



**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND  
FIRE/EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER**

<b>General Order Number:</b> 01-28	<b>Effective Date:</b> November 22, 2023
<b>Division:</b> Administration and Organization	
<b>Chapter:</b> Fire Commission	
<b>By Order of the County Fire Chief:</b> Tiffany D. Green	<b>Issue Date:</b> November 22, 2023

**POLICY**

This General Order is an overview of the duties and responsibilities of the Prince George’s County Fire Commission. The Fire Commission creates and maintains Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order and the Prince George’s County Code of Ordinances, Subtitle 11, Division 5 – Fire Commission.

**SCOPE**

This General Order is directed to the Department's career, volunteer, and civilian members regarding the fiduciary responsibility of the volunteer member corporations of the Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Association** – Refers to the Prince George’s County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association, an organization which advocates for the interests of their membered Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations.

**Stakeholders** – The leadership of various segments of the Department that provides input and feedback on major policy enhancements. The Stakeholders include:

- The Fire Chief
- Deputy Fire Chiefs
- Chairman – Prince George’s County Fire Commission
- President – Prince George’s County Professional Firefighters & Paramedics Association, Local 1619
- President – Prince George’s County Volunteer Fire & Rescue Association
- Representative from the Office of Law (as needed)

**Fire Chief** – The head of the Prince George’s County Fire & EMS Department, as established by the Charter and appointed by the County Executive.

**Fire Commission** – Administrative body appointed by the County Executive in accordance with Prince George’s County Code of Ordinances, Subtitle 11, Division 5, Section 11-301, tasked with the duties and responsibilities outlined in this document.



**PROCEDURES / RESPONSIBILITIES**

**I. Drafting of Budget and Recommendations**

A. As outlined in Section 13 of the Schedule of Legislation as appended to the Charter of Prince George's County, Maryland and Subtitle 11 of the Prince George's County Code of Ordinances ("Subtitle 11"), the budget responsibilities of the Fire Commission shall be as follows:

1. The Fire Commission shall review the financial needs and requests for public funds of each of the Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporation. It shall work with the Fire Chief or his/her designee to formulate one Capital Improvement Program and one expense budget for all Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations with respect to the expenditure of public funds and shall submit said budget and program, together with appropriate justification, to the County Executive or his/her designee in accordance with the provisions of the County Charter.
2. The Fire Commission will formulate and monitor the budget requests and make recommendations to the Fire Chief to address the needs of the Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations.
3. The Fire Commission shall also review the overall Fire/EMS Department budget and give its recommendations to the Fire Chief.
4. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission shall ensure all stations have the appropriate level of funding, based on the available appropriation.
5. To ensure that the needs, approvals and support of the various Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations are being taken care of, the Volunteer Fire Commissioners shall be designated as primary representatives of volunteer member companies, based on District allocation assignments. The division of responsibility among Commissioners for each District shall be determined by the Fire Commission at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission each year. The Fire Commission may adjust the distribution of District responsibilities, as necessary, to achieve the goals and priorities of the Fire Commission.

**II. Budget Review**

A. The Fire Commission shall be provided a monthly reconciliation report, detailing the Fire/EMS Department's line-item expenses for review. The Fire Commission shall have the right to request a written explanation of any unusual item in the reconciliation report. The Fire Chief or his/her designee shall respond to the request within ten (10) business days.



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- B. A Commissioner who is also member of one of the Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations shall be selected by the Fire Commission to be a “budget liaison.” The budget liaison shall work with the Chair of the Fire Commission to review and provide input to the budget process.

