



KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

JACKIE BRAY
Commissioner

JAMES B. CABLE
State Fire Administrator

Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Task Force Meeting

December 9, 2022, 1:00-3:00 pm

Meeting Minutes

Albany Office

Members Present :

- 1. Elisha Tomko, DHSES General Counsel – Chairperson
2. James Cable, State Fire Administrator (SFA) OFPC
3. Donald Corkery, Association of Fire Districts of the State of NY, 1st Vice President
4. John Farrell, Jr., FASNY President
5. David B. Ferrari, SUNY Chancellor Designee-V
6. Art Hunsinger, NYS Senate Minority Appointment, Commissioner, Clifton Park Halfmoon Fire Department
7. Brittany Kitterman, NYS Education Department Designee
8. Gerald L. Knapp, Governor Appointee Recommendation, Chief of Rockland County Hazardous Materials Team
9. Dale Lingenfelter, Director NYS Assoc. of Fire Chiefs
10. Luci E. Labriola-Cuffe, Governor Appointee Recommendation, Deputy State Fire Administrator
11. Mary Alice Molgard, Governor Appointee, Commissioner Berne Fire District
12. Mark Massaroni, NYS Department of Tax & Finance Designee
13. Stephanie Tubbs, NYS Department of Labor Designee

Syracuse Office

Members Present:

- 14. Bill Streicher, County Fire Coordinators Association of the State of NY, President
15. Felipe Hernandez, Jr., Governor Appointee Recommendation, Rochester Fire Department Interim Chief

Note: 15 out of 20 members were present so there was a quorum for purposes of conducting the meeting

Members Not Present:

16. Donald J. Forbes, NYS Assembly Minority Leader Appointee, Ret. Oswego County Fire Coordinator
17. Steven Klein, NYS Assembly Speaker Appointee
18. Kevin Klein, NYS Senate Majority Appointee, Oceanside Fire
19. Kelly Murphy, NYS Senate Majority Leader Appointee, Chief of Tarrytown Fire Department
20. Robert McConville, NYS Assembly Speaker Appointee

Others Present:

Lauren Lieberman, SUNY's Director of EH&S and Emergency Management  
Spectrum News Channel 9  
WNYT News Channel 13  
Katie Christopher, Administrative Specialist, DHSES

1. Meeting convened 1:05 pm
2. Opening/Member roll call by Chair Tomko
  - Quorum confirmed as additional members joined later
  - Introduction of DHSES Commissioner Jackie Bray
3. Welcoming Remarks from Commissioner Bray
4. Agenda Review/ Topics for Discussion
5. Draft Task Force Report
  - Identify/ prioritize recommendations
  - Issues / gaps in report
  - General discussion
  - Thanked members of Task Force for their advocacy towards the legislature passing, and the Governor signing, the extension bill that allowed the members to continue to meet until the end of the year, ending December 31, 2022
  - Explained that the members must meet in person remote was no longer an option by law.
6. **Purpose of meeting is to review Draft Task Force Report together and make sure we are representing the Task Force and the voices of organization and the entities you represent as well as the fire service**, for discussion and consideration and ultimately  
Elisha Tomko
  - Reflects work done by Task force members and subcommittees
  - Make recommendation in a report transmitted to Governor's office and legislature, by end of year.

- Task force authority exists only until the end of this year, report needs to be completed and submitted by end of year.
- Chair to add the Chapter amendment that allows for the Task Force to continue to meet until the end of this year.

**Issue Task Force was to study review and make recommendations on:**

1. **Delivery methods to enhance and streamline state firefighter training to include distance learning.** Chair as we add or amend, we will share document

James Cable  
 Elisha Tomko  
 Gerald Knapp  
 Jackie Bray  
 Luci Labriola Cuffe  
 Art Hunsinger  
 John Farrell  
 Bill Streicher  
 Filipe Hernandez

2. **Utilization of Community Colleges, BOCES and High School's to train firefighters which includes the creation pilot programs.**

Brittany Kitterman  
 Elisha Tomko  
 Mary Alice Molgard  
 Don Corkery  
 Art Hunsinger  
 Luci Labriola Cuffe  
 James Cable  
 Jackie Bray  
 Mark Massarotti  
 John Farrell

**Recommendation for report:**

OFPC to work with State Ed to promote the delivery of Firefighter training through the State Fire Program or BOCES Program developed guidance to roll programs out.

Promote and support State Ed high school level Intro. to Fire Science Courses, career opportunities in the Fire Service and awareness to have a career in the Vol/paid fire departments.

Work with our SUNY partners and other to see if viable option of OFPC to work with SUNY to collaborate on equivalency program at the SUNY level.

These programs are CTE programs (Career Technical Education Programs) not accredited, will reflect in the report.

**3. Feasibility and necessity of creating a unit within OFPC dedicated to Vol. firefighter recruitment and retention.**

Elisha Tomko  
James Cable  
Dale Lingenfelter  
Art Hunsinger  
Gerald Knapp  
Felipe Hernandez  
Donald Corkery  
John Farrell  
Brittany Kitterman  
Bill Streicher

**Recommendations:**

OFPC possibly creating a unit dedicating to Volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention. OFPC to identify a point of contact to serve as liaison and coordinator for the fire service, and to work with fire service partners to develop best practices such as onboarding practices of new members and mentoring programs to assist fire department and retaining new members and supporting local incentive programs.

**4. Identify and review new and existing recruitment and retention benefits and incentives and programs.**

Jim Cable  
Elisha Tomko  
Art Hunsinger  
Gerald Knapp  
John Farrell  
Bill Streicher

**Recommendation for report:**

Change language priority allowing compensation personal, Real and Property Tax exemption and credits  
Authorize paid on call and stipends for training and fuel

**5. Review and identify and retention programs utilized by other states.**

Elisha Tomko  
Art Hunsinger  
Gerald Knapp  
Luci Labriola Cuffe  
Dale Lingenfelter

**Recommendation for report:**

Develop and maintain a website to provide results of searches to volunteer fire departments

Work with fire service partners to include other state practices .

**6. Recruitment and retention of volunteer from unrepresented at-risk population.**

Elisha Tomko

Art Hunsinger

Gerald Knapp

Luci Labriola Cuffe

Dale Lingenfelter

**Recommendation for report:**

Use 2020 Census data to identify community and population used to understand the community particularly minorities women and LGTBQ communities to better engage and recognize changing households.

Fire Departments should attend local community events IE: local diverse communities, LGTBQ meetings, other non-traditional places. Partner with established groups serving these under-represented populations. Offer space for meetings to minority and other volunteer organizations in the community.

Fire departments should revise by-laws need to reflect out-reach to those under privileged and engaging with groups outside the fire house.

Fire departments should reach out to engage new homeowners and renters regarding fire protection and how it's provided to the community

Fire departments to reach out to engage veteran organizations.

Fire departments providing childcare at the firehouse during training, shifts, and response events for parents so they can be available to respond.

Chair Tomko thanked members for meeting explained no sharing the draft and to wait for the final draft that will be sent to members of the Task Force.

7. Meeting adjourned 3:00 pm