



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

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Page 1

**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 27, 2001 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

The meeting was called to order at 9:44 a.m. by Vice Chairman Kowalski with the following members present: Commissioners Brammer, Gomeau, Haber, Maheu, Milewski, Mullen, Munkenbeck, Nicol, Stankye, Vendetta and Wilkinson. Commissioners' Carozza and Johnson were excused. Staff members Morrissette, Birmingham, O'Neil and Ouellette were present.

Guests to the meeting were asked to identify themselves. Guests to the meeting were Chester Haber, Director of Training, Hartford County Fire School, John M. Kupernik, President, Hartford County Fire Emergency Plan, Fred Dudek, Middlesex County Fire School and Al Hawkins, Eastern CT Fire School,

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked for a motion to raise item 4 b.) to the top of the agenda.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Vendetta and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to move item 4 b) to the top of the agenda. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called on members of the sub-committee who met last evening with representatives of the regional fire schools to give their report.

Commissioner Vendetta stated the he felt that the meeting with the regional school representatives was very constructive and positive. All the questions that were raised could not be answered last night; however, many of our questions were also their questions. We now have all the regional schools speaking with one voice. It's a joy to see the fire service working in this manner in trying to get one bill approved as opposed to seeing bills popping up all during the session looking for support from the various fire service groups. One of the questions he stated he raised was whether the regional school consortium would entertain the Commission's involvement as a member of their working committee.

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They replied very positively and asked for the name of an individual to represent the Commission. He stated that his concerns of last month have not been directly answered, but he has a very positive feeling that those concerns over the course of the next couple of years will be answered. The Commission's involvement with the regional school consortium would be a very positive move for all the fire service.

Commissioner Stankye stated that as a member of the subcommittee he noted at the meeting last night that there was an air of mutual cooperation. It showed that the regional schools are unified as one, which over the years the fire service has been looking for. They explained how they approached the Connecticut Firefighter's Association for guidance because that's where their funding comes from. They are very receptive to working with the Commission and to have a representative from the Commission take part in their meetings. Once again he emphasized that he was in favor of backing the regional school's request for support.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated to echo what Commissioners Vendetta and Stankye have already stated, there is no doubt that the regional schools are united in this effort. A positive vote is the right thing for the Commission to do at this time. These people have their backs to the wall and are desperately seeking other locations for some of the schools that are about to be uprooted. If the funding doesn't come through some of these schools will go into demise because of that. With the way state government works and this being a budget year for the legislature, if the regional schools don't get funding this year, it may be several years down the road before they can apply for funding again. Some of these regional schools may not survive without this funding.

Commissioner Maheu stated that he supported the regional school concept of the proposed bill and he supports it even more so today. These people have done a lot of work, they have really done their homework. Each and every school knows exactly where it stands both in present day and what they plan for the future. He stated that there needs to be an ongoing dialogue and his only disappointment is that another meeting was not scheduled. He stated that he thinks that it is important for the Commission to continue a dialogue with the regional schools for the benefit of the fire service in the state. The offer to have a Commission member attend meetings is a good idea and we should act on that as well. In the future we need to begin to have concerns expressed at meetings by the Commission or the regional schools documented.

Mr. Morrissette referred to a list of issues presented at last evening's meeting. He prefaced his remarks by saying that many of the issues identified were not necessarily for discussion last night, but were long term in nature. At last night's meeting the focus was more on discussions about the impact of both a bonding bill for capital improvements and about the regional schools. Future request for additional operating expense funding. The regional schools are not really in a position to answer those questions and neither is the Commission. The regional schools realize that no matter what the Commission's vote may be, they are in for an uphill battle this year.

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that he still has concerns that what they will find out is that a lot of the money will go into preliminary surveys. He stated that he also knows that it will be a hard sell to

get this bill to go through. After listening to comments made by Commissioners he feels the Commission should go ahead and support this effort.

