

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 27, 1998 COMMISSION MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chairman Carozza with the following members present: Commissioners Andresen, Gomeau, Haber, Johnson, McCarthy, Milewski, Mullen Munkenbeck and Nicol. Commissioners Chatfield, Kowalski, and Vendetta were excused. Staff members Morrisette, Mansion, Piechota, Piskura, O'Neil, and Colton-Reichler were present.

Guest to the meeting was identified as Red McKeon from the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association.

Chairman Carozza addressed the Commission stating that if there was no objection he would like to add one item to the Agenda. To be added as item (d) under New Business is a letter from Hartford County requesting installation of an antenna on the administration building.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and seconded by Commissioner Milewski to amend the Agenda and add item (d) under New Business. Motion carried.

Secondly, Chairman Carozza requested to move item (a) under New Business to the first item on the agenda.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and seconded by Commissioner Milewski to move item (a) under New Business to No. 1. Motion carried

Chairman Carozza spoke regarding the Commission hosting the North American Fire Training Directors' Conference in Connecticut from October 14th to 18th. Chairman Carozza complimented the staff involved in all the planning and hard work in putting together a conference of this magnitude.

Chairman Carozza stated that there were some presentations to be made to the staff.

Mr. Morrisette asked Mr. Piskura to elaborate on the conference for those Commissioners who were unable to attend.

Mr. Piskura stated that a goal was set to yield the attendees with a memorable experience. He stated that from the e-mails, verbal congratulations and written comments he has received, the goal was accomplished.

Mr. Piskura gave a brief overview of the conference, and stated that he was very proud not only of the staff who was directly involved, but the tolerance of everyone who had to shift their own personal priorities and projects to accommodate this large group and this event.

Mr. Morrisette complimented all staff members whether intimately involved or not. He further stated that it was a very dynamic schedule and the day-to-day operations of the agency were

maintained. Presentations were made to the entire staff for their assistance directly or indirectly in making this conference a tremendous success. Individual wooden plaques engraved with staff members' names were given to the Commission by Kocheck Manufacturing Company Inc.

Mr. Lewandowski gave a brief overview on the history of Kocheck Manufacturing Company Inc., and on what the company represents.

Mr. Morrisette then presented staff member present an individual plaque.

Chairman Carozza returned the meeting to the regular order of business.

Mr. Morrisette introduced Red McKeon from the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association and thanked him for attending the meeting.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and seconded by Commissioner Milewski to approve the minutes of the September 29, 1998 meeting. Motion Carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to approve the Staff Report for the period of September 15, 1998 - October 14, 1998. Motion Carried

Moving to item 4 a.) Mr. Morrisette gave a facility update. He stated that he was hoping to report that the link connector roof reconstruction was complete, but due to weather conditions it is not finished yet. He invited the Commissioners to step out into the courtyard and view the work being done. In addition, he also invited the Commissioners to view a couple of the classrooms that have recently been carpeted. We have made a commitment that on a quarterly basis one additional classroom will be carpeted. Over a period of 2 - 3 years the classroom wing should be fully carpeted. This will add to the overall aesthetics and functionality of the rooms and in the long term decrease the maintenance expense.

Mr. Morrisette stated that a lot of work went into preparing the facility for the NAFTD Conference. Much of this work was on the schedule to be done over a period of time. A number of people pushed to make the necessary work happen.

Mr. Morrisette gave an update of the 1-800 Fire Line project. He informed the group that the agency will be hosting on November 18th, an informal discussion group for participants of the 1-800 Fire Line program. He further explained who would participate in the group discussion and invited the Commissioners to attend. He reported that activity in this program has been very slow recently.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the issue regarding the posting of signs or billboards along state highways.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he would be looking into this issue and other advertising mechanisms such as a utility bill insert.

Mr. Morrisette stated that internal discussion has been ongoing on the Strategic Planning process and he and the Directors agree that they should look at working first with three focus groups throughout the state. He further explained other avenues he was looking into in preparation for a planning process.

Commissioner Johnson gave a brief update of the Public Fire Education Subcommittee. He stated that he was meeting with Commissioners Munkenbeck, and McCarthy following today's Commission meeting to put together a final report. He added that he had a letter addressed to Mr. Morrisette for his review with a copy to Commissioner Munkenbeck.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he was asked last month to make an inquiry about the possibility of the Commission being represented at the Governor's monthly staff meetings. Mr. Morrisette is waiting for formal response from the Governor's office.

Moving to New Business, item 4 b.) Mr. Morrisette stated that budget option expansion items for agency services are to be submitted to OPM by mid November. Division Directors have been given an opportunity to think where they would like to go with their individual areas as well as collectively as a whole. At this point Mr. Morrisette turned the meeting over to individual division directors to make brief presentations on proposed future initiatives.

