

Congressional Fire Services Institute
National Advisory Committee Meeting
Hilton Washington
Jefferson Ballroom
April 30, 2010
Minutes

Steve Austin, NAC Vice-Chair

- Called to order at 8:30
- Pledge of allegiance
- Kevin O'Connor could not attend meeting because of meeting with a member of Congress

Executive Director's Report: Bill Webb

- Acknowledgements for dinner: 1800 people at the dinner compared to slightly less than 2000 the year before.
- Seminars at the hotel are more effective and easier for people to attend.
- Technology Exhibit by House Homeland Committee on Capitol Hill widely attended. Next year, we'll work with committee staff to enhance the event.
- Recognized volunteers including Denny Compton, Steve Edwards, and the award winners.
- CFSI will honor Sen. Chris Dodd for Legislator of the Year in Connecticut.
- Recognized CFSI Board members who were present: Chief Jim Estepp and Lou Amabili
- Next year's dinner is scheduled for April 6-7.
- In terms of outreach, CFSI continues to attend the major trade shows and conferences. We are hosting a monthly webinar program, publishing a bi-weekly publication, and conducting a weekly video message. We also launched a new website
- Asked NAC members to review the NAC Directory and to email CFSI with any changes/mistakes
- Lastly, thanked CFSI staff

Legislative Report: Sean Carroll

- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee marked up grant program on Wed April 28. Unable to attend mark-up because of our program.
- Changes in Senate bill
 - All changes recommended by national fire service organizations will sunset
 - Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (original draft had instituted 10% match on non-profits and fire departments; now-5% soft match)
 - SAFER match – 20% match over three years in House bill; 25% over three years in Senate with a fourth-year retention requirement.

- The proposed House bill match for AFG is 10% and 5% compared to 15%-10%-5% in the Senate bill. The current levels are 20%-10%-5%
 - CFSI will work with the Congressional committees as the process moves forward
- Barry Kasinitz – The markup was very positive in that it was able to avoid partisanship. Only one senator addressed concerns about the measure.
- Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act – a lot of work to do but a good opportunity in this Congress to move the bill forward. Conversation on Hill has moved from “Why” to “How should we be doing this?”
- Congressional Fire Services Caucus
 - Remains the largest caucus. Problem is turnover following the elections. Need to reach out to a lot of members and get them actively involved. We ask NAC members to encourage their members of Congress to join
- Janet Wilmoth – Can we get the list of who is not on caucus online? Caucus list is on CFSI website

Austin

- Recognizes past NAC Chairmen
- Called for self-introductions

PRESENTATION

Elizabeth Harman, Assistant Administrator, FEMA’s Grant Programs Directorate

- Barry Kasinitz introduced Elizabeth Harman
- Harman acknowledged long history of knowing CFSI’s work
- Explained grant programs directorate
 - “One stop shop for all FEMA grants.”
 - \$4 billion per year in grants with 56 programs
 - 20,000 applicants. Funding to award 25% of grant applications
 - GPD under Tim Manning, Rich Sereno, Craig Fugate
- 2009 – All announcements for unsuccessful bids went out before 2010 guidance
- AFG Grants
 - 13 rounds of AFG grants (4,421 awards, \$384 million, 1,200 awards remaining worth \$65 million)
- SAFER
 - 2,100 applications (2009) for \$1.2 billion requested, 49 awards worth about \$53 million given. Total about 100 awards will go out
- Tim Manning is rectifying situation of peer-review grants with criteria for choosing grant winners
- Fire Prevention Safety Grants – 2,100 applications worth about \$213 million; \$22 million passed out (9% of total requested)
- Station Construction Grants – 6,000 applications, \$210 million given out
 - Currently awarded approximately 100 grants
 - All applications must be “shovel ready”-all permits up-to-date, land owned. Ready to break ground immediately upon receiving the money

- 3 grants had to be returned because they were not “shovel ready”
- In the future, it’s important that the rejected applications offer explanations for rejections to improve the program
- Cathy Patterson now serving as Acting Chief of AFG grants program
- Going to have online tutorials, grant writing workshops, assistance
- Want stories of how AFG money has helped individual stations and districts
- Interagency approach, regional approach, interoperability are graded higher.

Questions and Answers

Webb – How do you answer the Constitutionality question?

Harman

- Consequences when local governments cannot afford it and there are large expectations for first responders in emergencies...bridging gap

Estep – Did you pick up on any bias between fire and law enforcement grants?

Harman

- No bias from what I picked up between fire and law enforcement

Oliver – Is there still stimulus money to be given out?

Harman

- Still more station construction applications to be awarded.
- We will retain some money to get through budget review as reserves
- Asked them to reduce reserve money to \$2-3 million in order to allow more station construction grants
- Check to make sure application money actually released to grantee. Have to balance construction with historic and environmental concerns which can delay drawing down the money
- Not getting any additional stimulus money as of yet

Appy

- Impressed with application process for station construction grants
- Patterson has support of the entire NAC
- Offered services of HSC to help applicants figure out how to evaluate their projects

Granby

- FEMSA/FEMA working on getting stories.
- There is a tour across the U.S. to obtain anecdotal info.
- Reached out to all dealers and manufactures to find out how these grants helped communities

Webb – Are there other grant programs that the fire service should be looking into and is it on your website?

