



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



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MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 26, 2008 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Chairman Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Blaschik, Kowalski, Murphy, Nelson, Nicol, Walsh and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewis, Morrisette and Piskura were present.

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

Chairman Carozza extended a welcomed to newly appointed Commissioner Chief Matthew Nelson, of Glastonbury representing the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association replacing Commissioner Andy Ouellette.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the January 29, 2008 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the Minutes of the January 29, 2008 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Report January 15, 2008 - February 14, 2008.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Brady and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to approve the Staff Report for the period of January 15, 2008 – February 14, 2008. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding the budget. He said we had forwarded to Commissioners a copy of the Governor's Mid-Term budget adjustments. He said there was nothing significant for the agency other than a couple of technical adjustments one of which is the payments to volunteer fire companies also known as the Supplemental Grant program. He said that account was reduced by \$25,000. This action was based upon our payouts from last year where we lapsed approximately \$25,000. Therefore, it's someone's assumption that if we did not fully spend down the account last year they would take it away. He said we had our hearing with the Appropriations Regulation and Protection Subcommittee last week. We brought this concern to their attention that this action could reduce payments across the board to all eligible fire companies and it's very likely that some may seek reimbursement in the future who had not in the past. He also said the other change was a technical line adjustment for the Stamford Regional Fire School combining two separate

budget lines which was an error into a single line. He said where they placed it was wrong so we also brought this issue up to see if they would correct it. Two minor adjustments were also requested to support the New Haven Regional Fire School and Wolcott Fire School. The New Haven issue relates to a need to replace two HVAC units for a total of \$34,000 and a salary increase for instructors at Wolcott amounting to \$12,000. He also said the Capital Budget proposes restoration of \$250,000 for capital facility improvements. This is a reduction from \$500,000 last Legislative Session. He said the problem was that Bill failed at the closing hours of the Special Session. Originally it was proposed as \$500,000 for deferred projects here at the Academy as well as at the CPAT Center in Meriden. He said in essence they are trying to restore partial funding and we can live with the \$250,000. Basically we can't adequately manage too many projects at a single time with the staffing that we have. He said it would be our intentions as part of the Budget development process for the next Biennium to request the additional funding so we've already made the Capital Budget folks aware of that issue. He said if and when the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee meets we'll be in attendance to speak on the issue. He also said the miscellaneous accounts administered by the Comptrollers office basically remained unchanged as originally proposed as part of the FY09 Governor's budget. He asked if there are any questions regarding the Budget.

Mr. Morrisette gave a staffing update. He said we completed yesterday, the interviews for the Bookstore Assistant position. Candidates were ranked and the number one candidate was a unanimous selection. He said DAS will be doing a final check of the SEBAC list as well as conduct a background reference review and if everything checks out they will be making an offer to the individual in the near future. He also said interviews on the Storekeeper position were deferred for over a month because DAS SMART human resources only wants to handle one issue at a time. These interviews are now scheduled for tomorrow and Friday of this week. He said we have ten candidates from an extensive list of well over 50. He said we're moving forward as quickly as we can with the resources we have available to us.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he had a brief report because the Committee has not met since the last Commission meeting. He said overall, progress is continuing to move forward on a positive note in all directions including a recently signed agreement between the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) which locks in the legalities of the site for the Burrville School. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 28th in Wethersfield.

Moving to item 4c.) FY08 Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding the Supplemental Grant program. He said we sent out a reminder as promised to 20 volunteer fire companies who have not made contact with us. We've been able to make direct contact with a couple in the last few days so this will be the final reminder. In essence, we could be lapsing another \$25,000 in the current fiscal year for that program. He said he appreciates the work that Commissioners have done in reaching out to those eligible fire companies. He said he knows Commissioner Brady was in

attendance last week at the Budget meeting and there were some questions as it relates to this particular program from Rep. Orange. He said he tried to relay the information that we're doing our best to spend the money but sometimes it's hard to get people to access the available funding.

