

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION

MINUTES (Approved)

Monday, April 6, 2026

9:00am – 10:30am

Champlain Conference Room, Maine Department of Public Safety, 45 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME

[Zoom Link](#) // Meeting ID: 897 3609 0724 // Passcode: 946438

Present 13

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. Larry Willis, MSFFF
10. Ken Desmond, MSFFF
11. Chief Shawn Esler, FMO
12. Steve Mallory, MEMA
13. Chief David Groder, MFCA

Absent

1. Senator Chip Curry
2. Rep. Dean Cray
3. Catherine Nadeau, Public Adv
4. Senator Scott Cyrway
5. Rep. Mike Lajoie
6. Wil O'Neal, EMS
7. *Vacant, Governor's Office*

Guests

1. Bill Dingee
2. Bill St. Michel
3. Glen Garland
4. Michelle Mason-Webber

Excused

1. Chief Robby Gross, MFS
2. Rep. Steve Bunker
3. Chief Darrell White, MFCA

Secretary

Shannon Els

Approval of Minutes: March 2025

- Motion: Ronnie Green, Second: Ken Desmond: All approved, passes unanimously

I. Committee Reports

A. Best Practices Committee

- Invoice for Best Practices Award/Plaque
Motion to reimburse: Gerry Gay, Ronnie Green – all approved, passed unanimously
- Award: Levant Fire Department received award at Fire Chief's Annual Conference (3/26)

B. Professional Development Conference

- Between the 50/50 and auction, raised \$10,000 for the Shriners Burn Hospital
- Well-attended (peak attendance at 200 participants) pre-registered attendants are capped at 180 participants to allow for walk-ins. Strong presence from vendors this year.
- 2027: Next year's conference will be at the same location and time of month. Conversation about different facilities/locations that could meet similar structure and organizing requirements.
- The RFP process for 2027 conference speaker is underway. Recent updates to MCCA procurement procedures have prompted adjustments, and coordination with the conference committee is in progress to expedite the timeline and secure speakers before availability is limited.

C. Education and Training Strategy Committee

- Live Fire Training Facility
 - Farmington/Yarmouth repairs need to be completed, and committee is in contact.
 - Ellsworth repairs are in the process of reimbursement.
 - Continued check-ins with DAFS for funding to be carried over. State supplemental budget closed. Theoretically \$8MILL to be split. Chair working with fire chiefs on organizing funding for facilities. Connect with Sen. Curry and Rep. Steve Bunker.
 - MFSI recently conducted live burn training on an acquired structure because there is no live fire facility available. There are needs for training buildings in Washington and Arostook counties – fill gaps.

D. Recruitment and Retention Committee

- In Penobscot County we have visited 7 high schools to date, including one job fair. We have two more job fairs locked in, one school scheduled, and one pending.
- The International Fire Chiefs, New England Division, provided a workshop at last month's conference at Sunday River. They are administering a 3.3-million-dollar, three-year SAFER grant dedicated to recruitment and retention in New England. Every fire department in Maine should become familiar with this grant, because it is available for recruitment, outfitting new firefighters, and training for all firefighters. ([link](#)) Plan to pursue some of that funding for recruitment at the County level and explore statewide uses.

E. Wildland Fire Committee - no report

Spring wildfire season has started slowly, but we are in an extended drought, and the amount of moisture we receive this Spring will be a key factor in what the wildfire season brings.

