



Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas Constitution and By-Laws

Article I – Name of Association

Section 1: This association shall be known as the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas.

Section 1.1: The definition of a firefighter as it is used in this association shall pertain to either male or female members or retired member of any organized fire department.

Article II – Purpose

Section 1: The purposes for which this association is formed are charitable, benevolent and non-profit, to gather and pass on knowledge and skills for the benefit of each member department in this district.

Article III – Membership

Section 1: The various classifications of membership in this association shall consist of Active, Sustaining, Life, Honorary Life, Honorary, Retirees and International.

Section 2: Active membership shall consist of regularly organized fire departments of the District, whether civilian, military, or industrial, the regularly appointed or duly elected Fire Marshals, or any city, town, county, state, federal or political subdivision of this district and rescue organizations all of which now exist or are hereafter formed or created and which are recognized.

Section 3: Sustaining members shall be limited to the manufacturers, jobbers, distributors and/or sales personnel of fire apparatus, equipment and accessories and companies having a genuine interest in the betterment of the fire service of Texas. Membership under this classification is available when qualified as provided in the by-laws of this association.

Section 4: Life membership may be given by this association in the same manner as outlined under Section (4) except that those eligible for such membership shall have given outstanding service, for at least ten (10) years, either to this association or the State Firemen and Fire Marshal's Association of Texas. Life membership shall be extended to all Past Presidents of this association.

Section 5: Honorary Life membership shall be granted to such persons whom the association wishes to honor in recognition for distinguished, meritorious, or long, faithful

service to this association and who are or have been active members of a member department of this association. Election to honorary life membership under this section shall be subject to the provisions of the bylaws of this association. They shall be qualified to vote only, provided they are otherwise qualified under the provision of this constitution and bylaws.

Section 6: Honorary membership may be given by a majority vote of this association, a quorum being present, at any regular or special meeting after name presented for such membership has been received and approved by the Executive Board. Anyone representing and giving outstanding service to firefighting in general may be considered eligible for such membership.

Section 7: The Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas does not recognize Individual Membership.

Section 8: International members, which memberships may be applied for by Fire and Rescue organizations or associations of the Republic of Mexico, located within a distance of not more than twenty-five (25) miles South of the International Border, separating the United States of America from the Republic of Mexico, in Cameron, Hidalgo, Starr and Zapata counties in the State of Texas.

Section 9: There shall be no dues for Retirees, Life, Honorary and Honorary Life membership and no assessments made. They shall be welcomed at any business, special meeting, or affair of this association, subject to the same regulations of active voting members, except the privilege of voting, dues and assessments. Any Retiree who is a Past President of this association will have voting rights. If any charges are made, as for food or other entertainment at any regular, special, or social meeting affair, the non-voting members as classified herein, will be subject to the same regulations as the active voting members of this association.

Article IV – Officers

Section 1: The elected officers of this association shall consist of a President, a First, Second, Third, Fourth Vice President and Chaplain.

Section 1.1: Each elected officer of this association shall be from the active membership of recognized active/retired member fire department of the "Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association of this District and the State Firemen and Fire Marshal's Association of Texas". No two (2) people from the same department can hold an elected office as long as there is a member still on the board of the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association. Any elected/appointed officer who holds any office in the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association must be an active/retired member of a fire department who is an active member of the

State Firemen and Fire Marshal's Association of Texas. If not an individual member of the SFFMA, he/she must become an individual member by the next regular business meeting.

Section 2: The election of officers shall be held at the April meeting of this association, and shall hold their respective offices until their successors shall be elected and qualified. Their duties shall be such as are defined by the by-laws of this Association.

Section 3: There shall also be an established Chief's Cabinet, which cabinet will act in an advisory capacity to the Executive Board in the settlement of any questions, but the Executive Board will be guided in their decision affecting the association generally by what the majority vote of the Chief's Cabinet might indicate to be a more general consensus of opinion affecting the proposed decision of said Executive Board.

Section 4: The Chief's Cabinet shall be composed of the active Chiefs of each member department, or in his absence he empowers one of his Assistant Chief's or any other officer of his respective department to represent him and all Past District Presidents who are still active in their respective departments or the District. The Past District Presidents shall not be entitled to appoint a representative.

Section 5: The Executive Board shall be composed of the President, First, Second, Third and Fourth Vice President, the Treasurer, Secretary, Historian, Chaplain, Training Coordinator, Mascot and the Immediate Past President.

Section 6: The Secretary, Historian, Treasurer, Sergeant at Arms, and Mascot shall be appointed by the President with no voting privileges. The Training Coordinator shall be appointed by the President with voting privileges.