Commissioner Maheu stated that the regional schools have done a lot of homework, they have preliminary sites identified and they have the backing of the community. The only thing they don't have is the funding to make it happen.

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that he agreed with Commissioner Maheu and is in support of the idea at this time. He also suggested that the Commission should consider holding the May meeting at one of the regional schools.

Commissioner Maheu stated that one of the points that were made last night was that there is only so much fire service dollars available. It has already been a concern of the Commission that there is only so many dollars whether it is regional school dollars or Connecticut Fire Academy dollars. He stated that he believes that if united there's a better chance of success for both organizations. The Commission has operating needs and so do the regional schools.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called on any of the guests to speak.

Mr. Hawkins stated that the regional school consortium asked the Connecticut State Firefighters Association (CSFA) to appoint an Educational Committee. This committee could be comprised of at least two representatives from each of the regional schools, representation from the CSFA and also representation from the Commission. The next meeting for this group has been schedule for March 28, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. at the Connecticut Fire Academy hosted by the Hartford Regional Fire School.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated having heard the comments of Commissioners and the sub-committee there appears to be a unified front and that's the only way the fire service can get anything out of the legislature. If the regional schools do fall he stated that he didn't know if the Commission could service the customer base it has now in addition to those displaced. If there is no other questions he stated that he would entertain a motion to support the bond funding for capital improvement program for the regional fire schools.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Stankye and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to support endorsement of the Regional Fire School Capital Improvement Plan.

Commissioner Nicol abstained.

Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski thank the sub-committee for their time.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called for approval of the minutes.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Maheu and SECONDED by Commissioner Milewski to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2001 meeting. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called for approval of the staff report.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the Staff Report for the period of January 15, 2001 - February 14, 2001

Commissioner Maheu inquired about item B in the Administration Report regarding a Proposed Bill 6669 which would transfer \$59,700 from the Commission's budget to the Department of Social Services to cover an anticipated budget deficit in that agency.

Mr. O'Neil stated that this was funding that was held back in the current fiscal year in order to appropriate to agencies with projected deficits.

Mr. Morrisette stated if you look at the text of the bill every state agency is impacted as transferring money to Social Services or to some other entitlement program that is facing a deficit in the current fiscal year. He noted, this may actually play into agenda item d.) under Limited Access Highway because the agency is currently facing a deficit in this account.

Motion carried.

Moving to item 4 a.) Mr. Morrisette gave an update on the Fallen Firefighters Memorial.

Mr. Morrisette stated that a committee meeting is scheduled for February 28 at the offices of the engineering design firm that is providing the preliminary design services. It is hoped that we will receive revised drawings depicting recent modifications to include the addition of names of fallen firefighters. He hopes to bring back drawings to the Commission for their next meeting for review. It appears that funding is moving through and probably will be passed as part of the Governor's budget. That funding is earmarked to come as a pass through this agency. A question brought up at our agency's Appropriations sub-committee hearing last week was whether this would be enough money to build the memorial. We responded affirmatively as long as there are no significant design changes. The only change thus far from the original plan is to incorporate the names of fallen firefighters. These will be engraved on the base of the monument. Our Facility Engineer has done some research for the addition of an eternal flame to the memorial. Lieutenant Governor Rell would like to have some type of ground breaking take place either late spring or early summer. Internally we've discussed trying to incorporate this event during the June School program.

Commissioner Maheu inquired about the accounting of the donations received for the memorial.

Mr. Morrisette stated that Commissioner Nicol had raised the question in terms of what type of an account the money is deposited in. As the Memorial committee attains incorporation and non-profit status it will be required to undergo annual audits. He was informed that the stone was ordered and that the committee had to make a substantial deposit for that to move forward.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the projected total cost of the memorial project.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he was hoping to get an updated estimate. The last estimate he was given was \$175,000 which did not include adding a modified base with engraved names. This addition should increase the cost. His best estimate is that the total cost would be around \$200,000.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if the Connecticut Firefighter's Association appointed the committee that will oversee the building of the memorial.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the Memorial Committee is a committee of the Connecticut Firefighter's Association. Only a small percentage of the people named on the original committee list have attended the two recent meetings. Anyone interested to attend any of the meetings would be welcome to attend and participate.

