



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



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**MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 30, 2004 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Vice Chairman Kevin Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Brammer, Blaschik, Haber, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye and Wilkinson.

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

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

Mr. Morrisette asked members to view the 2 plaques displayed at the front of the room and stated that last month the Connecticut State Firefighters Memorial Committee held a brief ceremony and presented plaques to various organizations and individuals that were involved with the development of the Memorial. This Commission was presented with a plaque of appreciation for its support to the Memorial project. The other plaque was presented to the Memorial Committee as a whole and for lack of a facility both plaques will be hung here at the Academy. On behalf of the Memorial Committee he thanked the Commission.

Vice Chairman Kowalski extended his thanks to the Memorial Committee and the Academy staff for their hard work in getting the Memorial completed.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ouellette to approve the minutes of the October 26, 2004 meeting. Motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brammer to approve the Staff Report for the period of October 15, 2004 through November 14, 2004. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stankye asked what the expectations were relative to item J on page 5 of the staff report, which stated that we worked with Kidde (Symtron) to arrange for an emergency service visit to make repairs to the Burn Building due to its inability to meet customer expectations.

Mr. Piskura indicated that a majority of fireplaces within the Burn Building were not functioning and scheduled training needed to be fulfilled. Symtron arranged for a Technician to travel from New Jersey to the Academy to make the repairs.

Moving to agenda item 4a.) Budget Reduction Update – Mr. Morrisette stated a copy of our Budget Reduction Option as submitted to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) was mailed to Commissioners. He said we tried to keep it general in nature which would give us some flexibility should we be required to enact the full 10% or a portion thereof. There was a slight change to the figure reported at our last meeting, where we had mentioned that the Reduction Option would be in the vicinity of \$232,000 that was actually increased to \$250,000. He said that as mentioned last month, we have received an unprecedented number of inquiries from OPM requesting documentation, reports and analysis on items included within our budget request. Mr. Morrisette referenced an email he had received from our Budget Analyst stating support for our Budget Request and concerns about any reductions. She also thanked us for providing such thorough answers to her questions and always in a timely manner. He recognized and thanked Peter O’Neil for his assistance in ensuring our responses are thorough and timely thereby maintaining good relations with the Budget Office. A brief discussion period followed.

Moving to item 4b.) Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson stated that a meeting was scheduled for November but because nothing had been taking place of any substance for the initiative a decision was made to postpone the November meeting so there is nothing to report. Commissioner Nicol remarked that one item of discussion at the Education and Training meeting was to put in a proposal of \$20 million per year for the upcoming budget which is a large number. He said that was a recommendation of the Committee but he’s not sure how the Administration will react to it. Commissioner Stankye added that the \$20 million is for a biennial budget and it goes according to our original schedule of \$10 million a year so it’s not a big number. Commissioner Kowalski added that typically the group has scheduled that separately from the overall budget concept meetings as a bonding issue and they are usually kept separate from the normal biennial budget.

Moving to item 4c.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrisette stated that we are approaching crunch time as there are only about 32 days remaining for eligible departments to utilize their vouchers. We still have approximately \$63,000 that has not been spent. He asked Commissioners to continue to remind people as they attend meetings to use the vouchers. We have posted reminder messages on the List Serv and agency web site and will continue to do so on a weekly basis until the end of the year. The original agreement with the Department of Social Services (DSS) calls for any unspent funds to revert back to the DSS although we would like to keep it here, if possible. He also reported that the agreement for funding for the next round of monies (\$72, 820) has been executed and received within our office about a week ago. That works out to about \$475 per eligible fire company. This funding will not be available

until we close out and issue a final report to DSS for the original \$100,000 so we're still about 2 months off before the second round of monies is released. We may even put a stipulation in the new correspondence to fire companies that if they don't use the first round of money they may be ineligible for the second round of money.

Commissioner Kowalski said if for example we end up with \$50,000 left is there any potential of offering a one week \$500 credit to any department not just the ones that participate in the Limited Access Highway Program. Mr. Morrisette responded that would be in the spirit of our agreement with DSS but we'll have to have discussions with DSS to make sure we don't get into any legal issues. Other options with any surplus funds could be to offer certain classes between January and June free of charge or possibly offer the June Fire School for free. A brief discussion followed.

