



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 RD. WINDSOR LOCKS, CONNECTICUT 06096

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 30, 2010 MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Secretary Stankye called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Dagon, Mitchell, Nelson, Nicol and Walsh.

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

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Due to the severe weather and flooding a quorum was not attained and the meeting proceeded on an informational basis.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the January 26, 2010 meeting.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports January 15, 2010 – February 14, 2010.

Commissioner Stankye referenced Administration staff report item c that stated based upon claims to date, we expect to lapse a significant amount of funds in the Entry Level Training Reimbursement Account. He asked if we know if it's both career and volunteer departments that are not applying for the reimbursement.

Mr. Morrissette said it's hard to say right now if it's a lack of applying for the funds or not. We would have to go through all of the individual certification records to see who has been certified during the current fiscal year and cross reference each name to a claim form. In the past several days we've received some new claims and we've added the current recruit class numbers. He said he would give a more detailed report when we get to that item on the agenda.

Commissioner Stankye also referenced staff report item e which regarding a review by the Director of Training and Office of the Attorney General of a Publisher Distributor Agreement. He asked if it will be one Publisher or several.

Mr. Morrissette replied the current review is for one specific Publisher agreement. He said most of the Publishers we work with do require execution of some type of agreement. While not a new Publishing company, this is a new agreement. He said a lot of these agreements generally contain standard language that identifies both parties responsibility when working with one another. The state has specific statutory requirements as it relates to contract and related agreements, thus often times there needs to be amendments proposed prior to execution.

Commissioner Stankye asked about staff report item g that states providing support to DAS led investigation on employee complaint. He asked if this is a serious complaint.

Mr. Morrissette said yes it was a workplace violence complaint. It's going through a DAS investigation with a pre-disciplinary hearing being scheduled.

Commissioner Mitchell referenced Training division staff report item m that states discussed online training options with Brian Hendrickson of Jones and Bartlett and their relationship with Kaplan University in Florida. He asked if we are going to be dealing with Kaplan University for on-line courses

Mr. Morrisette replied that this is a report from Director of Training Piskura. He said he believes it was a discussion that Mr. Piskura has had with *Jones & Bartlett* (J&B) who predominantly uses Kaplan University as their online service delivery mechanism.

Commissioner Mitchell said his only concern is we did have a discussion on the online training and he wants to make sure we are inclusive.

Mr. Morrisette stated we need to look at options for our agency and that's been a long ongoing process.

Deputy Director of Training Lewandowski added that Kaplan was a cold call to us and we were just following up with them. Next week we have another webinar scheduled. He said the hard part is really to find someone that understands the fire service out there. He said if a firefighter sits for a course they still want to hear someone speak, anyone can read a book but online is different. He said we're in the early stage and he knows the Commission has a committee already looking at that.

Mr. Morrisette added that he has briefed Commissioners from time to time on efforts to enhance the agency's data base and improve customer service through greater automation as well as move toward on-line training. It does appear we will be moving forward with DOIT to adopt and transition to a state owned Learning Management System (LMS) that will assist us in achieving many of our long range goals.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding the budget. He said Commissioners are aware in the current fiscal year the state has not as yet moved to solve the current projected deficit. There was an attempt this weekend for the Democrats to put forward a new Deficit Mitigation Plan (DMP). He said a copy of that plan was enclosed with Commissioner's packets today. Only one that specifically impacts our agency is number 5 which is a reduction to CFPC Grant Payments and for the current fiscal year that will be a reduction, in the final quarter of \$75,000 further expanded into FY11 when it becomes a reduction of \$300,000. He said without any definitive information he believes that's probably the Entry Level Training Reimbursement Program and in the current FY \$75,000 really would do us no harm as we anticipate lapsing a significant amount of money. If \$300,000 is carried into the new FY, that could have significant ramifications. Mr. Morrisette said he'll be reporting shortly that currently we've encumbered over \$250,000 in claims for the current FY and we do expect some additional submittals. He said this proposal was not voted upon because the Governor threatened a veto and votes were not in place to override a veto. It does sound as if both the General Assembly and Administration are engaging in more dialogue and will finally negotiate a DMP soon for the current FY. He also said everyone is well aware as he's reported, rolling forward the next two to three FY's things get even worse with an end to stimulus and rainy day funding so there's no end in sight to the budget problems. Mr. Morrisette said the Governor's second DMP did not impact us and the Democrat's plan only impact the Entry Level Training Program. He said that's where we are with the Budget and its

