



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



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**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 23, 2010 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Hilbert, Kowalski, Mitchell, Murphy, Nelson, Ross and Walsh.

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

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Chairman Carozza extended a welcome to newly appointed Commissioner Robert Ross, Director of Fire, Building and Emergency Services, replacing Commissioner John Blaschik representing Commissioner John A. Danaher, III, Department of Public Safety.

Chairman Carozza asked for an introduction of guests.

Guest to the meeting was identified as Jay Silver, Assistant Chief, East Hartford Fire Department/CFDIA.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the January 26, 2010 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Mitchell and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Hilbert to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2010 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports January 15, 2010 – February 14, 2010.

A **MOTION** was made Commissioner Brady and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Murphy to approve the staff report for the period of January 15, 2010 – February 14, 2010. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the budget. He said Commissioners are aware there is a projected \$515 million deficit for the current fiscal year. The only rescission that's been enacted thus far was the one that was transmitted by the Governor back in November and we're now awaiting whatever will occur between now and the end of the current fiscal year. He also said the Legislature's Appropriations Committee held a Public Hearing for the Commission's Mid-Year (FY11) Budget Adjustments which he attended. He said there were no public speakers regarding our budget and he had planned to offer to answer questions but when he arrived to sign up to testify, the Committee Clerk asked him not to. He said he did that with the understanding there is typically a subcommittee meeting with the Regulation and Protection Subcommittee of Appropriations. Those meetings have been scheduled, but to date, we have not had a scheduled meeting for our agency. He said he called and spoke to the Committee Clerk and she said according to her records there is no subcommittee meeting scheduled for our agency. He said it now appears we may not have a

subcommittee meeting which typically provides an opportunity for us to work out any details. He said if something changes we will inform Commissioners.

Mr. Morrissette reported regarding staffing. He said there's been no major change and both he and Director of Training Piskura had a meeting last week with the SmART Human Resources Representative to discuss some issues with upgrading part-time instructors. As many Commissioners are aware we have three pay levels for Adjunct Instructors; Instructor I, II, and III and that's not to be confused with levels of certification. He said when someone is hired they are brought in at the Instructor I level at \$18/hr. Within a year and completion of an assigned project they are typically upgraded to \$20/hr and the third level \$23/hr is for those who have programmatic supervision responsibilities. He said because of wording in the classification approved many years ago the new Analyst is looking at some of the upgrade requests that we've submitted. He said one of the things DAS has always done is when they are looking at the required experience, it states as an example going from level I to level II the incumbent must be at the Instructor I level for one year. Historically that has been looked at as a calendar year. The new Analyst is looking at it more closely and was concerned about audits. Her interpretation is teaching time should be prorated which works out to over 2,000 hours equaling a year. Thus, in some case it could be a decade or more before certain people achieve that level of service entitling them to an upgrade. Truly an unintended consequence. He said it really never had been an issue and now we have a number of unhappy employees who have been in the queue waiting for upgrades, some probably over a year that this has been held up. He said they are looking at some adjustments to the Classification that hopefully won't take too long to have approved. We will continue to keep the Commission apprised.

Commissioner Kowalski asked that once a person has reached Level III as a Program Coordinator would he/she go back to Level II if their services were no longer needed. Also, are there three levels in the Certification Division?

Mr. McGowan remarked that there are only two levels for the Certification side and it's consistent with the two levels on the Instructor side.

Commissioner Kowalski remarked so there is no Program Coordinator swap.

Mr. McGowan replied yes.

Mr. Morrissette added that he's not sure how often this may occur but there may be Level III Instructors who also provide services to the Certification Division on occasion. In this situation they would be paid at the higher rate.

Mr. Morrissette added that one issue we also raised with them, as many Commissioners may recall a number of years back we as an agency had received funding from OPM to enact an hourly rate increase for instructors. He said we have the money but we can't receive approval for the raise. It was our intent to provide a \$1/hr. raise for the instructors who haven't had a raise in better than 10 years. They are certainly deserving.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Mr. Morrissette stated that both Commissioners Nicol and Stankye are not in attendance today but Commissioner Nicol did fax a written report. He read the following: the CSFA Education Committee met on January 28th in

