

January 27, 1999

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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 27, 1999 COMMISSION MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Chairman Carozza with the following members present: Commissioners Chatfield, Haber, Milewski, Munkenbeck, and Nicol. Commissioners Andresen and Johnson arrived at 7:20 p.m. Commissioners Gomeau, Kowalski, McCarthy, Mullen and Vendetta were excused. Staff members Keane, Morrissette, O'Neil, Ouellette, Piechota and Piskura were present.

Guests to the meeting were identified as Mrs. John Andresen, Chief Clint Brandien, Prospect Fire Department, Chief Larry Black, Watertown Fire Department, Charles Stankye, President, CT State Firefighters Association, Mark Fortier, Prospect Fire Department and Donald Charette, President, New Haven County Fire Emergency Plan.

Due to the lack of a quorum, the meeting proceeded on an informational basis until 7:20 p.m. when a quorum was attained.

A welcome was extended to the Commission by Commissioner Chatfield and Chief Clint Brandien of the Prospect Fire Department.

Mr. Morrissette asked the other guests to the meeting to introduce themselves.

Chairman Carozza called for discussions or questions on the November 24, 1998 minutes.

Chairman Carozza called for discussions or questions on the Staff Reports for the period of November 15 - December 14, 1998 and December 15, 1998 - January 14, 1999.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the impact of Y2K on the agency.

Mr. Morrissette asked Mr. Piechota to give an update of the Y2K efforts.

Mr. Piechota gave an update of activities in preparation for the year 2000 and indicated that he did not think the agency had any computer issues. He reported that the agency completed a Y2K systems report and submitted it to Department of Public Works (DPW) and Department of Information Technology (DOIT). He stated that in January he met with a consultant hired by DOIT who reviewed the agency's hardware and software to make sure that all systems are Y2K compliant. All the agency's hardware has been certified to be Y2K compliant. DOIT is reviewing our software and to date have not indicated if it is Y2K compliant.

Having reached a quorum the meeting returned to the normal order of business.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the Staff Report for the period of November 15, 1998 - December 14, 1998. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the Staff Report for the period of December 15, 1998 - January 14, 1999. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the minutes of the November 24, 1998 meeting. Motion Carried.

Moving to item 4 a.) Mr. Morrissette gave a facility update. He stated that he was recently notified by Chief John Duffy of the Bradley Airport Fire Department that the Department of Transportation has hired an Engineer to perform an assessment for possible modification to some of the Academy's exterior burn props to ensure compliance with the FAA's training compliance requirements.

Work has commenced on some Administrative Office modifications. The next time Commissioners visit the Academy they will see that the reception window into the main lobby area has been opened up. The agency is working closely with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to obtain estimates for some of the other work identified staff as discussed at previous meetings. Also the deficiencies identified for the training tower have been solidified and forwarded to DPW. Work is contingent upon funding.

Moving to item 4 b.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the 1-800 FIRE LINE program. This program has had some press coverage over the past two months which resulted in a few additional calls. To date the line has received over 110 calls with 65 being referred to local departments. The City of Danbury notified us they were running ads within the local newspaper and PSA's on the local radio station seeking volunteers. They are using the 800 FIRE LINE phone number in their advertisements.

Moving to item 4 c.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on plans for scheduling a strategic planning session. He stated that he has interviewed different consultants to help facilitate the process. As recent as today he indicated that he met with a consultant who he believes will work out well for the agency. He is trying to schedule a meeting for sometime next week with the division directors and the Chairman of the Commission to develop a final plan. He stated that he was looking for feedback from Commissioners on how best to reach out to the fire service community for their participation.

A question and answer period followed regarding the establishment of a schedule.

Mr. Stankye stated that it would be a good idea to schedule both day and evening public hearings to reach out to the fire service community.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Chatfield recommending that both day and evening public forums be scheduled for input from the fire service for the purpose of strategic planning. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4 d.) Mr. Morrissette gave an overview of his attendance at the Governor's Staff meeting. The theme of the meeting was that agencies will be held accountable for their spending. Also, the issues in terms of budget constraints should never reach up into the Administration.

