



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



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January 30, 2001

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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 30, 2001 MEETING OF  
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Vice Chairman Kowalski with the following members present: Commissioners Haber, Maheu, Milewski, Mullen, Munkenbeck, Nicol, Stankye, Vendetta and Wilkinson. Commissioners Brammer, Carozza, Gomeau, and Johnson, were excused. Staff members Morrisette, Cooney, Lewandowski, O'Neil, Ouellette, Piechota and Piskura were present.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked the guests to introduce themselves.

Guests to the meeting introduced themselves as Ralph Scarpino from DEP Forestry Division and Al Hawkins from the Eastern Connecticut Regional Fire School.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called for a motion to move ahead to item 5 a.) under New Business.

*A MOTION was made by Commissioner Haber and SECONDED by Munkenbeck to move to item 5 a. under New Business. Motion carried.*

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked Adam Piskura to introduce the new hired Assistant Bookstore Supervisor.

Mr. Piskura introduced Pam Cooney as the new Assistant Bookstore Supervisor who will be taking over the bookstore operation. Mr. Piskura gave a brief overview of Ms. Cooney's qualifications.

Ms. Cooney expressed that she was very happy to be here, anxious to get going on the bookstore and very grateful for the opportunity.

Moving to item 2 on the agenda, Vice Chairman Kowalski called for approval of the November 28, 2000 minutes.

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*A MOTION was made by Commissioner Vendetta and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2000 meeting. Motion carried.*

Moving to item 3 on the agenda, Vice Chairman Kowalski called for approval of the Staff Reports.

*A MOTION was made by Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Vendetta to approve the Staff Report for the period of November 15, 2000 - December 14, 2000. Motion carried.*

*A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Stankye to approve the Staff Report for the period of December 15, 2000 - January 14, 2001. Motion carried*

Moving to item 4 a.) Mr. Morrissette gave a monthly update of the Fallen Firefighters Memorial project. To date a little over \$100,000 has been raised through various sources over the past six plus years. Greater than 50% of that has been raised just in the last six to nine months since the Lt. Governor has been involved. Her involvement has had a significant impact on the success of the project. Just this past week a memorial committee meeting was held here at the Academy with a number of representatives from the committee in attendance. A number of issues were discussed. The committee is moving forward with processing of the 501(C)(3) IRS papers that was requested by the Lt. Governor last spring. Thanks to Neil Burrows who has been placed on the committee by the Firefighters' Association for his assistance in moving this process along. There are a number of fundraising efforts that the committee was told about underway. These are efforts that the Lt. Governor has been spearheading at her end. It is our understanding that a number of towns will be hosting local fundraisers efforts. These may be on hold until the committee has the 501(C)(3) designation, as obviously many people want to have some type of a tax deduction for their donation. There is a meeting scheduled next week with the Lt. Governor to talk about specifics as related to the budget. One concern he has is at the last meeting there was some effort to start selecting colors for the different types of bricks. He expressed concern because no one at the meeting had any experience in doing something like that. He recommended considering hiring a professional to do that. It now appears that the committee will be meeting on a more regular basis as the project moves forward.

Commissioner Stankye inquired if there was a tentative timetable as to a deadline for ordering bricks.

Mr. Morrissette stated that brick orders are open-ended probably even after the memorial is erected. The sale of bricks can serve as a continual fundraiser.

Commissioner Stankye inquired if there was a deadline for submitting the names of deceased firefighters that was requested by the Firefighters Association through the County Vice Presidents.

Mr. Morrissette stated that he was only recently made aware that the county vice presidents were requested to go back to the departments in their region and request line of duty death information from individual fire departments. The Association has been able to go back to the 1930s to come up with what they feel is a complete list, cross-checked with other lists, of firefighters who have died in the line of duty. The committee wants to go back as far as they can. He expressed another concern that the committee needs to establish a standard in terms of what qualifies as a line of duty death. A small sub-committee was formed to come up with a standard for line of duty deaths that will be recognized.

Commissioner Nicol inquired in what type of bank account the committee is depositing the memorial funds.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the only comment that was made was that there is now \$100,000 in the account so they have to open a second account at another bank. It appears that the money is just in a savings account that is bearing very little interest.

Commissioner Nicol requested that Mr. Morrisette bring this concern back to the committee.

