



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



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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 26, 2010 MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Vice Chairman Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Dagon, Hilbert, Mitchell, Murphy, Nelson, Nicol, Stankye and Walsh.

Staff members Lewis, McGowan, Morrissette and Piskura were present.

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Chairman Kowalski asked for an introduction of guests.

Guest to the meeting were identified as Bill Trisler, Program Manager, CT Fire Academy (CFA); Jay Silver, East Hartford Fire Department/CFDIA; Fire Chief Geoff Herald, Danbury Fire Department and Chris Tracy; Fairfield Fire Department.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the November 24, 2009 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Mitchell to approve the minutes of the November 24, 2009 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports December 15, 2009 – January 14, 2010 and November 15, 2009 – December 14, 2009.

A **MOTION** was made Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the staff report for the period of December 15, 2009 – January 14, 2010. Motion carried.

Commissioner Stankye asked relative to item 2i in the Administration staff report which states discussions with DPW/DAS regarding dollar bid for fire hydrant replacement on the training grounds and whether the hydrants got hit by a truck or something because typically they last for years.

Mr. Morrissette replied that our experience is that fire hydrants at a training facility require constant repair or replacement. They are utilized daily during peak training days, often operated numerous times per day. This helps to underscore some the unique maintenance needs of training facilities. He said it's an ongoing problem and because of the state contracting procedures it takes a significant amount of time to make the repairs. He also said with the hope of moving forward with the facility expansion we asked the Architect to design a means to facilitate repair and replacement of hydrants included in the expansion project.

A **MOTION** was made Commissioner Walsh and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the staff report for the period of November 15, 2009 – December 14, 2009. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding the budget. He said there has been no change other than the rescissions which were put into effect in November. Commissioners should have received a copy of the fiscal impact details by line item. He asked if there were any questions as it relates to those rescissions. He also said we expect some additional rescissions or Deficit Mitigation Plans to be proposed throughout the remainder of the current fiscal year as the recently updated budget deficit for the current fiscal year is approximately \$515 million. Mr. Morrisette said we have a tentative date for a Public Hearing before the Appropriations Committee on our proposed mid-term budget adjustments.

Mr. Morrisette reported regarding staffing. He said we've not had any full-time changes however he did meet with the Governor's Chief of Staff a couple of weeks ago regarding some adjustments with part-time staff. Due to attrition we need to bolster our Training and Certification Division adjuncts as well as looking forward at the Q testing initiative. He said the Chief of Staff approved additions to part-time staffing to facilitate agency needs contingent upon not impacting our General Fund appropriation. We will work with Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to accomplish that task.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Nicol reported that the Committee met on December 3, 2009 in Wethersfield. He said Project Manager Don Ouillette reported on the status of property acquisitions. Department of Public Works (DPW) was given permission to go forward with a formal land appraisal in Willimantic. Mr. Ouillette presented renderings for the proposed Hartford County/CFA project and reported that he would be meeting with Secretary Genuario, Office of Policy and Management (OPM) the following day to discuss fire school projects. New Haven and Hartford Schools to cost about \$9 million and Willimantic is expected to cost about \$10 million. Mr. Ouillette reported that leaves about \$9 million for the remaining school projects. The Hartford School project is tentatively scheduled to go out to bid in January. Commissioner Nicol said a general discussion was held regarding proposed budget cuts. Chet Haber reported that he's working on setting up a meeting with key legislators. Jeff Morrisette reported that the Commission had enough funding to cover reimbursements for fall FFI and recruit classes and there is approximately \$150,000 for spring classes. Al Hawkins indicated that he will prepare and send a letter of concern regarding budget cuts on behalf of the Education Committee. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on January 28, 2010.

