



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



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**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 27, 2010 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Hilbert, Nicol, Ross, Stankye and Walsh.

Staff members Lewis, Lewandowski, Morrissette and O'Hurley were present.

Attendees took a moment to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Chairman Carozza called on State Fire Administrator Morrissette for an introduction of guests.

Mr. Morrissette identified staff members Mark Lewandowski, Deputy Director of Training and Ed O'Hurley, Certification Coordinator. There were no other guests at the meeting.

Moving to item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the March 30, 2010 meeting and the February 23, 2010 meeting.

Chairman Carozza due said due to lack of a quorum, the vote of approval will be delayed until a quorum is attained. The meeting proceeded on an informational basis.

He asked if there were any questions on the Minutes of the March 30, 2010 meeting and the February 23, 2010.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports March 15, 2010 – April 14, 2010 and February 15, 2010 – March 14, 2010.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update – Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the budget. He said Commissioners are aware there is another week and a half left until the legislative session ends and they are working on mid-year budget adjustments for FY11. There is a proposed budget bill in place, subject to change, with some minor reductions in Personal Services and Other Expenses accounts as well as significant reductions to the Entry Level Training Reimbursement and Supplemental Grant accounts. He said as discussed last month the reduction to the Entry Level Training Reimbursement account would possibly put us in a situation where we may not be able to pay all expected claims next year. He said as of right now we have to wait and see what occurs at the Capitol with the proposed changes. In addition to that there was a Deficit Mitigation Plan (DMP) passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor for the current fiscal year that will require action on the part of this body to address targeted cuts to the Supplemental Grant Award program. The DMP reductions will impact any outstanding balances that remain with fire companies that elected to utilize vouchers. He said we would be looking at an across the board 35% reduction of any balance that is currently remaining. He distributed a sheet outlining the reduction and said we would

have a more detailed discussion when other Commissioners arrive. He said we have to take immediate action on this in order to achieve the required reductions. The target reduction that we have to meet is not huge but it will impact those fire companies with significant balances. The 35% proposed reduction really is not equitable but it's the only option at the present time unless Commissioners have other ideas. Mr. Morrissette also reported that we expect to lapse a significant amount of money in the Entry Level Training monies this fiscal year. The Executive Secretary is working closely with the Certification Registrar to process pending claims immediately upon receipt of certification scores. We cannot pay claims for individuals certified this fiscal year with next years funding. He said it's going to be very busy towards the end of the FY. He asked if Commissioners had any questions.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Nicol reported that the Committee met on April 22, 2010 in Wethersfield at Co. No. 3. Project Manager Don Ouillette reported that the Willimantic Fire School would need a phase 1 environmental study and the State would do any required clean up. However, if they find any major issues, then they may just eliminate the bad site areas. Once the site survey is done, then they will develop an estimate for purchasing the property. There is no word back yet from DEP on the clean-up status of the Burrville Fire School site. The New Haven project appears to be moving right along. Hartford Fire School to be advertised April 23, 2010 with a bid opening scheduled for May 16. Mr. Ouillette said that the Hartford Project would not make the May Bond Commission meeting. Possibly it could make the June meeting. The Commission's Certification Director Thom McGowan informed the group on the new Haz Mat Program that was developed. A general conversation was held regarding the program. Ted Schroll legislative Representative for the CSFA provided an update on several legislative bills. Mr. Schroll reported that the latest proposed bond bill indicates a reduction of \$2 million from the previously approved Regional Fire Schools Bonding Program. The instructor indemnification proposal was approved by the Senate and was forwarded to the House of Representatives. Mr. Schroll indicated that the Regional Fire School Bill (S.B. 195) was amended to include a provision to add the Danbury Fire School. He indicated that a last minute glitch prevented a vote from being taken on the bill. He also indicated that the vote delay should be temporary. Chairman Hawkins circulated a Bond approval appeal draft letter to Committee members for their input that he had prepared. The group agreed that the letter, as revised, should be distributed to the fire service for their use in preparing personal appeal letters to the State Bond Commission members. The next meeting is scheduled to be held on May 27, 2010.

