



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



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**MINUTES OF THE JUNE 26, 2007 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Vice Chairman Kevin Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Brady, Mitchell, Nicol, Ouellette, Schenck and Stankye.

Staff members Lewis, Morrisette and Piskura were present.

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the American flag.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked for a moment of silence for the fallen firefighters from Charleston, SC.

Due to lack of a quorum, the meeting proceeded on an informational basis.

Vice Chairman Kowalski said it was a pleasure to welcome and introduce Wayne Maheu of the Department of Public Safety. He said his days as a state employee are numbered. He said the service Mr. Maheu has provided to the Commission and the fire service has been outstanding. He congratulated him on his career and wished him best of luck with his retirement.

Mr. Maheu remarked that he as many are aware he was a Commissioner for a short time in the interim between Deputy State Fire Marshals. He said when he was appointed Executive Director for the Department of Public Safety's Division of Fire Emergency and Building Services he felt it was only right to give up his seat on the Commission to John Blaschik, Deputy State Fire Marshal who traditionally has held the spot. He said he truly enjoyed being a Commission member. Commissioner Blaschik had to attend a funeral this morning and asked him to attend the meeting and take notes for him. He said he had a conflict with another coalition meeting but he wanted to attend this meeting and thanked the Commission for having him. He said he's spent 21 years in public service and its now time to move on.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if there were any questions on the May 29, 2007 minutes. There were none.

He also asked if there were any questions on the Staff Report for the period of May 15, 2007 –June 14, 2007.

Commissioner Stankye remarked that he must congratulate the staff for pursuing the Limited Access Highway Supplemental Grant Award program. He asked if there are still companies that haven't filed for their grant award.

Mr. Morrisette said he didn't have a final count of those that have not claimed their funds but we've really done our best to reach those who are eligible and we've reduced the amount to the bare minimum.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding staffing. We still maintain a vacancy for the position of Trainer. We're still pursuing trying to fill the position however due to some administrative issues linked to the Trainer classification this has been placed on hold by the Department of Administrative Services (DAS). He said we're looking at alternatives possibly to do something on a provisional basis and asked Director of Training Piskura to relay some of his concerns especially as it relates to the transition of the Recruit program from 10 weeks to 14 weeks. He said the 39th Recruit class is in house as of today so we have 11 weeks to get our 14 week program up and running and we don't have the staffing to do that.

Mr. Piskura remarked that the position has been vacant a year as of August 1st and we certainly anticipated filling that vacancy six or seven months ago. We were approaching the end of a two year eligibility list that DAS publishes and there were no certified fire service instructors remaining on the list qualified to work for us. Thus, we waited until January 1st of this year for a new test to be given and list certified. We're at the point where we were supplied with 12 names of qualified people that meet our criteria and we are in the process of sending out letters to invite them to an interview when we were notified to halt that process by DAS. He said the 14 week syllabus has never been filled out other than in a crude fashion. The purpose of going from 10 week Recruit class to 14 weeks was to gain operations days. That was a result of the Career Fire Chiefs saying that they liked the program but they wanted to see more skill development and that was a good way to do that. He said we need a body to pull this together and then either the same or a different person to ensure the consistency of the program. He said probably the most significant complaint we've ever received from students is lack of consistency whether it be in the Recruit program or a Fire Officer program that runs for six days. He said because of the nature of our workforce being part time we can use up to 90 different Instructors in ten weeks. He said he and Mr. Morrisette were at DAS Human Resources to discuss what our options are as we don't have clear direction. One direction he's pursuing is bringing a person in from the outside that will be able to work on this program and then provide continuity through the 14 weeks. Another option is to take someone off the new list on a provisional basis as most everyone on the list is currently employed and may not want to give up 14 weeks to work for us without a guarantee of being hired in the job permanently. In the meantime, we're working in an environment where the current staff is frustrated by the work load and justifiably so because the workload is incredible. He said if you look at our numbers in the monthly staff report you'll see that the numbers are stair casing upward. He said there isn't anyone here that has the capacity to do this and we have less than 10 weeks to get this accomplished. He said the process can take some time and the agency's credibility rests on the Recruit program and the 53 career fire departments and what we deliver. He said we certainly don't want to put out anything less than we've currently done and he assured the

Commission we're working diligently to get a body here somehow so we can provide the consistency that is so desperately needed in this program.

