

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION

MINUTES (Approved)

Monday, May 4, 2026

9:00am – 11:30am

Present

1. Chief Dan Brooks, Chair
2. Gerry Gay, 1st VP, PFFM
3. Ronnie Green, 2nd VP, PFFM
4. Vicki Schmidt, MSFFF
5. Jim Graves, MFSI
6. Charlie Soltan, Insurance
7. Steve Greeley, BLS
8. Joe Guyotte, MSFFF
9. Ken Desmond, MSFFF
10. Chief Shawn Esler, FMO
11. Chief Robby Gross, MFS
12. Rep. Steve Bunker
13. Chief Darrell White, MFCA
14. Rep. Mike Lajoie
15. Wil O'Neal, EMS
16. Senator Chip Curry
17. Chief David Groder, MFCA

Absent

1. Rep. Dean Cray
2. Catherine Nadeau, Public Advocate
3. Senator Scott Cyrway
4. *Vacant, Governor's Office*

Excused

1. Larry Willis, MSFFF
2. Steve Mallory, MEMA

Guests

1. Bill Dingee
2. Bill St. Michel
3. Michelle Mason-Webber
4. Richard Taylor
5. Joel Davis
6. Rebecca Graham
7. Chief Glen Garland
8. Chief Bill Gillespie
9. Alexander Rezk
10. Dominic Piacentini
11. Eric Miller
12. Gianna DeJoy
13. Prianka Maria Sarkar

Secretary

Shannon Els

Approval of Minutes: April 2026 - Motion: Ronnie Green, Second: Joe Guyotte – vote passes unanimously

BRIC Survey – UMaine Presentation Summary

A UMaine/Maine Fire Marshal study of Maine's fire service (2025–26 snapshot with future trend implications) covering workforce, capacity, training, finances, and community safety. Landscape of 219 departments that reported: ~377 Maine fire departments; 6% fully career, 34% combination, 42% volunteer-compensated. 60% are volunteer-based and 94% rely on some volunteers. ~74% of firefighters are interior- and pump operator–certified.

- Key Workforce Concerns: Staffing is stable but insufficient for rising demand. Volunteer availability during daytime, housing costs, multiple jobs/family obligations, and distance to training are primary challenges. ~27% are less than 30 years, 23% 30-39 years old, 20% 40-49 years old; and recruitment of younger members is critical. Volunteer departments have historically served as career training pipelines, but that pathway is at risk as those departments decline.
- Common Recruitment Methods: Social media (Facebook), print/signage, job fairs, open houses, live-in programs, and compensation/benefits updates.
- Emerging Dynamics: Career departments growing in small towns; shifting residency requirements; volunteer-to-career pathways and applicant availability are reshaping all department types. Attention towards maintaining up to date training as a primary staffing concern with many noting that time and travel commitments are a burden to volunteers.
- Recommended Actions: Regular workforce census updates, resource distribution and mutual aid mapping, call/response/training activity analysis, cost-benefit analyses of regionalization and training investments, and multimedia data tools for state leadership.
- Next Steps: GIS data, follow-up interviews, survey analysis, final report (September 2026). Commission priorities include counting career firefighters in volunteer departments and non-interior firefighters

eligible for interior certification. UMaine recommends targeted training surveys and addressing city investment structures when trained personnel leave for smaller departments.

Questions from the Commission: interested in knowing how many career firefighters are in volunteer departments as well as how many non-interior firefighters can become interior certified. recommended by UMaine: design/conduct specific surveys for capturing training data. Considerations need to be addressed to investments in fire training and what structures are put into place for cities that invest in personnel. Mention of Office of Community Affairs to support Commission and explore current personnel licensing structures currently in place across other industries.

I. Committee Reports

A. Best Practices Committee - no updates

B. Professional Development Conference

Reserved for Sunday River Resort for 2027 and 2028.

RFP for 2027 Keynote Speaker is out.