Moving to item 5 b.) Mr. Morrisette stated that he just wanted to inquire whether Commissioners had any questions about the dismissal of one of the recruits from the last program. In the December Staff Report he reported about a recruit who broke into our administrative office space and changed the message on the Academy's video-message system. The dismissed recruit appealed his dismissal, so the Administrator convened an appeals' board and met with the individual and his attorney. Associate Attorney General Steve Sarnoski represented the Commission. In the end, the appeals' board upheld the Director of Training's dismissal order. Because the individual was dismissed without prejudice that doesn't prevent him from coming back to a future program to complete the training. As such, we view this event as a win-win situation that our policies related to conduct within the program were upheld. There are some issues that came to our attention as part of the appeal's process that we are now taking a closer look at. Mr. Piskura plans to have some discussions with the Career Chiefs regarding curfew time and to determine if they wish to continue to support a curfew time. In the end the fire department was satisfied with the actions of the Academy. The individual has made restitution for the damage that was caused and has also forwarded a letter of apology to the staff.

Moving to item 5 c.) Mr. Morrisette made reference to a letter from Ted Schroll, Secretary of the CT State Firefighters Association. He stated that Mr. Schroll contacted him about a month ago regarding the Association's effort to put forth a plan to request bond funds to make improvements at the eight regional fire schools. At that time Mr. Schroll had received a call from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) requesting additional information as to the proposal and request. He was asked whether the Commission supported the proposal. The State Fire Administrator indicated to Mr. Schroll that he would prefer to place this request as an agenda item for the Commission's next meeting. Mr. Morrisette indicated he had an opportunity to speak with the Budget Analyst at OPM, and notified him the issue was being placed on the Commission's January agenda.

*A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Stankye for the Commission to support Proposed Bill No. 6542, an act authorizing bond funding for a capital improvement program for the Regional Fire Schools.*

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that in reviewing the Bills that are before the Legislature and as the representative of the Firefighters' Association on this Commission, he indicated that the Firefighters' Association is very strongly behind uniting the regional schools in coming together. The regional schools are all in dire need of upgrades. He also noted that an individual request has been proposed for the Fairfield Regional Fire School. He stated that he had the opportunity to speak to someone from that area and pointed out to them that the regional schools had come together as a unified front and their proposal was probably contradictory to the overall effort. An individual from Fairfield contacted Representative McKinney who was the original sponsor of the bill strictly for Fairfield the Representative indicated that he was going to withdraw that bill.

Commissioner Stankye stated that he has also been in touch with a party from the Fairfield Fire Department and was told that that bill has been squelched. Now this is just one person's word he has not seen anything definite in writing. That was the result of a few people trying to do things the way they were done ten years ago and evidently this Representative was just blind sided. So on behalf of the regional schools it is still a united front for the proposal put together.

Commissioner Munkenbeck inquired if the total amount of funding requested for this effort is available or whether this is an open-ended bonding.

Commissioner Stankye stated that each regional school has put in for a specific amount of money.

Commissioner Munkenbeck inquired if that is what was represented in the five year budget projection for the regional schools that was distributed at the November Commission meeting.

Commissioner Stankye replied affirmatively and added that it was about \$25 million over five years.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired if raised Bill No. 6542 reflected this funding request. In fact, what the Commission is being asked to do, is to support Bill No. 6542 which is the motion on the floor.

Commissioner Nicol stated what concerns him about this proposal is its impact on the operation of the Academy. Where is the money coming from for this \$25 million funding request? Will we see additional funds provided or will we see funds taken away from some other programs? For the last three years the Fire Service has been trying to put through some very important bills, such as the Fire Service Training bill which would benefit the entire fire service including the regional schools. He stated, when it comes to a vote on whether to support this bill that he had not yet decided but he would like to hear more discussion on this matter.

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that he agreed with Commissioner Nicol. Unfortunately we got into this problem because the state lacks a coordinated approach with funding over the years. For years Connecticut's fire service has been trying to get money out of the infamous 2% insurance fund for training. He stated that he is very concerned that down the road the state will play silly games by literally starvation funding of these schools and cutting back on the Academy. He stated that he does not know whether the legislature is fully aware of what really needs to be done in firefighter training. It's obvious the regional schools are needed. We need the regional schools' support and they need ours. Perhaps this is something we have to look at not only as a Commission, but as the fire service in Connecticut.