Commissioner Nicol said Commissioner Stankye was also in attendance at the meeting and asked if he wanted to add anything.

Commissioner Stankye said the only thing he wanted to add is that the Fairfield Regional School is going to try to get the planning funding on one of the Bond Commission meeting agendas.

Mr. Morrissette added that during Fire Service Day at the Capitol he had an opportunity to speak at length with Department of Public Works Commissioner Curtis. He said the original thought is that there may not be a May Bond Commission meeting and one may not be held for a long time. If that occurs it could put us in jeopardy regarding some of the projects that are in the hopper currently specifically Hartford, Burrville, Fairfield as well as property in Willimantic. He said with the unknowns of exact funding needs for the Hartford, Willimantic, Fairfield and Burrville projects whether there was consideration of adding a place holder, in

lieu of an exact figure, at the next Bond Commission meeting. He said she appeared committed to ensuring all options were considered and she fully understands the timing issues and concerns on the part of the schools.

Commissioner Nicol added that we started out asking for \$40 million this year and it was reduced to \$5 million and now they are taking away \$2 million that was already approved. He also said there appears to be sufficient Bond money to do the projects that were just mentioned; purchase of the Willimantic property, construction for the Hartford facility and the design funds for Burrville and Fairfield.

Moving to item 4c.) FY 10 Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrissette suggested we delay this item for later in the meeting when a quorum is attained as we need to take action.

Moving to item 4d.) FY 10 Entry Level Training Reimbursement Update – Mr. Morrissette reported that we continue to project a lapse well over \$200,000 in the current FY. He said the proposed figures for next year are significantly reduced so we would anticipate a need for some policy changes if the proposed reductions are enacted.

Moving to item 4e.) 2010 Legislative Session Update – Mr. Morrissette said Commissioners should have received an updated bill tracking chart today. He said he had mistakenly sent out the wrong chart on the listserv last evening and it would be corrected with today's transmittal of messages. He said the only specific agency bill is SB 195 regarding the future designation of regional fire schools. He said that seemed to be moving forward quite well and it was on the calendar but now on hold. There was an amendment to the bill to add Danbury as a regional fire school which we're all aware the CSFA Education Committee approved last year. He said there was no funding added with the caveat of an adjustment if additional funding for the other schools was increased, then there would be consideration of funding for Danbury. He said it's our understanding that the amendment has caused some issues in the Public Safety Committee, the amendment was offered by a Republican and the concern by the Committee Chairs was that it wasn't vetted through Representative Godfrey who is the Danbury State Representative and in a leadership role within the General Assembly. Mr. Morrissette said in talking with Chief Herald of Danbury yesterday, he indicated that he has had difficulty in communicating with his Representative for the past five months. CSFA Legislative Representative did report a brief encounter with Rep. Godfrey who was not even aware of the amendment. Mr. Morrissette said Mr. Schroll sent him an email this morning stating that because it's an agency bill he's actually going to be stepping back. He also said he spoke with the Governor's Director of Legislative Affairs and the Governor is actually considering vetoing the bill, if it does pass, because of concerns that the language allowing the Governor to make the final approval of funding for future schools was not included. He said it was included in the testimony he presented at the public hearing and it was included in the discussion which he had with Senator Stillman several weeks ago. He also said the Governor's office did send a Memo to the General Assembly's leadership outlining their concerns and the proposed amendments that they would like to see. Mr. Morrissette said what seemed to be a simple bill to address some technical adjustments as well as to look at a more strategic planning process in terms of designating future schools has run into some political problems. He also said the other bill we're following is SB 151 which is the act limiting the indemnification of fire service instructors which seems to be moving along very well without any major concerns to date. He asked Commissioner Ross if he wanted to comment on SB 312.

Commissioner Kowalski arrived at 9:44 am.

