

Iowa Firefighters Association  
Board of Directors Meeting  
November 15, 2015  
Pella, IA

Present: President Mark McNees, 1<sup>st</sup> VP Bill Halleran, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Marv Trimble, 3<sup>rd</sup> VP Jim Shutts, 5<sup>th</sup> VP Nick Riley, Past President Brad Yeager, Executive Director Wendy Lensing. Absent: 4<sup>th</sup> VP Gene Evans.  
Also present: Randy Novak, FSTB; Bob Hagen, Jewell; Ellen Hagen, Jewell; Jeff Quigle, State Fire Marshal; Roger Bissen, Harlan; Don Scott, Redfield; Jeremy Scott, Pella; John Langstratt, Pella; Randy Bogaard, Pella; Melissa Shutts, Belle Plaine.

**President Mark McNees called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.**

**Bill Halleran made a motion to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Jim Shutts. Motion carried.**

**Brad Yeager made a motion to approve the minutes of the last Board of Directors meeting, held June 13, 2015 in Hiawatha. Nick Riley seconded it. Motion carried.**

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

I'd like to thank the Pella Fire Department for hosting our meeting today. We appreciate your hospitality.

It's been a busy weekend with a board work session on Friday afternoon, our States Networking meeting with the surrounding states on Saturday and now our board meeting today. We had a good turnout for yesterday's meeting with attendees from Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Illinois. Minnesota was the only state that wasn't able to make it out of the usual ones that attend. A lot of good information always comes out of these meetings. One of the things that we discussed was our new database system we were trying to implement. Kansas and Nebraska have been working with this as well.

As of right now we are on hold with the whole membership database change to iMIS. Apparently at this time they are unable to provide the main feature that we were looking for when switching to their software. We were told that a "group administrator" on each department would be able to make changes to on-line to add and delete members and then pay on-line thus making the dues process much easier. After trying to get the system up and running and trying to make it fit the different membership types that we have we've found that the group administrator would not be able to make changes the way we were told. They have told us that they are working to make this possible and offered us some work a rounds but we have said that until it is working the way we were told it could we do not want to put something out there that is confusing and complicated for the departments. Nebraska is in the same boat as we are and they are not going to continue either unless the software is improved to do what we were told it would do. They have said they hope to have this in the first quarter of 2016.

Billing has been delayed by a few weeks. It is usually out by November 1<sup>st</sup>. I had some printer problems and schedule conflicts and it should be out by the end of November.

Please remember to nominate individuals and departments for the IFA Individual of the Year and IFA Department of the Year by December 15<sup>th</sup>. There are many members and member departments that are worthy of these awards. Nominate them so that they can be recognized for their contributions to the fire service and the association.

The deadline for IFA Scholarship applications is also December 15<sup>th</sup>. Be sure to send applications in by that date for consideration of the \$500 scholarship.

Story City sent their convention report to me. They ended up with 2072 registered attendees at convention this year.

**Membership Report – Wendy Lensing:**

The membership in the association as of October 31, 2015 stands at 14,746. Membership in Mutual Aid stands at 2,694. Both numbers are down a bit. This is due mostly to departments that lose one or two members. We have had a few new departments join this past year. We also have a few that haven't paid yet, some of which had some paperwork delays and are still sending in but are not included in the numbers.

We have gained 3 affiliated members this past year.

**Financial Report – Wendy Lensing:**

There are two financial reports on the table. At the last meeting the financial report ran through the end of May. Since we were in the process this year of changing our fiscal year to end June 30<sup>th</sup> there is one report ending June 30<sup>th</sup> and another one that runs July 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>. The total assets of the Iowa Firefighters Association as of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 were \$459,527.66. Total assets of the Iowa Firemen's Foundation as of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015 were \$51,611.36. This includes \$3,816.58 that is for the Smoke Detector Project of the State Fire Marshal's office. That leaves \$47,794.78 that belongs to the memorial savings and checking accounts.

Jim Shutts made a motion to accept the financial report. It was seconded by Marv Trimble. Motion carried.

