

**Minutes of Iowa Firefighters Association  
Mid-Year Business Meeting  
Saturday, April 17, 2021 – 10:00 a.m.  
Sheraton West Des Moines Hotel**

**Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The Mid-Year Meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by President Nick Riley. The colors were presented, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Resolution #1**

On behalf of the Iowa Firefighters Association, we would like to thank the city of West Des Moines, West Des Moines fire department and the community in general for hosting this meeting.

**Welcome by West Des Moines Fire Chief Craig Leu**

West Des Moines Fire Chief, Craig Leu, welcomed the members to the city of West Des Moines. He thanked the board for all they have accomplished for the members and thanked everyone for coming.

**Scholarship Awards – Nick Riley**

This year the Board had selected two good candidates. The two candidates are Hunter Connolly from Maquoketa and Luke Kloetzer from Iowa Falls. President Nick Riley presented the 2021 IFA Scholarship award to Luke Kloetzer from Iowa Falls.

**Introduction of Guests:**

***Fire Service Training Bureau – John Kraemer***

John thanked the board for having him. Their move to Camp Dodge is continuing to be very successful. In the first 6 months they are already seeing a \$6,000 cost savings from moving to Camp Dodge. Their field programs were pretty successful this year, even with covid. They provided 883 trainings and educated almost 14,000 students. They were able to work with local departments and followed the Governor's proclamation and the CDC guidelines. Their award certifications numbers were up this year. He reminded everyone that they are no longer utilizing any curriculum prior to the essential seven. He mentioned that they have over 20 test sites across the state of Iowa and each site has around 3-4 test opportunities a year.

***Senator Adrian Dickey***

Senator Adrian Dickey introduced himself as the senator of District 41. He commended John and Cindy on being great Lobbyists for the fire service. He went on to discuss a couple upcoming bills. The first was SF 551 which is a bill for an act relating to fire fighters and emergency medical services members responding to emergency situations in certain vehicles. The second bill was SF 447 which is a bill for an act relating to the individual income tax credits for firefighters, emergency medical services personnel members, and reserve peace officers by increasing the amounts of the credits, and including retroactive applicability provisions. The final bill was SF 588 which is a bill for an act modifying the additional township annual property tax levy rate and including applicability provisions. He also discussed SF 569 which is the local fire protection and emergency service providers grant program. He mentioned that the IFA members can make a huge change if they are able reach out to their senators. Senator Dickey

***Muscular Dystrophy Association***

President Nick Riley passed around the boot to help raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The boot brought in \$567 for the MDA.

***Iowa Elks*** - No Report

***Iowa EMA Association*** - No Report

***Iowa Emergency Management Association*** - No Report

***IAPFC*** - No Report

***IFCA*** - No Report

***Iowa Society of Fire Service Instructors*** - No Report

**State Fire Marshal – Dan Wood** – Dan Wood mentioned that last year we had 307 total cases and 107 were explosive calls. He believes the increase in cases is due to more people being home due to covid. He also mentioned that we have already had 38 fire deaths this year. At the end of 2020 they were 88% complete with school inspections. They have had to cut a lot of programs this year after taking a hit to the budget. They broke a record last year of 13,000 electrical permits. The last thing he mentioned was the fireworks grant that they open up each year.

**Fire Service Training Bureau** – No Report

**Iowa Firefighter** – Jeff Gargano introduced himself and mentioned that he has been publishing the Iowa Firefighter since 2001. He also encouraged members to send in articles to be published in the paper.

**A motion was made by Gene Evans to approve the Convention Meeting Minutes from Grinnell, Iowa (September 12, 2020), seconded by Chuck Raska. All approved, motion carried.**

**Executive Director’s Report/Financial Report – Taylor Moore**

Taylor Moore mentioned that she came on board as the IFA Executive Director back in July. She also introduced Alyssa Broderson who works together with Taylor on the IFA account. Taylor mentioned that Alyssa has done a great job managing the membership piece, so if you have any questions or changes, you can reach out to her and she will help you get everything sorted out. One of the main projects the board and I have been working on the last couple months, has been trying to contact those departments that have let their membership drop over the last couple of years. A lot of you have helped get us in touch with those departments, so thank you for that. And now for the financial report.