Commissioner Ross stated that more than likely he thinks SB 312 will pass and what it basically directs them to do in the Office of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (OSET) is to conduct a study of all the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP's) centers. He said the bill does two things; one to do a study that is due back to the legislature by June 30, 2011 and then they will adopt whatever the recommendations are of that study. He said Senator Stillman has asked that they commit approximately a quarter million dollars of OSET money to do the study. The other piece of it is once they come up with the recommendations based on whatever legislation is created; it would really direct that if you haven't adopted what the recommendations are of the study by 2016 you can keep your PSAP but you would lose state funding. It would not allow them to subsidize PSAP's. He said if the bill fails, the E-911 Commission at their last meeting voted to do the study anyways. He said their intent is to make sure that as the study is being done, all disciplines that are affected by PSAP centers are engaged in the discussion; police, fire and EMS. He also said they had met with Senator Stillman about six weeks ago and requested that the focus not be on population but rather call volume because they felt that was a better way to look at it. He said there really was no change in the language that he was aware of although another group met with her individually and said that she was going to adopt some changes to the language but he hasn't been able to find anything. He said they will be watching it and if the bill doesn't go through it would be a better thing for us because it would take the timeline out and we wouldn't have a ticking clock holding us to the June 30th deadline. He said one way or another there will be a study and he encourages Commissioners to be engaged in the process as much as they can when the study is released.

Mr. Morrisette added that it appeared PSAP's serving a population greater than 70,000 would be exempt from the regionalization requirement.

Commissioner Mitchell arrived at 9:50 am and a quorum was attained.

A brief discussion followed with some questions and answers.

Commissioner Murphy arrived at 9:55am.

Moving to item 4f.) eLearning Subcommittee – Mr. Morrisette stated that Director of Certification McGowan had been working with a few Commissioners on the eLearning Committee and there were some adjustments to policy proposed. He said he's not sure if there is any additional information forthcoming.

Moving to item 4g.) Entry Level Training Reimbursement Policy Issue – Mr. Morrisette said as a follow-up for those Commissioners that weren't present at last month's meeting in Meriden we did have a discussion about a formal policy change to the Entry Level Training Reimbursement program to address individuals who may pay their own tuition. In some cases they may be reimbursed by their sponsoring department and others are not. We also encounter this from time to time with volunteers who attend the Recruit Firefighter Training program and pay their own way. They are trying to make themselves more marketable, and if selected by a career department they typically would save that municipality significant funding in overtime coverage while they are detailed to training. He said the present policy in place does not specifically address this situation rather directs reimbursements to be made to a fire department

or municipality. He said there was a discussion last month which evolved into a broader discussion about restriction of training for non-affiliated personnel. He said he wanted to see if there is any follow up discussion or questions before he presents some language, hopefully next month to address a change.

Chairman Carozza said if there are no objections he would like to return to agenda items 2 and 3 on the agenda before moving to new business.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Murphy to approve the minutes of the March 30, 2010 and February 23, 2010 meeting. Motion carried.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Nicol and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Murphy to approve the staff report for the period of March 15, 2010 – April 14, 2010 and February 15, 2010 – March 14, 2010. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza said we would also return to agenda item 4a and 4c unfinished business.

Mr. Morrissette distributed a sheet with FY 2010 supplemental grant program information. He said with the Deficit Mitigation Plan (DMP) passed by the General Assembly the Supplemental Grant program account was reduced by another \$22,500 which was in addition to an earlier rescission of \$9,750. He stated we began with an appropriation of \$195,000. Due to the rescission and the DMP our total available budget as of today is \$162,750, we've made direct payments to eligible fire companies totaling \$102,000 and vouchers used to date total \$34,924.76. He said money that is still available to us totals \$25,112.24. We've paid out a number of vouchers to date but we still have close to \$50,000 outstanding and unused and include approximately 10 fire companies who have not responded to our repeated request for selecting a grant payment option. Therefore, he is proposing that any fire company who has not submitted a request form as of today will become ineligible for any funding this fiscal year and we'll reduce the outstanding vouchers by \$9,540 leaving a balance of \$38,541.24. Further he proposed a reduction of approximately 35% for all outstanding vouchers as of this date. He said fire companies that have a larger voucher balance will obviously be impacted significantly more than others with smaller balances. Mr. Morrissette reported he is certainly willing to discuss any options others may see.

