



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



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**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 22, 2005 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Vice Chairman Kevin Kowalski called the meeting to order at 9:39 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners' Blaschik, Cantor, Haber, Morris, Nicol, and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewandowski, Lewis, Morrisette, O'Neil, Piechota and Piskura were present.

Robert Walsh was a guest at the meeting.

Vice Chairman Kowalski stated that due to the lack of a quorum we would not be able to take any votes and the meeting would proceed on an informational basis.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski thanked members for attending the meeting and said that Chairman Carozza is out of state and could not be with us today.

He made a brief presentation to State Fire Administrator Morrisette. He said on behalf of Chairman Carozza it was an honor to present him with a plaque for 20 years of service to the Commission. He congratulated him and thanked him for a job well done.

State Fire Administrator Morrisette replied it was his privilege to serve the Commission and Connecticut's fire service.

Mr. Morrisette indicated he had expected a quorum today however Commissioner Stankye is ill with the flu and Commissioner Ouellette was admitted to St. Francis Hospital yesterday but was being discharged today following angioplasty surgery.

Moving to item 4a.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson reported that the Education Committee met on February 16th. He said the New Haven Architect selection committee has been formed and their immediate goal is to reduce the list of 11 RFPs down to 5 or 6 Architects to be interviewed. The appraisals were received back for the Willimantic property so now they can proceed with negotiations with the

property owner. The other property acquisitions efforts appear to be on track but slow. There was an extensive discussion during the meeting referencing the requirement of imposing JPR's and the Firefighter I and II certification exams. It seems to be imposing a manpower and time hardship on the Regional Schools when they deliver those and their request through the State Fire Administrator is that someone from the Certification Division attend the next meeting in an attempt to work out some sort of compromise in that area. As far as funding for the schools, subsequent to their meeting, Al Hawkins, Chairman of the Committee coordinated 2 meetings back to back to be held on March 10th at the Legislative Office Building (LOB). Representative Pawelkiewicz will attend both and the first is with Representative Denise Merrill and the second with Senator Donald Williams, Senate President Pro Tempore. The Willimantic School is also sponsoring a legislative luncheon at their facility on Saturday, March 12th. The next Committee meeting will be March 16th in Wethersfield.

Mr. Morrissette added that he distributed a copy of the Governor's recommended budget for the Regional Fire Schools and some of the other payouts for the Firefighters Association and county based radios. The budget calls for level funding for those entities.

Moving to item 4b.) Service Voucher Update – Mr. Morrissette stated that we are moving forward with drafting and mailing letters to eligible entities same as we discussed last month. We will provide two options (voucher or direct payment) and disbursement of approximately \$530 per eligible entity.

Moving to agenda item 4c.) Certification Testing (Haz-Mat and Safety Officer) Mr. Morrissette stated that we had several items unfinished from last month's meeting and some additional work was done on these items.

Director of Certification Piechota said the first one has to do with the proposal for the Commission to consider whether to offer Hazardous Materials (Haz-Mat) Awareness and Operational level of Certification as stand alone certification levels. Last month he was asked to put together a fee proposal and what it would cost the fire service and anyone else if the Commission was to move forward. He referenced a handout called Haz Mat Certification Fee Proposal that was distributed to members and said there are various delivery methods and or fees for consideration. If the Commission, Fire Academy or Regional Schools were to deliver a dedicated stand alone Haz Mat Awareness and or Operational program for fire service personnel those cost are the same as we would charge for anything else today. If we were to go forward and offer Haz Mat Awareness and Operational certification to non-fire service personnel or anyone else that is required to possess it by OSHA, there is a potential we could charge a little more to try to recover some of our costs. If we offered stand alone certification for Awareness and Operations within existing Firefighter I or II programs, the proposal is there would be no additional fees to the fire service, they would just receive the additional certification certificates.

Vice Chairman Kowalski said unfortunately we cannot give a vote today and asked if there were any questions, comments or concerns pertaining to the fee schedule.

Commissioner Nicol asked why a difference of \$5 between the \$7.50 and \$12.50 fee proposed for fire service personnel.

Mr. Piechota replied that right now the Commission charges \$7.50 for a written examination and practical exam is \$5 so Haz Mat Awareness is only a written exam because of the standard so it's \$7.50. Haz Mat Operational has a practical component as well as a written so the current fee is \$12.50.

