

NH Fire Standards and Training Commission**MEETING MINUTES (Approved)****November 5, 2020**

9:30AM **In person meeting and call in option available**

Richard M. Flynn Fire Academy
98 Smokey Bear Boulevard
Concord, NH 03301

Action items are in bold red.

FST Commission members present:

Jeremy Thibeault (Chair), Robert Buxton (Vice Chair), Richard C. Bailey Jr., William Campbell (late), Allan Clark, Justin Cutting, Robert Field, Nancy Smith (late), and Eric Wilking **(9)**

FST Commission members present via phone:

Kerry LeBlanc, Paul Parisi and Steve Sherman **(3)**

FST Commission members not present:

Ashley Frame, Jason Greene and J. Michael Joyal **(3)**

Division of Fire Standards and Training & EMS Staff:

Director Deborah A. Pendergast, Assistant Director Jeffrey Phillips, Captain Ted Tillson and Hayley O'Brien **(4)**

Public Guests:

Concord Fire Chief – Guy Newbery and Dept. of Education - Eric Frauwirth **(2)**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Item 1. The meeting was called to order at 9:32AM. Chair Thibeault read the "Checklist to Ensure Meetings are Compliant with the Right-To-Know Law during the State of Emergency" then Hayley did a rollcall attendance.

Item 2. The pledge did not take place due to the meeting having virtual participants.

Item 3. Members were made aware of Chair Thibeault and Vice Chair Buxton's expirations upcoming on January 3, 2021.

- The Nomination Committee consists of Kerry LeBlanc, Justin Cutting and Bob Field. Any recommendations from Commission members will be submitted to the Committee members, the members will then make a decision prior to the next Commission meeting. The Chair and Vice Chair will be voted on at the start of the January meeting.

II. REPORTS

Item 1. Questions/comments regarding reports (Division, EMS, CB, FMO, Forest Protection, Curriculum)

Director Pendergast added a couple items to her report:

- The Committee of Merit has met and the decision to postpone the Awards Ceremony until September 2021 has been confirmed. Any Academy Awards will be held and presented at the 2021 ceremony.

Item 2. Legislative Report (Chief Mercuri absent)

- Nothing to report.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made (Field/Wilking) - to approve the minutes for the September 3, 2020 meeting; passed unanimously.

Bailey	Yes
Buxton	Yes
Clark	Yes
Cutting	Yes
Field	Yes
LeBlanc	Yes
Parisi	Yes
Sherman	Yes
Smith	Yes
Thibeault	Yes
Wilking	Yes

IV. SUB-COMMITTEES

Item 1. Administrative Rules Sub-Committee (Reported by Commissioner Smith)

- Nothing to report.

Item 2. Curriculum Review Sub-Committee (Reported by Commissioner Clark)

- Have not met, nothing to report.

Item 3. Visiting Committees:

- **Haz Mat NFPA 1072** – (Reported by Commissioner Buxton)
Nothing to report.
- **Firefighter NFPA 1001** – (Reported by Chair Thibeault)
Discussion occurred under Old Business.
- **Technical Rescue NFPA 1006** – (Reported by Chair Thibeault)
Captain Antonucci has begun collecting available packages of curriculum to bring

forward. Scheduled to seat a Visiting Committee shortly.

- **Fire Officer NFPA 1021** – (Reported by Commissioner Clark)
Nothing to report.
- **Instructor NFPA 1041** – (Reported by Commissioner Cutting)
The staff has reached out to Commissioner Cutting to schedule a meeting to present some initial components of the online Instructor portions. More of an update to come after this presentation.

V. OLD BUSINESS

Item 1. NFPA Firefighter I & II Curriculum

A motion was made (Clark/Bailey) - *to accept the NFPA FFI and FFII curriculum as proposed by the Visiting Committee and approved by the Curriculum Committee.*

Chair Thibeault opened the motion up for discussion before doing a Roll Call Vote.

Commissioner Wilking appreciated the Academy's efforts to reach out to him personally to address some of his concerns. Commissioner Wilking mentioned that he still has concerns with the curriculum pertaining to the hours, not necessarily revolving the delivery mechanisms. Less concerned with adding in the 10/11 lab hours and more concerned with cutting hours where hours didn't need to be cut and removing or reducing pieces of the curriculum that didn't need to be removed. Based on the public comments, Commissioner Wilking expressed he is not the only one with these concerns.

Public Comment from Concord Fire Chief – Guy Newbery

Chief Newbury submitted a written comment, but was present to comment in person as well. Chief Newbury echoed the concerns with the Firefighter II program where there is such a substantial reduction of hours. Wondering how we will be able to measure programs prior to 2021 to now with a 70+ reduction on hours. Concerns with how a fire department will be able to take that reduction and somehow incorporate the lost hours into a program. Will there be a bridge program? Chief Newbury stated that the Visiting Committee saw to add Air Monitoring to FFI which added an hour, but removed it from FFII completely. Chief Newbury expressed how inadequate he believes this is. Chief Newbury asked if this new curriculum passes for the Academy to develop a program for the fire departments to teach at their level.

Vice Chair Buxton asked Assistant Director Phillips how many public comments the Commission received. 3 testimonies during the public hearing and 9 public written comments, including 2 letters as well.