Moving to item 4d.) Fire Apparatus Licensing Update – Mr. Morrisette said he had asked Program Manager Mark Salafia to contact the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) to check on the status of the Joint Council of Fire Service Organization's request. As you recall, the 2-Q licensing is set to go away the 1st of the year and by request of the Joint Council, DMV was looking at adopting Regulations to enact something similar. According to Mark Salafia, he spoke to DMV's attorney and found the process has started. At present, the Regulation Adoption request is sitting in the Governor's office, the first step in the process when adopting Regulations so they are waiting for that level of approval to move on. Commissioner Nicol asked if it appeared that DMV is moving on this because there have been discussions particularly from the Instructor's Association to possibly pursue a legislative fix. Mr. Morrisette said we know what the deadline is and we can react when the deadline comes which is before the start of the legislative session. He also said his direction on this would be to establish emergency Regulations which is a faster, streamlined process.

Moving to item 5a.) 2005 Commission Meeting Schedule – Mr. Morrisette said a 2005 meeting schedule was included in the Commission packets and asked for review and if acceptable adopted.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Stankye to adopt the 2005 meeting schedule as proposed. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5b.) December Meeting Status – Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that the December meeting is tentatively scheduled for the 28th. He asked for the pleasure of the Commission.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Ouellette and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Nicol to leave scheduling of a meeting up to the State Fire Administrator and Chairman if there is a need, otherwise we will follow the usual procedure of canceling the December meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5c.) Mr. Morrisette stated that at a future meeting Director of Certification Fred Piechota will give a more detailed report on the reaccreditation site visit. By all appearances it went very well this past month. There was good cooperation between the staff and the 3 member site visit team. Commissioner Ouellette was available and did speak as a representative of the Commission. Also, the team had an opportunity to witness a practical skills session, a live fire testing scenario and they also had an opportunity to witness a written testing scenario via tape. The exit interview went well. There may be some minor recommendations for changes but it is our understanding that in April at their Annual Meeting, they will recommend full reaccreditation of our agency to the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) Board and membership body. One issue that came up, which they made Mr. Piechota aware of, relates to a policy their organization is considering adopting and that is mandating HAZ MAT Awareness and Operations be tested as separate tests. Currently we conduct a sampling within our examinations for Firefighter I and Firefighter II. It appears we are one of the only states that do it this way. Historically we've taken the view point that the local fire chief certifies their employees to those levels. The other states conduct separate testing and certification to these two levels. A significant change such as this will impact the Regional Fire Schools and local fire departments substantially. He has asked Mr. Piechota to conduct a quick survey to identify how different states administer this and provide some scenarios to the Commission, probably in January for you to look at it's impact. He is also checking with the ProBoard to see if in fact they are contemplating anything similar to this.

Moving to item 5d.) Certification Prerequisite Discussion – Mr. Morrisette stated that this area is no longer his specialty and apologized that Mr. Piechota is away on vacation. He asked Director of Training Piskura to assist him and stated that the accrediting boards both permit us to slot personnel in respect to prerequisites for certification. Historically, the Commission as a body has employed grandfathering or slotting to gain support when establishing a new level of certification. This is something Mr. Piechota would like the Commission to look at closer as a way to maintain open access and be flexible to the needs of the fire service. He said that we've been somewhat rigid in our state with the exception of when we establish a new level. Adam Piskura added that a conversation came up at a recent meeting he attended where a couple of fire chiefs present inquired as to whether we would recognize the Chief Fire Officer Designation status from the IAFC which is based on experiential learning. Like Charter Oak State College here in Connecticut there is at least one designated unit of Higher Ed in all 50 states that takes experiential learning into account in assessing individuals seeking a degree. He said the same thing works for certification when we take someone's experiential learning you give them credit for that and in our case satisfies the prerequisites and places them in a particular class. There is a work load issue related to this and someone has to establish the parameters.

Mr. Morrisette said the most immediate request that came in the form of an informal email was whether or not we would accept the IAFC's Chief Fire Officer Designation as equivalent to some level of Fire Officer, maybe level III or IV. We have begun

researching the issue and we will bring to your attention if and when any decision needs to be made. A brief question and answer period followed.

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

Moving to item 7) Matters to be raised by Commissioners and Staff – Commissioner Ouellette stated that at last month's meeting a copy of a recommendation made by Commissioner Kowalski and himself, as a result of a meeting with Mr. Morrissette and Mr. Piskura was distributed. He indicated they are still seeking feedback from Commissioners. He said they are still following up on issues and a lot of positive things have happened. He asked Commissioners to feel free to call either him or Commissioner Kowalski if they have any comments or feedback. Commissioner Kowalski added that this project began with a cost analysis of courses. The Committee of Commissioner Ouellette and himself has continued with that however they have now opened up avenues of discussion with Instructors and various other entities of the organization and it has been very positive and rewarding. The Instructors are coming thru and discussing the issues and the initiatives that will be set forward. They are now in tune with the issues we're trying to deal with and that is the cost of reductions and how it affects the Commission, the increase in the availability of equipment in the Regional schools so we're not competing with the Regional schools. He advised Commissioners if there are any issues of concern coming from their respective organizations to contact them so they can address them. Their discussions are on-going and probably will never completely end as they feel it is important for the Commission to monitor these issues.

