KENTUCKY FIRE COMMISSION

Fire Commission Meeting
Minutes
July 29, 2026
Paris, KY

Present:	**Absent:**
Cheryl Allen	Joe Choate
Joe Baer	Todd Kilburn
Chris Black	Eddie Rucker
Michael Burke	Andrew Scott
Nick Clark	Jerry Stephens
Amy Hess	
Ricky King	
Steve Kyle	
Scott Lawson	
Dwane Smeathers	
Dr. Smith	
Mike Sutt	
Father Matthew Young	

Ricky King called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm (EST). Chris Black motion to approve the minutes from June 11, 2026. Nick Clark seconded. Motion approved.

Health and Wellness Committee

Dr. Smith said that the Health and Wellness Committee met this morning. Dr. Smith said we had a long discussion in possible changes in our language on the PTSD form number 3. The committee tabled this discussion until the next Fire Commission meeting. Dr. Smith said the committee did not get into any discussion on Lewy Body

Dementia. Ricky King appointed a workgroup with Father Matthew Young, Joe Baer, and Dr. Smith. Marc Rudder said one of the volunteer firefighters from Laurel County had a cancer screening done at State Fire School. She received results back stating that she has a tumor on one of her ovaries. She had no symptoms and no pain. She wanted to share her story. She has been referred to a specialist to see what the next steps are. Marc said he was approached by a firefighter who was not in favor of the stress injury program. This firefighter said yesterday that he has seen the success of this program and a lot of his phone calls and emails stating the dissatisfaction with the process was because of the shape that he was in. He apologized for the way he acted. Marc said these programs are working. Father Matthew Young said there are agencies who have never heard of this program. We have an obligation to fix that. Ericka Cole said we have pushed notifications out constantly. She really thinks that we have done what we can. Joe Baer said we bring up this program everywhere that we travel. Brenda Goddard said that Heather Thomas has been going with Jo Terry to different fire departments to get the word out. Father Matthew Young asked do we ever utilize text messaging? Carrie said that Lexington Fire Department uses text messages. She can check and see what they use.

Grants Committee

Chris Black said the Grants Committee met this morning. The only item on the agenda was the Technical Innovation Grant. This grant took effect on July 15, 2026. Chris said the departments will have a choice of one of three items every application period. If they receive a grant, they cannot reapply for two years. The grant cannot exceed $5,000.00. Dwane Smeathers motion to approve the Technical Innovation Grant. Cheryl Allen seconded. Motion approved. Chris said the Technical Innovation Grant will take place in the Fall, and the Training Facility Grant will take place in the Spring.

Loan Committee

Father Matthew Young said the Loan Committee met this morning to discuss two loans. Stamping Ground Fire Department is requesting $117,500.00 for a 2027 M2-

106 Crew Cab. Father Matthew Young motion to approve. Chris Black seconded. Motion approved.

Lebanon Junction Fire Department is requesting $59,346.25 for a 2026 Ford F-150. Dwane Smeathers motion to approve. Steve Kyle seconded. Motion approved.

Father Matthew Young thanked Melissa Norsworthy for all her hard work on the loans.

Eligibility Committee

Dwane Smeathers said the Eligibility Committee met this morning to discuss two items. The first item was an appeal from the Winchester Fire Department for their June incentive pay. Carrie said that Lisa has a deadline to meet each month with incentive pay. The Eligibility Committee agreed to approve this appeal but also look at procedures and policies to help curve the late submissions. Dwane Smeathers motion to approve reimbursing Winchester for their June incentive pay. Cheryl Allen seconded. Motion approved.

Dwane Smeathers motion for the Eligibility Committee to look at the policies and procedures and bring back to the next Commission meeting. Cheryl Allen seconded. Motion approved.

Dwane Smeathers said that the next item is concerning the Quicksand Fire Department. This department has only twelve members. They lost their fire station. They do not have access to the current building that they are using. They were showing 0% on their training hours for FY 2026. They have been issued state aid in the past and cannot show what they spent the money on. The Eligibility Committee voted to unrecognize them as of August 15, 2026. Dwane Smeathers motion to approve. Mike Sutt seconded. Motion approved.

EMS Committee

Nick Clark said the EMS Committee met this morning to discuss a few items. Nick said we had 199 applications for the 2026 EMS classes. 134 entrance exams were taken. Ninety-eight people passed the entrance exam and were accepted into the class. Eighty-five students started in the class. Out of the eighty-five students, nine students dropped out of the class. One person dropped the class because he passed the National Registry test. Seventy-five students passed the course. Out of the seventy-five students, fifty-five passed the National Registry class. Nineteen students failed the exam. Nick said the EMS Committee recommended and voted to have a refresher class for the nineteen students. The cost of the refresher class will be $1,200.00. Nick Clark motion to approve the refresher class. Dwane Smeathers seconded. Motion approved.

Nick Clark said the committee voted to have the Hybrid EMS classes in 2027. Nick motion to approve. Cheryl Allen seconded. Motion approved. Nick thanked Gary Hall for all his hard work on this.

