

FINAL

**FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR TRAINING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
May 12, 2009**

Chaired by: Phil McLean

Meeting Date and Location: May 12, 2009, Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS), 1970 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43223

Committee Members Present: Bob Babb, James Holcomb for Terry Gill, Mark Lundy, Richard Sacco, Jim Steele, Dudley Wright

Committee Members Absent: Terry Gill, Mark Mankins

Staff Present: Summer Boyer, Aleta Dodson, John Kennington, Tom Macklin, Doug Orahoad, Richard Rucker, Millie Pontious

Guests: Scott Carter, Spencer Township Fire Department; Jeff Cotner, Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors; Jeff Creed, Chillicothe Fire Department; James Holcomb, EMS Board/Violet Township; Bill Mallory, EMS Board; Stephen Steele, Chillicothe Fire Department; Michael Vedra, Columbus Fire Department; Steven Wallis, Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors/Ohio Fire Rural Council; Scott Walker, Ohio State Fire Marshals Office/Ohio Fire Academy; John Wilt, Columbus Fire Department

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM.

Mr. McLean introduced Chief Dudley Wright of Monroe Township Fire Department. He replaces Brent Gates as Mark Burgess's designee on the committee representing the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association. Mr. Wright has worked for over 20 years in the emergency service as a paramedic, firefighter II, and certified instructor.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 14, 2009 FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR (FFSI) TRAINING COMMITTEE MINUTES

ACTION: Motion to approve the April 14, 2009, committee minutes. Steele first. Sacco second. None opposed. Motion approved.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, Richard Rucker

Mr. Rucker reported that due to the state's financial status, the mileage reimbursement for travel is being reduced to 45¢ per mile effective immediately for Board and committee members. The Governor has issued an Executive Order to reduce costs by 30%. Mr. Rucker said to decrease expenses, the EMS Board will begin meeting every other month as will all Board committees, including this one. The FFSI committee will meet on the months that the Board does not meet. The next FFSI meeting will be held in July. State employees are taking mandatory across the board pay cuts, the Division's personal service contracts are being reduced by 15%, and there is a freeze on supply purchases. Mr. Steele said he thought a revenue stream had been secured and

Mr. Rucker said it has through a percentage of the abstract driver's license fees; however, the revenue is below what was projected. Mr. Rucker hopes the financial outlook will improve soon, but for now, the Division has to change how business is done.

A draft procedure for the *Appeal for the Waiver of Certification Eligibility Rules* was distributed for review. Mr. McLean said this is the current policy and it is just now being formally put in writing. Mr. McLean said the committee recommended a uniform process so everyone receives the same information when they call in. Mr. Holcomb pointed out a typographical error.

ACTION: Motion to approve the *Appeal for the Waiver of Certification Eligibility Rules* policy with the correction of one typographical error. Steele first. Sacco second. None opposed. Motion approved.

OPEN FORUM

Mr. Walker of the Ohio Fire Academy said their budget for 2010 has not been approved yet. Once the budget is approved, available courses will be posted on their website.

The Ohio Society of Fire Service Instructors (OSFSI) group gave an update on the 36 hour volunteer firefighter pilot course that is being conducted.

- Students in the pilot class were informed they are not trained firefighters and need additional training to be able to go inside a burning building.
- The revamped course will create consistency for quizzes, tests, outlines, etc., across the state as instructors will not be developing their own coursework. Course materials can be requested from the Fire Academy. Mr. McLean suggested the packet also be available on the EMS website. Mr. Orahod said if the quizzes are put there, students would be able to download them.
- The revamped class now covers all the different subject areas that meet the NFPA 1403 requirements without hands on demonstrations, which makes this disclaimer very important. It lets the Chief know they have to develop the volunteers to where they can become interior structural firefighters. It is the Chief's responsibility to provide the training and effort to get the graduates to that skill level.
- Committee members provided input on questions for the student evaluation form. Questions should include age, experience, do the students plan to go on to the 120 hour course, etc. Mr. Orahod and Ms. Boyer will prepare the form by the end of the week.
- The pilot class ends May 17th and the group will finalize their notes and forward to committee members before the next meeting.
- The group requested approval to hold two more pilot courses.

Mr. Steele said he has fielded a lot of phone calls from the predominantly rural northwest area with concerns that this is an external firefighting class and will not be able to use volunteers inside where they are really needed. Mr. Cotner said the fire chiefs need to provide additional training to those volunteers so they can go inside a burning building, which is the purpose of the disclaimer at the bottom of the waiver form.