kind of a wait and see but they are going to have to move quickly as we approach the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. We have already submitted the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter allotment request for the Regional Fire Schools grant payments so at least they will have full funding in place for the remainder of the year. He asked if Commissioners had any questions.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Nicol reported that Project Manager Don Ouillette reported that the New Haven Fire School reconstruction project completion date is Dec. 28, 2010. Mr. Ouillette stated that he was not aware of any ceremonial groundbreaking plans for the project at this time. The Hartford Fire School project should go to bid shortly. They expect to have project bids in early May. Mr. Ouillette also said he did not anticipate a Bond meeting to be held in April. He stated that he expected the next Bond meeting to be held in May or June and that it is quite possible that the agenda could include the construction costs for the Hartford Fire School project, the funds to purchase the Willimantic Fire School property and the survey funds for both the Fairfield and Burrville Fire Schools. Mr. Schroll reported that the proposed additional Bond-funding bill for the Regional Fire Schools is currently in the Finance Committee. He indicated that it would be difficult for the Legislators to approve additional bond funds while they are in the process of taking away previously approved funds from other agencies. Mr. Schroll said he asked some key legislative leaders to consider restoring the five million bond funds that the Governor reduced from this past year's budget. Mr. Schroll also reported on several other legislative bills. He indicated that the Regional Fire School Bill (Senate Bill No. 195) is in the House of Representatives for their consideration. Geoff Herald, Chief of Danbury Fire Department voiced his concern about the possible effect this bill might have on the proposed Danbury Regional Fire School. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on April 22, 2010.

Moving to item 4c.) FY 10 Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the Supplemental Grant program. He said we continue to chip away and with Commissioner's assistance we only have 11 fire companies remaining that have not yet responded. He said a number of them have been contacted and have promised to submit their grant selection forms. Mr. Morrissette said he believes we shared with the Commission last month that those fire companies that had not responded now have a reduced grant amount of \$954 to reflect the earlier rescission by the Governor. Unfortunately their delay caused them to lose money. Mr. Morrissette said before the rescission we've paid out \$101,750 in direct payments to the fire companies and there's approximately \$55,000 in vouchers remaining from the original appropriation of \$195,000. He said over the next few months we're going to have to encourage people to spend their money (vouchers) or lapse the funding.

Moving to item 4d.) FY 10 Entry Level Training Reimbursement Update – Mr. Morrissette said as he had mentioned when Commissioner Stankye had inquired, thus far we've encumbered \$243,000 which is inclusive of the current Recruit class at the Academy. Mr. Morrissette said originally \$505,000 was appropriated and there was a rescission but based upon what we're seeing thus far, he believes we're going to lapse a significant amount of money possibly \$200,000+. He said he's already alerted Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA) of that fact. As noted, we have received, just in the last several days a number of new claim forms for current classes. He is unsure what is generating the new surge in claim forms.

Mr. Lewandowski suggested having an entry level reimbursement form completed and sent in at the same time departments complete their FFI Examination Application form. He said as a fire chief it's something he forgets to do.

Mr. Morrisette replied we've done a couple of mailings to the chiefs since the beginning of the year just reminding them of the fact and it's announced at every meeting he and many Commissioners attend. We are lenient about approving claim forms received after a course begins.

Commissioner Stankye said if he recalls correctly the pre-approval was put in place as a measure to budget but unfortunately we now have money left over.

Mr. Morrisette said that is correct, it was to allow us to encumber funds in the individual's name in case we were over subscribed. That hasn't been the case thus far.

