

**National Honor Guard Commanders Association
Teleconference Meeting
January 30, 2006**

On January 30, 2006 at 1900 EST interested Honor Guard representatives from across the country came together on a conference call. The purpose of the meeting was to begin the process of formally organizing a group of individuals experienced in running Honor Guards so as to network with each other. The following were in attendance in whole or in part: *(please fell free to help me with the blanks or any corrections)*

Eric Nagle	NFFF
Mark Flaniker	Hobart, Indiana
Troy Gray	
Jim Forgo	
Joey Reed	LA County, CA
Dickey Fortner	Conway, AK
James McLoughlin	Hartford, CT
Tim Wren	Troy, MI
Dave Hathaway	Philadelphia, PA
Doug Swartz	Clearwater, FL
Boyd Teddy	Baton Rouge, LA
Hal Grout	East Hartford, CT
Dan Gosnell	US Forest Service
Tim Webster	Roanoke County, VA
Brian Roberts	
Mike Fold	Baltimore County, MD
Earl Lincoln	
James Williams	West Hartford, CT
Gary Gaffney	Houston, TX
Carlton Bradley	Augusta, GA
Jim Byrd	National Honor Guard Academy
Keith Patterson	Illinois
Bill Weed	St. Paul, MN

James McLoughlin from Hartford, CT established the agenda, as the formation of this group was his idea. The teleconference was sponsored by the NFFF. Through their support this conversation of key honor guard personnel was possible. The meeting began with a general introduction by Eric Nagle, representing the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation at 1905 EST.

Agenda

Naming the Organization

Two recommendations were presented. The first was the National Association of Honor Guard Commanders. The second name presented was the National Honor Guard Commanders Association. A roll call vote was taken. By a 12 – 4 count (not everyone voted or was on-line at the time) the name accepted by majority was the National Honor Guard Commanders Association (NHGCA).

As such, Dickey Fortner has agreed to develop a few logos and a flyer for the group to be presented for adoption

Mission Statement

James McLoughlin read a mission statement. The statement was agreed by all to be a bit lengthy. It was agreed to streamline (Swartz) the mission statement and include some of the goals (Fortner) of the association. The general idea was this, “the purpose of the National Honor Guard Commanders Association is to share information and experiences with each other to make us stronger leaders and more knowledgeable as unit commanders. By networking and sharing ideas we can face the challenges of running an organization and keeping membership working together so as to honor our fallen brothers and sisters.”

Points made during the discussion of the mission statement included adding a creed or an oath (Patterson), specific goals (Fortner), and a partnership with the NFFF (Hathaway) and the addition of honor guard participation in the Taking Care of Our Own program (Nagle).

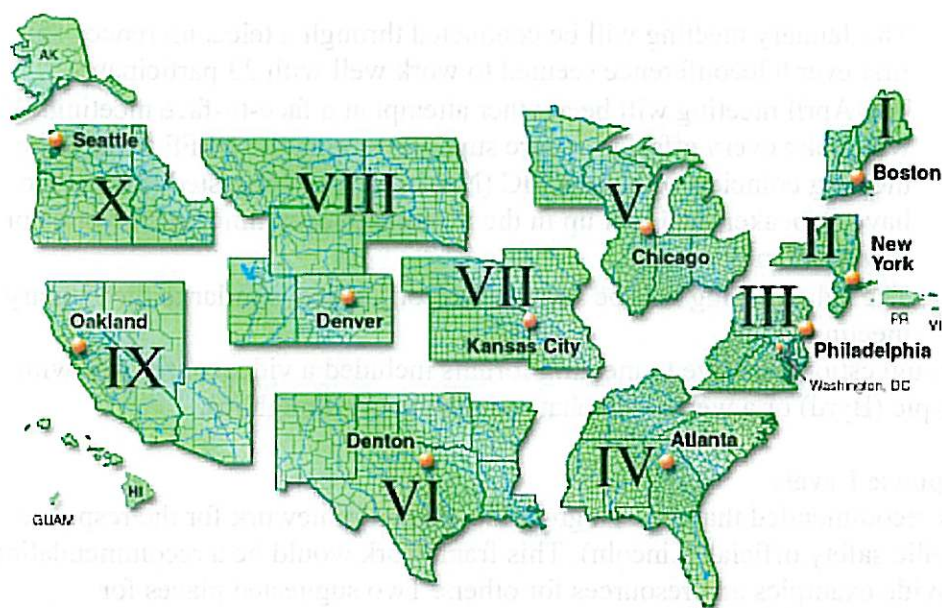
A streamlined mission statement with the aforementioned points will be worked on by James Williams and be re-presented to the group for adoption.

Organizational Structure

There were three presentations for the type of organizational structure we would take on as a group. The first presented structure was Commander, Vice-Commander, and Regional Commanders. The second was President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive Staff (8-10 regional directors). Finally the last structure presented was the Board of Directors, with a Director, Deputy Director and Area Coordinators. A roll call vote was taken. The results were as follows:

- #1=7
- #2=3
- #3=13

As such the Association will take on a Board of Directors type of organizational structure. Jim Byrd has offered to develop the definitions and the roles and responsibilities of the positions within the organization. It was also recommended that we adopt the FEMA areas (Fold) as a basis of dividing up the country into manageable sectors. (see below) In addition the issue of by-laws were mentioned (Reed). Draft presentations will be forwarded out to the interested members of this association.



