

**Society of Fire Protection Engineers  
Dallas-Fort Worth Chapter  
Meeting Minutes for Meeting Held on: January 12, 2015**

The January 12, 2015 meeting was held at the Doubletree Hotel on Valley View Lane in Farmers Branch, Texas. Lunch was served beginning at noon.

President Scott Whinery called the meeting to order at 11:50 AM. Self-introductions were given by the members and guests present.

**Old Business**

1. None.

**New Business**

1. Zach Arnold made a motion to set up a "cube" payment system so card payments can be accepted at meetings. This motion was accepted by the members present.
2. Greg Willis provided an update regarding the SFPE scholarships stating that the process for 2014-2015 has begun and he will keep the membership updated as to the status of the selection of candidates.

Kelly Stalder, Bob Morgan, John Gillette, Todd Haines, Rahe Loftin, Jim Williams, Patrick McGehee and Jay Loucks Participated in a panel discussion on issues regarding to authorities having jurisdiction.

President Scott Whinery adjourned the meeting at 12:45 PM.

Attendance List:

Ron Coker	Sue Stafford	Joel Drennan
Chi Do	Roger Tate	James Williams
Jay Farmbach	Robert Tralmer	Jay Loucks
Michelle Gebhart	Allen Webb	Bob Morgan
Jeffrey Heidelberg	Tom Wellen	Patrick McGehee
Scott Herrbold	Scott Whinery	Travis Nelson
Hal Key	Gary Wood	Greg Willis
Chris Morgan	Alyssa Xarras	Drew Geran
Andrew Ochsankehl	Barney McCollon	Evan Wilson
Donald Pease	Todd Gardner	John Gillette
Amy Porter	Todd Beendeds	Rahe Loftin
Jon Roberts	Mike Phillips	
Ronnie Smith	Alyssa Sanders	
Hunter Stephens	Rick Matsuda	

## Introduction

Presenters,

The following is a list of questions we may ask at next week's panel discussion. I am going to go with the flow of conversation, so we may get all or only a few of these, and I make no promises with respect to order. We anticipate that each response will be 1-2 minutes in duration (give or take), with 1-2 minutes of follow-up discussion if desired. Not every presenter needs to respond to every question, but I will try to let anyone who wants to speak do so before moving on to the next topic. I plan to keep the canned questions and responses to about an hour so we have time for some open membership questions afterwards.

### Introductions:

Please provide brief, 1-2 minute, description of your jurisdiction (facility/city/state/national, population, current growth, number of plan reviews/month or year, significant fire history, what do you feel sets your jurisdiction apart from our other presenters, etc.).

Name	Initials	Company/District/Constituency	Title	Years in Position	Responsibilities
Todd Haines	TH	DFW Air	FPE/Planning Chief		30 square miles, 1900 flights, 210 fire fighters, 16 personnel in plan review
Bob Morgan	BM	FTW	Senior Fire Protection Engineer, FW FD		2000 permits per year, 1600 sprinkler/alarm reviews, staff of 3 reviewers
Rahe Loftin	RL	GSA		17	Federal Building Jurisdiction,
Jim Williams	JW	Dallas	Assistant Fire Protection Engineer		160-180 alarm, 100 sprinkler plans per month, high rises and warehouses mainly
Patrick Mcgehee			Assistant Fire Protection		160-180 alarm, 100 sprinkler plans per

			Engineer		month, high rises and warehouses mainly
Jay Loucks	JL	Dallas	Engineer		Mike Mitchell also on staff and Tonya
John Gillette	JG	Frisco			6 staff (Alyssa sanders on staff), 90 permits per month, 55-60 development plans per month
Kelley Stalder	KS	State FM Office			Code Interpretation/ Fire Investigation

**Discussion:**

What current trends are you seeing in plan review submissions (for better/for worse)?

