



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



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

Vice Chairman Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Brammer, Haber, Milewski, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye and Wilkinson. Staff members Becker, Lewis, Morrissette, O'Neil, Piechota, and Piskura were present.

There were no guests in attendance at the meeting.

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

There was a Moment of Silence in honor of the late Chief Kenneth Jeffery.

Introduction of Yvonne Lewis as Executive Secretary.

Introduction of Wallace Becker as Provisional Trainer.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Milewski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2003 Meeting. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski moved to agenda item 3.) Staff Report for the period December 15, 2003 through January 14, 2004. Mr. Morrissette stated he had one correction to the statistics outlined in the monthly report for the 800 FIRE LINE program. The statistics noted were repeated from the previous month, the actual statistics for the month should have been one call received, one call acted upon. Corrections will be documented for next month's meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the Staff Report as amended for the period December 15, 2003 through January 14, 2004. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski moved to item 4 a.) Unfinished Business - Mr. Morrissette gave a brief update regarding the budget. He reported that he was advised by the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) that the agency would be impacted by an allotment reduction in the amount of \$11,739 in our Other Expenses Account. He stated that from an expenditure standpoint, the agency has been very conservative in trying to forecast the impact of potential reductions throughout the current fiscal year. Therefore, this reduction

would not place us in any type of jeopardy but there are concerns for continued reductions depending upon the status of the overall state budget situation. Additionally, he stated that the Governor's proposed Budget would be coming out with the opening of the Legislative Session on February 4th. OPM Secretary Marc Ryan scheduled a briefing for agencies on February 3rd. At that time, we would be appraised of any specific issues that would impact the agency.

Moving to item 4b.) Staffing Update - Mr. Morrisette reported that we have been fortunate in moving forward with the filling of two positions and stressed that Wally Becker, the new Trainer, has been hired on a provisional basis. He stated that we have approval for a second Trainer position and have already begun to advertise both positions in the upcoming Instructors Newsletter. He would like to expedite the overall process with the permanent filling of two Trainer positions within our Training Division.

Commissioner Nicol asked if the agency was losing two positions, the Receptionist and a Trainer. Mr. Morrisette replied that they are already gone and are no longer counted as positions on the agency's personnel count. There is no hope in the near term to regain these position so they appear to be permanent losses.

Moving to item 4c.) CSFA Education Committee Update - Mr. Morrisette asked if any of the Education Committee representatives had anything to offer other than the fact that the Committee is scheduled to meet this Thursday evening. Commissioner Wilkinson stated that unfortunately there has been no real progress thus far. The Committee met in December and an attempt was made to have a strategy meeting with Representative Betty Boukus to plan a course of action for the upcoming Legislative Session. The meeting unfortunately had to be cancelled due to circumstances that came upon very short notice. The Committee has been exchanging drafts of letters to be sent to Legislators over the next week. Chairman Hawkins will be sending letters to Representative Boukus and all of the Legislators, both in the House and Senate, that had signed on in support of the bill reinforcing the importance of the issue and how failure to move it forward will severely detract from fire fighter training statewide.

Commissioner Stankye added that we were scheduled to have a visit by Department of Public Works Commissioner Fleming to two of the fire schools last Sunday. He cancelled at the last minute although he continues to have interest in our projects.

Moving to item 4d.) Certification Regulations Update - Mr. Morrisette briefly stated that many months ago the Commission approved revisions to our agency certification regulations. Upon approval by the Commission, the amendments and additions were sent both to the Office of Policy and Management and to the Governor's Office for review and approval by their legal staff. That is normally a lengthy process in itself. We just received letters from both indicating that the regulations have been reviewed and approved with some technical adjustments being recommended. Commissioner Nicol added that they have a fairly tedious system to get it to the Legislature for approval. Mr. Morrisette commented that it is finally moving to the right entity for action but it would probably be several more months before they are formally acted upon by the

Legislature's Regulation Review Committee. He offered copies of the proposed regulations to any new Commissioners.

