



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



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**MINUTES OF THE MAY 25, 2004 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Vice Chairman Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:49 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Cantor, Haber, Kowalski, Nicol, Ouellette, and Wilkinson. Staff members Lewis, Morrisette, O'Neil, Piechota and Piskura were present.

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

A quorum was not attained and the meeting proceeded on an informational basis.

Moving to agenda item 4a.) Budget and Staff Update. Mr. Morrisette stated briefly that at least three Commissioners that originally intended to attend the meeting called late last evening with messages to say they would not be able to attend due to local issues. He said if we had known we weren't going to have enough members for a quorum we would have advised those in attendance so they would not had to have traveled here today.

Mr. Morrisette gave an update regarding the budget, the adjusted Budget for the Biennium ending June 30, 2005 was passed and the figures remain the same as what has been previously reported to the Commission. We have a reduction of what was originally authorized last year of \$84,407 of which \$62,512 come out of our Personal Services Account and \$21,895 out of our Other Expense Account. These are numbers we've known we would probably be working with. We anticipate our allotment information to arrive within the next two weeks from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). He reported that he was advised at a recent Governor's staff meeting that although there are projections of a surplus in the current and next fiscal years, many of the larger agencies were significantly under funded in the Budget which may necessitate the transfer of funds from other agencies. He also said that it is not unusual. What is appropriated is typically not what we end up with by the end of the fiscal year because there are always holdbacks and other adjustments that occur.

Commissioner Nicol asked about Item 1D in the staff report relative to a 9th Regional Fire School being funded in the budget under the Comptroller's Miscellaneous Accounts. Mr. Morrisette stated that he did not reference it in his remarks previously as he was dealing specifically with our agency. He said that there was no specific legislation regarding the

addition of a 9th Regional Fire School in Stamford, it just ended up as a line item appropriation of \$55,000 within the budget.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson stated that there is not a lot to update. Everything has been in a holding pattern as the budget goes through the process. The Committee is scheduled to meet Thursday night in Wethersfield for their regular monthly meeting. Mr. Morrisette added that he believes Stamford Fire Department was invited to that meeting. He said he spoke with Al Hawkins and provided him with the Chief's name and contact information.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if additional monies were provided to have Stamford as a Regional Fire School. Mr. Morrisette responded that as far as the capital side of the budget is concerned, he believes it is up to the Department of Public Works to prioritize and they will utilize the original study as their framework. He added that he had not visited the Stamford facility in about 3 years but to his knowledge they've invested a significant amount of city money into the facility. Commissioner Ouellette asked if the money comes out of the current fiscal year operating budget. Mr. Morrisette replied that there was an increase in funding appropriated to the Comptrollers' Miscellaneous Account in the order of \$55,000 so it is new money that was made available to fund Stamford. He said he had spoken to some of the Regional Fire School Directors who have received less than that amount for decades and that they are not too pleased. Commissioner Wilkinson added that it is worthy to note that Stamford's annual allocation is significantly higher than a lot of the Fire Schools that have been in operation for decades. He also said we've been approached by other geographic areas in the state over a period of time inquiring as to the possibility of being designated as a regional school and basically they were held off. The concept was we would fix what we have before expanding into other geographic areas. Mr. Morrisette added that it encourages those regions that have been very patient to not follow the process and go out on their own. He said that one of the legislative mandates of the Commission is to coordinate and plan for a statewide system of Fire Service training. He said the politicians need to be aware that it does not help the overall situation when they act unilaterally. Commissioner Nicol stated that he recalled in past years we had received an inquiry about Regional Fire School status from Greenwich, Bridgeport, Norwalk, Danbury and New London County. He asked if we had received any inquiries from Stamford. Mr. Morrisette responded that he received an inquiry about a week before the end of the Legislative Session. The inquiry was from a staff member of Speaker Lyon's office. He had inquired how one becomes a Regional Fire School.

Mr. Morrisette also stated that Stamford Fire Chief McGrath has called and requested a meeting with himself and Adam Piskura.

Commissioner Johnson arrived at 10:10 AM.

Moving to item 4c.) Legislative Update –Mr. Morrisette referenced an updated copy of Ted Schroll's legislative tracking chart that was distributed. Commissioner Kowalski

indicated that the Fire Code bill is extremely important for both fire prevention and fire marshals. Mr. Morrissette stated that the only other issue is the Homeland Security bill and the creation of the new Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. He said that key members of the Administration began meeting last week to begin looking at how they will make the merge between Divisional Homeland Security and Office of Emergency Management happen.

Moving to item 4d.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrissette stated that there was some conflicting information in the budget and some legislators are making statements regarding the Limited Access Highway program. The budget language inferred that \$100,000 was to be added back to the Commission from the Department of Homeland Security. Other language indicated that funding was to be coming from the Department of Social Services. He stated that what we've been told is it appears there will be some funding for the volunteer fire companies that previously participated in the Limited Access Highway Program in the new fiscal year. The specific language in the budget itself stated that "up to \$100,000" would be appropriated to the Commission with no specific details in terms of what we're suppose to do with it. He also said that in speaking with the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) and OPM they themselves were confused. The information he has right now is that more than likely approximately \$80,000 will be coming to the Commission.

