



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



TEL: (860) 627-6363
Jeffrey J. Morrissette
State Fire Administrator

34 PERIMETER RD. WINDSOR LOCKS, CONNECTICUT 06096

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2004 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Secretary Haber called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Blaschik, Cantor, Morris, Milewski, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye and Wilkinson.

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

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

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Secretary Haber called for a motion to nominate a member to Chair the meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Milewski to nominate Commissioner Nicol to Chair the meeting. Motion carried.

State Fire Administrator Morrissette extended apologies on behalf of Chairman Carozza who is out of state and Vice Chairman Kowalski who is attending a three day training program. They both could not be with us.

Mr. Morrissette took the opportunity to have Director of Training Adam Piskura introduce a new employee. Mr. Piskura stated that we were very fortunate with all the turnover that's occurred in the last 4 1/2 years to have someone that's worked for us. Bill Auclair comes to us from South Killingly where he has served as the Fire Chief for 9 years. He brings to us great strength in both rural firefighting and EMS. He said he is very pleased to have him on board and introduced Bill Auclair.

Bill Auclair said he has been in the fire service now for 23 years, served as an EMT for 20. He also is an EMSI which gives him a little more insight into facilitating the EMS Programs at the Academy. He said he has gone through the education process up to the Officer III and Instructor II levels. He stated that if he can assist anyone at anytime he would be glad to do so.

Mr. Morrissette took the opportunity to recognize 2 employees who have attained 10 years of service to the agency. The 2 employees are Elaine Mancino, Secretary in the Training Division and Jim Carroll, Program Manager also in the Training Division. He stated that prior to Jim Carroll joining us as a full-time staff member he served many years as an Adjunct Instructor. He thanked and recognized them for their continued loyal service to the agency and congratulated them.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ouellette to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2004 meeting. Motion carried.

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

Moving to agenda item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrissette stated that we've received an unprecedented level of inquiries from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) regarding our budget submittal. We've had to put together more detailed justifications and documentation for all aspects of our budget request. He reported that he welcomes the opportunity to state our position and where possible clarify individual items much more closely than we have in the past. He indicated that he suspects over the next 2 weeks he has a sizable job in front of him, and that is to put together the agency's 10% Budget Reduction Option plan. Unfortunately, due to the daily inquiries we've not had an opportunity to spend a significant amount of time on this but as noted in the staff report; he wanted to caution the members that a 10% reduction amounts to over \$230,000 to the agency. The deadline for the submittal is November 8th. He had anticipated having, at minimum, a general overview of proposed reductions today for the Commission to review and approve, but the daily inquiries have prevented that. He also cautioned that the agency no longer, as in the past has its sacrificial lamb, that being the Limited Access Highway funds. Therefore, whatever is proposed is going to have significant impact if implemented by the Administration.

Mr. Morrissette reported that he had made an inquiry to the Executive Director at the Police Academy regarding their plans for the reduction option. They have similar concerns to ours. Mr. Morrissette reported that it was his intent not to look at staff reductions. In all likelihood we will have to shift personnel and priorities around and reduce services. Additionally, he indicated that he will need authorization to move forward with a proposal. He asked Commissioner's if they had questions, recommendations or proposals he could take into consideration.

Commissioner Nicol suggested that if we have to cut staffing that it be done with the part time personnel first and not affect the full time personnel. Commissioner Ouellette remarked that we should look at the programs we're offering and possibly cut back on some. Mr. Morrissette said that it is his intent to also submit a Revenue Option which he has done in the past.

Commissioner Nicol asked if we have a monetary suggestion for the surcharge. Mr. Morrissette replied that the calculations we had done was \$8 per motor vehicle registration and that would provide free training, certification, lodging as well as cover the regional fire school debt service on their capital improvements. It would also reinstate and fund the Limited Access Highway Program.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Ouellette and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Milewski to allow State Fire Administrator Morrissette to submit a 10% Budget Reduction Option plan and include a Revenue Option proposal of surcharge funds on behalf of the Commission to OPM. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4b.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrissette stated that as noted in the staff report we forwarded a letter to the fire chiefs of fire companies eligible for the voucher program reminding them of the expiration date of January 1, 2005 and the loss of funding if the funds were not expended. We have seen a subtle increase in activity, predominantly in the Bookstore. To date only about 23% of the funds have been expended, so we have a long way to go in a short amount of time. We will also begin communicating, probably on a weekly basis, via multiple means to ensure that fire companies use their vouchers. As of last week, we signed the MOA with the Department of Social Services (DSS) for new funding in the amount of \$72,800 which will become effective January 1st. It is our intent to clear the books before we actually release that funding. As per the request of a number of legislative leaders, in addition to the former Governor's chief of staff, we are doing this as a direct grant program so each department eligible will receive a check in lieu of a voucher. We will encourage them to utilize the funding for training and education as well as other services offered by this agency. He also said, to his knowledge, that would complete the total expenditure of the Patriot Act Grant funds that the DSS manages. Unless legislation is enacted during the coming session and the Limited Access Highway Program is brought back that would be the end of any type of program in lieu of the previous funding program. He asked Commissioners for their assistance, when they are out speaking to groups, to make them aware that if they don't spend the money it goes away.

