



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



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**MINUTES OF THE JUNE 28, 2005 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Vice Chairman Kevin Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:42 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye, Walsh and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewandowski, Lewis, Morrissette, O'Neil, Piechota and Piskura were present.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that due to the lack of a quorum no votes could be taken and that the meeting would proceed on an informational basis.

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

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrissette reported that yesterday final budget information was received from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). It appears that the budget passed by the General Assembly was relatively equivalent to the Governor's proposed budget. He distributed a copy of the budget document and said in addition to a \$3,000 decrease in our Other Expense Account there were two additional adjustments called hold backs. These hold backs total \$28,130 and were levied against our Personal Services and Other Expense Accounts. He noted, the most significant issue was the addition of \$100,000 as payments to volunteer fire companies. Specific budget implementer language was added to address concerns he had previously raised with OPM. The language authorizes the State Fire Administrator to enact a Voucher or Payment program so it will be a continuation of the current program where eligible fire companies have the option to either receive a direct payment or a voucher for fee based agency services or materials from the Bookstore. He said he's not sure as yet the exact amount of the payment but there is probable going to be a slight increase because he is aware of at least two fire departments that indicated through reorganizations, they no longer operate separate fire companies.

Regarding staffing, as noted we experienced Jim Scavetta's resignation in the facilities area and have down graded the position to one which will allow us some greater flexibility in terms of the actual type of work the person can perform. We have gone through the SEBAC layoff list which we're required to do and mailed certified letters to the three names on the list giving them a deadline to respond back to us of which there

were no takers. We then mailed letters to 6 individuals identified on a transfer list in addition to publishing the employment opportunity notice on the list serv and our Web page. Currently, we are aware of 4 or 5 individuals who may be interested in the position and they have until June 30th to indicate their interest with a resume or state application form. We plan to schedule interviews and make a selection for the position as soon as possible. Mr. Morrissette also reported that Peter O'Neil is currently working on filling approximately 10 part-time positions through the state personnel system and will look to fill 30 to 40 vacant positions within the next several months.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson reported that the Education Committee continues to meet and met last week on June 23rd in Wethersfield. The agenda dealt with the status of the various projects. He said there has been some progress with the land acquisition and working with the DOT folks for the Hartford County project. The Committee feels that the size is adequate for their needs and they also need to work through the fact that there is a possibility of an annual lease fee. As far as the Wolcott School is concerned, the college is doing a white paper for the input of the chiefs in the area and the report is that the trustees will be meeting in July to discuss the property for that school. Willimantic School has a verbal commitment for a 3 year lease with a 2 year option on the current property. He said as reported previously, the land owner for the property that the Willimantic School sits upon is unwilling to sell, but they have been able to negotiate a lease that will buy them some time while they go through the property acquisition process. The Valley School will be seeking assistance from the Department of Public Works (DPW) in respect to locating property. DPW and the principals of the New Haven Fire School met with the Architect and Engineers. They basically brought the Architect and Engineer back into reality and now within budget and include all of the facilities that they wanted to include. The indoor storage building that may ultimately serve as an indoor CPAT facility is still part of the project. Donald Ouillette from DPW said that his current plan is to be on the Bond agenda to move forward the money for the construction in New Haven. He is also waiting for the necessary legislative changes to be enacted that will allow DPW to purchase property and will then move forward with the land acquisition for the Valley and Willimantic sites. As soon as that is complete, he will begin working on the design process for the facilities here at the Fire Academy. He anticipates that we will probably expend the \$10 million that has been allocated which is a good thing because then we will have some tangible results to show and it appears that all the right people are still in place to provide additional funding as requested. The next meeting is scheduled for July 28th.

Commissioner Nicol added that they also talked about the next money requested will be for FY07 and will probably be in the amount of \$10 million which will keep the project moving.

Mr. Morrissette also reported specifically regarding the Hartford County property. He said that we've had discussions with OPM regarding the appropriate way to pursue funding regarding the land lease. Fiscal impact could be around \$30,000 - \$40,000 per year. He said he was told by our Budget Analyst that we should pursue the funding from

OPM through our mid-term budget adjustment which OPM will probably solicit within the next several months. He said if we had a quorum today, he would ask the Commission to authorize him to pursue this although we still have some time. Initially, we will have to meet with the Bradley Airport Board as early as maybe July or August to begin the process. We can probably get through the first year on just a Memorandum of Agreement which would allow DPW to have surveyors, engineers and contractors on site to begin design type work. We will pursue the meeting with Bradley to indicate our continued interest and ask DPW to negotiate the lease on our behalf.

