



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



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**MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 28, 2007 MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Dagon, Kowalski, Mitchell, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye, Walsh and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewis, Morrisette, McGowan and Piskura were present.

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

Chairman Carozza called on State Fire Administrator Morrisette for the introduction of guests.

Mr. Morrisette welcomed newly appointed Commissioner David Dagon of Mansfield to the meeting. Mr. Dagon will be representing the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA) filling the position of former Commissioner William Johnson. He asked Mr. Dagon to give a brief overview of himself for Commissioners.

Mr. Dagon said he was Chief of the East Hartford Fire Department for 12 years. About four years ago he took on an Administrative position with Mansfield and was appointed Chief two years ago and is currently Chief of Mansfield Fire and Emergency Services.

Chairman Carozza welcomed Commissioner Dagon to the meeting.

Mr. Morrisette also welcomed two additional guests that are nominees to the Commission although appointments have not been solidified as yet. Fire Marshal Megan Murphy was nominated to represent the Connecticut Fire Marshals' Association and Fire Chief Matt Nelson was nominated to represent the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors' Association.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the May 29, 2007 meeting and the June 26, 2007 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to approve the Minutes of the May 29, 2007 meeting and the June 26, 2007 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports July 15, 2007 –August14, 2007, June15, 2007- July 14, 2007 and May 15, 2007 –June 14, 2007.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the Staff Reports for the period of July 15, 2007 –August14, 2007, June15, 2007- July 14, 2007 and May 15, 2007 –June 14, 2007. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrisette gave a brief update regarding the budget. He said as noted in the Staff Report and as most people are aware from the news the Bond Bill has not as of yet been passed. He said it affects the agency's capital equipment procurement as well as capital facility related issues. This is the first year that the capital facility funding would be direct to the agency rather than being held by the Department of Public Works (DPW) and accessed by other agencies before we could benefit from it. He said we don't know if and when the Governor and the Legislature will come in agreement to pass this important item. We still have some limited Capital Equipment funds remaining from the previous fiscal year which we are accessing at the present time as needed. He said it is the Capital Facility infrastructure funding that is critical to address facility related issues both here as well as at the CPAT building in Meriden. Once the Bill is passed it doesn't necessarily mean we would be able to access the funding anytime soon.

Mr. Morrisette reported regarding staffing. He said the Auditor had identified an issue regarding the use of a part time employee classified as Fire Service Instructor as the assistant to the Bookstore Manager. We've moved to make some adjustments and request a durational position that would be off the General Fund Budget, essentially paid for from funds derived from sales within the Bookstore. The durational position would be classified as Assistant Bookstore Manager however our next problem is that there is no list at the current time for the position. We have received approvals to announce the position which Department of Administrative Services (DAS) would do followed up by a test. He said as we are all familiar with the process it could take up to six months before we actually have an employee in place. He said last year was a record sales year by the Bookstore so customer service and staffing are very important. Also, we can't fully implement our online commerce initiative until we have some backup support in place.

Mr. Morrisette also reported that we still maintain a vacancy for the position of Trainer. We've been carrying that vacant position for just over a year. He said we had to wait for a test and a list to be generated. Last meeting we had reported that DAS placed the hiring on hold but that same afternoon we were told to move forward which we have done. There were a total of 12 candidates qualified with the Fire Service Instructor qualification in addition to passing the experience and training examination. He said 10 candidates were selected to move forward in the process and interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks. We had a three person team that participated in that process and they have made a selection. DAS is now conducting appropriate reference checks, etc. and at which time if everything comes back positive an offer will be made. He said he won't disclose the names of candidates now but maybe under an Executive Session later on in the meeting. All participating in the interview and selection process are comfortable with the top three candidates. Once an offer is made we hope to have someone on board within a few weeks.