Wethersfield at Co. No 3. Project Manager Don Ouillette reported on the status of Property Acquisitions. Two appraisals for the Willimantic Fire School property are in progress, which should be completed by the end of March. Mr. Ouillette reported the construction contract for the New Haven Fire School was signed. He also reported that they received additional design comments regarding the Hartford Fire School project here at the Academy. He stated that they plan to go to bid in mid to late March, open bids in April, bonding in May and construction beginning in July. Mr. Ouillette reported that Burrville and Fairfield need to show environmental mitigation plans before Department of Public Works (DPW) can move on the MOU's for each site. There was general discussion held regarding the recently held Regional Fire School legislative meeting. Al Hawkins commented that over 20 state Representatives and Senators attended the meeting. Mr. Hawkins indicated that legislative budget meetings will be held mid-February for the budgets for the next two years. He requested that each Regional School develop their budgets for the next two years and forward him the information. Additionally, there was discussion held regarding some maverick fire training classes being conducted around the state. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on February 25th in Wethersfield.

Mr. Morrisette gave an update regarding the Hartford County project. He said he's spoken with a few Commissioners independently just to provide an alert. He said we all know that in general no one is happy about moving the Burn Building to the back of the Administration Building. He said he wanted the Commission to be aware a number of staff members have identified significant concerns with that action and the potential impact of smoke on the workplace. He said we met with DPW's mechanical engineer and also representatives of TRANE which is our HVAC on-call contractor to inspect our current system and offer an engineered solution to the potential infiltration of smoke. He said we had discussed early on that if the Burn Building was going to move to this side of the road we have to look at modifications to the current HVAC system specifically roof top air intakes as well as the main air intake for the boiler room is in the basement. He said another concern is moving the flashover container which is supposed to be located adjacent to the new Burn Building. We are keenly aware that the smoke generated by this is more intense than what is typical from a Burn Building thus we are looking at other alternatives to maybe move that elsewhere. We've been in contact with the Air National Guard and looking at the feasibility of moving it over to Camp Hartell as part of the New England Disaster Training Center (NEDTC) project. He said we are also considering putting it on wheels and making it a mobile prop at some expense. The third option would be to look at an environmental scrubber for the unit similar to what the Stamford Fire Department uses for their unit. He said as of right now there is no money in the project for any upgrades to this building. He said Commissioners may recall he had brought forth the idea back in the fall about utilizing some of our private monies to bring on board a consultant to look at the issue and make recommendations for improvements. After discussing the issue with both DPW and TRANE we have yet to receive a formal report or proposal. Verbally it was shared there could be some relatively modest upgrades of the system that we currently have in place. He said he doesn't want to minimize the concerns on the staff's part and we're trying to keep ahead of it as best we can, working through professionals in the business. He said once we receive a report from both DPW and TRANE we can determine our next course of action. With the current project not having any funding for HVAC upgrades we may look to utilize our own agency funds for that upgrade. He said if we come in significantly under budget as this project goes out to bid; we maybe able to divert some funds for that particular application but its unknown at this time and we don't want to make any promises.

Moving to item 4c.) FY 10 Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the Supplemental Grant program. He said after our last meeting we sent letters to approximately 40 fire companies. At the Commission's direction we reduced the grant amount to take into account the rescission from \$1,211 to \$954. Those fire companies were given until February 15th to submit their form to let us know how they wish the Commission administer their reduced grant funding. He said we also stated in the letter that we cannot control any future Budget Deficit Mitigation Plans or rescissions. He said we had a fairly good response to that letter however there are still about 15 fire companies that have not yet responded. He said we're getting closer and we're encouraging people to spend the money.

Moving to item 4d.) FY 10 Entry Level Training Reimbursement Update – Mr. Morrissette said as of right now out of the \$479,987 available we've only committed \$151,769 thus far which doesn't include the current recruit class. He said potentially we could have a surplus in that account of approximately \$200,000 which we would lapse. He said he's sure the General Assembly and the Governor would be happy. He said we really haven't had time to determine if everyone has submitted a request for reimbursement or whether people are not submitting requests because they don't think funding is still in place. He said we'll need Commissioners help to spread the word that as of today there is still money available for reimbursements. He said it doesn't mean some money won't be swept between now and the end of the fiscal year. Mr. Morrissette also stated that we anticipate some issues come late spring as we approach the June 30 deadline to spend the funds and the significant number of examinations being delivered and graded. He also said there's a reduced amount to the funding proposed for next year which we should have no problems achieving.