Section 7: All elected members of the Executive Board will have a vote as a member of the board.

Section 8: All elected officers must be elected from the voting membership at large.

Section 9: The Mascot shall be between the ages of five (5) and fourteen (14) years of age and will be appointed by the President.

Article V - Election of Officers

Section 1: No city shall be allowed to vote on any matter unless their dues are paid by the April District Meeting.

Section 2: All election of officers held by this association shall be by ballot, a majority vote deciding, with the exception that if only one candidate is nominated for a respective office, then this section may be suspended by majority vote of the voting members

present, at any such election meeting, and the officers so solely nominated, may be elected by acclamation.

Section 3: If more than two (2) candidates are nominated for any one office and the count of the ballots does not show a majority vote for any particular candidate, the two (2) receiving the highest number of votes will be again voted on, the other being dropped, and the one receiving the majority of the votes in the second ballot will be declared elected to the office.

Section 4: In case of the necessity of a ballot, due to more than one candidate having been nominated for that respective office, the District President will appoint not less than three (3) tellers for the election who will distribute and collect the ballots, and count the votes and hand the results of said count to the District President, who will then announce the name of the candidate elected, or the necessity of a second ballot.

Section 5: The 4th Vice President shall be elected at each April Meeting of this association. The 4th Vice President must have a minimum of 5 years in the fire service and must be an active member of a fire department who is an active member of the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association and State Firemen and Fire Marshal's Association. If not an individual member of the SFFMA, he/she must become an individual member by the next regular business meeting. Also, the nomination form must be signed by the Fire Chief of the department or department head. If nominated from the floor the Fire Chief of the department must be present to sign off on nomination form.

Section 6: Should any officer resign or be removed from office all officers shall be elevated; and vacancy must be filled at the next regular district meeting of this association. If any officer passes away while in office that position shall not be filled until the April District Meeting.

Article VI - Amendment

Section 1: Any amendment to the constitution of this association must be prepared in writing and submitted to the Executive Board by the January District Meeting for study and upon their approval shall be submitted to the District for final action at the April District Meeting. The constitution of this association may be amended at any District Meeting by three fourth of present member delegate.

Article VII - District Meetings

Section 1: All district meetings shall be held quarterly each year.

Section 2: Meetings will be held in April, July, and October and will be held on the (2nd) second Sunday of the month. The January meeting will be held on the (3rd) third Sunday

of the month. Unless approved by the Executive Board these dates may not be changed.

Section 2.1: Meetings in July, October and January will start at 10:00 a.m. The April meeting will start at 9:00 a.m. All meetings will break at 12:00 noon for lunch and reconvene after lunch if needed.

Section 2.2: Action items must be submitted by email or mailed to the District Secretary; one week prior to the District Meeting to be included on the agenda. Action items submitted will be limited to 10 minutes for presentations. Any item not on the agenda or guests speakers will be limited to 5 minutes for presentations.

Section 2.3: Any individual addressing the board shall approach the podium and state their name, department and order of business.

Section 3: The April meeting will also honor those who have departed at a Memorial Service and a Memorial Committee Resolution will be submitted and placed in the minutes of the meeting. A Maltese cross will be setup in front at the Memorial Services.

Section 3.1: The following shall be the colors of the flowers to be placed on the memorial wreath:

White – Firefighter

Maroon – Past President of RGVFFMA

Blue – SFFMA Staff/Presidents

Pink – Auxiliary Member

Red – Line of Duty Death

Red/White/Blue – Military Personnel

Yellow – Explorers/Mascot

Article VIII - Duties of Officers

Section 1: The District President shall be the executive officer of this association and shall preside at all meetings of this association and shall appoint all committees not herein provided for and shall perform all duties usually incumbent upon and shall possess the power usually exercised by presiding officers deliberative bodies.

Section 2: The Vice Presidents shall in their respective order, act in the absence of or in case of the resignation or death, or other disqualification of the District President and

when so acting shall be vested with the powers and obligations to perform the duties imposed upon the District President.

Section 2.1: The 1st Vice President shall act in the absence of or in case of the resignation or death, or other disqualification of the District President and when so acting shall be vested with the powers and obligations to perform the duties imposed upon the District President. The 1st Vice President is responsible to organize a fundraiser for the district. The fundraiser needs to be advertised and mailed and/or emailed to all departments one month in advance. This event shall take place prior to the April meeting of the following year and all items for this event must be complete and ready to proceed two months prior to the event.

