

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION

MINUTES

Monday, September 8, 2025

9:00am – 12:00pm

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

Present: 16 of 21 and 1 vacancy

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| • Chief Dan Brooks, Chair | ▪ Chief David Groder, MFCA | Absent: |
| • Lt. Gerry Gay, 1 st VP (ret.) | ▪ Jim Graves, MFSI | ▪ Chief Joe Guyotte, MSFFF |
| • Ronnie Green, 2 nd VP | ▪ Chief Robby Gross, MFS | ▪ Chief Darrell White, MFCA |
| • Vicki Schmidt, MSFFF | ▪ Chief Shawn Esler, FMO | ▪ Rep Mike Lajoie |
| • Steve Greeley, BLS | ▪ Chief Larry Willis (ret.) | ▪ Wil O'Neal, EMS |
| • Senator Scott Cyrway | ▪ DC Ken Desmond (ret.) | ▪ Charlie Soltan, Insurance |
| • Rep Steve Bunker | ▪ Catherine Nadeau, Public Adv | ▪ Vacant, Governor's Office |
| • Steve Mallory, MEMA | ▪ Senator Chip Curry | |

Guests: Bill St. Michel; Secretary: Shannon Els

Approval of Minutes: June 2025: Motion KD, Second, SG – All Approved, 0 Opposed

I. Committee Reports

A. Best Practices Committee

One (1) proposed, Levant: Spark Plug Academy, under review by committee

B. Professional Development Conference

Speaker signed for 2026 and starting process for 2027

2026: Paul Dowdy (Leadership, Documentation) Flyer to follow

C. Education and Training Strategy Committee

LD 679 Training Facilities - MCCC funds have been encumbered (only for one year) and need to be used by July 1, 2026. Director Graves is working with DAFS and College Leadership to reimburse MFSI-MCCC funds. The current process for this fiscal year is as follows: SMCC-MFSI writes the check, then state reimburses. Once funds are reimbursed, there will be more funding available to disburse.

Bangor is the next facility to be considered. Yarmouth and Fairfield have been awarded funding to support repairs/improvements to current facilities.

Auburn project is underway and currently in the process waiting for a permit. Reimbursed 50% of the overall project.

MFPSC will need to put together a campaign to continue this funding moving forward for continued appropriation to support further construction projects. Recommendation from present legislatures is that communication to appropriations is done earlier in the process. The governor's office is always a worthwhile outreach with an organized leadership approach to discuss priorities. Historically, strong through criminal justice/safety, then loses funding in appropriations.

Recommendation for process to be moved to LOSAP so that language/funding is ongoing and able to be rolled over. To be considered whether to put this into a current bill or create a new bill. Needs to be approved as emergency legislation. **Clarification needed on decision moving forward. Requesting letter from appropriated cities/facilities to make this request of state in support of this project.** Proposal for Fire

Commission dedicated account (non-lapsing account) under DAFS for facilities priorities. Chair will pursue this question. Goal to find a dedicated source of funding.

Caribou facility to be considered. FF I & II End Test will be held in September 2025 and MFSI/MFPSC leadership will be meeting with Aroostook County stakeholders to discuss needs of fire service and facilities support.

D. Recruitment and Retention Committee

Fire Science (EMCC) Success from three years ago. Fire Chiefs had apparatus at every fire recruiting event, with strong leadership. EMCC enrollment is 35 students, 4 new live-ins. 21 in introductory class (new first-years).

Scarborough is hosting their annual Junior Muster.

Social Security Fairness Act positive impacts with law – as a recruitment and retention opportunity. Bill had been sitting in DC since 2003.

E. Wildland Fire Committee

It's been a busy season. August has more than doubled this year in the last twenty years. Northern Maine is the least concern. Weather in coastal/inland areas has been higher and still concerned for the fall. Not necessarily a red flag but needs consideration and has been informed by weekly stakeholder meetings. Weekly stakeholder call – included fire chiefs, MEMA, NWS including eastern area coordinating group and NIFSI (Boise) and helping to dial in fire incidents and tracking. New England is at a heightened fire risk. 673 fires with over 500 acres. If any of the fires had significant wind events, then more resources will be tested. Cannot rely on Compact members like New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, NH, VT, MA, because they are all dealing with the same situations.

Actively in discussions with Quebec to have additional aviation support.

Grant federal program update: current fiscal year finally got state-corps funding and volunteer fire support funding has been secured. Guidelines to this program are set up at the federal level and there is a need for these local concerns as it pertains to career vs. volunteer resources. Patty Cormier president of national state foresters and has been advocating for this funding. With competitive grant programs with community risk reduction, funding is secured. Priority communities for funding: Washington, Aroostook, Penobscot, and Franklin County are engaged in fuels risk reduction along with Community Wildfire protection plans.

During August response – lots of discussion regarding fire permit bans and online burn permit system shut off. Clarification asked of MFS: communities could put further restrictions in place and MFS felt that they weren't quite there yet to put on a state-wide ban. Trying to be careful about when to pull the permits and when not to do it. Clarification on 'fire bans' community-to-community and what is enforceable.