We've had limited use of the vouchers to date and as of last week, only 7% of the funds have been utilized to date. He distributed a copy of the letter that was mailed to each fire company and stated that the funds can be used for any service the agency offers. At the end of the summer we'll send out a reminder to fire companies reminding them that the funds must be used by December 31, 2004.

Moving to item 4e.) Rescue Technician Certification Update –Director of Certification Piechota reported that a Committee was in place to study the Rescue Technician Certification process and offer guidance to the staff as to the direction that would best serve Connecticut's Fire Service. The group met a number of times and he apologized for not getting the report back to the Commission sooner but there was some difficulty getting everyone together to finalize the report. He said that ultimately they are seeking a vote from the Commission to give them direction, however he understands that no vote can be taken today without a quorum. He explained the report and offered to answer any questions until a formal vote can be taken.

A discussion period followed. Mr. Piechota stated that he would reconvene the task group hopefully before the next Commission meeting and bring the comments of the Commission to their attention for discussion and come back with their recommendations.

Moving to item 4f.) Homeland Security Funding Update – Mr. Morrissette referenced the latest strategic guidance and administrative information related to the Homeland Security Grant Program. He referenced a document that will be sent to each chief elected official in every community outlining the state's program as it relates to the Federal

Homeland Security money. He expects that the document will be mailed out today or tomorrow once the legal staff approves the MOU. He stated that what he relayed to the Commission last month is essentially what occurred with some modifications. It is his belief that the vast majority of Municipalities will elect to administer the funds either through a regional planning organization or sign an MOU and allow the State to administer it for them. He also thinks there may be a few municipalities that choose to develop their own spending and implementation plan. It is his understanding that the Senior Steering Council approved this and June 4th is the deadline for every town to make their decision and have the information back to the State.

In addition, Mr. Morrisette stated that he has the revised agreement between the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA) and Connecticut's Homeland Security Education Center which can be approved next meeting. We just received the agreement 2 days ago and it was modeled after the copy that was distributed at a previous meeting. He stated that on the law enforcement side, the Police Academy is mandating every Police Officer receives basic Homeland Security related training. He remarked that this is something the Fire Service seriously needs to consider although they do not like to hear the word mandate. He ask that the Commission seriously consider establishing minimum proficiency levels, specifically at the entry level point. On the entry level side we already integrated terrorism training into the Recruit Training program which the Career Chiefs approved. Through our agreement with UCONN we could deliver this training free of charge to local fire departments and Regional Schools. Commissioner Cantor asked relative to the training issue whether the skill set that we see is at least common to the Police. Mr. Morrisette replied yes. He believes they are different programs however they are very similar in terms of awareness level of training. Commissioner Kowalski asked if there was something that could be developed for discussion for next month's meeting. Mr. Piskura added that for example, the Police Academy is adding five days to their Recruit program four of which are just National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) because they are basically starting at zero on NIMS. A discussion period followed.

Commissioner Ouellette stated he was happy to see that we have the agreement with Connecticut's Homeland Security Education Center and Connecticut Fire Academy. He said this will place us on the map. He asked about the expenses reimbursement that is indicated on the Agreement. Mr. Piskura said that they are already doing this. In a recruit class the chiefs that have students in that class are allowed to bill \$200 back for reimbursing the cost of backfilling the job for the students here.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated relative to Mr. Morrisette remarks about the need to consider some sort of mandates in those areas and realizing that the summer recess is approaching, he asked if it would be possible for the staff to put together some sort of conceptual program that we could consider at the June meeting without placing any undue pressure on them. Mr. Piskura replied yes.

Commissioner Nicol asked relative to the State Homeland Security Grant Program if those are the plans that the towns have already done. Mr. Morrisette replied no those were the local assessments that were done. A brief discussion period followed.

Moving to item 5a.) June 2004 Meeting- Vice Chairman Kowalski reminded members that the meeting is being conducted on an informational basis due to a lack of a quorum. Mr. Morrisette said that we talked about a night meeting for June 29, 2004. He stated that he has a number of offers that came in from local communities wishing to host the meeting. All of the request came from the Litchfield County area. We had discussed Litchfield or New London County. We had offers from Woodbury, Newtown, Torrington and Thomaston. He asked whether there was still an interest in holding a night meeting. He is concerned that we will need a quorum because we have a number of issues which need approval prior to the summer. He asked Commissioners for their input and offered to contact other Commissioners to see what the majority prefers and to decide on a day or night meeting. Commissioner Nicol said that he would suggest the meeting be held in either Torrington or Newtown. Commissioner Wilkinson added that indifference to Commissioner Brammer we may consider meeting in Thomaston being that he is the First Selectman. As far as a night meeting he is open to it. Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that we investigate holding the meeting in Thomaston based on comments from Commissioners.