**Officers' Reports:**

**1<sup>st</sup> VP Bill Halleran:**

Thanks to Chief Van Gorkum and the rest of Pella Fire for hosting today's meeting. I have known Chief Van Gorkum and many of the other Firefighters for quite some time and they have a class act Fire Department here.

Today's meeting follows our events from the past several days. Our board met in West Des Moines on Friday afternoon with our lobbyist and Majority House Leader Chris Hagenow. We were able to bend his ear on some small topic discussions to prepare for the upcoming legislation session. On Saturday we hosted our Annual State's Networking Meeting. This year's Firefighters Association's in attendance were Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. I look forward to this every year as it is nice to see where Iowa shapes up with the surrounding states. This is pretty much a round table session with each state taking turns with hot button topics that are happening in their respective state. This can range everywhere from membership dues, Annual Conferences, membership data bases, corporate donations, legislation issues, EMS coverages and the big ticket item that's always a hot topic, recruitment and retention.

For those that read my last IFA article will remember that I spoke on Fire Departments forming their own 501c3 status to protect donation monies. We as a governing board cannot emphasize the importance of this. The proper format written up by George Oster can be read on the Iowa Firefighters Association website. It is under the section about forming the 501c3 entity. Fire departments need to protect their monies that are donated to them.

We can use your help with action photos for the IFA newspaper. I spoke with Jeff Gargano the Editor of the monthly newspaper. We are going to make this even easier for everyone. With Jeff's permission anyone can text or email the action photo to Jeff at 515-890-0341. The one request is that if you get asked the question on your phone about photo size, pick the "original". This will offer the highest resolution. One note - if you are going to send a picture – make sure you follow your department policy. Also, please make sure that proper procedures are being followed in any photo that is submitted.

We are working on an IFA long range planning committee. This was formed back in 2007 and consisted of Chair Brian Platz, Dave Lensing, Roger Bissen, Brian Hoffman and Al Wessels. We want to review this and try to work on this further. They laid a very solid foundation of showing strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. You will be seeing more on this subject in the future.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> VP Marv Trimble:**

Thanks to Pella for hosting our board meeting. We just came from a busy weekend in Des Moines. Friday we met to work on our legislative priorities. Our lobbyists were able to get house majority leader Chris Hagenow to meet with us. He was very open to our concerns. Some of the big issues will be working to keep our local PSAP money local. We agree a statewide network is needed, but it should be funded with state monies. The other big one is fireworks. Some state lawmakers admit they are after the taxation revenue. Some say they are looking at civil liberty. I agree we should have civil liberties, but not at the expense of others. Our biggest concern is firefighter safety. If you have been reading my reports you know my feelings. I'm going to say it again, with increased access will come increased incidents.

Since our last board meeting I had the privilege to attend the retirement of Phil Hoppe of Robins. He has been on the department for 43 years. His wife and son have also been active with the department and city.

Stay safe.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> VP Jim Shutts:**

I would like to start by saying "Thank you", to the Pella Fire Department for hosting a board meeting of the Iowa Firefighters Association. It's wonderful that departments such as Pella are involved in the association. This gives us the opportunity to bring the Iowa Firefighters Association to you people the members.

I have not been real busy with association business since convention but have been personally with moving to a new residence. We all know that pain. I have had the pleasure of giving out a few years of service awards. The first I had to attend was helping 5<sup>th</sup> Vice President Nick Riley at his own department with an award for Past President Marv Boldt for his 40 year mark on the Traer Fire Department. Just a note Marv stated that he is not retiring yet. The next trip was to Iowa Falls for two presentations. Past President Kirk Rice gave a call to Gene Evans and myself to accompany Past President Bud Hollar and himself to honor two long time members. While in Iowa Falls I learned of the Endow Iowa program. I will have to research this more but it sounds very interesting. If your department has money that you are looking to invest this looks like it would be a very good option for long time pay out to support your department for future generations. This will require a lot more research on my part I will update in coming reports.