Commissioner Nicol stated that the presence of the State Fire Administrator at these meetings may open up some doors and is definitely a step in the right direction.

Moving to item 4 e.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the Tobacco Settlement Funding. After hearing that Lt. Governor Jodi Rell would be serving as the Task Force Chair reviewing how the tobacco settlement funds should be spent, he stated that he sent her a similar letter to that sent to Attorney General Blumenthal. In this letter he asked her to consider the collateral problem of fires caused by smoking material and the benefits of funding public fire education programs on both a state and local level. To date he has not heard from Lt. Governor Rell. A bill has been proposed (House Bill # 6567) introduced by Rep. Stone and titled "*An Act Concerning the Distribution of the Tobacco Settlement Funds.*" This bill states that a portion of the Tobacco Settlement Funds be allocated to local fire departments for equipment, training and fire prevention purposes. Grassroots support will be needed for this Bill to succeed.

Moving to item 4 f.) J. Faherty Casey Award presentation - Because of the absence of Mr. Ouellette, Chairman Carozza asked that this item be tabled for the next Commission meeting.

Moving to item 5 a.) under New Business Mr. Morrissette gave an overview of the proposed legislation for 1999 and which bills should be of special interest to the Commission. Of the bills proposed, approximately 70 are Fire Service/EMS related.

A discussion period followed on various proposed bills relating to fire service.

Moving to item 5 b.) Mr. Piskura spoke about a request made by a fire chief at a fire service organization meeting to borrow a piece of fire apparatus from the Academy because two of his apparatus had been decertified. Mr. Piskura stated that he indicated to the fire chief that the Academy had an apparatus available but first he needed to check the policies and procedures. In the interim a spare device turned up for this community. Mr. Piskura stated that the Commission should look at the feasibility and/or establishment of a policy pertaining to the leasing of agency equipment. We are lacking space at the Academy for storage particularly for rolling stock. This was an opportunity for the Academy to have a win win situation. With no classes scheduled for this device we could have loaned our apparatus out and at the same time gained floor space and a heated shelter area while at the same time picking up some revenue for the rental. The issue is being presented to the Commission at this time for consideration.

A discussion period followed with Commissioners Johnson, Chatfield, Munkenbeck and Nicol expressing various concerns and reservations on the leasing of agency equipment to fire departments in the state.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Nicol recommending a policy be developed on the leasing of agency equipment and present such policy at the next Commission meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 c.) Mr. Piskura reported on a current effort to rewrite the Fire Officer I through IV curriculums. This effort has been undertaken by a group of individuals under the guidance of Chief Instructor Roger Sylvestre. Mr. Piskura indicated that he is very pleased with the progress to date and the new approach to writing curriculum used by the committee. A report from the committee's activities to date will appear in the next edition of the 1ST Responder News. In less than ten months we should begin to see the fruits of their labor.

Moving to item 5 d.) Mr. Keane gave an update of the Industrial Training Program and Advisory Board. He reported that industrial training increased by 20% over prior year. The Industrial Advisory Board has added 10 new members bringing the total membership to 17. This group brings with them a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm which is very refreshing. Many good suggestions have come out of the first two meetings. New training calendars for winter and spring have been mailed to over 3,500 recipients. The next major event being planned is a two-day seminar on OSHA regulations to be delivered at three different sites in the state and the target audience will be small businesses.

Moving to item 5 e.) Mr. Piechota reported that the scheduled International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) site visit has had to be pushed back a few months. The reason is IFSAC's guidance concerning the requirements for a site visit, includes a recommendation that an entity put together an internal site visit team to review policies and procedures that exist against the IFSAC requirements. Because the agency has just two years ago gone through a reaccreditation from the Professional Qualification's Board, we had a pretty good handle on what our system looked like and we felt that we were internally able to perform an objective review against IFSAC's requirements. Under that premise we had asked that the IFSAC site visit be scheduled sometime in March or April. About a month ago we received a letter stating the information contained within IFSAC's guidance was incorrect, that it was not a voluntary procedure rather mandatory that an internal site visit team be established. What we need to do is put together about a five or six person team to review our entire program against IFSAC's guidance. That team will then recommend back to the Director of Certification and the Commission what needs to be done to the system to bring it up to IFSAC standards. They will then prepare a report which will be sent to IFSAC. We are looking at a June or July time frame for the IFSAC site visit. Mr. Piechota stated that he was putting together a review team and Commissioners Kowalski and Munkenbeck have agreed to serve on this team.