Membership Definitions

Two main topics came up when it came to defining the membership of the group. The first was whether the group should be limited to fire service personnel. The second point was could honor guard personnel that were not Commanders join as an associate member.

The first point of discussion resulted in being inclusive of Honor Guard Commanders irrespective of their public safety affiliation (Swartz, Nagle). Although we are primarily comprised of fire service personnel at this point, we could all benefit from the experiences of an honor guard commander from another discipline.

The second point of discussion opened up the membership of the association to Honor Guard Commanders, Vice-Commanders (or equivalent) and past, former or retired Honor Guard Commanders (Gaffney, Fortner).

Jim Byrd agreed to incorporate the definitions within the organizational structure section. Items inadvertently left out of discussion were how to handle internal conflicts and voting vs. appointments.

Meeting Frequency and Forum

The frequency and the forums in which we meet were discussed with the following resolutions:

- The Annual meeting of the group would be a face-to-face meeting and would get tied into the annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend. The plan is to conduct the annual meeting on the Friday before the weekend begins from 1300-1700. Logistical issues were raised with respect to security and we will attempt to address these issues prior to the meeting. If we cannot, there's an offer (Gosnell) to have our meeting off site at a hotel.

- The January meeting will be conducted through a teleconference. This first ever teleconference seemed to work well with 23 participants.
- The April meeting will be another attempt at a face-to-face meeting. We will make every effort to secure support through the NFFF to have the meeting coincide with the FDIC (Nagle). It was suggested (Swartz) to have a speakerphone set up in the meeting to accommodate anyone not able to attend.
- The July meeting will be another teleconference, similar to the January meeting.

Other suggestions relative to meeting forums included a videoconference with pic-in-pic (Byrd) or a web based chat room style (McLoughlin).

Funeral Response Levels

It was recommended that we as a group develop a framework for the response levels of a public safety official (Lincoln). This framework would be a recommendation! We could provide examples and resources for others. Two suggested places for information mentioned were the NFFF web site and the publication "Lead with your Left", by Jay Bishop from Illinois. Developing a standard (Fold) was suggested as well. Doug Swartz has agreed to draft a recommendation that the group could support.

Education / Training

It was suggested that an Honor Guard course be offered at the NFA. While that's a great idea, the association was started for us to network and share ideas to become stronger, more effective leaders. With that in mind, we began to share experiences as to where we might train and educate our people.

Doug Swartz talked about a conversation he had with Cathy Hedrick from the NFFF regarding adding an Honor Guard component to the Taking Care of Our Own program. Everyone on the conference call that had attended the TCOO program had high praises for the daylong program and welcomed an opportunity to assist in adding the HG component.

The National Fire & Public Safety Honor Guard Academy with its 23 modules was mentioned as an opportunity to train honor guard personnel. Jim Byrd gave a very brief synopsis of what the program might offer. Anyone interested is asked to contact him. (jibcommandant@aol.com)

The Goshen, Indiana Police offer an Honor Guard Camp. There was mention of a member on line having registered for the camp and was looking for feedback. Additional information can be found at www.honorguardtraining.com.

Jay Bishop's book, "Lead with your Left" was also mentioned as an excellent fire service reference for honor guards looking for what to do and how to do it.

Annual Memorial Service

Emmitsburg

The NFFF is planning to have a Memorial Weekend Honor Guard Commander at the annual ceremony assigned on a rotational basis. The formation of our group would be an excellent place for the NFFF to draw from with respect to providing a pool of interested, experienced, Honor Guard Commanders.

Colorado

The IAFF memorial weekend is made up of strictly union firefighters. Keith Patterson offered to contact Jay Bishop, who runs the Honor Guard element for the IAFF, to see if there is any potential for our group to help, assist, or just learn.

Web Page

The development of a web page would offer us an opportunity to share our mission statement, organizational structure, recommendations, email contacts, exchange information, bulletin boards, etc. Once developed; we could be linked through the NFFF as well as the i-Chiefs.

Dave Hathaway, Joey Reed and Earl Lincoln have agreed to form a committee for the development of a web page and will report back to us for approval.

Funding

Should we become a 501-c (3) organization? Keeping in mind our mission statement, it was suggested that before going that route, we would attempt to seek financial support through the National Funeral Home Directors Association, the i-Chiefs (volunteer sector), Airlines, Firehouse, Fire Engineering and major hotels. Other potential contacts would be: Insurance Companies, American Legion Posts, VFW's, and Elks Clubs. Rather than get into having money, we would try to gain support from these organizations in order to pay for the transport and lodging for requested members of the NHGCA. McLoughlin agreed to develop a letter and or presentation for the aforementioned groups.

Other

Jim Byrd mentioned the number of great ideas that had been brought up and that we should all take a little time to reflect on everything mentioned.

Doug Swartz thanked McLoughlin for putting together the teleconference. McLoughlin thanked the NFFF for supporting our efforts to get this group organized.

Adjournment

2140 hours EST

