

Iowa Firefighters Association  
Board of Directors' Meeting  
January 18, 2015  
Eagle Grove, Iowa

Present: President Brad Yeager, 1<sup>st</sup> VP Mark McNees, 3<sup>rd</sup> VP Marv Trimble, 4<sup>th</sup> VP Jim Shutts, 5<sup>th</sup> VP Gene Evans, Past President Al Esch, Executive Director Wendy Lensing. Absent: 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Bill Halleran.  
Also present: Bob Platz, Dyersville; Cliff Renslow, Stuart; Jack Runge, Buckeye; Rusty Hockman, Jewell; Jim Kenkel, Woodward; Jeffrey Quigle, SFM; Brian Seymour, Indianola; Ellen Hagen, Jewell; Bob Hagen, Jewell.

**Meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by President Brad Yeager.**

**Motion was made by Mark McNees to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Marve Trimble.  
Motion carried.**

**Jim Shutts made a motion to approve the minutes of the last board of directors' meeting held October 26, 2014 in Norwalk, IA. It was seconded by Mark McNees. Motion carried.**

**Executive Director's report – Wendy Lensing**

I'd like to thank the Eagle Grove Fire Department and Chief Gary Lalor for their hospitality today. We appreciate the opportunity to hold our meeting here today.

Yesterday the board met at my house in Humboldt and did the annual audit and budget work session. It's always a long but productive day.

I have been very busy in the office getting things done for the end of the year and the budget meeting as well as processing the dues as they come in. Right now with the new membership system in place we are having some issues with it being able to process some of the memberships correctly. The company is working to find a way to make this work in their system for us. Until we can be sure everything is working correctly I am still processing everything on the old system and the new system both. The issue that is causing the problem is those members that had a credit balance when they were migrated into the system or those members that pay ahead on the mutual aid. Their system wasn't set up to deal with credit balances and they are trying to work around that issue. It's a lot of work right now, but I'm still optimistic that in the future this will work out to be a good move. Once we get the dues renewal portion working correctly we will be able to start implementing the other features of the system.

The legislative session started last week and our legislative breakfast will be held on Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup> beginning at 7:30 in room 116 at the capitol. We hope you can come and visit with your legislator. We will also be holding Firefighter Day on the Hill and the chili cookoff on Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> this year. If you or your department would like to compete you should contact 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Bill Halleran to sign up. We hope to have a lot of firefighters fill the rotunda that day.

The tax credit for volunteers is \$100 now and I put information on the table about that and the information is also on our website.

The tax checkoff for the Volunteer Firefighter Training Fund / Veterans is on the Iowa tax forms again this year. The money designated to this checkoff is split between the 2 funds. There is information on the website and we encourage you to let your friends and family know about this.

**Financial report – Wendy Lensing:**

Total assets for the Iowa Firefighters Association as of December 31, 2014 are \$498,899.39. Total assets of the Iowa Firemen's Foundation as of December 31, 2014 are \$50,779.84. Of that total, \$10,503.54 is actually for the Smoke Detector Project so that leaves the Foundation with a balance of \$40,276.30.

**Motion to approve the financial report was made by Jim Shutts. It was seconded by Marv Trimble. Motion carried.**

**Proposed FY 2015-2016 Budget: Wendy Lensing:**

With the By-Laws change that was voted on in September to change the accounting year from a calendar year to a fiscal year running July 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup> the budget was put together to reflect that period.

An increase was made to the projected income from dues based on the change from \$11 to \$13 for annual membership dues.

Projected total income is \$224,400.00. Projected total expenses are \$223,669.43. Projected net income is \$730.57.

**Officer's Reports –**

**1<sup>st</sup> VP – Mark McNees:**

I would like to thank Chief Lalor and the Eagle Grove department for hosting the meeting today.

We have just completed our budget workshop this weekend and I am happy to report that we are able to project a balanced budget. This takes into account some items for replacement in the office that have been delayed, such as a new computer and replacement of printers that are over 10 years old and beginning to fail. It also takes into account a national benefit summit that was cancelled last year that we will be represented at this year by Bill and Gene.

