

January 28, 1997

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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 1997 COMMISSION MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chairman Carozza with the following members present: Commissioners Andresen, Chatfield, Haber, Kowalski, McCarthy, Milewski, Mullen, Munkenbeck, Nicol, Peabody and Vendetta. Commissioner Johnson arrived at 10:15 a.m. Staff members Morrissette, A. Ouellette, A.T. Ouellete and Piechota were present.

Mr. Morrissette introduced the guests to the meeting as Edward P. Urbansky, Jr. Chairperson, Firefighters Memorial Fund Raising Sub-Committee of the Connecticut State Firemen's Association, Leo A. Kelly, West Shore Fire District and Karen Wosczyzna-Birch representing the CT Community-Technical Colleges.

A MOTION was made by Chairman Carozza and SECONDED by Commissioner Kowalski to move to item (a) under New Business. Motion Carried.

Mr. Urbansky reported on fund raising activities undertaken for a Firefighters' Memorial be erected at the Connecticut Fire Academy. Mr. Urbansky stated that for over a year he has been working with the Mashantucket Pequots and other private sector corporations seeking their support. The Mashantucket Pequots have indicated that they would be very much interested in supporting this project and requested the Committee provide them with additional information. Chairman Ernie Herrick has asked that a letter be sent to all Fire Departments and Insurance Companies in the State. To date, the Committee has raised about \$15,000 from the sales of tee-shirts and donations. The Committee thanks the Academy for their help by selling tee-shirts at Academy events.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the Fund Raising Committee's goal.

Mr. Urbansky stated that the Committee hoped to raise between \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the possibility of erecting a partial or scaled down memorial in light of the recent fire service deaths in the State.

Mr. Urbansky stated that in recent discussions the Committee has given some thought to plan an event as soon as additional funds become available.

Chairman Carozza inquired if the Committee had contacted the Attorney General. The Attorney General had indicated to Chairman Carozza that he would very much like to participate in the fund raising activities.

Mr. Urbansky stated that he would contact the Attorney General to schedule a meeting with him to discuss the project.

Chairman Carozza thanked Mr. Urbansky for his presentation

Moving to item (h) under New Business Karen Wosczyzna-Birch reported on efforts of the CT Community-Technical Colleges to propose two new Associates Degree Programs to be offered through a Life Safety Institute. She described the curriculum and the various options being proposed. She remarked that the Community-Technical Colleges see the CT Fire Academy playing a very important role in this collaborative effort. The Community-Technical Colleges' goal is to develop a curriculum that is flexible and innovative which would give consideration and credits for prior training at CT Fire Academy, National Fire Academy and elsewhere. In concluding her remarks, Ms Wosczyzna-Birch invited comments from the Commissioners.

Commissioner McCarthy inquired about the reason for and distinction between the two associate degree programs.

Ms. Wosczyzna-Birch explained that two degree programs are being proposed to focus at two levels of competencies. Level 1 being for entry level firefighter up to FO-II and Level 2 for levels beyond FO-III.

Commissioner McCarthy inquired whether an individual who is currently in an associate degree program with their ultimate goal being a bachelor's or a master's degree would be prevented from moving into the new program.

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that the curriculum proposal requires no duplication because all the courses from the first level are carried over to the second level. The two Associates Degrees allow the Community-Technical College to offer a Baccalaureate Degree short 30 credits. It's designed so that there is no duplication, rather it is a progression.

The Norwalk Fire Department has volunteered to host the first degree program. It is the hope to have these degree programs in place by September, 1997.

Mr. Ouellette inquired if the Community-Technical College would be able to offer an entry level FF-I to the general public because many fire departments now require it as a prerequisite to be considered for employment.

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that as part of the overall plan, the College intends through the Life Safety Institute to come up with a program, as is being offered at Onondaga College and a number of other schools throughout the country, where the College will be able to sponsor these types of programs while working with the CT Fire Academy.

