

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 30, 1999 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chairman Carozza with the following members present: Commissioners Andresen, Chatfield, Haber, McCarthy, Milewski, Mullen and Nicol. Commissioners Kowalski and Vendetta arrived at 9:35 a.m. Commissioner Gomeau arrived at 9:45 a.m. Commissioners Johnson and Munkenbeck were excused. Staff members Morrissette, O'Neil, Ouellette, Piechota and Piskura were present.

Mr. Morrissette introduced and welcomed Ralph Scarpino from DEP-Department of Forestry as a guest to the meeting.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Haber and SECONDED by Commissioner Andresen to approve the minutes of the January 27, 1999 meeting. Motion Carried.

Commissioner Nicol asked that it be noted that a duplicate copy of page 3 was enclosed in the minutes distributed for the January 27, 1999 meeting.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the Staff Report for the period of January 15, 1999 - February 14, 1999 and February 15, 1999 - March 14, 1999. Motion carried.

Moving to Unfinished Business, item 4 a.) Mr. Morrissette gave a budget update. He stated that the agency has gone through its round of hearings with the Appropriations' Committee. These meetings appeared to go exceptionally well. A number of legislators expressed interest to visit the Academy in the future. He expressed one word of caution in that the capital equipment and facility items are both to be bonded. In past years some of the equipment money has been received as a direct appropriation within the agency budget. For the FY00 budget only \$1,000 has been earmarked as an appropriation for equipment. The balance of the capital facility and equipment funds are to come via bonding.

Bond funds typically become available toward the end of August or early September. Therefore this money is not immediately available July 1. To date we have not received any of the bond funds identified in our budget for the current fiscal year. There's a big delay and we've been told by OPM that we should be receiving about 50% of these funds this month and we hope the balance by the end of the fiscal year.

This issue was noted and discussed at length during our meeting with the Appropriations Regulations and Protection Subcommittee. Some of what our future plans are for enhancements of the facility and are tied to these bond funds. Therefore, we may not be able to move forward with these plans until later in the fiscal year.

Moving to item 4 b.) Mr. Morrissette gave a facility update. He stated that the agency has a number of projects which have been initiated through DPW. These are contingent upon funding through next year's budget. A project for a staircase to the storage mezzanine in the fire station will be funded out of moneys we have available this year. Other projects are enhancements to the training tower and the administration building. In addition, last week we had an opportunity to meet once again with DOT to discuss our plans for future expansion which will require land acquisition. There seems to be somewhat of a turn around in terms of DOT's posture. DOT appears to be showing an interest in the Commission and its programs. The next step in the discussion process involves the receipt of an updated map of the surrounding property. DOT will highlight restricted areas which we cannot consider for expansion and other areas open for consideration. They've asked us to plot out some of our immediate needs. As members of the Commission may be aware, we've been having some problems with the smoke travel from the flashover simulator entering the fire station. Also depending on the prevailing winds, the smoke is actually traveling into the administration building and causing problems.

This past week we heard unofficially the FAA has approved the funds for the ARFF training prop for the New Hampshire Fire Training Academy. DOT and Bradley Airport Fire Department is still looking at some enhancements of the current props here at the Academy.

Lastly, the agency has received the 15 year warranty on the improvements that were made to the link roof. This warranty covers both materials and labor.

Moving to item 4 c.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the 800 Fire Line program. To date this phone line has received approximately 140 calls. About 70 (50%) of those calls have been referred to local fire departments. The feedback from fire departments has been minimal. Most of the departments are not reporting the disposition of the referrals.

In addition, last November we hosted a meeting of the Fire Line contacts and volunteer fire chiefs which was very successful. A second meeting has been scheduled for May 6 at 7:00 p.m. which will be held in Wallingford at Central Fire Headquarters. This meeting is open to anyone responsible or interested in volunteer recruitment and retention. Interested Commissioners are invited to attend this meeting.

Lastly, the Governor's Office has agreed to work with the agency on the production of public service announcements (PSA). At this point we are soliciting PSA story boards produced in other states. We will submit a request to the Department of Public Safety video unit in hope they will work with us to produce these items.

Commissioner Nicol recommended the agency look at the possibility of doing the PSA at UConn and maybe even use Coach Jim Calhoun.

Moving to item 4 d.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update of plans being formulated for the Commission's Strategic Planning Process. He provided an overview of the proposed scope of services and schedule. The agency is looking to host three focus group sessions, both afternoons and evenings, towards the end of May. Various fire service constituent groups would be invited to these public forums. These sessions will be facilitated by an outside contractor. Tentative locations are Duracell Corporation in Bethel, Northeast Utilities in Berlin or Yankee Energy Systems in Meriden and the third area is Northeast Utilities in Windham or Yankee Gas in Killingly. He asked Commissioners if they had any questions or concerns with the proposed schedule and locations for the public forums.