Moving to item 4c.) Fire Apparatus License – Mr. Morrissette stated that he had provided Commissioners with a copy of a letter received from the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) Commissioner indicating his support for the Joint Council's request to continue a Q level license. The Commissioner requested his Legal Services Bureau Chief to begin looking at the establishment of regulations to provide a so-called "Q" level endorsement similar to the 2Q program. Mr. Morrissette said last week he spoke to the head legal person for DMV and inquired about the status, he reported that he had delegated the issue to another Attorney to begin working on. The Attorney has concerns that any new proposal will not do anything because they don't have a statutory mandate or enabling legislation which permits them to adopt regulations in this area. Therefore, if someone is negligent in driving a fire apparatus their negligent whether they're tested and licensed or

not. They are going to try to work with us by writing regulations but again the feeling is they don't have much ground or legal authority to stand on.

Mr. Morrisette also said that he advised DMV's Attorney that the various fire service organizations are available to meet to speak with him or members of his staff as we move forward. Commissioner Stankye asked if there was any indication from the legal representative of DMV whether they are going to try to get the legislators to do something. Mr. Morrisette replied that he mentioned to them that we have the ability to move that forward if they felt that was necessary or they had some difficulty in doing that. He also made the offer, through the Joint Council and the State Firefighters Association legislative representative. He reminded him that time is of the essence in that the license goes away after January 1st. Commissioner Nicol asked if there is a deadline in terms of proposing legislation on those regulations. Mr. Morrisette said the regulations could be done at any time but there is a means to expedite that process if necessary. A brief question and answer period followed.

Moving to item 4d.) Fallen Firefighters' Memorial Update – Mr. Morrisette gave an update on the Memorial. He stated that the ceremony was held 2 weeks ago and went very well. Six new names were added to the Memorial 2 of which were deaths that occurred from the time of last years Memorial Service, 1 just prior to and 3 were historical in nature where departments had not submitted names. We had some excellent speeches, most notably Governor Rell and Catherine Hedrick from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation who did an outstanding job and tied everything together for those family members in attendance. We have 2 new applications that were submitted for consideration next year. Over the next 2-3 years we need to get the word out to all the departments to review their records and submit names. From time to time the Memorial Committee has denied names that were submitted so again there is a process that needs to be followed.

He thanked everyone for their participation in the ceremony and said that those who attended enjoyed themselves. Commissioner Nicol added that he attended the ceremony and it was very nicely done and the weather cooperated although it was a little windy.

Moving to item 4e.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson reported that the Education Committee continues to meet and met again last week. At this point, there are 2 areas New Haven and then there is the rest of the project. New Haven has completed all the necessary paperwork required by the Department of Public Works (DPW). They've assigned a project manager and anticipate advertising for an architect in 2-3 weeks to get that project going. With respect to the other facilities everyone was very happy to report that they all seem to be making significant progress in the areas of property acquisition issues as it is appropriate to the respective schools. Donald Ouillette from DPW basically said in a perfect world they are looking to advertise for the architect for the other 7 facilities, quite possibly as early as February. Willimantic has had preliminary discussions with the owner of their property; they are the school that's closest to being under the gun because they are in a lease that will expire in about a

year. Mr. Ouillette anticipates putting in a request to the Bond Commission for their December agenda for approximately \$10,000 so they can contract to get a value analysis done on the property to enable them to proceed with the property acquisition process for that school. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for November 16th. They hope that after the conclusion of the elections and the Legislature makes their leadership decisions they can put together a roundtable with some leadership people from the House and the Senate to lay the ground work to perpetuate the project into the next phase.

Commissioner Nicol added that there were some discussions on the Bond funding for next year. The original layout was for 5 years and it is probably going to extend beyond that. There were monies set up for each year and we got \$10 million appropriated for the 1st and 2nd year, we're looking at \$20 million the 3rd year as it reflected that there are 2 schools proposed to be built estimated to be around 16 million. He also said that Mr. Ouillette indicated at the last meeting that he had built in 10% for inflation. Because inflation in the construction industry jumped ahead a little bit, that 10% is just about gone so the \$20 million is not really out of line as most of us thought. A motion was passed by the group to pursue \$20 million in the next Biennial Budget.

