



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL
OFFICE OF STATE FIRE ADMINISTRATION



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**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 27, 2004 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Cantor, Haber, Kowalski, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye and Wilkinson. Staff members Lewis, Morrisette, O'Neil, and Piskura were present.

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the American flag.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he did not receive the official paperwork as yet but welcomed Richard Morris of Niantic as a new member of the Commission representing the Connecticut Fire Marshal's Association. It was his understanding that the paperwork is in route from the Governor's office.

Mr. Morris said he was honored to take on this role. He said serving on the Commission was a dream that he's had for many years. He stated that he is very excited to be a part of the Commission and hoped to contribute to this very honorable cause.

Chairman Carozza welcomed him on behalf of the Commission.

Mr. Morrisette asked Director of Training Adam Piskura to introduce the two new full time employees to the agency.

Mr. Piskura introduced Eric Munsell. Mr. Munsell comes to the Academy most recently as a retired Assistant Chief of the West Hartford Fire Department. He is also active in the Connecticut National Guard. Mr. Munsell said he is very thankful for the opportunity. Mr. Piskura added that Mr. Munsell has some good skills that he demonstrated both in West Hartford and with the Air Guard specifically writing assignments and organization of policy manuals.

Mr. Piskura also introduced Mark Salafia. Mr. Salafia most recently comes to the Academy as a retired Deputy Fire Chief in the Manchester Fire Department. He is also currently the President of the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association (CFDIA). Mr. Salafia said he is very happy about the position and being able to remain in the Fire Service.

Chairman Carozza welcomed them both on behalf of the Commission.

Mr. Morrisette stated that Chris Johnston, the agency's Plant Facility Engineer has attained 10 years of service to the Agency. He was slated to be recognized today but unfortunately he is out ill and could not be with us. He said that he would convey the Commission's well wishes to Mr. Johnston on his 10 years of service.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 30, 2004 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Stankye to approve the minutes of the March 30, 2004 meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the Staff Report for the period of March 14, 2004 through April 14, 2004.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to approve the Staff Report for the period of March 14, 2004 through April 14, 2004.

Moving to agenda item 4a.) Budget and Staff Update. Mr. Morrisette gave a budget and staffing update. As noted at a previous meeting, with the addition of the two new Trainers the overall net loss of positions within the agency is 2, 1 Receptionist and 1 Trainer position. We do not have the ability to refill these positions as they no longer exist within the agency's personnel count. He is currently working with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to look at part time employee positions with the hope to establish some additional part time slots. It is becoming more difficult to fill certain teaching assignments and instructor cancellations are more prevalent. Therefore we need to bring in new talent to the agency to maintain our ability to serve our customers. We have a significant number of resumes and letters of interest on file from prospective instructors. Over the past few years, OPM has only permitted us to fill 3 to 5 instructor vacancies at a time. As the process is fairly time consuming, it would be beneficial if approval was received to fill 20 or 30 positions at once. While this impacts orientation of new instructors it is our belief the benefits outweigh the negatives.

Regarding the budget, there is no new update as the Legislature is still in session. Mr. Morrisette stated that it is his understanding there may be some funding somewhere in the budget for the Limited Access Highway account although he was told it is only \$100,000 dollars. He said that he had questioned Representative Linda Orange on the issue and had indicated that there may be some difficulties if full restoration is expected with only \$100,000. At that rate, funding would be exhausted within a 3-4 month time frame. The Service Voucher program was instituted earlier in the month and seems to be progressing slowly. Eligible Fire Companies have \$600 credited to their accounts for use toward agency services.

Commissioner Nicol asked about the full time positions that were eliminated. Mr. Morrissette replied that they were layoffs of a Receptionist and also a Trainer position. Neither will be restored or refilled. When the layoffs occurred the positions were zeroed out in our personnel count. Commissioner Nicol added that he thought there was a slight reduction in the Budget of \$80,000 dollars. Mr. Morrissette asked Fiscal Director Peter O'Neil if he recalled specifically how much funding was reduced. Mr. O'Neil stated that the bottom line reduction was around \$80,000 dollars. Commissioner Nicol asked if we were going to have a cut of \$80,000 dollars or whether that would be restored. Mr. O'Neil replied that it was referred to as a hold back so it's possible some of the funds could be restored but usually with good justification. Commissioner Nicol asked if we knew what areas would be cut or is that to be determined later. Mr. O'Neil replied that the majority of the reduction would probably be out of the payroll or personnel services account.

Commissioner Johnson arrived at 9:50 AM.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson stated that the Education Committee continues to meet and met as recently as last Thursday. They are in a status quo holding pattern at this point as far as the funding for the Regional Fire School is concerned. This year's monetary allotment is included in Senate Bill 33 which is on hold until the Legislature decides what is going on with the Budget. As soon as the Budget issues are settled, they anticipate that the statewide Bonding Bill will then be brought forth and acted upon. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on May 27th in Wethersfield.

