



Neighborhood Association for Fire Safety (NAFS)

Minutes of the Fourth Meeting

Formerly convened as the Fire Safety Committee

Date: Wednesday, July 1, 2026

Called to order: Approx. 5:00 p.m. at 76 The Way, Buckingham County, Virginia

Present: Lynn, Haris, Mindy, Hanuman, Don, Doug, and Erik.

Notes: Erik, Secretary, AgniWellCare

Next meeting: **Wednesday, July 15, 2026, 5:00 p.m.** at 76 The Way

Learn more: agniwellcare.org/fire-safety

Comments or edits: manager@agniwellcare.com

Hello neighbors. These notes are shared openly so that everyone in our community, whether or not you were able to attend, can follow along and take part in the work ahead. Nothing here is a final decision; it is a record of what we discussed and the next steps we identified together. Where names of prospective captains appear, they are noted as possibilities only: every volunteer will be invited and must agree before any role is assigned.

1. Opening and Committee Name

The group gathered informally, welcomed several neighbors who stopped by, and opened with a brief meditation. Before setting the agenda, members revisited the question of our name. Recent emails had used both “Fire Safety Committee” and “NAFS” interchangeably, and the group reaffirmed that the official name is the Neighborhood Association for Fire Safety (NAFS). “Fire Safety Committee” remains an acceptable informal reference, but NAFS is the name we will carry on outreach materials and in correspondence with outside agencies.

Members agreed to establish a working agenda at the start of each meeting. For July 1, the agenda covered: a recap of the June 24 Department of Forestry visit; neighborhood captains and zones; the door hangers; outreach method and materials; coordination with the Ashram; the county burn ban; alerts and equipment; and setting the next meeting.

2. Recap — June 24 Visit with the Virginia Department of Forestry

For those who could not attend the June 24 site visit, Erik gave a brief recap of the conversation and driving tour with **Chad Stover** and **Michael Downey** of the Virginia Department of Forestry. A full seven-page summary is posted on the fire-safety website. The key points were:

- **Grant funding is available.** Organized communities like ours can apply for the Firewise Virginia Community Hazard Mitigation Grant — up to \$9,999 on an 80/20 match — for roadside fuel reduction, signage, and water-source improvements. It is a reimbursement program with continuous, non-competitive sign-up.
- **A UEI is needed to apply.** Applications require a free Unique Entity ID (UEI) through a federal government portal. AgniWellCare could apply for this to facilitate the grant. The grant also requires a wildfire risk assessment within the previous five years.
- **Our ponds and lake are assets.** A dry hydrant could be installed — for example, at the Lotus Lake — allowing a fire truck to draw water at no cost to the community.
- **Everbridge is our alert system.** Encouraging every household to register for Everbridge was named one of our top priorities and features prominently on the door hanger.
- **Evacuation authority.** In Virginia, only law enforcement can order a mandatory evacuation; agencies can strongly recommend one. This makes a rehearsed community plan all the more valuable.

Members noted that the specialists cautioned against overstating the risk: our area tends to see brush fires rather than the fast-moving crown fires common in the West. The group agreed that education should be framed honestly while still conveying that preparedness matters and that the unexpected can always happen.

3. Neighborhood Captains and Zones

The committee discussed the structure of neighborhood leadership and clarified terminology. Each street or zone will have a captain and, where the area is large, one or more co-captains. A single overall coordinator — informally referred to as the “fire chief” — would sit above the neighborhood captains. The role remains intentionally simple: outreach, contact-gathering, and welfare checks, not firefighting or rescue.

Consistent with prior meetings, the names below are recorded as possibilities only, pending each person’s agreement. Progress and prospects discussed included:

- **Unity Place.** Doug and Don continue to lead outreach for Unity Place, a large road (roughly 40–50 households, including a small trailer park near the corner). Because of its size, the group discussed having two co-captains. Don, with a military background, favored organizing the whole road under a single point of command, with additional helpers, rather than splitting it into many small groups.
 - **Lynn joins the effort.** Lynn attended for the first time and agreed to help, as a co-captain of Unity Place.
- **Karuna Lane.** Karuna Marcotte has agreed to serve as co-captain alongside Haris, the existing captain. Suggested additional names for that area included Surya and Avi.
- **The Way.** Erik, agreed to be a co-captain.
- **Coordinator (“fire chief”).** Don invited Haris, who is already coordinating much of this work, to consider serving as the overall coordinator. She asked for the weekend to consider it.
- **Other Possibilities:** Jairam, who has EMT and rescue experience, was also named as a possible coordinator or co-captain.
- **Zones five and beyond.** Names raised for outreach and possible captaincy across the remaining zones – names will be redacted here for privacy.