Commissioner Nicol asked what accommodations the proposed locations had to offer.

Mr. Morrisette stated that basically he was looking for a meeting room set up with round tables where small groups of people can work as a team to develop proposed strategic priorities. The facilitator will then consolidate into a report all of the input from the group sessions.

Commissioner Nicol asked who would be invited to these sessions.

Mr. Morrisette stated that all state fire service organizations, fire chiefs, fire department members and Commissioners and staff members would be invited to these sessions.

Moving to item 4 e.) Mr. Morrisette stated that the March meeting of the Governor's Office Staff was canceled and the next meeting is scheduled for April 13.

Moving to item 4 f.) Mr. Morrisette gave a legislative update. He directed attention to a handout produced by the Connecticut Career Fire Chiefs' Association seeking support for House Bill #6565. This is the fire service training Bill which has been proposed for the last four years. This Bill earmarks funding to be appropriated to the Commission for distribution to local municipalities as reimbursement for the cost of training. This Bill will require the Commission to adopt regulations for program administration. One point, Mr. Morrisette expressed concern with is this Bill provides no funding for administrative overhead. We're asking Commissioners to go back to their organizations and disseminate this information asking individuals to contact their local legislators asking for support.

Mr. Nicol inquired what the dollar amount of this Bill was.

Mr. Morrisette stated that four or five years ago when the original task force group was established, the fiscal note worked out to a little bit more than one million dollars.

The second item relates to the transfer of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) from the Department of Public Safety to the Military Department. Mr. Morrisette stated that he, Adam Piskura and John Gamble had an opportunity to meet with Adjutant General (AG) Gay of the Military Department to discuss their concerns. In the past the Military Department reported in testimony by that this is a natural administrative transition taking place in all 50 states. In approximately 22 states throughout the country OEM falls under the Military Department. The AG indicated this move will actually benefit the overall workings of OEM in that most of the support staff and services will be located within the same structure (Armory). The point was also made that the last two or three OEM Directors have come from the military. The Adjutant General suggested this is a good move for the fire service. We came away from the meeting with a number of our questions answered; however, a level of concern still exists regarding the position of the fire service especially as it relates to the issue of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). There are billions of dollars in the pipeline and a minute percentage is making its way to first responders. The AG reaffirmed the military is not a first responder and will pledge to work closely with the Commission and fire service.

Mr. Piskura stated that he did not go away from the meeting very happy. About 98% of the conversation was interesting input which is the nature of that environment. McGuire who is now the Director of Emergency Management very proudly announced that he is a 40 year career military man. So you can very easily see the direction that weapons of mass destruction and any other terrorism act is taking. He expressed concern that basically the fire service is squeezed out. The money that is going to the State Police in a grant is the money that he reported on after a meeting with FEMA Director James Lee Witt and Bill

Terry from the National Domestic Preparedness Office. That money was suppose to come to the fire service and EMS and a decision has already been made at the state government level that that money will go to the State Police before the fire service even receives notice. At the federal level, there is a perception that the money is going to the fire service and it's not going there.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the next appropriate move would be for fire service organization leaders to meet with the Adjutant General.

Chairman Carozza stated that he concurred with Mr. Morrissette's remarks that it is very important that the leadership of all the fire service organizations meet with the new incoming Adjutant General as soon as possible.

Mr. Morrissette reported on House Bill #5408 making a statutory change to the makeup of the E 911 Commission by adding four new members. Two of the new members are to be managers of a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP), while two are to represent the commercial mobil communications' industry. He asked Commissioners to look at this Bill and raise any concerns through their organizations.

Moving to item 4 g.) for the presentation of the James Faherty Casey Award. Chairman Carozza and Mr. Morrissette presented the award to Mr. Ouellette. Mr. Morrissette stated that this award was named after James Faherty Casey the founder of the National Fire Academy's TRADE concept. This national award is presented to Andy Ouellette for representing the National Fire Academy's Training Resource and Data Exchange core values of excellence.

Mr. Ouellette stated that this award would not be possible without the support of the staff at the Academy and Commission. He thanked the staff and Commissioners.

Moving to item 4 h.) Mr. Morrissette stated that at the January meeting in Prospect there was a lengthy discussion on proposed revisions to the Certification testing scoring policy. The staff took into consideration the discussion items and recommendations and made some changes which he asked Mr. Piechota to explain.