State Fire Rescue Training

Marc Rudder said that SFRT had a very successful fiscal year for 2026. Marc thanked his staff for their hard work. Marc said there were 109,208 students in FY 2026. They participated in 7,470 classes. The Academy ran two classes and one EMT class. Marc said we are anticipating forty students starting at the Academy on August 17, 2026. Marc said the IFSAC Office issued 2,768 seals in FY 26. They gave 4,532 written tests and 137 skills sessions. Marc said we are advertising for the Accredited Certification Coordinator position.

Fire Commission Operations

Carrie Wilburn thanked her staff for all their hard work. Carrie said $10,111,854.03 in State Aid was provided to eligible departments in FY2026. 654 departments out of the 674 eligible received state aid. There were only ten departments who were ineligible for FY 2027 because they did not meet their 50% training requirement for

FY2026. This is a huge accomplishment for the departments and the instructors. Carrie said the deadline to submit State Aid paperwork is Sept. 30th. Carrie said that $27,290,509.24 in incentive and pension was sent out to departments for the eligible full-time firefighters. Carrie said that the paid firefighters must have one hundred hours and the hours must be entered in the KYFires system by Dec. 31, 2026, at 11:59 pm (EST). Carrie said there was $3,300,000.00 in grants that was distributed to the departments. Carrie said that Bonita Oldham is working on getting the Training Facility Grant checks in the mail. Carrie said close to $650,000.00 in loans has been distributed. Carrie said that 666 audits were conducted in FY 2026. Chuck Bonta is looking into investigations right now. Carrie said just a reminder that junior firefighters have to be between the ages of 15 through 17. The departments must have a junior firefighter program for this age group.

Fire Commission Facilities

Derrick Hall said that the Fire Academy had a kickoff last Friday for the equipment for the building. This has been a long-term project. Derrick said that District 4 in Bowling Green has an engineer that is finalizing plans for their area. District 5 flooded again almost two weeks ago. Their building is currently being worked on. Derrick said District 6 is back up and operating at their office. Derrick said Joe Mardis is our IT person and he has been doing upgrades at the District Offices. Derrick said Richard Wright takes care of everything that needs to be done.

Fire Commission Finance

Brenda Goddard said they are closing out for 2026. Brenda said for FY 2026, the revenues were up 11% over budget. Our investment income has increased. Brenda said we ended up using 89% of the budget. Brenda said we ended up with a cash balance carry forward of $70,000,000.00. Brenda said for FY 2027, we have already spent $25,900,000.00. Four of the capital projects are funded. The Fire Commission has transferred $1,800,000.00 to SFRT. Bruce Roberts said we would like to have a monthly Finance Committee meeting until the end of the year. Bruce said we did not get an increase in the budget this year and next year we won't get an increase. We have to be careful. Costs have increased.

Fire Commission Human Resources

Carrie Wilburn said Bill Mullins was hired for the District 5 Training Specialist. The Accredited Certification Coordinator position is currently open. The headcount for employees remains steady.

Fire Commission Accredited Certification

Marc Rudder said the only report is the stats from the SFRT report.

Fire Marshal's Office

Michael Burke said the hazmat permits are on a record high this year. Michael said their general people are hitting colleges and universities right now. The Fire Marshal's Office is gearing up for the state fair. Michael said he will be conducting interviews for Chris Crawford's old position.

Kentucky Office of Homeland Security

Amy Hess said they just released the 2025 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) grants along with the recent 2026 HSGP grants. Departments have only two days to get the grant applications in. Amy also said the 911 Services Team continues with the migration of Public Safety Answering Points to the Next Generation 911 system.

Kentucky Firefighter's Association

Chris Crawford said the KFA is getting ready for their conference. They are working on the upcoming legislation.

Kentucky Association of Fire Chiefs

The Chief's Conference will be held on August 26th and 27th in Bowling Green Kentucky. Their Board Meeting will be held on August 25th. The Fire Chief's handbook is currently being worked on.

Kentucky Professional Firefighters Association

Joe Baer said that the IAFF will be hosting their convention in Texas. Joe said they are working on legislation for the upcoming session. Joe said the KPFF is working on their 2027 biennial convention. It will be held in Owensboro Kentucky in May 2027. Joe said the International has assigned a PSOB Coordinator to each district.

Kentucky Emergency Management- Urban Search and Rescue

Chris Black said they are doing a lot of training. They will be having their ribbon cutting soon.

Chris Black said the Fire Academy has created a workgroup that includes a couple of fire chiefs, Pat Thompson and Brenda Goddard. Chris said they met virtually on July 1, 2026. Chris said the workgroup decided to remove the DO portion. This will reduce the class time from 13 weeks down to 11 weeks. Chris said they increased the student count to forty-four. The EMT classes will resume as normal. Chris said they discussed adding a third Academy class in 2027. The graduation for the next class will be held on October 30, 2026. Chris said they did everything in one meeting. Marc Rudder said they will continue to receive the three college credit hours.

Bruce Roberts said the Firefighter Memorial will be held in Frankfort Kentucky on October 7, 2026, at 11:00 am (EST). Nine or ten names will be added to the wall. Joe Baer said instead of the Peer Support classes, they will have the IAFF Resiliency class on September 9th and 10th in Lexington Kentucky.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Father Matthew Young motion to adjourn. Chris Black seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:02 pm (EST).