Section 2.2: The 2nd Vice President shall assist the 1st Vice President and will act in the absence of the President if the 1st Vice President is absent or take the chair at the wish of the President when that officer is attending to other duties. The 2nd Vice President is responsible for the Memorial Services during the April District Meeting. The 2nd Vice President shall develop a Memorial Service Program for the meeting and will ensure that all items are purchased two weeks prior to the meeting. Names of the fallen firefighters need to be submitted one month prior to the meeting to ensure that they are included in the program.

Section 2.3: The 3rd Vice President shall assist the 2nd Vice President and will act in the absence of the President if the 2nd Vice President is absent or take the chair at the wish of the President when that officer is attending to other duties. The 3rd Vice President is responsible for the Firefighter and EMS of the Year Award which takes place during the April District Meeting. The 3rd Vice President shall appoint a committee and a deadline for applications to be submitted to the District Secretary. The 3rd Vice President shall ensure that the committee meets a month in advance to determine who the recipients shall be. This individual shall also develop a speech for the presentation. All items to be presented to the Firefighter and EMS of the Year must be purchased two weeks prior to the meeting.

Section 2.4: The 4th Vice President shall assist the 3rd Vice President and will act in the absence of the President if the 3rd Vice President is absent or take the chair at the wish of the President when that officer is attending to other duties. The 4th Vice President is responsible for activities at the end of each District Meeting. Activities may or may not be held in the month of January. The 4th Vice President shall ensure that all trophies, medals and ribbons are purchased two weeks prior to the District Meeting. The 4th Vice President shall ensure that all trophies, etc. need to be issued to the teams/individuals that won. The 4th Vice President is responsible for the Nominating Committee during elections at the April District Meeting. He/she shall appoint a committee at the January

District Meeting and ensure that all nomination forms are submitted two weeks prior to the April District Meeting.

Section 3: The Secretary shall keep a correct and accurate record of all of the proceedings and the minutes of this association; shall receive and reply to all communications addressed to the association and shall do and perform such other duties as may be, from time to time, imposed upon the secretary by the District President or the Executive Board. The secretary must attend all meetings requiring minutes. The secretary shall see that the mail is sent out promptly after each meeting.

Section 4: The Treasurer, shall receive all receipts for all monies due to or belonging to the association, shall promptly pay the same; shall make quarterly reports in writing as to the financial condition of this association; shall be the custodian of all funds of this association to be kept in some bank selected by the Executive Board and Finance Committee, but kept in an account in the name of the association to be withdrawn by check or warrant signed by said Treasurer or Training Coordinator before delivery and shall do and perform such other duties as may be imposed by the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall furnish Surety Bond of some recognized Surety Company authorized to transact business in the State of Texas, in the penal sum of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000), conditioned that said Treasurer shall, will and truly keep a true account render of all monies, chattels, goods or other things of value coming to his/her possession as the property of said association or paid out by authority thereof; the cost of such BOND, shall be paid from the funds of said association and said BOND shall be approved by the District President of the Association and filed with the Secretary of this Association for safe keeping.

Section 5: The Chaplain shall direct this association in its duty and obligation DEITY.

Section 6: The Historian shall prepare and offer for publications as authentic a history of this association, as possible to obtain, and Historian shall attempt to keep the same up to date, from year to year. Historian shall be responsible for the accuracy of the reports of all meetings and proceedings of this association that may be rendered for publicity by the Historian or by the Secretary. Historian shall see that proper and necessary publicity is given to obtain desirable public relations; Historian shall act as the Chief Parliamentarian of this Association.

Section 7: The Training Coordinator shall be responsible for all training and ensure that all materials are purchased for each course being held two weeks prior to the training being conducted.

Section 8: The Sergeant At Arms responsibility is to enforce the by-laws and rules of this association and shall also maintain order at all meetings.

Section 9: The Mascot shall be the “good omen” of this association and should be invited to attend every business meeting of this association and should be supervised and instructed by the department from the member city from which he/she was appointed.

Section 10: If any elected/appointed officer on the board misses’ two consecutive meetings; they shall be brought up in front of the Executive Board to discuss his/her absences and determine course of action.

Article IX - Expenditure of Funds

Section 1: No expense shall be incurred exceeding \$150 and no monies paid out by the Treasurer unless authority therefore obtained from the Executive Board or from VOTING MEMBERSHIP of this association, by majority vote, a quorum being present at any regular meeting or special meeting, provided that no expense shall be authorized or incurred, either by the Executive Board or the VOTING MEMBERSHIP until the Treasurer has reported an amount on hand sufficient to cover such proposed expense or expenses or expenditure. In the expenditures of monies, all current bills and obligations shall be given preference.