Members agreed that we do not need every captain in place before beginning outreach. Distributing door hangers will itself help identify enthusiastic neighbors who may step into these roles. The group also agreed to place a notice in the community newsletter and on Facebook seeking captains and co-captains, linking to the [captain role description](#).

4. Door Hangers

The door-hanger order will be placed through a print vendor and is expected before the next meeting. An initial run of 250 was ordered — expected to be close to sufficient, since the number of households is smaller than the number of residents — with more to be ordered if needed. The laminated hanger includes a QR code and email option for Everbridge sign-up and points residents to the community resources page.

Haris offered to make hangers available to members in advance of the next meeting for anyone who wishes to begin distribution early. The group agreed it is important that everyone conveys a consistent message when hangers are handed out.

5. Outreach Method and Materials

The committee reviewed the outreach strategy memo (Outreach Material Strategy, posted under Active Projects on the fire-safety page). Its central point resonated with the group: the printed piece is only the doorway. As the memo puts it, *what is not received is not taught* — a beautifully designed hanger dropped in recycling is just paper, while **the captain's brief porch conversation** is caretaking, and of high significance. Research indicates that **a short, in-person conversation does more for real preparedness than all printed materials combined**.

The agreed sequence is: place the door hanger, then follow up in person (or by phone) with a brief, low-pressure conversation. Suggested conversation prompts include: What concerns you most about fire? Is there anyone in the household who would need help evacuating? What is your preferred way to be contacted? The goal is to identify residents needing extra support and any gaps in defensible space, and to leave neighbors feeling cared for rather than merely informed.

Role-play practice at the next meeting

Members were enthusiastic about practicing these conversations through role-play at the next meeting — including **how to respond warmly to a skeptical or reluctant neighbor**. The group agreed that a facilitator (possibly Mindy) would guide short scenarios (for example, a long-time elderly resident, a brand-new neighbor, and a genuinely resistant one), and that the practice itself would double as captain training. **The consensus was to rehearse first and then capture what works in a shared document**.

6. Coordination with the Ashram

The committee agreed the Ashram community should be kept informed and offered the chance to take part, rather than have NAFS members attempt door-to-door outreach on Ashram grounds. The preferred approach is a single, trusted point of contact who can receive a supply of door hangers, distribute them, and be reached in an emergency.

Mindy offered to speak with Jiva — head of the board of trustees and Mindy's manager in the Ashram's environmental work — as a first, accountable point of entry, to gauge interest and confirm a liaison. Members agreed to keep this simple and to route all Ashram communication through a single contact so the message stays consistent.

7. Burn Status and Voluntary Caution

At the meeting, a member reported that Buckingham County had a burn ban in effect. On follow-up, this was corrected: **there is currently no burn ban in Buckingham County**. The county ban that had been in place was lifted at 4 p.m. on April 28, and Virginia's statewide 4 p.m. spring burning law expired on April 30. As of this writing, no legal prohibition on outdoor burning applies in our area. Burn status should be confirmed directly with Buckingham County Emergency Services before any community announcement, rather than relied upon from social-media posts alone.

It should be clear that **legal does not mean safe under current conditions**. Drought has worsened since April; much of Virginia, including our region, is in severe to extreme drought, and county officials urged extreme caution when the ban was lifted. Expiration of the seasonal 4 p.m. law is automatic and is not a judgment that conditions have improved. Bans can also return with only a few days' notice. Under Virginia law, anyone whose fire escapes may be held responsible for suppression costs and property damage — and with fuels this dry, escape risk is high.

For these reasons, neighbors should **voluntarily postpone all non-essential open burning** — brush piles, debris, and burn barrels — until we receive sustained rainfall. Contained cooking fires (grills and metal or ceramic containers) remain fine with normal precautions. If you must burn, consider calling Buckingham Emergency Services first to confirm the current status, keep water and tools on hand, never leave a fire unattended, and burn only on calm, humid days.

Members also noted, for the record, reiterated the Virginia Department of Forestry specialists' June 24 guidance: state law imposes no current restriction, and counties may set their own bans — they appropriately deferred to county sources. Good ways to check current status include Buckingham County Emergency Services (by phone), the Department of Forestry burn-restrictions page at dof.virginia.gov, and the [Buckingham County drought monitor](#).

8. Alerts, Gathering Points, and Equipment

Everbridge and reverse-911

The group discussed how a platform like Everbridge can be targeted to specific streets so that authorities can push a message to registered residents in a defined area — in effect, a reverse-911 capability. Members agreed to confirm with the county **whether this can be arranged for our neighborhoods**, and reiterated that broad household registration is the foundation that makes any such system work.

