

Connecticut State Firefighters Association

Educational Committee

Meeting minutes

March 25, 2004 - 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
Hartford Fire School – Chet Haber, Michael Jepeal
Middlesex County Fire School – Fred Dudek
Valley Fire Chief's Regional Fire School – Jim Gies, Peter Wols
Wolcott State Fire School – Paul Perrotti
Connecticut State Firefighters Association – Scott Potter, Ted Schroll
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control – Jim Wilkinson, Rich Nicol
Connecticut Fire Academy – State Fire Administrator, Jeff Morrissette
Guest – Don Ouillette, Department of Public Works

There were no representatives present from:

Fairfield Regional Fire School
New Haven Regional Fire Academy

1. Lobbying efforts for capital funding for regional schools

Jim Wilkinson gave a report on the meeting between Governor Rowland and members of the Education Committee. Those in attendance were Governor Rowland, his aide Brenda Sisco, Representatives Belden and Boukus, Jim Wilkinson, Jeff Morrissette, Chet Haber, Richard Winn, and Al Hawkins.

The discussion about the project was quite casual. Representative Belden and Governor Rowland had a lengthy discussion about the availability of surplus state property. They both felt that there were several possible parcels that could be available for this project.

There was a brief discussion about the Governor's press release on March 19th. There were nearly 100 in attendance. Every regional fire school was represented. Also in attendance were Representatives Boukus, Mikutel, and Orange. Local legislators in attendance were Michael Paulhus, Windham First Selectman and Elizabeth Paterson, Mayor of the Town of Mansfield.

Lloyd Niles expressed that we should try to meet with key legislators by mid-April if this effort doesn't seem to be moving forward.

Jim Wilkinson offered to contact Representative Amann to request that he set up a meeting between representatives of this committee and Senator Sullivan to solicit his support.

All were reminded that this session of the general assembly ends on May 5th.

2. Funding support letters

Form letters of support are being distributed for use by local fire officials through various county and state fire service organizations. The letters will also be available on the C.F.P.C. listserve. All members were encouraged to distribute these letters and appeal to all fire chiefs in their respective service areas to send them to their state representative and senator.

Scott Potter advised that the capital improvement plan was brought up for discussion at the Fairfield County Fire Association meeting. There was a high level of support expressed by those in attendance, several form letters were distributed.

3. Action plan discussion – Where do we go from here?

Don Ouillette discussed how he anticipated that the project would move forward after the funding is approved.

Don feels that the single greatest potential impediment would be property acquisition. The Eastern Connecticut Fire School is current engaged in a lease with a private property owner. Since this is a pre-existing property use, acquiring this parcel of property may not be too troublesome. All of the schools that intend to relocate should be seeking out surplus state or municipal property. Trying to acquire property from private owners could involve a very lengthy and problematic process.

Funding authorization is essential to the process. This committee will be unable to pursue property acquisition until funding is approved.

A brief discussion about long-term property ownership was held. Property used for construction of a regional fire school may remain state property. A regional fire school could engage in a long-term lease with the state for the property.

A motion was made by Jim Geis, seconded by Jim Wilkinson that the committee adhere to the priorities set for year one of the five-year implementation schedule developed by this committee. After a brief discussion the motion passed unanimously. (That schedule calls for property acquisition for Willimantic, Middletown, Derby and Wolcott and for the construction of a burn building at New Haven and a burn building and storage building at Windsor Locks.)

There was consensus by those attending that in later years of the project that the Education Committee would determine project priorities based upon the funding available and the specific needs of each of the regional schools.

Lloyd Niles feels that a written commitment to our plan should be made by each of the regional fire school directors.

4. Other items from membership

There seems to be a grass-roots effort to develop a new plan for building a fire school in Middlesex. Someone who is not associated with this committee has expressed that we were wasting money by building masonry burn buildings and should look at steel, pre-fabricated burn buildings. The person responsible for this effort has asked to come to a future Education Committee meeting to make a presentation.

There was discussion that this committee had already investigated that option and felt that it only presented a short-term solution. It was generally felt that with the extensive use that burn buildings at the regional fire schools would be subjected to that pre-fabricated buildings would have an extremely short service life.

A motion was made by Peter Wols, seconded by Lloyd Niles that we not entertain further discussion about the use of pre-fabricated burn buildings. The motion passed unanimously.

Jeff Morrisette advised that Fire Service Day at the Capital would be on April 21. In the past the hours have been from 09:00 until 14:00.

The next meeting was set for Thursday, April 22, 2004 at 19:00, in Wethersfield.

submitted by:
Al Hawkins, chairman