Mr. Maheu added that when they adopted the new fire safety code they ran into a similar situation and they had very good success with employing outside instructors for a short duration of time and it worked out very well for them.

Commissioner Ouellette asked how long the list of 12 candidates is good for.

Mr. Piskura said two years unless the employment list is exhausted.

Mr. Morrisette said he hopes for a quick resolution as we work through the administrative confines.

Mr. Morrisette also reported regarding the budget and distributed a summary of the fiscal year 08 and 09 budgets. He said it appears this is the version the House voted on over the weekend and the Senate approved the same version without any changes. He said he basically pulled from the different line items any issues that relates to the fire service so Commissioners would have the information. Commissioner Stankye is aware of issues related to funding for the CSFA as well as for the county and statewide radio networks. There was an increase for the regional fire schools which fulfills their individual requests. He said Commissioners will see that the legislation providing funding for entry level Fire Service training was cut in half to \$750,000 to fund one half of Firefighter I and Recruit Firefighter entry level training for career and volunteer firefighters. He said \$750,000 was appropriated for the first FY 08 and a bump up to \$795,000 for FY 09. He distributed a copy of Bill No. 8005 which is an Act implementing the provisions of the budget. It only shows Sec 7 which relates to the implementer language for the fire service training initiative. Later on in the Agenda we will be looking to establish a formal Subcommittee to begin working to develop the framework for administering the funding. The only issue related to the budget is the Payment to Volunteer Fire Companies shows \$100,000 and he thinks they made the same mistake this Biennium budget as they did the last when they placed \$100,000 into our Other Expense line item and another \$100,000 into an earmarked account but he believes its still going to be \$200,000. They did not correct the mistakes that were made in the last Biennium budget as requested. He said another minor issue is the way the budget is laid out, all the payments to the Regional Fire Schools were sequential then the line items for the payments to volunteer fire companies followed by a line item for Stamford Regional Fire School. They actually split the payments in two separate line items. He asked if Commissioners had any questions regarding the budget. He said the most significant limiting factor is there was no increase in the agency's Other Expense Account which is what we use to pay all the bills so we may be a bit strapped the second year of the budget.

Commissioner Stankye asked relative to the Commission's budget what the agency would use the \$100 equipment line for.

Mr. Morrisette said this is just a place holder. The majority of the agency's capital equipment is paid out through the Capital Equipment Purchase Fund (CEPF). If the Governor's recommendation holds, the agency will do exceptionally well in these two

areas. He also said the other significant area is the Capital Facility budget where there had been proposed a half-million dollars. We're hopeful that this will stay in place and pass.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Mr. Morrissette said that Commissioner Wilkinson is not present today and asked if Commissioners Nicol or Stankye have any additional updates from last month. He said the Education Committee did not meet this month but there is a meeting scheduled for this Thursday evening. He said he's sure there will be discussions regarding the budget for the Regional Fire Schools which he thinks they will be pleased with. He said the transfer of the Regional Fire Schools' budget to the Commission has paid off as we were hoping. He also reported that Fit Testing equipment for the Regional Schools was recently secured through the Department of Public Safety (DPS). He said seven of the nine Regional Fire Schools will receive Fit Testing equipment. We'll be establishing a date to provide the training and transfer of this equipment sometime in July. He also said the equipment was originally in the possession of the Police Officer Standards Training Council (POST) as well as the DPS-State Police but in most cases the equipment was never used. By coincidence, all the equipment is due to be recalibrated and there is an expense of approximately \$500 to \$600 per unit. He said he spoke to Deputy Commissioner Sandford of DEMHS yesterday and he had indicated that once the budget is in place after July 1st he would be looking to provide funding for the calibration testing to ensure compliance and reduce liability issues. He said he's confident that operationally the Regional Schools will be able to use the equipment by their September class begin dates. Mr. Morrissette also stated that as part of legislative action, there was a formal transfer of property from the Department of Corrections (DOC) to the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control for the future Wolcott Fire School site which appears to be moving to Cheshire. Therefore, we're holders of some additional property to house that school. As for the Hartford County School, we met with the Architect/Engineer about four weeks ago along with Hartford County representatives to lay out the steps to begin the design for the Class A Burn Building and storage building. He said we're probably 12 to 18 months away from any type of ground breaking but at least that process has started. He also reported that they are in the final steps of procuring land for the Derby School which will be located in Oxford.