Here are the bank statement account balances as of March 31, 2021:

General Checking- \$78,483.48  
Mutual Aid Check- \$10,142.52  
Affiliated Membership Savings \$341.21  
Convention Equipment Savings \$6,069.08  
Credit Card Earnings Savings \$5,572.24  
Everbank CD- Mutual Aid \$26,495.68  
Everbank CD- Office Improve 1 \$15,750.89  
Everbank CD- Office Improve 2 \$15,889.18  
Everbank CD- Office Improve 3 \$15,897.50  
Everbank CD- R&R \$21,154.28  
Everbank CD- Statue \$3,702.00  
Everbank General CD #1 \$52,553.61  
Everbank General CD #2 \$52,908.42  
Everbank General CD #3 \$52,788.72  
General Savings \$519.20  
Hall of Flame Savings \$12,679.84  
IA Vol Firefighter PAC \$627.53  
IFA Scholarship Fund \$6,449.69  
Mutual Aid Savings \$12,539.28  
Office Improvement Savings \$981.22  
Recruitment, Retention, Defense \$2,149.49

Total Checking/Savings \$393,695.06

**2021-22 Proposed Budget**

There was discussion on why the IFA hosts the States Networking meeting in November and if we can cut that \$4,000 expense. Gene explained that the current budget doesn’t reflect the income that we receive from the other states. The question was already brought up if we need to send 2 board members and 2 NVFC Directors to Washington DC. Scott mentioned that all memorial payments should be coming out of the Memorial account and should not be listed on the General account budget. The newspaper contract was also discussed and a couple different options were brought up such as sending a magazine quarterly or offering the magazine digitally. There was a big discussion on why our budgets show a loss and the actuals end up not showing a loss. The big piece that is not showing on the Profit and Loss sheet is us having to pull from our savings account in order to pay our bills.

**A motion was made by Dan Sicard to table the approval of the budget until after the results of Resolution #2, seconded by Kirk Rice. Motion carried.**

**Credentials Report:**

Brian Platz announced that the credentials are now closed; voting credentials are now closed. We had 39 towns file credentials for a total vote of 1,234.

Listen for town names

Alden 24, Atlantic 40, Buckeye 17, Sheridan 41, Colesburg 21, Dyersville 68, Earlham 26, Eldora 32, Forest City 46, Garner 35, Gilman 1, Grand Mound 21, Grinnell 40, Guthrie Center 42, Holland 20, Iowa Falls 33, Jewell 23, Lake Mills 45, LaPort City 28, Low Moor 13, Manchester 36, Maquoketa 33, Mechanicsville 20, North Liberty 47, Osage 48, Panora 31, Radcliffe 26, Redfield 22, Sigourney 23, Solon 41, Storm Lake 26, Stewart 30, Tama 50, Traer 35, Waverly 30, Wellsburg 26, West Des Moines 32

37 Towns: Total Votes 1,172

2 Absentee Towns

Alta 28, Harlen 34

Total Votes 62

Total Vote Count 1,234

Officer Reports

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Jason Barrick:**

I would like to thank everyone for being here today. It's been a pretty busy few months for me with IFA business. I travelled the state for years of service awards, fire schools and funerals. In the past three months I have put on 1500 miles traveling the state. This is my favor part of being on the board.

I would like to touch quickly on resolution #2. First thing first the Iowa Firefighter paper is not going anywhere or cannot be changed. The IFA by-laws say we have to communicate certain things at certain times, without the paper published monthly we can't do that. Is there other options sure but it would take 2 years to change the by-laws. We the board was ask to tighten our belts, well I have ran more numbers and can you imagine the mid-year meeting a one day event, or the hall of flame without shirts or nobody the work the booth because we can't afford the tickets for the members that want to work it. We will be asking that any IFA money to be spent has to be approved by the board. I ask you to trust this board, the information we have brought forward and we have the best interest in mind. It's time to draw a line in the sand and forget about the past and help this board focus on the future.