Commissioner Maheu stated as he reads through the bill there is no dollar amount, it simply is a bill authorizing the bonding commissioner to go out and do that. He inquired isn't that kind of an open ended piece of legislation.

Mr. Morrissette stated that usually at the opening of the session projects requiring bonding or an appropriation don't have a dollar amount attached. As the proposal goes through the legislative process a fiscal note is attached.

Commissioner Maheu stated that he has the same concerns as Commissioner Munkenbeck. At times there has been a strained relation between the Commission's operation here at the Connecticut Fire

Academy and some of the regional fire schools. He stated that he fully understands the role and appreciates the importance of the regional schools.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that this organization the Commission and the regional schools have developed a better working relationship over the past few years that he knows of and that has exceeded expectations. He commended both organizations for doing that. If we look back five years ago we saw a list of bills that were from the regional fire schools subjecting the legislature to numerous bills and essentially nobody got anything. We found that probably the best bet would be to combine efforts and to press on. To that end, this is a pretty good start and he stated that he would not want to send the wrong message back to the organizations that are trying to do that.

Commissioner Stankye stated that he agreed with Vice Chairman Kowalski that over the past year this Commission has formed a partnership with the regional schools. It has been stated in this room that the Commission does not teach FF-I and FF-II any more at the Academy. This task has to fall onto the regional fire schools who are doing a commendable job with the poor facilities that they have. The regional schools have decided to go on a united front and he feels that the Commission should continue to back that partnership and this could also work in reverse. When the Commission is seeking funding it will get the backing of regional schools so that the fire service is going with a united front. So with a united front we stand a much better chance with all of us going together. The eight regional schools got together and submitted their budget figures. They understand that everybody has to take a turn and that's why they proposed a five-year plan. Once this goes through this Academy then we should start developing a plan and get the backing of the regional schools to go forward as a united front.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called on staff members for their comments.

Mr. Piskura stated that one of the things that occurs to him is that when you look around this building, we're going on seven years old and this building looks like it's new. This is a direct credit to the facilities people and to the contractors that they work with to maintain this facility. When you look around at the varying levels of the state-of-the-state of the regional schools they're woefully different than here at the Academy. He stated that he would personally attribute that to a lack of day-to-day maintenance, they just don't have the funding for that. One of the benefits of being a state agency is that we have a regular process to follow to obtain operating funds. All that he is familiar with in this bill is capital funding for construction. To invest multi-millions of dollars into concrete and mortar and then not support the heat, electricity and maintenance of the same would do a terrible disservice to the regional schools. That needs to be a companion piece to this proposal so that they have adequate funding to maintain a new facility in the way that it should. He expressed concern that the regional schools have adequate operating funds to maintain a facility once it is renovated or constructed new. On a global perspective the Commission is responsible for the status of statewide fire training and public education. The State Fire Administrator is statutorily empowered to make sure that those obligations are carried forth. As such, the Academy staff has short-term plans, ten-year plans and are constantly in conversation internally about how we can best deliver what the Connecticut fire service community might want or perceive wanting in the future. He stated that he would be curious on how the regional schools see that dovetail into the Academy's plans. As an example, one of the concerns in the Training Division is that we need to get our staff out in the field more. One of the ways to do that would be to have field offices. If these capital improvement projects could accommodate a State Commission on Fire Prevention and Control office that might be a discussion item that would help. He stated that he did not know how concrete these plans were because he was not involved with the

conversations. This would help get staff out in the field and would decentralize some of the activities of the Academy and that would put the Commission out in the regions where training is occurring. This may also have a double benefit. One area that comes to mind for example are those schools where there isn't a human presence for most of time unless there is training occurring. Now there could be a human presence and that person could provide access to vendors, customers, etc. He stated that he was not sure these areas were considered. When you look at plans and on how to best serve the Connecticut fire service community. Now if they are discounted that's fine, but he stated that he is not aware that those types of conversations took place. In many cases the Academy's plans have been internal to this building and may need to be shared on a global aspect. From a public policy standpoint he thinks that this body should be involved in the development of those various plans. How will these plans best benefit the local firefighter in the areas that the regional schools and the Commission serve. A lot of consideration needs to be done into what is the future of the Connecticut fire service and the role of training and education and let's build what's best for the firefighter.