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

Moving to item 7) Matters to be raised by Commissioners and Staff – Mr. Piskura reported on a couple of informational items. The bookstore was closed for an extended period of time because of our first accurate whole house inventory. As such we discovered a significant amount of problems and anomalies. The result of the findings was outdated materials and duplicate numbers. One of the more significant problems we found is we had a contractor set-up the store and designed a new inventory template. When the counts were entered into the new inventory we found out that the inventory would not enter into the existing point-of-sale software. We contacted the software manufacturer, they were not interested in supporting our problems because the company has been bought and sold twice since we purchased the original software. The new owner did not care if it worked or not for us. Eventually they did try a little bit and determined that we had to manually re-enter the entire inventory into the cash register which meant we did this twice. We were unable to conduct outward sales at the same time since we had to keep track on a separate sheet to re-enter those changes into the inventory. We did continue sales internally to our classes so if we ran a class and students needed a manual we did sell them the manual and maintained a separate sheet which then was entered after the inventory was corrected. To counter some of the lost of business, we're working with a graphics person that also has a marketing background and skills and we've produced several things. One of them is posters were sent to every fire department and these posters was a very inexpensive way and were specific to the fire stations. The posters were mailed in tubes. By mailing the poster in a tube it caused them to act upon it because when a chief gets something in a tube the other papers don't

stack on it. They have to open it and deal with it either throw it away or pass it on. Hopefully they got posted. When it gets posted hopefully it becomes permanent and it is personal and in place for a long time. The other thing we did was a bookmark and those are being given away. They are also given out with every sale in the bookstore and are also available to staff and Commissioners to give out as you go around. They promote the website primarily and that is the direction from the State Fire Administrator, to try to emphasize the website more than printed material. We seem to think that aspect is working because it is very visual and the colors and presentation are similar to the June Fire School and we're trying to brand what we do here. The first full month that the store has been opened we have more than doubled the sales. One year May sales were \$14,000 the next one was \$18,000. This month May we sold \$28,000 in sales for the bookstore which is \$10,000 over the previous sales. He said that some credit goes to the City of Hartford and a minor amount to the City of New Britain that are conducting promotional exams. We may be looking in the future for a different type of software for the store. We also have gift certificates now at the request of several firefighters. Commissioner Cantor suggested that we might be eligible to rent the Collegiate Bookstore's website and software including the credit card transaction component. He said that you don't have to buy from them to rent or use the website and they have full support and it works very nicely. It's made for marketing, specifically for training type organizations. Mr. Piskura asked if it includes online commerce. Commissioner Cantor replied yes that it is all online commerce and he believes the website address is Collegiatebookstores.com.

Mr. Piskura stated that there are now 3 publishers involved in publishing Essentials for Firefighters; Jones & Bartlett, Delmar and IFSTA. They are all actively and aggressively marketing. Delmar publishes 2 versions of the same book one is the Essentials book and the same book is published without the Hazardous Materials component so it makes the book cheaper so you have to look closely at the thickness of the book to see if that chapter is included. Jones & Bartlett publishes the most expensive one on the market but it comes with the enhanced value of internet access. He said he received a phone call from Senator Roraback who had been at a social function with Fire Chiefs. The Fire Chiefs had basically attacked the Senator over the fact that the Burville Regional Fire School was using a Delmar textbook but the State was testing to IFSTA and therefore all the students were failing. He said he explained to the Senator the actual situation that it wasn't the case and the textbook that the students were using certainly would be indexed to any test we gave. He also offered to send one of our employees out to talk to the student body if the class was still going on. These books will eventually all be used in the certification process.

A discussion period followed.

Mr. Morrissette reminded members that graduation of the Recruit Class is tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. at the Air Museum and invited all to attend. He also stated that approximately 6 months ago we had extended an invite to the staff of the Governor's office to come to the Academy and take a tour. We were asked to wait until the legislative session

concluded. We followed up with them and now we will have about 3 or 4 representatives from that office for a tour and overview.

Commissioner Ouellette asked how the numbers for the weekend classes compare to the daytime classes for the June Fire School. Mr. Piskura replied that the weekend numbers are dismal. He said that on Sunday there are only 3 courses being offered. He referenced the June Fire School spreadsheets that were distributed earlier and stated that the red means the class is cancelled, yellow means we're still holding on hope and green means that the classes are running. He added that the feedback he's getting from Manchester, Stamford, and Naugatuck is that these municipalities are under directions from their fiscal officers that they are not to do any nonessential spending and June Fire School is positioned at the end of the municipal fiscal year. Commissioner Wilkinson added that they traditionally offer June Fire School to the employees of the Milford Fire Department and on an average they usually have 20 or 25 participants on an annual basis. The City of Milford runs a July to June fiscal year and we're in the same position that our wage accounts are so close that we just can't possibly consider the day's pay that goes along with sending someone to the June Fire School. He also said they have money in their training account to pay for the tuition but it's the day's pay that puts them in a bind.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 AM.

Dated: _____

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