



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



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**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 25, 2003 MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Haber, Kowalski, Maheu, Milewski, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye, and Wilkinson. Commissioner Vendetta arrived at 9:45 a.m. Commissioners' Brammer, Gomeau, Johnson, and McDonald. were excused. Staff members Morrissette, O'Neil, Ouellette, Piechota and Piskura were present.

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

Chairman Carozza stated that the hats presented to each member are a gift from the Connecticut Fire Chief's Association brought in by Commissioner Haber.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2003 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Ouellette and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the minutes of the February 25, 2003 meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the Staff Report for the period of January 15, 2003 - February 14, 2003.

Commissioner Ouellette inquired about an error on page 6 of the Staff Report under the Training Division. He stated that the "Total Number of Contact Hours" reported should be 37,451.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Milewski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Haber to approve the Staff Report for the period of February 15, 2003 - March 14, 2003 as amended. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4 a.) Mr. Morrissette stated that a copy of the Governor's Proposed Budget for the agency for FY 04 and FY 05 was previously distributed to all Commissioners. Mr. Morrissette asked Mr. O'Neil to provide a brief overview of that budget.

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Mr. O'Neil stated that expenditures for this current year were proposed to remain the same for the next fiscal year. Reductions that were listed such as Personal Services include the two layoffs. As far as Operating Expenses we did request new funding for several new items including some cellular telephones, color copier and a couple other items that they are approving but they are reducing the amount that were to be appropriated plus cutting our operating cost overall. Even though they are approving our additional requests the funding will be actually less. Equipment funds have been approved only for replacement equipment and requests for new equipment have been eliminated. The Limited Access Highway Program fund was proposed to be eliminated.

Mr. Morrisette reported that the agency had its meeting with the Appropriations Subcommittee. There was a lot of good dialogue between members of the subcommittee and the staff. Some areas of discussion focused on the impact of the layoffs, potential impact of the early retirement program and the Limited Access Highway Program. We indicated to the subcommittee that the elimination of any new equipment requests could potentially cause a problem for our agency because much of the new equipment relates to terrorism training specifically meters and personal protective equipment. We did reinforce the fact that although it's nice to have support for the replacement equipment they need to take a closer look at what we're specifically requesting. We indicated that we would be happy to work with OPM to address those issues. We felt the meeting went very well although we're not sure where it's going to go. A letter was sent out last week to all Chiefs of fire companies that participate in the Limited Access Highway Program notifying them of the proposed elimination as well as reinforcing the fact that they need to contact their legislators.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if the Joint Council had taken a position on the elimination of the Limited Access Highway Program.

Mr. Morrisette stated that particular issue was discussed at their meeting last week. It is of concern and he believes it will be one of the Joint Council's primary agenda issues.

Commissioner Ouellette inquired if equipment for terrorism training could be acquired through some grants.

Mr. Morrisette stated that it is possible as in the case of the decontamination trailers that are being secured for 21 municipalities throughout the state. It's our understanding that OEM through the Department of Justice (DOJ) Equipment Grant Program is looking at ordering a trailer for this institution so we can for the integrate it into our hazardous materials' training programs. Also if there were some type of an event we would be responsible to transport the trailer to where it is needed. He stated that he thinks there's going to be a lot of looking at dual use of equipment to not only benefit the host departments but those surrounding them. OEM took our tractor late last week and they're installing an appropriate hitch on the tractor to make it capable of towing those vehicles.

Moving to item 4 b.) Mr. Morrisette stated that an updated organizational chart for the agency was distributed earlier. From discussions last month regarding employee layoffs and one employee being bumped the agency was notified the week before last that another one of our Trainers is at risk at being bumped. Unfortunately there's a situation evolving at another agency which has the potential of causing Jim Carroll to be bumped from his position. In line with that, as illustrated on the organizational chart all the staff cuts are in the Training Division. In respect to the Early Retirement