Mr. Morrisette also reported regarding the position of Storekeeper which has not been discussed with the Commission at previous meetings. The issue of inventory control is a significant problem within the agency as it is with any organization that owns a

significant amount of equipment. He said inventory control has been noted in Audit Reports for as long back as he can recall. With the centralization of the Business office in Hartford the individual from the Business office who previously conducted the inventory was Peter O'Neil. There are certain official forms that are required to be filed, including theft and loss reports, etc. Since Mr. O'Neil's departure, the agency has not been able to complete the required activities. We've identified this as an issue with the Small Agency Resource Team (SMART) which is suppose to provide us with assistance. They've told us they are short staffed as well so we continue to try to do more with less. We noted an opportunity within the Budget and determined there was a small amount of funding in our Personal Services Account which would accommodate another position which we identified as Storekeeper. He said it is a relatively low level position starting around \$30,000 per year. Recently, a number of agencies have established these positions including the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). He said we are looking to move forward with establishing this position as quickly as possible so we can tie up these important loose ends. In addition to making sure our inventory is correct, this position will be used as a logistics coordinator providing direct support on a daily basis to the Training Division and other users of the Academy. He said ultimately looking down the road we would probably need a second Storekeeper position to ensure the safety and security of all equipment as well as accountability. He said we're very excited about this position. This position is going through the approval process. Mr. Morrissette asked if Commissioners had any questions regarding this position or questions on the budget or staffing.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if it is the intent that the Extension Account or Auxiliary Account will hold the \$750,000 funding for the entry level training.

Mr. Morrissette replied that he will discuss this a little bit later but at the present time it is his opinion that the enabling legislation implies this but in discussions with OPM they said no. He said they are trying to work the issue out.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson reported on behalf of the Education Committee. He said he would first like to note that the Education Committee as well as the Fire Service lost a great friend unexpectedly last week when State Representative Richard Belden passed away. In the infancy of the Education Committee and the Regional Fire Schools improvement efforts Representative Belden was a quick and steadfast ally that served the Committee very well. He said Representative Belden was a strong supporter of us and was the individual responsible for getting us into the Governor's office when the initial commitment was made to provide Bond funding to rehabilitate the Regional schools so he will be a great lost to us all. As far as the Committee, they met on July 26<sup>th</sup>. The DPW folks are still working through the logistics of the property acquisitions as it addresses the Valley and the Eastern Connecticut schools. At that point the hope was that there was a possibility that we could be placed on the Bonding Agenda sometime in the fall for the funding to purchase those pieces of property but that is still up in the air as the Legislature and the Governor's office work out their issues with the Bonding package in its entirety. The New Haven school design is progressing and Hartford County is cleaning up the agreements with DOT and the hope is that funding for the architectural design work for this facility could also be on a fall Bonding meeting agenda. The Burrville and

Middlesex schools are making some minor progress on their property issues. The Fairfield school is actually working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the hope that some of these other projects that are behind might be in the position to allow them to move forward with their project. He said there was a significant discussion on the logistics related to the Training Bill funding and that is very well summarized in that Subcommittee's Minutes so he'll let that stand. The August meeting was cancelled due to lack of any new developments but the next meeting is scheduled for 7 pm September 27<sup>th</sup> at the Stamford Regional Fire School.

Moving to item 4c.) Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the Supplemental Grant program for FY08. He said letters are expected to be mailed just after September 1<sup>st</sup> to the eligible fire companies and the grant award amount this year will be \$1234.57 which sounds like an odd number but we basically take the number of eligible fire companies and divide it into the \$200,000. He said we will again provide options as in past years either a direct payment in the form of a check or provide a voucher credit to the fire company. We are going to strongly encourage the direct payment where possible because we always run into the end of year problems of chasing people down to spend their funds. We cannot carry over any of the money past the end of the fiscal year. He asked Commissioners if they had any questions on the Supplemental Grant program.

Commissioner Stankye remarked that he had mentioned this a few meetings ago but the staff did an exemplary job chasing down fire companies asking them to spend their funds and it is amazing to him that we still had some funding that lapsed. He congratulated the staff again for the effort.

Moving to item 4d.) New London County Incident Management Team (IMT) Recognition – Mr. Morrissette said we have no new updates. As mentioned at the last meeting, we've requested Chief Tim Baldwin who chairs the State Incident Management Team Subcommittee of DEMHS to attend one of our future meetings. He said he believes Chief Baldwin is expected to attend our September meeting to talk about the big picture of IMT's in the state not specifically New London County issue.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if we need to leave this item on the agenda each month.

