



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



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MINUTES OF THE APRIL 29, 2009 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Vice Chairman Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Blaschik, Mitchell, Murphy, Nelson, Nicol, Stankye, Walsh and Wilkinson.

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

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called on guests to provide self introductions.

Mr. Morrissette said Mark Salafia from the staff is present.

State Fire Administrator Morrissette said we had two employees to be recognized this morning for their years of dedicated service to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control. He said this morning he would like to recognize Program Manager Mark Salafia who has achieved five years of service with the agency. He presented Mr. Salafia with a certificate of appreciation for five years of loyal and conscientious service to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control.

Mr. Salafia remarked that it's been a pleasure and it was important for him to stay in the fire service and thanked the Commission. He said he hopes to continue on.

Mr. Morrissette also said the other employee to be recognized for 15 years of service is our Plant Facility Engineer Christopher Johnston. Unfortunately he's having surgery next week so he was unable to attend the meeting today but we will recognize him at a future meeting.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the March 31, 2009 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2009 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Report March 15, 2009 – April 14, 2009.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Brady to approve the staff report for the period of March 15, 2009 – April 14, 2009. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrissette provided a summary of the Governor’s staff meeting that was held last Thursday, May 23rd. He said it was reported at that time that the deficit for the current fiscal year is at \$1.056 billion. He said we’ve gone through several deficit mitigation plans thus far. He said there has been some success in negotiations with the unions in terms of concessions and he thinks they were in the process of voting upon those which would provide significant savings predominantly in the next biennium. He said there would be some savings in the current fiscal year although it’s fairly minimal. He said there is a retirement incentive program being offered, it’s very unlikely that if anyone elects to retire that their position would be refilled. He also said negotiations are ongoing this week and next in terms of the Biennium as well as the current fiscal year deficit issues. He said it’s been reported month after month that everything is on the table and there has been renewed discussions about consolidation and mergers so there is a concern there. He also said it was reported there have been some give backs of agency vehicles over the last year and they are going to be cutting even further. He said we’ve only returned one vehicle in the past couple of years being able to justify what we do. Agencies were directed not to spend any money for the remainder of the fiscal year but in our business it’s impossible unless we were to stop delivery of agency services. Mr. Morrissette also reported that we received approval to replace the agency phone system. He said it will probably be another two weeks before the actual system is installed.

Mr. Morrissette also reported regarding staffing. He said Commissioners may recall that we had six people who were classified as retire rehire. Several of them had inquired about the feasibility of continuing to work for the agency as volunteers. We received clarification that the individuals cannot volunteer and while there are statutes which allow for volunteer service, they are citing some concerns with FLSA issues. Mr. Morrissette remarked that we’ll discuss the Personal Services Reductions a little later in the meeting under new business but the agency has been mandated to develop a 5%, 7% and 10% budget reductions in that account.

Commissioner Nicol asked if we actually have anyone opting to take the early retirement.

Mr. Morrissette said he had sent an email to the staff asking them to let him know and he heard from one person who had some questions. Also, one of our fiscal administrative personnel who is now a DAS SmART employee has indicated his interest should SEBAC approves the plan. Mr. Morrissette indicated that he already had discussions with DAS SmART letting them know so they can be ready to enact a plan to provide the services which will change the way we do business. Mr. Morrissette said he’s asked the individual to provide a detailed overview of his job responsibilities which DAS and the agency will review.

Commissioner Nicol asked if they will capture the vacant positions if people take the early retirement package or will they leave them vacant.

Mr. Morrissette said he believes they would take them immediately.

Commissioner Nicol also asked if there would be a bid process for the telephone system.

Mr. Morrissette said we've already gone through that process and DOIT solicited three bids and vendor presentations. The lowest bidder selected is Sonitrol which handles NEC equipment.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Nicol reported that the Education Committee met last Thursday. He said the Willimantic site at the Rogers property is no longer being pursued however the property where the school is currently located is now going to be pursued by the Committee and they are in the process of notifying the probate court that there is interest to purchase that property. There doesn't seem to be any movement on the Beacon Falls site and Commissioner Stankye had mentioned at the meeting that he's working with Senator Crisco to get movement on that. Commissioner Nicol said he had reported at the last Commission meeting that the New Haven School project was going out to bid end of March but that did not occur. He said he's not sure what the problem is and he hopes it's a delay in document preparation but they were told it was going to the bid room the day they met with DPW Commissioner and staff several weeks ago. He also reported that a new estimate was prepared for the Hartford School with the relocation of the Burn building and there would need to be follow up meetings. The time scheduled for the Fairfield and Burrville Schools may need to be moved out because there were a couple of areas that they may have to get into particularly with the Fairfield School and possibly some property reviews that have to be done for the Burrville School. He said they weren't given a lot of details because Project Manager Don Ouillette was not in attendance at the meeting. Commissioner Nicol said the Committee in general felt a lot of disappointment with the New Haven School bid process not moving forward and they talked about sending a letter to DPW Commissioner Curtis and Chairman Hawkins was going to follow up on that. He also said Ted Schroll had some comments relating to the restoration of the Firefighter Training funds and asked Mr. Morrissette if he would be discussing it later in the meeting.

