



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



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**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 30, 2007 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

Chairman Peter Carozza called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. with the following members present: Commissioners Blaschik, Mitchell, Morris, Nicol, Ouellette, Stankye, Walsh and Wilkinson.

Staff members Lewis, Morrissette and Piskura were present.

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

Chairman Carozza asked members to remain standing for a moment of silence in honor of David Sandford.

Mr. Morrissette stated that it came to our attention that David Sandford passed away. Mr. Sandford was a former member of the Danbury fire department, Deputy Chief of the Wilton and Westport fire departments as well as a very active member of the CT Firefighters Pipes and Drums and most recently, salesperson for Shipman's Fire Equipment. He had served as one of the original adjunct Fire Service Instructors for the Connecticut Fire Academy (CFA).

Moving to item 1.) Chairman Carozza recognized and introduced the Commission's newest member Victor Mitchell representing the Chancellor of the Connecticut Community College System. He welcomed Mr. Mitchell and asked if he would like to say a few words.

Mr. Mitchell remarked that he is the Director of Business and Industry Services at Tunxis Community College and has been involved with the fire service since 1970 when he joined the Avon fire department. He said he is currently Deputy Fire Chief for the Terryville fire department and it's been a while since he's visited the Academy but he's very happy to serve the Commission representing the Community Colleges.

Chairman Carozza extended another welcome to Mr. Mitchell on behalf of the Commission and said he looks forward to working with him.

Chairman Carozza called for introduction of guests by State Fire Administrator Jeff Morrissette.

Mr. Morrissette introduced two guests to the meeting Mark Amatrudo who has been serving as the agency's interim Director of Certification since Fred Piechota's retirement and Rob Lucheme who serves as our 800 Fire Line Coordinator. He said they both assisted in development of the guidelines as called for in PA 06-22. These individuals may offer some background at some point in the meeting when we discuss the draft guidelines which were distributed this morning.

Chairman Carozza stated that he's aware that some Commissioners have to leave the meeting to attend Public Hearings on bills at the Legislative Office Building so if there are no objections he would like to move to agenda items two and three and then skip to Agenda item five New Business.

Chairman Carozza moved to Agenda item 2) Approval of the Minutes of the November 28, 2006 meeting.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Ouellette to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2006 meeting. Motion carried.

Moving to item 3) Staff Reports November 15, 2006 –December 14, 2006 and December 15, 2006- January 14, 2007.

A **MOTION** was made by Commissioner Stankye and **SECONDED** by Commissioner Walsh to approve the Staff Reports for the period of November 15, 2006 - December 14, 2006 and December 15, 2006 –January 14, 2007. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5a.) Legislative Overview – Mr. Morrissette stated a Legislative tracking chart was distributed detailing many of the fire service related proposals. He said if there are some bills which any Commissioner's organization wants to track that is not included to let him know and we'll add them to the chart and continually update them as well as maintain the tracking chart on the Commission's website. He offered to answer any questions Commissioners may have on any proposed bills.

Moving to item 5b.) Assistance to Firefighters Fire Prevention Grant. Mr. Morrissette asked Director of Training Piskura to speak briefly about two programs the agency is involved with. The first is to submit a grant request to replace our fire escape trailer and the second is a cooperative program with the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR).

Mr. Piskura stated that one of the only Assistance to Firefighters Grant Programs that the state can apply for is the Fire Prevention Grant and we've applied for that grant to replace our kids' safety trailer which is in poor condition. We're trying to replace it with a straight chassis which will no longer require a trailering operation. We've applied for that grant and have spoken to folks within the Department of Homeland Security Grants and Training Division and they gave us some specifics on reactions to our previous grant request that it was too much because we were trying to build a customized unit. Regarding the second initiative, he stated that approximately three years ago we worked

with the previous fire Chief of the Southbury Training School, Nick Gabriel and Russ Emons from our agency who at the time was the Public and Life Safety Coordinator. They developed a fire safety program for all their group homes. The number of group homes are staggering, approximately 13,000 and the reason that number is so high is because a group home can be as small as a family unit; a husband and wife with a child that needs support from the state. They developed the program but they don't have a way to disseminate it so they too as a state agency and as a fire department are applying for the Fire Prevention Grant to support delivery of this program. We worked with them on this grant request. If it gets funded, the DMR would receive the grant and about 90% would be transferred to our agency to do the deliverables for the training of the group home employees. This is and has been a great partnership as it took over three years to get to where we are.