Mr. Piechota also reported on the Safety Officer issue. He said last month the Commission approved breaking out Safety Officer into 5 different levels Health and Safety Officer, Incident Safety Officer, Incident Safety Officer Suppression, Incident Safety Officer Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Incident Safety Officer Haz Mat Operations. Commissioner Blaschik had asked us to take a look at the need to do stand alone testing for some of the levels. He referenced a copy of the standard distributed this morning to review the actual requirements for Suppression, EMS and Haz Mat Operations. The certification procedure hand out is the result of work by a Subcommittee we had put together consisting of himself and 3 other representatives who are officers, safety officers and have experience with EMS as well as Haz Mat. They reviewed the standard from a testing standpoint. In reviewing the procedure the Subcommittee is recommending for the level of Health and Safety Officer the requirement would be that the incumbent complete the Connecticut Fire Academy Incident Safety Officer program; and provide documentation that they've been assigned the authority and duties required of a Health and Safety Officer in their department as compared to the standard. Those two things together, the completion of the course and designation of their duties would allow them to take a Health and Safety Officer Examination and to test that portion of the standard.

Commissioner Morris asked if the course that was done at the Mohegan Sun Fire Department recently is the same as this program.

Mr. Piechota remarked that course was written to the previous edition of the standard although it is very close. He said the exam those folks took at the Mohegan is the old exam process which people who passed will be awarded certification to level of Fire Department Safety Officer which is the level that has existed for years in Connecticut. He proposes that those persons if they wanted to step up Health and Safety Officer they will have that option.

He also said that there is a level for Incident Safety Officer but the Subcommittee took a look at the standard and that level by itself is meaningless because it is a set of knowledge that isn't directed at any one thing. The Subcommittee felt in order to have that level as a level of certification it should not be a stand alone level but that the basic level on the Incident Safety Officer side be Incident Safety Officer/Suppression.

Therefore, anyone certified to the Incident Safety Officer level will be certified Incident Safety Officer/Suppression. This exam would be a combined exam at the end of the course. If someone wants to be certified to the other 2 specialties Incident Safety Officer EMS or Haz Mat Operations we've laid out what might work for that. For EMS the person would need to become certified to the Incident Safety Officer Suppression level, hold current credentials to the level of EMT B at minimum and submit proof that they've attended Mass Casualty Incident training and successfully complete a small written examination. The Subcommittee felt that just EMT B as well as attendance at a Mass Casualty Incident course would not necessarily show that they have knowledge on how to run an EMS incident so they felt the need to do some testing to determine that they actually have the ability and the knowledge. A discussion period followed.

Following the discussion, Mr. Piechota noted two things, first he said the Commission is under no obligation to adopt anything, the only problem is if the Commission choose not to adopt this edition of the standard then we will no longer be accredited for that level because both of our accrediting bodies require compliance with the current edition of the standard. Secondly, the regulation requires compliance with the current edition so if the Commission chooses not to comply with this again we would need to revise the Regulation.

Mr. Morrissette referenced a handout document titled Certification Eligibility Policy and explained that this is an extension of discussions from last month as it relates to some of the requests we've received from individuals to conduct training on a local level leading to certification. He said we're trying to present information to the Commission for review and discussion and consideration for possible adoption. In general, the policy supports the mission delineation agreement that we have with the Regional Fire Schools which allows for the delivery of entry level training, predominantly Firefighter I and II at the Regional Fire School and or local level. He said most of the other levels are delivered through the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA). We have a formal request from Fairfield Fire Department for them to deliver a Fire Service Instructor I course which causes some concern. Historically, if we go back to the original master plan for fire training and education in Connecticut, which dates back to 1980, it was and has been the philosophy of the Commission to develop and deliver the higher levels of training, education and certification. The lower levels were for local fire departments and Regional Fire Schools. He said he views this proposal as being potentially controversial in the perspective that there are different delivery models that exists. What is called into question is the subject matter expertise of the instructors and how the candidates will be evaluated as the skills are typically imbedded within the training program. Also, many of the advanced level courses have been reviewed and approved for college credit by Charter Oak. Therefore local delivery may negate this approval.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked if anyone had talked with the Regional Schools about supporting the Certification Eligibility Policy.

Mr. Morrisette replied he had not however it is based on the mission delineation document that was brokered with them.

Vice Chairman Kowalski remarked that he agreed with the proposal but felt we should solicit the support of the Regional Fire Schools.

Commissioner Nicol added that he raised the issue at the last Instructors meeting held in East Hartford and there was some concern expressed from a member. There were some questions and felt that some of the certification programs could be passed on to them if they had the capability to deliver locally. He said that a discussion was held after and the feeling was to keep this within the Commission.