Harman

- Grants.gov. What's important is that these specific grants go directly to fire service, not to state administrators
- Get more information out to educate departments how to strengthen relationships with state administrators

BREAK

PRESENTATION

Harry McDavid, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

- Mission of HSIN (Homeland Security Information Network) – unclassified portal that can be accessed anywhere
- Capabilities – virtual conferencing
- 100,000 training sessions to private sectors in the past year at no cost to states and local departments
- Johnson City, TN – training exercise: 90 minutes to convene thirty emergency vehicles
 - Important for rural areas
 - It involved the creation of a virtual command center with 40 vehicles
 - Geospatial locating- using Google Earth to find vehicle
- User driven databases to increase search ability, flag for certain patterns, persons, etc
- Have access to 18 different sectors and information like health, law enforcement, etc
- Keith Hinke (DHS) is in charge of creating fire communities of interest
 - 30,000 members related to the fire service that would find this network relevant
- Can call Juan Cole at 703-244-1806 juan.cole@associates.dhs.gov (outreach)

Questions and Answers

Austin – How do I know documents are legitimate and secure on portal

McDavid

- Call HSIN Help desk required to nominate yourself to be part of a certain community or network
- Need known contact to validate who you are to be part of community
- Can restrict access to documents to community, certain people, all of DHS community, or everyone

PRESENTATION

Dr. Shyam Sunder, Director, Building and Fire Research Laboratory, NIST

- Pat Gallagher, NIST Director, wants to strengthen leadership and organization at NIST
- Empowering and assigning accountability to managers who are responsible for research and delivering those services to community
- Changes – Created three Associate Director positions for each of the following programs: 1) laboratory, 2) associate, 3) admin programs. These programs have been approved and on Hill waiting appropriations committee approval
- 10 entities within Laboratory Programs to report to Associate Director of NIST combination of sector (information and fire research technology) and disciplinary (physics, chemistry) focuses, which will be divided into four centers, each with a laboratory (2 technology laboratories and 2 physical laboratories)
- These centers will contain all of Building and Fire and Research Laboratory within Engineering laboratory
- Construction and manufacturing arm will continue all current responsibilities in new lab
- Fire research grants programs (\$1.3 million)
 - For universities to do research
- Budget for NIST- \$37 million and President Obama requested additional \$11 million for next year
 - New money has been spent on World Trade Center Response program (occupant behavior in buildings, evacuation, and fire access elevator, performance of fireproofing in buildings)
- In 2005, \$2 million increase for firefighting technology
- In FY2007 and FY2009 started a program on wildlife urban interface fires
 - Focus on the ability to take the science that we know for single buildings and transfer it to this area
- Recovery Act – \$22 million in structural fire research lab
- Current projects and focuses of NIST
 - Smoke alarm standards, including ionization detectors for low income families and ionization vs. photoelectric detectors for different kinds of fires (flaming vs. smoldering). In addition, NIST is also studying new compositions in building materials, mattress flammability, and low-ignition cigarettes.

Questions and Answers

Dalton – Who at NIST is heading up ionization detector research?

Dr. Sunder – Tom Cleary

Appy – What is the consensus on ionization vs. photoelectric?

Dr. Sunder

- Ionization works better with flaming fire; photoelectric if it's smoldering

- Problem of cost, especially for low-income families vs. effectiveness

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Bylaws – no report
- Ethics – no report
- Fundraising (Webb)
 - Fundraising: dinner is the bulk of operating budget.
 - Thanked Meri-K and Kit
 - Night at the Phillies (Sept 24th).
 - Associates Club Program is gaining in participation and money (\$6,000-7,000 to date).
 - 300 attended the BBQ the night before the dinner. ARA Safety signed on to do it next year
 - Silent Auction at Firehouse trade show in Baltimore
- Programmatic (Webb)
 - Mostly seminars program. Looking for national in scope.
 - Reaching out to Congress in briefings.
 - Firefighter Training Program -- Corporate training program May 13th which includes a Ride Along
- Resolutions (Austin)
 - No resolutions
- Membership (Pattie)
 - Recommend application for membership to the NAC from the Center for Public Safety Excellence.
 - Motion offered by Pattie on behalf of the membership subcommittee; seconded by Compton. Approved unanimously

PRESENTATION

Ron Coleman, President, Fire Heritage Center

- Introduced Chief Bill Killen
- History of the American Fire Heritage Center
- Only organization to document fire related history
- Interested in maintaining incident reports, personal correspondence, writings
 - Centralized archiving center
 - Alliance with Smithsonian
- Preservation and education of historical documents – oral histories, preservation of movies
- Fundraising and membership – will be operational in the next 12 months

Questions and Answers

Appy – How much will it cost over time to create and sustain the project?

Coleman – Based on Army Heritage Center, only \$15,000 in revenue so need much more through fundraising, most work virtual

PRESENTATION

Eddie Buchanan, Fire Service Reputation Management White Paper

- Paper covers: Shift in sense of values and society
 - Proliferation of science and technology
 - Cheating
 - Arson
 - Theft and embezzlement
 - Misuse of fire equipment
 - Harassment and discrimination
 - Alcohol abuse on and off duty
- Calls for a national code of ethics for fire service
- Available on the Cumberland County Volunteer website

Questions and Answers

Appy – Have you given members of Vision 20/20 the paper to market?

Buchanan – Not yet, but we will soon

NEW BUSINESS

Elections – Tony O'Neill (past Chairman) conducts

- Nominations for NAC Chair for the next two years
 - Denny Compton nominates Steve Austin
 - Seconded by Shannon Meissner
 - Steve Austin elected chair for the next year unanimously
- Nominations for NAC Vice Chair
 - Jim Dalton nominates Eddie Buchanan
 - Seconded by Meri-K Appy
 - Eddie Buchanan elected vice chair for the next year unanimously
- Thanked all members, and congratulations to new chairs

Meeting adjourned