Moving to item 4e.) 2010 Legislative Session – Commissioner Stankye said Commissioners should have received with their packets a summary of bills that are in the process of working their way through the Legislature. He asked Mr. Morrisette if he had anything to add.

Mr. Morrisette said the only thing he wanted to add specifically relates to SB 195 which is our agency's bill to establish authorization and a process for the future designation of Regional Fire Schools. He said it's his understanding this bill is moving through the process. He did receive a call from the Governor's office last week that they may now oppose the bill predominantly because the original wording contained in the draft submitted by us was stripped from the bill by the Committee. That wording would include the Governor in the designation process as it would probably include a fiscal impact. He said he brought the concern up in his testimony before the Public Safety and Security Committee. He said he talked with the LCO Attorney who drafted the language and she said she was trying to simplify things. Mr. Morrisette said Commissioner Nicol had mentioned Chief Herald had concerns that the bill may negatively impact the future designation of Danbury as a Regional Fire School. Mr. Morrisette reported his testimony specifically mentioned Danbury and that the Education Committee had already pre-approved them. Thus, if the bill passes the effective date would not be until October therefore if Danbury is added as part of the current session either through the budget bill or other there will be no issue. If they are not included by the General Assembly then they would fall into the review process to be established by the Education Committee and the Commission.

A brief discussion followed on the future process for designation of regional fire schools.

Commissioner Nicol said this isn't a bill, but apparently Darien was successful in obtaining funding to do some renovations to a training tower they have. He said he thinks it's a regional facility but he doesn't know much about it and the question is where the funding came from.

Mr. Morrisette replied that this is not unusual, we regularly see proposals from Legislators to fund local project be they fire station construction projects or training facilities. He said he doesn't know if they ended up receiving that funding as a lot of funding for previously authorized bond projects has been or is expected to be swept. We were a bit concerned that the \$28 million in bond funds for the Regional Fire Schools maybe in jeopardy but that does not appear to be the case.

Commissioner Stankye said this had come up at the Education Committee meeting and he believes Darien got the funding out of a federal homeland security grant.

Commissioner Nicol said he doesn't believe it was federal funding.

Moving to item 4f.) eLearning Subcommittee – Director of Certification McGowan said he met with Commissioners Brady and Mitchell with regard to the subcommittee that the Commission had formed to look at online and eLearning for the fire service. He distributed a report on the issue. He said at the top of the page the two pieces that are underlined as compliance method 1 and 2 are already a part of the current application process. He said when a student check a number of boxes or a box on their application that would alert us to what type of training they are involved with and whether it's applicable to certification ramifications afterwards so we have one or two fail safes already present on the application. The next area underlined is language presently found in the CFPC Administrative Manual. He said we continually update that manual and the certification challenge process already has language which is outlined before Commissioners in black and through discussions the subcommittee decided that the language represented in red lettering is what we would add to the current language for challenging certification. Mr. McGowan said the last part is the certification prerequisite waiver form which is actually the state regulations and shortly his office should be able to move forward in making some upgrades to the regulations but there doesn't seem to be any language that we would need to change right now with regard to the waiver form. He said the conversation the subcommittee had was basically the language drafted in red lettering that is being submitted to the Commission for approval and to be added to our policy.

Mr. Morrissette added that in essence we're not changing anything just formalizing and more clearly defining the process.

Commissioner Nelson asked where this document resides as it is now.

Mr. McGowan replied it's within the Certification Division. All adjuncts Examiners have a copy.

Commissioner Nelson said if it's internal regulations that the Certification Director already uses. He asked if they were ever approved by the Commission on way or the other.

Mr. McGowan replied they were approved two years ago and they are also available online on the website under the Certification section.

Moving to item 5a.) Entry Level Training Reimbursement Policy Issue – Mr. Morrissette said he wanted to bring this to the Commission's attention. He said as it relates to the current policy for entry level training reimbursement Commissioners are aware that we've seen an increase in the number of individuals attending the CFA Recruit Program at their own expense. These are volunteer firefighters working toward a career in the fire service. Many career departments are looking at avoiding the expense of covering for a firefighter in training and hiring individuals who have completed the Recruit Program. Mr. Morrissette said one problem we encounter is the Statute clearly states we can only reimburse a municipality or a fire department therefore there is no real mechanism to reimburse individuals directly. He said we've had a number of fire chiefs approach us and inquire about the Commission reimbursing the department of record who in turn will make their member or employee whole. He said he believes the spirit of the original legislation was to defray the cost of entry level training and it maybe beneficial, at least through policy, to formalize that process.