**4<sup>th</sup> VP Gene Evans was unable to attend due to a work conflict.**

**5<sup>th</sup> VP Nick Riley:**

Since I was voted to the 5<sup>th</sup> vice president position I have done a few things.

I went to NATA (Northwestern Area Training Academy) in Fort Dodge, IA. It was my first time attending a training school and not going to classes. I went as the representative for the IFA. While I manned our IFA booth, I got to talk with the attendees some who were members and some who are not. Those who are not members asked some very good questions and even took some applications, individual and department apps. Looking forward to hopefully getting some new members or even some new departments to join the IFA.

Also I attended my first States Networking meeting. I will say that it was a very interesting meeting. We had 6 other states that attended. When I say interesting I mean eye opening for myself to see how the other states operate and do things from fire schools to the election of their boards representatives. I realize that every state has a different way of getting to the end result and when I look at their operations in the end they achieve the same common goal that we strive to achieve.

Finally I was able to give a certificate for years of service. This being my first time doing one of these I ask Jim Shutts to assist me. I would like to say that this being my first certificate I have given it went to a member of my home department here in Traer, Marvin Boldt for 40 yrs of service. Marv has been someone that I have looked up to on my department also we have participated in the water ball contest at convention together. Thanks Marv for making it easy on me for my first one!!

Be safe out there.

**Past President Brad Yeager:**

Thank you to the Pella Fire Department for opening up their station to us this morning.

I'll miss those states networking meetings in the future. It's a great way for the 5<sup>th</sup> Vice Presidents to start out each year and it's a great group of people.

As Wendy said, we're on hold with the database. The last e-mail I received from them said that they submitted our request to their higher management for group administrators being able to update membership and it's supposed to be in the works.

Mark noted that we were going to go together with Nebraska and write a letter telling them that neither of us is renewing and we would give them a year since they've told us that in the first quarter of 2016 they would have this ready for us, if they don't we're done and we'll be asking for a refund. We will also make it clear that even if they do get this feature working we will not pay again to get our data re-entered because we were told originally that the system could do what we wanted it to. Kansas is also having trouble with it.

**President Mark McNees:**

I want to thank Chief Doug Van Gorkom and the Pella Fire Department and Randy for hosting the meeting. I have been driving past the station for several years as my son will be graduating in a month from Central College and I am pleased we were able to schedule the meeting here. I have been confident having a child attending Central as I know the Pella fire department is protecting him.

As Bill mentioned we met Friday with new House Majority Leader Chris Hagenow and I want to thank Randy for coming down on short notice and presenting numbers for training and how the dollars we gained last year for mobile training units really have worked to our advantage in getting many times that amount in federal grants. He was definitely surprised by that. And we didn't mean to put Randy in a bad

situation but we argued for additional funding for the training bureau and a new position for a curriculum director and getting back some lost funds and positions. Hagenow did respond positively, but also stated what we know, in that a huge sum of state funds are already mandated and that only a small percentage is left over to fund all of the items that really do a lot of good work and are things they would like to fund. We assured him we would continue to voice and inform them all of our needs.

We also discussed E911 funding and the upcoming PSAP study release and our opposition to the Governor's proposal last year to take funds out of the reserve to start building a statewide radio network. We have support on both sides of the aisle and chambers, but according to statements made recently by the Governor and DPS commission Ryan, it sounds like the plan is to continue to plan to fund it that way. We told him we would strongly be opposed to that again and that other funding should be looked at for the network.

Another topic that we discussed was the possibility of adding cancer presumption for volunteers. The career firefighters have that. We talked about the ramifications of opening up Workmen's Comp but there are pros and cons both ways. I think if we continue to push for it it will help with recruitment and retention down the road. As cancer becomes more talked about in the fire service it could be one more reason someone might not volunteer if they are afraid they might get cancer. It started out that only the career firefighters were covered with heart attack presumption and now volunteers are and I don't look at this as being any different.

We are also looking at getting a meeting set up with the Governor prior to the session.