Mr. Morrissette said there is communication that Chairman Hawkins prepared which he has copies to distribute today.

Commissioner Nicol said he received a copy of the document Mr. Hawkins had released at the meeting and sent to Legislators. He said basically it talks about the change in cost of delivery for FF1 going back into the nineties and bringing up to current date costs which have drastically change over the years. He said Mr. Schroll also reported that there was some indication that the Legislators were going to restore \$550,000 of the Training money and \$100,000 in the Supplemental grant program. He also said in the budget for 2012 there is no Bond money for the Regional Schools Capital projects and there was no money planned for 2011 and five million that was proposed for 2012 was swept from the budget. He said he's not sure what will happen and asked Mr. Morrissette if he had any update on that.

Mr. Morrissette replied that it will be a part of the budget negotiations.

Commissioner Nicol also reported that there will most likely be some cuts in the agency's Extension and Auxiliary accounts and asked Mr. Morrissette to comment.

Mr. Morrissette said the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee has proposed that \$250,000 be swept; \$200,000 from the Extension account and \$50,000 from the Auxiliary account which is more than he had hoped would be taken. He said we did communicate with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) who is negotiating this week and next week. It's OPM's intent to recommend that only \$75,000 from the Extension and \$25,000 from the Auxiliary accounts be swept predominantly citing potential cash flow problems for the agency which is a real concern depending on receivables. Mr. Morrissette said the other thing which he wasn't all that comfortable with is OPM was using the potential to cause staff layoffs due to the fact we are paying three full time staff members from those accounts. He said when he had prepared all the documentation he identified, at least for the current fiscal year, what our salary and benefit obligations were for those three people.

Commissioner Nicol added that Mr. Schroll reported that the CPR/AED Bill that had been proposed in the Legislature is still alive however Mr. Schroll said he's working to try to kill that Bill and asked for a letter from the Training group to support that process. The next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for May 28th.

There was a brief discussion on the CPR/AED Bill.

Moving to item 4c.) FY09 Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrissette said there is not a lot new to update however a few fire companies contacted us after the last Commission meeting. The big concern is that there is still \$65,000 remaining in vouchers that need to be spent so we're encouraging people to spend it as soon as possible because it could be swept if its sitting there.

Moving to item 4d.) Entry-Level Training Reimbursement Update – Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the Entry-Level Training Reimbursement program that after the last meeting we made some additional payouts. He said we made payments to everyone that had been certified to date. He said there has been some in the last couple of weeks and he's aware Waterbury had a Recruit class. There is a lot of testing going on so there is a small amount of money that still remains but we do expect to pay that out when certification is achieved. He said we'll continue to make payments in order of certification.

Moving to item 4e.) 2009 Legislative Session Update – Mr. Morrissette said we've provided the latest legislative tracking chart from Ted Schroll. He said he wanted to report on our discussions regarding the proposal for the Commission's enabling Legislation to be amended to include future approval of Regional Fire Schools. He said that information was submitted to Representative Godfrey's office and he heard back from the Representative's Aide yesterday who indicated that Rep. Godfrey is meeting with the leadership to figure out a way to tack this language on to some Bill. He said it may go as we presented it or they may come up with something different and he's hoping today he'll get to the Capitol as part of fire service day and see Representative Godfrey.

He also said he's aware Mr. Schroll had a discussion with Chief Herald from Danbury yesterday encouraging him to go up to the Capitol and meet with Representative Godfrey. Mr. Morrissette also added that he's heard that there is interest from other parts of the state looking for Regional Fire school designation. He said the Education Committee probably needs to get together over the next six months and develop specific criteria that the Commission can utilize when receiving requests for Regional Fire School status.