Moving to item 4c.) FY 10 Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrisette reported that one of the rescission items does impact the Supplemental Grant program. At present the rescission is \$9,750. To date we've committed just under \$100,000 out of the \$195,000. He said later on, under New Business we're going to have to identify a means to achieve that rescission. Mr. Morrisette said we also have close to \$50,000 in funding which has not been requested by eligible fire companies. He said we've done mailings and as Commissioners know we run into this issue every year. He said later when he discusses this under New Business he would propose that the rescission impact those fire companies that have not yet submitted a request for their grant. He said we can provide the list of entities that have not yet responded if Commissioners would like to assist in reaching out to those departments. He also

said we were going to send out a reminder letter to those fire companies that hadn't responded a few months ago.

Moving to item 4d.) FY 10 Entry Level Training Reimbursement Update – Mr. Morrisette said there was a rescission totaling \$25,263 that impacted this program. He said we began with \$505,250 and after the rescission we are left with \$479,987. Thus far we've paid out \$125,475 leaving us with a balance of \$354,512. He said Commissioner Nicol had mentioned in his report that he had stated that there would be approximately \$150,000 in funding available in the account for spring classes. He said he believes his report at the Education Committee meeting was based upon information at hand at the time. He said the staff has done a good job in processing the payments. The vast majority of eligible training that took place in the fall has already been paid or is in process of being paid anticipating potential sweeps or other cuts. He said surprisingly however we've received very few claim forms thus far for the spring and we are aware that a lot of those training programs have either begun or will begin in weeks. He said Commissioners should share with people within their organizational meetings that there is still funding and the pre-approval forms should be submitted so we can have an adequate accounting of the funding.

Commissioner Brady said he's aware that there is a recruit class scheduled here for next month and inquired if there are any other metropolitan departments that we've heard from.

Mr. Morrisette said the only metro department that he has heard from is New Haven. Chief Grant had informed him that they expected a small class this spring and that he was going to be advertising it on a state and regional level.

Commissioner Brady asked how many recruits we're expecting for the upcoming class.

Mr. Morrisette reported that the last he heard we had commitments for 31.

Director of Training Piskura replied it's currently at 30 and it goes up and down until the first day of class which begins February 8<sup>th</sup>.

Moving to item 4e.) Q Testing Update – Mr. Morrisette said as Commissioners are aware the Commission did authorize him to move forward entering into more formal discussions with the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) regarding this program. He said his only contingency was the issue of staffing and that it would need to be dealt with as a segregated program. With the approval by the Governor's Office to increase our adjunct ranks we should be good to move forward. He said he's communicated that to DMV. He said he's not personally spoken to Bob McGarry in several months on this issue but they are aware that we've received approval for staffing to accomplish that if they so choose.

Moving to item 5a.) 2010 Legislative Session – Mr. Morrisette said the Legislative Session is about a week away. He said we have not been apprised yet by the Governor's Office related to our proposal for technical adjustments to the statutory language for administration of the pass through funding for the Regional Fire Schools. He said he'll be calling them to see if that is moving forward as part of the Governor's package.

Vice Chairman Kowalski added that another legislative item is the fire marshals. He said today at 10 a.m. they are having a hearing with the Regulations Review Committee pertaining to adoption of the Fire Prevention Code that they have been trying to adopt since 2004. He said they hope it comes to fruition within the next several months. It will be very substantial as far as towns are concerned because this will enable them to do quite a few proactive things.

Commissioner Nicol added that there is another meeting this morning at the LOB with the CSFA Education and Training Committee members who will be meeting with key legislators at 11 a.m. to obtain an update on the regional schools. He said the meeting will be in hearing room 1B if any Commissioner wants to attend.

Moving to item 5b.) On-line Training/Certification Programs – Mr. McGowan reported that as recently as a month ago he received an email from a Deputy Chief Donald MacMillan and copied to Commissioner Brady regarding online training that is been offered through a website called Trainingdivision.com. He said they are based out of Texas and are attached to Hill College which is an accredited college. They have a program in Fire Protection Technology. He said specifically the Deputy Chief is looking to see if he were to take their FO I program online would he then be able to challenge the Fire Officer I program in the state of Connecticut. He also said since then he received additional requests from individuals looking to get into the fire service and wanting to go through that same online training program for Fire Fighter I. He said they propose an online service for doing your book work and then at the end of the program when you're successful with that traveling down to Texas and spend two weeks in what they refer to as boot camp training to get all the practical skills completed at a cost of \$2,500, which doesn't include airfare. He said he's bringing this to the Commission's attention today for an open discussion on online training in general. He said he's seeking ideas, concerns and thoughts from the Certification perspective in terms of challenging.

