



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



TEL: (860) 627-6363

Jeffrey J. Morrissette
State Fire Administrator

34 PERIMETER ROAD, WINDSOR LOCKS, CONNECTICUT 06096-1069

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 27, 2007 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Chairman Peter Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Blaschik, Kowalski, Mitchell, Nicol, Ouellette, Walsh and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewis, Morrissette and Piskura were present.

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

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Mitchell to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2007 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports January 15, 2007 –February 14, 2007.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Ouellette and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to approve the Staff Reports for the period of January 15, 2007 – February 14, 2007. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update –Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the budget and distributed a copy of his testimony to the Appropriations Committee as well as an analysis of the Governor’s recommended budget for the agency. He said in general it appears to be a relatively solid budget. The public hearing with the Appropriations Committee was held back on January 20th and we also met with the Regulation and Protection Subcommittee yesterday afternoon which was an opportunity to review the budget in more detail with key Legislators. He said he had noted in the staff report that for the hearing, they actually separated the Regional School portion of the budget and allowed them an opportunity to speak directly with the Regulations and Protection Subcommittee. To our knowledge, this was the first opportunity they have had to advocate directly to this important Subcommittee.

One issue identified in the testimony is that there was a minor disconnect with the development of the budget this year. He said this is the first year we’ve worked with the new consolidated (SMART) business office in Hartford who developed our budget with agency input. He said he had solicited the Regional Schools to ask how they wanted him to address their specific budget needs. Specifically whether they wanted him to submit a

request for an inflationary bump across the board or if they were looking for individual increases based upon specific needs. Collectively they preferred to develop their own budget requests and by the time those got to him our budget had already been submitted so their specific requests were not included in our original budget. Their requests were transferred within a week in hope to amend our original submittal but it appears that did not happen. He said the total requested increase for the Schools is \$184,000 probably three or four of the Regional Schools requested only an inflationary increase of about 3% and others requested more significant funding all totaling \$184,000 the first year of the Biennium and an additional \$6,000 the second year of the Biennium. He said he addressed that issue at the public hearing as well as he had the opportunity to introduce the Regional Schools at their budget hearing yesterday with the Regulation and Protection Subcommittee. He also stated that another item of discussion was the Supplemental Grant Award program. There seems to be a lot of confusion on the part of a Legislator regarding how the program is administered. It was thought that we were still paying out \$100 claims for responses to incidents on limited access highways. He said he advised the Subcommittee that changed about two years ago and there was some statutory language enacted in 2005 to set the framework for the new program. He said Representative Orange did not appear happy and he's offered to work with her. Also, he offered to the Subcommittee the many inequities that were part of the old program because there is a Bill this year to provide \$500,000 to the program. The Governor's proposed budget actually reduces the current \$200,000 line item for this program by \$100,000. He said he's not sure where this will go but it may take a legislative decision to determine how the program will be administered. He also stated that when we first went through the budget we could not find annualized funding for the land lease with DOT. He said he was told by Office of Policy and Management (OPM) as well as the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) that the specific lease funding is spread throughout the budget and when the Governor's budget comes out it is a summary budget so you don't see details. The only other area he commented on at the hearing was regarding our request for additional IT support. As Commissioners are aware we currently have no in-house IT support. He said various staff members try to support the system as best they can. Before his retirement, Fred Piechota was the primary supporter. We also rely on a contract with a private vendor for larger and more complex issues and they come in on a scheduled basis or on an emergency basis to handle problems. He said as Commissioners may recall our request to begin automating some of the functions within the agency and we're kicking off a pilot program with the CT Distance Learning Consortium which is affiliated with Charter Oak College. He said the direction we would like to take is to have an initial pilot with them to develop a new database for the Bookstore because we've had continued problems with the commercial product we've had. As soon as that is available and we're ready with the creation of the new warehouse as discussed at last month's meeting we will be going on-line with those sales and secondary we would work with them to provide on-line look ups of certification scores so people don't have to wait four to six weeks to obtain their scores. He said although it's not a significant amount of money, the \$17,000 supports our contract with the CT Distance Learning Consortium which we've been working with for the last nine to twelve months. Mr. Morrisette also reported that we have another hearing scheduled next Monday with the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee which is the first time we've ever had the opportunity to meet

with them. Although it's not reflected on this analysis, the Governor's budget also provides \$500,000 for Capital Facility funding directly to the agency. Historically, that funding has gone to the Department of Public Works (DPW). He also said the Governor recommended the majority of what we requested for capital equipment funding which is \$275,000 the first year and another \$300,000 for the second year which is significant appropriations to the agency. The only other issue that came up was there were a lot of questions related to funding of training and those questions were posed to the Regional Schools. We were able to tie the questions back into the proposed Training Bill legislation. He offered to answer any questions Commissioners may have related to the proposed budget.