Moving to item 5a.) Training Program and Contact Hour Review (Vice Chairman) – Commissioner Quellette gave a briefing on behalf of Commissioner Kowalski. He stated that in the course of the summer he and Commissioner Kowalski had a meeting with the State Fire Administrator and the Director of Training over some concerns they had. At that time they had submitted a list of recommendations which was distributed today. There was a response to that but they did not receive it until after the last meeting so they have not had a chance to review the response. They plan on meeting again in the future and he asked members to take a look at the plan and bring any additional recommendations to the next meeting. Mr. Morrisette remarked that currently the Training Division is finalizing development of their programmatic budget for the upcoming 2005 Training Calendar. As such, with the Budget Reduction Option sitting out there we're looking at options to reduce some of the training program cost and fees and at minimum we have an opportunity. As many may recall several years ago, the Commission approved some add on fees to our course pricing. The fees were for a 10% and 12% add on for curriculum development and equipment replacement. At minimum, he would like to see an elimination of that. When possible, we've taken the liberty of not tacking on the fees. Elimination is possible as we have received capital equipment funds for the more expensive equipment that we needed to acquire. With curriculum development, we've seen a little bit of a shift from home grown curriculum to sharing among our peer agencies and in some cases we procure it.

Adam Piskura added that complaints that our staff receives about pricing are minimal and are generally not about the published Calendar courses, they are about the contract courses. A brief discussion period followed.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ouellette authorizing the staff to modify the previous surcharges that were

earmarked for curriculum development and capital equipment with respect to the fees charged for the upcoming calendar year. Motion carried.

Commissioner Ouellette inquired if the fee structure is the same for a particular program if you have five classes for example Instructor. Mr. Piskura responded that in the Calendar they are the same, they are calculated on the basis of labor cost so there is a minor difference if the course is delivered here as it is out and that has to do with food cost. Commissioner Nicol asked if the fringe benefit is up to 42% now. Mark Lewandowski replied 48%, typically \$9.60 on top of the \$20/hr rate. In the past we've been at \$26, we are up to \$29.60 now.

Mr. Morrisette added that we only pay the fringe benefit rate on any payroll that is derived from our Extension or Auxiliary Fund. Any General Fund monies which we utilize to pay Instructors are already accounted for and the state makes the paper payment. For about two-thirds of all the programs, we have to tack on a fringe benefit recovery rate. Commissioner Cantor reported that the Community Technical College (CTC) system is also facing this dilemma. This past year the Comptroller's office went to a new software program for payroll called CORE-CT and when that took effect the agencies were suddenly faced with real benefits charges as opposed to best estimates under the old system. In his case he found himself \$40,000 in the hole on payroll last month. Our system had gone forward to the Comptroller's office and asked for an analysis of the Extension Fund operations because, we just like you, and our Continuing Education Programs run on a fee recovery basis. The Comptroller is now working with us to analyze alternative ways to handle payroll. For example rather than have people on part time payroll have them on a 1099 or a contractor basis eliminating payment of benefits. He said some research is going on right now that may benefit the Commission and CTC and he would keep us informed. Mr. Morrisette said we are one of the only states whose Instructors are part time state employees. Most other state fire training organizations utilize contracted or other funded positions. Adam Piskura added that Tennessee is the only other state that the part time Adjuncts are actually state employees.

Mark Lewandowski added that last meeting he spoke about trying to look at subsidizing costs and with the Budget Reduction Option of more than \$200,000 out there, it is imperative that we do something. He advised Commissioners to go back and through the Joint Council make it a legislative priority for the upcoming legislative session that we come up with some type of package. He said that as the project for the Regional schools was done through that same process, we need to do the same for fire funding. A brief discussion period followed.

Moving to item 5b.) Instructor Meeting Overview – Mr. Morrisette thanked Commissioners Kowalski and Ouellette for attending one or both of the meetings that was held in the past 2 weeks with our Adjunct staff. Mr. Piskura stated that the meetings were casual since they were not mandatory and 25 people attended the first meeting and 19 attended the second. Out of the approximate 150 active Adjuncts the turn out was rather light but probably what we anticipated. The general comments we got back were

that it was a productive meeting. One of the things we announced is that we have a Command School which is something that the career fire chiefs had been asking for. Another announcement we made is that we purchased comfort chairs for the recruit classrooms and in the future we hope to slowly provide them for the other classrooms as well. We made Adjuncts aware that we keep them informed through the Newsletter which is a significant component as the activities are in there and they had an opportunity to ask questions. Commissioner Ouellette added that the meeting was very productive and one of the recommendations that we'll see is to try to improve communications. Sometimes we hear rumors and communicating by email and the newsletter is very effective however we need a little frosting on the cake and the meetings should curb a lot of the rumors. He recommended that the meetings be ongoing annually with the Adjunct Instructors.