For some time the Certification Division has been taking a look at the certification examination policies and procedures to be ensure they are accurately and effectively serving the fire service. In looking at the written exam scoring policy we see that a significant number of candidates particularly FF-I and II and even in some of the higher levels score below 60 on the written examination. With this in mind a proposal to modify the scoring policy was distributed.

Recognizing that the fire service is becoming more highly technical in nature upon each new edition of an NFPA Professional Qualification Standard and that individuals who perform duties in the fire service of Connecticut are required to possess a greater degree of knowledge and competency based upon those Standards, this proposal is designed to revise the Commission's Certification Examination process to ensure the knowledge, skills and abilities of Connecticut's Fire Service personnel.

The proposed policy revision will allow only a single retake of an examination and will factor in the individual's previous failing grade. In addition, it will require any individual who scores less than 60 percent on an examination to seek assistance or retraining prior to taking an examination.

The current certification examination policy requires that examinations be divided into sections to ensure that individuals be proficient in all subject areas of the respective Standard. These Standards contained up to 23 sections (in the case of FF-I to the 1992 edition of NFPA 1001). The newly revised Standard format has dramatically reduced the number of subject areas so the current procedure of dividing the examination into sections will no longer accomplish its intended objective. It is the opinion of the Commission staff

that an individual's competency in all subject areas be adequately examined without the need for examination sections. This policy revision will eliminate the requirement for examination sections.

Retests may be administered for any examination score between 60 percent and less than 70 percent. If a candidate has scored below 60 percent on an examination, there is no retest opportunity they would need to reapply. The candidate may exercise the retest option one time for each examination. The candidate must retest within 120 days of an examination. The final score after retesting will be determined by averaging the failed examination score and retest score. The average final score must be a minimum of 70 percent.

A discussion period followed with a number of Commissioners expressing concern.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Andresen recommending that the Commissioners take additional time to review the Certification Testing Proposal and place on the agenda for the next meeting for a decision. Motion carried.

Moving to item 6) Comments from the public - Chief Larry Black from the Watertown Fire Department addressed the Commission regarding a situation with a skills examination for one of his firefighter recruits. Recently a recruit, a female firefighter who attended all training classes in Wolcott had a problem with one of the stations on the skills exam. The skills exam required her to raise a 35' three section ladder. This was a three person raise but when the candidate ended up in the position of having to extend the ladder fully she could not physically pull the halyard hard enough to extend the ladder. She was given two chances to perform but she failed the station. The other two firefighters on the station passed. He stated that he did not want special attention for this firefighter. She is on her own preparing herself to retake the exam by working on building up her upper body strength. The Chief felt that firefighters are taught to work as a team, so when you have a team effort to do a skill the whole team should pass or the whole team should fail. Chief Black asked the Commission to give some consideration to this matter and take a look at the whole process of testing.

A discussion period followed on the current procedures for certification testing.

Mr. Charles Stankye spoke about the Derby Fire School's big demand for the 2Q Program and the problem with individuals having to bring their own apparatus for testing. Another concern expressed in the course evaluations was the requirement of the candidates having to go out on the road and drive for 120 hours.

Mr. Morrissette asked Mr. Piskura to research this particular issue and report back to Mr. Stankye.

Commissioner Munkenbeck gave a update on curriculum activities undertaken by the Community Technical Colleges. He reported that the Norwalk Technical College has agreed to run a FF-I class on a test basis starting this summer. This class is targeting people who otherwise would not be able to get FF-I in the communities that do not have volunteer fire departments. This program will also be open to high school students. As part of this there will be a new certificate program called pre-fire service training which goes in accordance with the federal guidelines for the school to career program.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if the Academy had given any consideration to offering a program relating to the Good Samaritan Law which was passed last year.