**III. Budget Transfers**

- A. Any transfer of funds out of the Fire Commission budget or use of those funds for purposes not originally intended in the approved budget must have majority approval of the Fire Commission.
- B. The Fire Chief shall be authorized to transfer funds on an “emergency” basis from the Fire Commission budget in accordance with County laws and regulations. Any such emergency transfer must be reported to the Fire Commission within 48 hours of the transfer for the Fire Commission’s formal review and post “emergency” event concurrence. Emergency transfers shall be for unforeseen circumstances, such as, but not limited to, issues involving natural disasters or catastrophic accidents or events that require immediate or urgent action to protect life, public safety, public health, property, and the environment.
- C. The Fire Commission will have the fiduciary responsibility to report any anomalies in or lack of reporting, or funding abnormalities to the County Office of Audits and Investigations.

**IV. Training and Certification**

- A. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly to identify and manage uniform training and certification requirements for Volunteer and Career Officers. This General Order in no way alters the structure of training certification and approvals performed by the Fire Commission as written in Subtitle 11 of the Prince George’s County Code, Division 7 - Minimum Qualifications for Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Medical Care Providers. Any future adjustments to these processes and laws shall require new agreements between the Fire Commission, and Fire/EMS Department.
- B. The Fire Chief and Fire Commission will work jointly to ensure that there is funding made available, as the yearly appropriations and training budget allows, for both qualified Career and Volunteer training that is required to meet new standards identified and adopted by the Fire/EMS Department.

**V. Records Management and Volunteer Statistics**

- A. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly to coordinate conversion of all paper records to electronic format, to improve the overall Fire/EMS Department’s records management through technology enhancements and user education and training.



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- B. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly to develop data and statistics that may be used to universally showcase the value and power of the Fire/EMS Department as a whole and highlight the contributions and efforts made by the Volunteer membership. This includes the development and distribution of a comprehensive report outlining the total response staffing by station, short- and long-term fleet and facility benefits, and other appropriate resource benefits achieved as a result of Volunteer participation.

### **VI. Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP)**

- A. The Fire Commission will manage the LOSAP program established in Section 11-328 of the County Code pursuant to the LOSAP Manual, as adopted by the Fire Commission, in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management. There will be no change to the existing LOSAP appeals process. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly to develop a process or identify software programs that will capture historical and statistical information on behalf of the Volunteer membership and assist in facilitating and the preparation of LOSAP and other critical reports needed by the Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations. The Fire Commission, Association, and Fire/EMS Department shall work together to identify enhancements to retirement and other benefits available to active LOSAP-qualified members of the Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations as well as LOSAP-qualified retirees.

### **VII. Senator Amoss (508) Funds**

- A. Funding from the State of Maryland designated as “508 Funds”, under the Senator William H. Amoss Fire, Rescue, and Ambulance Fund, provides support for fire, rescue, and ambulance services to promote high quality service and the continued financial viability of volunteer fire rescue and ambulance companies. In accordance with State law, funds may be used for the acquisition or rehabilitation of apparatus and capital equipment, fire and rescue equipment, and for the renovation of facilities used to house apparatus.
- B. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work closely together in the management and use of the “508” funds. If the Fire Chief and Fire Commission change the allocations or withhold funds under this section, the Fire Chief and/or the Fire Commission Chairperson will notify all Stakeholders.
- C. The Fire Commission manages funding requests of the respective Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations that meet the State’s “as needed basis” allocation requirement. Once funding is released by the County’s Office of Finance, the Fire Chief and Fire Commission must ensure individual station funding is distributed to the entitled Fire/EMS stations.



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- D. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly to provide annual reports to the appropriate and agreed upon individuals, agencies, or corporations.
- E. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly in assisting individual Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations with any audits and reports required by the County or the State of Maryland.