Commissioner Cantor added remarks in terms of how this issue intersects with the Community Technical College programs these days. He said they get quite a few firefighters, fire officers that come to the Technical College and ask if they can receive college credits for courses taken through either CFA, Regional Fire Schools or the National Fire Academy (NFA). The process the technical college is using which was worked out some 3 or 4 years ago when all of these programs were evaluated by Charter Oak State College for college credit, is that they send the prospective student to the Charter Oak State College homepage where approved courses are listed. Based on the Charter Oak State College review of the program, they will say it's worth 3 college credits at the sophomore or the senior level or it's simply not listed and therefore not one that is eligible for college credit. He said he mentions this first; to inform the Commission as to where we are in terms of the career higher education ladder in Connecticut and secondly that hand off courses to the Regional Schools is something they need to be alerted to because unless Charter Oak has a chance to put the course through a formal review it's not going to be eligible for college credit.

Commissioner Wilkinson added that he concurs with Vice Chairman Kowalski's remarks regarding the support of the Regional Fire Schools and said if Mr. Morrisette feels it's appropriate we share it with Chairman Hawkins for inclusion on the next scheduled meeting's agenda.

Mr. Lewandowski commented that he thinks the Regional Fire Schools would fall right in line as it falls in the Mission Delineation Statement of what the agencies are supposed to do. He also said that there maybe some rumbling up front about this, not so much from the Regional Schools, but from other entities. Once the policy is in place there would be no grey area as exists today; and that's the problem we have right now.

Moving to item 4d.) Legislative Update - Mr. Morrisette stated that an updated Bill tracking chart was distributed this morning. He suggested that members subscribe to our List Serv to be sure they are notified as to when Public Hearings are scheduled, etc.

Moving to item 5a.) Fire Service Instructor Challenge Request and Process - Mr. Morrisette asked Mr. Lewandowski to speak on this issue. Mr. Lewandowski said when

we put Fire Officer III into place the prerequisite of Fire Service Instructor II was not available due to it requiring revision. To address this deficiency, the Commission approved a policy change allowing participants in the first three class deliveries to test and become certified as a Fire Officer III in Connecticut only. They would not be eligible for registry for National Certification. Since then, we've delivered 2 more programs and we're getting requests how an individual can become certified if we do not offer the prerequisite. He said the first thing is shame on us that we didn't publish the document correctly and lastly we didn't have the program in our offering. He said he met with Mr. Morrissette and Mr. Piechota last week and together they came up with several options to propose to the Commission for consideration.

1. Allow the two most recent FO-III classes to become certified in Connecticut only with no room for advancement. This is the same as offered to the other 3 classes. This will allow them to take the test at the end of the program and be done with it.
2. Allow them to do a challenge of Fire Service Instructor II which would involve documentation of meeting the standard and a written test for Fire Service Instructor II at the end. This will allow them to move to Fire Officer IV.
3. Lastly, we have finally completed the revision to the FSI-II curriculum and we are offering a Pilot Program. We will give the students from the previous Fire Officer III class priority to attend the pilot delivery.

The Commission already approved the first option discussed and so we're now asking for approval to extend option one to the last two classes and also recognition of options two and three. This will give the students several options. After the pilot delivery of FSI-II all future FO-III candidates will be required to meet the FSI-II prerequisite.

Commissioner Nicol asked how many people were in the class.

Mr. Lewandowski replied that he believes it is less than 16 people that currently do not meet the prerequisite.

Vice Chairman Kowalski asked how substantial the FSI- II course is.

Mr. Lewandowski replied that it's a 5-day program but it does involve pre-course work that will be mailed out so when they receive confirmation of acceptance in the class they will also receive materials they have to complete for the class.

Moving to item 5b.) Web Based Certification Look-up – Mr. Piechota said it has been our desire to help our constituents out by offering a mechanism whereby someone can look up their levels of certification online versus having to call us or write a letter. It would be very helpful to fire chiefs as we get a number of requests from them wanting a list of certification levels of all their members. We've been working with our database consultant and looking at the model used by the Department of Defense which is a really

good one. We've been examining that and we have the technology and capability to do that. He asked if the Commission would like to move forward with putting into operation a process whereby someone could go online and look-up their level of certification. He said a concern is we get questions periodically from firefighters questioning the capabilities of their chief officers and this would allow that obviously to be done possibly causing internal problems.

Mr. Morrissette added that we could look to implement restricted look-ups where only the individual could look at their own record. The other option is to open it up to the world and that's where problems could arise.

Commissioner Blaschik asked if that information is public and accessible under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Mr. Piechota replied that it is our understanding that a level of certification held by an individual is public information, not necessarily the score they received. He said we will continue to explore the process and keep the Commission informed.