Moving to item 5c.) Bookstore/Facility Dormitory Update- Mr. Morrisette stated that at this point we wanted to update the Commission on a couple of items, the first related to the Bookstore operation and the need to expand and make available in closer proximity warehousing. He also said Mr. Piskura would give an update on the explosive registration that is ongoing with the next recruit class which is now over 70 students. This will necessitate us to move very quickly to double our dormitory space in terms of acquiring extra beds and accessories.

Mr. Piskura reported on the Bookstore operations. He said this calendar year crested \$300,000 in net sales which is a success by any realm and those sales were in person, email or over the telephone. Currently for the month of January we're up to \$30,000 in sales due in part to promotional exams in several area fire departments. We've taken over a small classroom as a warehouse and it was exceeded from the start so we have locked storage in a classroom and two small storage areas downstairs for clothing and for in house publications. He said the storage downstairs is an inconvenience for the Bookstore staff because they can't leave the customer to go downstairs to retrieve stock. The best thing to do is to combine all these warehousing points together in one location and the most logical place to do this is in the classroom that backs up to the existing store. That classroom was a double size room which was reduced to two-thirds size when the Bookstore was constructed. He said we'd like to install a pass door through there and convert that two-thirds classroom into the warehouse. We would vacate the existing small classroom warehouse and turn that into a double classroom and then move the materials that are downstairs upstairs. He said he doesn't like losing that classroom because it is located on the exterior circumference of the turn of the building with nice windows facing the woods and the street whereas the inside faces the courtyard which is a draw back but it is the most logical place to put it where they don't have to close the store and can easily access the warehouse. The other aspect of this is we're experimenting right now with online E-commerce and if this proves to be a viable product we'll probably double our net sales in the first year. If we double our net sales in the first year which is our projection, we'll need that warehouse space as stocking area. We currently get inquiries from Turkey and the Middle East to buy merchandise but we very seldom make the sale. He said if we go live with E-Commerce he anticipates a huge demand so we're showing some restraint by experimenting right now by just selling E-

Commerce to our adjuncts, part-time and full-time staff. If that is successful we'll push on with the E-Commerce aspect but we cannot continue with the E-Commerce for the general public until the warehouse situation is under control.

Mr. Morrissette added that we would be restoring the current storage area that was previously a classroom back to classroom space and also open up some storage space on the basement level for the Certification division which has maxed out its storage capabilities. He said unfortunately when the facility was constructed we wished they had built a full basement because we have limited storage space and that is becoming more problematic each year. He said he wanted to bring this to the Commission's attention because it would require some internal changes but no net loss of classroom space just shifting it around. He solicited feedback from Commissioners as to whether they foresee any issues related to this.

A brief question and answer period followed.

Moving to item 4a.) Budget/Staffing Update –Mr. Morrissette reported regarding the budget. He said the Governor will be releasing her budget on February 6th and we do not have any prior notice on how things look specifically for our agency. He said he referenced to a few people that recently at one of the Governor's staff meetings, about two weeks ago she stated that the administration was working very hard on trying to find the funding for the Regional Fire Schools. He said there are a couple of bills which addresses the capital monies and bonding so we'll have to see how that goes. He also reported that last week the Bond Commission approved \$103,700 of Capital Equipment funding for the agency which is the balance of what was due to us for this fiscal year. This will allow us to move forward with the procurement of two or three vehicles to replace trailers as soon as we can transfer funding from OPM to the agency accounts. The state Auditors are on site and a number of the staff has been working with them on a daily basis trying to locate everything they are looking for. He said the transition to the DAS SMART team for the fiscal side is going to be an issue and he anticipates a significant number of deficiencies, more than we've had in the past. Based on what he expects he is prepared to attribute a majority of those deficiencies to the transition and a lack of focused support that we're receiving. Once the draft report is received he will have to look at our options as well as determine if the deficiencies could have been non-issues if proper staffing was provided.

