

Fire Apparatus Assessment Committee Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2025 at 6:00PM
Zoom Teleconference

Attendees:

Eric Balles

James Catacchio

Scott Jamison

Travis Snell

Scott Triola

Brian Duggan (MRI)

Michael McQuillen (MRI)

Matt Salad (Tecton)

I. Review and Approve Minutes

- June 30, 2025 draft minutes were not yet available for review and approval.

II. MRI Update

Michael McQuillen provided a debrief of his Carlisle Fire Station site visit:

- Tour included apparatus bays, equipment storage areas, and outside facilities.
- McQuillen noted the facility's space constraints, outside storage use, and the unique rural nature of Carlisle's fire response. He acknowledged the need for a new facility.
- McQuillen indicated the Department has a healthy on-call roster and good turnout for fire calls.
- He reviewed operational use of each apparatus, emphasizing the department's heavy reliance on tankers due to the rural nature of Carlisle's water supply.
- He noted that Carlisle's surrounding departments do not always understand or practice rural water supply operations, but suggested expanding automatic aid agreements.
- McQuillen noted that many vehicles are reaching the end of NFPA's recommended 20-year lifespan. New fire apparatus are increasingly expensive and feature advanced safety technologies that older trucks lack.
- Recommended reviewing ISO scoring matrix, which reflects department capabilities in training, water flow, maintenance, and certification.

III. Member Updates

- Triola discussed a preliminary long-term apparatus replacement plan (based on info previously provided by Chief Sorrows – see FAAC 6-16-25 minutes) which extended through 2045. He highlighted the high apparatus replacement costs over the next 10-15 years and expressed concerns about funding this plan given potential planned DPW and Fire Station building projects.
- McQuillen discussed the increasing cost and complexity of maintaining modern fire apparatus and estimated annual maintenance costs to be 3–5% of vehicle value. He also noted that in-house repairs may void warranties due to integrated computer systems.

- Duggan clarified the distinction between mutual aid (requested as needed) and automatic aid (pre-programmed with immediate response). He stated automatic aid could provide support for ladder and tanker response, but noted there were fewer tankers in neighboring towns. Career department's quick response time relative to on-call mobilization can offset the greater distance needed to travel and/or delay in initial mutual aid request.
- Duggan noted Carlisle maintains a larger fleet than most similar towns and that 73% of similar-sized departments lack an aerial ladder truck. Carlisle's fleet is well-maintained but potentially oversized compared to peers. Duggan commented that the Committee should consider desired service level and cost tolerance going forward.
- Snell raised concerns that reducing apparatus may harm department morale and retention. He expressed concern for the potential of a downward spiral where reduced apparatus leads to a decline in performance, which in turn leads to on-call attrition and ultimately the need to transition to a career department. Duggan responded that department culture and apparatus safety matter more than fleet size. Duggan also commented that abrupt changes or the introduction of automatic aid with career departments could disrupt internal cohesion and relationships, especially if not well integrated.
- MRI asked how to consider the Antique Engines. Triola responded that they had community and historic value, but did not play an active role in fire response and their storage should not be built into the station renovation size or cost (~900 sq ft total). Other storage solutions could be pursued including alternate funding for the Antiques and/or storage at another suitable location in Town. Other committee members expressed support for this position.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM. (Motion made and approved 5-0)

These minutes include all motions made and votes taken during this meeting.

Minutes approved on July 18, 2025 (5-0).