

Connecticut State Firefighters Association

Education Committee

Meeting minutes

April 22, 2010

Wethersfield Fire Department

Company #3, Kelleher Court

The meeting was called to order at 19:05 with the following representatives present:

Burrville Regional Fire School - Tom Osborne
Eastern Connecticut Fire School – Al Hawkins
Fairfield Regional Fire School - Chris Tracy
Hartford County Regional Fire School – Chet Haber
Stamford Regional Fire School – Tony Conte
Valley Fire Chiefs’ Regional Fire School - James Gies, James Vincent
Wolcott State Fire School - Steve Veneziano, Paul Perrotti, Ken Hanks
Connecticut Fire Academy - Tom McGowan
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control – Rich Nicol
Connecticut State Firefighters Association - Ted Schroll, Charles Stankye, Jr., Thomas Murphy
Guests: D.P.W. - Donald Ouillette
Danbury Fire Department – T.J. Wiedl

No one was present representing the Middlesex County Fire School or the New Haven Fire Academy.

Minutes of the March meeting were distributed for review..

Motion was made by Chris Tracy second by Steve Veneziano to accept the March minutes as presented. Motion carried.

1. Status of properties acquisitions

Eastern Connecticut Fire School - Don Ouillette reported that D.P.W. has hired a consultant to complete a Phase 1 environmental assessment. He also reported that drain oil was discovered on the site by his staff during the property walkthrough. After the Phase 1 assessment is complete DPW staff will be ready to meet with the attorney for the estate to negotiate a purchase price.

There is no action on the Burrville lease agreement.

2. Other projects status

New Haven Regional Fire Academy - Don reported that site work at the facility began last month. Excavation found a building foundation on the parcel across from the administrative building, near the parking lot.

Hartford County Regional Fire School - Don reported that invitations to bid are scheduled to be sent out tomorrow. A site drainage evaluation will need to be completed at the C.F.A. site.

Chris Tracy pointed out that a meeting between Commissioner Curtis and Genuario was mentioned in the minutes of the March meeting. That meeting was scheduled to take place on March 26. There was no additional information available about the subject meeting.

3. Hazardous Materials / WMD training updates

Director of Certification, Tom McGowan addressed the committee about the new Connecticut Fire Academy training program on Hazardous Materials Awareness, Operational and Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The program was recently introduced at a Train the Trainer at the Connecticut Fire Academy. Three issues were raised:

1. The use of the Emergency Response Guide during skills evaluations.

The book was introduced into practical skills evaluations. It was not deemed necessary to provide the book for the written examination.

2. Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus face-piece doffing. Radiation exposure indicates letting air flow while doffing. European experts also indicate the appropriate means for doffing is to allow free flow of air.

3. Smart Triage System. The applicability of the Glasgow Trauma Scale to candidates that were not medically trained has been questioned.

The information provided for evidence preservation and collection was also discussed. This information is consistent with requirements of NFPA 472 and would need to be evaluated for the necessary amount of detail based upon the audience in the class. Classes delivered to law enforcement personnel should provide more information on handling evidence and should probably be delivered by instructors that are quite familiar with collection, preservation and custody issues.

Steve Veneziano noted that the face-piece doffing was not pictured in any of the four textbooks that are being used to deliver the program. He also questioned how a student could pass the testing module on Operational and fail the testing module for Awareness.

Tom pointed out that test results for Awareness evaluation showed the areas most often lacking were questions on Shipping Papers, Material Safety Data Sheets, NFPA 704 product labeling and questions on use of the Emergency Guide Book.

There was a discussion about the development of testing question for evaluating performance. Chris Tracy felt that all of the questions developed by Ben Hurst are based upon earlier reference materials. Rich Nicol felt that the fire service has significant participation in the process of developing and validating test questions. Steve Veneziano felt that core competencies type training for Hazardous Materials would be more appropriate for the Firefighter I level student. Jim Gies expressed that he felt that there is far too much hazardous materials training introduced in the Firefighter I program.

Tom pointed out the discussion about the introduction of the Hazardous Materials / WMD certification program had started at the Education Committee meeting. It was next addressed by the Career Fire Chiefs and finally decided by the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. He also indicated that all regional fire schools are having some problems with the course deliveries.

Chris Tracy suggested that the regional fire schools encourage their instructors that are delivering the Haz Mat program to develop a network with other regional fire school instructors. He felt that there was significant expertise that we should share between the regional schools.

Tom also addressed the special accommodations that could be offered to assist with the testing of students that have identified learning issues. Tom can direct the extension of time allowed for the exam, can direct that the exam be administered in a private room setting and can direct that a percentage of the written exam questions could be read to the student. The reading could be offered for 100 of 140 questions.

Tom also offered that in the evaluation of Firefighter I skills that some skills have universally tested poorly recently. Those include ropes and knots, ladders and donning and doffing of SCBA.

Concern was raised that this could be a result of the additional time spent on Hazardous Materials / WMD training. The basic firefighting skills could be suffering because of the limited time to present all of the information included in the new program.

4. Legislative update

Ted Schroll reported on reductions in the basic firefighter training funds. Those training funds are currently funded at \$505 k, this is being proposed to be reduced to \$353 k next year and to \$210 k the year after. He also pointed out that the regional fire schools operating budgets are forecast to remain at the 2006-07 level for the next two years.

Ted also reported that \$2 million out of the \$28 million that had been previously authorized for the regional fire school capital project has been removed.

The bill proposed by the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association to limit the indemnification for fire service instructors passed the senate on consent without a vote.

The bill dealing with the regional fire school designation is not progressing well. An amendment was attached to add the Danbury school. The bill was subsequently passed by for action. Ted thinks that the amendment created a problem for the bill.

Rich Nicol asked about the regional dispatch center bill. That bill is directing that a composite population of 40,000 would be necessary in order for a dispatch center to be regarded as regional. Cities with a population of \$40,000 or greater would still be eligible for funding.

Rumor is that there will be a bond commission meeting in June, probably at the customary schedule of the last Friday. This could be the last bond commission meeting of Governor Rell's term.

The legislative session ends on May 5th.

5. Other items from membership

Al Hawkins introduced a draft letter to the Governor for discussion. The general feeling was that the letter should get to the point earlier. Chris Tracy suggested the development of a letterhead that includes the names of all of the regional schools so that the reader would have a better idea as to the impact and numbers involved.

6. Next meeting date

The next meeting will be on May 27, 2010 at Wethersfield Company #3 at 19:00.

Motion by Chris Tracy second by Gies to adjourn.

Submitted by Al Hawkins