Mr. Morrissette recapped a few items of personal concern to him that deal with points that other Commission members have made and that essentially deals with the issue of operations and the operational expenditures that are necessary to maintain not only facilities but programs. The Commission and Academy's largest handicap is not facilities or equipment related rather appropriate funding to deliver training programs. Not only have we had to raise tuitions over the years to adjust salary increases for part-time instructors and other expenses but the cost of doing business. The regional fire schools have had to do the same. They on one hand enjoy some benefits that we don't have an opportunity to enjoy. We are subject to all sorts of regulations and oversight. We deal with auditors on a regular basis. We deal with the requirement that we have to pay a fringe benefit for each and every hour that our instructors teach and that increases expenses on an hourly rate by 41%. So again, maybe both sides have some benefits but it comes down to that there's really no current master plan for fire service training in the State of Connecticut. Earlier in the this discussion it was eluded to a partnership that has seen some improved relations over the past several years and he thinks that's true. It should be made clear that the Commission was not involved in any of the internal discussions of the regional fire schools. A lot of the credit goes to them for getting together. Many representatives of schools I believe have an unfounded concern that this entity is trying to take them over. That has never been our intent. Our intent solely rests on trying to provide the best training and education to Connecticut's fire service. He stated that there is some public policy issues that were raised that should be of concern to all of us, regional schools included. He stated we see a great need for the existence of a strong regional fire school system within Connecticut. At the regional schools' request we were not involved at all in the plan before us, we respected that position. We see a need to support improvements and enhancements, but exactly how that takes place from an administrative standpoint, more broad discussions need to occur. We want to be a good model and hopefully be able to address some of these issues.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that he had serious reservations about the Commission as a body supporting this legislation only because he thinks more information is required. As has already been expressed, there are no delineations between the regional schools and this facility. He recommends that the Commission should not actively oppose the legislation but should not support it at this time until more information is received. He stated that the Commission should make it clear to the regional schools that it is not that we don't want to see them be able to improve their facilities. The Commission could be a much better and stronger ally if we had a cooperatively developed master plan.

Commissioner Nicol stated that this is a capital plan but it does not include operating expenses. There will certainly be a need for additional operating expenses and again that will be another separate request that could possibly impact current operations. We were an outside party to the plan. We do not have control over the regional schools, we're a separate entity. We can take a no comment position. As a Commission, we don't have to be involved in direct support, but not to oppose it either.

Commissioner Vendetta stated many of the proposed bills that affect the fire service are all going to one point, the legislature. The same questions that are being raised here are going to be raised there and before any funding of bills are pushed forward those questions are going to have to be answered.

Vice Chairman Kowalski invited Mr. Hawkins who is representing the regional schools to comment.

Mr. Hawkins stated that the regional schools started meeting about one year and a half ago. They did that because there's been such a fractional effort to get funding for the regional schools, we decided there was strength in numbers. To date representatives from the various regional schools have met eight times and additionally two meetings were held with the Executive Board of the Firefighters Association. We gravitated towards that organization because statutorily that's where our money comes from. As was stated today, the Commission doesn't have direct control over the regional schools which he stated he did not necessarily agree with. We are certainly not trying to exclude this body from having input into how we do things. The emphasis behind this effort was that the Eastern CT Fire Schools is on leased property and that lease expires in June, 2005. The Derby School is sitting on a piece of real estate that's questionable due to hazardous waste dumping prior to them getting on that facility and the Middletown school is threatened by being taken over by eminent domain for reconstruction of highway ramp. As mentioned earlier in the discussion, absolutely if you are going to have a capital project such as this there has to be some operational money that comes along with it. One of the things that I intended to let everyone know here today is that the other shoe is going to drop and we've already been working on that issue. We elected not to try to incorporate our operating budget with the capital budget because we did not want to confuse the issues any further than they are. The regional schools have a meeting for February 21 to sit down and try to decide what plan they will put together to seek that additional funding. The other issue as far as coordination, a long-term strategic plan was drafted and signed off by this group back in 1995/96. That plan clearly delineated responsibilities and stated that the FF-I and FF-II entry level fire service programs belong in the regional schools and advance training and the recruit class belongs at the Academy. He stated that he didn't think there was any dissention amongst any of the directors of regional schools with that direction and he thinks that makes a lot of sense. He stated that the regional schools would welcome the opportunity to have regular meetings with the Fire Academy staff. The regional schools have a lot of firefighters they are training right now and they deserve to have a facility. The goal right now is to have a facility on line so they don't have to close their doors.