Mr. Piechota stated that the proposed policy will revise the scoring criteria for written certification examinations. This policy is designed to revise the Commission's Certification Examination process to ensure the knowledge, skills and abilities of Connecticut's Fire Service personnel. The current examination policy allows an individual that has received a score of less than 70% to retake an examination an unlimited number of times during a one year time period without the need to be retrained or counseled. Based upon examination retest results, Commission staff are of the opinion that the lack of retraining or counseling reduces the likelihood that an individual will be successful on one or more examination retests. This policy revision will allow only a single retake of an examination for persons who score between 60% and 70% (without retraining or counseling) and will require any individual who scores less than 60% on an examination to be retrained or counseled prior to retaking an examination. Retraining or counseling will be verified through the signature of a certified fire service instructor on the re-examination application.

A question and answer period followed.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Kowalski to adopt the Certification Testing Scoring Policy.

Under discussion, Commissioner Nicol asked if this item could be tabled for 30 days to allow Commissioners time to discuss this proposed policy with their respective organizations and not vote until the next Commission meeting.

A discussion period followed.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Kowalski to withdraw the motion to adopt the Certification Testing Scoring Policy. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Kowalski to table the Certification Testing Scoring proposal to provide adequate time for Commissioners to bring this matter to their respective organizations. Motion carried.

Mr. Morrissette put on the table for further discussion the issue presented by Chief Black of the Watertown Fire Department at the January meeting. Chief Black questioned the agency's practical exam processes and procedures. He stated that this discussion never really had any closure. He asked if Commissioners approve of our current psycho-motor skills testing procedures?

Commissioner Milewski commented that the discussion did go further indicating that a much larger ladder was used in testing.

Mr. Morrissette commented that they were cognizant of that prior to the examination. The staff feels comfortable that our process is fair and equitable to all.

Commissioner Chatfield inquired if this was an isolated incident.

Mr. Morrissette stated that this was the first incident like this brought to his attention.

Mr. Piechota stated that people are evaluated as individuals operating as members of a team. Team grades are not given even though the fire service performs in a team operations mode.

Moving to item 4 i.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the CT Firefighters' Memorial Committee. The agency has received from the Committee a written request to transfer the funding (\$30,000) which was appropriated by the Legislature to the Commission as a pass through to the Memorial Committee. Although processing has already begun, our Budget Liaison felt that this action should be approved by a motion of the Commission.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Gomeau approving the transfer of appropriated funds to the Memorial Committee. Motion carried.

Mr. Morrissette reported that the company the Chairman of the CT Firefighters' Memorial Committee works for has agreed to provide the engineering service for the layout and site work for the memorial. Engineers from the firm have been on site to do some surveying. To date the Committee reports funds totaling \$60,000, this figure includes the \$30,000 from the Legislature. Mr. Morrissette indicated that he has asked the Memorial Committee Chairman to attend a future Commission meeting to provide a project status report.

On a related item Mr. Morrissette displayed two nice certificates the Commission received for its donation made in the name of the Commission and Connecticut Fire Academy to the

National Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial. These certificates will be framed and displayed in a prominent location at the Academy.

Commissioner Nicol commented that the Commission needs to make sure that the location of the memorial fits into the facility master plan.

Moving to item 5 a.) Mr. Morrissette stated that some changes to the Recruit Firefighter Program curriculum have been made and these changes have been discussed with the Connecticut Career Fire Chiefs' Association. He asked Mr. Piskura to present an overview to the Commissioners regarding these discussions and for consideration of a fee increase for the program.

Mr. Piskura stated the proposal is to move the Medical Response Technician (MRT) week out of the 10 week program and place it as an optional 11th week. This will be for those recruits that require MRT certification. This will add five days to the curriculum which will include two days of Flashover Survival Training, one additional day of hose work, expanded SCBA training and one new day for practical skills practice.

Currently this program is underfunded by \$500 per student. Increasing the tuition to \$2,000 will enable the Training Division to achieve cost recovery for this program. Cost recovery will allow the Training Division the ability to offer additional programs without reductions in other areas. One additional recruit program has been added bringing annual availability to three.

At a Career Chiefs' meeting it was suggested that we add two components, one on cultural diversity and one on sexual harassment which will also be incorporated in this program. A vote was taken by the Career Chiefs in support of both program changes and tuition increase.

A question and answer period followed.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Gomeau to approve changes as stated to the Recruit Program. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Andresen to approve a fee increase of \$500 to the Recruit Program. Motion carried.

Commissioner Mullen stated that he had the opportunity to attend a Train-the-Trainer for the flashover prop and complimented the professionalism of Mark Lewandowski and Ed O'Hurley.