Incentive Program (ERIP), as of today, three employees are eligible and all three employees have indicated that they are interested to attend an informational workshop session. All of these personnel situations put the agency in a tough position. This was another point that we spent a lot of time discussing with the Appropriations' Committee. They were astounded to learn that our Trainers were not protected by their specialty nature. In addition to that, Mr. Morrisette stated that he had a discussion with the Governor's Chief of Staff making him aware of our staffing situation. Mr. Morrisette and Chairman Carozza intend to meet with the budget people at OPM as well as the Governor's Chief of Staff to discuss this situation further.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the process to fill positions vacated as a result of the ERIP

Mr. Morrisette stated if someone elects to take the early retirement, we do have an option of bringing that employee back for 60 days only up to the end of June. Regarding replacements and rehires, the Administration wants to wait to see the bottom line effect of what's transpiring with this before they make a final decision. Refills will not be immediate. We have to put together a plan for OPM by April 1<sup>st</sup> on how the ERIP will impact the agency. Obviously because of our mission and the current state of national affairs along with the public safety issue surrounding what we do we're going to seek full restoration of all vacated positions.

Moving to item 4c.) Commissioner Wilkinson gave an update on the CSFA Education Committee. He stated that House Bill #5270 continues to gain momentum. After the last Commission meeting he, Administrator Morrisette, Scott Potter, President of the State Firefighter's Association, Ted Schroll and Al Hawkins met with State Representative Betty Boukus in her office along with Representative Pawlkiewicz from Windham who was the original author of the Bill. It was a very productive and encouraging meeting and we forged another good legislative relationship. Representative Boukus is not only on the Public Safety Committee but she's also the Co-Chair of the Bonding SubCommittee. Later that morning the Public Safety Committee voted unanimously to draft the Bill. Subsequent to our meeting with Representative Boukus, she called for and held a meeting with several high ranking members of the Department of Public Works to further discuss the study. Also, Representative Boukus announced that she plans on personally visiting at least several of the regional fire schools and the Connecticut Fire Academy. On March 18 the Bill received a Joint Favorable vote from the Public Safety Committee. It was then sent to Finance Revenue and Bonding and on March 19 it was filed with the Legislative Commissioners' Office which are all positive steps. The Bill now has 41 co-sponsors. The current strategy is to continue to ask individuals, groups and various fire departments to continue the letter writing campaign to their respective representatives and senators in support of the Bill. The Committee will be meeting again next month. In conclusion, on a positive note Ted Schroll has said that a number of legislators that have not been directly involved with the process to this point have mentioned to him that it appears to them that this Bill is getting legs.

Mr. Morrisette stated Representative Boukus, Richard Piotrowski, Steve Kitowicz who is the head of all Capitol projects for DPW and Don Ouillette toured the Academy yesterday and then toured the Willimantic facility. Representative Boukus was very impressed with this facility and commented numerous times on how well it's maintained. In discussions with Mr. Piotrowski over the past several weeks he is very encouraged about this legislation.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if there was any indication from the Administration regarding this Bill.

Mr. Morrissette stated that it was the Committee's plan to meet with Lt. Governor Rell. We had an intermediary through Representative Green to set up a meeting that Commissioner Stankye was working on. That meeting with the Lt. Governor was deferred until after the Bill arrives in Finance Revenue and Bonding. Lt. Governor Rell wanted the Bill to proceed further along the process before she would meet to discuss the issue. That meeting has not taken place as of yet.

Moving to item 4d.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the Regional Foam Trailer Program. He stated in a recent staff report he had indicated that three agreements had been signed and approved. There's actually only two to date, Norwich and Fairfield. Those two units as of last week are in operation and DEP will dispatch them anywhere in the state if there is an event. We did have a productive meeting with the Attorney General's Office last week to iron out some of the issues with the Waterbury and New Haven agreements. Some changes have been made to the agreements and they have been faxed to both parties for review. As of yet we still have not sent a letter to the fire chiefs statewide indicating the program is available. He expects that all units will be on line very shortly.

Commissioner Stankye inquired whether the host community would transport the trailer.

Mr. Morrissette replied affirmatively. He stated that a letter would be sent out to all fire chiefs. Adjunct Instructor Ken Hanks from Naugatuck is preparing a booklet explaining the trailer; its equipment, operation and the dispatch protocol.