When looking at our budget we see a large opportunity for members to help contribute by using something they use often in their life, and I am speaking of the IFA credit card. While we are not encouraging debt, or irresponsible spending, we do encourage our members to get the IFA card and use it as they would their other cards. The IFA gets credit for each new card and a percentage of charges made on the cards. We have a miniscule percentage of members with the card, and if this could increase we could dramatically impact the overall budget. So I encourage our members to look on the website and check out the card offer. I have carried and used the card since it's inception and have been very happy with the fraud protection, and interest rate and benefits of the card. It is one I use frequently.

I was able to attend a pre-budget meeting with the board and Governor Branstad and Lt. Gov. Reynolds. We had a good discussion and I had a very positive impression at that time. Unfortunately, nothing we requested was included in the Governor's budget presented to the legislature. So we will continue to pursue our priorities through the legislative process and I believe if we can accomplish that, the governor will approve our requests. However, I am fully aware this will be a hard fight, as leaders from both sides of the aisle have stated any new spending requests will most likely not be funded this year. This will mean we have to come up with creative ways to get the results we desire, such as staff for the FSTB and Fire Marshall's office, along with increases in their budgets for things like the Firebridge Image

Trend annual contract, a curriculum coordinator for the training bureau, and new props for the FSTB. We will be having our legislative breakfast on the 27th so we will be meeting as many as possible at that event.

I also attended the EMS meeting in Sioux City conducted by Senators Danielson and Bertand. It was very well attended by a wide array of providers and officials. The discussion was productive and we will be greatly involved in working on improving EMS service in the state in any way possible. There are many issues and possible solutions and it's important we work to improve the overall service which affects many of our members who also provide the service, and the general public. Structure, finance, coverage and training are just four of the biggest issues involved.

The board is also aware of some issues that appear to be on the horizon again this year including a proposal to legalize fireworks. It is a complicated issue and we have some very definitive objectives in protecting the public, keeping the public and our responders safe, and keeping control should some sort of legalization occur. We have major concerns on all of these levels.

I am planning on attending two department banquets this week and present awards to long time firefighters. It's always a privilege to do so. I encourage departments to conduct recognition of their long time members as part of their retention efforts.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> VP Marv Trimble:**

Thanks to the Eagle Grove fire department for hosting our meeting.

Thanks also to Mark for reading my report. I too am disappointed to hear our requests to the governor did not make it into his budget. I attended the governor's address to the legislature. During his address he mentioned a student loan forgiveness program. I hope this can work as a recruitment and retention tool for the fire service in Iowa. I have talked with one firefighter who consolidated his loan with a conventional loan and now is disqualified from the program.

Senator Danielson is having an informational meeting on the state of the EMS system and the taxation structure in the future. There is one in Coralville on January 21<sup>st</sup> at the Marriot starting at 6:30 PM and another on February 2<sup>nd</sup> in Ankeny.

### **4<sup>th</sup> VP Jim Shutts:**

I would like to thank Chief Gary Lalor and his staff at the Eagle Grove Fire department for their hospitality and support of the Iowa Firefighters Association in hosting this meeting.

November 20<sup>th</sup> Vice President Gene Evans and I attended the grand reopening of the Northwood Iowa fire station. They won the ten thousand dollar firehouse makeover given out by California Casualty Insurance.

The 6<sup>th</sup> of December President Yeager and I attended the Joint Public Safety board meeting in Des Moines. This was very interesting to see the beginning process of the legislative season. Also in December, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice McNees and I met in Sioux City and attended the Iowa Emergency Response Summit held at Western Iowa Technical Community College. This was set up by Senator Danielson and Senator Bertram. It was an extremely informative meeting discussing some of the problems that EMS and Fire need to address. There will be one of these meetings on the East side of the state in the near future.

I have to say that January has proven very busy. The Board of the IFA met with the Governor and Lt Governor on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January to discuss what we would like to get in the Governor's budget. The next week President Yeager and Vice presidents Marv Trimble, Gene Evans and I attended the Governor's Condition of The State Address.

The Board met this weekend at Executive Director Wendy Lensing's home for the annual audit and a board work session, Gene Evans and I did the audit of the books of the Iowa Firefighters Association finding everything in order.

