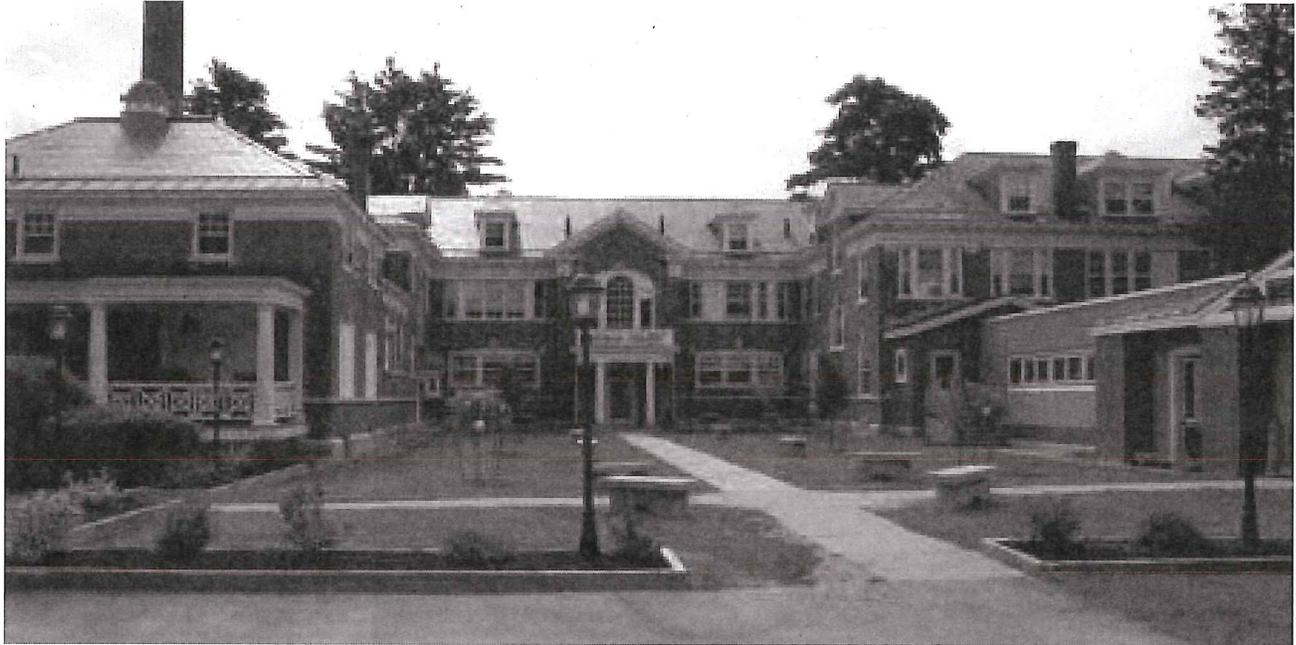


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TRAINING CENTER GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT
ROBERT H. WOOD, JR. CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND FIRE SERVICE TRAINING CENTER
PITTSFORD, VERMONT



Act Number 26, of 2015, established the Training Center Governance Committee to provide a single voice to the General Assembly. The duties and powers of the Governance Committee as noted in Chapter 19 §841(c) include governing;

- Use and access to the facility by various groups
- Future needs and capital investments
- Performance analysis
- Budget and rates
- Meetings

The Vision of the Training Center Governance Committee is to continuously improve the delivery of critical emergency response training to save lives and continue the hard work our predecessors endeavored to do making a training facility that will meet the training needs for the future.



Michael Desrochers, Executive Director
Division of Fire Safety
Chair, Training Center Governance Committee


Drew Bloom, Executive Director
Division of Fire Safety

Vice Chair, Training Center Governance Committee

Introduction

The main training facility structure was constructed in 1907 and was used as an infirmary. Although there is historic sentiment, the facility was clearly not designed with the current use in mind. The primary reason the Governance Committee was created was to provide a single voice to the legislature regarding access and use, capital investment projects, major maintenance, fee for space, develop efficiencies, facility management and contracts. Although there is overwhelming documentation in place relevant to the existing *infrastructure deficiencies* of the main building, we have also focused on a number of other issues and have been faced with many challenges throughout the past 4 years. Our highest priority remains the *life safety* of those who visit, work, train and reside at the facility however we would be remiss if we did not include how important *facility sustainability* as this is the only training center facility in Vermont.