I would like to share my plan for the next 18 months. My plan for my presidency is to review the by-laws and have them updated for vote at Mid-year next year. As you know we have and are doing our meeting online and there needs to be rules so members can get the most out of it. If you would like to be a part of that committee please let me know soon. This will be a big undertaking to get the IFA up to date. I need help filling positions on my committees. If you would like to be on a committee please let me know before august. I also am in need of 2 towns that want to host the IFA board meetings. I need one in November on our states networking meeting weekend and one in June on the memorial weekend. We worked yesterday with the convention committee. My goal is to make sure that convention is an easy process, that is spelled out for a convention city and they have the full support of the IFA. After all it is the Iowa Firefighters Convention.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Chuck Raska:**

Good Morning, it's great to see all of you here. Since the last meeting I've had the privilege of presenting two meritorious service awards. One for 46 years to Greg Benson of the Gowrie Fire Dept and one for 50 years to Tony Whitmore of the Iowa Falls Fire Dept. Congratulations and thank you for your service.

Firefighter Day on the hill went well this year with a good attendance of firefighters from around the state. The chili cookoff was a hit again this year and worked out great attracting our legislators to take a moment to visit with us about our legislative agenda. I'd like to thank all that attended, and I hope that you'll consider coming back next year and bring a neighboring dept member with you.

At this time I would also like to announce my Mid-Year meeting will be held in Ames at the Gateway Hotel March 31 to April 1st 2023.

Over the past few months, the board has been concentrating on the 21-22 budget, our membership, and the condition of our financial situation. As most of you know the budget, we've proposed has a 1.5 percent increase which will allow us to pass a realistic budget. Over the past six years we have been averaging a 3.5% budget increase each year, but the dues have stayed the same. As a result, our total assets have gone from \$598,000 in 2013 to around \$393,695 today dwindling around \$25,000 a year. This is partially due to our membership numbers dropping from what was once 15,000 members has gone down to around 11,000. We have been working our list of dropped depts since late last year trying to bring as many departments back as possible. As of today, we have brought our membership back up to 12,107. As most past presidents know it's difficult to make contact with departments and once you've made contact that doesn't guarantee they will take the next step to get things reinstated. We have made contact with 90% of the depts on our lists, some we've talked to a second time and we will continue to work on this as well as continue the pursuit of new members.

At the convention meeting in 2019 President Evans broke the news to the membership that we needed a dues increase and he threw out the \$20 number for the first time. As AAM took over the office and reviewed our financials they also came to us with the suggestion of proposing an increase to cover our expenses. Last year at Mid-Year in Iowa Falls we attempted a dues increase but failed to have quorum to allow us to vote so it was tabled to this year. The 2021 budget meeting was held in January, there we met and reviewed our financials, and it once again it became clear that its going to take a \$7.00 increase to cover our costs and hopefully if our membership continues to trend back up will allow us some stability for the future. The way we are looking at this is \$4.00 is to make up for the loss as long as the extra income continues to come in such as state fair sponsors, Donations and Merchandise sales which are not guaranteed. The other \$3.00 will protect us if we lose those donations and take us into the future allowing us to secure the IFA for few more years so we can avoid another large increase such as this one.

This dues increase means a department of 25 members will spend an extra \$175 per year. We understand budgets are tight, but that money is what protects are training dollars. That money is working to build a recruitment retention LOSAP program. That money is working to raise the tax credit to \$200. That money teaches many young minds the importance of fire prevention. That money sends our NVFC representatives to DC to keep Iowa in the forefront of firefighting. That money pays tribute to our volunteers with over 20 years of service. That money keeps you all informed of current firefighting topics from around the state. The possibilities of that money are endless if its properly placed to improve the fire service for every volunteer firefighter that answers the call.

I ask that you trust in us to lead the IFA into the future with a secure financial plan to build on our mission.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President – Roger Carr:**

Welcome all to this year's Mid-Year, I missed you all last year for the full event. I have had the honor and privilege to present several Length of Service Awards, and would like to thank you for the opportunity and the hospitality shown me. We as a board have worked hard on the budget and appreciate everyone's input and opinions. I have a real fear that if we don't do something. When I am sitting in the President's seat the IFA will not exist as we know it today.

I need to take a little of your time and talk about a subject that is very near and dear to me. The mental wellbeing of our 1<sup>st</sup> responders. There are many articles written by people much smarter than I and you can access them online. It truly saddens me that we have lost more of our Brothers and Sisters to suicide than Line of Duty Deaths. Any loss of our family is tragic but with understanding and knowledge we can lesson and prevent the feelings of suicidal thoughts.