Mr. Piechota gave an overview of a proposals regarding development and implementation of computer technology to conduct fire service certification testing to comply with the Job Performance Requirements of the applicable NFPA Standards for the levels of Fire Officer I, Fire Officer II and Hazardous Materials Technician. He proposes the following:

- In cooperation with professional test development experts develop test question banks as needed.
- Outline simulation scenarios required to accurately measure JPR's
- Develop and create Quicktime video test question banks for use with LXR Test.
- Develop and implement a remotely administered examination system utilizing the Academy's Computer Laboratory. Such system should serve as the foundation for a statewide Connecticut Fire E-Line.

Mr. Piechota explained that another initiative being proposed would be to outline a comprehensive project plan designed to expand the Commission's Information Technology System to establish and implement of a direct computer link between the Commission and each fire department and Regional Fire School in the state.

Mr. Morrisette stated that this initiative came out of our inability to communicate with fire departments on a timely basis. Today our only means of communication is via first class mail or via phone which if one looks at productivity issues our full time staff spends a quarter of their day talking to voicemail systems. From an expansion initiative this is something that will serve to benefit the entire fire service.

Budget estimates for these initiatives are presently being researched and developed and will be sent out to the Commission.

A discussion period followed on the Certification Division's proposed initiatives.

Mr. Piskura gave an overview of the Training Division's proposed initiatives. He stated that the first proposal is for additional clerical support for the Training Division which is urgently needed. He is requesting an Office Assistant so that the division can better direct more of the routine and existing functions.

The second request is for the addition of a Librarian. A library professional or information specialist would free up some of the existing Trainers to concentrate on direct customer service. The Librarian will research, identify and supply our personnel with pertinent, well-documented, facts that are of the most recent findings. As the entire State of Connecticut fire service community develops trust in the Librarian, significant quantities of labor will be shifted from trainers to the information service provided by this position.

The third initiative in order to keep pace with the technology that is entering into the learning environment the Commission should consider establishing the position of a Media Production Technician. This would allow for the production of top of the line visual aids for our training programs. Our students are becoming accustomed to interactive software and video at home.

While we have developed national recognized training programs, we are still at the mercy of using commercial canned video and CD-ROM training programs. By establishing this position we can bring this same technology into our classrooms. Our instructors would have the ability to have professionally produced videos and Power Point training aid to accompany our programs.

Budget estimates for these initiatives are outlined in the Training Division proposal handout.

Mr. Morrisette stated that a key point to note is that there has been a shift over the last several years in the demands placed upon the Agency. We are seeing a shift to more information services in addition to the regular training, certification and education services.

Commissioner Nicol questioned whether the facility had enough space to accommodate these initiatives.

Mr. Morrisette stated that space issues are presently being looked into.

Commissioner Gomeau inquired if it was realistic to think of this facility as more of a resource center rather than a physical training center?

Mr. Morrisette stated there is great competition for the resources we currently have and is something we have to keep a critical eye upon. In terms of all these initiatives, the key point is with the spending cap we realize that the competition for any expansion item is going to be very great. Internally, we need to prioritize these initiatives, were going to have to make those decisions upon what's realistic today and in the very near future. We will always be required to provide training services. Request for training from departments is increasing every day.

Commissioner McCarthy inquired if the agency was hampered by a cap on what is proposed for increases in the budget?

Mr. Morrisette stated that in terms of expansion items there is no cap. He stated that he is planning to meet with the Budget Analyst to find out what is acceptable and in what format.

Moving to item 5 c.) Mr. Morrisette gave an overview of the USFA Blue Ribbon Panel Report. He asked the Commissioners to review the report and the accompanying 34 recommendations. If the Commission as a body is in agreement with the recommendations in whole or in part Mr. Morrisette asked that a resolution be drafted and sent to Director James Witt.

Mr. Piskura stated that the North American Fire Training Directors as a group took a position to advocate the content of the Blue Ribbon Panel Report and try to propel FEMA toward implementing the 34 recommendations. He stated that he was not suggesting the Commission rubber stamp the report but look at each recommendations and weigh each one. Director Witt has asked for comments by the end of the month. Lastly, Mr. Piskura distributed a copy of Carrye Brown's response to the USFA Blue Ribbon Panel Report to the Commission members.

Chairman Carozza suggested the Commissioners review the report and add this item to the Agenda for the next Commission meeting.

A MOTION by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Milewski to table the USFA Blue Ribbon Panel Report for discussion at the next meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 d.) Chairman Carozza read a letter from Hartford County Fire Emergency Plan requesting permission to install a 21 ft. antenna on top of the Administration building to be used by the County for the purpose of transmitting and receiving on high band frequencies. This will be of no cost to the Fire Commission and the County will hold all the proper licenses and provide documentation as requested. This will allow the County to communicate

Mr. Morrissette stated he checked with the agency Facility maintenance staff to see if there would be any impact. The only impact would be aesthetic and our Facility people felt there would be no negative impact.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner McCarthy and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to approve the installation of a 21 ft. antenna by Hartford County Fire Emergency Plan. Motion Carried.

Mr. McKeon stated that regarding the 1-800-Fire Line there is a statewide committee that has been working diligently on recruitment and retention . This committee will be recommending that a video be produced to help people better understand retention and recruitment.

