



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



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**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 28, 2006 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Peter Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Blashchik, Kowalski, Morris, Nicol, Ouellette, Schenck, Walsh and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewis, Piechota and Fortin were present.

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

Guest to the meeting were identified as Al Hawkins, CSFA Education Committee; Denice Fortin, Commission on Fire Prevention and Control; Chester Haber, CSFA Education Committee; Ed Haber, retired Commission member; Ted Schroll, CSFA Legislative representative; Gary Keating, UPFFA Legislative representative and John Griffin, West Hartford Fire Department.

Chairman Carozza moved to Agenda Item 1a Employee Recognition Service Award.

Director of Certification Fred Piechota extended an apology on behalf of State Fire Administrator Jeffrey Morrisette who is unfortunately attending a family funeral and could not attend today's meeting.

Mr. Piechota stated that it is our pleasure to recognize members of the staff who have made significant contributions to state service. Today we are recognizing Denice Fortin for 15 years of state service.

He stated that Denice Fortin began service with the Commission in 1993. Denice serves as the agency's Certification Registrar in the Certification Division and is the face and voice of the division to the fire service. He said it is his pleasure to present Ms. Fortin with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of 15 years of loyal and conscientious service to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and Connecticut's fire service.

Chairman Carozza moved to Agenda Item 1b retired Commissioners recognition.

Chairman Carozza stated that the next presentation is to someone who is no stranger to this presentation and the fire service. He stated that Ed Haber was appointed to the Commission in 1987 and served as Commission secretary from 1989 to 2005. He thanked Mr. Haber on behalf of the Commission for all his years of service not only to the Commission but to the entire fire service and the state of Connecticut. The work,

time and commitment Mr. Haber has done are things we will never forget. He presented Mr. Haber with a token of our appreciation from the Commission and staff.

Chairman Carozza stated that we had a representative of the Governor's office in attendance today to make a presentation to Mr. Haber.

Adam Jeamel, Director of Public Affairs for Governor Rell said the Governor could not be present today but felt it was important for someone from her staff to be present. Mr. Jeamel presented Mr. Haber with a Proclamation from Governor Rell recognizing his 18 years of state service on the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control.

Mr. Haber remarked that he enjoyed serving on the Commission and he enjoys the fire service which has been the love of his life. He said he remains involved with the Fire Chiefs Association. He thanked the Commission for the wonderful gift and thanked Governor Rell for the Proclamation.

Commissioner Walsh stated that he had a correction to the Minutes item 4e on page 5 the first sentence that reads Chairman Carozza stated that both he and Commissioner Kowalski met with Chief Nick DeLia. It should read Commissioner Walsh instead of Kowalski.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Walsh and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2006 meeting as amended. Motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the staff report for the period of March 15, 2006 through April 14, 2006. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Piechota reported on behalf of State Fire Administrator Morrissette. He stated that we've been working much more closely with the DAS SMART Fiscal Unit staff to get a better handle on the status of our budget and associated accounts. It's still a challenge to deal with the various issues remotely but the level of communication has improved. We're now focusing primarily on end of fiscal year close out issues. At present, we expect to lapse a small amount of Personal Service funding estimated to be \$4,200 and it appears probable that some of the supplemental grant funding that eligible fire companies did not access as part of the former Limited Access Highway Program. The DAS fiscal unit also provided some staff resources this week to process a significant amount of surplus or damaged equipment that has been stored in a cargo container at the Academy. He said it appears they've also changed their position and will now provide staffing to conduct an end of year audit and inventory of agency assets however; the final details have not yet been worked out. The DAS SMART Human Resources staff representative continues to hold weekly office hours and has been a tremendous asset to the agency.