Commissioner Nicol asked if upon completion of the audit whether the Auditors make recommendations or are they somewhat relying on the agency to address them.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that they identify deficiencies and we as an agency have an opportunity to respond to how we will address the deficiencies

Mr. Morrissette also reported regarding staffing. He stated that most Commissioners are aware we had to place an employee on administrative leave about two weeks ago due to an arrest. The employee was placed on leave for a little over two weeks and a stipulated agreement has been executed and he has returned to work as of yesterday pending the

outcome of the legal proceedings. DAS has provided strict guidance as to what information we can share and with whom.

Commissioner Morris asked if the employee is still allowed to instruct out in the field.

Mr. Morrissette said that's something we had initially struggled with but the decision was made to return him to his regular duties.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if he was placed on leave with or without pay.

Mr. Morrissette replied the Administrative Leave was with pay.

Commissioner Ouellette asked if there is a time limit that it can be done legally.

Mr. Morrissette remarked that DAS SMART HR can provide this information.

Moving to item 4b.) CSFA Education Committee Update – Commissioner Wilkinson reported that the Education Committee met again last Thursday. They were honored to have state Representatives Pawelkiewicz and Orange with them. The Committee remains reasonably optimistic as Mr. Morrissette eluded that the next round of Bond funds will be included in the Governor's budget however if that doesn't happen, Representatives have proposed Bill #6925 that would provide for the 30 million dollars of bonding over the next biennium. He also said a slight controversy arose over the proposed new site for the Willimantic School which was a local issue that the city fathers became concerned about the potential loss of tax revenue to the municipality if the property were passed from private to public hands. As a reaction to that, Representative Pawelkiewicz has introduced Bill #6923 that would provide for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) funding for municipalities in which the new Regional Fire Schools facilities will be built. He also said Commissioner Brady spoke at length about the Training Bill which is scheduled for a public hearing later this morning. As far as the projects are concerned the design contract as been signed and is moving forward for the New Haven School. The advertisement for the design of the Hartford facilities was due to be in the paper the following day. Project Manager Don Ouillette hopes to have the proposals for the property acquisition monies for both Willimantic and the Valley School sites on one of the Bond agendas this spring. The other projects are status quo moving along as need be and the next meeting will be held on February 22nd.

Mr. Morrissette added that copies of the Bills Commissioner Wilkinson referenced are available today and it is interesting to note that the PILOT Bill is actually for 100% of the assessed property rather than the typical 33% or 66% depending on the project.

He also reported that we've processed the third quarter checks for the Regional Fire Schools and made them available to CSFA Treasurer Stankye for distribution to the schools for their operational funding.

Moving to item 4c.) Supplemental Grant Program Update – Mr. Morrisette reported regarding the Limited Access Highway (LAH) Supplemental Grant Award Program. He said we still have about 19 fire companies that have not notified us what their pleasure is for the funding and we have a list of those companies for Commissioners. He said there seems to be a lot of interest at the General Assembly and Commissioner Kowalski called him late yesterday while he was meeting with Senator Stillman, Co-chair of Public Safety and Security Committee asking questions about the program. He said there is a Bill #5180 to increase the appropriated amount for the program to \$500,000 from the current \$200,000. He also said at the Education Committee meeting Representative Orange had asked him if the agency submitted the Supplemental Grant program as our Reduction Option. When he replied to the affirmative she appeared very disappointed with that. He said he hopes to have some future discussions with her on that but it was part of the agency's 10% Reduction Option. He said we have a list of the fire companies that have not responded and asked Commissioners if they have access to any of them to please ask them to contact Yvonne Lewis or Ed Bycenski so we can make arrangements to ensure that they receive their funding. There is a deadline of June 1, 2007 for when the funding has to be expended or it will go back to the General Fund.

Moving to item 4d.) New London County IMT Recognition – Chairman Carozza stated that he met with Chief DeLia last month at the Capitol because we are trying to reach some resolution to this issue. He said we were still waiting for some Meeting Minutes from the state IMT Committee meetings.

Moving to item 4e.) Minor Firefighter Issue – Mr. Morrisette said that Commissioners Kowalski and Brady are both not here today but he can report that they along with representatives from the Department of Labor (DOL) have been attending various meetings of fire service organizations and updating folks on the minor firefighter guidelines. He said he hasn't received a lot of feedback but some of what he's received is on the negative side because people feel the guidelines are too strict. He said he's tried to remind them that it's opened up some of the restrictions that were actually in place that no one knew about. At least now we have details in writing which we can discuss.