Vice Chairman Kowalski reported regarding legislation that the fire marshal and chiefs novelty lighter Bill is essentially dead. He also said the smoke detector Bill which was proposed in partnership with the Chiefs Association is back on the Floor waiting for a vote. He also said Bill 1009 which has to do with fire prevention code that they are trying to get adopted will affect changing 38 different statutes if adopted. He said that Bill is also sitting on the Floor waiting for a vote and they hope it will go through as it is an important piece of legislation for the Chiefs and fire marshal's office. He said it has to do with a lot of the operations going in and out of buildings. A public hearing is scheduled for May 26th.

Moving to item 4f.) New England Disaster Training Center Update – Mr. Morrissette said at a future meeting we will invite a representative from the Military Department to conduct a presentation on the larger scope of this initiative. He asked Director of Training Piskura to provide a brief update on the project.

Mr. Piskura said since the last Commission meeting we've brought a group of military personnel down to look over some surplus passenger cars located in New Haven and we selected three cars. The spot where they are going can only accommodate two at present so we're trying to put a third car into the spot at Camp Hartell. Other than that we're looking at the next two months where they will be pursuing the improvements to our facilities ie, classrooms, commission room in regards to AV upgrades. He said they are going to handle the purchases and install. He also said we're still looking for a railroad chemical tanker which is typically privately owned so if any Commissioner has any information on where to get one to let him know. He said we'll begin to see things happening at the site in July.

Moving to item 5a.) Personal Service Proposed Reductions – Mr. Morrissette circulated a document with the agency's proposed personal services reductions for FY2010 and FY2011. He said the document was due for submittal two or three weeks ago however because of the concession negotiations with the bargaining units they put it off until last Friday and then again until late this week. He said our targets are 5%, amounting to \$87,621.05; 7% amounting to \$122,669.47 and 10% which amounts to \$175,242.10 in the FY 2010 and an increase to \$88,927.30, \$124,498.22 and \$177,854.60 for FY 2011. He said the scenario we presented encompasses the current vacant General Trade Worker position, with the individual on a leave of absence, not being refilled and the remainder of the reduction from our part time salary account. This would impact the number of subsidized training and certification services offered. He said there was a committee that met last summer and discussed looking at employee compensation and other issues and at that time we talked about prep time, mileage reimbursement and a number of related issues. He said we may not be able to serve each community like we currently do. He

asked for the Commission's approval to submit the document as proposed today. He asked Commissioners if they had any questions.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to adopt the proposal prepared by the State Fire Administrator. Motion carried.

A brief discussion took place.

Moving to item 5b.) IFSAC Site Visit – Mr. McGowan reported for the Commission's knowledge that he received an email from Clayton Moore who is the equal to Fred Piechota at IFSAC and they have set aside the early part of November to make a reaccreditation site visit to the Commission which is on a five year schedule. We just went through this with the ProBoard about a year and a half ago. He said we're working diligently on the paperwork to get all the applications in and meet all their requirements. He said he'll keep the Commission informed as we move along.

Commissioner Nicol asked how many programs the Commission has registered with IFSAC.

Mr. McGowan replied with IFSAC right now it's eight but his proposal is to move up and make equal so that what we do with ProBoard we would do with IFSAC which would be 25 to 27.

Mr. Morrisette added that IFSAC's rules aren't as flexible to add levels so they have to do it during accreditation site visits rather than administratively like the ProBoard does.

Moving to item 5c.) NVFC position regarding minimum standards training for volunteers – Mr. Piskura said this is an action that the National Volunteer Fire Council took to promote the ability of volunteer fire departments through the Chiefs minimum training standards according to the NFPA. He said they met with the North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD) recently and asked for their help. He said when they asked that association they are really asking all the individual states for assistance in bringing all that state's volunteer fire departments up to a minimum standard. He said the organization that he belongs to the NAFTD agreed to help and one of the things they requested is that links be placed on both websites the NVFC and NAFTD. He said if you go to the NVFC's website they have a position paper and a press release done by their legislative representative about volunteer fire departments needing to come up to a minimum standard. He said he thinks it was well thought out, politically dangerous and we have yet to hear any push back on this action. He said we are going to try to do some outreach in state and talk to individual fire departments and refer to the NVFC's position paper and help them achieve this.