Commissioner Nicol stated that a sub-committee would have to be established to oversee this project and to perform an audit.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the Committee is currently going through an incorporation process and as part of this they will be required to perform audits.

Commissioner Nicol recommended that there should be some representation from the Commission on this committee.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he would make that recommendation to the Committee at tomorrow's meeting.

Moving to item 4c.) Mr. Morrisette gave a legislative update. He stated that a number of public hearings were held during the last few weeks. At a public hearing held on February 13 by the Public Safety Committee a variety of fire service issues came up for public input (i.e. sparklers, residential sprinklers, regional fire school bonding, etc.) There was a significant fire service presence at this hearing. At the regional fire school meeting held last night the school representatives feel that they have support to at least get this bill out of Public Safety and move it forward. Until the Public Safety Committee holds a committee meeting to discuss the disposition of this bill there is really nothing happening. Any additional proposed legislation that has come about since the last Commission meeting has been distributed to each Commissioner.

Commissioner Munkenbeck inquired about the status of the proposed bill to transfer OEMS to Public Safety.

Mr. Morrisette stated that Commissioner Garcia from the Department of Public Health approached him at a recent Commissioners' meeting and inquired if he had heard of any move to transfer OEMS to the Commission. Mr. Morrisette stated to Commissioner Garcia that he was only familiar with the proposed bill to transfer OEMS to Public Safety. At that time Commissioner Spada joined the

conversation and he eluded to the fact that Public Safety was not really interested in the proposed move. Commissioner Garcia inquired what the Commission's interest might be regarding this matter. Mr. Morrisette responded that without any of the background information his main concern would be the availability of adequate resources. He stated that he did not believe that as currently staffed and funded any agency would be willing to accept OEMS in its current form. He asked Commissioner Garcia to keep him informed.

Moving to item 4 d.) Mr. O'Neil reported on the status of the Limited Access Highway Payments that might have to be held up until the next fiscal year because of an estimated shortfall of \$20,000 to \$30,000 in this account.

Mr. Morrisette stated that OPM has formally been notified of the anticipated deficit in this account. We will continue to closely monitor this account. If it appears reimbursement of claims will be delayed, the agency will notify fire chiefs of those departments impacted.

Commissioner Stankye inquired if Mr. Ted Schroll would be notified of the Commission's vote to support the regional fire school proposed bill.

Vice Chairman Kowalski replied affirmatively and added that a copy of this letter should also be sent to each regional school.

Moving to New Business, item 5 a.) Mr. Morrisette asked Mr. O'Neil to give an update of the FY 2001-03 Biennium Governor's Budget.

Mr. O'Neil stated that there were no major changes on the FY 2001-03 budget submittal from what the agency requested. There was a small 1% increase made in our payroll request and about a 4-5% decrease in our operating expense request. There is no guarantee that this budget will go through as it is. Also, there could be future reductions after it's been approved. Included in our operating expense request was funding for the satellite facility in Meriden.

Moving to item 5 b.) Mr. Morrisette stated that the agency is beginning to get deluged with state requirements for maintaining agency web sites. This puts the agency into a predicament in that we do not have any full time computer support staff. The responsibilities for IT management in the agency fall upon the Director of Certification, Fred Piechota. The responsibility of managing IT internally obviously takes away from Mr. Piechota's role of managing the Certification Division. We also have a part-time person who is responsible for maintaining our web site as well as IT support. As part of a number of initiatives within the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) they are establishing policy requirements including a privacy policy. He explained that the Agency Web Site Privacy Policy Draft was presented at this time for the Commission's review and approval at a later date.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked Commissioners to review the draft and be prepared to discuss and possibly approve at next month's meeting.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired about the vacancy in Certification and if that has been frozen.