Commissioner Stankye stated that he has a problem with the rationale of why a lease payment has to be made on this land. He said the regional fire schools receive their funding from the State. If DOT wants money for lease it still comes from the State.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that the FAA has certain governance rights and approval for projects on airport property. Because of the grants DOT receives from the FAA, there is certain language that apparently exists that requires DOT to obtain fair market return on all property leases. He said he was told the days of the hand shake and dollar a year lease are gone and it comes down to what is reasonable commercial lease payments that other entities are charged. The lease rates range from 50 to 75 cents per square foot.

A brief discussion followed.

Moving to item 4c.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrissette reported that we had a close out date of June 15th for the service vouchers. Phone calls were made to all eligible fire companies who had not contacted us encouraging them to expend their funds. Although we've made contact with just about all the fire companies, there is still approximately \$19,000 unexpended. He said with the addition of the \$100,000 in the coming fiscal year, we'll have the entire year to administer the funding. As soon as we're able to clean up the bookkeeping and report to Department of Social Services (DSS) regarding the past grant program, we will begin communicating the new funding to eligible fire companies.

Moving to item 4d.) National Certification Registration Options – Mr. Morrissette said last month Mr. Piechota had given a general overview of national certification options and offered some considerations for the Commission. He was asked to put together a document for review by the Commission and is presenting it today.

Mr. Piechota remarked that this is built on the estimated cost to register everyone and the new fee structure that the Pro Board just initiated of \$6.50 per person. He said that there is no operational need for this to occur because people can register on their own; but he thought it might be added value for the Commission to offer this to firefighters in Connecticut. Approximately 29% of the persons who are eligible from the Pro Board and 17% from IFSAC have availed themselves of the opportunity to do it on their own so it's a fairly low number but this would be a way to give a little bit back to firefighters.

Vice Chairman Kowalski said that once everyone has an opportunity to review the document and take it back to their respective constituents for feedback, perhaps a vote can be done at the next meeting.

Commissioner Nicol asked how this would affect on-line registration.

Mr. Piechota explained that if this was implemented, we would electronically register everyone who becomes certified in the state to both the Pro Board and IFSAC for the appropriate accredited levels by sending electronic files to them. These persons would be immediately added to the National database for national registration so they would immediately receive a national certification and we would indicate on our state certificate an IFSAC and or Pro Board seal with a unique number on the certificate itself showing that they received the national certification. One certificate would have all 3 seals; state, IFSAC and Proboard and the database would be electronically updated immediately.

Commissioner Stankye mentioned that at last month's meeting there was a discussion about a Hazardous Materials (Haz Mat) Technician course with Stamford Fire Department and Fairfield County Haz Mat team and inquired whether we had an opportunity to meet with the Stamford Fire Department.

Mr. Morrisette stated there was a delay for about a week and asked Mr. Piskura to report specifically as it relates to the agreement with the Fairfield County Haz Mat Team. Following our meeting we attempted to contact Chief McCarthy to discuss the issues with the MOU but a week had gone by before we finally connected.

Mr. Piskura stated that he discussed the elements of the MOU with Chief McCarthy and he emailed the document to him. The Chief signed the MOU and sent it back. Although the MOU was signed after the fact, the training was conducted accordingly and we had a training Program Manger observe at least 3 classes that were conducted as we expected.

Mr. Morrisette added that the agreement was between the agency and the Fairfield County Haz Mat Team not with the Stamford Fire Department. This is based upon the position that Connecticut Homeland Security previously had passed direct grants of equipment to the team. He also said there was discussion regarding meeting with Chief McGrath in Stamford. This was somewhat contingent on what was taking place with the MOU.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if the Fairfield Instructor issue had been resolved.

Mr. Morrisette reported that he and Mr. Piechota met with the Chief, Deputy Chief and the Training Officer where they discussed a whole host of issues. He said it was a positive meeting with reaffirmation of what our commitments were to each other. He also said he felt it would be more appropriate for them to meet with training staff at some future time to discuss their desire to conduct a Fire Service Instructor program. They

offered to come up to CFA and a meeting was scheduled for late last week but they called to cancel due to a conflict. The meeting will be rescheduled.

Moving to item 5a.) Safety Stand Down Report – Mr. Lewandowski provided an overview of the agency's efforts as it relates to the Safety Stand Down called for by the IAFFC. He said Adjuncts were notified via email and we had approximately 13 attendees both full time staff and Adjuncts. The meeting ran from 9 am through 3 pm and the sixteen points set forth by the national group were discussed. We reviewed injuries that occurred at the CFA and we've been very fortunate that the majority of incidents here are sprains, strains, minimal broken bones and some minor second degree burns caused by steam. He also said they identified problems and what we have to do to correct them. There were a lot of questions and everyone thought it was very positive. We will review our policies and procedures and get that out to our people because a lot of what goes on whether it's safety or operational hinges back to that. There was a lengthy discussion about the heat and the flash over simulator which was very enlightening to the group. He said he hopes to have a summary of the day's discussion available for the next meeting.