Moving to item (b) under New Business Mr. Leo Kelly addressed the Commission and related concerns with the Fire Service EMS Delivery System in Connecticut. He then gave a brief summary of his experience and involvement with EMS and as a Commission part-time instructor. He stated that when he first came on board with the Commission he was very much impressed with the organization, the centralization of duties, the dedication and interest that was shown for testing and certification as well as the instructor program. On the other end of the spectrum he stated that he has watched the EMS system in the state crumble to a point where it was twenty years ago. Mr. Kelly offered several recommendations for the Commission to consider in relation to its activities with training and certification of emergency medical providers.

Chairman Carozza thanked Mr. Kelly for his report and added that this matter certainly warranted further investigation by the Commissioners.

Returning to item (2) and the regular order of the agenda, Chairman Carozza asked for approval of the November 26 meeting.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and SECONDED by Commissioner Chatfield to approve the November 26, 1996 meeting. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and SECONDED by Commissioner Chatfield to approve the Staff Report for the period of December 15, 1996 through January 14, 1997. Motion carried.

Moving to item (a) under Unfinished Business Mr. Morrissette gave a facility update. He reported the Academy has been experiencing some bubbling of the rubber roof membrane. For close to two years, agency staff have been working through the general contractor to request the manufacturer come and look at the problem. The roofing sub-contractor has indicated that it is a material problem. Finally, the manufacturer of the roof materials contacted the agency and indicated their willingness to investigate the problem. As of now

there is no leak problem as a result of this bubbling, but we are concerned about future problems especially with freeze/thaw cycles.

The agency has awarded a new custodial contract for a period of three years utilizing the State's "Set Aside" program for disadvantaged individuals (A.R.C. Industries). The benefit of this contract is that the rate is established for a period of three years, also the new contract will provide a larger custodial staff plus a supervisor on a daily basis.

Mr. Morrissette reported on activities of the Minor FF Training Study Committee. He stated that he was waiting for input from the Task Force members to a report from the Labor Department. It is hoped the Task Force will have a final meeting and report to the Commission by the February or March meeting with a recommendation for action.

Mr. Morrissette reported on the status of the Limited Access Highway Task Force. He stated that the Task Force has not had a meeting since December 5th and asked Commissioner Johnson whether as Co-Chairperson he had anything to report.

Commissioner Johnson stated that during the proceedings the Task Force discovered that there may be money available by billing insurance companies. When the Task Force contacted appropriate people from the insurance industry they were surprised and didn't quite understand what the Task Force was asking for. They indicated they would make an individual available to represent their industry and to work with the Task Force on this matter. To date a meeting has not been scheduled.

Moving to item (b) under New Business Chairman Carozza suggested that the Commission establish a sub-committee to further investigate the EMS system in Connecticut. Commissioners Johnson, Kowalski, Milewski, McCarthy and Munkenbeck volunteered to serve on a sub-committee to look at the issue.

Moving to item (c) under New Business, Commissioner Vendetta reported on findings of the Home Fire Sprinkler Task Force. The charge of the Task Force was first to investigate the extent to which fire extinguishing systems approved by the State Fire Marshal have been installed in residential buildings. Secondly, the cost of such systems and third the feasibility of requiring installation. The ultimate decision on the part of the Task Force was it was not feasible at this time to require residential sprinklers for a number of reasons, (1) cost factor and (2) the technology is rapidly changing. The most important decision was the fact that there's not enough public knowledge on the issue. The fire service is at fault for that. The Task Force made four recommendations which he explained to the Commissioners. The two most important being the following: (3) Require the task force to reconvene in January, 1998 to; (a) re-evaluate new fire sprinkler technology, (b) revisit the status of recommendations, and (c) reassess original findings; (4) Create a task force consisting of representatives from regulatory agencies, Department of Economic and Community Development, water companies, and the building and sprinkler industries to

investigate methods to reduce costs, increase public awareness of and demand for residential fire sprinklers, and explore the investment potential of residential sprinklers against the initial installation cost to determine the long term economic benefit.