This report focuses on the progress and challenges facing the Training Center Governance Committee, Safety Sub-Committee and Building Sub-Committee. Although to date, we have improved access and use, gained training efficiencies, improved some of the infrastructure, improved safety, enhanced communications, this does not imply we do not have challenges in front of us. The continued collaboration and support from your Committee, facility users, Buildings and General Services, State Agencies, the Vermont Legislature, the Administration, neighbors, the Town of Pittsford and others will allow us to continue to make improvements at the training center so we can meet the training and educational needs of the future. Access and use to the facility have grown over the past few years and scheduling and managing the operations can be challenging and requires a lot of administrative time in planning and logistics. The fact the Governance Committee is *active and expanding* means in contrast the business management processes of running the day to day operations is taking valuable time away from those who have other important job duties. This identifiable business management process would best be handled by a *facility manager*.

With the receipt of funding (\$1.8 million dollars) and a contract to renovate the East Cottage into viable dorm space, the Governance Committee can be in a better position to coordinate future renovations in collaboration with BGS, to advance our goals of renovating the remaining main building. The completion of the East Cottage allows swing space so other portions of the building can be renovated to meet the intended use of today. Buildings and General Services Capital Plan outlines the strategic plan to renovate the training facility main building structure. The Capital Construction Plan prioritizes the work with life safety a priority.

Exploring potential new users and how best to mesh training opportunities between users continues to be an on-going discussion. Requesting capital funds for new projects is challenging and will require direction from the legislature. There have been peripheral discussions regarding the feasibility of re-locating Corrections to the Training Center in Pittsford. The Governance Committee recognizes the importance of modernization and we continue to seek participants to attend our meetings. The Department of Correction has a seat on the Governance Committee and has been active with our efforts to bring training opportunities to the facility. Future expansion of the facility to enhance training opportunities is always an open discussion and we are in an excellent position to be a catalyst to these future discussions and debates.

Scope and Overview

Active Subcommittees:

A few notable changes have occurred at the training facility between 2016-2020. We are glad to report we have a solid working relationship between all Governance Committee members and our Sub-Committee Groups. Currently there are two very active Subcommittee groups reporting to the Governance Committee (1) Pursuant to Act 118, Section 12, 29 V.S.A. § 842 (a), a Safety Sub-Committee is created (2) Building Facility Work Group established under the authority of the Governance Committee. Attached to this report you will find the 2019 Governance Safety Report submitted to the General Assembly. The Safety Subcommittee membership includes 2 members from the Police Academy, two members from the Fire Academy, the Commissioner of Labor or designee, Risk Management Manager within the Agency of Administration, an employee from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns who specializes in risk management. The Safety Committee has done an outstanding job working together by being proactive in injury prevention. The safety report provides a detailed analysis of the subject but here are just a couple notable achievements;

- There is now a common report used to track and process injuries at the training facility
- There is a common understanding of what an injury is based on OSHA 300, allowing a consistent tracking of injury or illness incidents and what needs to be reported. The report details all known incidents although many only required first aid and are not reportable under OSHA reporting criteria.
- Both law enforcement and fire have taken steps to institutionalize a culture of safety
- Training programs have been altered, some significantly, to address previous injury trends

Infrastructure:

Previous reports and documentation clearly outline the deficiencies in the main facility infrastructure. A Building Subcommittee Group was assembled in the summer of 2019, for the sole purpose of addressing the *current* infrastructure deficiencies and *future* needs. Funding is always at the forefront of any capital project and the Governance Committee continues to work collaboratively with BGS to coordinate repairs to the main facility building. The East Cottage project will commence soon allowing for future swing space to assist with future renovations of the main facility. The East Cottage project is the catalyst for future projects at the main facility. Keeping employees housed at the training facility throughout any future project will reduce the cost burden. The figures below do not represent any department capital bill request. Below is a general summary of future BGS capital expenditure requests for the training facility:’

- FY20: \$1,000,000.00
- FY21: \$4,000,000.00
- FY22: \$5,000,000.00
- Fy23: \$5,000,000.00

Building and General Services is currently looking into the full renovation of the VPA main building in the near future. There are some general notes/considerations while moving forward;

- **Sewer system:** System is adequate for current use, but if anymore sleep space was added to the septic on the main building, a new leech field would be needed or the entire waste water system would need to be tied into the town system. Connecting to the Town system should be an ultimate facility goal.
- **HVAC** needs to be replaced for the main complex. Lack of adequate cooling and heating is danger for recruits and staff. The 2nd and 3rd floors including sleeping spaces are the worst issues.

(Special Note) The system being designed for the East Cottage is designed in such a manner that it can be moved and added onto to handle the entire complex in the future. This would potentially happen during the renovation process of the main building. This was discussed during East Cottage meeting with the project manager.