C. Education and Training Strategy Committee

Working on a package for the legislation explaining what has been done to date and what further funding is needed to continue. Thank you to Senator Curry in support of the live fire training facilities mission. Since 2015, \$3.5 million has been granted. Yarmouth and Farmington facility repairs will be completed by summer. Bangor will be completed before MFSI Live Fire Instructor/Instructor In-Charge this year. St. George under review with MOU for MFSI use (pending) and other site options.

D. Recruitment and Retention Committee

Those departments that have not checked out the materials available through the SAFER Grant. Easy to obtain Free (to the department) recruitment materials. [\[link\]](#) Once you contacted the administration of the grant, you will receive an order form for:

- A 3' by 8' banner (perfect to attach to ladders on engine for parade, etc.)
- 100 posters that are 11" by 17"
- 200 handouts (6" by 10") public appearance and/or available in station lobby

Verbiage is for "Volunteer" recruitment but could attract recruits for FT positions. Fire departments are eligible, but regional organizations will need 501c3 to apply.

E. Wildland Fire Committee

197 wildfires statewide (largest 11 acres) 7 residences damaged/destroyed, 17 outbuildings.

WUI/human causes are prominent. There aren't many fire departments that can handle a seven-day wildfire occurrence. It is very difficult to come up with a 20-person hand crew, call-when needed capacity. This needs to be built up (10% of events are extended). The reality is that not everyone can afford to let full-time folks go. Strategizing how to build this capacity is important. Federal entities: US Wildland Fire Service going through big structural changes; affects Maine's response/capacities with various jurisdictions. Working on expanding wildfire preparedness plans.

F. Staffing Committee -- BRIC Survey Grant (see notes above)

G. Cancer Reduction Grant

Confirming with DAFS that accounting has been accounted for and reported.

Considering future engagements with legislature to combat cancer in the future.

H. Emerging Energy Hazards Committee

Proposed training NFPA 855 – Energy Storage Systems (particularly lithium-ion technologies) led by fire protection engineer. The standard does say that there needs to be an emergency plan in place, but what does that actually look like? Each jurisdiction dictates the regulations and requirements for solar, data, and energy storage.

Fire chiefs are asking for training and support for these policies and response. Commission members are meeting with Efficiency Maine and other agencies involved in large energy projects so that there is a collaboration and support with the fire service. Department of Labor Standards will review what other states are doing to compare.

I. Treasurer Report: \$4336.77 - \$139.73 (Award Reimbursement) = \$4,197.04

II. Legislative Report

+ LD679 \$500k for live fire training facilities

III. Old Business

A. LOSAP Board Report

- Almost 1000 participants and \$250k investments

B. EMS Report

- May 17-23, 2026, EMS Week. Awards on May 21 at capital building (hall of flags)
- \$6M to expand paramedicine services in rural Maine (\$30M in the next 5 years)
- [worksourcemaine](#) landing page for EMS recruiting (shows wages) [\[link\]](#)

C. OSHA/BLS - no updates

D. Election of Officers (Nominations)

Motion: Charlie Soltan, Second: Joe Guyotte – vote passes unanimously

- + Chair (Dan Brooks), 1st Vice-Chair (Gerry Gay), 2nd Vice-Chair (Ronnie Green), Treasurer (Jim Graves), Secretary/Non-Member (Shannon Els)

E. Committee Members (Review Rosters)

C. Education and Training Strategy Committee

Jim Graves, Chief Dan Brooks, Gerry Gay, Vicki Schmidt, Chief Darrell White

H. Emerging Energy Hazards Committee

Chief Shawn Esler, Chief Robby Gross, Jim Graves, Steve Greeley, Chief Dan Brooks, Ken Desmond, Gerry Gay

IV. New Business and News from Members

- Charlie Soltan is retiring in the fall – he will make recommendations for replacement.
- Explore process for the commission's members confirmation

Adjourn: Motion: Ken Desmond Second: Joe Guyotte – vote passes unanimously

Next Meeting Monday, June 1, 2026, at 9am