Moving to item 4 e.) Mr. Morrissette gave a legislative update. He referenced the Bill Tracking Report distributed this morning as the most current information on proposed legislation. He stated that he was expecting Ted Schroll to attend the meeting later this morning. In the mean time he offered to respond to any specific questions on Bills.

Commissioner Vendetta gave an overview of proposed Bills pertaining to sparklers and sprinklers. He stated substitute language that required an amendment to the burn bill was drafted which requires hospitals to report any injury resulting from the use of fireworks and that went through. As far as sprinklers, there were two bills dealing with residential sprinklers. One was to require that all one or two family new homes over 3,500 square feet would be sprinklered. That bill did not have support. The second bill called for a mandate on the part of the home builder to offer residential sprinklers as an option. The sprinkler bill was used as a vehicle to mandate retrofitting of sprinklers for all existing convalescent homes which amounts to a total 53 homes. The mandate requires them to be sprinklered by 2005 and plans must be submitted to fire marshals for a permit by 2004.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that the sprinkler bill as proposed for the mandatory option rule unfortunately was endorsed by the fire service the way it was written. We had some difficulties trying to explain to the legislators that it's not really the case. That was an issue for which we had to go back and explain why it was a problem. In addition, we are working on other issues in reference to codes.

Commissioner Nicol inquired what year convalescent homes would have to be sprinklered.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that upon passage, the bill would mandate sprinklers in convalescent homes by 2005.

Mr. Morrisette reminded Commissioners that the Legislative Reception is scheduled for May 14 at the Officer's Club from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and the Fire Service Day at the Capitol has been confirmed for April 30 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the concourse area at the Capitol. At the next meeting of the Joint Council they will be dividing up responsibilities, they hope all fire service organizations will be represented.

Moving to item 4 f.) Mr. Morrisette stated that he did not have much new to report on regarding the proposal for a Fire/EMS Commission. A public hearing was held where about two to one was against the proposal. Predominantly, those against were non-fire based EMS providers. He stated that one positive thing that everyone here should be very proud of was that most of those that testified complimented this Commission. Even though they weren't in favor of a combined Commission, many of them spoke very positively in respect to the work of this body. They were seeking a separate Commission modeled after ours. We were recently contacted and informed that the Committee would like us to look at drafting the Bill.

At a prior meeting with a representative from the Governor's Legislative Office, Mr. Morrisette stated that the only questions he had was what the fiscal impact of this initiative would be and whether it was controversial. He indicated that he would hope to accomplish the consolidation with little fiscal impact and yes it was controversial at least to some. Late last week, at the Commissioners' meeting at the Capitol Mr. Morrisette indicated that he met briefly with Commissioner Garcia to receive an update. He appears to be still neutral. He did ask if we come up with a plan that we share it with him. We invited some people to get together after this meeting to develop some language. He stated that he thinks that the Commission should direct the staff to move forward with the effort. It seems there's a lot of interested members of the Legislature who would also like to see this happen.

Legislative Representatives Rapanault and Scholl arrived as guests to the meeting.

A lengthy discussion took place with the Commissioners voicing their concerns and comments.

Moving to item 4 g.) Mr. Morrisette stated that the Firefighters Memorial Committee met last week and they selected Sunday, October 19 at 2:00 p.m. as the date for the next ceremony and unveiling of the engraved names. Also, the Committee did listen to a presentation by the gentleman who was at our last meeting regarding the foundation proposal. There seemed to be interest on behalf of the Committee to explore that further. We're just trying to obtain some references and some guidance from different groups who now employ the National Heritage Foundation model. The bottom line we would be able to get something up and operating in a very short amount of time that takes care of all the legal and IRS requirements. Lastly, there will be a final letter going out to all departments that have not submitted names or at least acknowledged that they have had no LODD's. This will be the last opportunity to submit names before the Committee moves forward and begins engraving the LODD honor roll.

Moving to item 4 h.) Mr. Morrisette referenced the Damaged Equipment Policy that was distributed to Commissioners with their packages.