Moving to item 4e.) Fire Service Instructor Re-certification - Mr. Piechota stated that after some discussion at the November meeting it was the suggestion of the Commission to bring on board the users who might most be impacted. Commissioner Nicol and Ouellette have brought this to the attention of the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association (CFDIA). They have formed a Committee scheduled to meet tomorrow to begin discussions. It is the hope that they will come up with a set of recommendations and bring it back to the Commission for review and consideration. There seems to be a fairly high level of support from the instructors. Commissioner Nicol added that everything was positive, there are just some questions of what the mechanics would be. Mr. Piechota responded that hopefully by February or March the latest, the Committee will present some feedback and recommendations on how the process might work.

Commissioner Ouellette added that the reaction from the CFDIA was certainly positive, however, we feel as instructors we can be key supporters of the idea if it is positive. We also are keeping in mind that we're not the only organization in the fire service. There is hope that there would be input from all the fire service organizations.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he agreed with Commissioner Ouellette and he is happy that the CFDIA has formed a Committee to facilitate a review.

Moving to item 4 f.) 2004 Fire Service Legislative Agenda - Mr. Morrisette reported that the Connecticut State Fire Fighters Association (CSFFA) held their Annual Legislative Meeting in Wethersfield last month. From his perspective, although most of the organizations were represented at the meeting, it seemed like there was a little bit of a disconnect. There weren't any formal proposals in writing as in previous years. There was a lot of discussion about issues such as the Training Bill, Regional Fire School Initiative and others. He is concerned that in the coming Legislative Session that we may be lacking some focus and that people tend to think someone else may have the same proposal. He recommended that each representative of the Commission go back and have discussions with their own Legislative Committees and if they are contemplating any Legislative proposals they should not rely on another organization to propose it.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he was never aware that during the short Legislative Session, like the one coming up this year, individual bills couldn't be proposed by individual Legislators they must come from a Committee. Therefore, if anyone has something of interest it has to be given to the Committee leadership rather than individual Legislators.

Commissioner Kowalski explained that the Fire Marshals Association is seeking the adoption of NFPA 1 as a state Fire Prevention Code. The chiefs and instructors will be very interested as it gives a lot of tools to use in Fire Prevention to facilitate the management of inspections and citations. We are going to take all of the Statutory

requirements that are currently in print and put them into Regulation. There are plans to give a presentation to the Chief's Association and other groups to provide overviews of NFPA 1. There has been much discussion relating to the code revision cycle, not only on the state level, but the local level as well. Also, the Chief's Association is planning to go again this year with the support of the Public Safety Committee to facilitate sprinklers in single family homes. There were a lot of fatalities this year due to fires in single family home and down the road the more protection we have for these houses the less fires will occur. We were advised that we have substantial support from the Public Safety Committee on NFPA 1 with the exception of Connecticut. He noted that every state in New England right now is NFPA 1. He advised members that if their Legislative group within their organization has any initiatives, they should take it to the Joint Council.

Commissioner Nicol asked whether NFPA 1 was presented last Session. Commission Kowalski replied that the proposal got a lot of billing last year, they requested the document be proposed to replace the Fire Safety Code with the NFPA 1 safety components. We are working parallel with adopting NFPA 1 as a Fire Prevention Code as opposed to a Fire Safety Code. The Fire Safety Code will still stand as components of NFPA 1. There are a lot of negotiations currently ongoing and the proposal has support from the Building Industry and Architects. This year we have two separate documents, a Fire Safety Code and Fire Prevention Code.

Commissioner Nicol commented about an article that appeared in the Waterbury newspaper relating to the Limited Access Highway program. He stated that the Chairman of the town Board of Finance in Middlebury picked up on the Limited Access funding elimination and made contact with the town Fire Chief and possibly the press. There were some discussions at the Board of Finance meeting about pursuing Legislation to get a bill introduced through Committee to replace part or all of the \$230,000 that was eliminated.