Commissioner Munkenbeck inquired as part of the regional schools' planning did they come up with a standard regional school blue print.

Mr. Hawkins replied that this issue was discussed at length. One of their intentions is since the Eastern CT Regional School was one of the first schools actually seeking engineering and architectural services that they put together a plan for a water collection system. It will be made clear to that engineer that this plan will also be used and shared with other regional schools. It is their intention to try to do that as much as is possible. Obviously the classroom and administrative section is going to

be somewhat unique to each school. They're all unique operations, but as far as a burn building, water collection system and training tower he obviously agrees it would be money well spent to get a design with an understanding between the architect and the engineer that that design will be utilized at other locations.

Vice Chairman Kowalski he stated that it appears based on discussions here today that even though the regional schools have done a substantial amount of homework for this bill presentation the Commission still needs to be brought up to speed officially on this document. There is a motion on the floor, however; he asked for a motion to table the motion for this month. He then asked to initiate a review by a sub-committee of three Commissioners to come back next month to update the Commission on exactly how the operational entities will be included in the capital expenditure for this project.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that he agrees to table this motion with one exception as you all know this bill could come up for public hearing within the next two weeks. This body will not meet again until possibly after that public hearing. He strongly suggested that the sub-committee meet within the next week. At which point, if the sub-committee is satisfied they can speak for the body and get word out to everyone else as to how it went so we can be represented at least in a letter if not orally in a testimony at the public hearing. Obviously if we chose not to support we would not be at the public hearing speaking against.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated clearly if we do that then that's understandable. The sub-committee would have to meet within the next week. We would need something from the entire Commission to set objectives for support or denial of this bill for the three individuals who will have to make that decision.

Commissioner Nicol stated that he understands but time is not on the Commission's side to spend additional time on this matter even with a sub-committee. He stated that he personally thinks that this is a decision that this whole body could participate in a vote rather than turning that decision over to a sub-committee that could down the road affect the future of the Commission and the Academy. As a representative of the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association, he stated that he would personally prefer to vote as a Commissioner and not have a three-member sub-committee vote on this issue.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated for informational purposes only that a number of the Commissioners represent different organizations that makeup the fire service and all of those organizations are members of the Joint Council. It is his understanding that the Joint Council has already agreed and brought forth a package of five bills that they're jointly supporting and the bonding issue for the regional schools is one of those bills.

Mr. Morrissette stated that his understanding is the Joint Council has been made aware of the proposal, however they only plan to formally endorse one or two issues. It appears from preliminary discussions the Fire Service Training Bill that would reimburse all departments for training, will end up being the primary bill to support. A final decision will be made at the Council's next meeting.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked for the original motion to be read.



The Executive Secretary read the motion on the table as follows:

*A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Stankye for the Commission to support Proposed Bill No. 6542, an act authorizing bond funding for a capital improvement program for the Regional Fire Schools.*

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked Commissioners in favor of the motion on the table to signify their vote by raising their hands .

Commissioners Maheu, Mullen, Stankye and Wilkinson voted in favor of the motion.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked Commissioners opposing the motion on the table to signify their vote by raising their hands.

Commissioners Haber, Milewski, Munkenbeck, Nicol and Vendetta voted against the motion.

Commissioner Vendetta stated that a letter should be sent to Mr. Schroll to respond to his request for support of Proposed Bill No. 6542. He suggested that the Commission's response outline what the concerns were for defeating the motion so that there is no misunderstanding that the Commission is not saying it is not in support of the regional school system.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that the understanding he received from the discussion is to generate a letter outlining the Commission's concerns and issues with this capital expenditure and to also make it clear that we are not actively opposing it and would like to have this stated in the letter.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if anyone would like to serve on the sub-committee to review the work of the regional schools and the Commission. He added that he would like to have the staff represented on this sub-committee.

*A MOTION was made by Commissioner Vendetta and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to form a sub-committee . Motion carried.*

Commissioner Stankye inquired what are the questions the Commission wants asked of the regional schools.

