes

Graham – I believe this is a significant matter for discussion, but we need to address the size of our test banks. Grimes mentioned earlier the extensive amount of work he observed during the IFSAC Audit. Currently, we are offering two test curricula, Jones and Bartlett and IFSTA, for 11 out of the 14 certification levels. It came as a surprise to our peer agencies and the audit team that we use both full banks for each level. To alleviate the administrative burden, we plan to reduce the size of our test banks. We must have double the number of questions in the bank compared to the number of questions on the test. Since most of our tests consist of 100 questions, this requires a bank of 200 questions, along with an additional 50 questions for future use. Our priority is to first reduce and manage the Firefighter and HazMat banks, given the upcoming ProBoard Audit in April. However, even with these reductions, maintaining two separate banks for almost all 14 levels of certification is labor-intensive. We have a few options to consider. The first option is to do our best to maintain what we have with the reductions and aim to add more levels. However, this would be difficult considering our already demanding workload discussed in this and previous council meetings. The second option is to immediately cross-reference both curricula as the reduction to 250 items takes place. In this scenario, all test bank items would fulfill the Job Performance Requirements (JPR) and have cross-references to both curricula, resulting in one test bank per certification level. Based on our experience with pre-made mixed banks, we believe we can do a better job with this approach, particularly as it allows our Subject Matter Experts to select the most appropriate questions for each JPR. Although it requires more work initially, it would ultimately reduce the effort required to manage each bank over its approximate 5-year lifespan. The third and final option, which we do not recommend, is to choose only one curriculum to reference the tests, regardless of what each department uses in their training programs. I have been working to solicit feedback on this topic from Fire Departments, unfortunately I was only able to speak to a small number (5 or 6). From those I spoke to, they were not in favor of the Council selecting a single publisher test bank. Regardless of the option we choose, the goal is to minimize human error and create the best testing possible.

Grimes – I acknowledge the significant workload carried out by the office. I suggest we postpone this discussion until the Spring meeting, as the reduction process will still require substantial effort.

Graham – Yes, however I would like to clarify that we will be doing the reduction, it is the number of test banks that is on the table. Since we need to review every question in both banks, it would be most efficient to complete that task when we initially receive a new bank.

Grimes – Are there any questions from the council? Let's hold off on public comment for now.

Mathis – Some will only be found in one publisher, like 1005 Marine Firefighter.

Graham – Well if you only have one curriculum then we only use the one test bank. All the others we recommend combining.

Mathis – Word of caution, HMT only has one but HMA and HMO has both so they could be using a different curriculum.

Graham – Yes but that is the situation now, any certification can have a test referenced to any curricula then the next level of another certification can be taught and referenced to a different curriculum. A department can choose to use IFSTA for HMA and HMO and then be required to use JB for HMT.

Shield – This process would allow for the Standard Review Committee (SRC) SME's to

curate a better test.

Grimes – Any other comments about mixing the banks. Seeing no other comments, I will weigh in. Since you are doing the work, it feels like this would make more work for you and we must pay for both anyway. How is that beneficial?

Graham – Once again, implementing the use of mixed banks for the test review process will initially create additional workload when working with the SRC. However, we firmly believe that maintaining this bank throughout the standard year, which spans approximately 5 years, will eventually reduce our overall workload by more than 50%. This reduction includes eliminating the possibility of human error in test distribution and streamlining the audit process, as well as data entry and management for a digital test bank.

Shield – I agree, while there may be a slight increase in workload for the SRC and office staff initially, the long-term management is significantly reduced.

Grimes – Remembering back to how we managed the purchased PTS mixed banks we still had the same amount of work and I think we can do a better job.

Graham – When discussing with colleagues outside of Alaska, they often mix their own test banks or simply select a single bank. Although Fire Departments have the flexibility to choose the training materials, they deem suitable, they are obliged to take the examination selected by the certificate issuing agency.

*Move to table the test bank discussion until the 2024 Spring meeting in Juneau – Grimes
Second – Mathis*

Discussion: none

Grimes – Instead of a roll call vote, is anyone opposed to this? (no response)

Approved

Graham – We will continue to gather input from FDs to obtain their viewpoints on this matter. Please feel free to email me any questions or comments that you believe should be considered.

11. Public Comment Period

Descutner – I like the CO training program updates, good work. For the discussion on the test banks, I would recommend that the office put out a survey to get feedback.