Mr. Morrisette added that it's our intent to bring this to the Chief's organizations and others to make them aware of the proposal although it may not be a good time to begin the discussions. He said incrementally everyone wants to move in this direction anyway and that Connecticut is significantly compliant with it already on a local department by

department level. He said even though funding may not be available, maybe it's not a bad thing to look at some legislation and begin working on the process to obtain buy-in. He said it professionalizes everything that we do.

Commissioner Wilkinson added that Scott Potter and Robert Gutherie are the two NVFC delegates from the CSFA.

Mr. Piskura said then that's where we should start. He said to visit their website to see the position paper and press release www.nvfc.org.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners or staff – Commissioner Mitchell asked for an update on the investigation regarding the Cadet Summer program.

Mr. Morrissette said we met with the agency's new Human Resources representative from the DAS SmART unit. He said he indicated to her that the last he heard from the previous HR representative that conducted the investigation is that it was on his supervisor's desk for final approval in anticipation of transmittal to the agency. He said surprisingly she indicated that there was one more issue that required further investigation so that was news to him. This investigation is approaching one year in length.

Mr. Piskura reported that we've advertised for the Introduction to the Fire Service program. He said we've made some changes one of which is we've separated the ages of the students so we don't mix 18 and 14 year olds together. He said for the first time we now have a written lesson plan despite of it being asked for repeatedly by two different Program Managers. He said we instituted a mandate that you cannot instruct in the program unless you took the In-service program taught by Program Manager Bill Trisler which entailed the specifics of the program and dealing with minors and adolescents. He said it was coupled with another program delivery about the social and functional aspects of adolescents and minors delivered by a licensed Social Worker who happens to work for us part time and that is Bill Deford. He said that In-service program was delivered three times and was well received. There will be one student to a dorm room and the capacity of the class will be limited to 30 participants. There will be two female Instructors available at all time throughout the program. He said the most costly thing that we're doing right now is inquiries were made about requirements for camps so now we're going to have to apply for a camp license from the Department of Public Health. He said on previous deliveries our institutional knowledge is we had heads up that we weren't codified as a camp. Upon more specific inquiries, DPH is codifying us a camp so now we're complying with the camp licensing requirement which also cost money because there is an application fee and site visits. He said there is a lot of logistics that have to be accomplished before these deliveries and none of this was done in the past and now it's been done. He said the most rewarding aspect of this is we finally have concrete lesson plans so we've made giant steps into controlling this program.

Commissioner Mitchell commended the staff for all the work done.

Mr. Morrissette added that back when the program started we consulted with DPH regarding codification as a camp and at that time we were told based upon some of what we were doing there were some questions but they felt we could continue to deliver the program. He said we need to move in this direction for the protection of everyone.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired about the status of pending personnel issues related to this program.

Mr. Piskura said there has been on-going communications.

Mr. Morrissette circulated a sheet that outlined the Bookstore gross sales for the past three months. He said it provides an illustration to the Commission offering a better understanding of the business. He asked Director of Training to report as to the success we've had as it relates to that operation as well as some of the failures with auditing.

Mr. Piskura said we've been in business for eight years and these first three months outlined in the spreadsheet for this calendar year have been the best in eight years. He said the majority of the sales are for fire department promotional exams. He said it's a phenomenon that we thought would have lasted for a month or two but it continues to go on and more than likely at the end of this month we will have made gross sales of an entire year. He said if it does go sour as the economy is we're still going to have a good report. He said coupled with that phenomenon is the Auditors are on site and one of the areas they focused on was the Bookstore because it was cited in the last audit report. He said he believes we're now compliant with the Auditor's last request one of which is that we conduct a whole house inventory. He said he took that to mean a whole house inventory being conducted by people that are not involved with the Bookstore operation so we hired an outside firm to come in and do that. He said the Auditors had some kind of program that randomly generates 20-25 items to randomly check the inventory. He said 50% were wrong. He said some of the items were explained upon investigation but the majority of them still hold so it's approaching a 50% error rate in the inventory which was recently taken by a professional firm. For example we had a bin with VHS video tapes that were marked down below what we paid for them and their program identified two tapes that were in that bin as being in house and they are not here. He said through the cash register software we could prove that the tapes were sold so they weren't stolen or lost, they were sold but for whatever reason the inventory system which is all interfaced in the point of sale software still reflected that we had them and we don't. He said the reason we could identify them is those items were discounted and need his authorization when they are sold below what it costs the state to acquire them so we knew about those products intimately. He said he notified the State Fire Administrator and we'll have to wait for the Auditor's report. He worries about the inventory control because we're doing our level best to control the inventory of what is in the Bookstore. He also said a lot of the items that were counted by the outside firm were not attributed correctly for example there is a series from the NFPA called Masters of Disaster and there are five or six different titles but the covers all look the same and unless you look closely you would not know they are different. He said the outside firm counted the entire stock as the same title and they caught that during the inventory and a recount was

done. He said he's not attributing all the problems to the outside inventory company but we'll have to find out how we can be more accurate.

