



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



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**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 28, 2006 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, Blashchik, Kowalski, Morris, Nicol, Stankye, Schenck and Walsh.

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

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

Mr. Morrissette welcomed our new Commission appointee, Philip Schenck, Town Manager in Avon. Mr. Morrissette said that Mr. Schenck has some familiarity with the agency in that he had done some training with some of our Adjuncts in the Promotional Interviewing program many years ago. He welcomed Mr. Schenck to the Commission and said he looks forward to working with him.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2006 meeting. Motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the staff report for the period of February 15, 2006 through March 14, 2006. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrissette reported that we finally had the opportunity to meet with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) fiscal unit SMART Team who is responsible for the agency's fiscal activities. He said that was the first meeting we've had in about two to three months. It was to identify a lot of the issues that are not going well, specifically in terms of their role and the need to have a representative here at the agency on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. He said he brought our business office representative as well as Ron Vietts who technically work for DAS with him so they could bring forth some of their specific issues. There was a genuine attempt to address some of the concerns although he believes we're still way off. There are a number of other issues that need to be addressed rapidly like end of year budget activities. They also indicated that they are now handling 28 different state agencies and they have only two people in their inventory section and there is no way those two people can take care of every agency. We indicated that the individual that previously did this work within our agency is gone and there is no way we can reassign those duties

someone else. He said by the time the meeting ended, DAS representatives said they would see what they can do because we stated this was a concern we presented to the Auditors.

Mr. Morrisette also mentioned that we did have our budget meeting with the Appropriations Regulation and Protection Subcommittee and that meeting was rescheduled to a third date due to snow and other scheduling issues within the legislature. He said he had a scheduled vacation and could not make the meeting. Vice Chairman Kowalski along with Peter O'Neil from the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) was allowed back to serve as our agency representative. Our Executive Secretary and Ted Schroll, legislative representative for the Firefighters' Association attended the meeting. All indications in talking with the folks in the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), as well as Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is that everything was handled exceptionally well and he's very appreciative for a job well done.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Mr. Morrisette said that the Commission representative Commissioner Wilkinson attended the last meeting, however he's traveling to Italy currently and is not available so he would provide an overview of the March 23rd meeting. The agenda items began with an overview by Fred Piechota, Director of Certification on the HAZ MAT certification and the possibility that the Regional Fire Schools, at their discretion, may move forward and begin conducting training leading to certification at the Awareness and Operations level. He said the only hold up at this time is national accreditation, but that may not necessarily prevent them from beginning the actual training if they so desire. Ed O'Hurley, Certification Coordinator was also on hand to discuss the modification to the FFI psychomotor skills testing which has been recently updated. We had a previous meeting about six to nine months ago with the Regional Fire Schools to discuss some of the issues and concerns that they had. The Certification Division has modified the testing process and it has gone from four unique testing days up to eight, so there are eight different scenarios that can be tested within a single day of testing and the number of JPR's conducted in each of those testing days has been increased to a total of six. There was some discussion on the issue but one of the present concerns is that a lot of the Regional Fire Schools don't have the necessary equipment, not only to do the training, but to do the testing. They have to borrow equipment to do just about all of their programs. A good example is with the Willimantic School where they reported that they needed a halligan tool for one of the testing scenarios and they couldn't find one. Another concern raised by Willimantic is that some of the scenarios identified in the new psychomotor testing days require full use of a facility and with their Burn Building and Tower being condemned, there's no way they can fulfill some of the objectives contained within the standard. Long range it won't be an issue as the facilities come on line in terms of modern facilities. Mr. Morrisette also reported that there was an overview on a few of the different properties and issues related to each of the Regional Fire Schools starting off with the Derby Fire School. They had reported that they are looking at one specific piece of property in Oxford which totals 20 acres of land in an industrial park area. Department of Public Works (DPW) is looking to move forward to obtain an appraisal on that property. The Wolcott School site they are looking at in Cheshire, at the Department of Corrections (DOC) is still in