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

Moving to item 7) Matters to be raised by Commissioners and Staff – Mr. Morrisette stated that he distributed draft copies for the proposed Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) organization table. It is a draft and they still have a number of labor relation issues to work out and have posted the commissioner position in a number of major national newspapers including the *New York Times*. There is a committee established to serve as a screening tool so they are doing what they proposed in conducting a nationwide search. At present the new organization appears that it will be an approximate 80 person agency. For the first 6 months from January 1 to June 30, 2005, most of the fiscal/administrative related functions will be handled jointly by the Military Department and by the Department of Public Safety. After the new fiscal year, they will have their own fiscal administrative component in addition to the operating divisions. There is a training and exercise division, we'll have to see if that has any issues for us to deal with long range. We had an opportunity last week to sit down with some Congressional investigators who are traveling to all 50 states reviewing how the federal Homeland Security funding is being spent. We relayed our concerns, specifically as it relates to training. It seemed as if they took good notes and were generally aware that our concerns are consistent with those of some of the other states. The final report that they will issue is not public information, it is for the House Appropriations Committee. The final report will not provide attribution to any individual person or organization they speak to.

Commissioner Cantor asked if the Homeland Security Education Center is the operational arm of training and exercising. Mr. Morrisette replied to his understanding they will continue on as the primary point of contact for training and education but he's not sure if they're combined, the organization chart shows them as separate. He said they facilitate outside training, they don't do any of their own training. He also said they try to work with us when possible but the available programs that we are authorized to teach is so limited there isn't much demand for those programs anymore. He believes it is their desire to continue on with the ultimate goal that they become a federal or national consortium like Texas A&M or LSU. A brief discussion period followed.

Mr. Morrissette reported that he had a meeting yesterday with the director of Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) to discuss their interest to work with us to conduct Paramedic testing. Fred Piechota has a primary contact and he will be meeting to discuss and review all our options. We had previously met with Hartford Hospital who conducts training and testing. Mr. Piechota added that it is almost a natural fit for us because what they are asking us to do to facilitate paramedic testing is very similar to what we do now. The way they explained it to us is there would be very little impact on us since we wouldn't have to do any record keeping and tracking of students. We would propose to have a separate category of part examiners who would be qualified to do the station skills as well as a part time person to coordinate the administration of this. The next step is to see what the cost would be to do this and then determine what we would charge for providing the service. There could be no negative fiscal impact on the Commission. Commissioner Nicol asked if that is what Hartford Hospital is doing. Mr. Piechota replied that there are 3 organizations that conduct testing currently. He also said a large number of people go to New Hampshire for the National Registry testing. Commissioner Ouellette asked if that would be a good potential source of revenue for the Academy. Mr. Piechota said yes, but it would be very limited.

Mr. Piechota reported that the Training Division is in the process of putting together a training program for tanker operations. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard for Pump and Aerial Operator is very similar to the program being developed. We're going to work cooperatively with the training folks so that when this program is up and running a person will be able to sit for an examination. It would be another level of certification and we would seek national accreditation for it. Our concern is for the 2Q part of it. He also said that there will be a significant negative impact to certification if the 2Q licensing goes away because we don't currently test the driving portion of the standard. We've always used the 2Q license or CDL in lieu of conducting our own test. If the licensing piece goes away, we would probably need to suspend certification from Pump and Truck Operator because we will not have the ability to test people on the driving piece.

Mr. Morrissette reported that the widow of Kenneth Jeffery was not able to attend the IAFF National Memorial in Colorado Springs last month. Peter Carozza accepted on her behalf the U.S. flag which would have been presented to her at that time. He said Mr. Carozza spoke to Cathy Jeffery and made arrangements for a simple flag presentation ceremony on November 5th here at the Academy. He extended an invitation to Commissioners and advised them to call later in the week to confirm the time as it is tentatively set for noon.

Mr. Piechota reported that the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) is traveling here next month to perform our 5 year accreditation visit. One of the things that IFSAC wants to do is have a meeting with one or more of our Commissioners. He asked if any Commissioner would be interested in coming here to meet with the 3 member team on Friday morning November 12th. Commissioner Nicol asked if the

meeting would be conducted as a one on one type interview or a group session. Mr. Piechota said he suspects that it would be a group session where one or more of the Commissioner's will sit with the site visit team. They would be asked to give their impressions of how the certification process works for the constituent groups that they represent. The IFSAC team would like to get a feel for how the people who are being served by the system view it. Commissioner Nicol said it would be nice to have members of the Commission that have recruit personnel attending the Academy such as Commissioner's Wilkinson and Johnson. Commissioner Wilkinson said it is too early to tell if he will be available.

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

Commissioner Nicol adjourned the meeting at 10:51 AM.

Dated:

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