Mr. Lewandowski added that some recruits are coming out of the military service and are looking for something to do with their GI Bill. He said they have to be a member of a fire

department and have the department's sponsorship. He said we are probably going to see a bigger trend for that because a lot of organizations are looking for trained personnel to save cost.

Commissioner Nicol asked if individuals attending under the GI Bill aren't financially being sponsored and if so that would be a problem of double dipping.

Mr. Lewandowski replied he's not really sure and he doesn't know in detail how the military GI Bill works. All we do is complete a certain form for the individuals and it is sent to Buffalo, NY and they get reimbursed. He said he's aware they do get paid for their time.

Mr. Morrisette said we'll have to look into the issue closer. He said we wouldn't want to put the individual in jeopardy.

Commissioner Nicol said it would be a problem for the Commission also.

Mr. Morrisette also said some volunteer departments still require their new members to pay for their entry level training upfront and then be reimbursed upon passing their probation or other requirement. In some cases this could be a year or more. He said unbeknownst to us we are probably already reimbursing municipalities for one half the cost of the training. Because we are not the deliverer of the training we don't see who paid for the training offered through a private vendor or Regional Fire School. He said we're just processing the reimbursement as it is presented to us and we're just trying to make it equitable. He said we can work on some wording from the policy standpoint to put forth at the next meeting.

Commissioner Nelson said he wanted to make a comment on this issue and he's not looking for the Commission to do anything right away but as we watch this trend continue. He said the issue that started along time ago for him is that FFI and recruit school is only available to volunteer firefighters or those hired thus you have to live in a community that has a volunteer fire department to sponsor you for either one of these entry level courses which gives them obviously a foot in the door. He said in the long term someone has to address the issue of fairness where all of the young people in Connecticut can equally access the opportunities to get into the fire service through the training and certifications that are available. He said right now that's simply not true, statutorily probably so it's not something that could be changed at this level but there is an inequity there and not only is it a term of fairness but a term of legality eventually.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that it's probably more of a problem for the municipality versus the Commission because we're just the provider of the service. The municipality determines their entry level requirements so the burden is upon them.

The general feeling of members present was that we need to look at the inequity whether it's by statute or just encourage career departments to develop some type of designation to people that have expressed interest or have a desire to somehow sponsor them.

Mr. Morrisette asked Commissioner Walsh if the Hartford Fire Department Explorer program gives those individuals extra points on an entry level examination if they are a member.

Commissioner Walsh said the Cadet program does not an Explorer program. He also said the Cadets are actually employees hired for 20 hours per week.

There was a lengthy discussion on the issue.

Commissioner Nelson said he had just brought it up for a point of discussion for today because it's not something he feels the Commission can handle immediately.

Secretary Stankye said we would table this for further discussions at a future meeting.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners or staff – Mr. McGowan said the Training Division recently ran a Fire Officer I class in Willimantic and the follow up to that was the Certification process. This was our second attempt at the practical skills evolution for FO I and we did not have any examiners scheduled for the examination that day. He said he appeared before the class and offered apologies to the group who was concerned for the situation. We did offer the students at their convenience an opportunity to reschedule and take the practical examination. Most of the students completed the examination either Thursday or Saturday of last week. To date there's one person who has decided not to take the practical examination at this point. He said he wanted to bring this to the Commission's attention that we were unable to get personnel to cover the practical. He takes full responsibility for this. He said in terms of getting some proctors trained, we're actually having two Train the Trainers (TtT) this weekend one down in Fairfield and one at the CFA to bolster our examination proctors for both FSI I and FSI II as well as for FO I and FO II. He said we did receive a couple of phone calls and a letter stating the concerns of the students as well as 16 comment sheets reflecting the student's feelings. On a positive note, he did receive one student comment after the practical examination was done that said it was one of the best practical examinations that the individual has been through.