Mr. Piskura also reported in connection with the Bookstore we abandoned the project that we were working on with the CT Distance Learning and that was initially started because we knew we had corrupted software in the inventory. He said this isn't the economic climate but at some point we need to purchase a new point of sale software which will cost \$6,000 to \$12,000.

Mr. Morrissette reminded Commissioners that Fire Service Day is today at the Capitol until 2pm if any Commissioner wishes to travel there. Being a Session Day it should be a very good day for us there.

He also said the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) annual conference is also being held today if any Commissioner is interested in staying.

Commissioner Blaschik reported on two items. One is May 9th is National Arson Awareness Week and the Governor issued a Proclamation. He asked that copies be displayed at the Academy. He said they are also working on transmitting electronically, copies to fire chiefs and fire marshals so that they can display it as well. The other item is an issue that came up in a couple of places but it was brought to the Career Chiefs attention by Milford Fire Chief Lou Levecchia and it's the use of camera phones at fire scenes. He said it was also brought up by Detective John Sawyer from his agency who was conducting a fatal fire investigation program around the state. He said from their point of view there are some issues on compromising an investigation with the use of cell phone cameras by firefighters that are on the scene. He said DPS is planning to send a letter out to the fire service notifying them to either stop or control the use of cell phones by firefighters. He said there is a bigger issue which really isn't under DPS' authority because they are dealing with the suppression side is the liability issue for a firefighter who posts those pictures on the internet or television station. He said he's asking for the Commission's assistance in writing a letter jointly discouraging that practice because we don't need the Legislature to create some law on this.

Mr. Morrissette said he's sure we can come up with some sample policies or directives because he's sure some fire departments probably already have something in place and we would only have to make it contemporary including new technology.

Commissioner Walsh added that we're probably going to see more of that behavior because TV stations have cancelled a lot of their overnight crews because of budget cuts and they are soliciting raw footage from the public more than ever especially for overnight stories to enable them to have video on their morning shows.

Commissioner Nicol said the trip to Washington for the fire caucus dinner was a success and they had an opportunity to meet with our congressional delegation. He thanked Vice Chairman Kowalski for coordinating the meetings.

He also said he had an opportunity to attend the graduation for the Waterbury fire department class. He said he had a chance to talk with the Training Officer Michael Couture who mentioned that he was very appreciative of the cooperation he got from the Academy and particularly the assistance of Ed O'Hurley in the Certification office.

Commissioner Nicol also mentioned that Dave Rabito who many will recall retired to FL several years ago is very ill and asked that we keep him in our prayers.

He also asked for an update on the CPAT program.

Mr. Piskura said we're going forward and we are still getting fire departments that are in the process of complying with the March 31st deadline. He said approximately one third of career departments have not complied so we're now at the point where we'll have to make individual calls to see what their intentions are.

There was a brief discussion on the CPAT issue.

Mr. Piskura also reported that the Academy is sponsoring a NFA class on fixed Fire Protection Systems and it's a dual registration process. The students register with the CFA as well as the NFA. He said we had 20 people registered and the NFA had 13 so they cancelled the class because it's beyond their minimum. He said we've elected to use our operating funds to deliver the class and the NFA has sent notices out telling students the class is cancelled. He said we are moving forward with the delivery which carries significant fire marshal credits and he's trying to promote it. He said we've contracted directly with the successful bidder from the NFA to teach the class. It's a six day class that ends the weekend before Memorial Day and after this wraps up we're going to have some serious dialogue with the Superintendent of the NFA about their deadlines as it was very clear to us that they pulled the plug far too soon. He said he has a Program Manager that is very upset about the lack of support the NFA extended us. He asked Commissioners for assistance in getting the word out that the class is not cancelled.

Mr. Morrissette said he received an email that there is a conference call scheduled for 12 pm today regarding the H1N1 virus so he will be participating in that.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 10:35 am.

Dated:

Charles M. Stankye, Jr., Secretary
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control