Section 2: The President of the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter’s and Fire Marshals’ Association shall be the ambassador at the State Firemen and Fire Marshal’s Association Conference as a delegate to the conference for the District.

Section 2.1: The Training Coordinator shall also represent the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter’s and Fire Marshals’ Association at the meeting of the Training Coordinator at the State Conference and meeting which are called by the State Executive Board for these coordinators.

Section 2.2: Funds for the District President and the District Training Coordinator to attend meetings of the State Firemen and Fire Marshals’ Association will be funded by the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter’s and Fire Marshals’ Association if these funds are available in the district budget. These expenses are to be approved by the Executive Board.

Section 2.3: Funds for the District President and District Training Coordinator shall not be paid by the District if being sent to the State Conference by their individual department.

Section 2.4: If the District President or the District Coordinator of the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter’s and Fire Marshals’ Association cannot attend the State Conference the Vice Presidents in sequential order should go in place of the President and if the District

Coordinator cannot attend, a coordinator will be selected by the Executive Board to attend these meetings.

Section 2.5: Reimbursements for mileage will be paid out at state rate from city limit to city limit and host hotel rate.

Article X - Membership Dues

Section 1: Each regularly organized fire department shall be required to pay the association annual dues, an annual due of one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125) as herein provided. Every city will have five (5) votes if members are present.

Section 2: Sustaining members of the Rio Grande Valley Firefighter's and Fire Marshals' Association which include manufacturers, jobbers, distributors and/or sales personnel of fire apparatus equipment and accessories may obtain sustaining membership in this association upon payment of one hundred twenty-five dollars (\$125) annual dues.

Section 3: International membership shall have no voting privileges.

Article XI - Quorum

Section 1: A quorum for the transaction of business in this association, at any regular or special meeting shall not be less than twelve (12) member departments and their VOTING MEMBERS of the association member departments present. All Past Presidents in attendance will be counted individually to establish a quorum.

Section 2: A quorum for the transaction of business, at any regular or special meeting of the Executive Board of this association, shall be defined as not less than four (4) of the seven (7) voting members composing such board, one (1) of the said four (4) necessary for such quorum must be the District President, or in his absence one of the four (4) District Vice Presidents in order of command.

Section 3: A quorum necessary for committee, exceeding two (2) members, to transact business to come before it, shall be a majority of the members of the committee meeting.

Article XII - Fiscal Year

Section 1: The fiscal year of this association shall begin and close with the election of officers in April of each and every year.

Section 2: At the last quarterly meeting of this association which proceeds the closing of fiscal year (i.e., the January meeting) the District President shall appoint an auditing committee to consist of three (3) members who shall audit the receipts at the next

regular quarterly meeting (i.e., the April Annual Meeting). The outgoing officers and standing committees of this association will also make their final reports at the annual meeting in April.

Section 3: At the third quarterly meeting (January meeting) of this association the District President shall appoint a nominating committee to be chaired by the 3rd Vice President and consist of three (3) members, this committee is to nominate a slate of officers for the following year, this report shall be read at the April meeting of this association.

Section 4: The elective and appointive officers and all standing committees of this association shall take their respective offices and places on their respective committees, as soon as the election officers and appointment of committees have been completed and the officers and committees installed.

Section 5: Dues of this association shall be paid by the April District Meeting of each year.

Section 6: Dues not paid by the April District Meeting, will cause the department to not be able to vote on any matter brought before the District until dues are paid in full.

Section 7: Any department not paying dues by the April District Meeting will be charged a higher fee for all district training. These fees to be set by the Executive Board depending on type of class until dues are paid in full.

Article XIII - Selection of meeting place

Section 1: The selection of holding a quarterly meeting shall be in alphabetical order of cities in the district. The District President will obtain a yearly calendar and obtain a commitment from the cities at the April District Meeting for the year. Should the host city not be able to host, it is the responsibility of the host city to notify the Executive Board in advance, so that they can obtain a commitment from another city.

Section 2: Should a city drawing the April meeting be located in either extreme end boundaries of this association, they should agreeably exchange meeting dates with one of the more centrally located cities since this is election date.

Section 3: There shall be and is hereby levied on each and every individual member of this association whether a voting or non-voting member, spouse, or child a meal fee in the sum of up to \$10.00 for each individual attending a regular meeting. This meal fee is to be paid to the host city. The host city will pay for its guests and any guests of the District will be paid by the District with approval of the Executive Board. Vendors will pay for their meal fee unless approved by the Executive Board. All member departments will pay for the count they submit to attend.