Commissioner Nicol asked if we would be reducing the funding of each fire company by a little less than \$400.

Mr. Morrissette replied no. He said we're only reducing the balance of their voucher so as an example there may be some with only a \$5 balance remaining where someone else may have \$1,211 remaining but if you reduce the total amount by 35% it will achieve our goal. Thus, some will be impacted significantly more than others. Mr. Morrissette also said when he had mailed the first letter to fire companies back in September 2009 he had encouraged them to spend their funding sooner than later because there is no telling if and when a sweep could occur.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ross to approve the State Fire Administrator's plan to reduce the LAH Supplemental Grant program outstanding balances by 35% to achieve the agency's target reduction. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5a.) EMS Advisory Board Update – Mr. Morrissette said he was expecting Brenda Murphy-Tenney, the Commission’s representative on the OEMS Advisory Board here today as she had some concerns she wanted to raise with the Commission and give an update on the proposed regulations changes. He said there is still some time to submit comments. Commissioners were forwarded the draft regulations many months ago but it’s his understanding Mrs. Tenney has not heard back from anyone. He said she has presented a number of proposed changes and those were vetted through the Career Chiefs who are in agreement. He said the Career Chiefs Association has a subcommittee which deals with EMS issues and they are on board. They are however concerned with fire service representation on the EMS Advisory Board, specifically in consideration of the number of departments involved directly in the EMS arena. Mr. Morrissette said he made sure they are aware that Mrs. Tenney is the Commission’s representative and if they have issues they can certainly present them to this body and we would put them forth through Mrs. Tenney.

Moving to item 5b.) Haz Mat Testing Update – Mr. Morrissette said as was mentioned in the Education Committee report there was a TtT offered recently with the updated curriculum for Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations. He said he knows we had at least one Commissioner attend. In addition, there were a number of concerns which arose as a result of the TtT more or less related to testing. He said he attended the Career Chiefs meeting because he understood that there was some concern on the part of the Career Chiefs but nothing came up at that meeting. He said he did state to that membership that he was there specifically to address any concerns with the curriculum and or testing but nothing was raised. Also, he knows Mr. McGowan attended the Education Committee meeting last week and represented the agency to listen to any concerns related to the testing. He’s looking at the four or five major issues which were outcomes from the TtT and trying to determine if any adjustments are necessary. He said Mr. O’Hurley or Mr. Lewandowski may have additional input. He said the other big concern from a curriculum standpoint is the number of hours it would take to achieve. He said what people have to understand is it’s a recommended program and contact hours. The local instructor may use all or any part of the proposed curriculum. Certainly a lot of time and effort went into it. He said people can pick and choose which pieces they want to use. He asked if any Commissioner or staff wanted to add anything or had heard these concerns.

Commissioner Nicol added that the other concern was the issue of triage and using the smart tag which is a DPH concern. He said the concern about doffing face piece maybe something that Mr. McGowan need to take a closer look at because apparently the information was not part of any of the reference publications that were available.

Mr. Morrissette added that it’s his understanding the reference books are silent on the issue.

Mr. O’Hurley added that the procedure came out of MA and the authority having jurisdiction to deliver.

Commissioner Hilbert said he’s aware of some concerns the Haz Mat Chiefs have and have offered to meet in May. He asked if the Commission will have representation at that meeting.

Mr. Morrissette said we’ve participated in those meetings from the beginning and at minimum Mr. McGowan and Mr. Munsell are planning to participate.

Mr. Lewandowski added that the document that was put forth is just a reference guide and there wasn't a complete source of this training material anywhere and that's the reason this was put forth. He said people have to realize that it's the core competencies that one has to take which is probably equal to the old Haz Mat program and then there are eight mission specific target areas which each, are basically stand alone programs. He said the Certification division has the ability to test to all eight so when we teach the program we have to provide all the necessary information so that is why the length of the program is large. He said we added about eight hours of new material to update the old program to bring it up to the standard. Additionally, there are the other eight disciplines that are required by the NFPA. He said we try to tell people that we are an OSHA state and they don't have to follow it if you don't want certification so people can do what they want for the training. He said in working with the Haz Mat teams they are going to use this as entry level training for their people. He said people can choose to use it or not or use pieces of it but we're giving folks great information and it's extremely detailed.