Commissioner Nicol asked if we're aware of the status of the bonding package for the schools.

Mr. Morrissette said he was trying to locate that information today but was unable to but we should know more by Thursday.

Commissioner Nicol also asked if the Directors of the Regional Schools have been notified of the information on the Fit Testing Equipment they will be receiving.

Mr. Morrissette said not as of yet other than occasionally they have been asking at meetings when is the equipment coming. He also said they were promised laptop and projectors as well.

Moving to item 4c.) Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrissette said we only have a few more days to close out this program. Those departments that we were unable

to reach, who in the past had requested a direct payment, we went ahead and processed a check so they probably received their check last week. He said they did not select that option but we wanted to liquidate the funds without having to return money back to the General Fund. He said the month of June has been an extraordinary month for the Bookstore approaching \$70,000 in sales. A lot of that traffic is from people doing last minute spending with their LAH vouchers. Next year we are going to try to encourage departments to take their grant as a check. He said there will be very little money returned to the General Fund at the end of this fiscal year.

Moving to item 4d.) New London County Incident Management Team (IMT) Recognition – Mr. Morrissette said we have no new updates or meeting minutes from the meetings that the Commission had requested.

Moving to item 4e.) Legislative Update – Mr. Morrissette said other than the legislative tracking chart dated 6/15/07 that was distributed today; we should be receiving an updated tracking chart from Ted Schroll which we'll send electronically as quickly as possible. He said this chart contains a majority of the bills and the last column shows the bill status. Those that were tied to the budget we'll be able to clarify in the next few days.

Commissioner Ouellette asked about the New London County IMT item on the Agenda. He said this is an issue that has been on the Agenda for the past year and no one is forwarding the information that is required.

Mr. Morrissette said he'll talk with Chairman Carozza about it and he agrees we've carried this as an agenda item for quite sometime now. He said possibly we can get Tim Baldwin, Chief of Southbury Training School who chairs the DEMHS IMT Committee to attend a future meeting and provide an overview so Commission may consider endorsing their plan.

Moving to item 5a.) Summer Meeting Schedule - Mr. Morrissette said typically the Commission doesn't meet during the summer months. Not knowing exactly the direction that the Training Funds Subcommittee is going to take regarding funding for fire service training, he's not sure if as we develop the framework we can electronically pass it by Commissioners. He said calls already began a week or so ago from individuals seeking training funds. Once we have the draft policies and procedures in place we can share them with Commissioners electronically. Then, if necessary we can meet in August or September to officially approve. On or around September 1st would be a good deadline to set to have the reimbursement process in place.

Vice Chairman Kowalski remarked that the only issue he foresees is that a lot of the Regional Fire Schools have fall classes being set-up and it would probably be good if at all possible to provide them with some direction when they are contemplating their September plans. He said he suggests if it is possible to get a Subcommittee together to facilitate the procedure and policies of distributing the funding and if we need to ratify that we could call a meeting in August. That way we can service our customers out there. He said this is probably going to put us in a precarious situation as we were planning for a substantial amount of money and we've received half of it so he's not sure how we're going to do that but we'll leave it up to the Subcommittee to decide.

Commissioner Brady added that the idea that it is based upon certification implies that they would have to take the class and pass the test.

Commissioner Ouellette added that whether the reimbursement is made directly to the department or the regional school it's still based upon certification.

Commissioner Stankye remarked that we're at the beginning of a new program and it would probably serve us better to get a legal opinion on the issue so we're not starting off in the wrong direction and have a problem later down the road. He said the idea of a Subcommittee is good.

Vice Chairman Kowalski said it's important and he's sure the Education Committee will have a substantial amount of input in the Subcommittee to determine if there is a base rate or common rate because he believes currently each Regional school and the Recruit training school is all over the board and we don't want to get into a situation where we end up with more bills than we can pay for so there has to be some consistencies with that.