Chairman Carozza said it has been on for several months and asked the pleasure of the Commission.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to remove the New London County Incident Management Team Recognition item from the Commission's meeting agenda. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4e.) Fire Service Training Funding Subcommittee – Mr. Morrissette thanked Vice Chairman Kowalski for serving as Ad Hoc Chair. He said everyone should have received copies of the Minutes from the two meetings held. He said there was a lot of discussion and committee members went back and worked through some issues resulting in the draft Reimbursement Policy which we have before the Commission today under new business. He said we hope the Commission will consider the policy and approve it to allow us to move forward.

Commissioner Kowalski thanked all participants that attended the meetings during the summer and worked on the issue quickly to come to a resolution of the funding stream. He said while it is a draft document that we're hopeful will be approved today he wanted to stress that once we implement the policy and the project gets underway if there are certain issues pertaining to payment schedules where we see a need to massage the policy we will look to do that so it's not cast in stone but we are responsible to the Legislature because they'll be watching us very closely. He asked Mr. Morrisette to provide an overview of the policy and if there are any questions we can get answers.

Moving to item 5a.) Fire Service Training Reimbursement Policy- Mr. Morrisette gave an overview of the Entry Level Training Reimbursement Policy. He said the legislation provided \$750,000 to cover the cost of entry-level training at the level of Firefighter I and Recruit so basically we began the policy by referencing the Statute which provides the funding and then we identified the scope and who is responsible. He said while the fiscal impact statement said there was no fiscal impact to the agency that's not the language he had submitted. He said he had submitted language specifically that the agency would need some support whether it is funding for overtime or maybe a half time position to administer this funding because we're taking it on with no additional staffing and it is going to be laborious for a number of people. The Reimbursements will be done based upon a pre-approval process. Although we have \$750,000 earmarked for this program everything was based on estimates and the fiscal impact statement was based on historical training and certification data over a period of three to five years. The closer we look at it we were very close. The available funding may be tight especially if this program causes more departments to mandate training through contracts, bylaws or probationary requirements. He said the pre-approval process will allow funds to be encumbered in the name of the municipality or fire department. A Pre-approval form would identify personnel who are being registered in Firefighter I or Recruit Firefighter Training Programs. We would issue a payment authorization number and return the form. Upon successful completion of the training and appropriate certifications the department will notify us and we will issue the reimbursement. Training programs conducted outside of the Regional Fire Schools and Connecticut Fire Academy will also be required to be approved as compliant and eligible for reimbursement. He said we're going to look at the key elements that the Career Chiefs have identified as the key components for the program. The legislation was based upon the individual being certified at the end of the training. It is very clear for Firefighter I but when it comes to recruit its Firefighter I and II which led to some discussions within the Subcommittee. Mr. Morrisette stated that Vice Chairman Kowalski brought up a question earlier about the funding. The way the funding was appropriated to the agency was as a direct line item which would mean it would lapse at the end of the fiscal year. However, the way the legislation reads and its intent is that the funding should be directed into the agency's Extension and Auxiliary Account which are non-lapsing accounts. He said someone made a mistake and it appears they're not willing to fix it although they said they would work on revising the language during the next legislative session. He said he asked OPM if it would be permissible to allow us to transfer the funds over to the non-lapsing account because we foresee, especially in the spring, many programs begin in the January February timeframe and they don't finish until late May into June which is our peak time for processing results. Any encumbered funds would lapse before we confirmed the student became certified and eligible for reimbursement. He said once the funds are

encumbered he would prefer to transfer them to a non lapsing account to ensure we can properly manage the funds.

