



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



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**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 30, 2004 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 Blashchik, Cantor, Haber, Kowalski, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye and Wilkinson. Staff members Lewis, Morrisette, O'Neil, Piechota, and Piskura were present.

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

There was a moment of Silence in honor of Robert Griffin, the Prospect Firefighter that died in the line-of-duty during a recent training exercise at the Wolcott Regional Fire School.

Introduced as a guest to the meeting was Leonard H. Guercia, Jr., Director of the Department of Public Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services. Mr. Guercia offered his assistance and that of his office to the Commission.

Mr. Morrisette asked Director of Certification Fred Piechota to come forward to be recognized. Mr. Piechota was presented with a certificate of appreciation for his ten years of outstanding service to the agency. Chairman Carozza and Vice Chairman Kowalski participated in the presentation.

Mr. Piechota thanked the Commission for letting him be a part of the organization and indicated that he looked forward to continue serving the agency.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2004 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2004 meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2004 meeting.

Commissioner Cantor stated that there was an error on page 1 as his name was omitted as having attended the February 24, 2004 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ouellette to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2004 meeting as amended. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the Staff Report for the period of January 15, 2004 through February 14, 2004.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the Staff Report for the period of January 15, 2004 through February 14, 2004.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the Staff Report for the period of February 14, 2004 through March 14, 2004.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Stankye to approve the Staff Report for the period of February 14, 2004 through March 14, 2004.

Chairman Carozza moved to agenda item 4a.) Unfinished Business - Mr. Morrisette stated that he had moved forward with the filling of one of the vacant Trainer positions and asked Director of Training Adam Piskura to report. Mr. Piskura stated that the position has been offered to Eric Munsell who begins service to the agency this Friday. The second Trainer position required reauthorization which was just received and that position will be formally offered to Mark Salafia who has given some preliminary indication he would accept it.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update - Commissioner Wilkinson reported that since the last Commission Meeting, things have changed drastically. The Education Committee was advised that the Governor was interested in meeting with the Committee to discuss the plans of the Regional Fire School initiative. That meeting took place several weeks ago in the Governor's office. It was a tremendous experience. The Governor was genuinely interested in the status of the Regional Fire Schools and asked excellent questions and received even better answers from the Committee. It was a very productive meeting and the Governor proposed to the Committee that he would like to provide \$10 million in funding this year and another \$10 million next year in the State Bonding package to initiate the rehabilitation of the Regional Fire Schools. The original study that was commissioned estimated that the cost would be approximately \$60 million. The Committee felt that \$20 million was an excellent amount of money to start the process. On March 19th a press conference was held at the Willimantic Regional Fire School with over 100 attendees and representation from each regional fire school. The Governor made an official announcement that he would endorse the plan. The Committee met last Thursday and the consensus is that we need to keep this issue in the

forefront. He stated that he had copies of letters to pass out and asked Commission members to take the letters and revise them as they wish to encourage their local legislators to stay abreast of the cause. The Committee will try to attempt to schedule a meeting with leaderships of both the Senate and the House because they are the key people to making sure this Bonding Bill passes.

Mr. Morrisette emphasized the need to keep this issue in the forefront especially considering the fact that the Legislative Session is more than half over. He stated that the Committee is very willing and able to work together to prioritize the various initiatives to ensure that each entity is addressed and that the fire service as a whole benefits from the investment. Commissioner Wilkinson added that he would like the Commission to approve writing of some letters to key individuals.

Moving to item 4c.) Legislative Update – Mr. Morrisette indicated that an updated legislative tracking chart was distributed this morning. He asked if there were any questions on any proposed bill. He asked Commissioner Kowalski to update the Commission on the Fire Marshal package which is fairly substantial.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that the Fire Marshals are on track to adopt a Fire Prevention Code for the State of Connecticut. They will work with and augment the duties and responsibilities including Fire Chiefs. As the involvement increases, the adoption is scheduled for January 2005 however, he does not feel we will make that date depending on the type of work there is. The intent is to eliminate a lot of the statutory requirements and replace them with regulations that could be changed periodically as needed. The Joint Council has spoken favorably on this issue and he encourages all the organizations to support this endeavor. The legislature wants to get this through the House and Senate and we hope it could be as early as this Thursday or Friday. It is currently in the Government Administration and Elections Committee and hopefully it will be out by tomorrow. He again encouraged all to support the endeavor as it would be to our collective advantage.