After listening to concerns and comments from members of both associations and continuing with my own thoughts, we have changed the date of the legislative breakfast to Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 am. The March 17<sup>th</sup> date will remain as Firefighter on the Hill Day and will still afford us an opportunity to voice our positions on bills in the pipeline and other items still being decided upon. The earlier date of the breakfast will allow us to work on informing the legislature of our priorities and concerns shortly after the session begins and before the first funnel date.

I have recently addressed the Iowa Fire Chief Conference in Harlan where several were in attendance that had also been to the Pro-Chiefs Conference. We discussed, and are working on a letter to send to leaders in the state government, indicating our irritation that the State Fire Marshall has been given a gag order and cannot publicly state a position on fireworks legislation. It does not serve anyone well when full discussion of issues and positions are not allowed. When we have such a public safety issue as fireworks and the fire marshal is not allowed a public position then we have a real problem.

During our mid states meeting yesterday it also was reinforced on how successful our fire school is in attendance, and how successful our training program really is. Our numbers overall during the year are very good and indicate real success in our structure. Bill also mentioned discussions at mid states regarding corporate partnerships and the success Illinois is having in that regard. We intend to pursue possible partnerships where we find a common purpose. Even though the IFA does not actually provide and conduct training we can work to get sponsors that may help fund the training bureau for training programs reaching more responders and creating more opportunities.

I also attended the ELKS fall convention in Des Moines and met with their Major Project committee. We discussed the efforts above and beyond the seven fire prevention trailers they support statewide. Those trailers have touched almost 15,000 kids this year. The ELKS have also used funds to help purchase smoke detectors for the fire marshal's efforts and a replacement bomb dog for the division so that another could be returned to the military veteran it served with overseas. They are looking at other

ways to support fire prevention efforts. Ken Swank, a Shenandoah firefighter is the chair and Fairfield firefighter Kaley Fleig are members of the committee and working with the others to raise more awareness within the ELKS organization of the program and within the IFA. Ten dollar raffle tickets are sold to raise these funds, and if the board approves, I offered to put them in our billing mailing since anyone, including a fire department, would be eligible to win the cash prize. I will be writing an article for the paper regarding the program.

**Motion was made by Bill Halleran and seconded by Marv Trimble to include ticket and letter in the department billing. Motion carried.**

Bill also mentioned the long range committee. I indicated to the board in September that I intended to form a new long range committee as the last time frame had passed. I have asked the board to come up with some possible names to ask to be on the committee and I hope to have at least one from the previous committee serve again to give some continuity. It's important we give this board and future boards some guidance on what the membership wants and what the board's goals should be.

I have also established our own recruitment and retention committee where we will work to compile a list of potential board officers. The list will help identify those who may have expressed an interest in serving, or those who have been approached by a board member or past president, and asked if they were interested. We will serve as an informational committee for those interested and hopefully function as a lookout for the members in assuring we have interested, qualified, and successful candidates for the board. We know most people are not knocking on the door to run for the board and that most of us were approached by someone to see if we were interested. I was not thinking of being on the board until I was approached. We want to have this committee so that if someone has been approached and indicates the time may not be right, but maybe in a couple of years they would be ready, we have that knowledge and re-approach them. I think it's imperative that the membership have time to get to know a candidate and that person also had time to consider as many of the requirements for service as possible.

#### **Committee Reports:**

##### **NVFC – Roger Bissen:**

Since I was just appointed to the NVFC in September I already had a prior commitment that interfered with the NVFC Fall Conference. Harlan was hosting the I-Chiefs Conference at the same time so I was unable to go to North Carolina.

One of the discussion topics at the NVFC Fall meeting though was recruitment and retention as has been talked about here. The NVFC has started a "Make Me A Firefighter" Campaign and there is information on the website about this program. It will be on the IFA website and Facebook page as well.

The NVFC also has information on their website about cancer awareness. There is a link that FASNY has put up for a "Fighting Cancer" video that talks about different firefighters around the state of NY that are dealing with different types of cancer. I think we need to be aware of the types of cancer that we can be exposed to. At the I-Chiefs conference we had we had a Captain from LeMars that talked about throat cancer that he was dealing with. He was really pushing physicals – "Get in, get your physical." Another highlight of the fall conference was diversity in the fire service. Just like every community, we need to be as diverse as possible.