F. Staffing Committee (changed to Fire Marshal)

- BRIC Grant: sought permission for UMaine to present report to MFPSC (approved)
 - Preliminary assessment of Code Enforcement Officers across the state. MOCA used presentation material to advocate for training and additional resources.
 - Fire Survey: Career is increasing; call is shrinking. Age is a concern. Training concerns listed (not enough funding or bandwidth). People are working on all departments around them geographically. Staff rosters are not completely accurate. Increased costs and economic restraints. There is a wide-scale move to *regionalization* (forced, not necessarily intentional – based on need). There is no longer large-scale opposition.
 - End of Grant period is September 2026.
 - FMO asked that Portland Fire data is separated from data (it's the outlier) 212 uniformed firefighters. Asked to present results separately to view with and without PFD data.
 - Question: Did UMaine provide a data gap analysis or credibility factor? Note: there is not 100% participation from fire chiefs. Answer: Credibility can be tested by the subject matter experts. Nothing of the data that was received reflects bad data from the first look. It will be a 30,000-foot view. Wide scale adoption of EMS in the fire service.
 - Need to be able to articulate issues within fire service is necessary to address the legislature next year. Ex: taking data from Houston, Seattle, and other major cities to use it as an example of what Maine needs to act on for fire suppression 4 stories below (remove) and mandate suppression 5 stories above. *This is language that is not in interest of the towns and cities. FMO needs to address this on safety and economic level. Note: NFPA allows single stairway up to 4 stories.
- PFAS survey: 220 departments out of 370 departments. FMO staff is reaching out to departments and focused on capturing this data. There are over 8000 gallons that have been noted. Continuing to move forward with that survey. Many departments report 0.
- NERIS: 200 departments onboarding. There are some departments that report on different platforms. Frustrations from ImageTrend (not adapting fast enough) are always behind. Capturing more information. Emerging Hazards (19 battery fires logged 2026).
- Governor's Office and Department of Energy asked for fire service's opinion on large scale battery banks and production/storage. Data that funding and training has not been sufficient. FMO to put together committee to provide training. Estimate \$200k to start.
- Issue with Marine Take Back Program – Tractor trailers are full and cannot be destroyed properly. PPE has not been provided for workers. Burn injuries occurred recently. Bid out for \$220,000 for PPE and facilities that can dispose of it properly and safely.

G. Cancer Reduction Grant

- Cancer grants have one final award to make for Eustis FD, pending completion of exhaust system install. Rep. Bunker traveled to Machias on March 29 to deliver cancer awareness presentation to approximately 40 fire members from the area. SB to continue to offer this at no cost to any audience. Need help from commission with invitations but will continue to fund travel statewide.

H. Emerging Energy Hazards Committee

- Interested by the fire service professional in EV vehicle fires. Online resources are available, but no funding is available at the state level. Will ask other agencies.

- New Hampshire had a recent crash that used a number of resources. The burden cannot be on the municipality. It will take several departments to contain fire, and the companies are not held at fault or mandated to provide resources for training.
- Interest from renewable energy storage group to share training (state house discussion).
- Question: Lithium battery storage boxes – are they effective? Answer: Always check for UL label. Additionally, 1/3 of the market is compliant with UL Listed as it relates to thermal runaway. A large-scale majority of lithium batteries are manufactured in China and do not have fire suppression (low-cost option). If installed properly, the batteries are relatively effective and can capture and store solar energy. However, many are not installed properly – this is an issue for the fire service because the firefighter is at an increased risk of electrocution.

I. Treasurer Report - no changes at \$4336.77

II. Legislative Report

- LD 2223: "Increase Funding For Construction Plan Reviews And Clarify Rule-making Authority For Municipal Reviews Of Development" Delegated authority/added positions to conduct more reviews, funding mechanism for positions and special revenue account that FMO has permission to fund
- LD 2173 and LD 2224: Working group to look at residential sprinklers and dissect the cost of sprinklers. Component needs to be addressed; PUC and water companies charging to hook up and standby fees. A new system structure from FMO to be proposed to address affordability and structural issues. Ex, can six-story building with one stairway be insured?
- LD 2025, "Provide Health Care Cost Reimbursement for Retired Law Enforcement Canines"
- LD 2100 and LD 2012 "An Act to Amend the Laws Governing Carbon Monoxide Detectors, An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Fuel Gas Detector Requirements" Did not receive a 2/3 vote in Senate, passed the House, passed Committee. Criminal Justice Chair can put in an amendment to strip the emergency mandate to preamble. The new law states that code enforcement or fire marshals can enforce and is related to NFPA standards. Supported by school systems and noted that it will cost X.
- LD 1730 Plug-in solar panels have been passed and are now allowed in apartments without the permission of the building owner.
- LD 744 Battery Take Back (DEP Bill) requires sellers of batteries need to be able to take them back. There are increasing fires in landfills and dumps (almost every single day), and they are not reporting.

III. Old Business

- A. LOSAP Board Report – no report
- B. EMS Report – no report
- C. OSHA/BLS Updates
 - Still too soon to elaborate on Fire Brigade/new Emergency Response, no updates now. Next meeting will be in June. MFSI is working to provide a pathway to address officer requirements from the proposed Emergency Response (if it does get approved, but there is no movement yet). Incremental approaches will be recommended for the state of Maine.

IV. New Business and News from Members

- Thoughts are with Buckfield Fire Department for their loss of a firefighter in a vehicle crash.

Adjourn 10:34am

- Motion: Ken Desmond, Second Gerry Gay – approved, passes unanimously

Next Meeting Monday, May 4, 2026, at 9am