Mr. Piechota also reported that we've been working closely with the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) to provide greater support to the agency. Several initiatives are planned and appear to be a go. We're cautiously optimistic that these will move forward following many false starts. As the legislative session comes to a close we await the passage of a final budget. He distributed to Commissioners a copy of the Appropriations Committee recommended adjustments to the Governor's recommended budget. Mr. Piechota also reported regarding staffing. Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) has confirmed funding for at least one durational staff position to work on a revision to the Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Response Plan as well as provide training support. We will work out the details in the coming weeks. As funding for the position is FY'04 Homeland Security grant funds, the funding expires November 30, 2006 however, it is anticipated that an extension to the grant performance period will be approved.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update –Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he was unable to attend last night's meeting due to a family obligation but Commissioner Nicol and Al Hawkins, Chairman of the Education Committee are here today and both attended the meeting last night. He asked them to report.

Commissioner Nicol reported on the status of the Regional Schools. The Willimantic appraisal is due next week and Don Ouillette, DPW Project Manager for the Regional School project asked for a motion to authorize the Department of Public Works (DPW) to begin the appraisal process for the Derby Fire School's possible move to Oxford near the airport. The Burville School needs to revisit the permit that was issued by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and they will continue to work to obtain authorization. There was no information on the Middlesex site but there was a general discussion some of which is tied into the approval of the budget. He said Mr. Ouillette gave some updated budget figures for the New Haven Fire School project which was originally estimated to be \$4.9 million based on construction beginning in 2007. The current estimate will probably be around \$5 million so it's very close to what they had originally estimated. Mr. Ouillette asked for a motion from the CSFA Education Committee which passed, authorizing DPW to expend \$5 million for the New Haven Fire School. Commissioner Nicol said the next step is to begin work on the Hartford Fire School project which will be undertaken by DPW. He also reported that there was a discussion concerning the property ownership for the Willimantic and Oxford property and DPW recommended that they be placed under the ownership of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. He said he knows that was briefly discussed at one of the Commission's previous meetings and it should probably be discussed today or at a future meeting. He also said there was a brief discussion about the time period allowed for practical testing and after the discussion there was a consensus that they would like to see times established for psycho-motor skills certification testing. The next meeting is scheduled for May 25th.

Mr. Hawkins added that the ground work for the capital project began back in 1999 and March 31st of this year marks a milestone because they got the first Bond release of funds by the Bond Commission. The Bond Commission released approximately \$375,000 to

begin the New Haven design and that's a good sign. He said from what the Committee is hearing right now they are very hopeful that the project will continue to progress in a timely fashion.

Commissioner Johnson arrived at 9:50 AM.

Moving to item 4c.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Piechota gave an update on the Limited Access Highway (LAH) Supplemental grant award program. He reported that as of April 27th 71 checks at \$615 each have been issued for a total of \$43,665 to fire companies and 78 vouchers at \$615 each have been issued for a total of \$47,970. The total vouchers used equal \$12,648.64 and total vouchers unused equal \$35,321.36. He said we encourage fire departments to utilize the funds before the end of the fiscal year or make arrangements ASAP so that the funding is not lost.

Moving to item 4d.) New London County IMT Recognition – Chairman Carozza stated that both he and Commissioner Walsh met with Chief DeLia, City of Groton a couple months ago and Chief DeLia was going to investigate this issue further and get back to them. He said they have not heard back as yet and asked the Commission to continue to table this item until we receive more information from Chief DeLia.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Morris to table the New London County IMT Recognition request until the Commission hears back from Chief DeLia. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4e.) Certification Skills Time Limits – Mr. Piechota reported that as the Commission is aware, last month there was a discussion related to the consideration to possibly begin establishing time limits for some or all practical skills tested by the Commission. Each Commissioner was going to go back and check with their constituent organizations to see if there is any desire to do that or not. He said Commissioner Nicol previously reported that at the Regional Fire School meeting yesterday, some people spoke favorably about it but we have not heard from any of the other organizations. He indicated that he knows the Connecticut Fire Department Instructor's Association (CFDIA) has not had an opportunity to discuss the issue and he asked the Commission's indulgence to table this issue for another month for input from at least the CFDIA and any other organizations.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to table the Certification Skills Time Limits issue for another month and wait for input from other organizations. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4f.) Legislative Update – Mr. Piechota asked for the Chairman's permission to turn this over to Ted Schroll to report.