Moving to item 4d.) Entry-Level Training Reimbursement Update – Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the Entry-Level Training Reimbursements. He said approximately \$400,000 has either been encumbered or reimbursed to date so the account is down approximately 50%. He said it's hard to really track in terms of how successful we will be as we're still trying to capture all those people that have been certified between July 1st and present to let them know. He said any assistance Commissioners can provide in reminding fire chiefs that the funding is available is appreciated. He said this joins with the next item under the Legislative Update specifically Raised Bill 180 which is the Training Bill and a proposal for restoration of full funding. He said he brought it up at the budget hearing last week as well that in essence we can be doing a whole lot of good with more funding and it's making its way through the process. He said there was a public hearing on that particular Bill earlier last week and Commissioner Brady testified as well as Chief LeVecchia. He said it's really going to come down to where the state sits in terms of the financial picture. He said he received a call yesterday requesting assistance in development of the fiscal impact statement so they are looking for detailed information on how we would spend the full \$2.5 million. We will be putting that together in the next day or two and forwarding it to the Office of Fiscal Analysis. He said the program is working well but it is somewhat of a burden upon the staff. They are doing their best in accommodating requests and conducting follow ups in making the actual payouts upon certification. He said he anticipates, towards the end of the fiscal year, is really going to become crunch time and we may have to devote some additional staff to support the program in making phone calls to verify information, etc. He said things are looking pretty well currently but it's hard to determine if we will lapse any funding in that particular program. He also said the funding does increase to \$795,000 in FY09.

Moving to item 4e.) 2008 Legislative Session Update – Mr. Morrissette said we distributed a Legislative Bill tracking chart this morning which was provided by Ted Schroll as of Friday of last week. He said working with the CSFA, we will begin posting on a regular basis, the updated tracking chart on our website. He said in the past Mr. Schroll distributed it to a small group of people and made presentations to various organizations at their monthly meeting. The State Library previously had done our bill tracking but they no longer provide that service so he had asked Mr. Schroll and working through President Wilkinson of the CSFA we'll be making the chart available to all those who visit our website. He said we'll post any specific updates on Committee meetings and hearings via the Listserv when possible. He asked Commissioners to review the chart and he would respond to any questions.

Moving to item 4f.) FireZone Project Update – Mr. Morrissette said he and Commissioner Wilkinson attended a meeting of the planning team for the FireZone project that Chief Denis McCarthy from Norwalk had presented to the Commission back

in the late fall. Chief McCarthy has gathered a small group of people to begin looking at laying out the process for making the FireZone public fire safety education “edutainment” a reality. He said the meeting was held on January 30th and he and Commissioner Wilkinson represented the Commission, and Fire Marshal Iannaccone from Norwalk, Fire Marshal Baker from New Canaan and Sandy Clarkson who is a member of the Board of Directors for the FDNY FireZone were also in attendance. He said it was a positive meeting and everyone appeared energized to move forward. He said a developer in Norwalk has made available a little over 2,000 square feet of property in a planned development for the construction of a FireZone here in Connecticut. The key is how to fund this project’s construction and ensure it can operate. They are beginning to look at establishment of a non-profit foundation similar to what they have in New York. He also said funding was requested in the amount of \$1.5 million from Liberty Mutual to support the project. He said the New York project when it was developed was a little over \$2.5 million and that was probably 10 years ago. He said we can benefit from much of the ground work the FDNY Foundation had accomplished resulting in some savings up front. He said there will be some follow up meetings but basically they are looking at the creation of a business plan, identification of corporate or foundation related type sponsors as well as possibly looking at state support sometime in the future. He asked Commissioner Wilkinson if he wanted to add anything.

Commissioner Wilkinson said the location is slated for somewhere in downtown Norwalk. He said there is a redevelopment area in close proximity or across the street from the Stepping Stones Museum. He said Norwalk has become an educational field trip mecca for southwestern Connecticut with the Aquarium and the Stepping Stones Museum so they think it will be a good location for that type of environment. He said it is an interesting concept and hopefully it will progress well.

Commissioner Nelson asked for a brief overview of the FireZone project.

Commissioner Wilkinson said the FireZone is a store front in New York City and a part of the Rockefeller Center complex and is operated by the FDNY Foundation in close conjunction with the fire department in the city. He said he believes it is open to walk in traffic but it is also a destination for elementary school aged children field trips and it has an edutainment area, a room where they offer fire safety presentations to the kids. He said there is a small store where they sell merchandise, etc.

Mr. Morrissette added that they’ve basically identified the top five causes of fire within the city and are trying to provide education to prevent similar occurrences but it’s a partnership with a small amount of paid staff which includes professional actors and light duty firefighters that are detailed to the operation. He said it’s very well done and the only thing he would advise before they move forward is they would need double the space of what is in New York City which is approximately 2,500 square feet.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if they were to explore state funding would that involve the Tourism Bureau.

Mr. Morrissette replied it potentially could. He said they are looking at the private funding first to get some seed money to proceed and if they need additional funds the state would be an obvious choice.