Chairman Carozza asked if there were any additional questions from Legislators.

Mr. Morrisette replied that the vast majority of questions were related to the Supplemental Grant Award program and the impact if funding was reduced. He also said there were a few questions in terms of how firefighters and fire departments pay for training.

Commissioner Nicol asked what the plans were for the \$500,000 in Capital funds.

Mr. Morrisette replied that we have a list of projects that has been carried over from the previous Biennium that includes asphalt replacement, upgrades at the CPAT center to demolish the old storage shed, repair the roof and provide security fencing. We would also replace the carpet at the CFA as well as use the funding for the warehousing operations that was discussed at last month's meeting. Mr. Morrisette added that the other positive part of that is we had submitted a request to DPW for funding a month ago and he just received word that Commissioner Fleming will be adding that request to the Bond Commission proposal for the month of March. He said there is no guarantee that the Bond Commission will actually meet as there was no meeting in February and there may not be one in March but it was nice to hear that at least they've added a request of \$300,000 for the agency so it's possible that over the next 12 months we could see up to \$800,000 of Capital Facility items and there is no shortage of a list of things that need to be done. Two items not supported by the Governor were the design and construction of a new "indoor" CPAT facility and a larger auditorium here at the Connecticut Fire Academy. The projects are identified but zero funded.

Mr. Morrisette also reported regarding staffing. He said we still maintain a Trainer vacancy and we expect a certified list of Trainer candidates to be established soon. He also mentioned that an offer was made to Tom McGowan to fill the Fire Service Analyst position and he will begin work on March 16th. We're currently working on transitioning his durational duties managing the NIMS/ICS program over to Jacklyn Kilby-Richards who has served as a long time Adjunct for the Academy. He also stated that we're working with DEHMS because they are backlogged in processing accounts receivable to us totaling \$130,000. With the pending large Recruit class, we're very concerned about cash flow.

Mr. Morrisette reported that Commissioner Johnson had mentioned last month that he planned to retire. He sent a letter to the Governor announcing his retirement and his plans to retire from the Commission. He said he believes the Chief's Association will be following thru on a recommendation for his replacement.

Mr. Piskura added that Tom McGowan is actually working today on an assignment attending a federally called NIMS meeting with DEMHS' Deputy Commissioner Wayne Sandford in Latham, New York.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson reported that the Education Committee met February 22nd. The Governor's proposed budget included \$10 million dollars each for the next two years for the Regional Fire School project. Also currently in the process is HB 6347 which would increase that to \$15 million for each of the next two years. As far as progress of the various projects, the new site for Eastern Connecticut, DPW is working through the final purchase contract language with representatives of the Rogers Corporation. For the new site in Middletown, DPW is still working to get an MOU executed with the city Attorney in Middletown. The new site for the Valley School, DPW is working on purchase agreement details and they mentioned that hopefully the property purchase can be on the Bond Commission's agenda in May or June. With respect to the new site for the Wolcott School, there is reportedly a Bill going in the Legislature to switch the future ownership of the proposed site at the Cheshire Corrections property to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. The New Haven school design is about 30% complete and they've started various permitting and site tests projects. DPW is still waiting to execute the actual MOU from the city of New Haven on that project. For the Hartford School site here at the Academy, the short list Committee had met that afternoon and four proposals had been received from architectural engineering firms including one from the same firm that's doing the New Haven project. The Committee will be interviewing those firms over the next several weeks and the next meeting is scheduled for March 27th.

Moving to item 4c.) Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding the Limited Access Highway (LAH) Supplemental Grant Award program. He said that there isn't much to update other than there are still about 20 fire companies we haven't heard from. A letter was mailed yesterday reminding them that time is running out and for them to contact us as to how they would like to receive their funding. Aside from that, we'll probably be sending out a general announcement to all those that had previously contacted us and requested vouchers to remind them of the deadline of when the funds have to be expended.