Mr. Morrisette stated that we could try to summarize questions that came to the floor today from the minutes of this meeting and come up with a list of questions.

Commissioner Stankye stated that he agreed but that he was throwing out the issue again in case there was anybody who did not raise any questions that wanted some answers.

Mr. Morrisette inquired if there was any interest to try to schedule something with the consortium of regional fire schools for the first meeting of the sub-committee or whether the sub-committee should meet alone.

Commissioner Stankye stated that the sub-committee should meet with the school representatives because time is of the essence.

Commissioner Vendetta inquired if it would be possible to obtain a copy of the 1995 document for the sub-committee to review prior to the meeting.

Mr. Hawkins stated that he would forward a copy of the document to Mr. Morrissette.

Commissioner Nicol stated that one of the issues that did not surface today is that the legislators will probably be concerned about the location of the regional schools, the number of programs that they offer and the number of contact hours of instructions, vs. the fire service population that they serve. These are the kind of issues that should be included in the sub-committee discussions and there may be others.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called on any Commissioners who would like to serve on this sub-committee.

Mr. Morrissette noted that this would probably be an evening meeting.

Commissioners' Maheu, Stankye, Kowalski and Mr. Morrissette will serve on the sub-committee.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that any relevant correspondence should be prepared and distributed to the sub-committee as quickly as possible.

Mr. Morrissette stated that there was a legislative meeting of the Firefighters Association scheduled for Thursday of this week. He stated that he plans to attend that meeting to provide feedback on this issue for those in attendance there.

Commissioner Maheu stated that the initial scope for this sub-committee should be to review the funding and the impact. This Commission should look at long range facilitating between the regional schools and the Commission. He stated that he is hoping that this will be just the beginning of long range planning to establish some written guidelines as to how the Commission will function in conjunction with the regional schools.

Mr. Hawkins stated that he believes that the regional school directors would be in favor of such a document. One of the items on the agenda for the February 21 meeting of the regional school directors is to discuss the possibility of going back to the Firefighters Association to request that a committee be appointed to review fire training in the state. In addition, a suggestion will be made that the committee should be populated by representative from each of the regional schools, delegates from the Connecticut Firefighters Association and based what was discussed here today, there should also be some representation from this group. A strategic plan should be developed to represent all of the training needs for the fire service for the State of Connecticut.

Moving to item 5 d.) Mr. Morrissette gave a legislative update. He made reference to the fire service training bill to implement the recommendation of the Task Force to study firefighter training which dates back to 1995, a few bills in relation to funding for thermal imaging cameras and some bills that the Fire Marshals' Association is tracking very closely.

Commissioner Vendetta gave an overview of proposed bills to repeal last year's legislation making it legal to purchase sparklers. He also spoke about an enabling act to allow municipalities to adopt ordinances specific to require residential sprinklers in new one and two story buildings.

Mr. Morrissette stated that he was appraised this morning that there would be a fire service issue raised within the Governor's budget address next week.

Mr. Morrissette stated that he would entertain questions on any of the proposed bills.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the status of the thermal imaging camera project.

Mr. Morrissette gave an overview of a hearing held about three weeks ago with a number of legislators who were cosponsoring the bill and looking for additional sponsors. This is a follow-up from last year's initiative that ended up passing as LOCIP funding. Quite frankly this made a number of legislators and fire departments unhappy. A grass roots effort began on the part of several fire chiefs in the southeast part of the state as well as legislators from that area. There are two or three different drafts of ways in which the program could be implemented. It appears now that the Administration is supporting somewhere between three to five million dollars for the purchase of devices whether or not a town already has one. There's been discussion about providing a reimbursement to municipalities that already have devices. It appears that they want to create as few administrative obstacles as possible. There was discussion about providing additional cameras for population increments of 25,000 and greater.

Mr. Morrissette asked Mr. Scarpino if he wished to address the Commission.

Mr. Scarpino stated they had gotten an increase in the volunteer fire assistance monies that are available to towns with populations of less than 10,000. There is always the money in the Fire Act that is sitting out there and nobody knows when that money will be distributed. Does anybody know whether the State Emergency Management will be involved in the distribution of money, or is it strictly FEMA?