Ted Schroll, Legislative representative for the CSFA reported that the Legislature is still in session and distributed a Bill Status Report showing the Bills that are still active. He gave a brief overview on the Bills of interest to the fire service. He mentioned that HB

5284 an act concerning model guidelines for volunteer emergency services personnel is still active and requires the State Fire Administrator to set-up guidelines for volunteer emergency personnel. He also mentioned the Bonding Bill, SB 52 an act authorizing Bonds of the State for Capital Improvements and other purposes and includes the \$10 million funding for the Regional Fire Schools. He said as of two days ago when he had talked with the co-chairs of the Bonding Subcommittee and although the Bond Bill is still in flux the \$10 million is still there and they are pretty certain it will stay there unless some unforeseen circumstance comes up. They are hopeful that the second \$10 million will stay there to keep the Regional Fire Schools project moving forward. He also reported that SB 109 has to do with Enhanced 9-1-1 in the state an act concerning multi-line telephone systems. He said it is a money Bill with a lot fiscal impact so it was moved to the foot of the calendar. He said he can answer any questions the Commission may have.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if the \$375,000 that was just released is part of the \$10 million for the fire schools.

Mr. Schroll replied that is part of the first \$10 million appropriated in FY04 that has been sitting waiting to be used. He said the bill this year puts in a second \$10 million in there so we would end up with a total of \$20 million by the end of this year to keep the project moving forward. He said the discussions with Secretary Genuario of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is if things fall into place by the end of the next current fiscal year they should be very close to using up all the \$20 million so the concern was to try and get the second \$10 million before the funding runs out and the good thing for the fire service is that the Governor initiated the second \$10 million.

Commissioner Morris said as a representative of the Connecticut Fire Marshal Association (CFMA) he wanted to personally thank Mr. Schroll for all of the information he provided this session. He said they were well aware of legislative information and was able to communicate with the other CFMA representatives.

Moving to item 5a.) May Meeting Location – Mr. Piechota stated that traditionally the May Commission meeting location is held off site and it is placed on the agenda for the Commission to decide when and where they want the meeting to be held. The scheduled date of the meeting is May 30th.

Commissioner Kowalski stated while he has no problems going to any place that the Commission need to go in the state, historically we haven't gotten an audience at any other facility and the intent was to get a larger audience of participation from the fire service or the public at these meeting sites. He suggested that unless we have a specific goal in mind we should have the May meeting at the Fire Academy at the normal time.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if it would be beneficial to consider having an evening meeting even if it is at the Academy particularly for the volunteer sector to attend.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Blashchik to return to the Fire Academy Commission Conference Room for the next meeting in May. Motion carried.

Mr. Schroll introduced Representative Walter Pawelkiewicz to the Commission and stated that he has been very supportive of the fire service since 1999.

Representative Pawelkiewicz remarked that it has been a privilege to work side by side with some of the finest firefighters in the state and he's very glad that our work has finally come to fruition and the fire service can always count on his support.

Mr. Hawkins asked Chairman Carozza if he could comment. He added that Representative Pawelkiewicz has been one of the people that have been there for the fire service on an ongoing basis and hasn't been in the forefront a lot of the times and stays in the background allowing other people to take the credit. He said every legislative session Representative Pawelkiewicz is the one that sits down and put together a strategic plan for that session and he's done a really good job for the fire service.

Moving to item 5b.) Regional Fire School Land Issue – Mr. Piechota remarked that at the March 29, 2005 Commission meeting, a discussion was held as to whether the Commission would be willing to serve as a holding agency for land for the Regional Fire Schools, should for any reason, the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association (CSFA) not be able to do so. He said a motion was made and approved that the Commission if circumstances warranted would serve as the holding agency to facilitate reconstruction of the Regional Fire Schools. He said at this point he would like to ask Al Hawkins to comment further on this issue.