Geoff Coon – I would like to welcome the new administrator, Colt. As for the meeting on Feb 4th, most of the Fire Chiefs will not be in Juneau until the 6th. It would be better to sync it up so that they can attend. Interior chiefs have concerns for next meeting so being able to attend the spring meeting would be of great value. Also, public comment would be good to have at the beginning of the meeting so that we do not have to wait and listen to all the other agenda items. In a lot of our opinions the Instructor Renewal is confusing and not needed. Many things are tied to having a current Instructor certification, including the CO program. I have paid many testing fees over the years due to expired certifications. Even the person signing you off also must be current. This is not required under NFPA and we took out the specific state certifications that are self-imposed in other standards. This renewal process is a self-imposed problem. I would like to be heard on this subject in the next meeting.

Graham – You can always contact us to add items to the agenda. Grimes do you want this on the agenda for the next meeting?

Grimes – Yes, we need to add it, but I am cautious to rehash things that have already been resolved. However, we will have many new council members who may have a different view on this. Can the office investigate previous minutes for the last time this was reviewed?

Graham – Yes, we can investigate that.

John George – I would like to express my support for the reduction of the test banks and provide a caution regarding the selection of committee members. In the past, we have encountered instances where items were left in the test banks that should not have been included. It is crucial that we first optimize what we already have before expanding. This is especially important considering the staffing issues we have been discussing. Additionally, I

suggest implementing a mandatory checklist for everyone to go through during the CO refresher.

Craig Lewis – I would like to inquire about the timeframe for obtaining certifications, as it previously took a few months.

Graham – The primary factor causing a delay in certification are unpaid invoices. Once payment is received, we are given a 30-day window to issue the certificate. As mentioned in previous meetings, both the Council and DPS are actively working towards resolving the staffing shortage and purchasing an updated RMS/digital testing platform to rectify this matter.

Grimes – I have a text question from someone about the status of the online payment system. I understand that we have discussed this matter and are actively working towards a resolution.

John Prevost – I understand the discussion on test banks is currently postponed, however I would like to voice my support for the idea of combining them. This is because there have been instances where we have had to take the wrong test in the past.

Grimes – Online question from Stacy Skoda, “How long after payment does the cert get issued?”

Shield – As Colt mentioned, certifications are issued within 30 days upon receipt of payment. Due to present staffing challenges, this timeframe will remain unchanged until new systems are implemented. Currently, upon payment receipt, the application undergoes digitalization for final approval by the administrator, after which it is returned to the certification clerk for uploading onto IMPACT. We experienced some delays prior to the hiring of our new administrator, but this issue has now been resolved.

John George – I would like to mention that we also recently received the wrong test, and I am in favor of having a combined test bank.

Eric Schultz – Are we still hand grading the tests?

Shield – Yes, and that is a large motivator to the implementation of digital testing and a new RMS.

John George – I appreciate the promptness with which the last tests from UAF CTC were completed.

Grimes – Public comment is now closed.

12. Action Item Review

AFSC Action Item Progress Report

Updated 12/12/2023

Carry-over from Spring 2023 meeting:

- ADMIN – We will put together training for test reviewers to include clarification on the term “distractors”. **Status: Pending**
- ADMIN – Council related Google drive to put docs for review. New Skill Sheets, Training Records, Standards Data Sheet, that are interconnected for one change to update all docs. Technical Committee will get data and staff will be able to update docs in minutes not months. **Status: In-progress**
- ADMIN – We will look into the possibility of getting state email addresses for council members and possibly password access to documents we can put on our website in “hidden folders”.
Status: email- cost & hidden files- pending
- ADMIN – NFPA 1003: Airport Firefighter found some verb issues within skill sheets that will need clarification.
Status: Need to Coord with Tech Committee
- ADMIN – IFSAC has NFPA 1005: Marine FF for Land Based Firefighter now and will be working on it after HM is done. June will have a final draft. **Status: Pending**
- ADMIN – Set up CO training for Council to fund initial training to include Step A and Step B.
Status: Complete
- Grimes – Add two council seats specific to postsecondary and industry. **Status:**
- AFSC – Move to amend Sec. 18.70.350. Powers. Where it states “The council may” to “The council shall” items 1-4, 18.70.350. **Status:**

AFSC Action Item Progress Report

Updated 12/12/2023

Fall 2023 meeting:

- Grimes – Draft & submit a letter to the Governor’s office and DPS Commissioners office on behalf of the council indicating that we need an FTS range 19 and FTA range 21. **Status: Completed**
- Grimes – Set meeting date for the special meeting with the New Administrator. **Status: Completed**
- Grimes – Certifying Officer Program Updates, meet with new admin to give an update within 60 days. **Status: Completed**
- Grimes – 2 new council positions, Boards and Commissions needs to be asked. I will contact them to find out what needs to be done.
Status:
- Grimes – 1041 Technical Committee look into the renewal process simplify or remove **Status:**
- Grimes – Will look for people to be on committee for NFPA 1407 Rapid Intervention Technician **Status:**
- Mathis, Sprehe and Grimes – Strategic & Operations Plan Review/Rewrite **Status:**
- TC AK RFP Misewicz – Rural Fire Protection we will have something to present in the next meeting. **Status:**
- Shield – Fix links broken in FSEI directive to renewal packets. **Status: Completed**
- Shield – remove the “checkmark” if it is not completed on action item list. **Status: Completed**
- Shield – Retention policy with IFSAC, NFPA 1000 and State, can we destroy? **Status: Completed**
- Shield – Finance Report *correct personal to personnel. **Status: Completed**
- Shield – NFPA 1521: Fire Department Safety Officer Lead change to Tyler Bones **Status: Completed**
- Shield – Review of renewal certs for live fire in IMPACT. **Status: Completed – Leaving as in, already issued**
- Shield – Verify dates for Spring meeting in Juneau, regular 2 nights, or whole week? **Status: Pending Approval – Emails sent (to finalize at December special meeting)**
- Carbuccia – Baranoff Hotel book block ASAP for 15 minimum & a meeting room. **Status: Completed Pending Approval – Rooms block on hold with hotel**
- ADMIN – Outstanding Service to the AFSC, Jake Bender, Alex Boyd & Dave Lundin **Status: Admin to follow up w/ letters.**
- ADMIN – Letters created for expiring service on the council. **Status: Admin to follow up w/ letters.**
- ADMIN – NFPA 1035 Fire Life Safety Educator/YFSI is now 1030 for 2024, adopted, need test bank review. **Status: In Progress – being scheduled**
- ADMIN – NFPA 1006 Technical Rescuer standard information to Don Werhonig/Tyler Bones **Status:**

13. Action Items (New Pulled from this current meeting)

Grimes – The first is what we held over that can be resolved now. We are going to make a process with documentation to keep CO’s updated and provide refresher training as needed to include the TAP.

*Motion to approve the new Certifying Officer Triennial Agreement – Knowlton
Second – Long*

Discussion: none

Grimes – Roll call vote

Bones, Tyler (Fairbanks) Public/Over 2500 Residents – Absent

Grimes, Daniel (Soldotna) Chair, Fire Chief’s Association – Yes

Knowlton, Kevin (Nome) Volunteer Fire Fighter/Over 2500 Residents – Yes

Long, Brian (Juneau) Chief Admin Officer/Fire Chief/paid staff – Yes
Mathis, Robert (Anchor Point) Volunteer Fire Fighter/Under 2500 Residents – Yes
McMichael, Virginia (Chugiak) Fire Fighter Representative – Yes
Nakano, Lloyd (Anchorage) State Fire Marshal/Designee – Yes
Sprehe, Dorianne (Wrangell) Vice Chair, Public/Under 2500 Residents – Yes
Simonds, Benjamin (Anchorage) Alaska Professional Fire Fighters Association – Not present

7 – Yes & 2 – Not present for vote

Approved

Grimes – Create tutorial for setting up meeting with legislators and representatives for council members.

Graham – Review previous minutes for the conversations regarding Instructor Renewal

Graham – AFSC Administrator to send email survey of Accredited Fire Departments regarding options for test banks.

14. Future Agenda Items

A. Test Bank Merge

B. Instructor Renewal Requirement

15. Future Meeting Dates

Spring Meeting, Juneau – February 4, 2024

Coon – Commented the Leadership Summit is 6th – 9th

Mathis – Websites says 5th – 8th with travel

Sprehe – Dates are conflicting with Agenda and website.

Grimes – We can change the date for the 5th, since nothing starts until 3pm on Monday, however, we will leave it as is so that meeting is not happening during the travel day for most chiefs.

Fall Meeting, Wasilla – September 29, 2024

16. Good of the Order

Grimes – Any comments? Thank you to the staff and thank you for the people attending this meeting. We are happy with the amount of communication coming out of the AFSC office.

Move to adjourn at 3:30 – Knowlton

Second – Grimes

Approved