JW – Rubber stamp reviewers, 85% of plans received easy to identify problems with the designs, another thing 4 story single family dwellings (kicked into 13R instead of 13D) so FDC required among other things

JG – Similar issues contractors not looking at work, rely on FD to be bad guy and make them follow code, industry going to computer aided submittals so they are thinking of going in that direction, record retention laws are restrictive, Texas law says City needs to hold onto plans for the life of the building, North Texas area does good job reviewing plans, but in areas outside of DFW area reviewers are not as stringent and nationwide companies don't like having to change their usual plans, when things are added above code requirements, things go into a grey area. COG helps with these issues but outside of DFW is tough.

BM – Agree with previous comments, and lack of attention to detail. APS more of a problem than RMEs. Both are a minimum standard so they should be trying harder to meet code requirements.

TH - Electronic plans submission, forced into the system, going green, etc. As an AHJ it was hard to be prepared, plans can be signed off on but then you have to rely on contractor to provide the reviewed plans for walkthroughs. Basic information is wrong, that is a pet peeve, make sure the responding fire department is correct, patience from contractors, he meets reviewing deadlines to best of his ability so if something is built before he gets there he has to put his foot down and make them change things that were installed wrong and do not meet comments made during plan review.

RL – Poor and incomplete designs are a problem. Plans should not have incorrect information on them and should be 35% during that submittal. It is a struggle to get correct plans for each submission. Backgrounds different on fire protection and architectural drawings. Location of FACP's in rooms where they won't fit, sprinkler valves in unheated rooms.

KS – State FM office doesn't do a lot of plan review. Will look at plans for state entities. Problems are usually found during life safety inspections of buildings. Discovered many times plans submitted and signed off on by University, after that some University entity asks for a change which is made but does not get passed back through the review process. A lot of smaller cities don't have staff for reviews so they will accept a third party review. Contractors complain about having to submit to third parties. KS has to hold their hands looking for the local ordinance creating that requirement. Unincorporated portions of the state, not all counties are allowed to adopt the fire code, only about 70 counties have adopted a fire code. A state statute does include requirements in certain areas of the state for wind protection, buildings cannot be insured unless they are built to sustain hurricane force winds.

What are your thoughts on current project delivery methods such as design-bid-build v. design build (construction management at risk, integrated project delivery)?

RL – DBB typically used for large projects, occasionally use DB, DBB gives them lots of time to do reviews and get design correct before the system gets installed. DB is faster but doesn't work for large complex projects. Can turn into build – design since they are trying to build fast and start building before project plans are reviewed. Mostly design bid build.

TH – DB – 2 projects, DART, North gates interchange. Great contractors on those projects. Possibly because of time restrictions but they were very pro-active about answering questions and making corrections. Year long project contractors much more receptive.

JG – DB project schedule pressure is very large if multiple government facets are involved. Expectations far greater due to the large amount of money being invested by the public. Public wants the design right and want the project done fast. Shell design done before interior design approved for Cowboys project, it can be provide thorough reviews.

PM – DBB can lead to cheapest bid wins, contractor will bid low. Which can lead to very poor submittals with hopes for change orders.

Alternate requirements for submissions based on type of project (no from all).

What are the most interesting equivalencies, code modifications, and/or variance requests you've seen over the past few years? Would you like to share any notable rejections as a cautionary tale?

BM – Don't approve anything the first time. (Joke)

JG – Deal breakers, if life safety part of the system doesn't work as variance it is a deal breaker. If you are supervising people they don't have time to see things 4 or 5 times. Challenges running into, alternative access to buildings. Federal building access is very difficult due to security restrictions. Architects try to push the boundaries of what will be accepted. New products and new technologies have led to more complications in projects everywhere and needs for more in depth reviews.

RL – 911 has led to several access restrictions, 50 foot limit when approaching buildings. Equivalencies can be accepted with thorough justification that system will protect the area. Rejected ceiling equivalency example, failed required building code test badly (AC 171?)

JG – Life safety exit width is being cut to thinner allowances. Also, building access is a large problem (security) makes it difficult to approve jobs.

JG/RL – People approach the AHJ regularly and try to eliminate means of egress (stairs, etc.)

What are your thoughts/opinions on the increasing use of performance based design?

NO TIME, NOT ASKED

What is your largest fire protection related concern at this moment?