We need to know understand the signs of depression and PTSD. We need to recognize when one of us is hurting and get them the help they need. Lose the macho BS and show each other the compassion we show the citizens we serve. We are Family and when one hurts so do we all.

Stay strong, Stay Vigilant, Stay Well

### **4<sup>th</sup> Vice President – Aaron Clemons:**

I would like to thank everyone for attending this year's meeting both in person and via zoom. This board has been working diligently on correcting the membership over the last few months. We have been contacting departments that have had some discrepancies with their membership paperwork. At this point we have regained about 40 departments back to the IFA. We are and will continue to contact other departments hoping to

resolve any issues that have occurred with their membership. Attended Firefighter day on the hill. Thank you John and Cindy for all your hard work. Attended a 50 years of service award in Iowa Falls for Tony Whitmore. Very honored to be a part of that presentation. I would like to express the importance of the dues raise on everyone here. A change needs to happen in order to keep the future of the IFA alive. I will end with encouraging all to attend this year convention in Grinnell. They need all the support we can give them this year.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> Vice President – Kent Brix:**

Kent thanked everyone for coming. He asked all the first timers to stand up to be recognized and asked for all first timers to come up during the next break for a picture. He mentioned that he has been able to present a couple awards and attended a couple funerals. He is excited and motivated to help get our membership number back up. He attended the Indian Hills Fire School and was able to chat with several firefighters there about joining the association. He also encouraged others to make a trip up to the capital and meet their senators.

#### **Past President – Gene Evans:**

Since the January Board meeting, I have attended the dues Q & A session in Iowa Falls, presented service awards in Forest City and most recently along with 5th VP Kent Brix attended the Funeral of Garber Fire Chief Chad Kuehl who was taken from us at 45 years by the COVID 19 virus.

I would like to take this opportunity to expand on my statement from earlier in the meeting regarding the impact that COVID 19 has had on the fire service, and for that matter ALL emergency responders in Iowa.

Each one of us has experienced some effect from the Pandemic. Be it the actual illness, isolation, depression, loss of income, or even the death of a friend or family member, this plague has touched every citizen in Iowa.

With vaccinations increasing every week, we can begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we must remain vigilant in our efforts to remain safe and protect the safety of the communities that we serve.

Please continue to take precautions as the virus now has variants and the vaccine is not 100%. Remain strong, stay safe and continue to be the leaders in your communities.

#### **President – Nick Riley:**

Nick thanked the Sheraton Hotel for hosting the Mid-Year meeting and he thanked the West Des Moines Fire Chief for welcoming us to their city. Since the last meeting, he has given out a couple years of service awards and attended the Q&A session in Iowa Falls. He also attended a couple funerals for a fallen firefighters in Iowa. Nick would like to see more support from the membership regarding legislation. He mentioned that John and Cindy do a great job, but we need to have their back and respond when asked for help.

#### **Audit Update:**

Gene gave an update on the audit after the departure of their former employee. The original plan was to have someone from the state auditor perform the audit of the books. We were in the process of trying to implement this when covid happened, so that never got done. We decided to reach out to a firm called TP Anderson and Company in Humboldt, IA. Tim with TP Anderson performed a preliminary audit, he was only able to perform a perfunctory audit on our Quickbooks account since the Access Database was out of date. There was not any sufficient evidence to support that there was any criminal activity or malfeasance. The board decided that the audit was complete and does not wish to spend \$20,000-30,000 on a forensic audit. **A motion was made by Don Scott and seconded by Ed Tibbott to approve the audit report. All approved.**

#### **Committee Reports:**

##### ***NVFC - Marv Trimble***

Marv give a quick report and mentioned that the NVFC has not done much over the last couple years due to covid. The NVFC has had a couple virtual meetings, but he mentioned the networking just isn't the same as an in-person meeting.

##### ***Memorial Committee - Mike Reuman***

Mike gave a quick update on the 2021 Memorial Service that will be Sunday, June 13<sup>th</sup> in Coralville, IA. He mentioned that Coralville currently doesn't have any gathering restrictions, but they do have a mask mandate. The mask mandate may be lifted by June, but plan on bringing a mask just in case. The memorial committee decided to purchase carnations instead of having the families bring wreaths to place along the memorial. Gene

Evans announced that Riddles Jewelry donated another red line watch this year to be auctioned off. We will be auctioning off the watch tonight at the auction and the proceeds will go to the Memorial.