negotiations to have the property formally transferred from the DOC. DPW is still waiting for submittal of two appraisals they're doing on land which was identified as a potential site for the Willimantic School. There was a discussion on the New Haven School, specifically regarding the Bond Commission agenda issue. It appears that there's resolution with the Governor adding that particular project to the Bond Commission agenda scheduled for this Friday. He also reported that the city is in final negotiations with the land owner for 13 acres of land in Middletown for the Middlesex County School. They are trying to negotiate the price below a half a million dollars that way it doesn't have to go to referendum to the citizens of Middletown. The City of Middletown would be purchasing that land and constructing a fire station in addition to the state Regional Fire School. Burrville Fire School has a new DEP representative in that region and they are beginning discussions with that individual to get an extension on a "camping" permit at Burrville State Park. Mr. Morrissette said there was basic discussion on the Hartford County land issue. He had previously reported that one of the hold ups we've had, is the agreement between our agency and Department of Transportation (DOT) hinged upon him getting authority by OPM to sign off on the agreement. He also reported that there was a discussion on the operational budgets and distributed copies. He said there was a change from one he had distributed earlier. They are requesting an increase in their funding for next fiscal year. Their increase is from the current \$443,165 appropriation up to approximately \$670,000 or an increase of about \$220,000. He said the regional schools distributed a report to key Legislators and within their report stated that if this doesn't happen, many of the schools will be bankrupted. It was reported that the Director of the Fairfield Fire School, Scott Bisson is going onto the line as a shift Captain and the new regional school Director will be Douglas Chavenello beginning in April.

Commissioner Stankye added that there was just one response to the ad placed by DPW for the Derby school land. The 20 acres of land sits adjacent to the Oxford Airport and is across the street from the piece of land he had looked at which belongs to the Airport. DPW is proceeding on it and minimal clearing is necessary and it's very close to all utilities.

Moving to item 4c.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrissette reported that we have had some success with contacting the remaining departments that have been deficient in responding to us as to how they wish to obtain this year's funding. There are a few departments that we've not heard from directly including Chester Hose, Round Hill, Coleytown and Citizens Hose. He distributed a copy of a Statute that came out of last year's Legislative Special session which governs the Supplemental Grant Award program. He said it is laid out the same way as the old Limited Access Highway (LAH) Grant program with the exception that it allows us to administer a Supplemental Grant program but states that any such credits shall be used during the fiscal year for which they are received. He said he had indicated in his letter to all the eligible fire departments that they had to utilize the funding by May 15th so we could close out the books. About half of the departments have requested vouchers for either the Bookstore or training activities. He said he has a concern that we may not be able to satisfy the request by the end of the fiscal year because of popular programs and our ability to field instructors so

he is seeking a ruling to see if we may be able to transfer the money from this account to the agency's extension account for use at a later time.

Commissioner Kowalski referenced the Statute and asked if this was passed last year and whether it is currently on the books. He said one of the major initiatives that was discussed at the agency budget meeting with the Appropriation's Regulation and Protection Subcommittee was the LAH. There was representation for both career and volunteer and the question came up as to why the program is only volunteer and not career. He said our input to that is it should be funded regardless of whether you're volunteer or career. He said if the program is opened up to career departments it reduces the amount of money to distribute because the number of departments will increase. Additionally, there was discussion as to the way the funding is given out. It should be to each town and not to each fire company because multiple departments respond to the same incidents and everyone makes a claim so it reduces the stockpile at the end. He said it was interesting discussion that warrants future consideration and he knows we had a taskforce study about five years ago and we had positive remarks come back. One concern he had which he expressed at the meeting is the fact that we should not be taking money from the Commission's operations to fund the LAH program which we've unfortunately had to do in the past. It is a mandate and should be funded as such.

Mr. Morrisette said he has provided them with some sample Statutory language for consideration.

Commissioner Nicol added that he's not sure how you would work out the issue with the LAH funding but even if career departments are included in the program, the funds often go to the municipality's general fund and the fire department does not get the benefit. He said if there was some creative way to pass the money to the departments both volunteer and career that would be great. He said it also happened to some of the volunteer departments where the LAH funding goes to the general fund of the municipality.

Commissioner Kowalski remarked that the vast majority of volunteer fire departments have non profit fire company accounts and the checks get mailed to them. Secondly, we brought up the point of the career departments and generally speaking the funds must go to the organization's general fund unless we issue a training credit like the program does now.