Mr. Morrisette said as a follow up he thinks one of the issue that the students had is the course description published within the CFA Training Calendar contained details of the older program that met the NFPA 1021, 2003 edition. He said changes were made after the Calendar was published so one of the students felt there was a breach of contract. Also, the course description did not mention a practical examination. He said the few students he personally called and spoke to at length express the fact that the course description said one thing and we delivered something else. He said we probably need to look at adding a general disclaimer into the Calendar because from time to time things change due to staffing, scheduling or change in curriculum.

Commissioner Brady suggested that when the training begins the student should be made fully aware from day one.

Commissioner Nelson commented that he took the very first FO I class that was offered in the state of Connecticut and he had a practical examination at the end so there was nothing new with this course.

Commissioner Stankye asked if the Bond Commission met last week.

Staff member Lewis replied no the meeting was cancelled.

Deputy Director of Training Lewandowski gave the following updates in absence of the Director of Training who is away on vacation.

He said CPAT has been extremely overwhelming with the amount of people looking for jobs. For example Stamford was supposed to be hiring and we got over 800 applicants from the Stamford area alone for their test but they have now put a freeze on hiring. He said we are meeting the demand of all the people and we're trying to work better with the departments.

The June Fire School booklet should be on our website possibly this Friday if not on Monday at the latest and we did add a disclaimer in there. He said with the June School we may hold some courses offsite and things could change. He also said we've cut back on mailing to try to meet the Governor's requirements but a hard copy will still be mailed to the stations but not as many as in the past.

He also said Program Manager Munsell spent approximately the last year reviewing NFPA 472 for both Awareness and Operation which are certified levels. He said we've worked with Certification and Mr. McGowan has piloted some of it with his Haz Mat background so we're looking to run that as a pilot TtT which will begin next week with two days and another two days the following week. We've invited two representatives from each of the Regional Schools, regional Haz Mat teams and some other people in addition to some of our adjunct instructors. He said we are going to push it out to the TRADE Region to get some feedback from the other states. The program is extremely comprehensive with volumes of books which we are providing to the instructors that take the TtT which was funded through a grant through HMEP administered by the DEP. Our goal is to run it to any department in state that wants it for a TtT. He said it's not the program to use it's a program if departments choose to they can use so we're careful about how we state that. He said he doesn't have the exact number of delivery hours but it exceeds the present program we have now. He said one of the things that Certification does is test all of the competencies and there are eight of them. He said we cover all eight of those competencies in the training. He said there are a lot of materials covered that may not be applicable to most people but it is testable so it's being documented. He said this is only one program that is available; if people choose not to use it its fine but we've developed it and it's being passed off through the TtT program and it's of no cost to all those people. He said once the Pilot is complete we'll make any necessary changes based upon feedback we receive. He said those people who don't want to participate in the TtT we'll have funding made available for them and we'll go out and conduct regional deliveries to different organizations.

Commissioner Nelson asked if this is a program developed by the Academy.

Mr. Lewandowski replied yes it's an in-house developed program. He said it's an extremely comprehensive program.

Commissioner Nelson complimented the staff that developed the program.

A brief discussion followed.

Mr. McGowan added that Connecticut is the only state in the country that offers a complete packaged Awareness to Operations with eight competencies program and exam. He said that was attributed to the Commission foresight in voting that in a year or so ago. He also said with regards to baseline and then going on to the Technician level the 472 as far as he's concerned



being a 13 year member of a technician level team is woefully under standardized. He said the efforts that the Training Division has gone through to get the Awareness and Operations up to where it is will only help the regional teams in the state and he applauds their efforts.