Commissioner Mitchell said he discussed this issue with his Training Officer who heard from folks at the Regional Fire Schools that somehow the Commission had taken all the funding from the account. He said he told them that wasn't true and the funding is still there. He said he's not sure where the miscommunication is coming from but it might be good to advertise it one more time to the Regional Fire Schools.

Mr. Morrissette said we will certainly do that but it is up to the individual departments to apply and not the Regional Schools. He said the schools are trying to advise the departments and some actually will help them complete the forms. He said we will make it clear to the Regional Schools at our next meeting.

Commissioner Kowalski stated as a follow up to last month we were going to check on the time delay of six to eight weeks on processing grades and asked Mr. McGowan if he's come up with a solution to help that situation.

Mr. McGowan replied that there are a couple of different solutions, the first adding additional staff which would be difficult. He said a single Registrar performs all application processing from entry to results. He said the other component we have to be mindful of is every time she has to pick up the phone for students who are looking for grades, even though they are told not to make that phone call delays the process.

Commissioner Kowalski said he understands that but again the question is whether we could get part time assistance in that Division especially in light of the situation and funding stream.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that it's certainly not just the Certification Division that needs help and he knows Director of Training Piskura can also relay the back log of applications in the Training Division as well. CPAT applicants over the past month have exploded with the announcement of several different exams. He said at times we're getting 60-90 applications a day and many of those are credit card payments which add additional steps to the process. He said he attended Fire Marshal training on the issuance of citations and learned that the Judicial Branch has a lock box clearinghouse that they use for processing of tickets so he had placed a call into DAS to inquire as to whether or not there is some type of contract for that service. He said it's being research and that could be a positive thing for us as Commissioners are all aware our regular Audit Reports always cite violation of the 24 hour deposit rule during certain times of the year. He also said that DAS is typically very reluctant to permit utilization of temporary hires and in this market would almost surely be forbidden. He said we're exploring other options and while most of them are not short range plans he was excited to hear how one agency handles their processing of money. He said that it all comes down to processing of money and especially on the testing side there are so many steps to process each level of certification. Further, we continue to explore moving toward a Learning Management System (LMS) which would automate a lot of our processes.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if it takes about a week for the Recruits to get their scores after taking their exam.

Mr. Morrisette replied that it's done the same day as their examination. He also said the other option for classes is individuals can submit a release of test scores form and as soon as the tests are graded, usually within two or three days of the administration of an exam we return the form to the designated person who can release individual student scores while awaiting the official packet from the Commission.

Moving to item 4e.) 2010 Legislative Session – Mr. Morrisette said we've provided Commissioners with a copy of an updated legislative bill tracking chart supplied by Ted Shroll, Legislative Representative for the CSFA. He asked if there were any questions or whether Commissioners wanted to comment on any of the proposals. There were a few Public Hearings scheduled for specific bills which are noted on the tracking chart.

Moving to item 5a.) Valley Fire Chiefs Regional – Mr. Morrisette reported that we electronically transmitted to Commissioners a copy of a letter received by Chairman Carozza from the Valley Fire Chiefs Fire Training School Executive Board. He said he was copied as well, in addition to a number of Legislators. He said the letter was sent in regards to SB No. 195 an Act Concerning the Designation of Regional Fire Schools. He said he had an opportunity to meet with their Board of Directors last evening in Ansonia to discuss it in more detail. Basically their initial concerns were that they just found out about this Bill and were not aware of its existence until recently. He said they may have found out as a result of the CSFA Legislative Committee meeting which was held sometime in mid to late January. This was vetted through that body and it was approved. He said he did present the Bill and commented on it but he doesn't recall any specific questions related to it and it was also passed through this body as well as the CSFA Education Committee. He said the idea actually originated with the Education Committee and it was brought out by the fact that we have seen over the past several years a number of fire departments or regions that have been interested in being designated Regional Fire Schools. He said the most recent was Danbury and before that we heard of a