**5<sup>th</sup> VP Gene Evans:**

I would like to begin by taking this opportunity to thank Chief Lalor and the Eagle Grove Fire Department for hosting today's meeting. It is always good to see old friends!

The primary focus for the IFA Board this month has been establishing priorities for the 2015 Legislative session. The Board had the opportunity to meet with both Governor Branstad and Lt. Governor Reynolds last week and present them with our requests for funding to be included in the Governor's Budget. Although they both appeared to be empathetic and voiced support for our cause, the unfortunate truth is that NONE of our requests were included in the Governor's Budget. Not that this is the end of the road, but the struggle to move forward with our mission for this year's session will be more difficult, to say the least. Please be vigilant as this legislative session progresses and reach out to your individual Senators and Representatives as legislation affecting the Fire Service moves forward.

I have also had the honor of presenting length of service awards to some very deserving members of the Association. On December 13 I traveled to Lake City FD and presented three awards. Lynn Boyd- 30 years, Dan Morrow- 25 years and Mark Wilkins- 25 years. Then on January 10, two awards were presented to the Spirit lake FD. Mike Lloyd- 20 years and Verlyn Vander Veen- 25 years. I would like to thank both these departments for giving the IFA the privilege of recognizing these service milestones. Also, thanks to them for the wonderful meals and hospitality.

In closing, I want to remind all of you to be cautious during the rest of the winter months. With the exception of a couple of storms, this has not been a "bad" winter so far. But, this is Iowa, and as we all know, things can change. Be prepared....take time to put on your long johns, drive with regard for the conditions when responding, both to the station and when driving apparatus. We can't help anyone if we don't make it to the call!

**Past President Al Esch:**

Thank you to the Eagle Grove Fire Department for opening up the station to us today. Thanks also to Dave and Wendy for opening up their home yesterday so we can do what we have to do to make our budget process work. I think Gene and Jim received an eye opener as to the business of the association. We answered a lot of their questions and I hope they continue to ask questions as they go through their years.

I too was a little disappointed with the Governor's office after attending our meeting. Everything flowed so well at that meeting and then to have such a kick to the head later was kind of a downer. But we've formed a lot of coalitions and partnerships throughout the years and we'll have to work on those. We've heard that the fireworks legislation will be brought up again this year. We are monitoring the situation and waiting to see what language comes out on that.

Wendy, Brad and Mark will be going to Washington, DC this year and they will be seeing some new faces there this time.

To wrap things up I want to be sure everyone knows we do have association benefits and we certainly like to see you take advantage of those. The credit card, as was mentioned before, continues to help our bottom line quite a bit but it could be better.

**President Brad Yeager:**

I also want to thank Wendy and Dave. That works out great to meet at your place.

We did do Wendy's annual review and gave her a 3% raise. With the budget process that will be in effect for 18 months.

My parents grew up in this area and I spent a lot of time around here. I met Gary at certificate presentation in Goldfield and I didn't know him except that he was from Eagle Grove and as I was giving my presentation he said "Yeager, from Forest City?" and it turns out he went to school with my dad. That kind of thing happens all the time. That was a cool experience. That's how I decided to have a meeting here since it was close to Humboldt.

I don't think we should give the impression that we were beat down too badly with the legislative agenda. I hope that there are still some things that we will be able to work out on some of the items. We will continue to plug away and push our agenda.

We did have an opportunity also to meet the interim commissioner Roxann Ryan outside the Governor's reception. She seems very supportive.

The fireworks legislation seems to be a difficult issue. I e-mailed Senator Danielson and asked how he justifies his position and I got an awesome response back. Basically, he sees the current law as futile. There are no real repercussions to having fireworks; they go off all the time anyway, why not legalize them and sell what we in Iowa would feel is o.k.? It was good to read his position just because he is a firefighter and is pushing the bill. But as others have said, we'll have to see what the bill is before we do anything.

