

New Mexico Fire Chiefs Association

Annual Business Meeting Minutes

Date: September 28, 2024

Location: Ruidoso Convention Center

1. Call to Order & Announcements

The meeting was called to order by President Kevin Hope at 4:11 p.m.

- Notice of recording was acknowledged.
 - All meeting documents, including minutes and financials, are available on the New Mexico Municipal League (NMML) website under the Fire Chiefs Association section.
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2. Attendance

All attendees signed in, those present include:

1. Pete Bellows, Former Fire Chief Doña Ana County Fire & Rescue
2. Lucas Bugg, Fire Marshal - Quay County
3. Judy Casados, Department Secretary - Harding County Rosebud Fire
4. Robert Casados, Fire Chief - Harding County Rosebud Fire
5. Shannon Cherry, Fire Chief - Doña Ana County
6. Michael Daniels, Deputy Chief - City of Las Cruces Fire
7. Joe Gober, District Chief - Sandoval County La Madera Fire
8. Roger Groves, Fire Chief - Grant County
9. Chad Hamil, Fire Chief - Town of Hagerman Fire
10. Lance Horton, Battalion Chief - Town of Silver City
11. Tibor Kocsis, Battalion Chief - City of Las Cruces Fire
12. Milo Lambert, Fire Chief - Town of Silver City
13. Anthony Leyba, Deputy Chief - State Fire Marshal's Office
14. Joshua Mack, Fire Chief - Eddy County Fire & Rescue
15. Tommy Madrid, Deputy Chief - Village of Los Lunas Fire
16. Joe Reeser, Retired Chief - Union County Sedan Fire
17. Mark Smith, Chief - Union County Sedan Fire
18. Rodney Stoner, Deputy Chief - Village of San Jon Fire
19. Randy Varela, NM State Fire Marshal
20. Eloy Vasquez, Deputy Chief - Town of Silver City
21. David Watson, Deputy Chief - Eddy County Fire & Rescue
22. Adolf Zubia, Retired Chief City of Las Cruces Fire
23. Jared Zuniga, Deputy Chief - Eddy County Fire & Rescue

Officers present:

24. President - Kevin Hope, Fire Chief – City of Artesia
 25. Director IV - Mike Cherry Deputy Fire Marshal - Quay County Fire
 26. Director III - John Gabaldon, Fire Chief - Village of Los Lunas Fire
 27. Director I - Diane R. Queener, Fire Chief - City of Texico Fire
 28. Secretary - Shawn Jeffrey, Fire Chief - Town of Springer Fire
 29. Immediate Past President - James Salas, Chief Executive Fire Officer – Town of Dexter
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3. Approval of Minutes - September 30, 2023

- Correction noted for a member's department
 - Motion made by Robert Casados (Rosebud Fire) and seconded by Milo Lambert (Silver City) to approve minutes with correction.
 - Motion carried unanimously.
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4. Financial Report (FY 2024)

- Beginning Balance: \$21,865.41
 - Income: \$90,158.46
 - Expenses: \$100,505.41
 - Ending Balance: Negative \$32,212.36
 - Key Issues:
 - Increase in expenses over past 2–3 years, under review.
 - Outstanding conference fees (from 2021–2024) remain uncollected; efforts underway to recover about ~\$25,000 (older) and the bulk of outstanding is 2025~\$50,000.
 - Dues were previously increased to address rising costs.
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5. Committee & Agency Reports

a. Fire Protection Grant Fund

- Total funding available: \$292,604 (down ~\$1.2M from prior year).
- Applications: 195 submitted (219 previous year).
- Project funding requests: \$105M (up from \$90M last year).
- Dollar amount requested this year \$74M (last year \$50M).
- Scoring is being completed and deadline: End of September.
- Awards meeting scheduled for October 7–9 in Albuquerque.

b. Statewide EMS Advisory Board

- EMS Fund Act received permanent funding.
- Concerns:
 - Delay in fund disbursement.
 - Legislators reduced appropriation from 10% to 5%.
 - \$3M returned due to unspent allocations.
 - Chiefs urged to **spend all EMS funds annually** to prevent claw backs and loss of credibility.
- Regulatory Concerns:
 - DOT proposed new federal-level EMS driver/drug testing standards (impacting rural volunteers).
 - Is it possible to testify in front of DOT?
 - Public session planned to discuss at Fire Expo – Governor has our back.

c. International Association of Fire Chiefs – Southwest Division

- Conference scheduled: October 22–24, Benton, TX.
- Topics: Canadian fire in North Texas response lessons, FEMA regional preparedness, Grants, SAFER/AFG grant access.
- Concern: New Mexico underrepresented in SAFER grants (zero awards this year).

d. State Fire Marshal's Office

- Planning \$40M facility in Santa Fe (offices + training center).
- Staff expanded, inspections and investigations increasing.
- 190 personnel hired under retirement investment area funding.

e. NFPA Update

- Fire Prevention Week: October 6–12, 2024 – theme: “*Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work for You.*”
 - Resources available at **nfpa.org**.
 - NFPA Annual Conference & Expo: June 16–18, 2025 in Las Vegas.
 - Ongoing initiatives: lithium-ion battery fire research, construction site safety, campus fire prevention.
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6. President’s Report

- Attendance: 203 registrants (average prior years ~130–140).
 - Exhibitors: 44 (83 representatives).
 - Golf tournament: 59 participants (encouraged to increase future turnout).
 - Strong communication requested: ensure departmental contacts updated with Jackie.
 - Emphasized **full utilization of EMS funds** and accurate justification of financial requests.
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7 Legislative Issues (Old Business)

- Resolution 2024-23: Supports continued study of EMS funding needs and pursuit of sustainable, recurring funding streams.
 - Chiefs strongly encouraged to spend allocated funds to demonstrate need.
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8. New Business

- **OSHA Fire Brigade Standard Proposal:** Could impose costly NFPA compliance mandates (\$14K annually for small departments; biennial firefighter physicals; officer certification requirements). Members urged to monitor closely.
 - **Volunteer Firefighter Retirement (PERA):** Concerns raised about inadequate benefits (\$125–\$250/month) despite long service. Fire Marshal’s office is working to validate accurate data before legislative advocacy.
 - **Fire Services Council:** Draft procedural rules in progress; next meeting scheduled for November 12, 2024 (Zoom option available).
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9. Elections of Officers (Terms through 2026)

- **Director 2:** Chief Justin Drum nominated by Bobby Casados (Rosebud Fire) Motion by Rodney Stoner (San Jon) to cease nominations and elect by acclamation; second by Mark Smith (Union County Sedan Fire). Motion Carried.
 - **Director 4:** Chief Mike Cherry nominated by Rodney Stoner (San Jon Fire) Motion by Bobby Casados (Rosebud Fire) to cease nominations and elect by acclamation; second by Milo Lambert (Silver City). Motion Carried.
 - **Secretary:** Chief Shawn Jeffrey nominated by Mike Cherry (Quay County) Motion by Rodney Stoner (San Jon) to cease nominations and elect by acclamation; second by James Salas (Dexter). Motion Carried.
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10. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m. with recognition of strong turnout and encouragement for continued collaboration.
 - Reminder: Next year’s conference: September 25-28, 2025.
 - Door prize drawings scheduled for tomorrow’s closing session.
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Respectfully Submitted:

Jackie Portillo

Jackie Portillo, NMFA Liaison