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

The report from Story City is very complete. They did a great job. There were 2072 registered.

**Guests:****Fire Marshal – Jeff Quigle:**

The SFM Division will be receiving our first shipment of smoke detectors right after the first of the year. If your Fire Department would like to be placed on the list to receive smoke detectors please contact Steve DeJooode at 515-725-6145 or e-mail at [dejoode@dps.state.ia.us](mailto:dejoode@dps.state.ia.us).

The SFM Division Arson and Explosives Bureau completed interviews for the vacant Northwest Iowa Special Agent/Bomb Technician position. The selection should be announced shortly as this territory has not had an assigned Special Agent since June 2015.

The State Fire Marshal Division is currently using the 2009 International Fire and Building Codes. Administrative Rules have been filed to adopt the 2015 International Fire and Building Codes. We are optimistic these new Codes will be adopted during Fiscal Year 2016.

We are currently working with Image Trend (Fire Bridge) regarding fire alarm and sprinkler licensing software and have options to add additional licensing modules in the future. We are in the process of verifying the data that was exported into the web based software. This new web based software will allow a licensee to purchase their license on-line and print out a license card. This will save everyone valuable time and money.

This year the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative partnered with the State Fire Marshal Division for the 2015 Healthiest State Walk to encourage walks in conjunction with fire drills as part of National Fire Prevention Week. I am happy to report that Fire Drills/Walks were registered in all 99 counties. On Friday, November 13, 2015, I traveled to the Creston Fire Department who was the winner of the drawing for the \$1000.00 check give away. Officials from several organizations were in attendance to present the check to Chief Todd Jackson.

Fire Inspector Dan Wood and State Fire Marshal Jeff Quigle will be traveling to Annapolis, MD in December to attend a "Leading and Living Life Safety Lessons Learned" meeting. The outcome of this Life Safety meeting will be the creation of a defensible document for fire departments, legislative representatives and other partners to use regarding smoke alarms, residential sprinklers and other related issues.

**Fire Service Training Bureau – Randy Novak:**

**FSTB Budget:** The Bureau is level funded for FY16. The Volunteer Firefighter Training Fund is funded at \$825,520 for FY16. Funding will continue in the Firefighter Preparedness Fund (income Tax Check-Off) and the Paul Ryan Memorial Fund (fee on vehicle FF tags). The one-time appropriation for the Bureau (\$100,000 to purchase new mobile training units and related equipment) was passed and signed.

Budget planning for FY 17 has begun – DPS requesting all budgets for level funding.

**FSTB Staffing:** The Bureau has submitted a budget proposal for a Curriculum Developer (Fire Service Coordinator).

**Grants:** The Bureau has applied for the following federal grants:

- FSTB received our National Fire Academy "State Training Support Grant" for \$20,000 for federal FY 16 (August 1, 2015 to July 30, 2016). This will be used to support the delivery of NFA Approved Courses (Instructor I & II, Fire Officer I & II) and NFA 2-Day Courses.

- FSTB received a 2013 AFG grant for a new mobile live fire simulator (\$350,000). We are completing the “close-out” for this grant (\$336,660).
- FSTB received a 2014 AFG grant for a new mobile drill tower (\$220,000). We have issued a PO for the new mobile drill tower (\$219,777).
- FSTB has applied for two 2014 AFG-FP&S grants: A \$200,000 (through IFA) on behalf of the SFM for smoke alarms, and a \$20,000 on behalf of the SFM for the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program. The smoke alarm grant has been funded, while the Juvenile Firesetter grant has not.