Mr. Morrisette reminded the Commission that Fire Service Day at the Capitol is scheduled for April 21st. Plans are still being finalized. It is expected to be an extremely busy day at the Capitol as there is a special event being planned to celebrate Husky Day. He encouraged Commission members to take the opportunity to come out, contact their local legislators prior to attending and invite them down to visit some of the tables that are staffed by the various organizations represented here on the Commission. In addition, there is a planned Chili tasting contest. They will be looking for a number of Fire Departments or individual firefighters to submit entries. Legislators will vote for their favorites. The contest will be held in LOB Room 2600 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. He stated that there are a lot of events being planned for that day and hopefully everyone will take advantage and use it as a tool to bring attention to our needs.

Commissioner Nicol asked about status of Substitute Bill 5510 An act concerning payments to Volunteer Fire Companies for calls on certain highways.

Mr. Morrisette stated that at the Press Conference on March 19th in Willimantic, Representative Linda Orange made a point to bring forth the issue to the Governor. He stated that he knew the bill had a lot of support but did not know the status at this time.

Commissioner Nicol asked who introduced the bill. Mr. Morrisette replied that it was a representative from the Wallingford area. Commissioner Nicol asked if there were any other bills like this one.

Mr. Morrisette replied to his knowledge this was the only one. Commissioner Nicol stated that he noticed the language indicated payment to Volunteer Departments. He suggested that if we were asked about it we should voice that the bill should include Career Departments as well.

Moving to item 4d.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrisette gave an update on the Memorandum of Agreement with Department of Social Services (DSS). He stated that the MOA was finally signed off last week. The letter that will be sent to eligible Fire Companies is being finalized and will be mailed later in the week. The exact value of each voucher will be \$600. We have followed the recommendations of the Commission and the Business Office has done their best to identify the Fire Companies that have participated in the program over the past 5 years. Peter O’Neil in the Business Office has been working on an accounting strategy to ensure funding is managed properly. We will have until the close of the calendar year for the Fire Companies to utilize the Credit Voucher for agency services.

Moving to item 4e.) Certification Update – Director of Certification Piechota gave an update to the Commission. He stated that the Commission is due for a re-accreditation site visit by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) this calendar year. Preparations are underway to prepare for that. It will probably be in the August/September timeframe. At that time, we will apply for re-accreditation by IFSAC of all existing levels and any new levels that we don’t currently possess for which we are prepared for. The level of Rescue Technician is being worked on. A task force has been formulated to make recommendations to the Commission, specifically on levels to certify, testing process and any training requirements that may be needed. The next meeting is scheduled for next week and the hope is that a recommendation can be presented to the Commission possibly as early as April.

He also stated that as directed by the Commission, his Division has begun scheduling site visits to observe Live Burn evolutions associated with locally administered Firefighter training programs and those of the Regional Fire Schools. We want to ensure the evaluations are being conducted properly. They are also beginning to create a process to determine how many individuals are signed-off for live fire as a result of actual incidents versus training.

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist 1 is a new level of certification the Division is reviewing in preparation for offering. The NFPA sets the requirements of the level but the task force will determine how those requirements can be best met in Connecticut. Findings will be presented to the Commission at an upcoming meeting.

He stated that they are also working on revisions to Safety Officer. Changes to the standard require us to look closer at the differentiation between the Incident Safety and Health and Safety Officer levels. We may need to split the two and establish the recommendation that a Health and Safety Officer be fulfilling the position on the department level. Additionally, we're also reviewing a whole bunch of test banks and skill sheets.

The Committee that has been formulated by the Connecticut Fire Department Instructors Association (CFDIA) regarding Professional Development or Continuing Education for Fire Service Instructors is proceeding. Recommendations may be available for the Commission's consideration at their April meeting.

Commissioner Kowalski asked who makes up the task force for the Rescue Technician level. Mr. Piechota replied that the taskforce consists of a member of the Connecticut Career Chiefs, Connecticut Fire Chiefs, State USAR team, Regional Schools, and a representative from the Training and Certification Divisions.

Commissioner Kowalski mentioned last year there was discussion of whether to purchase a canned system versus developing our own. He asked if we are developing our own system for testing and training.