Commissioner Brady said he would like to offer some background and stated that he was approached by Deputy Chief MacMillan of his department who is also a PA at a New Haven Hospital and will be deployed this weekend to Haiti. He said he is also a Lt. Commander in the Naval Reserve which takes up a lot of his time. He said DC MacMillan approached him saying he wants to become certified as Fire Officer and inquired about the ability to take that online course and then challenge the test to become certified. Commissioner Brady said he's not sure the JPR's attached to it. He said he doesn't have any objections to classes that don't require actual physical hands on as long as they can demonstrate competency through the examination process.

Commissioner Nicol asked if the ProBoard or IFSAC recognize these programs.

Mr. McGowan replied that what's occurring is part of their advertisement. Once you take these courses particularly as a Texas resident it then qualifies you to challenge the examination process in the state of Texas under IFSAC. He said it has been approved by the Texas Office of Fire Protection. He said Texas A & M has not approved it and they are a ProBoard entity inside TX and under their own auspices. He said in a philosophical discussion through email with Tom Sturtevant who is his equal at Texas A & M their biggest concern is whether learning affected change and whether this course is actually designed to take the examination or is it just online training that people would be able to walk away with information to use in a practical experience. He said he's looked at a few curriculums; FFI as well as FO and the number of

hours for any these programs seems to be legitimate and matches up to the standards that they were assign to.

Commissioner Kowalski asked what the current process is for challenges.

Mr. McGowan replied that for someone looking to challenge it would depend as to whether we already formally reviewed the program. Typically they would have to provide a syllabus, student guide and any references.

Commissioner Kowalski asked whether it's determined on a case by case basis.

Mr. McGowan said that is correct.

Mr. Morrisette added that if they come from another state that has an accredited program for example a FO I program we would grant direct reciprocal credit which doesn't certify the individual in Connecticut but we recognize their credentials as equivalent and they are allowed to move forward within our system in advanced standing. If they then move onto the FO II level and successfully pass the required examinations then they would be Connecticut certified to the FO II level. He also said if an individual who is granted reciprocal credit elects to challenge the examination for which credit is granted and pass they would be state certified.

Mr. McGowan said in the example of Deputy Chief MacMillan he's looking to come back in the state of Connecticut with his training and then challenge our examination so that he could receive full status. The firefighter in question wants to go down to TX, become certified there and then come back to us provided he meets the prerequisite which would be that he needs to be an active member of a department in Connecticut and has the certificate with a seal for either IFSAC and or ProBoard then they would receive reciprocity. He also said we've refined, just recently, the FSI as well as FO to involve the candidate in practical skills evolutions. He said in fact this morning down in Bridgeport is our first pilot practical skills evolution for FOI. The students are going to be given a scenario that has between five and six skill sheets of the 22 that are offered in FO I and through the scenario they'll have to answer questions based on the skill set sheet. If they are successful with that then they could move into the written examination phase. He said the same type of process is going to occur more formally than it did at one time with the FSI program and we'll do the same thing for FO II; we already have that in place for FO III and FO IV.

Commissioner Mitchell added the colleges have been doing online training for academic credit for a while now and there a lot of criteria that has to be met. He said in this case we may need more information but he doesn't think we should totally eliminate any type of online training because newer firefighter coming in to the system can do training on their I Pod. He said a lot of the training at the colleges is hybrid and some of it is in the seat class time but you still take the examinations at the college. He said maybe this needs more examination to see if they are really credentialed but he feels it's an issue we need to look more closely.

Commissioner Kowalski said he thinks we have to keep our eyes open to online training. He asked Mr. McGowan if he needs any further direction other than bringing it to the Commission's attention and whether this could be handled on a case by case basis as we have in the past.