NO TIME, NOT ASKED

For the Cities – What are your current standings on residential sprinklers?

NO TIME, NOT ASKED

### **Conclusions:**

What do you believe we, as industry insiders (residents, owners, insurers, construction agents, engineers, manufacturers, tradesmen) should be working on now to avoid future problems in your jurisdiction?

NO TIME, NOT ASKED

What can FPEs do to make their life easier?

KS – Make sure we do what we can so things do not go back to SFMO or AHJ in general for review. Try to get all issues worked out the first time or before something is sent for review.

RL – More communication between AHJ/Owner and designer/contractor. In most cases green tag is all that matters. Galvanized sprinkler systems used to be preferred, now it's a problem in some places, smoke control systems designed by non FPEs which leads to complications with communication, anti-freeze systems not allowed.

TH – make sure you do your research on jurisdiction where building is located. Helps AHJ feel like working together instead of him being “bad guy”. Remodels are a major concern with protecting occupied areas while working on other areas. Natural gas is a concern in some areas at the airport. Firefighter standpoint, green buildings, not a lot of research on these buildings, new LEED buildings on grounds, worries about fire behavior with the new green materials. Doesn't want to City of Frisco on plans submitted to DFW Airport.

BM – Chair of fire advisor board to NCTCOG. Tries to work with everyone to develop amendments. Tries to get private sector input in, currently Mark Hayes is only private sector attendant. Fire hydrant fluxuation requirements not included in code requirements anymore, took it to NFPA 13 to try to get it back into the standard. Committee formed study to determine whether it should be added back to the code. Codes are changing all the time and not always for the better. Try to participate in ICC and NFPA committees.

JG – People following standards in the local jurisdiction . Jurisdictions that don't make people follow the rules make jobs harder for AHJs that do follow the rules (codes). Pick up the phone when making a request, it is very difficult for him to get full picture and be able to provide a good answer over email because of CYA considerations. Architects do not hire FPEs because we take up their budget so they ask AHJs questions, concern for AHJs because architects do not know the code or want to create design

that doesn't meet the requirements. See if they can get it in under the radar. Common sense needs to be met for equivalencies/performance based designs, needs to be a cooperative process, can't be put off until the end even though this happens regularly.

KS – Make sure records are kept by Client of performance based designs or equivalencies.

JW – Agree with others, a lot of the issues boils down to communication. Underground plans get rejected 75% of the time because people don't understand the requirements or do not coordinate with the design team.

### **OUTSIDE ?s**

Rick Matsuda – RMEs signing off on plans they don't know about. SK – could be a license problem and they can get their license taken away. Especially if it's a code violation that should not have been signed off on. Machine stamp is a violation too. Clear violations should be investigated. Scary wording in code "if permitted by the authority having jurisdiction"

Something we should look at, buildings being submitted without structural plans. Problems with small municipalities requesting re-submittals for tiny issues that don't affect the plans or safety, missing commas, etc.

TH – Submittal sent, none of requested changes made, called contractor, contractor out golfing asked him to mark up plans with problems and send back comments. Problem is he doesn't want to do design for Contractor.

Michelle – do AHJs get resubmittals after value engineering process? Things like – something that was not combustible concealed space, gets VE'd out of project, combustible products used and never resubmitted for review. Many times never sent back to project FPE for review. Potential problem for AHJs to look out for. JG – Inspectors tend to catch things in field, so having to fix things after they were built is a problem they face.

Warehouses, fire loading. What contractors are told load will be and what owner actually stores. RL – Arlington – all shell warehouses class IV commodity minimum. JG – If AHJ is told about materials, code says AHJ can ask for HAZ MAT inventory, so gives them ability to ask for specific materials that will be stored, problem is when no one has asked for that until things are sent in for plan review. Warehouse storing pool chemicals expanded next to empty suite. 90,000 lbs pool chemicals submitted by national owner, kept trying to do it in house. Whole inventory was wrong, atrium turned into 2 control areas and atrium. TH – implemented 45 day inspection, follow up inspection to see current condition of property (45 days after C of O).