



South Carolina Volunteer Strategic Assistance Fire Equipment Program

V-SAFE Panel Meeting Minutes January 7, 2021 at 2 p.m. Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Public notice of this meeting was properly posted at the South Carolina State Fire, 141 Monticello Trail, Columbia, SC 29203 and provided to all requesting persons, organizations, and news media in compliance with Section 30-4-80 of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

In accordance with the Governor's directives regarding social distancing, the meeting was held via video and teleconference.

I. Call to Order and Welcome: Chairman Keith Minick

The meeting was posted and advertised pursuant to all South Carolina laws, rules, and regulations. Chairman Minick called the meeting to order at 2 p.m.

The following panel members were present (see below) and a quorum was established. Additionally, LLR employees George Stapleton, Susan Duncan, and Laureen Spires were present.

II. Introduction and Roll Call of Members

V-SAFE Panel Members									
Jonathan Jones	Z	Keith Minick	Z	Barry McRoy	Z	Tony Dicks	Z	Tommy Keaton	Z
Bill Dunlap	Z	Steve Arsenault	Z	Randy Swinton	Z	Glenn Poole	A	Thomas Rivers	A

P: Via Phone Z: Zoom A: Absent

III. Approval of Agenda

Tony Dicks made a motion to approve the Jan. 7, 2021, agenda. Barry McRoy seconded. The motion carried unanimously without discussion.

IV. Update on Education and Outreach Efforts

Jonathan Jones reminded the Panel members he held a well-attended in-person grant writing workshop during the Fire Service Improvement Conference in January 2020. However, due to COVID-19 precautions, educational and outreach efforts had to be altered. To educate anyone wishing to learn more about the grant opportunity, Chief Jones recorded a one hour V-SAFE tutorial that was shared, via Fire Portal email, with every S.C. fire chief and other interested parties.

During the month-long open grant period, those interested could also attend any of the weekly (except for the week of Thanksgiving) live Q&A sessions held at 7 p.m. via Zoom. During each session, questions were asked pertaining to a particular grant request or learning general tips on how to complete the application. Volunteer fire personnel appreciated the opportunity to contact staff after normal work hours. In the future, Chief Jones may elect to target regions during the Q&A sessions and invited Panel members to continue to participate.

Chief Minick stated several of their SC Firefighters' Association members were assisted with grant writing tips, mentoring, and review services.

V. Application Scoring Process and Instructions

Panel members were reminded the Financial Need score is automatically scored. For this cycle, State Fire received 203 applications totaling \$5,774,366.12. The average request was \$28,445.15.

To date, State Fire can distribute \$4,684,074. Additionally, Chief Jones announced, the V-SAFE account will receive another quarterly deposit (March 15) of \$505,932. As such, that amount will be added for distribution in April 2021 for a disbursement total of \$5,190,006. As a result, nearly 180 fire departments will be awarded funding. Panel members have Portal access to start grading applications until the end of February 2021. Afterwards, a spreadsheet will be compiled for review for the pre-announcement meeting.

A motion was made to by Chief Jones to open the grant scoring process (as of Jan. 7, 2021) to the Panel members and close it at 11:59 p.m. on February 28, 2021. Additionally, awards will be announced after the March 15 deposit. Tommy Keaton seconded. Motion carried unanimously, without discussion.

Chief Jones stated several questions were asked during the live Q&A sessions. There was a question regarding “used” equipment that is still under warranty - but not the “latest standard” (brand new). In the past, the Panel has historically not awarded funding for used equipment. In this case, there is no liability as the equipment isn’t “used” and is still under the manufacturer’s warranty. If there are any departments asking for this type of equipment, those grant writers were reminded during the Q&A to be descriptive in the narrative/project description.

Chief McRoy asked Chief Jones to share additional Q&A questions. Chief Jones stated he reminded grant writers the Panel does not, traditionally, award partial funding requests or for joint (two or more departments adding their requested funds together) projects.

Chief Jones stated the Panel members may want to discuss the joint project suggestion in the future and create an internal policy on how to handle those types of requests. Chief Minick suggested the grant application could be amended to tie these types of requests together.

Chief Jones stated equipment vendors were also educated by State Fire staff.

Panel members complimented staff’s use of video technology and the outreach and educational efforts.

VI. Old Business

Susan Duncan provided a 2019 grant cycle update. Email and phone call reminders continue to be sent to any department with an outstanding grant report. The Ware Shoals VFD requested a grant amendment to spend their remaining \$1,121.65 on smoke alarms. They were approved to use those funds to purchase smoke alarms to distribute during an upcoming community risk reduction program.

Since departments can requesting funding once every three years, Chief Jones stated the 2018 grant recipients were reminded, via email, they could submit a grant request this cycle. Panel members were reminded to score every application.

VII. New Business

None

VIII. Next Meeting and Adjournment

A motion was made by Tommy Keaton to adjourn the meeting. Barry McRoy seconded. The next meeting was not scheduled and is at the call of the chair. The motion carried unanimously without discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.