Chairman Carozza stated for the record that he was at the Academy on another date to view the flashover training but it was canceled.

Chairman Carozza read a letter of thanks from Commissioner Haber to the Commission for the plaque presented to him by Commissioner Nicol on the occasion of the testimonial dinner for his retirement from the Berlin Fire Department.

Commissioner Haber read a letter from the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors' Association requesting the assistance of the Commission with sponsorship of the CFDIA 14th Annual Fire Apparatus Drivers' Rodeo to be held May 22.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Kowalski to place on file the February 25, 1999 letter from the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors' Association. Motion carried.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that he truly appreciates the support and vote of confidence given him as Vice Chairman of the Commission; however, on a few occasions this year he has been asked to perform in that position and because of other commitments he has had to say no. He went on to say that he believes this Commission deserves better and expressed his wish to step down as Vice Chairman.

Chairman Carozza stated that he has discussed this matter with Commissioner Vendetta and appreciates his thoughtfulness.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Milewski to place on the agenda for the next Commission meeting nomination and election of a Vice Chairman. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza stated that at a recent meeting with Governor Rowland on some labor related issues he expressed his concerns and displeasure on some of the things happening with the Connecticut fire service. Governor Rowland indicated that he had just established a Law Enforcement Committee and asked Chairman Carozza to serve on this committee and he accepted. A brief overview of the Committee was given.

Also during this meeting Chairman Carozza expressed his concern with the transfer of OEM to the Military Department. Governor Rowland asked Adjutant General Gay to call Chairman Carozza and they had a lengthy conversation the next day. A meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible with the new Adjutant General and express our concerns to him.

Mr. Morrissette gave an overview of a House Resolution in Congress introducing the FIRE Bill. This Bill is modeled after the Cops Bill and proposes to provide a billion dollars a year for five years to the fire service. He indicated there is a significant disparity in terms of federal funding for the fire service as compared to law enforcement. Currently in Connecticut three members of Congress have signed on (i.e. Gejdenson, Maloney and Larson) as cosponsors. He stated that he was currently working through the other offices to seek their support this legislation. He also asked Commissioners as individuals and through their organizations to get to their membership to seek support.

Chairman Carozza stated that the concentration needs to be with Congressman Shays and Johnson.

Mr. Morrissette stated that on April 7 at 10:00 a.m. the Northeastern States' Fire Consortium, which supported the FIRE Bill from the very beginning, will hold a meeting here at the Academy and Commissioners are welcome to attend. This group was successful in lobbying an appropriation of a half million dollars to the National Fire Academy's budget for development of chief officer level training.

Mr. Piskura shared with Commissioners and gave an overview of the rumors being circulated around the state about the Academy. He further stated that as an educational institution, we must be proactive in promoting facts and a fair representation of situations. The Academy has an active safety committee that assumes its responsibilities seriously. If anyone hears any type of rumors about the Academy they are asked to call either Mark Lewandowski or the Director of Training.

Commissioner Andresen inquired if anything had been done regarding an inquiry a few years ago from Chief Walsh in Willimantic about the damage caused to turn out gear after crawling around the burn building.

Mr. Morrisette stated that on two occasions over the past four years the burn building floor has been ground down with special sanders. This has not worked and gear is still being damaged. A vendor is scheduled to provide a sample coating to the floor as a test for evaluation by staff. If approved we will move to have this floor coating throughout the burn building added as funds permit.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Gomeau to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Dated: _____

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

MOTIONS

Commission Meeting - March 30, 1999

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STAFF FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED

OEM Transfer to Military Department - Mr. Morrissette stated that the next appropriate move would be for fire service organization leaders to meet with the Adjutant General.

Chairman Carozza stated that he concurred with Mr. Morrissette's remarks that it is very important that the leadership of all the fire service organizations meet with the new incoming Adjutant General as soon as possible.

Certification Testing Scoring Policy - Under discussion, Commissioner Nicol asked if this item could be tabled for 30 days to allow Commissioners time to discuss this proposed policy with their respective organizations and not vote until the next Commission meeting.

National Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial Commemorative Certificates - Mr. Morrisette displayed two nice certificates the Commission received for its donation made in the name of the Commission and Connecticut Fire Academy to the National Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial. These certificates will be framed and displayed in a prominent location at the Academy.

Commissioner Nicol commented that the Commission needs to make sure that the location of the memorial fits into the facility master plan.

Staff Commendation - Commissioner Mullen stated that he had the opportunity to attend a Train-the-Trainer for the flashover prop and complimented the professionalism of Mark Lewandowski and Ed O'Hurley.