Moving to item 5a.) Laptop Encryption Project – Mr. Morrissette said he wanted to update the Commission on this issue because of the amount of staff time devoted to make this to become a reality. As Commissioners may recall last summer there was theft of a laptop from a Department of Revenue Services employee's car down on Long Island. This set off a fire storm within the state basically the protection of personal data. He said over the past six months or so there have been surveys of agencies and our agency reported that we had a number of laptops however we do not maintain any restricted or confidential data on any of them. The vast majority are utilized by members of the Statewide Fire Plan which we have 16 Tough Book computers set aside just for their use and some are utilized by a few staff members. He said the remainder is utilized for PowerPoint programs made by our Adjunct instructors. He said we have approximately 50 laptops within the agency. It was deemed sometime in December that we're not going to take any risks. He said it's a mandate and Executive Order that all agency laptops be encrypted. He said there are some 6,000 or more laptops in state service and the whole process has been a team approach through the DOIT and a vendor called Safeboot to try to make this a reality. He said what we were told originally would be a half-day project turned into a four-day project. The Governor has said in no uncertain terms by the end of February all laptops must be encrypted or else. He said every Friday a score card is distributed to all the agencies. He said he can report that as of last Friday we are 80% there and the DOIT and Safeboot staff will be back here tomorrow to finish the others. We may have a few straggler units later. The other problem that happened is with this technology some of our older computers have failed because of hard drive or other problem. He said he was told that the state police have lost 100 or more computers thus far from their laptops. He said we will have to replace some of the computers but he's not quite sure we'll be 100% by the deadline but with the available resources that we have we've done an admirable job in trying to come up to speed very quickly. He circulated a copy of the score card to Commissioners.

Moving to item 5b.) Recruit Class 41 Overview - Mr. Morrissette asked Director of Training Piskura to provide an overview on some recent changes of our Recruit Training program.

Mr. Piskura reported that we have 51 Recruits currently and is the largest class so far. He said we've been accommodating them well and we have some HVAC issues in the dormitory rooms so we've had our contractor here three days addressing various issues. He said we did put some money aside for upgrades to the Recruit lounge room so we were able to blow out a wall into the adjacent former dormitory area which was currently a book depository or quasi library. He said now it is a quiet study area equipped with four computer stations. He said there was no way the room would accommodate 51 people even if they were all standing so we've offered that they could use the cafeteria at night or the former recruit double classroom. Additionally we're looking at upgrading the television satellite to DirecTV similar to what is in a residence because currently we

only get about six television stations and that was a legitimate complaint from the former class. He also reported that one career department had sent us a couple of folks and one of them made it through noon the second day and decided that firefighting was not for him so he left. The department sent us another person and this person turned out to be a retired New York City firefighter who felt the Recruit program was beneath him so he lasted a little less than eight hours. He said they asked if they could send a third person and he said yes but that was it because we're three days into the program and it's not fair to the other students. He said he's happy to report that the recruit is still with the class and has indicated that he likes the career.

Mr. Piskura also reported that we've made some upgrades in the Auditorium which is incomplete at this time. He said the challenge coins that were distributed to Commissioners this morning are from Recruit class 40 and they are in commemoration of the first Recruit class to go 14 weeks. He said in the future they will only be issued to the graduates, their department chiefs and training officers and that's to make them precious. He said Commissioners were involved and took a positive position with increasing the program to the 14 weeks. We were able to achieve that and the Firefighter training funding so in commemoration of that we shared the coins with everybody. He said it will also be a new tradition we start that every graduating class will receive a coin. He said if anyone has been in the military they know the significance of challenge coins and what they mean. He said he thinks they were well received and the design will change each time coins are ordered.

Mr. Morrissette added that we spent a significant amount of time at the conclusion of the each Recruit program debriefing the students and we ended up with about two or three pages of specific comments which we narrowed down to action items. He thinks we've made very good headway in trying to address most of their recommendations. He said some things are tied to funding and others are easy to do items as well as some we may not be able to accommodate. He said we have made some structural changes throughout the facility and Commissioners will notice on the agenda at the conclusion of today's meeting we wanted to provide an opportunity to tour the Commissioners through the enhancements of the Bookstore warehouse area and the new classroom which is still short of getting new seating and the audio visual support within the room but we've turned over the space very nicely and it's now the most sought after classroom we currently have. He said we are doing things to improve the facility and we take the comments in a positive light both from staff as well as students and make them into action items.