**Partnerships:**

- National Fallen Firefighters Association
  - Courage To Be Safe® (CTBS)
  - Leadership, Accountability, Culture, Knowledge (LACK)
  - Leadership So Everyone Goes Home (LEGH)
  - Stress First Aid (SFA)

**Major Events:** (check our website: [www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/fstb](http://www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/fstb) )

- FSTB Programs (2015-16)
  - 92<sup>nd</sup> Annual State Fire School, February 26-28, 2016 at Ames
  - Fire/Arson Investigators School, March 14-25, 2016 at FSTB
  - Announcement for various open enrollment classes will be mailed to Iowa fire departments throughout the year.
- National Fire Academy (NFA) Courses (2015-16):
  - Leadership III: Strategies for Supervisory Success, December 3-4 at FSTB
  - Incident Safety Officer; Training Operations for Small Departments; and Fire Service Culture: Who Protects Firefighters from Firefighters, February 27-28, 2016 at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Annual State Fire School
  - Command & Control of Incident Operations (TRADE Region VII delivery), June 13-18, 2016 at FSTB
  - Four (4) additional NFA courses for 2016 will be selected in September.

Check our website for new information: [www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/fstb](http://www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/fstb)

You can now sign up for an automatic e-mail notification when something has been added.

**Unfinished Business: none**

**New Business:**

**Roger Bissen** – The I-Chiefs board had some discussion on the Haz-Mat Symposium and Homeland Security had been talking with the fire service about wanting to combine Homeland Security and the Symposium together. We feel as the fire service that would not be a good fix for us. That is the position of the I-Chiefs – that we continue to hold two separate conferences.

**President Mark McNees** – We’ve been trying to get our committees to function more as they are supposed to and take care of some of the things that have been put on the Executive Director that weren’t originally intended to be. Fire Prevention Committee will be working on the poster program and I thank Ellen Hagen and Jim Kenkel for that. We still have the Hall of Flame which is a major project for this association and the coordinating of that with getting volunteers scheduled, getting tickets sent out and all of that is a big job. We need to find somebody like we had a few years ago that will do the coordinating for that so that it’s not in our office. If anyone is interested let us know. Having some familiarity with it would be a big plus.

Rusty Hockman has asked if we could take the money that we have used in the past as a donation to the school group that has helped us tear down the booth and split that up between the ones that helped out this year with tear down. **Motion was made by Marv Trimble to allow Rusty to split that money between helpers. It was seconded by Brad Yeager. Motion carried.**

Randy noted that if we ever need the Hall of Flame trailer moved to please let him know and they could move it for us as they do for the convention trailer.

Mark also said that Rusty had told him the new trailer is in and a date needs to be set up to move the equipment and props from the old trailer to the new trailer.

#### **Good of the Association:**

**President Mark McNees** – Bill mentioned it and I also have talked to George Oster. We will have some guidance on our website that we can link to from the University of Iowa. I've looked at it. It's guidance as to what 501c3s can do. You can get a free copy and it's \$1 for copies after that. I'm wondering if we might want to as an association purchase some copies of this and have them available at the Mid Year meeting. We are putting out a survey in the billing and on Constant Contacts asking questions of departments about if they have an association and their structure, if they have issues, if they think they have enough guidance, things like that. We want to help as much as we can. **Brad Yeager made a motion to purchase 50 copies. It was seconded by Marv Trimble. Motion carried.**

**President Mark McNees** – The board has discussed this and we will be coming up with some sort of guidance for best business practices for this board and future boards as to what we would like to see on savings the association has that are "undesignated" that we want to keep as a minimum operating reserve on hand. Anything above that amount could be considered for use to avoid a dues increase in future but we want to come up with a suggested amount that should be kept as a minimum.

**Don Scott:** Wanted to mention following the comments during the meeting regarding training that he would like to recognize our director of the Fire Service Training Bureau, Randy Novak, for the great job he and his predecessors have done with training in the state.

Don also brought up that Past President Kirk Rice and also Gene Evans were unable to be here today but he wanted to note that there was some controversy at convention about some participants and whether or not they were registered at the convention. The participants in question did not have wristbands so it was believed they were not registered at convention. If these people were in contests and they were not registered they need to be disqualified. It states in the rules that you must be registered at convention. It doesn't matter if you are staying at the campgrounds or not. You do have to be registered to compete. If that is happening we need to find a way to check convention registrations.

Meeting adjourned 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Lensing  
Executive Director