Members also noted a related community effort, led separately, to identify residents who are homebound or in need of hands-on care; the group agreed that it would be best to coordinate so the two efforts complement rather than duplicate one another.

Gathering points and evacuation area

Drawing on the Forestry visit and military experience, members distinguished between gathering points — two or three nearby, pre-identified spots where residents are first assembled — and a farther evacuation area, well to the rear and out of danger, to which people are then moved. Because fire behavior is unpredictable, several alternatives (**“rally points”**) **should be planned** rather than a single fixed location. The trail near Unity Place was noted as a natural fire break; members agreed these planning details, while valuable, come after the immediate outreach work.

Training and equipment

Don offered to contact area fire departments — beginning with Dillwyn, and including Glenmore as the nearest — to learn what fire-safety and equipment training is available, and on what schedule. He has introduced himself as representing the Neighborhood Association for Fire Safety in the Yogaville area and will **share any training schedule** and requirements with interested members.

There is also interest in whether the community's existing pole-mounted siren is functional, to be tested at a coordinated time once neighbors are aware of the effort.

9. Neighborhood Mapping and Household Lists

The committee reviewed a draft zone map and a county GIS parcel map from the clerk's office. Members agreed the most useful immediate step is a simple list — by street, house number, and resident name — rather than a polished map. Longtime residents who know who lives where (Hanuman was named as an especially knowledgeable resource) will help assemble this. Erik will continue refining the zones with input from Jai Ram, who previously compiled community lot information. This household list will support the captain structure and the eventual color-coded maps for each zone.

10. Decisions Reached

- **Decision:** Reaffirm the official name — Neighborhood Association for Fire Safety (NAFS) — for outreach and outside correspondence.
- **Decision:** Adopt an agenda at the start of each meeting.
- **Decision:** Begin distributing the 250 door hangers after the next meeting; members may take hangers early. Keep messaging consistent.
- **Decision:** Use a door-hanger-first approach followed by a brief in-person (or phone) conversation; keep the captain role focused on outreach and welfare checks, not rescue.
- **Decision:** Devote the next meeting largely to facilitate role-play practice of neighbor conversations, doubling as captain training.
- **Decision:** Coordinate with the Ashram through a single trusted point of contact (Mindy) rather than direct door-to-door outreach on Ashram grounds.
- **Decision:** Verify burn status directly with Buckingham County Emergency Services before any community announcement; recognizing there is no current ban, recommend a voluntary hold on non-essential open burning while drought conditions persist.
- **Decision:** Set the next meeting for Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

11. Action Items

- **Erik** — Begin the UEI / SAM.gov registration for AgniWellCare to enable the grant application; continue refining the zone map with Jai Ram; record these minutes and update the fire-safety website; make door hangers available to members.
- **Don** — Follow up with Dillwyn and Glenmore fire departments on training and equipment; speak with Jiva about an Ashram liaison for fire-safety coordination.
- **?** — Speak with Jai Ram about serving as captain.

- **Doug & Don & Lynn** — Prepare for Unity Place outreach; help compile the household list for Unity Place.
- **All members** — Continue identifying and inviting prospective captains and co-captains; bring ideas for role-play scenarios to the next meeting; help assemble street-by-street household lists (house number, street, name).

12. Status of Prior Action Items (from June 14 and June 24)

- **Door hanger (Erik / Haris).** Complete — finalized and ordered; delivery expected within about five days.
- **Zone map and captain role (Erik).** In progress — zones being refined with Jairam; captain role description in use for recruitment.
- **Captain / co-captain recruitment (All).** Underway — Karuna confirmed as a co-captain; Lynn joined; several prospects identified across zones.
- **UEI / SAM.gov registration (Erik).** Starting — to be initiated through AgniWellCare to enable the Hazard Mitigation Grant.
- **County / Everbridge coordination.** Ongoing — confirming whether targeted, street-level alerts (reverse-911) can be arranged for our area.
- **Training and equipment (Hanuman).** New — outreach begun to Dillwyn and Glenmore fire departments.

Three things every household can do now

1. Sign up for Everbridge emergency alerts so you receive evacuation and hazard notices by phone.
2. Clear leaves and debris from the first five feet around your home, plus gutters and roof.
3. Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the road, so responders can find you at night.

Join Us

Everyone is welcome at our next meeting: **Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., at 76 The Way.** To get involved, sign up, or share a concern about a neighbor who may need evacuation assistance, please visit agniwellcare.org/fire-safety.

In service,

Erik Phillips-Nania

Secretary, AgniWellCare

for the Neighborhood Association for Fire Safety (NAFS)

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