Mr. Morrissette said that a copy of ODP Bulletin No. 141 was included in the Commission packages. This is a clarification by general counsel of the Federal Department of Homeland Security as it relates to overtime and backfill policies for part time employees and stipends for volunteers. Stipend funding for volunteers has been a request of Connecticut's volunteer fire service for a significant amount of time and obviously must have been a national issue as well because Susan Mencer, Director of ODP requested formal clarification. Volunteers and part time employees will have the ability to receive some type of stipend as it relates to attending ODP related training programs. Connecticut Division of Homeland Security sent a request to several individuals including the presidents of the Career Chiefs and the Connecticut Fire Chiefs soliciting input regarding the establishment of a policy for putting this program into effect. He asked Commissioners to let him know if they have any concerns or issues. It is his understanding that he will be meeting with a Committee that has been established by the Career Chiefs and the Connecticut Chiefs to come up with a formal response to Connecticut Homeland Security. Commissioner Johnson inquired who is the state that is mentioned in the last sentence in item C of the ODP Bulletin where it stated "Finally, the state should develop a policy stating the standardized stipend amount to be provided for participation in training and exercises". Mr. Morrissette replied that for Connecticut it falls to the state administrative agent which is currently the division of Homeland Security within the Department of Public Safety. As of January, it will be the new Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

Mr. Morrisette also reported that the Connecticut State Firefighters Association (CSFA) legislative meeting is scheduled for December 1st in Wethersfield at 7:00 pm Company No. 3. He said letters were sent to all fire service organizations to attend. Issues for the new session will be establishing a revenue stream for fire service training and looking at establishing enabling legislation to allow fire departments to charge fees for rescue services. Also an amendment will be needed in the recently passed legislation affecting red light permits. At present only four, per municipality are permitted creating an issue within those communities that have more than one department or district. Another issue is consideration of mandatory training standards for both the volunteer and career fire service. A brief discussion period followed.

Mr. Morrisette reported that with the Governor's assistance we had our dedication and wet down of the new rescue truck on November 19th. He thanked Vice Chairman Kowalski, Commissioners Ouellette and Nicol for attending the event. He said the event went relatively well and we were able to recognize a number of Adjuncts and staff who participated on the Committee to put the truck together. Commissioner Kowalski thanked the staff and said the truck looked really good at the Capitol.

Mr. Piskura reported that for the 2005 training calendar course prices were cut on average by 15%. Also, 3 courses went up approximately \$15. The calendar is going to the publisher tomorrow and after a few minor corrections are made we should have it posted to our website. It will also be mailed first class to chiefs and training officers and the remaining fire stations will be mailed bulk which means they may not receive them at the stations for up to 30 days. We will also post a List Serv message that the calendar can be viewed and downloaded on line

Mr. Piskura talked about Charter Oak conducting their annual site visit to review courses for college credit. Program Manager Mark Salafia is working on this for us. We have 2 new programs that were reviewed Fire Officer III and IV. Collegiate transfer credit will be available, not just for Charter Oak, but for any division of higher education in the state. If someone takes a course from us they will get the cheapest college credits one could ever purchase. The site visit already occurred and we are in the process of answering their questions.

Mr. Piskura stated that we are hosting three National Incident Management System (NIMS) sessions next week on December 7 and 8. We're hosting John Carnegis from the NIMS Integration Center (NIC). NIC consists of 13 employees with a \$15 million budget. John Carnegis is a former career firefighter from North Providence, RI and he is the only firefighter at the NIMS Integration Center. Mr. Carnegis was coming out to Massachusetts to do a 2-day session and he offered to come to Connecticut so we secured him for the sessions that will be held at the Mashantucket, Trumbull Center and the East Hartford Public Safety Building. We have close to 200 applicants now which is fantastic and it's not just the fire service signing-up, it appears to be a diversified mix of

responders from the Red Cross, emergency managers, law enforcement, public health from all over the state.

We've achieved our goal and we continue to receive registrations on line. There is no charge for the seminars because hosting Mr. Carnegis will not cost us much.

Vice Chairman Kowalski took the opportunity to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday and a happy new year.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 10:39 AM.

Dated:

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