



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



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**MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 25, 2005 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Vice Chairman Kevin Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:50 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Blaschik, Morris, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye and Walsh.

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

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

Due to lack of a quorum the meeting proceeded on an informational basis.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if there were no objections he would like to move to Agenda item 3, Committee Reports and asked if members had any questions.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked again if there were no objections he would like to move to Agenda item 5a, New Business – New London County IMT Recognition.

Nick DeLia Fire Chief, City of Groton gave a presentation on the New London County Incident Management Team (IMT). The group began under the Statewide Mobilization Plan. New London County created 6 Taskforces, 3 in the north and 3 in the south with 6 Taskforce Leaders. As part of that effort and getting ready for the TOPOFF 3 Exercise they thought it would be a good tie in to take the Taskforce Leaders and give them some additional training and begin an incident support staff team. He said a traditional IMT comes into an incident and they sign a MOU and literally take over all responsibility and the Incident Commander walks away and the IMT takes over. They saw that as a problem in New England and in their county so they originally started as an incident support staff providing logistics, planning and finance principally, and some assistance with safety and operations. Chief DeLia said that the members of the New London county fire chief's IMT have attended extensive training to prepare for large scale emergencies including TOPOFF 3, and those requiring the use of Unified Command. As part of the formal organizational process, the plan calls for recognition from those Authorities Having Jurisdiction but the problem is there is no defined Authorities Having Jurisdiction so they decided to start with the county. On August 4, 2005 the New London County Fire Chiefs' Association voted formally to recognize its IMT as a Type 4 IMT. The next day they sent a letter to the Southeastern Council of Governments asking for

their recognition. On September 21, 2005, the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments voted to formally recognize the IMT (now known as CT-IMT4) as a Regional – Type 4 IMT. These actions were taken as part of an effort by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's United States Fire Administration's plan to determine the means to develop all-hazard IMTs across the country. He also said they did a presentation to the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security's (DEMHS) Coordinating Council who designated a Subcommittee to explore creating IMTs statewide. Chief DeLia requested that the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control consider formally recognizing and certifying the Incident Management Team (CT-IMT4) as a Type 4 IMT and emergency response resource.

A question and answer period followed the presentation.

Vice Chairman Kowalski thanked Chief Delia for coming to the meeting and doing the presentation. He said the Commission would not be able to take action today with the lack of a quorum.

Vice Chairman Kowalski indicated that we would return to Agenda item 2, Approval of Minutes.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrisette remarked that he didn't have any definitive information regarding the budget specifically our expansion options and technical adjustments. He did however receive a voicemail from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and it sounded relatively positive that these will be moving forward. He said there was also a minor adjustment in the salary of the level 1 Instructors from \$17 to \$18. At last week's Commissioner's meeting with the Governor, they indicated that there is an expected state surplus of \$20 to \$40 million but the projected impact of fuel costs could really be disastrous on that surplus. Mr. Morrisette also reported relative to budget/staffing that the impact of the Business Office consolidation is that the agency lost the Fiscal Administrative Supervisor position. He said there was some funding remaining to pay this position through the end of the year and that is frozen. At a recent meeting with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) he asked if we could use that as our 5% Reduction Option and they didn't see a problem with that although he has not heard back as of yet. He said Commissioners may recall there is \$100,000 which is the new appropriation for the Limited Access Highway (LAH) program and in lieu of that he offered that as our reduction in addition to some minor adjustments in our Personal Services Account. Mr. Morrisette said that we were originally notified about three weeks ago that we would be losing one position and that the other two positions would remain here at the agency as part of the DAS centralization effort. All human resource functions have already been transferred over to DAS.

He said he was told we would need to look at policies and procedures for identifying who would be responsible for what. The position we lost had responsibilities primarily budget and human resources related which was already addressed and the other two positions some of those responsibilities were thought to be transferred. A few days after he was told the two positions were staying at the agency he received a call that said one of the

positions was to be transferred to DAS. He said he told them he had already advised the employees that they were both to remain with the agency and if there was any change they would need to come before the Commission. He said he received a call back stating that one of the two positions would be transferred to DAS however, permanently placed here within our agency. A number of the staff met with several DAS representatives last week to begin flushing out roles and responsibilities and after an hour and half they left stating they will have to go back to the drawing board. He said it was very confusing and it didn't instill confidence that a lot of planning took place.