Mr. Piskura added that one of the comments from the previous Recruit class 40 was that they had people staying at hotels on Rt. 75 on Sundays because there are people from down state and the coastline areas coming here so if there was predicted inclement weather they would come up the previous day. He said from a financial standpoint he didn't think that was wise because we have rooms here. He said there is a cost for the rooms but the biggest cost is for a Duty Officer not the cleaning or linens but that's generally incorporated into our budget. He said he recently did a poll of the current class and initially 13 students indicated they would routinely come up to the Academy and stay

on a Sunday and when we told them what the rules would be the number decreased to ten. He said we are going to make that change and open up the dorms at 6 pm on Sunday so they can come in and be prepared for Monday. He said we're trying to be as responsive as we can to the students.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Commissioner Wilkinson reminded Commissioners that Fire Service Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Wednesday, March 12th from 9 am to 2pm. He said we chose a Wednesday as we anticipate they'll be in Session that day.

Commissioner Kowalski reported that he and Commissioner Brady have been in contact with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) in reference to the junior firefighter programs throughout the country. He said one of the issues that was brought up several months ago is the Southwestern Division is going to look at some serious prohibition in junior firefighter programs. He said they felt very strongly about it and they spoke to Chief Tim Wall who is the IAFC Chairman of the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) in starting to initiate programs within their organizations to generate interest in the urban cities as well as the rural countryside. He said they are going to try to find some middle ground and the resolution was discussed as late as yesterday. He said Commissioner Brady has drafted a resolution that will go before the Board and he thinks that there will be a committee formed to look at this program as a whole and perhaps leaving it up to state organizations to govern that activity. He said they are still involved with the junior firefighting programs as they are extremely important to all and he will give updates to the Commission as they become available.

There was a brief discussion on junior firefighting standards.

Mr. Morrisette added that just last week he and Mr. Piskura met with Jim Fusaro from the Department of Labor (DOL). He said Commissioners may recall Mr. Fusaro had worked with Commissioners Kowalski and Brady and some of our staff on the development of the policies and procedures as it relates to the actions of minors in the workplace, specifically the fire service. He said the DOL had developed a brochure which detailed other pieces of correspondence in trying to consolidate all the information into one spot. He said we had noted some minor errors or needed clarification two or three months ago but we hadn't been able to connect with them. We were finally able to meet and we offered suggestions to clean up the document so they are now ready to go to print with 7,500 copies and as soon as they have those Mr. Fusaro will make a significant amount available to the Commission for assistance in distribution. He said he's sure not everyone will agree with what they see in respect to prohibitions or permitted activities but it was a result of a lot of work on the part of many people so we should have those brochures in the very near future.

Mr. Morrisette said he also wanted to reference the past couple of months have been very busy for our office. We did have our Affirmative Action Plan approved by the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) at a meeting last week. He said that has been a work in progress for over a year and half. He said the Plan is good for two years and it establishes specific hiring goals and procurement goals for the agency which we're already being mindful of. He said, having the opportunity to sit through the CHRO Commission meeting he found it to be very formal and they will review our accomplishments over the next two years before they approve subsequent plans from the agency.

He also reported that an Energy Conservation Plan was required to be developed and submitted to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and that has been completed along with an IT Strategic Plan which was required to be drafted and submitted to DOIT. Therefore, a lot of planning documents have been in process and completed in the last couple of months.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he wanted to re-engage several Commissioners and he believes Commissioners Nicol, Mitchell and Brady had volunteered to serve on an Adjunct compensation committee. He said we're ready to meet and asked those Commissioners in attendance today to stay after the meeting and look at their schedules as he would like to begin meeting in the next week. He said we would like to initiate action for a pay raise for Adjuncts but as we process those we wanted to look at some of the other employee benefits.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that today's meeting agenda was very light as we really didn't have any action items but he was hesitant to cancel the meeting during the Legislative Session especially early in case there were any issues or problems. He said we'll be a bit more mindful and we'll work with the Chairman in the coming months on agenda items and if there is not a need to meet we don't want to take Commissioners away from their other work. He said he appreciates Commissioners coming up today for a light agenda. He said after the meeting he would like to have a few minutes with Commissioners to tour through some of the projects that have recently been completed at the Academy.

Mr. Piskura said that Mr. McGowan would have been here today but he's covering a hole he had in his instructional fleet. He said we're in the process of completing our NIMS obligations for DEMHS and he wanted to make sure we had sufficient instructors. He said today starts the first day of NIMS 300 training for the Rocky Hill Police Department. We have one instructor there but he understands that DEMHS is going to observe the class so he wanted to make sure we have two and he thanked Mr. McGowan for stepping to the plate for that.

He also said he wanted to inform Commissioners that he's involved with providing expert testimony in defense of one of the Regional Fire Schools over a lawsuit that has been levied by a student. He said yesterday was an examination of the physical property and today he'll react to a deposition. He said that is something we checked with the Office of State Ethics and they said it was appropriate to do.

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

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 10:20 am.

Dated:

James P. Wilkinson, Secretary
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control