Mr. Steele said scoring comparisons with cross sections of the state will be needed to evaluate the course's strong and weak areas. Mr. Orahod said the test will be web based so students can receive reports on how they did in each topic area of the state certification exam, which can be

used as one evaluation tool. Mr. Steele asked the group if a reading comprehension exam was given to students before they were admitted to the pilot course and Mr. Cotner said they did not. Mr. Orahood said some charter programs give reading comprehension tests to anyone to assess whether they have a reading disability before gaining admittance to the course. Ms. Frient will complete her review of the disclaimer form and give to Mr. Cotner prior to the May 27th course completion date. Mr. Orahood passed out copies for members for review.

Mr. McLean said the revamped course will eliminate the consistency issue, but still believes the Level I firefighter class needs promoted as the entry level class in Ohio. He thanked everyone for their hard work and efforts.

The OSFSI group is willing to provide updates on the 36-hour fire instructor's revamped program around the state. The Fire Academy, Mr. McLean, and Mr. Orahood can assist with the training.

Mr. Kennington passed out copies of the certification report. He received two requests for waivers for exemption for continuing education due to active military status and the staff recommends approval.

ACTION: Motion to approve the request(s) for exemption(s) regarding continuing education for two individual(s) serving on active military duty during the certification period. Holcomb first. Steele second. None opposed. Motion approved.

Two individuals in the audience addressed the committee requesting waivers for the mandatory renewal deadline. Mr. Stephen Steele, Chillicothe Fire Department, said himself and others in his department did not receive word about the renewal. He said there is nothing on the EMS website that gives certification sites or dates, the drop down box on "how to recertify for EMS and Fire" had no link to the fire information, there is a grace period for EMTs but not firefighters, and he did not receive any notice in the mail from the Division. As a 28 year firefighter veteran he had retake a test and could not work for eleven days. Mr. Steele did say that the recertification test was great and he received his response right away. Mr. Steele's Captain, Jeff Cree, spoke on how their agency had some departmental issues that did not give notice to all firefighters about the renewal deadline. Once Mr. Steele received his records from the school he attended and submitted to the Division, he received his card. Even though he did everything he was supposed to, Steve did not have a card January 24th. Captain Cree said there are some flaws in the system, the Division should admit that, and make an exception for someone who did their due diligence to get renewed. He asked the system and process be reviewed as it not only affected the individual firefighters, it impacted their departments and communities as well. Mr. Cree also wondered how firefighters not with a department learned that they had to recertify.

Mr. Kennington said the paperwork was received, the card was issued with the expiration date of January 24, 2009, which is standard procedure for everyone who was grandfathered. Those who were grandfathered then had to go online to renew their card prior to January 24, 2009 as theirs expired then. Stephen Steele said he did not know that and assumed he didn't have to recertify for another three years. Mr. Kennington also said that midstream through the process, the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) initiated uniform websites and the EMS website

was changed before the January 24, 2009 deadline. There was not a reference under “how do I reinstate” for fire, and the FAQ linked to EMS and Fire only referenced the EMS side. He will see to it today that it will reference section 4765.20-8 (fire reinstatement rule).

FFSI committee members and Division staff said firefighters had a whole year grace period to get their certification, there were more publications, press releases and notices given to all the fire departments than any other program that the Division initiated, EMTs have no extension or grace period but do have a 90 day extension, more stringent rules for the chartered institution have been revised to address training records, test dates aren't on the EMS website because schools don't notify the Division until a class has been completed, and chartered institutions have the ability to test every ten days and are to maintain communication with the fire community they are serving.

Mr. Scott Carter from Spencer Township Fire Department asked for a waiver. He did not know his card was expired until he registered to attend a FFI course. He never received any letter, email or phone call notifying him he had to renew. He has his original card, a copy from his instructor that he is enrolled in Level I class with contingency that he gets his card reinstated, and has completed his NIMS requirements. He is requesting today that his volunteer firefighter card be reinstated. He has tested once and missed by two questions. Mr. Carter said the cost is \$70 to retest and he does not have the money and the fire department won't pay for another test.

Mr. McLean said with over 105,000 names in the database it was not financially possible to send mail to notify every firefighter, but out of 52,000 individuals who did register, only about a few hundred didn't know. Mr. McLean said as the rule stands now, the only option is to take the test. The committee cannot govern what the schools charge to take the test, but he knows of places Mr. Carter can go and take the test at no charge and will talk with him after the meeting.

ACTION: Motion to make recommendation to Executive Director to deny request(s) for waiver(s) for case(s) presented for those who missed the renewal deadline. Babb first. Steele second. Sacco opposed. Motion passed.

