

Connecticut State Firefighters Association
Educational Committee Meeting
Wethersfield, June 21, 2001

Present:

Burrville Fire School – Richard Winn
Derby Fire School – Peter Wols
Eastern Ct. Fire School – Lloyd Niles, Al Hawkins
Hartford Fire School – Chet Haber, Tom Post
Middlesex Fire School – Fred Dudek
Wolcott Fire School – Bob Massicotte
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control – Commissioner, James Wilkinson
Connecticut Fire Academy – State Fire Administrator, Jeff Morrissette

There were no representatives in attendance from the New Haven Regional Fire Academy or the Joseph S. Elias Fire Training Center of Fairfield.

Bob Massicotte led a discussion on the mission statement for this committee. A draft was distributed and comments were solicited. There was discussion about whether the history of this committee needed to be chronicled in the mission statement. There was consensus that the mission statement should remain as proposed.

Mission Statement

The Educational Committee of the Connecticut State Firefighters' Association is made up of representatives from the Regional Fire Schools, The Connecticut State Firefighters' Association, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control and the Connecticut Fire Academy and is organized in a collaborative effort to support the firefighters in the State of Connecticut by:

- Promoting the regional fire schools as a means of providing fire fighter and fire officer training at the local level;
- Supporting the efforts of the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to provide quality training through the Connecticut Fire Academy;
- Developing and promoting short and long range plans for capitol improvements to the State's regional fire schools;
- Developing recommendations for standardizing the delivery of fire fighter and fire officer certification training at the State's regional fire schools;
- Coordinating training initiatives between the regional fire schools and the Connecticut Fire Academy;
- Providing a forum for the exchange of ideas relating to fire fighter training in the State.

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There was a general discussion about the agenda for the next meeting of this committee. Items for inclusion include:

Standardize listing of programs for regional school delivery

- Which programs are ready for local delivery?

Provide listing of programs for Connecticut Fire Academy delivery.

- Jeff Morrisette stated that he feels that the Fire Service Instructor I program should remain under the control of the Connecticut Fire Academy.

There was a discussion about the contrast between the funding for police and fire training in Connecticut.

- There are approximately 9,000 police officers in Connecticut. The C.S.P. employs nine full-time instructors with a compliment of adjunct instructors. The C.S.P. is currently looking for \$40,000,000 of funding for expansion of their training facilities.
- By contrast there are 30,000 firefighters in Connecticut. No money has been forthcoming for capital improvements and the operational funding is at nearly twenty-year-old funding levels.

Jeff Morrisette suggested that this committee develop a report of its activity for printing in the convention booklet.

There was an update on the state funding for a study of regional fire school facilities. There is currently \$200,000 allocated for studying all eight regional fire schools. There was concern expressed that this committee should meet with the “study committee” in order to communicate about our current and anticipated needs. Jeff Morrisette suggested that after the regional fire school study is complete that we should request a public hearing to solicit input.

Jim Wilkinson indicated that he had discussed the efforts by the regional school directors with Lt. Governor Rell. Jim reported that she appeared supportive.

There was a discussion about the disparities between the operational budgets of the various regional fire schools. The feeling of the committee was that there should be some standardization of the courses offered by the regional fire schools and of the associated fee structure. It was pointed out that course fees included various incidental expenses at the different schools. The Eastern Connecticut Fire School includes the cost of catered lunches with all fees. Other schools provide for a varied array of textbooks and instructional materials with their fees.

The discussion turned to how the various schools deal with operational expense overruns.

- The Hartford County School has turned to the county fire service organization to fund operational overruns.
- The Middlesex Fire School has also turned to the county fire service organization to help balance their budget.
- The Wolcott School has raised their tuition rates to balance their budget.

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- The Eastern Connecticut Fire School is not operated within a county organization. The focus service area encompasses three counties; the actual service area includes five counties and Rhode Island. This leaves no possibility of seeking financial assistance from any parent organization.

There was also discussion about the expense budget building process. It appears that the existing figures have placed some regional schools at a disadvantage. The annual budgets have historically been based on the budgets for preceding years. There has been neither a formal process of reviewing requests for additional funding nor any process in place for evaluating the reasonableness of any such requests. Under the existing system, it appears that requests from regional fire schools have been neither solicited nor considered for several years. There was discussion that some standards need to be developed to tie the operational budgets to a combination of actual operating expenses along with the training activity levels of each of the regional schools. We need to work with the President and Treasurer of the C.S.F.A. to arrive at some consensus of how the budgeting process should work. Questions were also raised regarding the Public Act 83-517 reporting requirements. It seems that each school is submitting different information in various formats. We should develop consensus about what information is necessary. It was suggested that we attempt to meet with the Treasurer of the C.S.F.A. and a representative from the state comptroller's office to discuss this.

Bob Massicotte suggested that a future agenda item should include developing a consensus of how our operational budgets are developed and disbursed. The delivery of the Firefighter I and Firefighter II programs should also become standardized. There is currently a disparity in the number of hours for delivery as well as the course curriculum and the student participant materials provided. Through evaluation of our current programs we should be able to identify the methods of delivery that are most successful.

Submitted by,

Al Hawkins