

Connecticut State Firefighters Association

Educational Committee

Meeting minutes

December 18, 2003 - 19:00

Wethersfield Fire Company #3

The meeting was called to order with the following members present:

Burrville Fire School – Richard Winn
Eastern Connecticut Fire School – Lloyd Niles, Al Hawkins
Fairfield Regional Fire School – Scott Bisson
Hartford Fire School – Chet Haber, Michael Jepeal, Jim Baldis
Wolcott State Fire School – Paul Perrotti
Connecticut State Firefighters Association – Neil Burrows, Charles Stankye, Jr., Ted Schroll
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control – Jim Wilkinson
Connecticut Fire Academy – State Fire Administrator, Jeff Morrissette

There were no representatives present from:

Middlesex Fire School
New Haven Regional Fire Academy
Valley Fire Chief's Regional Fire School

1. Update on the bonding bill S.B. No. 1036

There has been no progress since this committee last met. Jim Wilkinson reported that he had discussed the bonding with Senator Smith. Senator Smith believes that there has been a disconnect between Governor Rowland and Mark Ryan. Although the governor had committed to support of thirty-million dollars over two years to get the project started, Mark Ryan has been intent on culling out some of those funds for other purposes. Senator Smith said that the correct people have come to the support of the initiative, this committee needs to continue to exert pressure.

Jim also reported that on top of all of the fiscal problems the state bond rating was in jeopardy.

2. Lobbying efforts update

Jim Wilkinson indicated that the funding initiative needed to be established as a high priority early in the upcoming legislative session.

Scott Bisson from Fairfield reported on an initiative that they had undertaken at their regional fire school. The project was called a "Civilian Fire Academy" and was conducted for legislators and local politicians. This was run as an introduction to the fire service to help lawmakers get some appreciation for what local firefighter were subjected to for entry level training.

Charlie Stankye asked if the bill needed to pass in order for the funding to be forthcoming. Ted Schroll said that he believed that the answer was "yes".

There was discussion about soliciting assistance from the state attorney general, Richard Blumenthal. A.G. Blumenthal addressed the C.F.D.I.A. annual banquet in October and openly offered his support of the mission of the C.F.D.I.A.. He openly invited anyone in the room to contact him if he could

assist in any way. The A.G. sits on the state bond commission. It was decided that the A.G. should be added to the distribution list for future correspondence.

It was suggested by Lloyd Niles that we attempt to get one state legislator from each region to sit with this committee. This could become a grassroots of a Connecticut caucus to lobby the U.S. Congress for financial assistance.

It was suggested by Rich Winn that this committee try to point out to the state legislators that the decrease in available burn buildings was resulting in an over-use of the remaining facilities. This trend is placing regional school directors in an impossible position. The continued heavy use of these facilities is accelerating their deterioration while no funding sources for repairs have been identified. Each regional school director needs to weigh the need to train firefighters in live fire conditions against the structural stability of their burn buildings.

3. Alternate funding sources

There was discussion about pursuit of federal funding for the regional fire school capital project. Both Rob Simmons and Chris Dodd were mentioned as contacts to plead for federal assistance. It was generally felt that this alternative would probably become more embroiled and probably would take a significant amount of time. This may be a reasonable avenue to pursue long-term operational funding, but probably would not yield results in time to save the existing regional fire schools.

4. Terrorism and Haz-Mat training initiatives

Jeff Morrissette spoke about initiatives of the Emergency Response Commission. The University of Connecticut will apparently be hiring two or three employees to assist with administration through the University Extension Service to provide training.

5&6. Mission Delineation updates. Educational Committee mission update

Al Hawkins distributed copies of the Winter Class Schedule for the Eastern Connecticut Fire School. There is a compilation of C.F.A. and E.C.F.S. course deliveries that appear to further the goals stated in the mission delineation statement as well as this committee's mission statement.

7. Other items from membership

Jim Wilkinson announced that John Vendetta has tendered his resignation from the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. There was consensus by the committee that we should ask that another Commissioner be appointed to take his place on this committee. Jim will take our request to the next C.F.P.C. meeting.

The next meeting was set for Thursday, January 29, 2004 at 19:00, probably in Wethersfield.

Al Hawkins, chairman