Mr. Piechota responded that for testing, we were able to avail ourselves of the testing process established by Bucks County, Pennsylvania that has been accredited nationally. This testing process was reviewed and we found that it was very comprehensive and fairly easily transferable to Connecticut. This is what we are using as a basis for our practical skills testing process. For the written examinations, we have test item banks that will be reviewed by Connecticut subject matter experts. Mr. Piskura reported that on the training side we are using curriculum and materials from Maryland and the State of Pennsylvania.

Moving to item 5a.) New Business - Mr. Morrissette stated that we have a request from the Bradley Airport Fire Department for assistance and asked Mr. Piechota to explain. Mr. Piechota stated that Chief Duffy wants his firefighters to be certified to the level of Airport Firefighter in accordance to the NFPA professional qualification standards and asked if we could assist as the certifying entity. Chief Duffy through his contacts with Westover Air Force Base would arrange for all of his firefighters to travel to their burn pits for access to all the props required by the NFPA standard. The Commission in turn would send evaluators to Westover to evaluate the practical skills proficiency. We would customize our written examination to be Bradley and Connecticut airport specific.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if there was a potential of certifying airport firefighters from other states. Mr. Piechota replied that the Commission has no authority to certify out-of-state firefighters although the Commission could extend the national certification. The Training Division is preparing a proposal to provide training in support of this initiative.

Commissioner Kowalski asked if we foresee any problems with officials from Massachusetts expressing concern with our conducting training or testing in their state. Mr. Piechota responded that he didn't think so but as a courtesy we should make contact with them to apprise them of this activity.

Commissioner Cantor asked about expenses for the Commission to do this project. Mr. Piechota replied that from his understanding the Airport Fire Department would pick up any and all expenses associated with this process. There wouldn't be any cost for the Commission to do this other than some staff time to do the manipulation of the skills sheets and to put the process together. Commissioner Cantor asked about expenses to travel to Westover. Mr. Morrisette responded that it appears Bradley has budgeted for this process.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if we could extend the national certification in addition to the state certification. Mr. Piechota replied yes and said that the Commission currently has a Pro-Board accreditation for this level.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if Mr. Piechota needed formal approval from the Commission to proceed with this process. Mr. Piechota said no, that the only difference to what we normally do is that we are traveling out of state to a federal facility to conduct the activity. We already have the levels established.

Moving to item 5b.) Hartford Circus Fire Memorial –Mr. Morrisette reported that the City of Hartford and the Hartford Fire Department has been on the road recently trying to gain support for their Hartford Circus Fire Memorial initiative. Their fundraising efforts are already in place and they are looking to dedicate a Memorial on the 60th Anniversary of the Circus Fire, July 6, 2004. They are asking for fire service support for this effort. A copy of their fundraising letter was mailed in the Commission packages. He also stated that the Commission, as an organization, did support the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial with the purchase of two bricks a number of years ago and he proposes that the Commission do the same for this effort.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson that the Commission support the Hartford Circus Fire Memorial initiative with the purchase of a brick. Motion carried.

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

Moving to item 7) Matters to be raised by Commissioners and Staff – Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he had two motions.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to send a letter to Governor Rowland thanking him for his support and commitment of funding for the Regional Fire Schools rehabilitation. Motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Kowalski to send letters to the Speaker of the House, the President Pro Temp of the Senate, and the Majority and Minor leaders of both Houses of the Legislature asking for their support and endorsement as the legislative process for the Regional Fire Schools proceeds through the process at the Capitol. Motion carried.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that he and Commissioner Ouellette have been meeting with staff to review cost concerns and price of classes. The project is on going and they are trying to pick up all the information to make sure the calendar classes and all the other classes along with budgetary concerns are brought into context. They are still working on it and anticipate coming back within the next couple of months.

Commissioner Ouellette asked for an update on the court case with John Bolton. Mr. Morrissette replied that we distributed a copy of a recent newspaper article that Commissioner Wilkinson had located in a local newspaper. There's been no change or action to the case as it relates to our agency. This issue addressed by the newspaper article appears to be unrelated to the law suit against the City of Norwalk. This is a law suit he has brought against the City of Bridgeport. We will comply with any FOI requests and any other request we may receive through the Office of the Attorney General.