**VIII. Station Management Funds and Supply/Equipment Requests**

- A. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly in the development and the administration of Station Management Agreements, including an annual review for any required adjustments to the list of qualifying expenses. This review must take place in a sufficient amount of time to ensure that any agreed upon change occurs prior to the new station contract awards being issued.
- B. The Fire Chief and Fire Commission will work jointly to conduct semi-annual audits of all funded stations entitled to "Station Management Funds."
- C. The Fire Commission will either approve or deny funding requests from Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations from budgeted Volunteer funds that are outside of typical Station Management funding use and budget, following current practices for approval of those funds. Unapproved expenditures are solely the responsibility of the individual Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations and will need to be covered by the Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporation's funds from independent, non-County sources.
- D. For any funding requests made by Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations that are not addressed in the budget process or within Station Management Fund use, a Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporation shall submit a written request to the Fire Commission stating the amount, reason, date of the request, and the name of the individual making the request. A process and timeline shall be developed for Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations to make such requests during the County's budget formulation process for consideration for potential inclusion in the annual Fire/EMS Department budget proposal.
- E. Station Management Funds or reimbursements shall be distributed in scheduled installments on/or about February 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> annually, or at such other times as agreed upon by the Fire Commission, Fire Chief, and the County Office of Management and Budget.
- F. The Fire Chief and Fire Commission will work jointly to review processes and procedures and to provide suggestions for improving the station supply process. This includes the process for allocating funding and to increase the efficiency in expense of these funds along with other supply/equipment requests.



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- G. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work jointly to improve station supply deliveries, as well as processing new equipment requests and station repairs for all fire stations.

### **IX. Major Policy Enhancements**

- A. The Fire Commission and Association will be provided the opportunity to review and comment as stakeholders on all proposed Fire/EMS Department General Orders or material revisions to General Orders, prior to implementation (except in emergency situations), as outlined in *General Order 01-01 Fire Department Document Policy*. The Fire Commission will appoint two representatives to continuously represent the Fire Commission on the Fire/EMS Department General Order Workgroup (or any future equivalent designated review body). This Workgroup will serve as the notification point for policy/regulation proposals.
- B. The Fire Chief will provide, except in emergency situations, all segments of the Fire/EMS Department a reasonable opportunity to comment during stakeholder review and shall review such comments prior to issuance of the final version of the policy to be implemented. While the Fire Chief may confer with stakeholders to address any concerns, final policymaking authority resides solely with the Fire Chief.
- C. As needed, the Fire Chief will assemble a workgroup comprised of representation from each Stakeholder to review policies that directly affect the Volunteers.

### **X. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers**

- A. The County will fund a dedicated Volunteer Recruiter who will report directly to the Fire Commission and indirectly to the Fire Chief, as available County funds permit. The Recruiter and the Fire/EMS Department will work together to ensure Volunteer and Career recruitment efforts are coordinated.
- B. The Fire Commission shall be provided with administrative staff support by the assignment of at least one full-time County employee to assist with the recruitment process and other administrative tasks to support the work of the Fire Commission. This position is a full-time County employee, subject to all personnel policies, procedures and laws.
- C. The Fire Commission may work with the Fire/EMS Department's Administrative Services Command staff to identify grants and other funding sources to assist in the recruitment and retention of Volunteers.
- D. The Fire Chief and the Stakeholders will work jointly to develop strategies that encourage community participation in their local fire stations and for the recruitment and retention of Volunteers.





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- E. The Fire Commission will work with the Fire Chief to identify new Personnel Accountability Systems and components to improve overall system safety. The Fire Commission will continue to assign Personal Accountability Tags (PAT) to the Fire/EMS Department. The Recruiter will assist the Fire Commission and the Commission's staff with this task for all Volunteer, Sworn, and Civilian members.
- F. The Fire Commission will manage all aspects of the Volunteer application process (recruitment and retention), including but not limited to scheduling physical examinations for new Volunteer members, coordinating background checks with the Office of the Fire Marshal, gear and equipment issuance approval, and coordination of the Volunteer Recruit School Program.
- G. The Fire Commission will maintain limited Volunteer member personnel files, which consist of the following: application form, background check information, results of physical examinations, or any other personnel-related record.
  - 1. Access to Volunteer member personnel files will be kept confidential in a manner similar to those of County employees, governed by the appropriate and applicable sections of the County's Personnel Records law (Division 16, Sections 16-215, 16-216, 16-217, and 16-217.01). Volunteer member personnel records shall be maintained in a secure and confidential manner. By appointment with an appropriate staff member or official of the County Fire/EMS Department, a volunteer, upon presenting his/her identification, shall be permitted to examine his/her personnel file, except as to background investigation information secured prior to acceptance of the volunteer's application and any other documents received under the promise of confidentiality. A volunteer's personnel file will only be accessible to County officials who have specific and routine operational need for the information contained in the file. To the extent that other parties, including members of the Fire Commission, may require access to a volunteer's personnel file the volunteer must be advised of the purpose of the requested access. The County agrees to remove derogatory information three (3) years old or older from the volunteer's personnel file, if requested to do so by the volunteer member. Derogatory information three (3) years old or older will not be used against the volunteer whether it has been removed or not.
- H. The Fire Chief and the Fire Commission will work together for the issuance of personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure that there is an adequate supply available to support the needs of the Volunteer force.