Commissioner Nicol asked what the effective day is for the transfer.

Mr. Morrissette remarked it was effective October 6th, the same day as the Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) meeting.

Commissioner Blaschik was excused and left the meeting at 10:45 am to attend a meeting of the Legislative Regulations Review Committee.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if the funding had been transferred out of the agency to DAS along with the position.

Mr. Morrissette remarked yes although he hasn't received any financial reports recently but the letter he received indicated that the funding along with the position would be transferred to DAS.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Mr. Morrissette inquired if Commissioner Stankye or Nicol had any information to report relative to the Education Committee.

Commissioner Nicol stated that the next meeting will be this Thursday.

Mr. Morrissette added that the Committee did not meet last month. He said the land issue as it relates to the Hartford School continues to be negotiated and we've requested funding as a Budget Options for the lease expenses. Also there are meetings being held to decide whether the land could be provided for free but no decision has been made. He said he's aware of a meeting between the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), OPM budget representatives and Bradley Airport representatives last Thursday and they were going to get back to him if any progress was made. He said he has not signed the MOU that DOT sent to us for signature which would allow initial access to the land for surveying and engineering. He doesn't want to commit the agency to a fiscal note if additional funding is not forthcoming.

Commissioner Nicol mentioned that the Bond Commission meeting that was scheduled for the last Friday of September was cancelled. He said they are scheduled to meet this Friday and if they don't take action at that meeting we won't see any action until possibly December's meeting.

Mr. Morrisette added that there have been a lot of news articles in the last couple of weeks about state bonding as a whole and some of the philosophy out there and what's going to have higher priority.

Commissioner Nicol remarked that the problem here is if we don't get a commitment on the Bonding before the year ends, it will roll into next January and there maybe some issues in that they may roll it over into FY 08.

Moving to item 4c.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrisette reported that it appears that the number of eligible volunteer fire companies has been reduced from 165 to 162 which would make available approximately \$617 for each of the eligible fire companies for this year's round of funding. The letter has been drafted and once we have a final confirmation the letters will be mailed by the end of the week. He said they will have the option again of receiving a check or a voucher to use within the Bookstore or to procure agency services. We will continue to administer the program as we did last year and we're letting companies that elect a voucher know that they have until mid May 2006 to expend their voucher. He said because it is a budgetary item and not a grant we need to close out our books by the deadline. When the letters are mailed and if companies have any questions they should just follow the instructions in the letter and they should have no problems.

Moving to item 4d.) National Certification Registration Options – Mr. Piechota stated that this issue has been on the agenda a number of times as unfinished business. He said Mr. O'Hurley made a presentation at the last meeting and no action was taken so it was placed on the agenda again this month for consideration but there is no quorum today. He asked if Commissioners had any questions about what is being presented.

Vice Chairman Kowalski said unfortunately there will be no action today with the lack of a quorum and asked if it creates an issue.

Mr. Piechota remarked no.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if there were any questions relative to agenda item 4d.

Commissioner Nicol asked if the issue of credentialing ties into this at all.

Mr. Piechota responded probably not because it is his understanding that credentialing as it is currently proposed does not have any requirement that a national certificate would be issued. It would recognize the state's system which we already have so there is no impact on what we're asking for here as it currently stands.

Moving to item 4e.) Certification Fee Schedule, Levels – Mr. Piechota stated the same applies to this agenda item in that a vote would be necessary to determine whether the Commission would like to begin to offer 2 new levels of Certification; Awareness and Operational at the Haz Mat level and some associated fees.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if there were any questions.