This board is awesome. We can discuss things and have differences of opinions but talk things out and come together on an agreement that works for everyone. One thing we talked about also was blue lights on DOT trucks. Initially, most of the board was opposed to it. In talking to people I know that drive the trucks they wanted the blue lights to make themselves more visible. They are talking about putting just one blue light on the back of the truck and only during the winter. One thing they mentioned was when they are out there moving snow they really are performing a public safety job. That makes sense to me. It's a pilot project at this point in just one part of the state. It's a 3 year study and if accidents decrease they will look at going throughout the state. I don't think we're going to take a position, but we are not going to be opposed to it.

Mark mentioned that it's not just a DOT study, ISU is involved also so there are outside eyes looking at the information.

**Committee Reports:**

**NVFC – Bob Platz and Brian Seymour:**

Bob reported that prior to the beginning of the year the House and Senate both passed a bill that would finance the government through September except for the Department of Homeland Security. They wrote letters to the House and Senate and are hoping to get that straightened out.

They regrouped the recruitment and retention bills and the ones that they are going to push are:

- 1 – Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Reauthorization Act (VRIPRA) which provides an income tax exemption on the first \$360 that a volunteer receives as a benefit.
- 2 – Volunteer Emergency Services Recruitment and Retention Act (VESRRA) which simplifies how Length of Service Award Programs (LOSAPS) are taxed
- 3 – Congressmen Loeb sack and McKinley's bill that allows volunteer emergency responders to claim the first 300 hours per year of services they provide as charitable donations worth \$20 per hour.

Last week Bob received an e-mail from NVFC legislative liaison Dave Finger notifying him that the House unanimously passed H.R. 33, the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act. The bill clarifies in statute that volunteer emergency responders will not be treated as employees under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA or Obamacare), even if they receive nominal recruitment and retention incentives.

Dave Finger offered Bob a seat at the CFSI dinner, which he accepted.

Brian reported that FirstNet appreciated the opportunity to come to the last NVFC meeting and they want to come to the next meeting and report again on how things are progressing. The Chair and Vice Chair will be coming so they will hear things first hand.

Mark McNees asked Brian if the timeline is 2017. Brian stated that the state of Iowa is sort of on the forefront of the FirstNet project and so they are looking at trying to have something here 2017-2018. How that's progressing for the state itself seems to be a little slow so he'd be surprised if it happens that quickly. Ellen Hagen and Mark McNees both stated that the first step would be getting ICN opened up to public safety. That bill, SF20, has been introduced and IFA supports that. Funding is still the issue.

Brian said for those that may not know, he will be moving out of state sometime in the next few months. He appreciates the opportunity he's had to serve on the NVFC board. Brad stated that the board decided to leave Brian as a delegate through the rest of this term. He has been a great asset and will be missed.

#### **Legislation –**

Brad said John Pederson was unable to be at the meeting. Legislation issues had been covered pretty thoroughly in the officers' reports.

Jack Runge commented that he had been at the reception also and had spoken with John afterwards and understood that the board was disappointed with the budget but reminded everyone to look at the fact that you met with the governor prior to session, you were there later, they had to look you in the eye and no it wasn't in the budget. Think of the value of that.

Discussion followed regarding the commercial property tax roll back and the back fill.

#### **Convention Committee – Marv Trimble:**

Marv has had some conversations with Story City FD and it sounds like everything is headed in the right direction for them. They are working on their pricing right now and getting ready for Mid Year. May 2<sup>nd</sup> will be the pre-convention walk through meeting.

Brad said we are still hoping to work through some rules changes and getting the drill equipment trailer gone through to see what needs fixed or replaced.

#### **Guests:**

##### **Fire Marshal – Jeff Quigle:**

The SFM Division had 42 unofficial fire deaths reported for 2014. This is a sharp increase over calendar year 2013 with only 26 reported fire deaths. 34 out of the 42 reported fire deaths in 2014 occurred in residential occupancy fires. Only 4 of the residential occupancy fires had working smoke detectors. The SFM Division has investigated 2 fire fatalities to date for 2015. During this reporting period in 2014

there were no reported fire deaths; however, the tragic fire that occurred on January 24, 2014 in Arlington, IA resulted in 5 fire deaths.