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### **XI. Additional Duties**

- A. The Fire Commission shall provide guidance and advice to the Fire Chief on any matter related to the provision of emergency medical services, fire prevention activities, and fire suppression activities. The Fire Commission shall participate in any review of the performance of the Fire/EMS Department, including actions taken and policies adopted, as ordered by the County Executive.
- B. The Fire Commission shall review and make recommendations on the proposed (and updates to) Public Safety Master Plan provisions for fire, rescue and emergency medical services.
- C. The Fire Commission may make recommendations and comments to the Fire Chief on legislation, regulations, and policies that apply to or affect the Fire/EMS Department.
- D. The Fire Commission shall review and recommend any appropriate improvements, changes, and additions in communications between key stakeholders of the Fire/EMS Department.

### **XII. Fire Commission Composition and Terms**

- A. Fire Commissioners shall be appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council pursuant to the provisions of Section 322 of the County Charter. Such members shall be broadly representative of the residents and citizens of the County and shall otherwise comply with the County Ethics law.
- B. The Fire Commission shall be comprised of nine (9) Prince George's County residents, including five (5) Volunteer Commissioners, two (2) Career Commissioners (Active or Retired) and two (2) Resident Commissioners.
  - 1. Appointment of Fire Commissioners are staggered so that no more than half of the terms expire at the same time. This provides continuity of operation of the Fire Commission. (Example: 3 Volunteer Commissions, 1 Career Commissioner and 1 Resident Commissioner on even numbered years and 2 Volunteer Commissioners, 1 Career Commissioner and 1 Resident Commission in odd numbered years.)
  - 2. The Fire Commission Chairperson will call for resumes, letters of interest, , and letters of recommendation or endorsement 60 days prior to the expiration of a term to be filled.





### **XIII. Eligibility Requirements**

1. Any Volunteer Member of a funded Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporation may submit a succinct resume and letter of interest to the Office of the Fire Chief for consideration for a Volunteer Fire Commissioner position. The President of the eligible corporation and the President of the Association may submit letters of recommendation or endorsement for any of the candidates.
2. Any Career Member (active or retired) may submit a succinct resume and a letter of interest to the Office of the Fire Chief for consideration for a Career Fire Commissioner position. The President of Local 1619 may submit a letter of recommendation or endorsement for any of the candidates.
3. Any County resident may submit a succinct resume and letter of interest to the Office of Fire Chief to be consideration for a Resident Fire Commissioner position. The Presidents of the Association and Local 1619 may submit letters of recommendation or endorsement for any of the candidates. A Resident Commissioner shall have no current or past personal or business affiliation with the Fire/EMS Department, the Union, or Volunteer Fire/EMS Corporations, and shall not have immediate family members with said affiliation.
4. The current Fire Chief, Deputy Chiefs, Union President and Vice Presidents, and Association President and Vice Presidents shall not be eligible to serve on the Fire Commission.
5. After the deadline for submitting resumes has been reached, the Chairperson of the Fire Commission will call for a special meeting to allow all candidates an opportunity to address the Fire Commission and to allow the attending members to meet the candidates before joint submittal of candidates to the County Executive's Office.
6. The PGCVFRA President, Local 1619 President, and the Fire Chief will discuss all candidates and collectively select the top candidates to be recommended to the County Executive for consideration of a Fire Commission appointment; and (4)
7. The PGCVFRA President, Local 1619 President, and the Fire Chief will also submit a joint letter to the County Executive recommending the top candidates to be considered for a Fire Commission appointment.