Commissioner Stankye said we need to set a limit for Recruit training no matter what it costs and the same for FFI because now that the training is funded we're going to have a flood of applicants looking for reimbursement.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if there was any rule that states a member has to be with a career department to take the Recruit training program.

Mr. Piskura replied no.

Vice Chairman asked for a show of hands of members who want to serve on the fire service funding Subcommittee. He said he has no problems with everyone who wants to volunteer to serve on the Subcommittee to do so but we want to make sure it doesn't become too massive and we would like to come up with a reasonable product by end of August including a legal opinion from the Attorney General on the scope of the policy.

Commissioners Mitchell, Nicol, Stankye and Ouellette volunteered to serve.

Commissioner Ouellette remarked that he knows we only received half of the funding that we expected and he complimented Commissioner Brady and the Committee for a job well done on the training bill.

Commissioner Brady said thanks and that he had to give a lot of credit to everyone who worked on this especially Ted Schroll who was very helpful at the Capitol. He said the key was that everyone was on the same page and we all have to speak with one voice.

Commissioner Nicol mentioned that if we have a lot more demand than we have funds to support, this could become a serious problem.

Mr. Morrisette said that is something he would have to investigate whether we would have to transfer funds internally which he would prefer not to do.

Vice Chairman asked if the size of a Committee constitutes requiring Minutes.

Mr. Morrisette said he doesn't think the size have any bearing. If it is a formal Committee or Subcommittee it is a public meeting.

Moving to item 5b.) FY07 Annual Report – Mr. Morrisette reported that we've received guidance recently for development of the agency's annual report. As been past practice we'll work internally to draft that and as it appears we're going to be meeting sometime in August we'll seek the Commission's approval.

Moving to item 5c.) Fire Service Training Funding Subcommittee – Vice Chairman Kowalski said we've already had discussions on this item. Mr. Morrisette said we'll have a limited number of representatives from the Education Committee to serve on the Subcommittee. He also asked Mr. Piskura to inquire amongst his peers to see if they administer any type of reimbursement program similar to this.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Commissioner Ouellette said he received some inquiries about staffing at the New England Fire Chiefs Expo. Mr. Morrisette provided background on the staffing concern.

A brief discussion on the issue followed.

Commissioner Nicol asked if we've heard anything on the two vacancies for the Commission.

Mr. Morrisette said he's been told anecdotally from the Fire Chiefs Association that the name of Dave Dagon has been put forward for consideration to fill their vacancy but he hasn't seen any formal communications to that effect. He said there were three individuals that expressed interest in the position and the Executive Board selected Chief Dagon as their nominee to the Governor.

He also said he has not heard from the Fire Marshals about their nominee as of yet. He said they were supposed to decide last month but he was told that did not happen.

Vice Chairman Kowalski added that he anticipates next month a decision will be made if the Board of Directors has a meeting.

Mr. Morrisette reported on the following items:

Three new foam trailer units go into operation July 1st and will be located in Winsted, Willington and Danbury. He reported that he has mailed a letter to fire chiefs along with an updated brochure informing them of the expanded program. The DEP will still be utilized as the point of contact for dispatch of the units. We were hoping DEMHS would come up with a one call number for everything and that still hasn't taken place so DEP has agreed to support us in that endeavor. He said the Winsted unit is on a soft roll out as

they are waiting on the arrival of a new tow vehicle similar to the ones used for the DECON trailers.

The agency was approved for an extension of federal grant funding for two major programs. One is the NIMS coordination effort within the Training division which Tom McGowan previously held and now overseen by Jackie Kilby-Richards. The other is our planning efforts for the Statewide Fire Rescue Plan. DEMHS provided funding for a Planner which Kerry Flaherty and Bill Higgins have been filling. This will be our final grant extension through September. Hopefully, we can secure grant funding from a new federal fiscal year to support these important activities.

DEMHS has reimbursed the agency for about 95% of all expenditures thus far. Mr. Piskura had reported a few meetings ago that they were in arrears of between \$100,000 to \$200,000 thousand dollars. They have made the transfer of that funding and there is approximately \$10,000 that is still owed and being reviewed. Mr. Morrissette said it's his understanding that DEMHS is working on an MOU between agencies so we don't fall into the same problems as we did in this past year.

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 10:50 am.

Dated:

James P. Wilkinson, Secretary
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control