Mr. McKeon urged the Commissioners to carefully read the USFA Blue Ribbon Panel Report.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the status of the ARFF Prop Project.

Mr. Morrissette stated that he contacted Chief Duffy to inquire whether there was any movement on DOT's part as a result of their response to FAA's last correspondence. At that time, Chief Duffy's response was that they brought DOT's engineers into the facility to take a look at what modifications would be necessary for compliance with the FAA. DOT engineering people made a decision that they could not take this on as an internal project and they recommended that Chief Duffy as Department Head solicit this as a DOT project. What they are looking to do is bring in an outside contractor to design, construct and install the necessary modifications to comply with FAA requirements.

Commissioner Nicol expressed concerns over the lack of communication on this project between DOT and the Commission.

Mr. Morrissette stated that it was a recommendation of the agency to solicit the assistance of their in-house engineering people to expedite the improvements.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the status of the Commission's request for additional land.

Mr. Morrissette stated that a letter requesting additional land was sent to DOT. The letter recognized the meeting the Administrator had with DOT's Leasing Unit back about four months ago. At that time they indicated that they would not entertain any expansion until the Commission had a master plan in place. In a letter to DOT, Mr. Morrissette highlighted the need for a small plot of land for two immediate projects. One deals with our receiving last week the Flashover Simulator. (Mr. Morrissette invited the Commissioners to view the simulator.) One other area which we thought to be of high priority within DOT is the high speed train service which is going to be introduced from Washington to Boston which will travel through Connecticut. Offers have been made to us from various rail companies to provide rail cars to us for static props. To date there has been no action on the request for additional land.

Mr. Morrissette commented on an editorial article in the Waterbury Republican newspaper in which the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control is mentioned in a negative light. The article is a result of a situation between the City of Torrington and the Drakeville Volunteer Fire Department which is an independent organization that provides fire protection for one of the more rural area of the city. The Torrington Fire Chief has been requesting that the volunteer fire department supply him with copies of their training records. The Administrator stated that he had received a call from a member of Drakeville Department asking that the Commission come in and mediate the situation. Mr. Morrissette indicated that this was not our role.

Commissioner Johnson suggested inviting the writer of the letter to come before the State Fire Administrator and a member of the Commission to ask any questions he has and for us to explain the Commission's role.

Commissioner McCarthy stated that he fully supported the recommendation of Commissioner Johnson.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Johnson and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to invite Walter D. Miller to meet with the Commission regarding his letter to the editor which appeared in the Waterbury Republican. Motion Carried

Commissioner Munkenbeck distributed copies of a report from the Connecticut Safety Institute on Recruiting and Retaining Volunteer Fire and EMS Personnel - A Study of Programs and Results. This report is the first of what will be several layered reports from the Recruiting and Retention Committee. What has come out of this survey is that the fire service as we suspected is at times its own worst enemy when it comes to recruiting.

He presented an overview of preliminary proposals for a higher education grant that he and his staff have been working on for the development of a Connecticut Officer's Academy. This would be a joint program between the Commission and the Community Technical Colleges.

Mr. Piskura offered Commissioner a copy of a similar study being done by the State of Illinois.

Commissioner Munkenbeck made a few more comments.

Commissioner Nicol praised the staff for all their efforts on the North American Fire Training Directors' Conference. He stated that he had a chance to talk to some of the participants and they were very complimentary.

Mr. Piskura handed out a preliminary summary of the Chemical Emergency & Community Response Conference. The comparison from this year to last year illustrates that we had fewer people but generated more revenue while having a successful event. What came out of this event was a new revelation that the EPA, since 1986, has had a program to reimburse local governments up to \$25,000 to cover the costs of emergency responses. It should be noted that since this program began only three Connecticut departments have applied for this money (i.e. Bristol, Old Saybrook and Stratford). This program is out there, both career and volunteer department can tap in to it. It's not as cumbersome as it may appear to apply for these funds and basically get them because on a national level this fund is virtually untapped. This is federal aid that is going unexpended, so if you can assist us in getting the word out to your constituents that this is available.

Mr. Morrissette suggested that Commissioner Gomeau help to disseminate this information through the CCM city and town newsletter.

Mr. Piskura announced that Mark Lewandowski was the recipient CFDIA's Instructor of the Year Award.

A MOTION was made by Chairman Carozza and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 11:23 a.m.

Dated: _____

Secretary, Commission on Fire
Prevention and Control

MOTIONS

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STAFF FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED

1-800 FIRE-LINE - Mr. Morrissette stated that he would be looking into the issue of posting of signs or billboards along state highways and other advertising mechanisms such as utility bill insert.

Governor's Staff Meeting - Mr. Morrissette stated he was waiting for a formal response from the Governor's office on this matter.

USFA Blue Ribbon Panel Report - Mr. Morrissette asked that if the Commission as a body is in agreement with the recommendations in whole or in part that a resolution be drafted and sent to Director James Witt.

Letter in Waterbury Republican - Commissioner Johnson suggested inviting the writer of the letter to come before the State Fire Administrator and a member of the Commission to ask any questions he has and for us to explain the Commission's role.