The State Fire Marshal Division is continuing our partnership with the Iowa Firefighters Association and the American Red Cross to address smoke detector installation programs throughout the state. The SFM Division investigated a fire on November 25, 2014 in Riverton that tragically resulted in one fire fatality. A Red Cross Smoke Detector installation project is scheduled for Riverton, IA in Fremont County on Saturday, January 24, 2015. The project volunteers will canvass all homes in the community and the SFM Division is supplying 300 smoke detectors and batteries for the project. Another Red Cross Smoke Detector installation project is scheduled on Saturday, January 31, 2015 in Dubuque at an apartment complex that has seen two different fire events in the last 3 months. We continue to work at identifying communities that we would like to target for future smoke detector installation programs.

The State Fire Marshal Division received the first shipment of 2500 smoke detectors in December of 2014. This initial shipment has been distributed to the requesting Fire Departments with the exception of 200 smoke detectors that are spoken for. The next shipment of 2500 smoke detectors will be delivered to the SFM Division within the next couple of weeks. 2250 smoke detectors are already spoken for from shipment number two. There will be two more shipments of 2500 smoke detectors delivered to the SFM Division. If a Fire Department needs smoke detectors for installation in their communities, please contact Dan Wood with the State Fire Marshal Division at 515-725-6145.

The State Fire Marshal Division's newest Fire Prevention Inspector, Michael Euans just completed a one week Life Safety Code course instructed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services in Dallas, TX. Euans is now certified to conduct Federal Health Care Life Safety Code surveys and will be conducting inspections on his own effective January 20, 2015. Euans is stationed in Northeast Iowa in Winneshiek County in the City of Calmar. The new revised Fire Prevention Bureau Fire Inspector territory map will be posted to our web site on Tuesday, January 20, 2015.

The State Fire Marshal Division conducted interviews for the vacant North Central Iowa Fire Prevention Inspector in December 2014. This vacancy occurred due to State Fire Marshal Division Special Agent 2 Joe Lestina, who was stationed in Lee County in Southeast Iowa transferring to the Division of Criminal Investigation and SFM Fire Inspector Lucas Ossman who was stationed in North Central Iowa was promoted to a Special Agent 2 with the State Fire Marshal Division and is stationed in Linn County. Division of Criminal Investigation Special Agent 1 Christina Smith who was assigned to the Special Enforcement Operations Bureau at the Diamond Joe Casino in Northwood was selected for the North Central Iowa Fire Inspector vacancy. Fire Inspector Smith will be starting her field training program in the near future. The SFM Division is very excited to have Christina join our team.

The State Fire Marshal Division is in the process of completing the required paperwork to reclassify a vacant funded position within the SFM Division to a Fire Inspector to be stationed in Southwest Iowa. The State Fire Marshal Division lost the Fire Inspector position in Southwest Iowa due to a shortfall in funding in the SFM budget at the start of Fiscal Year 2013 on July 1, 2012; however, the position has been vacant since 2011 due to the former Fire Inspector accepting an out of state position with a Fire Department.

The Arson and Explosives Bureau had a very busy 2014 with a total of 411 cases opened. SFM Agents have investigated 41 Accidental, 52 Arson, 76 Undetermined Fires, and 21 cases are currently listed as under investigation. SFM Agents have assisted or been case Agents in several high profile cases during 2014 throughout the state. The Bureau currently has 70 open case investigations. SFM Bomb Techs

have safely completed **61** Explosive Disposals in 2014. SFM K-9's responded to **48** requests for service in 2014. The Bureau has ordered a 3<sup>rd</sup> Sprinter Bomb and Explosive Rapid Response Vehicle for Eastern Iowa and is waiting for delivery of the vehicle.

The State Building Code Bureau welcomed our latest new employee State Building Inspector/Manufactured Housing Inspector Tony Seidl to the Division in December 2014. Tony and his family are stationed in Carroll County. Tony is currently going through the Field Training program and is anxious to start conducting inspections in Western Iowa on his own. Senior Construction Engineer Rich Bolten with the State Building Code Bureau continues to serve as the Acting State Building Code Commissioner. All paperwork has been completed and signed and sent to the Department of Administrative Services and Department of Management to reclassify a vacant funded Construction Engineer position to a Public Service Executive to serve as the State Building Code Commissioner. The State Building Code Bureau staff is also working diligently in the process of the adoption of the 2015 International-Codes.