Mr. Hawkins, Chairman of the CSFA distributed a draft document outlining the Regional Fire Schools and proposed property ownership of the schools. He said the document is marked DRAFT as this is his own thoughts and does not come directly from the Education Committee. The document was distributed last evening at the Education Committee meeting which was the first time they had a chance to see it. The principal issue is in the case of the Eastern CT Fire School, if they were to acquire property to construct a school and the fact that they are not a state agency, it would become very difficult for DPW to facilitate the project because they don't have statutory authority to engage in constructing a fire project and use their normal procedures which basically circumvents local control. Property that does not belong to a state agency is not exempted from local control by; Land Use Planning/Economic Development agencies, Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands, Water Pollution Control Authority, local Building Department, local Fire Marshal and any others. State ownership would provide for exemption from local control and allows DPW to exercise total control over construction projects pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes. He said the suggestions is to have the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control (CFPC) be the state agency that would either own or be the lessee for the property which is the way the property acquisition is set-up for the 1.6 acre of land at Bradley. That money has been allocated in the current Governor's budget for the Commission with nearly \$35,000 for the first annual lease

payment and that assigns the CFPC as lessee for that property. He said there would have to be some contractual agreements so we understand what the rights and responsibilities of both parties are. His thought would be to develop separate Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with each of the Regional Fire Schools for operation and maintenance of each school and within the MOU there would be some type of clause that if the local Regional Fire School either ceased to exist or failed to operate the facility then control would be transferred to the CFPC. He said this has not been decided on by anyone besides him putting this into a draft and at this point he is requesting that the Commission consider the issue.

Commissioner Kowalski asked for clarification of whether the draft request includes the Fairfield, Middletown, New Haven and Stamford facilities.

Mr. Hawkins replied no and that they would be Regional Fire Schools but the ownership would remain with the municipality.

Commissioner Kowalski also asked for clarification on a bulleted point referencing the MOU and operations and maintenance of each school and asked if the Regional Schools would be requesting the CFPC to provide services to maintain those facilities.

Mr. Hawkins replied not necessarily and his intent for requesting a MOU is so that we have a contract document that details the rights and responsibilities of both parties. He said he doesn't envision that the Commission would be assuming the responsibility to perform any routine maintenance.

Commissioner Kowalski said then it is his understanding that it would be up to the Commission to work with the Regional Fire Schools on an MOU based independently from this so if there is a facility out there that wishes to have the operations section done by the Commission that could be done based on that Regional Fire School's request.

Mr. Hawkins said there was a discussion on this at the meeting last evening about whether it might be worthwhile for the schools to share a maintenance staff within the schools and it is something worth looking at.

A brief discussion followed.

Following the discussion, a **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Blashchik and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady that the Commission empower the State Fire Administrator to contact the Attorney General's Office and begin the process of establishing an agreement with the Regional Fire Schools for land ownership. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kowalski added that he believes we're taking this one step further from the previous motion voted on at the March 29, 2005 meeting. He said previously the Commission gave the authority to work as a partner for land acquisition and now we're expanding it perhaps into different areas. He said he agrees with the motion enabling the

State Fire Administrator to research the agreements to facilitate operation and a partnership with the Regional Fire School.

Moving to item 5c.) Web Based Initiatives – Mr. Piechota reported that the current computer software system being used for the Bookstore operation has become somewhat unreliable. The company that created the software has been sold a couple of times and the technical support is less than ideal. He said we needed to move forward to get software and a system in place that is more reliable. At the same time, we wanted to begin to explore the possibility of doing online commerce so we've entered into an agreement with the CT Distance Learning Consortium. They are the state agency that is affiliated with higher education but they are an independent entity that does computer hosting of online training in support of higher education, as well as some online commerce for other state agencies. They are going to begin the development of a brand new system to support the Bookstore operation which may end up leading to the ability to do online sales and will also lay the ground work for a lot of web based initiatives that the Commission might consider down the road as it relates to training and certification. He said they are a sister agency and are very enthusiastic about helping us.