Moving to item 5 a.) New Business – Commission Representative to the CSFA Education Committee to replace Commissioner Vendetta. Mr. Morrisette stated that we have a request from the State Firefighters Association Education Committee for a second representative to replace Commissioner Vendetta on that Committee. Time commitment does vary and at some points last year, they were meeting possibly twice a month usually in the evening. With the Session underway, they would probably meet more frequently and their next meeting is scheduled for this Thursday evening. If anyone is interested in serving on this Committee we would be happy to have you.

Commissioner Nicol volunteered to serve on the Committee.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Milewski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to appoint Commissioner Nicol to serve on the CSFA Education Committee. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 b.) Service Vouchers. Mr. Morrisette advised the Commission that included in the Commission packages was a copy of a letter that was received from OPM

Secretary Marc Ryan to the Legislative Leadership regarding training support for Volunteer Fire Fighters. In that letter, it was proposed that \$100,000 be transferred from a Federal grant managed by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to the Commission for providing some relief to those Fire Companies that previously benefited from the Limited Access Highway Program. He stated that it wasn't the intent to replace the program, but it was to recognize that there was little notice regarding the elimination of the Limited Access Highway Statute and to provide financial relief to the departments that relied on it for funding. He asked for discussion today and stated that there was no equitable way to distribute the funding other than to take the number of Fire Companies that benefited from the program and divide that number into the total funding. He believes that some Fire Companies will be unhappy because they had received significant sums on an annual basis where others have not submitted a claim in two or three years. In December, OPM got back to us stating they preferred a service voucher approach as opposed to a one-time check so it could be tied into training support. Our best estimate is that there are approximately 165 eligible Fire Companies statewide that previously participated in the program. That works out to a little more than \$600 per Company. One concern is that we could miss someone who had not been on the books for a number of years. Our Fiscal Office did research back 5 years and this is the best number we could come up with. OPM would like to clear their books by the end of the calendar year, so December 31, 2004 would be the deadline for Companies to use their vouchers. Our business office could develop an accounting system to track the funding. The other request received from OPM was that we move this process forward as quickly as possible, preferably no later than March. In speaking with some members of the Public Safety Committee, there is strong interest to try to restore the funding for the original program.

Commissioner Ouellette stated his prime reason for supporting this initiative is that it is an opportunity for us to show our customers that we are providing service to them, whether they take it in training, certification or resources from the bookstore. He thinks it is an excellent idea.

Commissioner Nicol agreed and asked whether there would be any problems if a Company did not take advantage of their voucher by the December 2004 deadline. Mr. Morrissette replied that once these funds were appropriated to DSS, there is no requirement by the Federal Government that the funds be spent by the end of December, 2004, so it would seem like this is an OPM specific request. He also stated that there is still a question of when we provide a final accounting report and whether any unspent funds would need to go back. We need to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DSS to outline the specifics.

Commissioner Kowalski suggested that it would be to our advantage to keep this separate from the limited access highway fund and utilize this as a grant and offer it to departments versus the Companies that facilitate responses to the highways. Mr. Morrissette said that segregation is important as there is already some confusion out there. He indicated that he had drafted an article for the February edition of 1st

Responder News and will continue to provide correct information. He does believe that the department issue will complicate matters and favors funding the eligible Companies.

Commissioner Wilkinson commented that if our Fiscal Office has some viable records that go back 5 years, it would be within our jurisdiction to use those statistics to establish a list of eligible entities. Unfortunately, if a Fire Company from 8 years ago showed up they would not be considered eligible. Commissioner Stankye agrees.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Haber authorizing the staff to enter into a MOU with DSS for the \$100,000 grant. The grant would be issued in the form of a voucher for services provided by the Commission. The staff will identify from the 5 year period a list of Fire Companies that have responded. Motion carried.

Commissioner Nicol had a postscript comment that possibly any new Legislative proposals reenacting the limited access highway program may include career departments. Commissioner Wilkinson added that if an initiative is put forth to resurrect the program, he encourages the fire service to consider career fire departments as recipients.