Definition of 'Volunteer' continues to be discussed.

From Drought Taskforce Meeting – a lot of what we are seeing is like 1947 wildfires; 2001/2002 were higher fire incidences, high winds, low RHs.

Evacuation information is through MEMA. Systems go under-utilized on the local level when it comes to all-hazards/wildland awareness systems. Actively putting together regional tabletop strategies.

F. Staffing Committee

Fireworks with fire bans to consider regarding fire permits. Ability to ban commercial shows but no mechanism in place for personal/individual enforcement.

BRIC UMaine Survey – had over 210 departments reporting. Starting to see data samples including mutual aid. Key points, communities are feeling the volunteer issue. Departments are adding full time staffing and seeing reluctance of municipalities to send resources to protect their own community. Service centers are taking a hit to cover the smaller communities with limited resources and fading departments. The

survey will be able to take it to the legislature. Another: lack of uniformity in policies, procedures, scene response, and apparatus. Survey is going out to Town Managers and Code Enforcement Officers.
Hired new Senior Planner. NERIS transition is ongoing from MEFIRS. Future webinars will be hosted to be able to answer NERIS questions.
PFAS Survey out. Goal to hit 90% to understand the inventory out in the field before making any fiscal decisions.
LD 159 Working group to study municipal plans review meeting weekly. Will publish overview.
Fire Marshal Office has developed a strategic plan and will provide feedback to the commission.

G. Cancer Reduction Grant

Remaining three departments are to be awarded, but the process is wrapping up with additional training to be scheduled. 30 exhaust systems, 7 gear washers awarded.
Needs additional grant management to consider proposing this in the next fiscal year.
Motion: GG, Second: KD to continue providing cancer reduction grant process.
Request to expand the language to include forest service and fire marshal office, plus expanding definition of gear washers. Priority to municipal level and state second.
CAPE toolkit free from Rutgers and available to all.

H. Emerging Energy Hazards Committee

Research is continuing forward to find a valid vendor for statewide.
FMO sought to find a way to support EV data across the state. Presumed that lithium batteries are one of the major causes of fires, however there isn't data tracking this report. January 1st with the new NERIS form, there will be a complete fire emerging section for departments to report in order to understand how fires are starting so that advocacy and strategy can move forward.
This has a big impact on the fire service, and they are not being adequately trained. Solar panels are presenting challenges: stored energy, venting, etc.

I. Treasurer Report Updated Balance: \$5242.27 then, after payments: \$4336.77

Invoices to Pay: Legislative Breakfast, cancelled \$305.50; Secretary, Shannon Els, \$600
Motion to Pay: LW, Second: DG – All approved, 0 Opposed.

II. Legislative Report

For 2026, exploring Hall of Flags Events (Month of February) Coffee/Hall of Flags around legislature sessions with a lunch event.

LD 1375 information sent out from Bill St. Michel and Senator Curry. Requested names of members on the committee. **Passed and this is an active working group to understand barriers to inadequate housing and how to move forward with life safety.** Maine Fire Chiefs/Code Committee have developed a response to express concerns about the removal of certain restrictions to provide information regarding consequences to fire life safety and first responders. Greg Payne is coordinating research and leading this working group to generate a report to consider creating a committee. Encouraged by legislatures to engage in this work group (which fire service does not have representation at currently nor was approached) and continue conversing with national organizations looking at these similar regulations and conversations.

See open Zoom meetings sent via listserv.

September 1 – November 30: Subgroups meet to develop strategies

Building Codes/Safety & Fire Issues: 9/11, 9/18, 9/25 @ 9-10am

Building Codes/MUBEC/Code Enforcement: 9/30, 10/7, 10/14 @ 8-9am

Zoning & Land Use: 10/16, 10/23, 10/30 @ 9-10am

Permitting: 10/21, 10/28, 11/4 @ 8-9am

December 31, 2025: Report due to HED

III. Old Business

A. LOSAP Board Report – No Changes

B. EMS Report – No Report

C. OSHA/BLS Updates

No new news, still reviewing the public comments for ‘Emergency Response/Fire Brigade’. Still planning an ad-hoc committee in 2026 for proposed Emergency Response standard as it pertains to Maine.

An additional work group (indoor air quality) for the public sector, previous leadership put together a work group to put together indoor air quality standard. Public meetings and comment period will be held before anything becomes official.

IV. New Business and News from Members

A. By Laws Review – Review in September for Final October Vote

B. Review of upcoming MFPSC Meeting dates/times: **Monday, October 6, 2025, at 9:00am**

C. Sept. Federation Fire Convention in Fryeburg, Memorial Service, Friday 7pm annual meeting

D. Upcoming: October 9, Community Risk Reduction and Live Sprinkler Demo

Motion to Adjourn: RG Second: SE All Approved – 0 Opposed