Moving to item 5c.) Legislation – Mr. Morrissette stated that the Governor's Proposed Budget was sent out to Commissioners and gave a general overview. He said that the recommended Budget does have some reductions within it. It is our general assessment that we are able to maintain current services with what is proposed both in Personal Services as well as our Operating Expense Accounts as long as there are no significant changes by the Legislature. There is also a reduction to our Capital Equipment request although if we did a comparison between agencies we did relatively well specifically as it relates to Capital Equipment. One vacant position was taken away which was an unfilled, unfunded position and a number of our Budget Option requests such as Burn Building maintenance, support of the Statewide Honor Guard Program were not approved. He said he was told that very few agencies were granted any Budget Options. Our agency budget presentation is scheduled for tomorrow, from 6:00 – 6:30 p.m at the LOB. A public hearing follows the presentation at 6:30 p.m. so if any Commissioner wants to speak they should attend the public hearing. We will have individual agency Budget meetings with the Appropriations Subcommittee scheduled sometime in the next month or so.

Moving to item 5d.) Public Fire Education Presentation (Masters of Disaster Fire Safety Program) - Russ Emons gave a brief overview. He said thanks to USFA Fire Act Grant money the American Red Cross developed the Masters of Disaster Fire Safety and Prevention Program. They have put together a three level, nine lesson program which passes all of our tests of an efficient fire safety prevention program. These folks really extended themselves to put together a program that is comprehensive and inexpensive that can easily be adopted to any classroom K-8. They have come up with the first middle school program that has achieved success because it has adult ties to kids. It has made them responsible people who are capable of learning the glossary in the back of the book. They have taken a great deal of care to cross-reference every lesson with the

national standards for education. There is a component for the non firefighter so the classroom teacher can decide to teach fire prevention in any class such as Science, Math, Social Studies or English class. The book also has a home component, classroom or school component. A firefighter could go in and supplement any one of these lessons or a firehouse could have a set available at their firehouse so that if a group came on a tour a firefighter could use anyone of these lessons and have it ready so the tour becomes more meaningful. The book cost \$5 per classroom which includes shipping and handling which by far is a reasonable amount to pay. An accompanying video is being produced. There is also a Juvenile Firesetter component. This book is the answer to a lot of Fire Marshals and Firefighter problems as far as a way to get their fire prevention knowledge across in the classroom without creating a financial or time burden. He said he hopes Commissioners will have an opportunity to attend the Fire Marshal conference in March to obtain a more detailed overview. He said he would like to see the recognition and approval for use of this program by the Commission and a recommendation by the Commission that this program is a certifiable method of getting fire safety education in the schools, classrooms, firehouses, YMCA and wherever people may gather who need fire safety information. He believes a lot of time was spent developing this program and the goals are consistent with fire safety goals going back to the 1800's.

Mr. Morrissette said that he knows that a number of Commissioners have been very active in promoting the NFPA Risk Watch program and asked Mr. Emons for any new updates on that program.

Mr. Emons said it appeared that Risk Watch has leveled off; the initial interest has peaked a bit. Some of the leaders have left the NFPA although the program is still out there. He hasn't seen much new development of that program but the fire safety components are still very useful and the website is still accessible and up to date. Both Risk Watch and Masters of Disaster are programs the Commission should endorse.

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Commissioner Wilkinson said for all too long a great deal of discussion at our Commission meeting has always surrounded the subject of Homeland Security and it's inefficiencies as it applies to the Fire Service. Being that the new Department is in place and a Commissioner has been appointed and the deputy Commissioner is one of our own, he suggested that if possible State Fire Administrator Morrissette make arrangements for the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner to attend one of our Commission meetings in the next several months so they can provide us with an overview of how they see Homeland Security evolving.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that he is already having discussions with the new Commissioner and his Deputy. He was looking at possibly scheduling a meeting at the LOB sometime in the next 3 months because that would be a good opportunity for us to meet at that location.

Mr. Morrisette reminded the Commission that we have two Auditors in house and they've budgeted about 300 hours for a comprehensive review of our agency. The staff has been cooperating fully.

Mr. Morrisette also informed Commissioners that Fire Service Day is scheduled for May 11th and asked them to mark the date in their calendars. It has not been formally decided but they're probably going to do a legislative breakfast or some type of buffet lunch to take the place of the regular evening legislative reception that was too costly. He said it should be a very busy day at the Capitol, that day, as it is also Connecticut Business & Industry Association (CBIA) Day. Their displays will be in the Capitol itself.

Mr. Morrisette offered to show a 20 minute video on TOPOFF 2 if anyone is interested to stay following the meeting. He said it will give an idea of what the TOPOFF 3 Exercise will be like when conducted in April. It's sure to be a significant event for the State of Connecticut.

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:24 AM.

Dated:

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