Chairman Carozza inquired if all Commissioners had an opportunity to review that policy and called for a motion to approve the Damaged Equipment Policy.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Maheu and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the Damaged Equipment Policy. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 a.) Mr. Piechota stated that as part of the Commission's accreditation with IFSAC and the Pro Board the Commission is responsible for a certain amount of participation in the organizations. In the Commission's case that's done via the amount of money that is derived by IFSAC for the certificates that people purchase voluntarily. For those levels that the Commission is accredited by IFSAC, we issue right along with the state certification a completed application for IFSAC certification for that level that the individual just has to sign, attach a check and send it to IFSAC. The Commission is accredited for at least \$2,000 per year. For the period up until now (July 2002 to March 12, 2003) 246 certificates have been issued. Backing up over the last four fiscal years 330 folks from Connecticut applied for IFSAC certification for the last year that is a total of \$4,950. So we are well over our \$2,000 threshold. But interestingly enough and a bit disappointing that 330 number is approximately one third of the number of folks that we actually grant state certification and who would be eligible for IFSAC certification. The Pro Board reports back to us that for the 2001, 258 persons took advantage of the Pro Board certification. That's a drop because in the year 2000, 319 persons applied for Pro Board certification and in 1999, 447 applied. So in two years we went down from 447 to 258. He stated that he was not sure why other than the fact that both certificates cost an individual \$15.00 per certificate. In either case we are well over our threshold. We're certainly not in jeopardy of having to owe these organizations any additional funds. Another option would be that the Commission purchases the certificates for the individuals. That could drop the cost in IFSAC's case from \$15 to \$3 per person because we buy the seals and place them on our certificate sent to the individual and report back to IFSAC. That way we get 100% representation at \$3 per person. The Pro Board has that same option.

Commissioner Maheu stated if you combined the numbers from both IFSAC and the Pro Board and you haven't really experienced a drop in the amount of people seeking national certification. With our current fiscal state of affairs is that an expense that we want to take on at this time? We have to then purchase those certificates from the national association, guarantee the association a certain amount of payment and then we can issue the certificates at \$3 each.

Mr. Piechota replied affirmatively and the other option would be to pass along the cost. An example is right now we charge \$7.50 for a written examination and we could raise the fee to \$10.50 and the individual would get an automatic national certification along with the state certification.

No action was taken.

Commissioner Maheu stated that he would like to commend Mr. Morrissette on the excellent job he did of explaining his staffing update and ongoing negotiations on behalf of the agency. He expressed sympathy for Mr. Piskura who has to work under this current staffing situation which is extremely difficult.

Commissioner Nicol inquired whether anyone knew how many individuals from Connecticut's fire service have been activated for the Iraq situation.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he was not aware of the number that he could possibly get that information from the State Military Department.

Mr. Nicol suggested that it would be a good idea to post on the List Serv the names of individuals who have been activated and the fire departments they serve.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he had an opportunity to recognize one of our employees. Alberta Ouellette has attained her ten years of service to the agency. He stated that he thinks the Commissioners will agree with him that there isn't a more dedicated and committed person to the efforts of the Commission.

Chairman Carozza presented a certification of appreciation to Mrs. Ouellette and thanked her for all her efforts for all the Commissioners.

Mrs. Ouellette thanked the Commission for the opportunity and the recognition.

Mr. Piskura gave an update regarding the individual who bumped into the Training Division from the Motor Vehicle Department and earlier discussion that he would be placed into the FF-I training program. This individual was assigned to the Recruit Program that began March 10 and he became a significant distraction for the students and Instructors. After some consultation this individual was removed from that assignment and re-assigned to coordination tasks in the Training Division.

Commissioner Ouellette inquired where does that leave us for the future.

Mr. Piskura stated in looking at the organization chart and another possible bumping and that individual will probably not have fire training background either. Right now the Training Division is paralyzed.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the agency was documenting all this and Mr. Piskura has taken the appropriate disciplinary action in regard to what transpired.

Chairman Carozza called for a moment of silence for those who have lost their lives in the war in Iraq and let's hope that our troops conclude their job there and come home safely.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

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

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 11:29 a.m.