Moving to item 4d.) National Certification Registration Options – Mr. Piechota reported that this issue was brought up sometime ago and was tabled for a while. The original proposal was whether the Commission wanted to consider registering all eligible applicants for national certification directly to the Pro Board and IFSAC. He distributed a document called National Certification Registration Options which outlines the process using calendar year 2004 figures. It shows that the Commission took in approximately \$20,000 worth of registration fees and it would cost about \$10,000 to register all those people to either the Pro Board, IFSAC or both. He said Commissioner Kowalski however, felt that it would be appropriate to look at this in the larger vain and that is against what it really cost the Commission to do certification. He distributed a second

document called Certification Examination Delivery Cost Analysis which shows what it really cost the Commission to do each of the levels of certification an average of approximately \$87 per candidate.

Commissioner Kowalski said he had an opportunity to speak with Commissioner Wilkinson on this subject over the last several months and asked him to check with his constituency to see if this is something the Commission should pursue. He said Commissioner Wilkinson agrees with him that we should lend this as part of the program in issuing the national certification however it should not impact the Commission's budget it should be a charged fee. He said he believes the Commission should include the national certification for each test with an increase in fee cost based on the \$7.50.

Mr. Piechota asked for clarification on Commissioner Kowalski's proposal. He asked if the suggestion is to have candidates voluntarily choose to have the Commission register them nationally at a cost of \$7.50 and does the Commission wish to give candidates the option to opt out of that.

Commissioner Kowalski said no because it would be too confusing.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady that the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control raise certification fees by \$7.50 and register candidates to get national certification by both the Pro Board and IFSAC effective July 1, 2006. Motion carried.

Commissioner Nicol asked what the benefit is to the firefighter by having national certification.

Mr. Piechota remarked that they would have demonstrated to their peers nationally that they have achieved this level and it gives them the ability to transfer their credentials easier when moving.

Commissioner Nicol asked why it can't be optional and not mandatory.

Commissioner Kowalski said it makes the process a little more streamlined and we're not increasing the cost of giving the examination. We offer that as a service and firefighters get the national certification.

Commissioner Brady added that he brought up this proposal to several fire chiefs and they are very supportive of the concept.

Moving to item 4e.) New London County IMT Recognition – Chairman Carozza stated that both he and Commissioner Walsh met with Chief Nick DeLia, City of Groton a few weeks ago on this issue and brought forth some of their concerns. He said Chief DeLia agreed with them and said he wanted to go back to his organization to discuss the issue further and asked the Commission to table this item for now.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to table the New London County IMT Recognition request. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4f.) Legislative Update – Mr. Morrissette stated that we distributed today an updated legislative Bill tracking chart for the particular Bills we're monitoring and asked if anyone had specific questions on any of the Bills. He said he's aware that the training taskforce Bill H.B 5125 died in Committee. He also stated that the language of H.B. 5284 an act concerning model guidelines for volunteer emergency services personnel was changed from the Commissioner of Public Safety to the State Fire Administrator and distributed a copy of the Bill. He said the Bill was proposed by a Legislator from Newington and when he got back from vacation he called her and she said the language was already changed. He said there are several Bills from a fire marshal standpoint which he doesn't know the status of and asked if the Vice-Chair or Commissioner Morris could report.

Commissioner Kowalski reported that this has not been a stellar year at the Capitol and the fact of the short session. He said for some reason the Judiciary Committee closed their doors and nothing came out of that Committee. It's been a tough year and we will continue to press on.