Mr. Morrissette added that he spoke to Ted Schroll prior to last week's meeting to alert him that he had received a call from Speaker Lyon's office inquiring as to what the procedure was to have a fire training facility designated as a Regional Fire School. No further information was shared with him regarding the inquiry. He stated that he did caution the staff person that it is a more complicated issue than it appears. He invited to meet at any time to discuss the issue in more detail. As a follow-up, Mr. Morrissette noted that at the Commissions request, letters were sent to Legislative leadership requesting their support of the Bond funding which is contained within Senate Bill 33.

Moving to item 4c.) Legislative Update – Commissioner Kowalski stated that we were able to get a gift from the Senate in the form of a Bill on fire prevention requirements. That was the only bill the Senate addressed on Fire Service Day and it was passed unanimously. The bill was a unanimous pass in the House as well. We're on the road to a Fire Prevention Code for the State of Connecticut and this is one of the largest changes for the Fire Service since 1981 with the Connecticut Fire Safety Code. He anticipates over the next 3 years there is going to be some changes in the way Fire Marshals and Fire Chiefs operate. He said he met with the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association Board of Directors last week to discuss what the impact is to the Fire Chiefs. It is a very positive change since we will now be able to pick and choose what we feel is best for the safety of the citizens of Connecticut. There is an Advisory Board that will be formed to facilitate

the Fire Prevention Code. It will consist of 9 members 2 of which will be from the Codes and Standards Committee and the other 7 will be from the Connecticut Fire Marshals Association (CFMA). This will be a positive change for the Fire Service as a whole since it will not go through Codes and Standards but will be Regulations from and generated by a National Model Code as well as Fire Service people. We're looking forward to having it go into the system over the next two years. It will take a while to get the language together and the next hurdle will be to get the Governor to sign it.

Mr. Morrisette stated that an updated Legislative Tracking Chart was distributed to members this morning. He commented that the whole issue of Homeland Security continues to move through the Legislature. The Senate acted on the creation of a new Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management last Thursday. It was then sent to the House and as of yesterday there has been no action. This takes the Office of Emergency Management out of the Military Department and creates a new stand alone Department with a Commissioner level position. It will also bring in functions and personnel from the current Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security. He advised members that we'll need to watch the formation of this new agency very closely. OPM has been asked to review the whole issue and it will more than likely also be their charge to look at other agencies and bringing them into the fold. The new agency will maintain the current Senior Steering Council ensuring Fire Service representation in the form of 2 municipal Fire Chiefs, 1 appointed by the Senate President Pro Tempore and the other by the Governor, and 1 Volunteer Chief to be appointed by the Minority Leader as well as the State Fire Administrator position. A copy of the current language was distributed for your information.

Moving to item 4d.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrisette stated that at the beginning of the month a letter was mailed to eligible Volunteer Fire Companies containing information related to the \$100,000 dollar transfer of funding to the agency for use as Service Vouchers. Within a day or two of the mailing, we started to receive calls from fire departments inquiring as to specifics and requesting clarification. To date we've had at least 6 departments exercise some form of the Voucher. As we travel throughout the state we will continue to communicate the benefits of this program. Also, the expiration date for use of the Voucher is December 31, 2004. It is our intention to mail a letter with a balance update in each of the Fire Company accounts sometime around September. This will serve as a reminder to them that they have until the end of the calendar year to utilize funding in the account.

Commissioner Stankye stated that in the Valley most of the training is conducted by the Derby Regional Fire School and wondered whether there was any thought to having surrounding towns in that area turn their voucher over to a Fire School to expend their funds. Mr. Morrisette replied that when the original discussion regarding options took place with OPM he had raised this issue. To minimize any administrative burden and the need for multiple agreements, it was determined that a single focus would be administratively cleaner. We would encourage a department that has students in a Regional Fire School program to use their Voucher to purchase applicable reference

materials often required as part of the class from the Commission. Mr. Morrisette indicated that he had brought this program to the attention of the Regional Fire School Education Committee at one of their earlier meetings.

Moving to item 4e.) Certification Update –Mr. Morrisette stated that Director of Certification Fred Piechota is not present as his mother in-law passed away and the calling hours were scheduled for today in Massachusetts. Mr. Piechota was planning to provide an update on the Rescue Technician Review Committee. The Committee is finalizing its recommendations for review by the Commission.

Moving to item 5a.) Homeland Security Funding – Mr. Morrisette briefed Commissioners on activities of the Homeland Security Working Group which was established to develop a methodology for distributing the 04 Homeland Security federal grant. There has been a lot of discussion within the State about ensuring that communities receive their share or at least 80% of the grant as required by the feds. The working group is meeting every Friday over the next several weeks to finalize the methodology. The program funds will go to Connecticut's 169 municipalities and 2 tribal nations. The recommendation of the Working Group will go to the Senior Steering Council for final approval. If a municipality elects to, they can execute a MOU with the State allowing the State to manage the funding for them. It is currently proposed that the 80% funding would be allocated on a base plus population formula. Each municipality would receive base funding in the amount of \$20,000 dollars and then there would be a population bonus of \$3.54 per capita based upon the 2000 census figures. The higher the population, the more money a municipality would receive. In addition, there is going to be some reserve funding and it was discussed that it could be made available under a competitive grant process through an RFP where individual municipalities could seek additional funding to address local issues. They've now moved away from that and are now looking to make the reserve funding available to the States 15 Regional Planning Offices and to the 9 existing Regional Response Teams which includes 6 Haz-Mat Teams and 3 Bomb Teams. The remaining funds would then go to the 12 most populated municipalities.