Moving to item 5 c.) Governor's Domestic Preparedness Senior Steering Council. Mr. Morrisette stated that yesterday the Steering Council met to review and adopt the state's strategy for the next round of federal funding. The fire service had a number of representatives present. He felt, in general, that the strategy generally met the fire services needs. There were a number of issues that still continue to concern us specifically, the training issue. It is the strategy of Division of Homeland Security to continue the utilization of University of Connecticut to facilitate the training component. The fire service representatives on the Senior Steering Council will monitor activities closely.

Commissioner Brammer questioned the allotment of monies being distributed to departments under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. He stated that there were grants being awarded to departments to purchase the same equipment. He also stated there are a number of towns in his area that are second time recipients of grants where a number of other towns did not receive any money. He questioned the process of the grant awards and said that the notification letters that are received for rejected grant requests are too vague and they cannot tell you where you failed. He indicated that he has made contact with Congresswoman Nancy Johnson who has agreed to establish a Committee to try to review how these grants are being awarded.

Mr. Piskura responded that he actually participated in the criteria development sessions that FEMA had and they are consistent in not responding to individual applications. It may take a Congressional push to change FEMA's process. He also said when he is there he constantly voiced the angst that exists amongst the fire service community as to why their grant was rejected. FEMA has categorically responded that they do not have the time or initiative to respond to specific communities as to why an application was

rejected. Commissioner Brammer said he did not agree with their process. Mr. Morrisette asked whether Commissioner Brammer had met with any of his neighboring communities that have been successful to review their grant request. He replied that they went as far as to have them review their applications.

Mr. Piskura replied that he would advise against hiring professional grant writers as it actually works against you. He explained that the grants are reviewed and ranked by firefighters from all over the state so it is better not to use professional grant writers. He offered his assistance with the grant review process.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Brammer and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to send a letter to FEMA requesting to expand the scope of the assistance to firefighter's grant program to include the rationale for rejection of an application and send it to the applicant at the time of the rejection. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stankye asked whether some of the departments listed on the grant award summary could have received one, two or three grants. Mr. Morrisette replied not in the same fiscal year with the exception of those awarded a grant are also eligible for a fire prevention grant.

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

Moving to item 7) Matters to be raised by Commissioners and Staff.

Commissioner Stankye stated he was asked to extend a thank you on behalf of the Derby Police Department for the assistance extended to them for their training offered by Joe Mercieri, Haz-Mat Instructor. Mr. Mercieri assisted the police department in setting up a Haz-Mat course to train police, fire, and National Guard personnel as a union for the first time. He has been more than cooperative and they are more than thankful. He is a credit to this organization.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked about the Decontamination Trailers whether they were being delivered and what the status was on a plan to provide tow vehicles. Mr. Morrisette replied that to his knowledge there were four trailers being held at Connecticut Fire Apparatus due to a legal issue. He indicated that he thought there was a meeting scheduled today regarding the tow vehicles. A number of fire chiefs are in attendance to try to finalize and agree on the specifications. He stated that as noted in the staff report, the agency was activated by the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) with the elevation of the national threat level to Orange back in December. He also reported that on New Year's Eve, he was tasked with having to contact all the host departments for the Decontamination Trailers to obtain a status report on their availability because of specific concerns. He said that his calls indicated that about two thirds of the units were available to respond immediately while the others were either not available due to a lack of tow vehicle or incomplete training.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked Mr. Morrisette to share the dispatching protocol for the Foam Trailers. Mr. Morrisette said first, a new protocol was established for the Decontamination Trailers. The dispatch contact for these units will be through Tolland County Dispatch. They have the protocol in place. On the Foam Trailer side, we are still utilizing the Department of Environmental Protection's 24-hour line.