Moving to item 5a.) NIMS Compliance – Director of Training Piskura reported that things have significantly improved with the Academy being reimbursed for most or all of our NIMS training and distributed a document which represents one month of reservations so far for NIMS training estimating 1125 students being trained. He said when we send an instructor to conduct the training all that labor is billable back to DEMHS and we've already submitted one invoice for about \$30,000. All of our Regional Haz Mat Teams training for NFPA 472 Technician is all reimbursable through an agreement we have with DEMHS and that is approaching \$15,000 per delivery. We're also conducting some additional training for the New Haven Area Special Hazards (NASH) team. We've actually done two deliveries there and they are asking for a third delivery which they are paying for out of their DEMHS distribution to the individual communities, so in both cases when we do the 472 Technician classes, it isn't costing the Commission any operating money which is unprecedented. He said the other thing with NIMS training is that it is also franchised out to the Regional Fire Schools and as they teach NIMS 700 or any other course, we will reimburse their instructors for doing that so it also doesn't cost the Regional Fire School any money. He said everything is working very well. The current question being asked of him by DEMHS is where is the NIMS 100 and 200 training which is happening just not to the level they are looking. He also said we're doing a fairly large program for Western Connecticut state college located in Danbury for Fairfield county police. There was a rumor out in the state that the Connecticut Fire Academy is not qualified to teach law enforcement officers because we aren't law enforcement officers. He said he has a letter from Thomas Flaherty, Executive Director of the Police Academy stating that only they and us are qualified to teach law enforcement officers so if Commissioners come across that statement it is false. He said not only are we allowed to but Mr. Flaherty prefers that the Fire Academy teaches because they don't really want to get into this. He said Deputy Commissioner of

DEMHS Wayne Sandford has been extremely complimentary at public meetings about the level of training that we've been delivering. Most recently the USAR Team has approached us looking to have their training done by us which had not happened previously to this time. Those training are reimbursable by DEMHS so it doesn't cost the USAR Team anything nor does it cost us other than scheduling the logistics.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Mr. Piechota said as the Commission is aware, we have two new levels of Safety Officer Certification. Health and Safety Officer and Incident Safety Officer because of changes to the NFPA Standard. Health and Safety Officer is the only level which requires that the person not only pass the test but they actually must hold the position and have the authority to do certain things in their department. It has not been a problem and persons are providing us with the documentation from the Chief Executive Officer of the department and they take the test and then become certified. He said a question came up recently and that is there are some Health and Safety Officers in a department that are elected and what happens to the certification if the person loses the election next year and no longer holds the position. He said he brought it to the attention of our Attorney General who likened it to fire marshals but more like police officers. Fire Marshals have to hold the position to become a certified fire marshal. In the case of a police officer you not only have to learn how to do it but you have to be one and if you are no longer a police officer you lose all your rights. The Attorney General suggested that the Commission create a process that the level of Health and Safety Officer have an expiration date and if the individual continues to hold the position they just send us proof and the Commission would make a notation in our database. He said the Commission would probably issue them another certificate because the certificate would have the expiration date on it. He also said if the Commission does this our regulation would have to be changed but the Attorney General felt that the Commission could adopt this on an interim basis until there's a formal revision of the regulation.

A brief question and answer period followed.

Commissioner Morris expressed that he would not be able to attend the Tuesday, April 24th Commission meeting.

Chairman Carozza added that he wanted to discuss the next meeting date today as it falls on the same date of the Connecticut Fire Marshals Conference and several Commissioners will probably be attending that event.

Mr. Morrisette added that we had scheduled the next Commission meeting to be held at the Legislative Office Building in hearing room 2A however we could change the date if the Commission chooses to do that. He said one option is to move the meeting to Friday, May 28th which is Fire Service Day at the Capitol.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Walsh that the Commission change their regular scheduled April meeting from Tuesday April 25th to Friday, April 28, 2006. Motion carried.

Mr. Piechota stated that our evaluators who evaluate FFI and FFII skills primarily have come to us and asked whether or not the Commission would be interested in establishing time limits or requirements for some of the evolutions that are being performed. Currently there are no time limits and we tell the evaluators to evaluate them using in their opinion; swiftly, safely and with competence. He said the evaluators have had a problem with some people taking an inordinate amount of time to do certain skills. We have done some research and have spoken to the psycho-metric unit at DAS. DAS suggested that in lieu of an actual published standard and there aren't any, the Commission could establish times based upon actual field conditions. The best way to do that would be to form a Subcommittee representing the constituent groups of the Commission. He said he brings this to the Commission to decide whether we want to form a Subcommittee to review this issue.