request from Bridgeport and possibly the New London County region. He said the concern was really with the fiscal times you're going to see more locales looking to have their facilities receive funding or capital monies. He said instead of leaving it to the whim of a legislator trying to appease a local constituent it would be best to direct this to a group of fire service professionals to make a decision about expansion of our fire service training delivery system. He said there hasn't been a master plan of fire training and education done in probably over 25 years within the state. The system in general works relatively well and as compared to other states we work amazingly well with the cooperative relationship between local, regional and state organizations. He said the proposal that was reviewed by the Commission was sent to the Governor's office for review as part of our agency's legislative package. Late last month the Governor's legislative aide approved the proposal with the sole request the Governor be the final approval of future schools based upon a recommendation of the Commission. The proposal was then submitted to the General Assembly's Public Safety and Security Committee who scrubbed the Governor's role from the Bill. He said our proposal that was submitted was only one paragraph in length where the Bill that came out was six pages long due to a variety of amendments to historical wording, nothing that would be controversial. Mr. Morrissette said as part of the meeting last night with the Valley's Board of Directors he offered to bring forth in the Public Hearing any issues they wish raised. He said he did receive a call from Jim Geis, Director of the school this morning offering the following discussion items for inclusion at the Public Hearing.

- A Moratorium on any new school designations until the build out of all of the schools in the queue at present.
- A formal appeals process as part of any future revocation.
- Current Regional Fire School is grandfathered so they could not ever have their designation revoked.

Mr. Morrissette said he indicated we don't control the funding, that is done at the legislative or Governor's level. He said our appropriated funds for dissemination to the schools are earmarked for the schools so if someone takes the funding away we can still maintain designation as a Regional Fire School but the Commission cannot guarantee funding. He said those are the concerns Mr. Geis wanted him to share with the Commission and he expects the Bill to be ready for a public hearing next week. He said he did indicate he's not sure how the Commission would feel about their request with the exception that he can offer their concerns as part of the testimony but he find it a little difficult to work on some of the language to take care of all of their issues. He said he's sensitive to their concerns as they currently don't have an operational facility.

Chairman Carozza asked if there were any questions.

Commissioner Hilbert commented the main stumbling block is the revocation of an existing school and asked if Mr. Morrissette will bring that forward in his testimony. He also asked if the revocation language was in our original submittal or was it added after.

Mr. Morrissette replied that it was in the language but was fairly simplistic and the Legislative Commissioners Office (LCO) expanded it. He also said the other concern they had is that the Commission will adopt standards for the revocation and for the future designation of schools.

He said we've always known and even amongst the Education Committee we've talked about developing those guidelines.

Commissioner Hilbert also asked if the financial reporting is more onerous to Regional Schools than it has been in the past.

Mr. Morrissette said no we're just asking that a copy of their audit report be sent to the Commission. He said this is the second or third year we've been handling their funding but we've never received any reports. He said they do issue reports to Commissioner Stankye in his role as the Treasurer of the CSFA who currently forwards them to the Comptroller's office. He said all we're asking for is a copy and possibly we would like to add their course delivery statistics to our annual report, not to take credit, but to recognize and document these measures. He said he believes that would be very positive for both the Regional Schools and Commission.

Moving to item 5b.) HazMat Awareness / Operational Handoff TtT – Mr. Piskura reported that HazMat Awareness/Operational training is something we don't have the labor to deliver in the requested quantity so we're in the process of pricing the cost of offering train-the trainers strategically around the state. Each fire department would be allowed one person at no charge and additional people would be at cost to participate empowering them to deliver HazMat Awareness/Operational, WMD in their locality. He said the list of items they are going to receive to do the Train-the-Trainer will be 28 different items including textbooks, CDs and over 19 different documents some of which are close to 300 pages long. He said that's not done to intimidate but to empower the instructor and from that they can take the required materials that they need. The ability to do this is coming through a pass through grant from the DEP SERC which we asked for well over a year ago. Once we receive the pricing from the Bookstore on the duplication or acquisition of these materials then we will begin doing selective advertising. Our first thing is to do a Pilot with the Regional Fire Schools by invitation, our own staff and then once that's done then we invite by geographic region the fire departments to participate. He said we don't believe we're going to get 100% compliance and that's okay as long as we get at least 70% to 80% compliance. He said that's the intent of this as Commissioners hear this role out, he's sure they will get comments and hopefully positive ones. The effort that is going into the creation of the lesson plans and the materials is a solid calendar year. He said we will have a comprehensive and high quality program. He said most recently we shared what we're about to do with the DEMHS regional HazMat teams and they were very happy to see it and using this as a stepping stone for HazMat Technician.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if that would be for the instruction but not including the certification.

Mr. Piskura replied just the training.

Commissioner Kowalski said he knows the book materials would be provided but wondered if all the props would be supplied to the departments.

Mr. Piskura remarked that if departments are in the HazMat response business they better have the supplies.