At the same time the Task Force was preparing their final report, the residential sprinkler issue was discussed at an NFPA meeting in Nashville. A recommendation which came out of this meeting was that a strong program of public education in the area of residential sprinklers be pursued. This led to another meeting between the NFPA, the American Fire Sprinkler Association and the National Fire Sprinkler Association. A coalition was formed between these groups to be known as the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition. It has established as its mission *"to provide accurate information to the public about the value of residential fire sprinklers with a focus on new construction of one and two family dwellings."* Because of the active role Connecticut's Task Force has taken, as well as it being in the Northeast it has been chosen by the Coalition to serve as a pilot test site for an educational initiative.

The Coalition will require a number of things from the State of Connecticut to make this program go and it will take members from various factions of the fire service. Mary-Kay Appy who is the Vice President of Public Education for the NFPA has already contacted Cynthia Colton-Reichler from the Commission's Pub Ed Division to gain support. He stated that he had already given a report to the Fire Marshal's Association and was meeting with the CT Fire Chiefs' Association that evening along with Gary Keith from the NFPA to make a presentation. He indicated this Coalition is most interested in finding a family who has experienced a home fire, has since rebuilt or a family who has built a home and have chosen to install residential sprinklers and who may be willing to take a lead role in this initiative. Commissioner Vendetta stated that when a family decides to rebuild a home more often than not it's the woman of that family that makes most of the decisions as to what's going to go into the home. Thus we have targeted the women as being the people we most want to get on board this program. He asked for input from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Johnson inquired if anyone from the Coalition had met with any opposition to this program.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that the Coalition had a member from the Home Builders' Association (Bob Fusari). Mr. Fusari indicated he was very pro residential sprinklers to a point but he indicated the big problem is there may not be any demand for these types of homes. He presently has such a home for sale in Middletown and it's the only home he has not been able to sell.

Commissioner Johnson stated that the Home Builders' Association was a very powerful group and no matter how much public education is done there will still be some individuals that will be opposed to this program.

Mr. Morrisette inquired if following the February 13 meeting the Coalition would have responsibilities to delegate to the various fire service groups.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that he was sure that members of the National Coalition would be contacting various fire service organizations in the very near future.

Moving to item 5 d.) Mr. Piechota reported about airport firefighter certification. When the Certification Regulations were written and adopted by the Legislature about a year ago included was the level of Airport Firefighter certification to the NFPA Standard. The Commission currently does not offer this level of training and certification; however, it was felt there would probably be a need for it in the future. The Certification Division has received a number of requests for reciprocal credit to the level of Airport Firefighter from individuals who have been certified to that level by other agencies. These certification programs are either accredited by the Pro-Board or by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. The agency is asking that the Commission grant approval to offer Airport Firefighter certification currently as reciprocal credit only for those individuals in the state who request it and meet certification requirements.

Commissioner Chatfield inquired if this would apply to individuals who lived in neighboring towns to airports.

Mr. Piechota stated that to qualify an individual would have to provide proof of national certification. When the training program is up and running anybody who meets the prerequisites would be eligible to go through the program and take the test at the conclusion.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Peabody and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to approve certification of individuals who qualify at the level of Airport Firefighter. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that efforts had been underway to have the Department of Defense accept our training programs and standards. By the Commission approving this standard it would work to our advantage in marketing our programs.

Moving to item 5 e.) Mr. Morrisette reported that he and Mr. Ouellette, the Director of Training recently met with corporate safety and training personnel from Northeast Utilities (NU) on two issues. One issue was to discuss an enhancement in the communication between Northeast Utilities and the fire service throughout the state. He stated that it was evident that everyone at this meeting was on the same track in terms of understanding what the needs of the fire service are and some of the pitfalls that have been faced by fire departments in the past. Also, NU is rewriting their Electrical Safety Program which is delivered to fire and emergency services workers. We offered recommendations on how

best to offer this training program, explained the mechanism in the state for providing training from regional facilities, the Academy or directly to the local fire department.

Mr. Ouellette reported that he would be meeting with NU in February to tour their facility and training props. NU indicated that they were looking at the possibility of donating some training props to the Academy. We asked that they also consider providing props to the regional training schools.