Moving to item 4f.) Training Funding Update – Mr. Morrisette said this is a follow up to Chief McCarthy’s presentation last month and we haven’t had any formal meetings but the Commission had asked us to review the issue a little more closely. After speaking informally with Director of Training Piskura the Administrator recommends this be addressed legislatively because of the unstable agency budget climate we operate within. He said maybe the time is right to re-address this issue and he would ask the CT Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA) to bring the issue forward as a legislative initiative. There is very minimal fiscal impact to this and they probably would move forward in establishing a legislative study committee to report out by January 1, 2007. Hopefully they would identify a stable revenue source to address the entry level training needs of both the career and volunteer fire service which also corresponds with the regional fire school issues as they are looking for more stable funding for their operations. We could utilize the language that created the original Subcommittee which he knows Commissioner Ouellette and some others were a part of. Mr. Morrisette also said Senator Andrea Stillman is the new Co-Chair of the Public Safety Committee replacing Ernest Newton who has stepped down. She was the champion, on the 911 side to revamp the entire funding stream for E-911 and the funding of equipment for PSAP’s and regional dispatch centers. He said we should probably look to her to lead this effort.

Commissioner Stankye commented that Senator Stillman was also a big help with the plans for the regional fire schools.

Commissioner Nicol added that he feels this is an initiative for the Joint Council to get behind and support in the upcoming legislative session.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that usually they look for one of the member entity to bring it forward and then they could endorse it very easily.

A brief discussion followed.

Commissioner Johnson arrived at 11:02 AM.

Moving to item 4g.) Felony Prohibition Update – Mr. Morrisette said we did a little research from our presentation last month regarding the request to establish a prohibition for those convicted of a felony and asked Mr. Piechota to comment.

Mr. Piechota stated as the Commission is aware the agency’s Certification regulations were revised and passed a few months ago and the Commission now has the ability to revoke certification if someone is convicted of a felony. He said the Commission would consider what the offense was and could revoke certification because of that offense. He also said that does not include prohibition of granting certification to someone who has been convicted of a felony. The Attorney General’s office did suggest however, that in the absence of any further language we should indicate on our application asking individuals if in fact they had been convicted of a felony. He said the Commission may

want to consider doing that even before a person is granted certification so that we don't have to worry about possibly taking it away later. Our research shows that in fact the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) does that in their regulations but on their application for Paramedics they have 6 or 7 questions that have to be answered by the applicant, one of which is have you been convicted of a felony either in this state or another state. If a person answers yes to that question then that application is reviewed by staff and an investigation team at OEMS. They make the determination of whether or not they would allow the person to even consider being licensed as a Paramedic. There are some models we're looking at to see what it would take to essentially determine the eligibility or credentialing of someone upfront before they are ever able to proceed forward with the certification process. Right now we cannot prevent anyone from receiving certification if they are a convicted felon but we can take away the certification.

Commissioner Johnson added that he has gone through a similar situation in his department. He said their application states that the Board of Fire Commissions may reject a person's application that is a felon. He also said the state of Connecticut has a policy encouraging review and possibly hiring of convicted felons.

A brief question and answer period followed.

Mr. Piechota remarked that there are a number of questions that are asked on the application that OEMS uses and if a person answers yes to any question that application is then turned over to an investigation board that determines whether or not the person continues in the process or not, so it's an individual decision. He said he has a call into the Attorney who works for that investigation team to ask them what criteria they use to determine whether or not the person proceeds in the process or not; or if it is a judgment call each and every time. He said he's waiting for a call back with that information and will report it back to the Commission.

Mr. Morrissette added that OEMS is greater staffed and equipped to do that, our agency is not and that is a concern.

Moving to item 6. Comments from the public – Chief DeLia commented that the Joint Council is the dynamic force to bring issues legislatively if there are people standing behind them.

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Mr. Piskura said there are 2 Instructors' meeting scheduled for January 17 and 19, 2006 and asked for Commissioners' representation at the 2 meetings.

Mr. Piskura reported that he's concerned that we've been having difficulty fulfilling our Instructor assignments and towing trailers.

Mr. Morrissette added that we rely very heavily on part-time staff to deliver training.

Vice Chairman Kowalski added that they wanted to know who our customers are.

Mr. Piechota reported that he attended a meeting of the Office of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (OSET) to begin the planning phase of creating a Statewide Emergency Services Data Network. He asked the Commission for direction as to the best way to obtain input from the fire service on what the CT Data Network could be used for.

Commissioner Nicol stated that he attended the Mid Atlantic Association of State Fire Commissions 27th annual conference held in Charleston, WV. He said he will issue a detailed report at the next meeting.

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:58 AM.

Dated:

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