The policy also provides for reimbursement at a level of 50% of the cost of training. It was decided that we would establish a cap and this maybe something that gets changed in the future because the level of funding increases next year to \$795,000. At the present time the proposed cap is established at a maximum rate of \$225 for Firefighter I and \$2625 for Recruit. The \$225 was by all indications agreed upon by the Regional fire schools in that their average published tuition will be \$450 for someone to take a Firefighter I course. If someone takes a course through a local department and they charge \$600 for the course, the maximum rate of reimbursement will be \$225 not \$300 which would be 50%. Mr. Morrisette said the final issue does relate specifically to Recruits and in discussions with representatives, Chief Levecchia who represented the Career Chiefs felt that most of them would prefer that we just invoice the department 50% of the cost. The procedure proposed will be when a candidate is sent to Recruit Firefighter training program here at the CFA the department will issue a purchase order for the full cost of the training program and when it comes time to actually invoice them we will do so at 50% of the cost. He said it would make the process easier for them as well as for us because it would be less paperwork. He said there is a lot more detail in the policy and he would like Commissioners to go through it today in detail and hopefully approve it so we can initiate the program soon.

Commissioner Nicol asked how much was the cost of the Recruit Firefighter Training program under the old schedule of 12 weeks.

Director of Training Piskura remarked that it was \$3309.

Commissioner Kowalski added that there was a lot of discussion at the Subcommittee about municipalities or departments like Hartford, Bridgeport and New Haven that conduct their own recruit training. He said the key is those departments' program have to be identified as consistent with the Recruit program conducted by the CFA and the students must achieve certification at the end of the training. He said if that gets accomplished then the department would be reimbursed up to 50% of the cost of the training up to the established cap.

A discussion on the policy followed with questions and answers.

Commissioner Walsh asked when the forms will be ready because his department has a class scheduled for September.

Mr. Morrisette replied that there is a note at the bottom of item 4.2 Prior Approval Process in the policy. He said we've been asked this questions often that there is a number of classes both Regional Schools and local programs that have started before we developed the policy. Therefore, the pre-approval process is waived for the period of time between when the legislation passed and October 1, 2007. He said it's our hope by next week or two the forms will be finished and we will begin disseminating the information. He said we had promised that we would get this out around September 1<sup>st</sup> although there are a lot of other September 1<sup>st</sup>. deadlines. He said it's our desire to have

everything in place as quickly as possible and we're going to keep things simple. He also said we're open to changes if something doesn't work.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to adopt the Entry Level Fire Service Training Reimbursement Policy prepared by the staff. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5b.) Adjunct Compensation Review Committee – Mr. Morrissette said as part of the Budget process he had submitted a request for funding to accommodate a salary (hourly rate) increase for our Adjunct Instructors. The request was approved and funding was provided. It amounts to an approximate 6% hourly rate increase for adjuncts. Our salary for adjuncts and part time employees is built into the job specifications which means we have to go and change the job specifications to actually provide the increase. He said internally in discussing this, it was brought to our attention by Deputy Director Mark Lewandowski that he had some concerns regarding current compensation provisions (ie., Prep Time, Mileage, Teaching Time, etc.) Therefore, if we're going to move forward with an increase we should look at all of the issues in a comprehensive manner and address them all at once. Mr. Morrissette asked if there are any members of the Commission that would like to participate on a Committee to review the compensation issue.

Commissioner Mitchell asked if these are non-bargaining unit staff.

Mr. Morrissette replied yes.

Commissioners Nicol, Mitchell and Brady volunteered to serve on the Committee.

Moving to item 5c.) CFA Curriculum Development Projects (Handout) – Mr. Piskura stated this issue ties back to the previous conversation. He said we've recently hired 32 new adjunct instructors. They start at the Fire Service Instructor salary level I which is \$18 an hour. In order to receive the level II salary of \$20 an hour they must teach for the CFA a minimum of 80 hours a year and complete a project. This project could be curriculum development or enhancement, construction of a prop or any other items that he or the Deputy Director approves for the betterment of the CFA. He distributed a Curriculum Work In Progress Report and said that it reflects curriculum only. Most of the new hires gravitate towards either a favorite curriculum or enhancing an existing one. We've hired 32 adjuncts but this report only reflects approved projects to date. One of the exciting ones as far as a new topic is Big Box Retail Firefighting being done by Joe Coppola a Lieutenant from Norwalk fire department. He said as Commissioners review the list they will see that there is a lot of good stuff happening and it's really rewarding to see people stepping to the plate and wanting to satisfy the requirement. He said we are enforcing the requirement that if people don't initiate a project by the end of one year of employment then they sever their employment with the CFA.