Commissioner Johnson arrived at 10:23 AM.

Moving to item 5b.) Distance Learning Initiative – Mr. Piechota reported that as a result of a request that Mr. Piskura received from the National Fire Academy (NFA) regarding the possibility of the agency hosting an online training initiative, we made contact with the CT Distance Learning Consortium whose sole purpose is to serve as a resource and to create online initiatives for higher education, specifically state agencies. There is a fee for these services. Initial discussion regarding hosting online training led to further discussions with the potential for a great deal of cooperation and collaboration. Looking down the road they could become the agency's online registration, training, bookstore sales vehicle if we choose to do so. Any initiative that would be our avenue out to the internet from an operational standpoint could possibly be done through this agency. Our current website hosted by the state is good for information but it doesn't work interactively for us, so we really can't go online and register for a course communicating through database. We are doing some small projects with them as a pilot test. One of these projects has to do with registration services for CPAT, as well as the ability to automatically update results of the CPAT exam to our database from the Meriden site via the internet. Another initiative being worked on is the ability to do certification look-ups as previously discussed with the Commission. It's a new initiative and we're enthusiastic and optimistic that it will do good things for the agency.

Mr. Piskura added that this Distance Learning Initiative group is the same people affiliated with CT Train. He said we're also seeing possibilities of making adjustments to CT Train to be a more useful tool for us because currently people are registering for classes that we can't capture the data for or it's unreliable. While we're very happy with where this goes and what it may cost us, there is also a relationship with people that are already providing the service for us through people that are employed in the Department

of Public Health (DPH). He said he sees some good things coming out of this relationship in a lot of different directions.

Mr. Morrissette added that the most refreshing thing is their “can do” attitude. After dealing with the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) for many years you get a lot of promises which rarely materialize. Our agency having no dedicated IT staffing needs support, not roadblocks to progress.

Commissioner Ouellette inquired what agency the group falls under.

Mr. Morrissette remarked they fall under State Board of Academic Affairs. They and Charter Oak State College are the two units within the State Board of Academic Affairs.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if they provide technical services.

Mr. Piechota said they would provide the technical backend to make everything happen for us. They have computer servers that would allow things to happen in a secure way and provide 24 hour, 7 day a week technical help services which is really big. They also have designers and developers on staff so we could take a training division course appropriate for online delivery and give it to their designers and they would create or modify the course to be presented online.

A brief question and answer period followed.

Moving to item 5c.) Bookstore Direct Sales – Mr. Piskura referenced a handout called Fire Protection Publication (FPP) and Fire Service Liaison April 2005 Sales and May 2005 Sales and said he wanted to make the Commission aware of what we’re trying to achieve in the Bookstore. He explained that the reports reflect from the publishers’ standpoint purchases CFA made at wholesale prices. This is not a sales sheet from our bookstore; it is what our bookstore purchased from Fire Protection Publications (FPP) at Oklahoma State University. The reason he brought this up as a discussion item is to show how a percentage of customers from our state go directly to the publisher for retail purchases. The report showed that CFA wholesale purchases for April is \$6,872.40 and FPP sales is \$1,670.30 and what that means is those are customers from within CT that went directly to FPP and made retail purchases. He said that figure represents \$1,670.30 in lost sales that should have been done through the Bookstore. While it’s actually not a tremendously negative number we’ve gone through a lot of expensive marketing efforts such as mailing posters to every fire department in the state in addition to multiple mailings with promotions of the Bookstore activities and its existence trying to capture the business in Connecticut. Not everyone may like the CFA bookstore and some may have misperceptions of what the bookstore has, but we’ve invested funding in marketing campaign over the past 3-4 years in trying to penetrate CT Fire service to let them know the Bookstore is an asset. The CFA Bookstore is a distributor of FPP and that means we are the face of FPP in Connecticut so if people don’t know where to go to get documents and publications the CFA Bookstore is the place to go. He also said there are specific

circumstances where someone might contact the Bookstore for a certain amount of publication that we might not have but we are capable of making arrangements to have either the entire purchase dropped shipped directly from the publishers or we can do partial shipment and back it up. He wanted members to be aware of our efforts in promoting the Bookstore and remarked that anything Commissioners can do to promote the existence of that will help expand the Bookstore. Profits from sales go back to supporting agency activities.