Mr. Morrisette stated that Mr. Birmingham who was scheduled to retire at the end of January has delayed that until the end of March when he will officially retire.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired if this would be the time to incorporate an IT Specialist into the position description for the expected vacancy.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the agency has in its organizational plan an IT position identified as a proposed future position.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that he thinks that the Web site is a tremendous asset to this organization.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked for a motion to appoint a member of the Commission to the regional fire school committee.

Commissioner Vendetta recommended that one individual and an alternate be named to the regional fire school committee.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Gomeau and SECONDED by Commissioner Stankye that the Commission appoint two Commissioners to the regional fire school committee. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that he would like to coordinate the selection of two Commissioners for this committee with Chairman Carozza.

Commissioner Munkenbeck inquired if a site had been selected for the May Commission meeting and if it was possible to find a regional school to host this meeting.

Mr. Morrisette replied affirmatively and that he would contact representatives of the schools.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Vendetta that the Commission actively pursue scheduling the May Commission meeting at a regional school.

Mr. Morrisette inquired in what area of the state the Commission would like to hold the meeting.

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that the eastern part of the state would be a good area to hold the meeting.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated if it is okay with the Eastern Connecticut Regional Fire School that it be selected as the site for the May evening meeting and this should be noted in the motion.

MOTION was AMENDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Vendetta that the Commission would actively pursue scheduling the May Commission evening meeting at the Eastern Connecticut Regional Fire School. Motion carried.

Commissioner Maheu suggested that the appointments to the regional school committee be made prior to March 27.

Vice Chairman Kowalski replied affirmatively.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the plans for the Legislative Reception.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the Legislative Reception hosted by the Joint Council of Fire Service Organizations is scheduled for Thursday, March 8 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Officers Club. He extended an invitation to all the Commissioners. In addition, on Tuesday, March 6, Fire Service Day at the Capitol will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the concourse area of the LOB.

Commissioner Nicol inquired what bills the Joint Council was supporting during this legislative session.

Mr. Morrissette stated that it seems that it has been very difficult to get people to attend the Joint Council meetings this past year so there was no formal vote taken. The original discussion pertained to the Fire Service Training Bill and a Municipal Employees' Retirement Fund Bill which appeared to have significant support.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the 13th Annual Fire and Emergency Services Dinner is schedule for April 25 in Washington. If there is any interest from Commissioners we could probably assist with some of the travel expenses. Both from a lobbying prospective and an opportunity to meet with our congressional delegation it is well worth the time. He asked Commissioners who were interested to attend this event to let him know.

Mr. Morrissette stated that he has available some audio CDs produced by an individual from the Hartford area. This song was written and produced as a tribute to the Worcester firefighters as well as firefighters in general. This individual is looking for support in terms of funding to bring this initiative to the next level. He added that if anybody is interested or thinks that their organization may be interested he has copies of the CD. The writer has an upward battle in trying to get this produced by a national recording artist. He is looking for some financial support and is ultimately looking at establishing a foundation for which any of the sales of any of this song would go to benefit a fire service effort.

Commissioner Haber thanked the Executive Secretary who on her own initiative ordered a coat rack for the Commission Room.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he sat on the oral panel for the pilot Fire Officer III Program and found the experience very rewarding. It was very gratifying to see the quality of the candidates.

Commissioner Wilkinson thanked the members of the Commission for their positive support of the regional schools funding issue. He also encouraged the Commissioners not to let their support stop here and to contact their legislators to stress the importance of this bill.

Commissioner Stankye inquired about pocket ID for commissioners.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the agency was looking into this matter.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if the agency had requested support from the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association for the Connecticut Fire Officer weekend.

Mr. Morrissette stated that there was some discussion on this matter but he does not know where that stands. He extended an invitation to the Commissioners to attend the Connecticut Fire Officer's Weekend at the National Fire Academy.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Dated: _____

Edward F. Haber, Secretary
Commission on Fire
Prevention and Control