- **Driver Training Course:** The facility needs an improved driver training course, currently some of the drivers training has to be completed at Fort Devens or utilize the Massachusetts State Police course. A feasibility study should be undertaken to determine whether the property has sufficient space for such a training course or whether adjacent property could be utilized for such training needs.
- **Bathroom Renovations:** 3 More-bathroom renovations at the main VPA building.
- **Ice Issues on the Fire Range.**

Water dripping from the baffles creates rows of ice that law enforcement officers and trainees have to traverse to get to targets. This is a safety issue that needs to be addressed. Can't use salt in the building.

Thoughts are for some type of covered dome over the structure.

There was discussion about what BGS projects were in progress and where things fall.

Based on the building subcommittee meeting minutes there are a number of key issues needing resolution to support the main building;

- Stairwell above the kitchen to training space needs to be completed as a 20-week academy is coming in 1 year and the space is needed. Code issue.
- General repairs/remodel of the main building (Windows/storm windows, roof, electrical, bats, heat/AC- building too hot or too cold.
- Covered Storage for vehicles
- Driver training course is needed as there is no longer an instate driver course

Based on the building subcommittee meeting minutes there are a number of key issues needing resolution to support the campus wide needs;

- Covered Storage for vehicles and training trailers. The trailers are often buried in snow requiring hours of digging out and some of the trailers are damaged by the snow and ice.
- Looking at future demands at the facility an addition to the fire department building to meet the needs of the future. Currently the station houses a haz mat command vehicle which needs to be moved outside daily. There is no training space (dirty classroom) or training office in the current building. The addition of restrooms and locker rooms was a much-needed improvement.
- The apron around the new burn building needs pavement to provide better access to the building by fire trucks.

The reclaim water system at the Fire Academy has elevated levels of PFAS from firefighting foams used for training purposes prior to 2011, when the Academy switched to PFAS-free foam. Testing by the State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) did not find PFAS in nearby drinking-water wells. A water filtration system was installed in 2016 to be used when reclaim water needs to be discharged from the reclaim water storage tank to the ground. More testing is being done to determine where the remaining PFAS are located at the Academy. BGS is assisting the Academy through the regulatory process under the ANR site investigation and cleanup regulations.

Access and Use

Determining future interagency use of the training facility including new building construction has been discussed in meetings. The Governance Committee is focused on sustainability and ensuring the training facility operates safely and functions as intended. Finding interagency efficiencies and expanding use at the facility continues to be a main objective. The committee is pursuing the basic renovations and repairs to address the full and safe functioning of the campus. ***Modernization*** and how we will deliver training (efficiently and effectively) in the future is critical. Although the Governance Committee does not dictate training requirements to either training council, there are efficiencies in cross training and interagency collaboration. Identifiable trends such as cancer prevention, health and wellness, first responder suicide, personal safety, overdoses, recruitment and retention, and leadership impact sustainability. When we look into the future, we see a training campus prepared to accommodate the needs of first responders, state government, municipalities. EMS, fire safety, law enforcement, Corrections, Mental Health Services, and all professionals that are impacted by emergency needs of Vermont communities and facilities. An innovative and equipped training center can host interactive classrooms for in-person competency-based trainings, Skype and webinar panels that extend to all of Vermont and beyond. Multiple classrooms, additional property to lend itself to larger and more diversified team trainings with break out rooms, scenario-based training props. Also, of great importance is a training and educational campus with a modern computer lab for forensic training. E- learning – research and test outs. There are missed opportunities at the current training center because we cannot sponsor large groups (conferences). ***Modernization*** is critical to our infrastructure, sustainability and ability to meet the needs of Vermont’s first responders. Below are just a few cross-training opportunities enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of training delivery;

Opportunities for cross agency partnerships and cross training

- 1) Systemic Leadership Training
- 2) Cross agency drills and exercises
- 3) Resilience trauma and CISM training
- 4) Trauma informed responding
- 5) Restorative Justice concepts
- 6) Hostage Negotiation Basic training

- 7) Non-lethal- less lethal training
- 8) Firearms
- 9) De-escalation training and advanced communication techniques
- 10) First AID CPR_ - Narcan
- 11) Alice – Active shooter
- 12) Blood borne pathogens
- 13) Defensive driving
- 14) Fair and Impartial policing
- 15) Implicit bias and cultural competence
- 16) Health and Wellness
- 17) Incident Command

There has been a wide range of discussions regarding new uses of the campus. We looked at each area as it relates to the capacity and ability of the facility to accommodate training for our law enforcement officers, fire fighters, and other potential facility users such as; Corrections, Urban Search and Rescue, and Hazardous Material Response, just to name a few. There are several municipal entities who may utilize the facility and/or have agreements in place to do so during an emergency. These include but are not limited to; agreements with both the Town of Pittsford and the American Red Cross to function as an emergency shelter, as well as ongoing support of activities with groups such groups as the Vermont State Firefighter's Association, Pittsford Recreation Department and assorted law enforcement cadet explorer programs.