Commissioner Kowalski said it looks like of the 32 new hires only eight or nine have stepped up to the task.

Mr. Piskura replied that letters have been mailed to the others advising them of the policies.

Moving to item 5d.) Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Plan Update – Mr. Morrisette introduced William Higgins who over the past year has been working with Kerry Flaherty serving as durational employees funded by federal grant funding provided by DEMHS. He said as Commissioners may recall we had received a \$150,000 grant from DEMHS a year ago and it was divided into two areas. The first area is to provide the overall NIMS training coordination and the other was a joint proposal by the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association and himself to establish a full time durational position to coordinate the Statewide Fire Plan. He said most Commissioners are aware that the Fire Plan is a direct responsibility of his and while the Plan has moved forward under the goodness of many volunteers such as the regional and county coordinators as well as representatives from the Chiefs Association. There were many projects and programs that we need to move forward to bring the Plan to the next level. He said we were fortunate in that some of the funding has gone to Mr. Higgins assisted by Kerry Flaherty on a part time basis to serve that role as our Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Plan Coordinators. He said he's asked Mr. Higgins to come in and provide an overview to the Commission.

Mr. Higgins thanked the Commission for allowing him to speak. He distributed a document outlining the position status. He gave an overview of the duties he assisted by Kerry Flaherty were tasked with and what they accomplished along with their future goals. He said he didn't realize how much work had to be done but they were able to revise and update the Statewide Fire Rescue Plan to be NIMS compliant and created a 75 page Resource Deployment Guide to assist Regional Dispatch Centers and Command/Communication vehicles. He distributed a copy of the Resource Guide which is broken down by County along with maps of the taskforces. The Guide also contains information on the regional dispatch centers, regional hazardous materials teams, and decontamination and foam trailers. Mr. Higgins asked if anyone had questions.

Mr. Morrisette added that recently he, Chief Richards, Chief Varney and Mr. Higgins met. He said one of the best kept secrets within the state's fire service is this Plan. While they've had multiple discussions at the monthly meetings of the county and regional coordinators we need to bump this up to the next level. He said some may recall right after 9/11/01 there was an invite to fire chiefs or their designees to an evening meeting held at the Police Academy to lay out some of what was underway at that time. He said Chief Tom Webber was heading our efforts with the Statewide Fire Plan so we were able to layout for everyone where we were at that time although the Plan was in its infancy prior to 9/11. He said while Mr. Higgins has been attending meetings on a regional basis, we realize the time to hold another meeting of the fire service executives is fast approaching and well overdue. Sometime in the near future we hope to hold a meeting. Laying out an agenda for that the meeting would exceed a full day so to start we'd like to plan for a half a day or evening meeting followed by more detailed sessions. He thanked Mr. Higgins and others for all their efforts.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Chairman Carozza called for a motion to go into Executive Session for personnel matters.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Stankye to go into Executive Session. Motion carried.

The Commission went into Executive Session at 11:00 am.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to close the Executive Session with no action taken. Motion carried

The Commission adjourned the Executive Session at 11:55 am.

Chairman Carozza asked if there are any other matters to be raised by Commissioner or staff.

Mr. Morrisette announced that Michael Varney Chief of Ellington Fire Department was selected by *Fire Chief Magazine* as the Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year and was recognized at the recent IAFC conference in Atlanta. He said we will post something on the agency's website recognizing him for this honor.

Mr. Morrisette reported that September 1<sup>st</sup> is our deadline for Technical Budget Adjustments for FY09. He said although we're fairly limited in what we are permitted to submit, he'll probably be looking at some minor proposals. He also said we're required to submit a Budget Reduction Option and Budget Expansion Options by October 14<sup>th</sup>. He reported he was not sure if we'll be required to extend that to the Regional Fire Schools but he wanted the Commission to be aware.

Mr. Morrisette also reported that he hopes to have the annual report finalized by tomorrow as the CSFA needs it by Thursday morning to go to print. It was his goal to have it completed prior to today but we've been too busy with other issues.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to adjourn the meeting.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.

Dated:

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