Mr. Lewandowski also reported that this past weekend our full-time Trainers as well as our recruit leads participated in 1403 training which is a live fire standard training through IFSI. He said IFSI came to Connecticut for a couple of reasons; our availability of having a Class B Burn building as well as the Class A Burn facility close by in Springfield. It was a three day program and IFSI is going to begin certifying people and we've had some preliminary discussions with Mr. McGowan and possibly looking at voluntary certification for 1403 live fire trainer in Connecticut. He said he has a meeting with training division staff to review the changes that we need to make. He said out of 100 points we scored 97 so we have a few minor changes that we need to make to bring us up to full compliance with 1403. He said we need to make sure the people that are doing live fire training are doing it correctly and everyone goes home safely. He said we will make some changes and recommendations through the Fire Administrator's office and hopefully look at voluntary certification down the road because we think it's that important.

He also said Mr. Morrissette mentioned earlier the Learning Management System (LMS) which is basically online registration for us as well as a lot of other tools that ties back to eLearning. He said we're close to entering into an agreement with DOIT and it would allow us to speed up the registration process on behalf of the student. Approximately 80% of our student pays for courses with credit cards or by purchase orders from the community and the remaining are checks or cash. He said students will be able to register online and as soon as they register for a class they will get confirmation immediately and the system would apply to the certification side as well.

He also reported that Bob Taloni who was an Adjunct with the Training Division for many years and now with the Certification Division and a Deputy Chief in Norwalk was just hired by the City of Harrisburg, PA as their Fire Chief. He said he was sworn in yesterday in Harrisburg and it's nice to know someone from CT is moving up the ladder.

Mr. Morrissette said he wanted to follow up on a few comments Mr. Lewandowski had mentioned. He said with the Haz Mat project Mr. Lewandowski had stated this but he wanted to re-state it so everyone is very clear on it. He said the original estimate that Mr. Munsell had is about 80 contact hours if you offer the full program. He said this is just a resource and we're providing it for people to pick and choose the portions they want to offer.

A brief discussion ensued with some questions and answers on the contact hours of the Haz Mat Awareness and Operations developed by the CFA.

Mr. Morrissette also reported that we have not had a contract in place with an IT Hardware Support vendor for about a month now. We were operating with the same vendor for approximately five or six years under what is called a General Letter 71 which is direct purchase authority up to a certain dollar amount. He said we have about 90 computers in an agency of 18-20 full-time staff and another 200 part-time staff so we have a lot of IT issues. He said we were bumping up against the maximum dollar limit of the purchasing authority where DOIT would not authorize our continued use of the vendor. Thus we have to go out onto a master state contract. There are three vendors that can provide this type of service but the process to actually secure someone to come in and do the work is quite detailed and time

consuming. He said we're trying to make arrangements with one of the three vendors to sub-contract with the company that we have engaged for many years. He said we're trying to complete that process which involves interviewing the potential people and that was completed yesterday. He said he hopes to have someone on board hopefully within the next few weeks if DOIT approves it.

He also said Mr. Lewandowski mentioned the high volume of CPAT applications being nearly 1,600. He said that coincided with a number of other programs that were scheduled such as the Seminar Series and the CT Fire Officers Weekend at the NFA. He said our registration capability was over run by the registrations. He said we were weeks behind in terms of processing applications which generates phone calls and we were not compliant with meeting the 24 hour deposit rule by the state Treasurers. He said while we haven't received the audit report for the last audit which was done over a year ago the next audit will probably pick up on this issue. He said we just don't have the staffing and that's one of the reasons why we need to look at transitioning to a LMS where we can take advantage of automation more. He said that period of time has been very stressful to the staff.

Mr. Morrisette said he should have done this at the start of the meeting but he wanted to ask for a moment of silence in recognition of the Line of Duty Death in Beacon Falls and recent deaths of both a Hartford Firefighter and Wallingford Fire Marshal.

Secretary Stankye asked the Commission to observe a moment of silence.

Commissioners were reminded that Fire Service Day at the Capitol is April 15 and were told there will be a huge tax rally expected at the Capitol that day. Mr. Morrisette invited Commissioners to attend.

Secretary Stankye adjourned the meeting at 11:17 am.

Dated:

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Charles M. Stankye, Jr., Secretary