#### ***Legislative Committee - John and Cindy Peterson***

John and Cindy Peterson thanked everyone for coming. Cindy mentioned that legislature is winding down and it has been a crazy year with new covid cases popping up every week. She reminded everyone of the successful chili cook-off earlier this year. Next year's chili cook-off will be January 18th, and they would love everyone to swing by and meet with their senators. Cindy mentioned that she sends the IFA office weekly legislative updates which are then forwarded out to the membership. Cindy passed out a handout with several of the IFA's important bills including HF 721/SF 333 Emergency Responder, HF750 Length of Service Award LOSAP, HF654/SF 331 Use of Lights, HF563 Raising tax credit to \$20, HF761/SF 569. Cindy gave an update on each of those bills and encouraged the membership to email their senators regarding the mentioned bills.

#### **Convention Committee: Jason Barrick**

Jason gave a quick update on the convention meeting that was held yesterday. During yesterday's meeting the committee members went through the convention city hosting packet and contract line by line to update the host city packet for convention. Jason highlighted a couple of the big changes that were made to the packet. The IFA received \$6 from every Convention registration. The committee requested that the \$6 goes up to \$10, and the \$10 goes into a separate line item. He also touched on that the contract needs to be signed by every host city before they can host convention. The membership confirmed that this change to the IFA support funds does not need a motion, it is a board decision.

#### **Hall of Flame: Rusty Hockman**

Dusty mentioned that there was no fair last year, but hopefully we will be able to bring out the Hall of Flame trailer to this year's fair. He mentioned that the t-shirts are very popular and he thinks it would not go over well if we had to get rid of them. You can contact Ashley to sign up for working at the booth.

#### **Resolution Two: Mark McNeas**

Whereas: The Iowa Firefighters Association has been "The voice of Iowa's Fire Service" since 1879  
Whereas: The cost of doing business is increasing every year.  
Whereas: The IFA budget has exceeded income for the past several years.  
Whereas: The IFA has not been able to replace our cash reserves due to budget shortfalls.  
Whereas: There has not been a dues increase for nearly a decade.  
Whereas: In order to continue to fulfill the IFA mission and expand our benefits to our membership, we feel that a dues increase is needed.  
Whereas: The current dues of \$13.00 per member are one of the lowest for Fire Associations nationwide.  
Whereas: A dues increase of \$7.00 per member is proposed raising annual dues to \$20.00, beginning with the 2022 billing.

Explanation- The IFA had not been able to produce revenue consistent with expenses factoring inflation for several years. In order to keep the IFA viable, we feel that a dues increase is necessary at this time.

**A motion was made by Larry Renslow and seconded by Iowa Falls to vote on Resolution #2. Motion carried.**

There were 36 towns that participated, two spoiled ballots, 2 absentee ballots  
Ballot count: Yes – 715; No - 419

Resolution # 2 failed due to the lack of a 2/3 majority vote as stated in the bylaws.

**A motion was made by Don Pounds to raise the IFA Annual Dues to \$17.00 per member, seconded by Waverly. Waverly made an amendment to raise the dues by \$1 each year until we reach \$20.00 per member. Waverly decided to remove the amendment, seconded by Larry Renslow.**

Don Pounds mentioned that he agrees that we need a Dues increase and that \$17.00 might not be enough, but this is a good start and he is willing to come back in a couple years and re-evaluate the membership dues. Many members agreed with his comments.

There was a new vote held to increase the IFA Annual Membership Dues to \$17.00.

There were 31 towns that participated; 1 ballot with no credentials, 0 spoiled ballots  
Ballot Count: Yes – 971; No – 166  
Resolution #2 passes

**A motion was made by Waverly and seconded by Larry Renslow to approve the budget with dues increase change. All approved, motion carried.**

**Unfinished Business:**

No unfinished business.

**New Business:**

Jack Runge gave a presentation on a new proposed online voting option. We don't want to discourage people from attending meetings in person, but with the change we will be able to include more members across the state.

Cliff Renslow suffered a stroke a couple weeks ago and is currently going through rehab and should be released in the next couple weeks. Stuart Fire Department is going to have fundraiser on June 6<sup>th</sup> at their Fire Department.

**Good of the Association:**

**Motion to adjourn – First and second. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Taylor Moore