Commissioner Morris added that he's hearing a lot of feedback too where some folks feel that it's going to ruin the volunteer fire service in years to come when you stop minors from doing what they've been doing for many years. He said the Chief from Guilford tells him he's working with his legislator to try and get that system exempt so there is some feeling in different areas of the state that they are moving forward to try and react to this.

Mr. Morrisette added that the other thing we're hearing is that some of the insurance carriers that insure volunteer fire departments in the state are also developing stricter rules. So it appears from a risk management perspective that they are going to begin their own enforcement. He also said that there was a recent news article about some live fire training of acquired structures that was occurring up in the northwestern part of the state. A quote in the article from a 15 or 16 year old spoke about the value of the training but

one could read into that as they were having 15 and 16 year olds actively participating in a live burn of an acquired structure.

Commissioner Nicol commented that he attended the joint meeting of the Instructors and Chiefs at the Aqua Turf this past week and one of the programs presented was on the minor firefighter guidelines. Although Commissioner Brady had lost his voice earlier and wasn't able to speak, the representative from the DOL made a very good presentation and gave a little bit of the history of the Commission's involvement. He said the DOL representative made some good points especially indicating that Connecticut when compared to some other states is more reasonable in their guidelines. There were some good questions and answers at the end of the presentation.

Commissioner Morris added that one of the biggest downsides with the guidelines is the authorized time of day when minors can participate. He said if they can do away with the time frame that would be helpful.

There was a brief discussion on the issue.

Moving to item 4f.) PA 06-22 Guidelines Update – Mr. Morrissette said as Commissioners are all aware we've been looking at this issue which was initiated with PA 06-22 requiring us to develop guidelines. We held two fact finding forums where there was good sharing of information. He said we can all agree that this is a very difficult and contentious issue with pros and cons on both sides. Following those hearings Commissioners met briefly at the Legislative Office Building and he requested some guidance from Commissioners. Not much guidance was received but it was determined the best route to take is to identify statutes that already exist and may impact the issue. It really is up to the municipalities on a local level whether they want to entertain sharing of personnel and that it be their responsibility to enter into inter-local agreements. He said we did review a draft document from Waterbury which he applauds them for their efforts. However, it fell a bit short in placing all responsibility with the volunteer municipality but it gave evidence that a framework does exist. With the assistance of Rob Lucheme and Mark Amatrudo we identified applicable statutes and issues which exist. We also met with our representative at the Attorney General's office and he had an opportunity to review the document and provide some direction. He said he has available for Commissioners the draft language that we've come up and it is our intent that we would also add an introduction and some background. He said he'd like Commissioners to spend some time today reviewing the document and provide direction. He said it is still our concern that the direction the legislature may be moving in will be one of a mandate. It would be much more palatable for us as the fire service to identify a solution. There are already some Bills introduced that would not permit a collective bargaining agreement to prohibit someone from serving as a volunteer. The basic discussion within the Joint Council last week was to see if we could try to broker some kind of a deal to possibly restore or create legislation to offer protections for both the career and volunteer fire service that would permit a renewed level of cooperation.

Chairman Carozza added that as most Commissioners are aware this has been an issue for quite some time and last year a proposal was introduced to give this to the Commissioner of Public Safety. We were successful in keeping it in-house and he's made a commitment to several legislators that we'll do everything we can to try to come to a resolution on the issue. He said it can be resolved within the fire service and as Mr. Morrissette mentioned, tomorrow we'll be meeting with the Joint Council and hopefully we can reach some consensus on how to proceed. The two fact finding forums were beneficial but other than that we need the Commission's input and maybe we can take a few minutes to go through the document now, gather input so we can bring that up tomorrow at the Joint Council meeting and hopefully move forward because things are going to happen rather quickly in the legislature so we want to get our game plan in order.

Mr. Morrissette suggested that what was very clear in reviewing all the statutes that exists is it appears public policy promotes volunteerism. This is based upon state demographics and the historical organizational structure of our fire service with 80% of departments being volunteer. He said what we were struggling with is trying to come up with something which met somewhere in the middle and in discussions with the Attorney General's representative, he feels it's one of those issues that will be difficult to reach an agreement that is found to be reasonable.