Director of Certification Fred Piechota stated the New England Fire Service Training weekend took place a few weekends ago and was well attended. He reported that Connecticut was extremely well represented and it was a very rewarding weekend. It was a different program format this year with some guest speakers and workshops. There were about 160 registrants with approximately 75 from Connecticut. We were able to offer Fire Marshal credit for some of the programs and that may have helped. He stated that the Training Director and his staff did a tremendous job in getting the flyers out in a very timely fashion and that contributed to a very successful weekend.

Commissioner Kowalski asked whether there was any more feedback about the live fire requirements for Firefighter I and II. Mr. Piechota responded that we are going to redraft the current form so that we will be able to track where people received their training. If we do that for about 6 months we should have a good idea of where they're being signed off. We are also going to request entities tell us when they intend to conduct the live fire evolutions of the training program. We plan to observe these live burns, so we can satisfy ourselves that an appropriate evaluation is being conducted.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that he and Commissioner Ouellette are working on a Subcommittee on agency fees. There is a meeting planned for February 23rd.

Commissioner Ouellette commended Fred Piechota and Adam Piskura for their efforts at the New England Fire Service weekend and stated that Connecticut certainly did their share. He also commended Adam Piskura and the training division for a professional job on producing the calendar. He asked if any consideration is being given in the fee for those interested to participate in the Pathway Haz-mat Technician Program. Mr. Piskura responded that Joe Mercieri is working on the staffing sheets and once that is complete we would develop individual prices for the components.

Mr. Morrisette reported that a group called the Connecticut Statewide Network of Honor Guards was seeking sponsorship from the Commission to provide this service statewide to those departments requesting. He stated that a formal presentation by James McLoughlin would be forthcoming. This group would like to provide a network of Honor Guards and needs some financial support. There are two components, planning and ceremonial. He also said he supports the initiative and that it would be an asset to our agency. He asked the Commission to offer sponsorship.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Ouellette and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brammer that the Commission participates and sponsors the Connecticut Statewide Network of Honor Guards Program.

Commissioner Ouellette commented that he had the opportunity to witness the Honor Guard and he thinks it is a tribute to the fire service as well as the families.

There was no further discussion on the issue. Motion carried.

Mr. Morrissette reminded the Commissioners that Yvonne Lewis is now available to assist them and they should feel free to utilize her, as they need to. He stated that we would send her email address to those Commissioners that we have an email address on file.

Mr. Piskura formally stated he is available to assist with narratives for the 2004 FEMA grants. He said that he would not write the grant but would be glad to review the narrative. He stated that two Gordon Graham seminars are scheduled for Milford and Manchester. Early registration takes off \$20 of the \$80 tuition. FEMA workshops for the Assistance to Firefighters grant program will be held again this year. Notices will be sent out to chiefs and elected officials.

Mr. Piskura talked about Connecticut Fire Officers weekend. He mentioned that security is very tight and emphasized that people should plan to take the bus this year. He said arrangements would be made for any number of buses that are needed. Mr. Piskura also stated that we are in the process of solidifying specifications for our rescue truck. He said the truck is slated for delivery in May. He mentioned that many meetings ago there were talks of an initiative around the state regarding building a national public safety complex in Connecticut. The Commission had originally sent a letter of interest and support. The group would now like to turn the letters of interest into action. He stated that he and Mr. Morrissette had a discussion and decided to ask the principals to attend the next meeting and offer a presentation. He went on to say the group is now looking at efficiencies and revenue. He stated that the Commission needs more details about the proposal and should provide more structured direction to him. The group is moving ahead rapidly and is now looking for a commitment.

Commissioner Nicol asked where the agency fits into this initiative. Mr. Piskura replied that the overall plan has evolved and they even spoke about moving the operations of this Academy. Every facet of public safety would be represented at this new facility.

Commissioner Ouellette added that the report from Commissioner Stankye about Joe Mercieri from various agencies is certainly a tribute to this agency especially when we're trying to make friends and pull in some funding. He stated that it would be a good idea to have some form of recognition for Mr. Mercieri, maybe in the form of a letter from the Commission. Mr. Morrissette agreed.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Dated: _____

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