Moving to item 4d.) New London County IMT Recognition – Mr. Morrisette remarked that he believes this item will still be tabled as we were waiting for minutes from the previous meetings of the Committee but it is his understanding there are no minutes other than ones we've seen on the DEMHS website. He said we were still waiting for some meeting minutes from the state IMT Committee meetings.

Moving to item 4e.) PA 06-22 Guidelines Update – Mr. Morrisette said that we had previously sent out another draft version of the model guidelines. He said he didn't get a lot of input from members of the Commission so he did his best to integrate comments Commissioners may have had into the current draft. He also said he had asked Director of Training Piskura to review the document and this is what we have to date. He said he's happy to entertain comments from Commissioners today.

Vice Chairman Kowalski commented that he wanted to thank Mr. Morrisette for putting the document together. He said for those Commissioners who aren't aware of what is going on at the Capitol as far as the agreements, there is a lot of discussions in reference to volunteer and career actions. He said this is an important document for both the Commission and the fire service and it is important that we review the document and move forward with it unless there is some major stumbling block. His only concern is item "F" where it talks about backfilling. He said he doesn't think that should be included in it and he knows there are a few caveats with removing it, but until a department shows that the local electrical company a person works for has to pay for backfilling it shouldn't be included. He also said during the hearings there was really no data that suggested this was an issue only some subjective comments and he doesn't think we need to get into that because the intent is not to restrict what a person does on their off time whether they are a carpenter or a firefighter.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that the reason it was added was generally to say that it may be a point of discussion and if a municipality wanted to have that included in their inter-local agreement they could do that.

Commissioner Mitchell asked whose responsibility is it to tell the volunteer chief that a member is also in a paid department or vice versa.

Vice Chairman Kowalski replied that during the hearing there were several career department chiefs that required their personnel to fill out a form stating whether they have any outside employment or whether they volunteer services someplace. He said whether the firefighter elects to correctly fill out that form is between the career firefighter and the chief of that department. When the volunteer fire chief finds out is when the career chief or city manager informs the volunteer that they are going to come up with an agreement or the firefighter cannot be a volunteer any more and then it becomes a matter of employment.

Commissioner Nicol asked what the Statutes states for the definition of fire duties.

Mr. Morrisette replied that it is in Sec 7-303.

Commissioner Nicol suggested that we include the definition of the Statutes in the guidelines as opposed to referencing it.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson that the Commission adopt the proposed guidelines for volunteer emergency

personnel and enable the State Fire Administrator to incorporate minor changes as discussed today for review and approval by the Commission. Motion carried.

Commissioner Ouellette stated that in reviewing the document he looked at it from both the career and volunteer perspective. First, the guidelines between elected officials and both departments especially career departments could become very complex because they may have to deal with elected officials from a volunteer town and could have half a dozen of their personnel living in six different towns. Secondly, Workers' Compensation between municipalities need to be enhanced and become more uniform so there will be no incentive for a volunteer firefighter who is also a career to choose where they would place their claim and that is something that has to be addressed at the state level. He also said the heart and hypertension clause is a concern because the career service lost their heart and hypertension benefits in 1996 and he sees this as a big opportunity for career departments and municipalities to get that back and probably include a cancer bill in the negotiations which would benefit both the career and volunteer fire service.

Vice Chairman Kowalski remarked that this document is a guideline and the municipalities may or may not have to enter into these agreements.

Commissioner Nicol said he attended a hearing that was held on HB 5265 an act concerning collective bargaining agreements between municipalities and paid firefighters and asked how the Guidelines affect that bill.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that the Guidelines were mentioned during the hearing maybe as an opportunity to serve as a compromise and allow communities to communicate with one another. He said they're trying to work out some compromise Legislation to provide additional benefits for both career and volunteers. If that happens, this may become a non issue.

Chairman Carozza stated that the Commission supports the document and asked Mr. Morrisette to move forward with the changes.

Mr. Morrisette added that he also asked retired fire chief of New Haven Marty O'Connor to review the document as he thought his input might be valuable based upon his background and education as an Attorney.

Moving to item 4f.) Legislative Update – Mr. Morrisette stated that an updated Legislative tracking chart was distributed today and asked members if they had any questions to let him know.