Commissioner Ouellette asked about S.B. 628. Mr. Morrissette stated that to his knowledge this is just a budgetary housekeeping bill.

Commissioner Ouellette asked Mr. Piskura to update the Commission on the Hazardous Materials Technician program. He stated, as we had expected, the 200 hour course we adopted was not patronized. We had about five people that applied for it. We have a group of individuals that agitates for a more expensive Technician Program but then there are no takers for it. We continue to run the 40 hour EPA Technician program with great success. Over the past week we've probably had two or three calls requesting the program.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if we're doing anything with the Pathways Program to filter this into the Calendar Program which was not done apparently due to an oversight.

Mr. Piskura stated that the five individuals previously mentioned were offered the Pathways Program as an option. There have been about thirty people that indicated

interest in the Pathway Program to date. The majority of these people are not from the fire service they are from the private sector. There are probably about seven or eight from the fire service. As far as running the actual classes that they need, we still need curriculum master of what those classes are. For example if they need Incident Command System (ICS) we would need 15 students to run ICS and when we offer that class, can we offer it at a time and place that they can access it. There is more than one dimension to their access to the Pathway Program.

Mr. Morrissette had a follow up comment and stated that it was brought to his attention that Mr. Piechota had received a call from one of the sectors of the New Haven Area Special Hazards (NHASH) team. They are currently going through the entire 200 hour Technician Program being delivered by the Mid-Fairfield County HazMat Team. This concerns him in that this further diminishes our ability to maintain a viable program. The main point of concern is the communications between NHAS representatives and Mr. Piechota was one of inquiry about accessing certification testing services. The concern stated was about cost for testing because they are paying so much for the training. The other point is there is so much training offered in the area of Hazardous Materials and all the specialized WMD related training offered out of state. A lot of this training is offered free of charge by ODP vendors. Every week students are traveling from Connecticut to all over the country for this training or those institutions are coming into our facility and offering training that we formally offered at no charge. We cannot compete with that.

Commissioner Ouellette inquired when certifying other agencies, do we have a fee structure that we charge to fire service personnel attending outside training and should we consider that in the future.

Mr. Piechota replied that right now the process for that level would be the same as any other with no special fee. The Commission has approved charging what it costs when we have to recreate a testing process.

Commissioner Kowalski added that we are once again starting to get close again to the Freelancing issue.

Mr. Piechota stated he had two items. He said some years ago the Commission approved conducting a combination Firefighter I and II examination. The Commission said at that time that this was a blanket approval only for the Fire Academy's course. Any other same request or arrangement would be dealt with on an individual basis. We have received a request from Stamford where the Stamford Fire Rescue Department wants to run a combined Firefighter I and II program for fourteen probationary firefighters. They are asking that the Commission grant approval for us to do the combination Firefighter I and II testing for that course being done in Stamford.

Mr. Morrissette apologized for this item not being on the Agenda. He stated that the request came in after the meeting Agenda was sent out.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Wilkinson that the Commission approve the conduct of a combined Firefighter I and II certification examination for the Stamford Fire Rescue Department. After a brief discussion, the Motion carried.

Mr. Piechota mentioned that some of the discussion today brought to light a little problem the Certification Division has been wrestling with more frequently of late. It has to do with our ability to test folks for some of the higher more complex technical levels. Rescue Technician is an excellent example. The problem the Commission has is that our testing is a challenge based system. He explained that people are not required to take a training program but must document their competency in order to test for the standard. Our testing process is random sample. Because it is standards based and certification requires that all candidates be exposed to all objectives of the standard, the training component does that and then we conduct the end testing. We don't test all the objectives because that would be too difficult and fiscally challenging. We allow persons to take our test based upon the knowledge and ability they have. Rescue Technician is an extremely technical detailed document and the ability for us to test it is being stretched. We are wrestling with how people are educated to get there. We need to have a tighter control at the curriculum being used. Since it is impossible for us to test every single component of those higher levels, we have to rely on the training being conducted to get them there. The question becomes how much outside training do we accept for that purpose. We need the Commission to help us decide what will be allowed to get into that level and would a specific training program be the only way you get there. We are asking the Commission to consider formulating a subcommittee to look at the levels we do and maybe decide we are going to require some very specific training for these higher levels.