Mr. Morrisette added that the Commission may recall that this body approved testing to the full Awareness and Operational core competencies plus the eight mission specific competencies back in the summer or fall of 2008. Thus, we implemented the testing almost two years ago and we've had a steady increase in the success rate of individuals passing. He said the mass users of this to date have been the Regional Fire Schools and he believes Mr. McGowan shared with them that if there were serious concerns about actually continuing to do the full program the Commission would be willing to listen to that and reconsider. In addition, we always encourage and offer individuals the opportunity to write the Commission or speak at one of its meetings. The same was offered to the TtT group who got very vocal about the issue. He said the class consisted of military, police and fire personnel, a very diverse group.

Commissioner Nicol said one of the areas discussed was regarding the questions that are in the examination and he knows they come out of Florida. He asked how often the questions are reviewed.

Mr. Morrisette said that Mr. O'Hurley is responsible for that particular area.

Mr. O'Hurley stated that Ben Hirst puts a Committee together with representatives from throughout the country and brings them together in Florida. Once he has the questions approved he sends them to Connecticut and other customer states and we put our own validation Committee together to review the questions from a New England and state perspective. He said lately we've been busy sending people to Florida not only because of the standard changes but there are a lot more competing publishers and texts. He said before it was just IFSTA now, Delmar, J & B, Penwell as well as a few other texts.

Mr. Morrisette added that the Florida activity is at no expense to the agency. Historically since the beginning of fire service certification in Connecticut we validate all of our test banks locally. He said some states do not validate locally that is typically a requirement of our Accrediting boards and it gives us a greater comfort zone especially in the increasingly litigious environment we operate in.

A brief discussion followed on the issue of publications and examination reference materials.

Commissioner Hilbert stated that additional TtT sessions are eagerly awaited and asked if some are scheduled.

Mr. Lewandowski replied that we will be working on scheduling more when Program Manager Munsell returns from vacation. He said we're trying to schedule one TtT for each region and five in the state. He also said we will try to accommodate both volunteer and career personnel.

Mr. Morrissette added that next month we could have discs available with a copy of the program for any Commissioner that may want it.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners or staff –Commissioner Kowalski asked with all the budget reductions what's the status on maintenance overall and the impact to hardware on site.

Mr. Morrissette replied that luckily we've been spared significant cuts to the Other Expense (OE) account to date. He said we all know the significant fiscal impact is still about two years out when they are looking at multi-billion dollar deficits. One area that we have had concerns with, for probably three years now and Commissioners may recall is we had some significant capital facility money approved and by a mistake within the General Assembly's Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee where the dollar amount approved in Committee happened to be the last line on a page and someone mistakenly left it out. The next year when we went back to have this corrected the entire capital facility bond bill was vetoed. Then the state's fiscal problems began to grow and we find ourselves without funding that was sorely needed for facility infrastructure repairs. He said we have continued roof leaks while the facility is approaching 20 years old; it's probably overdue to replace the roof. He said if you go over to the training grounds a lot of the bituminous concrete is failing requiring significant repaving. He said luckily we've had some boosts in terms of funding through the Military for some of the AV upgrades and some new computers which has been helpful. He said we do not anticipate any funding at this point for a number of years. In the event of a dire emergency, DPW does have a limited infrastructure fund; although every agency is competing for a small pool of money. He said we are in the process of bidding some significant projects right now such as four of our training ground fire hydrants estimated at \$45,000 that would have to come from agency operating moneys or the Extension and Auxiliary fund. Additionally, one of our vaporizers have been out of service for a few months and we have three bids in place which ranges from \$19,000 to \$11,000 to repair it so we should have an award soon.