Commissioner Kowalski remarked that he is an evaluator and he understands where the evaluators are coming from, however generally speaking, there is a clear line on whether a person knows the skill or not in a reasonable period of time. He said he's a little concerned about setting time tables outside what is considered to be a reasonable amount of time and the number one concern is to make sure it is done safely as this is a training environment. He suggested that we seek feedback from the Instructor's Association and the Chief's Association.

Commissioner Nicol asked how many skills are tested.

Mr. Piechota replied approximately 125 but we would not look to establish times for each skill because they are done in corporation.

A discussion period followed.

Mr. Morrissette added that the Commission had previously conducted time studies in the early eighties in Bridgeport. He said he could not locate that information although he's not sure it would still be valid today however, he feels it would take the subjectivity out of the evaluation process. If ever challenged we could document how we arrived at the time limits. He said this topic bears some research and discussion. It was brought up today for discussion not for any decisions to be made today.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Nicol that we table this item for discussions with the Connecticut Fire Department Instructor's Association (CFDIA) and the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA). Motion carried.

Mr. Morrissette stated that Commissioner Ouellette had surgery and we have contact information for him.

Mr. Morrisette also mentioned that there were a few Commissioners interested in attending the Congressional Fire Service Caucus Dinner in Washington next week. He asked Commissioners that are still interested to let him know at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Piskura said we found out that we have access to free advertising of employment vacancies in five of the state's newspapers. Commissioners will see very shortly a solicitation for adjunct instructors. It is going to be a perpetual advertisement and we'll have a continuous interview process internally. He said we're at approximately 120 adjuncts and we're authorized to have 160 so we're trying to employ about 30 new adjuncts over the next three to four months. He said that advertisement will appear periodically because we're going to maintain an interview process and a bank of qualified people. We currently have 65 resumes on file and those people will be interviewed in addition to anyone else that identifies themselves through this open process.

Mr. Piskura distributed the contact information for the Highway Watch program, an in-service training program at no cost. He said if you're looking for a one-hour program for an internal group activity this person will deliver a power point presentation at no charge.

Mr. Morrisette stated that Commissioners may recall several months ago we formed a Committee of the Commission to look at the issue of certification and felonies. He said we put it on hold because of H.B. 5122 that was proposed which would prohibit any felons from becoming employed as firefighters which he presumes would also cover volunteers as well. He said his understanding is that the bill died in Committee but we have received several requests from Mr. Bolton asking what our Committee has done. He said the representatives of that Committee are Commissioner Ouellette who is ill, Chief Johnson who is on an extended winter vacation and Commissioner Walsh. He said there was a lot of testimony at the public hearing on that particular issue and it seems to have the support of the UPFFA, the Connecticut Chiefs and the Firefighters Association so he's sure the bill will be revived next year.

Mr. Morrisette also reported that Wayne Bindas one of our adjuncts is aiding a taskforce of the state Transportation Strategy Board dealing with highway incident management. The taskforce has been working on developing and reviewing a highway incident management doctrine which will be reviewed and ultimately approved by the Transportation Strategy Board. Wayne has done great work on the draft materials to date.

Commissioner Walsh mentioned that a couple months back we had talked about inviting Deputy Commissioner of the DEMHS, Wayne Sandford to our meeting and wanted to know if the Commission still plans to do that.

Mr. Morrisette said he had not invited Deputy Commissioner Sandford as yet.

Commissioner Brady said he was talking to Chief Wall from Wallingford regarding the credentialing of firefighters for these federal emergencies and mentioned it to Deputy

Commissioner Sandford at the Chiefs meeting and he didn't really give an answer as to what the status is and he's wondering if that might come under the prevue of the Commission or we can act to expedite some resolution to that entire issue.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that DEMHS has a Credentialing Committee and he believes they've only met once. He said there are fire service representatives on that Committee and Mr. Piechota is the agency's representative. He also said we had forwarded to the Committee Chairman the documents from the U.S. Fire Administration. On the fire service side, a lot credentialing is based upon certification pro-qual standards and also looking at national certification. A lot of municipalities and regions are ordering badging equipment with their homeland security funds.

Commissioner Morris added that in his opinion there are all these devices to make IDs and he has two fire departments in his community and a whole host of people and he would like to see one ID for everyone so you don't have 37 different IDs signed by each agency or each person.

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

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 11:06 am.

Dated:

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