Mr. McGowan said if the Commission wants him to handle it on as needed basis he can do that and as other situations arise we can revisit it. He also said he has the same sentiments as Commissioner Kowalski and that is 50% or better of most courses is networking and he knows there is great value but he's not sure how we can measure that. He said he's not against anyone who wants to take online training but we should probably solidify a policy or procedure stating expectations.

Commissioner Brady said he's not against continuing the trend of reviewing each request on an ad hoc basis here, however the reality of it is while the networking is very valuable that's not what the standard or certification is all about. He said certification is about knowledge and demonstration of competency and if a student can demonstrate that competency without sitting through that networking we are going down a slippery slope in trying to massage this issue. He said we have to look at particular classes and determine what is acceptable for online training and we have to be very objective on what we say is certification. He said networking is great and there are tons of benefits but it's not certification.

Following a brief discussion on the issue, Commissioner Kowalski said he'd like to consider a small subcommittee to give Mr. McGowan some assistance to review the issue more closely. He called on Commissioners Mitchell and Brady to serve on the subcommittee. He asked if Commissioners had any objections.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Brady and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Murphy to establish a subcommittee to review which online training programs are qualified for certification.

Mr. Morrisette added that from time to time he, Mr. Piskura and possibly Mr. McGowan receives calls from various vendors of this type of training looking for endorsement. He said we certainly don't provide any type of program endorsement. Historically, here in CT we don't care where someone obtains their knowledge, skill and abilities. We have to approach it from a demonstration of competency perspective. We probably will need to look at more comprehensive skill evaluations for challenges rather than evaluating a sampling of skills. This approach would be an additional expense to the individual but would ensure compliance.

Moving to item 5c.) Cos Cob Fire Police Patrol Request – Mr. Morrisette said Commissioner's should have received in their packets a request from Cos Cob Fire Police Patrol seeking inclusion as an eligible participant in the LAH Supplemental Grant program. He said we had a similar request from them back in 1999 and at that time he had sought an opinion from the Attorney General's office. We did in fact receive an informal opinion at that time. This request comes from their new President who stated the company was in a financial bind at present. He said he had contacted Chief Sicienski and forwarded him the request so he's aware of it as well. The Chief did send a letter of support as well. He said although the AG's opinion was informal Cos Cob had some counter points to the opinion which he forwarded to the AG's office. The AG's office replied that unfortunately at present there really is no clear definition of a fire company and specifically as it relates to firefighter and firefighting duties. Basically, the AG's opinion has not changed from the informal opinion rendered back in 1999. Cos Cob Fire Police Patrol articulated that their response basically covers all the basic duties a fire company would perform with the exception of fire suppression. They perform extrications,

salvage and overhaul, etc. He said it's also important to note that we do provide a grant to Cos Cob Volunteer Fire Company and they are co-housed in the same station.

Commissioner Nicol asked if a motion is necessary.

Mr. Morrissette replied yes, if Commissioner's need additional time to review the information that would be acceptable. With the recent rescission and anticipated future reductions we do not anticipated available funding this fiscal year.

Commissioner Nicol commented that it appears the 1999 opinion of the AG's office defines it for us. He said we as the Commission seriously need to take into consideration the AG's opinion and accept their recommendation. Bases on the informal opinion of the AG's office we would have to deny the request at this time and if they want us to ask for a formal opinion then we could do that.

A brief discussion followed on the issue and the general feeling is that Cos Cob's plan of action should be to seek some statutory change if they want to be included; it's really not a Commission issue.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to deny Cos Cob Fire Police Patrol request seeking inclusion as part of the LAH Supplemental Grant program based on the Attorney General's informal opinion. Motion carried.

Mr. Morrissette said he's aware that Cos Cob Fire Police Patrol is working with their local legislators on the issue.

Commissioner Kowalski remarked that we should keep a watchful eye out on these discuss with their legislators to be sure they don't define something that really is not appropriate for the best interest of the entire state.

