



South Carolina Volunteer Strategic Assistance Fire Equipment Program

V-SAFE Panel Meeting Minutes Wednesday, July 31, 2019 at 10 a.m. Conference Call

I. Call to Order and Welcome: Chairman Charlie King

The meeting was posted and advertised pursuant to all South Carolina laws, rules, and regulations. Chairman King called the conference call to order at 10 a.m. and reminded attendees the meeting was postponed two weeks due to State Fire staff responding to the recent hurricane in Louisiana.

The following panel members were present (see below) along with the former V-SAFE Chairman Tres Atkinson. A quorum was established. Additionally, LLR employees George Stapleton and Susan Duncan were present along with Joe Palmer from the S.C. Firefighters' Association.

II. Introduction and Roll Call of Members

V-SAFE Panel Members									
Jonathan Jones	X	Charlie King	X	Barry McRoy	X	Tony Dicks	X	Tommy Keaton	X
Bill Dunlap	X	Steve Arsenault	X	Randy Swinton	X	Glenn Poole	X	Vacant	

P: Via Phone X: Present A: Absent

III. Approval of Previous Minutes (March 12, 2019) and Agenda

Barry McRoy made a motion to approve the March 12, 2019, meeting minutes. Glenn Poole seconded. The motion carried unanimously without discussion.

Jonathan Jones made a motion to approve the agenda. Randy Swinton seconded. The motion carried unanimously without discussion.

IV. Funding Update and Consideration

Chief Jonathan Jones shared the available grant funding amount (balance of V-SAFE account) which is \$1,346,113.42. This amount is an accrual of nearly 18 months. In comparison, last year, \$832,000 was available (\$500,000 was one-time non-recurring money from capital reserve). All of the \$1.346 million available today is "recurring money."

Chief Jones also explained how the agency needs to obtain "permission" (authorization) to spend the V-SAFE money. First, the Executive Budget Office will have to approve authorization. To resolve this in the future, legislation will have to be introduced to amend the V-SAFE funding law so it does not go against agency's authorization. He recommended, today, the Panel decide who will receive a check and the approved amount. However, the checks can't be disbursed until an "increase in authorization" is obtained. He is confident there will be a quick resolution and asked to notify the grant recipients after permission has been received.

V. Scoring Compilation and Grant Award Approvals

Chief Jones explained the office received 151 applications from fire departments in 36 counties who are requesting more than \$3.9 million (average request/\$26,025.26). Based on the Fire Academy regional map (of 2010), the following number of grant applications were submitted and awarded:

SCFA Region	Number of Applications	Percent Awarded
1	31	19%
2	23	35%
3	12	08%
4	08	25%
5	18	06%
6	25	52%
7	34	53%
TOTAL:	151	

Members clarified the selection of partial votes in scoring. Chief Jones explained the intent of allowing a partial score meant a Panel member did not agree with every requested item.

The top 49 applications were fully funded with one exception - Cold Spring Fire Department received approval for partial funding (\$21,320), as the Panel did not approve the purchase of a used pickup truck (\$8,680).

In total, Panel members awarded 50 fire departments from 20 counties a total of \$1,346,113.42. The majority of grants awarded were for personal protective equipment (\$456,405), followed by rescue equipment (\$330,420), fire suppression equipment (\$259,399), self-contained breathing apparatus (\$182,653) and safety equipment (\$62,234). Grants were also awarded for portable air refilling systems (\$30,000) and decontamination equipment (\$25,000).

There was a brief discussion regarding the grant submission from Wagener Fire Department totaling \$29,998.53. Chief Jones asked the Panel members to vote on whether or not to fully fund their request specifically regarding four complete sets of turnout gear for \$14,338.08 (\$3,584.52 each). All Panel members agreed by raising their hand.

There was a three-way tie (each scored 409) for the remaining funds of \$58,382.78. Chief Jones recommended reviewing the automatic financial need score (three factor budget formula) and awarding it to the department with the highest financial need score. As a result, Caw Caw Fire Department (score of "7") received the final fully awarded amount of \$30,000.

With \$28,382.78 remaining, the Panel had to select between Youngs Fire Department (score of "6") requesting \$24,261 and Pendleton Fire Department State #2 (score of "6") requesting \$30,000. The Panel, once again, reviewed the specific grant requests. The majority of the grant funding for Youngs Fire Department was \$17,861 worth of EMS related items. All Panel members agreed to partially fund Pendleton Fire Department's request by raising their hand. The remaining amount of \$28,382.78 was awarded by the Panel to Pendleton Fire Department Station #2 (requested \$30,000 for turnout gear and a spreader/cutter).

Chief Jones reminded the Panel local South Carolina House and Senate members will be notified of grant recipients within their respective district. Recipients cannot receive a grant award for three years.

Chief Jones shared the average request was \$26,131.77 and the average award was \$27,471.70.

A motion was made to adopt the 50 awards selected by the Panel based on scoring. Bill Dunlap made the motion to adopt. Tommy Keaton seconded. Motion passed unanimously without discussion.

VI. Old Business

None

VII. New Business

The Region 3 Panel seat remains vacant. A name has been submitted to Senate Finance. The seat has been vacant nearly two years. The Panel was reminded Region 3 was awarded one grant.

Chief Jones stated, to help future applicants and the process, staff will create a guidance document. Prior to the 2020 grant cycle, numerous in-person training sessions will also be offered.

There was a general discussion of the grant application. Chief Jones reminded Panel members it mirrors the AFG grant. During the development of the writing seminar, he asked Panel members for tips for what members are looking for in the narrative section.

Chief Jones stated a bill is being submitted for legislative consideration to provide leeway in grant amendments. It will also allow the Peer Review Panel to define funding priorities.

Susan Duncan stated the grant process in North Carolina is unique as each application is electronically scored.

Susan Duncan will print the Panel member comments for distribution during the next meeting. Panel members were encouraged to share grant writing tips with her via email.

Glenn Poole asked about the three year grant cycle. Since the 2017 grant application checks were cut in 2018, those departments can apply again in 2021.

Staff will adjust the timing of the grant application cycle, especially since the Panel chairman changes each June. Chief Jones has two suggestions: 1) Start the process in early spring, and finish before the yearly June conference or, 2) Wait until after the summer conference and finish in the fall - which Chief Jones prefers as it is a new authorization year and more money can be collected for distribution. This will also allow the Panel chairman to complete a full application cycle.

Chief Jones stated once authorization was obtained, Panel members would be notified via email. At that point, grant recipients will also be notified. He also mentioned providing a grant workshop during the January 2020 Fire Service Improvement conference.

Randy Swinton asked if there was a term limit for Panel members. Per State law, there is not one.

VIII. Next Meeting and Adjournment

A motion was made by Glenn Poole to adjourn the meeting. Randy Swinton seconded. The motion carried unanimously without discussion. The next meeting was not scheduled and is at the call of the chair. The meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.