As it relates to equipment, there is still some Capital Equipment Purchase Funding (CEPF) remaining however, we are operating approximately two years in arrears in respect to allotted funding versus needs. We continue to review options as it relates to replacement of our aging fleet of fire apparatus and will consider lease purchase arrangements in the future.

Coincidentally we just sent to surplus the donated LTI Tower as we could no longer afford to maintain the vehicle. Thus, we try to defer as long as possible repairs and replacement. Not the best way to do business but a reality of the times.

He said with the bidding of the construction project here at the Academy moving forward, we've committed to address the HVAC issue and put in some type of filtration system. He said he doesn't think the Facilities Engineer has received the proposal as of yet but we're expecting it any day. Mr. Morrissette also said one of the major concerns was the moving of the Flashover container to the back and we were looking at options to move it over to the NEDTC

but that option doesn't appear alive anymore; we've looked at a mobile approach and also looked at equipping the current one with scrubbers. To replace the unit would probably cost over a \$100,000 for a complete unit. Mr. Morrisette said there are some major expenditures coming up fairly quickly that need to be addressed. Our partnership with the Military has been both beneficial and timely allowing us to achieve long term goals of constructing a trench and train prop, this at no direct expense to the agency.

Commissioner Kowalski stated one of the concerns that he has is the fact that while it's important to make advances on our training grounds it's also equally important to maintain the existing equipment that we have. He said it's very difficult to provide training when fire hydrants or the basic needs for fighting are not working. He said he recalls suggesting in earlier meetings if we could perhaps follow-up with some of the funding that's probably going to be swept, we should do it instead of keeping the money. He said it's always good to have a little extra however when there is a threat of losing it maybe we should use it to upgrade our infrastructure and maintain it. He said as long as we're paying attention to that and there is something in the works it would be advantageous to us.

Mr. Morrisette remarked that we've been doing relatively well on collections from accounts receivables but we do have some slow payers. He said we're attempting to go to collections on a private vendor that we've done business with, one of the Maritime companies who has defaulted on approximately \$9,000 to the agency. Mr. Morrisette also said sadly our accounting system seems to be flooded with departments requesting we maintain credits on their behalf. He said those credits are held in our private money accounts and if those funds are swept those credits go away and the agency cannot be responsible for making up the lost money. He asked Mr. Lewandowski if he's seeing an increase in those requests.

Mr. Lewandowski replied that usually its right at the end of the fiscal year when departments are trying to not return money back to the city or town, they try to spend it here but now it's in jeopardy and becoming a lot more complicated. He said it's very easy just to tell the staff in the Training division that we are not going to continue that practice and tell them the reason why.

Mr. Morrisette said the other major project we've discussed several times here is the Learning Management System (LMS). He said we've received a scope of work from DoIT and they along with key staff here are on board to move forward with that system. He said the actual outlay for it has been reduced which is nice. Both Mr. Lewandowski and Program Manager Salafia has been attending training at DoIT looking at the benefits of the system. He said long range we see a lot of benefits but short range we need to sign the agreement to move forward. Our private funds would be utilized to cover this expenditure. He said eventually there could be some personnel savings as a result of that and the automation features would be beneficial to everyone and more importantly it allows the agency to meet the expectations of our customers.

Commissioner Mitchell said there may have been a report on this previous to him getting to the meeting but he noticed in the staff report quite a few mentions of some personnel issues. He inquired if there is a problem in light of what happened two years ago with the Introduction to the Fire Service Summer program where he had to spend some time at DAS.

Mr. Morrisette replied that as noted in the staff report the investigation was completed several weeks ago and that a pre-disciplinary hearing held and discipline carried out. He has kept the

Chairman abreast of the status throughout. He considers the issue addressed in compliance with all state regulations and human resource policies and procedures. He also said he's aware some staff members have been emailing Commissioners as well as the Governor's office and between our HR representative and himself we've been working through the process as quickly as feasible.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Kowalski and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Walsh to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza adjourned the meeting at 10:38 am.

Dated:

Charles M. Stankye, Jr., Secretary