Moving to item 5d.) Supplemental Grant Program Rescission Policy – Mr. Morrissette said this is a follow-up to our earlier discussion regarding the rescission of \$9,750 from the Supplemental Grant program and how the reduction should be applied. As direct payment grants have already been made to dozens of eligible fire companies it would be difficult to request monies be returned. Another option is to impact only those fire companies that never responded to us identifying how they wished their funding be administered. These entities would receive a reduced amount.

Commissioner Brady suggested that we only apply this to the fire companies that have not yet responded.

Commissioner Dagon asked that we assign a specific date after which if they haven't responded and it should be retroactive.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that in our original correspondence to all eligible fire companies we did identify October 1, 2009 as the deadline for responses. He said we could send a new letter stating that they are still eligible but at a reduced amount and with the caveat that if there are additional reductions or rescissions they may be impacted.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Brady and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Dagon that the staff sends a letter to all the companies that had not responded to us stating that rescissions have been made and funding is available at a reduced amount. Motion carried.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners or staff – The Executive Secretary distributed to Commissioners copies of a flyer announcing the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Blue Mass by the Hartford Archdiocese scheduled for Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> and asked them to pass it along to their constituents.

Mr. Piskura said because it's the first of the year, there are quite a few supplementary brochures to the calendar and distributed them to Commissioners. One is the live burn training initiative that we have with the ISFSI scheduled here at the CFA for March 19 -21. He said this is a Pilot and they are just completing the textbook that goes with the live burn certification class. In addition to this we're going to send some full-time staff to a live burn qualification demonstration at the Massachusetts's Fire Academy in Stowe where they are going to discuss problems with the SCBA face masks used in repeated training evolutions.

He also said we're promoting the Seminar Series and the Instructional Methodology class in addition to the Fireground Safety for the Company Officer class by Forest Reeder, Battalion Chief/Director of Training & Safety with the Pleasantview, IL Fire Protection District. He said these have been very popular.

Mr. Piskura said there is open registration coming up for CREC Public Safety Magnet School and distributed copies of a brochure and asked Commissioners if they know of anyone that has an interest to let them know the school will be accepting applications. He said there are still plans to build a \$50 million new school somewhere closer to the city of Hartford.

He also gave an update on the New England Disaster Training Center (NEDTC). He said work has begun on the trench rescue prop and the railroad prop is complete with the exception of the train cars itself. We have a surplus tank care that was located in Louisiana and will be in route here to be placed on the tracks. He also said today two employees are traveling to Palmer, MA to look at passenger cars which we may get here. Connecticut DOT has basically stated that their cars are too valuable to give away. He said we don't know what to expect until we get to Palmer today and find out what's there and then that would complete the railroad prop. The trench prop will be completed and in use by spring. He said as Commissioners leave today if they travel via Route 75 just pass the ice cream stand there is a railroad crossing if you look to the left that is the railroad prop. There is a station platform that they built according to our specifications so one of the passenger cars will be positioned against it for pinch accidents. He said progress is being made and he anticipates spring for the trench prop to be in operation.

Mr. Morrissette said from a legislative perspective some Commissioners may have seen a proposal from the EMS community related to command related issues that could impact CGS 7-313e. He said he wanted to clarify that a representative from the EMS community visited about a month ago to discuss the issue and basically it was stated at the time that they should meet with representatives from the CSFA Legislative Committee. He said the way it was left



was that they were only going to approach it through education not legislation. He said subsequent to that he heard that as a result of that meeting here they thought they had approval by the fire service. Mr. Morrissette said he wanted to emphatically state that they were provided with instructions on what they needed to do seek further support. A copy of the proposal has been supplied to Ted Schroll, Legislative Representative for the CSFA and Paul Rapanault, Legislative Representatives for the UPFFA.

Commissioner Kowalski said the information he received from the chiefs is that they were not going to support that and he knows the fire marshals are not going to either.

A brief question and answer period followed.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to adjourn the meeting.

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 10:39 am.

Dated:

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Charles M. Stankye, Jr., Secretary