The Electrical Licensing and Inspection Bureau and the Electrical Examining Board continue to work on the adoption of the 2014 National Electrical Code. The adoption of the 2014 National Electrical Code is currently proceeding through the Iowa Administrative Rules process.

The 91<sup>st</sup> Annual State Fire School will be held from February 27<sup>th</sup> through March 1, 2015 at Iowa State University Scheman Building.

The State Fire Marshal Division Fire Service Training Bureau is conducting the Basic Fire/Arson Investigator School at the FSTB in Ames from March 16 – 27, 2015.

**The Department of Public Safety completed our first successful reaccreditation of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) in 2014. DPS Senior Leadership will appear for renewal candidacy before the (CALEA) Commissioners at the CALEA Conference in Reno, Nevada on March 21, 2015.**

Iowa Department of Public Safety Commissioner Larry Noble retired on January 9, 2015. Governor Terry Branstad named Department of Public Safety Administrative Rules Coordinator Dr. Roxann Ryan as Interim Commissioner.

There is some money left in the budget due to unfilled vacancies that Jeff said he will be able to use to fund a few extra things. He is working to purchase a Fire Cube for Image Trend. It's about \$12,000. It will give Alicia the capability to mine things out of the statistics. There was a report that they put together for Senator Danielson on response times that instead of taking minutes it took days. This will be money well spent. There are some other cubes that they are considering also. The annual fee of \$36,000 has also been set aside for this year. This has been paid for in the past with asset forfeiture money and that funding stream is drying up. The other thing that Jeff stated he plans to pay for out of the extra money is all the supplies for Capt. Brent Smith's Juvenile Fire Intervention Program. The supplies aren't that expensive but there are DVDs and flash drives and notebooks and things that are needed for this program and if we can provide that it would really help.

Jeff has also been working with Healthy State Initiative program. They approached him about the possibility of during a fire drill during fire prevention week once everyone has been accounted for, rather than standing there waiting maybe they could go for a walk. He thought that as long as everyone was accounted for that was a great idea.

Mark McNees asked about in the future for Image Trend if the \$36,000 annual fee is something that we want to get put into the budget as a line item and Jeff said, yes, that is something that needs to be in there.

**Fire Service Training Bureau – Jim Kenkel:**

There are a couple of grants we've been working on through the FSTB. Jeff talked about the smoke detector grants. We just received 4 or 5 bids back for the new burn trailer. Randy also put in for a grant again for a mobile drill tower.

We got \$20,000 again for NFA to do our special programs (officer programs, instructor programs, etc.)

A couple new courses – VFIS – Highway Safety for Emergency Responders – It's a 6 hour program that includes some activities; National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training Program – that's also a 6 hour program with some activities and is put out through the Federal Highway Administration. They are currently going through reaccreditation for their certification programs.

Annual Fire School is February 27 – March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Volunteer Fire Chiefs Workshop is April 11<sup>th</sup>.

Jim is working on hopefully finding a way to update the databases. For example he looked in their database for Eagle Grove FD and the address in the database is for a house. So evidently that is or was the home of the chief or secretary, we need to have addresses for the fire stations. He is working with a group to see if they can get a representative in each county to get the needed information.

**Unfinished Business: none**

**New Business:**

**Lighthouse Uniforms** – Ellen Hagen will coordinate this program for Iowa but they wanted 3 people per county. That isn't something that is going to happen. She is going to have her L.A.S.T. team work on this but is going to talk to Lighthouse about it.

**Rusty Hockman – State Fair Booth –**

Rusty has some concerns with trailer used to store and haul the booth back and forth to Des Moines. Possibly need to check into doing something different as far as what all is being hauled in the trailer or rebuilding some of the pieces out of lighter materials. Also need to purchase new tires as he had a flat on the way back to Jewell and purchased 2 tires but need to purchase a couple more.

Discussed things that could possibly be changed with trailer or with some of the parts of the booth. Also discussed higher compensation for the coordinators.

**Good of the Association: none**

**Motion to adjourn was made by Mark McNees. It was seconded by Gene Evans. Motion carried.**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Lensing