Section 4: Registration for the District Meeting shall be made to the District Secretary (either by email, phone, or by the link provided) notifying her of the number of people that will be in attendance at the upcoming meeting. She in turn will notify the host city with ample time to prepare for the meal.

Section 5: All reservations made shall be paid for, whether the member making such reservations attends the meeting or not. Payment for the meal fee for such reservation should, if possible, accompany the reservation, but if not, then the payment of the reservations, in an equal amount of the total reservations made.

Article XIV - Burial Ritual

Section 1: This organization shall adopt and establish a burial ritual to be used at the death of a firefighter, if the family so requests, and it shall be a rule of this association that in case of the death of an active firefighter, proper steps shall be taken to see that he/she receives a Christian like or any other denomination burial and in no case shall a deceased active firefighter ever be permitted to be buried in a Pauper's Field.

Section 2: At the annual election of officers, each and every year a roll call shall be made of all members of this association who have died during the preceding year and a proper record thereof made upon the minutes of this association.

Article XV - Appeals and Grievances

Section 1: The Executive Board shall constitute a Board of Appeals to determine any questions submitted to them by any member, department, or any other person or group, holding membership in this association. The Board of Appeals shall consist of the Executive Board. Should an appeal or grievance be brought against the Board the Past Presidents of this association will determine the outcome.

Article XVI - Cooperative Effort

Section 1: It is hereby declared to be the rule of this association that all members and member department shall at any and at all times exert themselves to the utmost of their ability in the uplifting and betterment of civic and moral conditions of the community in which they live and for the protection of homes, businesses, and other property against FIRE or any disaster.

Article XVII - Amendments

Section 1: The majority amendment must be in writing and presented to the Executive Board for their study before being brought to the floor.

Section 2: The by-laws of this association may be amended at any district meeting by majority vote.

Article XVIII - Business Procedures

Section 1: The rules contained in “Robert’s Rules of Order Revised” shall govern this association in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not consistent with the by-laws or other special rules of order for this association.

Section 2: Unless otherwise changed or amended from time to time the regular order of business for meetings of this association shall be as follows:

- Call to Order
- Invocation by the District Chaplain, or in his absence, some other selected person
- Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Flag
- Welcome
- Response
- Roll call of departments giving the following information when their department name is called:
 - ❖ Number of Firefighters present
 - ❖ Number of Children present
 - ❖ Number of Spouses present
 - ❖ Number of Guest present (not representing a department)
- Approval of minutes of any previous regular, special, or Executive and Chief’s Cabinet Meeting
- Reports, if any from:
 - ❖ Executive Board
 - ❖ Standing Committees
 - ❖ Special Committees
 - ❖ Quarterly Report from the Treasurer
 - ❖ Training Coordinator
- Unfinished Business (3X)
- New Business (3X)
- Historian Report
- Announcements
- Benediction
- Report of Auditing Committee
- Elevation of Officers
- Election of Officers
- Installation of Officers
- Selection of next meeting place
- Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted by the By-Laws Committee:

Ruben Balboa, Chairperson
Frankie Joe Salinas, 1st Vice President
Eloy Salazar, 4th Vice President
Rene Lopez, Fire Chief
Herb Willich (Past President)
Mari Tovar, District Secretary

Harlingen Fire Department
Edinburg Fire Department
Pharr Fire Department
Mission Fire Department
RGVFFMA Chaplain
Edinburg Fire Department

Amendments: Updated – April 17, 2016 – Mari Tovar, District Secretary

Article V – Section 5 (Approved – April 13, 2003)
Article XIII – Section 3 (Approved – April 18, 2004)
Article IV – Section 1.1, 10 (Approved – October 14, 2004)
Article X – Section 1 (Approved – January 11, 2009)
Article XIII – Section 2 (Approved – January 11, 2009)
Article IV – Section 8 (Approved – July 12, 2009)
Article IV – Section 1.1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, (Approved – April 10, 2011)
Article VII – Section 3, 3.1 (Approved – April 10, 2011)
Article I – Section 1 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article II – Section 1 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article III – Section 1, 5, 7, 9 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article IV – Section 1, 1.1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article V – Section 1, 5, 6 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article VII – Section 2.2, 2.3 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article VIII – Section 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article IX – Section 1, 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article X – Section 1, 2, 3 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article XI – Section 1, 2 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article XII – Section 7 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article XIII - Section 1, 3, 4 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article XV – Section 1 (Approved – April 17, 2016)
Article XVIII – Section 2 (Approved – April 17, 2016)