Scheduling users and managing all the logistics (rooms, meals, classroom assignments, scheduling meetings, administrative support, reporting, evaluating current use, communication, assigning dorm rooms, accountability, and conflict resolution) is spread out among facility user staff who have other job duties for which they were hired to do. The committee is in agreement that we need a *facility manager* responsible for operating the day to day logistics. In part, each facility user group has a different direct reporting supervisor and each user has different day to day responsibilities. ***This identifiable business management process and recommendation was reported back in 2016, when we completed our first legislative report, thus there is some repetitive language.*** We have not been able to financially or logistically fill this need. This identifiable business management process above is creating by default, major inefficiencies and is a critical obstacle for moving forward to achieve maximum efficiency. We have been very fortunate that the Governance Committee members have been able to coordinate the day to day operations, but we have concern as we move forward this role will become more necessary. The Governance committee was established to be a single voice for the training center and a facility manager needs to be created. As noted in our 2016 report the following are just some responsibilities of the facility manager:

- Scheduling use and access to the training facility (including meals and lodging)
- Facility utilization reporting to support future decisions regarding rates
- Establish policies for conflict resolution and identify potential sources of conflict
- Establish working groups to facilitate capital project discussions to present to the governance committee for consideration
- A communication hub for all day to day related activity of the training facility
- Administrative support and reporting to the Governance Committee

- Evaluate and compile data to support the effectiveness of training including future training and the potential for new users.
- Preparing contracts relevant to the use of the facility (food service, linen)
- Compile data and create reports to facilitate discussions on the effectiveness of the delivery of training and short falls of our training delivery
- Compile all curriculum related material between all facility users see if programs can be coordinated between present and future users
- Reach out to potential user groups increasing use and access to the facility

In 2017, the Fire Academy received a \$500,000 federal grant, Assistance to Fire Fighter Grant (AFG), to help fund the construction of a modern live burn training building. An additional \$300,000 was approved by the Legislature and with additional assistance from Buildings and General Services we were able to complete the project. Without the support of the Legislature and BGS, the new burn building would not have been constructed. Vermont was the first State Training Center to receive funding through AFG for construction of a burn building. The building has a non-toxic training smoke system allowing firefighters/first responders to participate in search and rescue training.

- Fires are able to be set simultaneously on two floors creating a hot environment with zero visibility that will challenge the most experienced firefighters and officers.
- There is 360-degree access to the three-story building, which is perfect for both ground ladder and aerial ladder operations.
- Roof ventilation where the student can experience cutting ventilation hole in the roof while there is a fire below them. This is something that is very hard to realistically simulate elsewhere.
- The building is equipped with a pre-piped standpipe and sprinkler system for fire extinguishment training in a commercial or high-rise building.
- There is now a capability to isolate areas within the building, for the purpose of creating atmospheres to train with thermal imaging cameras, carbon monoxide meters and other monitoring devices.
- Though-out the building there are permanent anchoring systems set up for many different types of rope work and technical rescue.

The old burn building will be utilized regularly by the USAR Team with the potential to bring in a small rubble pile training prop that can be assembled easily adjacent to the foundation of the old building. Specific detail regarding the new burn building and old burn building was added to this report to put emphasis on how we are expanding the use of the facility while recycling existing training g props to enhance sustainability.

In 2018, The Fire Academy renovated an existing storage room into a classroom seating approximately 25 students. The additional space has proven to be invaluable and is utilized frequently. The extended use of the building, however circles back to the identifiable business management process of managing day to day operations.

Summary:

The Governance Committee and the two sub-committees have actively worked to understand the needs of our users and are working collaboratively to address those needs. We remain focused on safe and efficient training operations on campus. Our goals include the continuation of risk management, the successful completion of critical building upgrades, future expansion on campus that will address the user demands, and operational changes that meet new training regulations and standards. We look forward to working with the Governor's Administration and the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions to better understand the vision for the Criminal Justice and Fire Service Training Center. Our students are the future of the emergency service, and the training that they receive must prepare them to be able to perform their increasingly complex duties in a manner that Vermonters expect.