NOTE: The County Executive will have access to the entire application pool and in good faith will consider the joint letter of recommendation.

8. The Fire Chief will submit all resumes with letters of interest and letters of recommendation or endorsement for all candidates to the Office of the County



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Executive, along with any recommendations for appointment from the Office of the Fire Chief, for consideration.

9. Each member of the Commission shall serve a term of two (2) years. No member shall consecutively serve more than four (4) - two (2) year terms. Nothing in this General Order prevents an individual from being re-appointed as a Commissioner after at least one (1) year has elapsed since the individual last served as a Commissioner. Upon the expiration of any Commissioner's term of office, the Commissioner shall continue to serve until a successor is appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council.

### **XIV. Appointment of Fire Commission Chair and Vice Chair**

- A. Confirmed members of the Fire Commission shall recommend candidates for Chair and Vice Chair for consideration by the County Executive via the Fire Chief no less than 30 calendar days prior to July 1<sup>st</sup> each year. The Fire Chief will forward the recommended candidates to the County Executive and upon receipt, the County Executive, at his/her discretion, may appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of the Fire Commission.
- B. If the County Executive declines to appoint the initially recommended candidate(s) for the Chair and/or Vice Chair position(s), the confirmed members of the Fire Commission will provide recommendations for alternative candidates for the County Executive's consideration via the Fire Chief no later than the adjournment of the Fire Commission's next scheduled meeting immediately after the County Executive's decision. The Fire Chief will forward the recommendations of the alternative candidates to the County Executive and upon receipt, the County Executive, at his/her discretion, may appoint the candidate(s) for the Chair and/or Vice Chair position(s).
- C. If the County Executive declines to appoint any of the recommended alternative candidates, the County Executive may formally appoint another confirmed member(s) to the position of Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Fire Commission.
- D. During the period until a new Chair or Vice Chair is formally appointed by the County Executive for a new term of the Fire Commission, either the currently serving Chair or Vice Chair shall continue to serve. If both are no longer members of the Fire Commission, the candidates recommended by the Fire Commission shall serve.

### **XV. Appointment of Commissioners for Vacancies**

- A. If any Fire Commissioner vacancy occurs prior to the expiration of the respective term, the same process will be used to fill the remaining portion of the term as described in Section XII Fire Commission Composition and Terms.



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- B. A member appointed to fill such a vacancy shall serve the remainder of the unexpired term. A member who is initially appointed to serve the remaining portion of a previous member's unexpired term is eligible to serve up to four (4) full consecutive two (2) year terms.

**XVI. Compensation**

- A. There shall be no compensation for members of the Fire Commission. Each Commissioner shall be reimbursed for reasonable travel provided prior approval was received pursuant to County regulations and administrative procedures. Sworn or Civilian Commissioners, as well as any Resident Commissioner (should they be a County employee assigned to another agency), may not receive overtime pay or compensatory time off for the hours they serve in performing their duties on the Commission.

**XVII. Meetings**

- A. The Fire Commission will meet on a twice-monthly schedule, the first and third Wednesday of each month.
- B. The Stakeholders (or a designated representative) will meet quarterly to discuss strategic goals, issues, and/or concerns. This meeting shall include the Fire Chief, the Deputy Fire Chiefs, the Fire Commission Chairperson, the Association President, and the Union President.

**REFERENCES**

N/A

**FORMS / ATTACHMENTS**

N/A