Mr. Piskura stated that FEMA was currently in the process setting procedures and the key thing for anybody who is interested in that grant money is it has to be asked for, received and distributed prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that they are making it easier this time by having an on-line application.

Vice Chairman Kowalski pointed out that any of the legislative issues that are supported by the Joint Council and the organizations can be posted on the List Serve by the Commission.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if anyone had seen any effect as a result of the new Administration and the appointment of a new FEMA Director.

Mr. Morrissette stated that there's been a little bit of information on some of the List Serves that Mr. Piskura subscribes to as a State Director of Training. The only thing we've heard to date is that the

new Director does not have any emergency services experience but he is thought to be a top notch Administrator.

Mr. Piskura stated that the new Director might not have anything to do with the agencies he is the head of. Former Director James Lee Witt was a hands on manager.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired about the status and impact of the free lancing policy.

Mr. Morrissette stated that to date it has not been disseminated to the adjunct instructors. The Training Division has been doing a comprehensive overhaul of the Connecticut Fire Academy's operations manual and that is nearing completion. When that is done there will be a meeting with all the instructors to review the entire document and to have everybody sign off as receiving and complying with it.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired about a target date for the release of this document.

Mr. Piskura replied that he anticipated completion before July.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired about the Limited Access Highway account.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the third quarter allotment has been expended in full and we're just into the third quarter, we anticipate a deficit in that account. He stated that he did not know if this was a factor of more fire department taking advantage of the benefit or it's due to weather conditions causing more incidents. OPM has been alerted of the anticipated deficit. As additional information, there are two bills that propose reimbursing fire departments for responses to rest areas on limited access highways. We are not quite sure exactly how this dovetails with what we do.

A discussion period followed.

Mr. Morrissette made reference to a letter from OPM included in the Commission package regarding reinforcement of the hiring freeze. We were successful in bringing Pam Cooney on board because a bona fide offer was given to her prior to the letter from OPM. Jim Birmingham has offered to defer his retirement until the end of March at which time he will formally retire.

Mr. Morrissette stated that also included in the Commission package was a map overview of communities to which referrals have been made with the 800-FIRE LINE Program.

Mr. Morrissette reported having been alerted by somebody of a newspaper article about Bradley Airport. Within the article there was mention made that the Airport Administration would like to move the Air Museum and the Fire Academy. He stated that's the first time he had heard this and that he would try to follow up on this story.

Mr. Morrissette reported on the upcoming re-accreditation site visit scheduled for February 8 and 9 by the Pro Board and invited Commissioners to attend.

Mr. Piechota gave an overview of work being done to update the certification regulations. Some months ago the Commission approved a number of proposed changes. Those changes will be

incorporated into regulation adoption process that will go through the legislative public hearing, etc. But in the meantime to give the fire service a heads up we published the document you approved on our Web page for people to get a feeling for what was happening. In the last two weeks we've received at least two complaints regarding one of the proposed changes that dealt with the issuance and lapse of certificate section. The complaints accused the Commission of trying to do away with the volunteer fire service. The Commission's current regulations state that an individual must be a member of a fire department to be certified at any level. The proposed regulation section states that training can be completed but if the person does not become a member or employed by a fire department, then their certificate of eligibility is only good for a period of time. He stated that he did not know where the misconception came from because it is not in the regulation and it is not the intent of the staff or the Commission. The State Fire Administrator has replied to the email message and Mr. Piechota and Piskura have both replied to the voice messages.

A discussion period followed.

Mr. Piskura reported that Commissioner Wilkinson had some good news from his community that he might want to share with everyone.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that on behalf of his Fire Chief Lou LaVecchia he was very happy to announce that the Milford Fire Department has been rated an ISO Class 1 fire department effective February 1.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the status of the 800 FIRE LINE PSAs and how much longer they would be aired.

Mr. Morrissette stated originally the PSAs were scheduled to stop airing on December 31 but it appears they are still appearing on Channel 30. The FIRE LINE continues to receive calls. Mr. Morrissette reported on future activities planned for the FIRE LINE program.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if the PSA was being made available as a public service to communities and if there was a cost involved.

Mr. Morrissette stated that there is no cost from Channel 30 to air the PSAs. The cable companies are always looking for something to put on cable access. A couple of radio stations have also indicated that they would air the PSA if we send them a copy.

A discussion period followed.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:36 a.m.