Moving to item 6- Comments from the public- There was none.

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Commissioner Brady stated that last month he asked about the Credentialing process and where that stood in the state of Connecticut. He said Mr. Piechota provided him with some information and also as part of the packet sent to Commissioners this month, there was a newsletter from the Pro Board that really explains a lot about what the Credentialing process is all about. He said he would like to ask that this be placed on the next meeting agenda for further discussions and perhaps to see if this is the agency that should go forward with standardized Credentialing process for all firefighters in the state of Connecticut.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Brady and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Morris to place Credentialing on the next meeting agenda for further discussions. Motion carried.

Mr. Piechota added that he is on a statewide Credentialing Subcommittee and will attend its first meeting next Thursday so this will be a good lead into those discussions.

He also reported that last month a proposed procedure was distributed for consideration by the Commission regarding expiration dates to be assigned to the level of certification for Health and Safety Officer. We are seeking input as to whether or not any of the entities have guidance or suggestion to the Commission regarding that proposal. He said for Commissioners that may not recall the reason for that is because Health and Safety Officer is the only level of certification that the Commission requires a person actually be assigned the duties in their department and that could possibly change due to job changes and reassignments and the like. He said that would be the sole reason for it.

Commissioner Ouellette asked in awarding the certification if there's a stipulation for the individual to notify the Commission if their duties end with the department.

Mr. Piechota remarked no there is nothing that would require them to tell us that their duties have changed. The proposal is that there be a time limit on the certification and it would automatically expire either after one or two years. It would be incumbent on the individual to verify for the Commission whether they still hold responsibility in this area within their department and in that case, we would just automatically extend the certification.

Commissioner Kowalski added as a point of information that this is the first time the Commission will have an expiration on any certification it issues and he wants to make sure that all the constituents know this and the Chiefs Association and the Instructors' Association have an idea that this is going to happen. He said hopefully in the last month the word was supposed to have gotten out but he's not sure it did. He said he has a concern based on the position of the job to be sure it is aligned within the job description of the individuals performing the duties and that it may not be consistent with the certification requirement.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Blashchik and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to table this item for next month's meeting until those concerns are delivered to all the constituent organizations. Motion carried.

Mr. Piechota also reported that the Commission voted to begin national certification of all eligible persons on July 1st. He said after that motion was made and approved we found that many of the Regional Fire Schools and local fire departments had already created their budgets and scheduled class including fees for summer classes. This would have an impact upon them so administratively, we've pushed that implementation date back to September 1, 2006 which will have less of an impact and allow planning and budgeting for the fall.

He also reported as a point of information that last Sunday the Commission conducted a FFI practical skills examination at the New Haven Fire School and there was an injury during the examination that required transport of a candidate to the Yale New Haven hospital. The evolution entailed bringing an unconscious victim down a ladder. He said the way we do that is one person selected at random to be the victim walk up the ladder turn around and face out and lean against the ladder while the rescuer goes up the ladder and takes the proper steps to bring the victim down. It was raining and the thought was that when they were about half way down, the rescuer's hand slipped off the ladder causing her to fall and the victim fell on top of her injuring her. The candidate was taken to the hospital and was kept for observation but has since then been released. In conversation with our lead examiners and there were three of them, they felt the conditions did not warrant cancellation of the examination. We are reviewing our policies regarding weather and our safety policies and this will be brought to the attention of the Safety Committee for review at their next meeting to see if any additional changes need to be made.

Chairman Carozza stated as everyone is aware today is Fire Service day and asked Commissioners to visit the various displays in the concourse and the reception in room 310 of the Capitol.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 10:34 am.

Dated:

James P. Wilkinson, Secretary
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control