Commissioner Nicol inquired whether the USAR Team is involved in this funding. Mr. Morrisette responded not currently however their needs may be addressed in the state's 20% share of the funding. Also, there is a current proposal to provide \$2.4 million in State Bond funds to the team. They are currently seeking funds and it is addressed in the Joint Council brochure. USAR also receives some funding through a federal Byrne grant.

Commissioner Morris questioned if there were any parameters of what the money could be spent on. Mr. Morrisette responded that it is part of the Working Group's responsibility to develop the overall strategy. Each town could then purchase items of their choosing as long as the equipment met the overall strategy. It appears many communities may pool their funding under a Regional Planning Council in an effort to address regional issues. In addition, Mr. Morrisette remarked that a copy of an Articulation Agreement between the Department of Public Safety's Division of

Homeland Security's UCONN Homeland Security Education Center and the Police Officers Standards and Training Council (POST) was included in the Commission package. We've not received any formal proposal from UCONN as yet solidifying a relationship however they provided a copy of the POST agreement for our review. They are looking for the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA) to sign a similar agreement. They would provide a bonus for the number of students completing a program to entice us to market the training programs. He asked Commissioners for their input and comments. Commissioner Cantor asked what monies would be coming through UCONN that differs from the monies you just described through the other grants process. Mr. Morrissette replied that we don't benefit currently from the Homeland Security grant. There is an education or training funding component which goes to DPS and UCONN that is utilized for Training.

A brief question and answer period followed.

Moving to item 5b.) May Meeting Location- Mr. Morrissette stated traditionally the Commission's May meeting is conducted as an evening meeting somewhere in the state. This year the May meeting conflicts with the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association's (CFCA) monthly meeting. They are both being scheduled for the fourth Tuesday of the month. He asked if Commission members were interested in maintaining the May meeting as a regular day meeting here at the Academy or consider moving it to June in either New London or Litchfield County.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and Seconded by Commissioner Wilkinson to hold the May Commission meeting as a day meeting and plan for the June meeting to be in the evening. Motion carried.

Moving to item 6) Comments from the public – There were none.

Moving to item 7) Matters to be raised by Commissioners and Staff – Commissioner Nicol commented that he attended the Connecticut Fire Officer's Weekend at the National Fire Academy and it was very interesting.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if there were any more developments over the USAR training. Mr. Piskura responded that the last official contact he's had was in January and they wanted to begin training in March. Internally they focused on the necessary training like Sexual Harassment, Cultural Diversity for its members. He stated that it was his understanding from John Mancini that they have money for equipment but no allocation for training. Mr. Morrissette added that it was his understanding that a lot of the training they are looking for would be delivered by USAR Teams from other states. They are working cooperatively with New Jersey and Massachusetts to do some cooperative training with possibly each looking at developing certain specialties. Also, some of the discussion in the Rescue Technician Committee is that if training is provided by a third party, how will that training be looked at for the purposes of Certification in Connecticut.

Commissioner Cantor stated that annually the National Fire Academy (NFA) sponsors a Fire Service Higher Education 4 day conference usually the last weekend in June. He plans to attend this year and the topics that are being looked at is a uniform Associates Degree Program across the Nation's Community Colleges co-developed by a standing Committee headed up by National Fire Academy. In Connecticut, they've been looking at several Community Colleges that still offer an Associate Degree in Fire Service Administration and they are looking at lining up with that National Curriculum. Additionally, he will be conducting a presentation on Advisory Committees at Community Colleges for the Associates Degree in Fire Service Technology.

Mr. Morrissette stated that he distributed a copy of a letter from the Secretary of the State's Office regarding her Volunteer Firefighter Public Service Award program. They have five ceremonies scheduled, one of which already took place on March 24th. The remaining ceremonies will be held in May, September, October and December. He stated if any Commissioners were interested in attending any of the ceremonies to let him know so he can advise the Secretary of the State's Office. They are holding these ceremonies by Congressional district.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that he will be traveling to Washington, D.C. next week for the Congressional Fire Service Institute (CSFI) Dinner. He said one of the issues they would like to discuss is funding for the Academy through the ODP processes. He asked Mr. Piskura to provide some background information for him.

Commissioner Kowalski also reported that the Subcommittee that had been formed for the purposes of reviewing the fee schedule continues to work on the issue. They are still gathering information and it is a slow process. They are looking at both sides our customer base and also being able to operate as a Commission.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ouellette to enter into Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue. Motion carried.

The Commission entered Executive Session at 10:40 AM.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Nicol to close the Executive Session. Motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to reopen the regular meeting from Executive Session. It was requested that the record show no votes were taken while in Executive Session. Motion carried.

The meeting was reopened at 11:10 AM.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Stankye to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.

Dated: _____

Edward F. Haber, Secretary
Commission on Fire
Prevention and Control