Commissioner Mitchell asked relative to HB 5265 if the wording on the Bill says municipal employees or firefighters.

Mr. Morrisette said he couldn't recall and that we would get a copy of the Bill at the end of the meeting and verify.

Commissioner Nicol asked if we've gotten any feedback on the training Bill 6338.

Mr. Morrissette replied no but we mention it any opportunity we get whether it's at a hearing or any other public forum. He said there is some minor concern over some of the language which can be worked out if funded.

Commissioner Brady added that he also spoke to the Public Safety Committee Legislative liaison to make sure that they understood that our intent is not just a two year project and that this would become an ongoing program. He said the liaison said he would take care of it and make sure that was communicated as things move forward to the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. Morrissette stated that Commissioner Brady requested that we add minor firefighter update to the Agenda so he could provide an update to the Commission.

Chairman Carozza added item 4g Minor Firefighter update to the agenda.

Moving to item 4g.) Minor Firefighter Update – Commissioner Brady stated he was not in attendance at last month's meeting but he had read the minutes and wanted to provide the Commission with an update. He said he had another meeting with the Department of Labor (DOL) last week and there were a couple of open items that came up at several of the information sessions. One relates to the directing of traffic which previously was an allowed activity but they are now going to pull back on that and not allow minor firefighters under the age of 18 to be considered eligible to direct traffic. He said that's not to preclude them from assisting at Fairs and other events within parking lots but it will be a prohibited activity on a public roadway. The other activity that had not been addressed in any of the previous discussions was that of marine rescues. This came up at the Valley Shore meeting and again at the New London county meeting. It was decided that they would be able to participate in the training of marine rescues but not under an actual emergency. He said the whole focus of this is to allow minors to get a flavor of what the fire service profession is all about but they are not to replace actual firefighters. Commissioner Brady also said he wanted to address some of the issues regarding Commissioner Morris' comments about the hours and he may have mentioned that the chief of Guilford had expressed some concerns about that. He said he's communicated with both the chief and the Legislator for Guilford; Representative Widlitz and he's made himself available to her to discuss the hours, as well as he knows Mr. Morrissette has made overtures to Representative Orange on several occasions that we're prepared to sit down with them at any time to discuss how we arrived at the hours. He said the point he'd like to make clear is that as long as the jurisdiction of the minor firefighter comes under the DOL, we are really burdened by the federal hour requirement and the interpretation they've made for the minor firefighter is in fact the most liberal that they've allowed for any employment in the state of Connecticut. It's not something we all like but the DOL has stepped up to the plate and have made it as permissible as they can under the circumstances.

A brief discussion followed on the issue and whether Boys Scouts fall under the jurisdiction of the minor firefighter guidelines.

Commissioner Brady stated that there is a lot of misinformation out there but over time the DOL is planning to go to both the Police and EMS Explorer groups and put into place similar regulations. He said the brochure they are putting together includes all of those groups and whatever they are called they still fall under those guidelines and are subject to child labor laws. He also said there were some questions about minors being covered by Workers' Compensation and the fact is minors from age 14 on are clearly covered by Workers' Compensation.

Moving to item 5a.) Public Safety Magnet School – Mr. Piskura stated that the Greater Hartford Public Safety Academy is something that is beyond its concept stage. It's a series of Magnet Schools administered by the Capital Region Education Council (CREC) and they've approached the Commission about providing someone to sit on their curriculum Committee. He said he's met with their director Dr. Townsley who asked him to serve on the curriculum Committee along with other folks from the fire, EMS, homeland security and law enforcement entities. This is an opportunity for high school students in the greater Hartford area to concentrate on a career in public safety. They've asked us to write curriculums that are specific to fire and this initiative seems to have significant support from the Legislature as well as they've received a federal grant to start the program. He said they've asked him to sit on their Governing board to talk about the facilities as they are now in the planning stage of the facility itself so they need to know what the appurtenances are that are specific to fire service that they will need to have. They've visited one other facility like this that is known about in the United States in Santa Clara, California. The school would serve about 30 or more communities and it is anticipated that the school would not only be a model for Connecticut but a model for the United States. He said it is good for us as an organization to be involved in this and as far as the actual curriculum development, most of it would be taken off existing curriculum and they're probably going to track Firefighter I training. As this develops we may have to approach the Certification Division to see where they are. Currently CREC knows that a person has to be age 21 to be certified law enforcement officer and age 18 to be certified Firefighter I. He said we may choose not to offer certification but those are the conversations being held regarding the Public Safety Magnet School.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if we were looking to offer certification to these students.