Mr. McLean wanted both parties who spoke today to know that it is not this committee nor is it the Division's intent to take someone's card. Over a year was spent developing the rules with the input of the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association, the Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters, and the Ohio Firefighters Association, and firefighters had a year to recertify.

FIRE COORDINATOR REPORT, Doug Orahood

Mr. Orahood distributed the Fire report with certification numbers. Mr. Steele asked how many charters there are in the state and Mr. Orahood reported there are 73.

Mr. Orahood said Mr. Calco's contract cut will not impact audits, but he will not be able to attend as many local meetings, which might affect information this committee receives.

Mr. Orahood reported that the Ohio Board of Regents stackable certificate contractors' jobs were cut and he is not sure if the project will be discontinued. The volunteer and FF I certificates have been completed, but the fire inspector and fire instructor might not get finished.

The first draft of the Instructor Resource Sharing web page was sent out to committee members for comments. This is where instructors can share courses that fire instructor can use. Mr. Orahood reported the Ohio Fire Officials group will be providing five or six courses for posting.

The Division of EMS held their final Town Hall meeting in April in Columbus and over 100 people attended.

Mr. Orahood will be on a panel discussion along with Mr. McLean and Mr. Steele at the Ohio Fire Chiefs conference this summer.

CHAIR'S REPORT, Phil McLean

Mr. McLean attended the national Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) convention and their 1403 class. The class discussed having trained firefighters available to go into live burns, but did not mention having a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) certified instructor. Mr. McLean felt Ohio is ahead on this issue. He asked members to turn their PowerPoint presentations for the 1403 project in to Mr. Orahood in order to stay on target to get this project completed.

A Fire Hazard meeting will be held June 4th at the Ashland Fire Department at 9:30. Mr. McLean hopes the final curriculum will be developed.

He received a letter from Brent Gates which he read to the committee. Mr. Gates apologized for his comments at the last FFSI meeting. Mr. McLean also received a letter from Mr. Burgess indicating Chief Wright was appointed April 30th by the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA) to replace Brent Gates on the FFSI committee. Mr. McLean and the committee asked that a thank you letter be sent to Mr. Gates for his dedication to this committee and his many years of service. The letter will be drafted by Mr. McLean and Ms. Dodson, and a copy will go to Mr. McKenzie of the OFCA. Mr. McLean said he was honored to work with Mr. Gates.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. McLean personally delivered the committee's letter to Todd Laps of the Akron-Canton Airport regarding the certification situation of their fire brigade. He also spoke with EMS Board member Mark. Resanovich who said the airport's fire brigade will be retesting.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. McLean said since Mr. Gates was the vice-chair, a replacement needs nominated.

ACTION: Motion to nominate Jim Steele to replace Brent Gates as the FFSI vice-chairman. Babb first. Sacco second. None opposed. Steele abstained. Motion approved.

Mr. Sacco brought up the topic of firefighters being laid off who will not be eligible to go through their departments to attend continuing education classes due to liability issues. He wondered if a waiver could be provided for them similar to the military one. Items discussed included:

- When the rules were being developed, this was discussed and such individuals would be able to go to chartered training institutions
- There is no waiver for continuing education for EMTs

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- Consider pro-rating con-ed
- Attending CE classes might jeopardize firefighters unemployment insurance or disability
- They could attend lectures or take online courses without risking liability
- The committee might consider developing a policy on what online training is acceptable.

Members asked Mr. Lundy if the Ohio Association of Professional Firefighters (OAPFF) will be providing any guidance for its members. Mr. Lundy said it has come up at district meetings and it depends on each department's policy. Members asked Mr. Lundy to get options at the next OAPFF meeting.

Mr. Holcomb asked whether the committee granted approval to hold the two additional volunteer fire pilot courses and Mr. Steele said they have not seen the results yet for comparison. Mr. Cotner said two facilities have offered to hold the courses after July and after the committee has the first course results.

Mr. Babb reported the Columbus Division of Fire Training Academy was dedicated and said the FFSI committee is welcome to meet there anytime.

Mr. Orahod said with the FFSI committee meeting every other month, members might receive emails in between those times regarding ongoing projects including the Public Safety Instructor Course update, the fire inspector NFPA 1031 update, and looking into an email from an individuals claiming there was a Fire Instructor III level question on a FFI test .

ADJOURNMENT

ACTION: **Motion to adjourn.** Lundy first. Steele second. None opposed. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 11:52 AM.