A brief discussion followed and it was stated that departments would need to have their own equipment.

Mr. Morrissette added that we currently bring equipment out when we conduct the practical skills testing but we're trying to extract ourselves from that activity. Mr. McGowan still feels that we're not at a point where we can stop doing that. He said the standardization of equipment is helpful.

Mr. McGowan added that he was going to present this later on in the meeting but the idea is we will notify departments and Regional Fire Schools in July that as of January, 2011 the Commission will no longer be providing equipment for certification purposes for HazMat Operations.

Moving to item 5c.) FSI I & FO I Psychomotor Skills Evaluation Revision – Mr. McGowan distributed to Commissioners two handouts referencing the FSI I and FO I practical skills certification examination process. He said as part of the IFSAC accreditation site visit and as well our own inventory the Certification Division decided on upgrading the FSI I practical skills evolutions which was already part of the FSI I training component. He said we have not increased the amount of time that the student will be away from their department but we're utilizing the last day of their training as the actual legitimate certification exam component for practical skills. He said that was originally done by the instructors themselves and then signed off on the back part of the certification application notifying them that they were ready for the written application. He said we're now bringing three examiners to that last day so the personnel has not changed in terms of numbers but we're solidifying the fact that the examination would be done by examiners. He said this is a two-phase assessment; a practical examination of your instructional skill and a written multiple-choice examination to confirm your knowledge of instructional methodology. Upon completion of the practical examination you will be advised of the result and, if successful, eligibility for the written FSI I certification examination. When a candidate succeeds in both practical and written examination components they would have earned the FSI I certification. Mr. McGowan also outlined the process for the FO I certification examination process. He said from the IFSAC folks as well as looking at our own program we already have a practical skills evolution for FO IV, we've put one in place for FO III and determined FO I and II should also have the same type of format. He said with the FO I this is new where we basically have two examiners go in and evaluate the candidates. He said this is also a two-phase assessment; a practical examination of your officer skill and a written multiple-choice examination to confirm your knowledge as a fire officer. Upon completion of the practical examination you will be advised of the results and, if successful, eligibility for the written FO I certification examination. When a candidate succeeds in both the practical and written examination components they would have earned the FO I certification.

Commissioner Murphy asked a question relative to the practical examinations policies, procedures and expectations that states candidates will be notified of the results of the practical examination in writing from the Certification office. She asked if a candidate will have to wait six to eight weeks to hear about this before they can sit for the written examination.

Mr. McGowan said no, as for the practical skills we are processing as quickly as we can but we already have the written examination in place two weeks following the end of the class and in that time frame we have to provide results immediately.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners or staff – Commissioner Ross said he wanted to make an observation. He said having been in this business and in a number of different positions and involved in a lot of things over the years often times we get to see the product of our work. He said a little over two weeks ago he saw the product and works of this Commission in Middletown. He said he got to see the skills and talent of a lot of different agencies and organizations that were deployed to the Kleen Energy Power Plant and quite a bit of what was used as far as skills, tactics and training came out of the staff here at the Commission and everyone here deserves credit to a good operation. He said he takes it even a step further to say that the Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Plan (SFRDP) which the State Fire Administrator and others have been working on for years really paid off. He said he just wanted to extend his observation that the work done here and much of the success of that incident is attributed to what people learned at this Academy, the work behind the scenes of the SFRDP, USAR and DMAT teams all came together. He said he wanted to extend his thanks and observation.

Chairman Carozza thanked Commissioner Ross for his comments and asked the State Fire Administrator to relay those comments as appropriate.

Mr. Morrisette stated Fire Service Day at the Capitol is scheduled for April 15th and asked Commissioners to get there early because he's aware a taxpayer rally may be scheduled to be held that day. He said through the Joint Council every organization is welcomed to have a display table and asked organizations to provide giveaway items they can for that day. He said we're also hosting a legislative breakfast in the legislative dining room and the details are still being finalized. He asked Commissioner to attend if their schedule permits and encourage their organizations to attend.

The Executive Secretary asked Commissioners to get word to their constituents that the Archdiocese of Hartford has scheduled their second annual Blue Mass for active and retired police, fire and safety personnel for Sunday, May 2nd at 11 a.m.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Brady and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Mitchell to adjourn the meeting.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 10:45 am.

Dated:

Charles M. Stankye, Jr., Secretary