Mr. Piskura remarked that he's only mentioning it as it may come up down the road.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson that the Commission provides support as needed to the Greater Hartford Public Safety Magnet School. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5b.) Pilot Paramedic Testing Initiative. Mr. Morrisette said approximately 18 months ago we provided the Commission with a briefing regarding the Department of Public Health's (DPH) request of us to provide support in the area of

Paramedic testing. At that time the Commission agreed that we would move forward with a Pilot test of that initiative. He said it has taken us the 18 months to prepare and we have a Pilot test scheduled for April 21. Before Fred Piechota departed we had worked with Brenda Murphy-Tenney to serve as a coordinator for that effort and we also secured approval by the National Registry to serve as a testing location. We had staff travel to New Hampshire to witness an exam being conducted there and it was interesting to know that there were students from all the New England states including Connecticut and beyond. When the National Registry approved our initiative here they posted the Pilot test date on their website which has already generated a call from Puerto Rico. He said there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done and DPH has provided support to us with thousands of dollars worth of equipment and there is also other equipment that we need to acquire. He also said some of the hospitals in the area have offered to provide assistance with equipment. We're doing the test as a Pilot but logistically it's a challenge especially with the large Recruit class and the 14 weeks schedule. The big problem is when we host the test here it will take up a good part of the facility for an entire day. Originally it was suppose to be a written and practical skills test but the written is done on-line now so they will come here for only the practical. He said he congratulates all those who worked on the program because it has required a significant effort to see it through and we'll provide a report after April 21. We propose charging \$200 as an in state fee and \$250 for out of state candidates and there is also a fee schedule if a candidate needs to retake a section of the test. He said the other thing this will do is open our eyes in terms of how some of the practical skills testing is done in other areas. He said if any Commissioner is available and wants to attend the testing scheduled at the Academy on April 21 they are welcome to come and observe. He asked Commissioners if they had any questions.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked assuming the Pilot test is a success, how many offerings in an average year will we consider doing.

Mr. Morrissette replied that we'll continue to take baby steps and it's still going to be a scheduling issue. He also said that if we could do it quarterly that would be an initial goal. Prospective demand may also figure into the scheduling.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Commissioner Blaschik reported regarding Connecticut Fire Officers weekend that when he received the brochure several classes were given partial credit for fire marshals and out of all those classes he believes only one should have been given partial credit and the rest of the classes should have been offered complete credit. He said he's let that be known in his office however that information is not passed through his office it goes to the Office of Education and Data (OEDM) and the CFA. He said it would have been more palatable to the fire marshal community if those classes were offered full credits and he believes they should have been.

Mr. Morrisette reported that with the assistance of Commissioner Blaschik as well as the Connecticut Chiefs' we issued a press release followed up with a press conference regarding the spike in fatal fires over the past few months. He said we originally had planned to do a press release to address the rash of fatal fires in Connecticut over the past few months but as soon as the draft was completed he was contacted by the Chiefs that they wanted to do a Press Conference on fatal fires. He said this is a concern and we normally see spikes this time of the year but over a three day period we had several fatal fires. He said we allowed them to piggy back on what we were doing and the press release was done. We intentionally had Commissioner Blaschik's office send the press release out through Lt. Vance's office. The Press Conference will be held this afternoon at the Cheshire Fire headquarters at 5 pm preceding the Chiefs' meeting. He said Commissioners are welcome to attend.

Mr. Morrisette distributed copies of the preliminary investigation report by Baltimore City Fire Marshal's Office on the recent line of duty death in Baltimore. He said by coincidence we had the first of two instructor meetings yesterday and had previously scheduled, long ago, representatives from the state of Pennsylvania Fire Academy who sustained a line of duty death in a train the trainer of instructors on how to conduct live burns. He said he was only able to sit in for about an hour but the information provided was very interesting and it is something we need to look at closer. While you can have all the latest and greatest safety standards and equipment we still have the human element to concern us. He said sticking to the lesson plans and following policies and procedures were all reiterated yesterday and it appears there were a number of rules violated in Baltimore.

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

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 10:57 am.

Dated:

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