Commissioner Kowalski asked whether there are national standards that could be met that we could accept.

Mr. Piechota explained that theoretically the testing process is equivalent if you've been accredited. Each accrediting agency has demonstrated to either IFSAC or Pro-Board the ability to test every component of every standard. The curriculum and who teaches it is the key. When you get into the higher levels there is nothing out there and the concern is the level of professionalism and how well they are being taught.

Commissioners Cantor, Ouellette and Kowalski were selected to form a subcommittee to explore this issue.

Commissioner Nicol asked about our involvement in the Bridgeport fire and how the activation of the Foam Trailers went.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the Fairfield and Waterbury Foam Trailers were dispatched by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to the scene. The trailers did operate and each used a quantity of their foam. He stated that he spoke to Chief Felner of Fairfield who was elated and said the trailers operated flawlessly. One issue that came up

however, following the incident was foam replacement. This issue surfaced a few months ago when New Haven had a tanker incident and we later found out that they still had not received any replacement foam. They were told by DEP that they would provide the replacement foam as agreed in our original agreement with the host and DEP. With this incident it has been reemphasized that DEP has no set procedure in place. He also said that we had recommended to the Division of Homeland Security to utilize some of their federal funding to acquire at least two additional foam trailers as well as to provide a cache of foam at each of the host location so when a trailer is used it can be immediately refilled upon return to the fire station. There has been no action to date on that issue but the positive is that the trailers were used and operated well.

Mr. Morrissette issued an update regarding the Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Plan and how it worked during the Bridgeport tanker incident. He stated that he received a call from the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) that there may be some additional need for Mutual Aid at the Bridgeport incident. He said that he spoke to the county coordinator for Fairfield County who was in the Command Post and stated that he would get back to him if there was a need to activate the Statewide Rescue Disaster Plan. That phone call never came and Mr. Morrissette followed up the next morning.

A question and answer period followed.

Mr. Morrissette stated that an editorial that appeared in *Fire Engineering* magazine was mailed in the Commission packages. He said that Mr. Piskura received at least one request from the University of Connecticut for us to send a letter to the *Fire Engineering* requesting a retraction as there were some inaccuracies in the editorial. The only one we noticed was a statement that UCONN delivers training themselves. That is inaccurate as they work with and through partners such as the Academy. We work with the UCONN folks daily in coordinating different WMD related training activities for the Fire Service in Connecticut. Aside from that, there is a lot of other activities that UCONN does that we are not aware of. We are told continuously that different programs are coming into the state at the request of various groups. The Commission's and the Academy's role in the area of Homeland Security continues to be diminished and that is the whole essence of the editorial. We will continue to work cooperatively with the UCONN Homeland Security Education Center.

Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the Statewide Honor Guard initiative. He stated that they have been active and that the agency is supporting a number of individuals to travel to Florida to the National Honor Guard Academy in April. They also recently provided assistance in the Town of Prospect for a Line of Duty Death and were also active with the Secretary of the State's Service Awards which will go to members of Volunteer Fire Departments. There are a number of similar ceremonies that they will be involved with in the state. They are doing a fantastic job.

As a follow up to the Prospect Line of Duty Death, the Wolcott Fire School is establishing a Committee to look at the incident and at their policy and procedures. This

will be helpful to all of the Regional Fire Schools so they are seeking representatives from each of the Schools. He said that he submitted Mr. Piskura's name as the Commission's representative to serve on that Committee.

Mr. Morrissette reported that the Department of Homeland Security here within Connecticut has brought together a state working group to discuss and plan for the overall development of the strategy implementation plan. They will now decide how and where to spend the Office of Domestic Preparedness funding coming to Connecticut. A number of Fire Service people are serving on that committee and there was a meeting last Friday which he was unable to attend. He believes there is a little bit of contention right now, in that a lot of the locals are pushing that the state cut a check to them so they can purchase what they need. There are some global issues that the entire Fire Service needs to tackle as a united group. He said that he will be attending a follow-up meeting this Friday and there may be a consensus vote on this issue at the meeting. He asked members for their input and opinion on the issue prior to Friday.

A brief question and answer period followed.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Stankye to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM

Dated: _____

Edward F. Haber, Secretary
Commission on Fire
Prevention and Control