Commissioner Johnson arrived at 10:25 am.

Mr. Amatrudo commented that he can respond to whatever questions Commissioners may have but one of the big issues for career departments is going to be the cost associated with overtime and the coverage.

Chairman Carozza said he wanted to restate because there has been discussions about the role of the Joint Council. He said the Joint Council really has no jurisdiction over the fire service but it was established many years ago in an effort to get the leadership of Connecticut's fire service together in hopes of getting a consensus on issues and it's worked very well. It is an informational group that tries to work on fire service issues in the legislature and it's worked very well and it is not to step on anyone's toes.

Chairman Carozza said we would take a five minute recess to review the guidelines.

The Commission took a recess at 10:35 am.

Chairman Carozza reconvened the meeting at 10:45 am.

Commissioner Johnson said he doesn't understand the section on backfilling and asked if we're mandating that the town a firefighter gets hurt in provide backfill funding to the town that provided the firefighter.

Mr. Morrisette said none of the document is considered a mandate but it can become the element of an agreement and we're just trying to identify elements for an inter-local agreement.

Mr. Amatrudo added that the significant issue putting this together is we have no detail on what the impact has been so what the document says is rather than having a compensation agreement between the two mandated, the Commission would gather information on it and if it is a significant issue then there would be a recommendation to do something.

Commissioner Walsh added that we're looking at this from one side and the other side being there are no facts and no harm so what is the problem with having the backfilling language included. The discussion is looking at it from the perspective that the municipalities can't show that there is a harm then why would the volunteer municipalities think that there is a potential harm to them.

A discussion on backfilling followed and Mr. Morrisette said his intent would be to identify areas where the legislature could help i.e. establish a backfill fund. If that is going to make everyone happy and keep things clean it should be included as part of the transmittal letter. He said it is only his thought and it seems like a reasonable approach.

Commissioner Nicol said he didn't see anything in the document about the issue of safety which was mentioned at one of the forums by Chief Teale with the Hartford fire department.

Mr. Morrisette replied that it is addressed in the training item (d). He said he recognizes Chief Teale's position and he believes he was accurate in saying there is a differentiation between the contact hours for entry-level training for a typical volunteer as provided in-house or through a Regional Fire School and Recruit training offered by the Hartford fire department or delivered by the Connecticut Fire Academy. While this exists, at some point the recruit goes back to their department and receives additional training and annual refresher training as guided by ConnOSHA.

Chairman Carozza remarked that we all agree this issue will not be resolved today and asked members to go through the document and for each Commissioner to get their feedback to Mr. Morrisette ASAP.

Mr. Morrisette commented regarding the backfilling issue that if Commissioners wanted to tweak the language and make a sentence of fact that would be fine.

He also said he discussed a little about the training issue and safety concerns with the AG representative who is a former police officer. While he doesn't know the frequency of it, he did say a number of police officers actually work for more than one police department within the state so it is replicated in the law enforcement world. Department specific training would be provided by both employers.

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

Moving to item 7 – Matters to be raised by Commissioners and staff – Commissioner Johnson stated that he has submitted his retirement from the fire service effective February 22nd after serving for 41 years, 26 as fire chief. He said he represents the CFCA primarily as a representative of the career chiefs and the career chiefs' by-laws was very specific that they didn't want retired fire chiefs in the organization so he will be leaving the career chiefs. He said he plans to submit his resignation from the Commission after he speaks with Mr. Morrissette and his organization.

Commissioner Wilkinson extended best wishes for a long healthy and happy retirement to Commissioner Johnson. He said he's been a neighboring fire chief for his entire career and it has been an honor to share being on the Commission with him. He said there is a rumor that a suitable retirement party maybe in the works and asked Commissioners to save the date of February 23rd.

Chairman Carozza said he wanted to personally thank members of the Commission for their calls and cards during his recent stay in the hospital. He said he appreciates it.

Commissioner Blaschik also thanked Commissioners for all of their best wishes while he was in the hospital.

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

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:07 am.

Dated:

James P. Wilkinson, Secretary
Commission on Fire Prevention and Control