Commissioner Kowalski commented that in looking at the figures and comparing them to all the other states he would not sell our group short because we've done a tremendous job. He also said Connecticut is one of the highest ratios on the document and certainly whatever sales got away will probably happen anyway and there are only 1 or 2 states that are doing a better sales ratio than us. He said he visits the Bookstore when it's open and sees a lot of traffic come in and it looks really good. We've been doing an excellent job and he encouraged that we continue with the marketing that we've been doing.

A discussion period followed.

Moving to item 5d.) FY 05 Annual Report - Mr. Morrisette said we should be receiving guidance for the development of our FY 05 Annual Report. He said usually at this meeting he would request authorization by the Commission to draft the report with assistance from the staff since it is historically submitted prior to our next Commission meeting. We'll be working on that report over the next 30 to 45 days and will try to get a draft to members prior to final submission to the Governor.

Moving to item 5e.) Summer Meeting Schedule – Mr. Morrisette reported that at this month's meeting we typically let the Commission know that unless necessary we recommend that the July and August meetings be cancelled unless there is a significant event or other emergency necessitating a meeting.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff - Mr. Morrisette stated that we submitted to Commissioners copies of an Office of Legislative Research (OLR) report regarding Liability of Regional Fire Schools which was discussed briefly at the CSFA Education Committee's last meeting. He said he's read it a few times and he's a bit confused by it and will probably have our associate Attorney General review it the next time he meets with him. He also said he's aware that OLR called all the regional schools and had called him a few times when doing research for the report. They indicated they would send him a draft before they finalized the report but he never saw it before it was distributed. He advised Commissioners to let him know if they had any questions.

He also reported that a copy of the Connecticut State Firefighters' Memorial Foundation Committee's budget was distributed at their last meeting. He said this is the first budget

document the Committee has received to date and that it just outlines in very basic terms expenditures from the beginning. Based on the figures in the document there is about \$7,000 on hand to carry on and there has been little to no fundraising being done. He suggested that when we send out the notification for the October Memorial Service we should include a stuffer in the invitation asking for donations. Mr. Morrissette also reported that there was interest to begin looking at establishing a separate foundation for the Memorial. Currently they benefit from the National Heritage Foundation's tax status. The National Heritage Foundation provides all accounting and reporting for the foundation for a small expense.

Mr. Piskura stated that a preliminary report for the June Fire School showed we had 759 students distributed over 58 classes. A more detailed report will be provided to the Commission by their next meeting.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if that number is low or high compared to last year.

Mr. Piskura remarked that the number is up some from last year.

Commissioner Wilkinson commented that last week the Hartford County Emergency Plan held their annual dinner meeting and during the course of the proceedings they recognized various individuals who have done things that not only benefited Hartford County but also the states' fire service. There were 5 people affiliated with the Commission that were recognized that night and given plaques; Jeff Morrissette and Jim Carroll from the staff, Commissioners Ed Haber, Charlie Stankye and him were recognized so it was a nice gesture to know that we're appreciated for what we do.

Vice Chairman Kowalski reminded members that are up for reappointment or planning to retire to make sure their specific organizations are aware of it.

Mr. Morrissette added it is critical that we have quorums at our scheduled meetings. Although there were not a lot of action items on the agenda today it demonstrates to the fire service that we are active and engaged, working on their behalf. He said he appreciated members coming today and wished them greater success in the new fiscal year.

Commissioner Ouellette asked what we could do to motivate members to be at the meetings.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that in the past we've sent letters regarding attendance. More recently he's been handling it verbally if there is an issue.

Vice Chairman Kowalski thanked members for coming today even though it was an informational meeting.

Commissioner Nicol mentioned that legislators passed the bill renaming the road to the Memorial and asked for an update on what will happen next.

Mr. Morrissette said he has not seen the actual wording that passed so he doesn't know if it's an actual name change or possibly the addition of signage ceremonially changing the name similar to what we see on bridges and stretches of certain highways named after someone or a group. If it is an official name change it probably won't make our neighbors too happy because of the fact that the Air Museum has thousands of dollars invested in marketing. He indicated that when we receive the official information and there is an official change he will look to implement the change over a six to twelve month transition period as we also have a significant amount of stationary, envelopes, marketing, etc. that will need to reflect the change.

Commissioner Nicol added in light of not having a quorum today he wonders if we could pursue having alternate members appointed to the Commission which would probably require legislative change, but at least that would give us a quorum in the event a member cannot attend a meeting.

He also mentioned that Commissioner Brammer is not seeking reelection as First Selectman for the town of Thomaston so he probably will not be representing CCM on the Commission anymore.

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:02 AM.

Dated:

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