Mr. Morrisette stated that an Academy Lead Instructor in the EMS area did bring this issue to our attention as the bill was going through the process.

Mr. Piskura stated that the Academy does offer this training internally as part of the recruit program. Quite frankly the Academy does not have many requests for this outside of that program.

Mr. Morrisette stated that Conn OSHA will be advertising through the Connecticut Law Journal very shortly the date for a public hearing on the Respiratory Protection Standard. This public hearing has been delayed several times. The Governor's office just approved this Regulation to move forward to the public hearing phase.

Mr. Morrisette gave a budget update. Notification was received today that the agency's budget presentation before the full Appropriations' Committee has been scheduled for February 24. A request was made through OPM and approval received to not follow through with the ACE/PONSI accreditation for training programs. The Director of Training is working with the State Technical Colleges to work out an agreement to provide the same benefit for little to no money. This effort has made available about \$14,000 for other purposes.

Mr. Piskura reported on a meeting with James Lee Witt, Director of FEMA in Washington, D.C. regarding the status of the recommendations in the Blue Ribbon Report.

Mr. Piskura also reported about a meeting with Mr. Bill Terry, who is the only fire service representative on a newly created National Domestic Preparedness Office. This office was created to coordinate distribution of the billions of dollars going into terrorism/weapons of mass destruction training. Two FBI agents in New Haven have been tasked with serving as the information link for the State of Connecticut. They will use the Fire Academy and Regional Fire Schools to communicate information to the Connecticut fire service. Approximately \$360,000 is coming to Connecticut in 1999 for the express purpose of first responders purchasing equipment. All first responders (i.e. EMS, Fire, Civil Preparedness and Law Enforcement) can apply for this money. It is absolutely necessary that the State fire service community let Public Safety know that they also need access to this grant money.

Commissioner Chatfield thanked the Commission for holding its meeting in Prospect.

Chairman Carozza presented a "Certificate of Appreciation" to Commissioner Chatfield and Chief Brandien of the Volunteer Fire Department of Prospect.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to adjourn the meeting.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Dated: _____

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

MOTIONS

Commission Meeting - January 27, 1999

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the Staff Report for the period of November 15, 1998 - December 14, 1998. Motion carried.

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A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the minutes of the November 24, 1998 meeting. Motion Carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Chatfield recommending that both day and evening public forums be scheduled for input from the fire service for the purpose of strategic planning. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Nicol recommending a policy be developed on the leasing of agency equipment and present such policy at the next Commission meeting. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Andresen recommending that the Commissioners take additional time to review the Certification Testing Proposal and place on the agenda for the next meeting for a decision. Motion carried.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Chatfield and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to adjourn the meeting.

STAFF FOLLOW-UP REQUIRED

Strategic Planning Session - A motion was made recommending that both day and evening public forums be scheduled for input from the fire service community.

J. Faherty Casey Award presentation - Because of the absence of Mr. Ouellette, Chairman Carozza asked that this item be tabled for the next Commission meeting.

Leasing of Agency Equipment Policy - A motion was made recommending a policy be developed on the leasing of agency equipment and present such policy at the next Commission meeting.

Certification Testing Proposal - A motion was made recommending that the Commissioners take additional time to review the Certification Testing Proposal and place it on the agenda for the next meeting for a decision.

Certification Skills Examination - Chief Larry Black, Watertown Fire Department asked the Commission to give some consideration to this matter and take a look at the whole process of testing.

2Q Program - Mr. Charles Stankye spoke about the Derby Fire School's big demand for the 2Q Program and the problem with individuals having to bring their own apparatus for

testing. Another concern expressed in the course evaluations was the requirement of the candidates having to go out on the road and drive for 120 hours.

Mr. Morrisette asked Mr. Piskura to research this particular issue and report back to Mr. Stankye.