

**Sunset Advisory Commission  
Board and Commission Review  
Training Center Governance Committee 29 VSA § 841**

The Commission reviews every State board and commission and takes testimony regarding whether each board or commission should continue to operate or be eliminated and whether the powers and duties of any board or commission should be revised. Each board and commission has the burden of justifying its continued operation.

The Commission also reviews whether members of a board or commission should be entitled to a per diem and, if so, the amount of that per diem.

In testifying before the Commission, you should be able to provide the following information:

1. In general, how often does the board and commission meet?

**Answer:** The committee is legislatively mandated, and we make every attempt to meet quarterly however, during the COVID Pandemic the individual members were heavily engaged in support operations within their respective areas of discipline resulting in a more fragmented meeting schedule than we would have preferred.

Provide specific information on how often the board or commission has met in the past two fiscal years.

Answer: The Committee met 4 times in 2020: (1-30-2020, 09-14-2020, 12-17-2020 and 12-31-2020) and in 2021: 07-30-2021, 09-29-2021 with a meeting scheduled for December 2021. Provide information on where agendas and minutes of meetings can be found. Minutes will be posted in a new web page location housed in Fire Safety and all meetings will be warned accordingly.

2. Provide the names of members of the board or commission, their term length and expiration, their appointing authority, and the amount of any per diem they receive.

**Answer:** The membership of the Committee does not receive per diem nor is there a specific State funding source for reimbursement. Members are reimbursed through their respective employers. The membership is as follows.

Michael Desrochers, Executive Director, Division of Fire Safety (Commissioner Schirling)

Peter Lynch, Chief of Fire Service Training (Commissioner Schirling)

Chris Corbin, Chair Fire Service Training Council

William Sorrell, Chair Vermont Criminal Justice Council

Heather Simons, Executive Director, Vermont Criminal Justice Council

Kevin Lane, Captain Vermont State Police (Commissioner Schirling)

Kevin Henderson, BGS (Commissioner Fitch)

Corrections: Vacant

3. Provide an overview of the board or commission's purpose.

**Answer:** The Vermont Legislature created the Training Center Governance Committee to provide a single voice to the Legislature regarding the following matters.

- **Access and Use of the Training Facility:** Previously there were conflicts between users primarily between (law enforcement and fire service). With limited dorm space, limited training room space, small cafeteria and a large demand for the facility there were some scheduling conflicts which could not be avoided. This created tension between the users, and something had to be done to resolve this. The Governance Committee meets to discuss access and use of the facility to eliminate conflicts, promote effective communication, work collaboratively as a single group to resolve conflicts and provide fair and impartial resolution to matters. The Committee has resolved access and use conflicts but, there is still a lot of work to be accomplished to move forward on other program initiatives.
- **Capital Construction Projects:** The Governance Committee is responsible for submitting Capital Construction projects. Last year we received \$50,000 for an engineering study to evaluate the shooting range roof which has been leaking causing an ice buildup on the shooting range pad (2) to complete a need assessment study to determine future use of the West Cottage and Main Training Center Building to ensure money spent addresses safety, environmental health and provides a modern learning environment for students.
- **Contracts:** To review contracts between different facility users to determine the most cost effective and efficient way of operating the campus.

4. Is that purpose still needed? What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?

**Answer:** We are at a pivotal point ensuring we provide students and users of the facility a safe and healthy learning environment. Additionally, we are missing many opportunities to encourage training, increase facility usage, enhance training, bring efficiency to programs by reducing redundancy in program delivery and most importantly recognizing what training will look like in the future. The Main Building, West Cottage and Gymnasium are in real need of upgraded.

- **Main Building/West Cottage:** There is virtually no air-conditioning, heating system deficiencies, electrical wiring needing upgrade, structural problems and an overall lack of training classroom space.
- **Accomplishments:** It is essential and critical the committee continue the work toward a comprehensive plan representing all potential users and addresses our existing and future training needs. During the committee tenure we have obtained funding for the complete renovation of the East Cottage Dorm providing 24 sleeping beds. This allows swing space for future renovations of the Main Building and West Cottage. We have acquired a new state of the art live fire burn building, created a consistent method of reporting campus training injuries and most importantly we have brought all facility users together to enhance the overall day to day operations of the facility.

- Working collaboratively, we have been able to share fire academy training space with many other groups and we have been able to share police academy space for fire service needs.

What would happen if the board or commission no longer fulfilled that purpose?

**Answer:** We would be unable to secure any capital funds to address the multitude of facility safety deficiencies or coordinate access and use of the training facility. We would experience major issues with scheduling events, training, conferences, providing sleeping accommodations, coordinating special events and much more. Users of the facility would work in their individual silos causing significant inefficiencies in program delivery and the legislature would have no single voice representing the critical needs of Vermont's only training center complex. It should also be noted the training facility is used by the general public and the community and we have an outstanding relationship with the Town of Pittsford.

How well is the board or commission performing in executing that purpose?

**Answer:** The Committee is performing well however, with COVID we continue to be challenged with access and use ensuring we protect our emergency responders. Below are frequent users of the facility.

- Law Enforcement
- Fire Fighters
- Correction Officers
- Urban Search and Rescue
- Haz Mat Response Team

5. If the purpose is still needed, can State government be more effective and efficient if the purpose was executed in a different manner?

**Answer:** The purpose is still needed although we recognize we can be more effective and efficient.

- Administrative support: Currently we do not have administrative support (meeting minutes, scheduling, document management and communication). Fire Safety is working to create a web page for the Governance Committee and will provide some admin support moving forward.
- Although participation of members is strong, we will need to solicit more participation from non-committee members as we maneuver through future capital construction proposals. Discussions on how best to submit capital construction bills will be a priority in 2022.
- Although the Governance Committee is **not** responsible for training there is a nexus between access and use and training when it comes to the COVID Pandemic. In 2022 we will need to be very aware of safety and health for our emergency responders.

6. If the purpose is still needed, do any of your board or commission's functions overlap or duplicate those of another State board or commission or federal or State agency? If so, is your board or commission still the best entity to fulfill the purpose?

**Answer:** There is no overlap with other committees we have a very specific charge to govern access and use of the facility, manage capital construction bills, contract review and establish fees when applicable. The membership involves those stakeholder groups who are decision makers and understand the complexity of the facility. The Safety Sub-Committee created by the legislature reports to the Training Center Governance Committee. The Governance Committee is the best entity to fulfill the purpose.

7. Does the board or commission's enabling law continue to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the board or commission?

**Answer:** The enabling law continues to correctly reflect the purpose and activities of the committee, Throughout the pandemic access and use has been a critical component to our work ensuring we provided a safe and healthy environment for our instructors, staff and students.

8. Provide a list of the board and commission's last fiscal year expenditures including staffing costs. How are these funded?

**Answer:** The Training Center Governance Committee does not have a budget. Expense reimbursements are handed by each member's respective employer.

9. Is the board or commission required by law to prepare any reports or studies for the Legislature, the Governor, or any State agency or officer? If so, have those reports or studies been produced? Does the board or commission have ongoing reporting obligations?

**Answer:** The Training Center Governance Committee shall review and consider the recommendations made by the Safety Subcommittee

- Annually, on or before January 15, the Governance Committee shall report to the General Assembly regarding:
- Any training safety issues it has discovered at the Training Center and any steps it has taken to remedy those issues; and
- Whether the Governance Committee has instituted any of the Subcommittee's recommendations for training safety and if not, the reasons therefor.

**End**