Moving to item 5 f.) Mr. Morrissette gave an overview of all fire service related bills being proposed for this Legislation Session. He explained in more detail some of the bills that may impact the Commission. Bill #5428 - "An act authorizing the Commissioner of Public Safety to take land by eminent domain for the training of firefighters". This bill came about by virtue of a task force to study the land issue at the Eastern CT Fire School in Willimantic. This proposal names the Department of Public Safety as the agency who would take this land by eminent domain. Deputy Commissioner Luther communicated to the State Fire Administrator that they had a concern because the Department of Public Safety does not have any responsibility over the Regional Schools. The Office of Legislative Research called looking for a response from the Commission as to whether the Commission felt it would be better suited to be named in this legislation in place of the Commissioner of Public Safety. In our brief discussion the Administrator indicated that this agency does not have the staff or fiscal resources to implement the bill.

Commissioner McCarthy stated that the reason the Department of Public Safety is dumping this is because of the financial issue. He inquired what would happen when the land is taken by eminent domain and payment needs to be made and the money is not available. A recommendation would be to have the Comptroller's Office be named in the Bill because they have contingency accounts.

Mr. Morrissette stated another factor to bring out is that their lease does not expire for several more years so action will not be required immediately.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and SECONDED by Commissioner Milewski that the Commission recommend that proposed Bill #5428 reference the Comptroller's Office. Motion carried.

Mr. Morrissette reported on Bill #5158 which arises out of the Branford incident and deals with funding and training for firefighters in the use of portable radios. The Commission may have to amend its certification regulations to specify demonstration of competence in the use of portable radios. This is training we currently include in our FF-I program, however we would need to ensure the spirit of the bill is met.

A discussion period followed regarding other bills being proposed which impact possible the fire service.

Mr. Morrissette asked Commissioner Vendetta to report on his concerns regarding proposed legislation on requirements to identify buildings with truss construction. He indicated the way the proposed bill is written creates a number of problems, one being that it is not only wood trusses it's all. It's putting in the hands of the Commissioner of Public Safety the responsibility to establish requirements and guidelines. Other states with this kind of legislation indicate they are only getting about 50% compliance and are finding themselves in situations of extreme liability. Right now I believe this proposed bill will be turned into a study committee.

Moving to item 5 g.) Mr. Ouellette explained the purpose for the proposed Recruit FF Rules and Regulations document. He indicated the Commission has never officially adopted a set of Recruit FF Rules and Regulations. The agency has never been challenged on the rules it operates by, however as we continue to expand this program we felt it was time to formally adopt rules.

For purposes of discussion a *MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Vendetta to adopt the Recruit FF Rules and Regulations.*

Commissioner McCarthy stated that he was in favor of adopting the Recruit FF Rules and Regulations and recommended rather than adopting the Rules and Regulations before them it would be better for the Commission to make a motion to allow the State Fire Administrator to formulate the directives for operating the CT Fire Academy as needed. He also recommended that if penalties are going to be imposed on individuals who do not follow the rules and regulations then an appeals process has to be provided for.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that he was in agreement with Commissioner McCarthy's recommendation to give the State Fire Administrator more flexibility to change or add to these rules and regulations.

Commissioners Kowalski and Vendetta were in agreement to withdraw the previous motion to approve the Recruit FF Rules and Regulations.

On MOTION by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Vendetta to allow the State Fire Administrator to promulgate rules and regulations for the safe and efficient operation of the Recruit Firefighter Program. Motion carried.

Commission Kowalski inquired about the 10% budget reduction and its impact on the agency.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the Governor would release his budget on February 13th. The Agency's Budget Analyst has indicated that smaller agencies would not be impacted as much because 10% to them has much more impact than to a larger agency. Additionally,

because the Task Force is still studying the issue of Limited Access Highways they would not touch our proposal for the reduction until the Task Force came back with a final report. As a note the agency has been contacted by at least one other agency who will be having layoffs and looking at their bumping options with employees in our agency.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 11:30 A.M.

Dated: _____

Secretary, Commission on Fire
Prevention and Control

COMMISSION MEETING OF 1/28/97
MOTIONS

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STAFF FOLLOW-UPS REQUIRED

Chairman Carozza thanked Mr. Kelly for his report on EMS in Connecticut and added that this matter certainly warranted further investigation by the Commissioners.

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