Assistant Director Phillips clarified that Air monitoring was actually never in the NFPA standard, it was newly placed in the standard this time around. Air Monitoring used to be a 3-4 hour segment, but is now seen only as an hour segment because it was broken up into other

modules. All the skills they are currently doing in FFII will still be in the program, but there is no stand-alone Air Monitoring module. Air monitoring skills can be seen in the tools and equipment, salvage and overhaul, fire behavior. Rescue Skills module is also not required by the standard, but due to it being part of the Homeland Security grant the Academy should still be able to offer them.

Chair Thibeault mentioned seeing the new curriculum passes, it will not blend with the old FFIII seamlessly and will need to be addressed.

Commissioner Campbell expressed concerns with needing more contact time with the students to produce competent firemen. It seems as if we are constantly cutting hours to just meet the standards. Commissioner Campbell doesn't see any harm in going above and beyond the minimum required hours. The job we do hasn't changed, contact time is essential, learning the skills through a computer isn't going to work.

Chair Thibeault mentioned the proposed curriculum is reducing the class lecture time and increasing the hands on, drill yard time. Yes, hours are reduced, but a lot of those hours are classroom hours.

Vice Chair Buxton agreed with Commission Campbell and the ability of those to practice the skill needs to be taken serious to gain proficiency. The lab hour change is new to everyone. Unfortunately, the facility closing in March was detrimental and these classes and trainings could not be delivered. With any curriculum change, changes could be seen, but that is with any curriculum change. Vice Chair Buxton has the faith in the Acaedmy staff to put together an excellent online portion with adjustments taking place as needed. Instead of driving an hour for in class lecture, now the class can be delivered at home to students and that back & forth commute time is now gone for those call/career firefighters. More hands on approach with this curriculum.

Commissioner Clark commented on the fact that there are no certification requirements a firefighter on a call/volunteer department needs to meet. The Visiting Committee was not instructed to meet a minimum or maximum numbers of hours for the curriculum, they were to look at the knowledge and practical skills needed to align with the curriculum and meet those standards at the most basic level. Recognizing the driving back & forth for class hours plus the cost of FFI, up to \$900, is significant; some department's budget is only \$20,000 a year and the cost in general is an issue. The intent isn't to water down the program, the Visiting Committee is trying to align the curriculum with the most recent standard. The call/volunteer departments are struggling to recruit.

Director Pendergast reiterated the flexibility the Academy has to meet area's needs. The example used was if Pittsburg fire department responds to x amount of brush fires a year, they have the ability to NWCG and the Academy supports the different needs in each town/city. The Academy is simply setting the table of what the curriculum consist of and adjusting it based on geographical needs.

Chair Thibeault regrouped back to the fact that the Commission is voting on an idea. This revamped program will come back to the Commission for review to see how well it worked once it has been delivered a few times.

Commissioner Smith asked if there was a review process to evaluate any change that has been approved. Acknowledging the concerns, but understanding that the curriculum has not been done this way yet and will need to run a few times to review test scores and feedback from Chiefs of the students they sent.

Assistant Director Phillips explained after the spring programs (FFI), after 2 deliveries, the Academy staff would report back to the Commission with a report of their findings. Then a final approval would take place. AD Phillips added that approximately 19 hours have been added to the curriculum for practical skills. The big change is getting away from classroom delivery to an online classroom component.

Marshal Parisi acknowledged the changes of the curriculum. Concerned with the reduction in over half of the hours in FFII, but understanding those hours will be made up in other areas/programs offered. Perhaps taking a look at part time needs more in depth.

Commissioner Field commented on his reluctance to vote in favor of this, but after many discussions with Captain Keller he is confident that the Academy will put forth the effort to deliver what the students need. Upon successful completion of FFI & FFII, the Academy is verifying that the students are capable of the skills required to perform firefighter duties. Once on a department, they will further develop those skills by doing hands on skills. Commissioner Field acknowledges he has concerns if the curriculum was altered to meet the needs to be more accessible to call/volunteer departments, but should be tracked. Reducing the number of hours is not going to significantly increase the number of call/volunteers joining departments. As the training captain for one of the state's largest departments, recruiting eligible firefighters to be employed full time is an issue for us as well. Funding is still an issue for career department's budget as well.

Commissioner Wilking asked what the Commission Members options are based on the motion today. A motion is on the floor with a second to support the proposed curriculum. Can the members make amendments, is it all or nothing, can the members send it back?

Chair Thibeault confirmed the options Commissioner Wilking listed. Chair Thibeault explained that the Commission owns the curriculum. The Commission by policy has chosen to use a Curriculum Sub-Committee and a Visiting Committee, but the Commission creates the curriculum. The members can make amendments, send it back to Curriculum Committee or send it all the way back to the Visiting Committee. The confusion to the approval process is next on the agenda. Sending it back to the Curriculum Committee will not really accomplish anything. If any changes want to be made, it would be best to figure them out here.

An Amendment was made (Wilking/Sherman) - to the proposed curriculum brought forth by the Visiting Committee, based upon a significant amount of testimonies by our constituents, to add 12 hours to the curriculum specifically to support the NWCG forestry program back to what it was, add all online component pieces, leaving the 8 hours of practical, but putting forestry back to 24 hours to make the total number of hours 214.

Chair Thibeault opened the amendment up for discussion.

Commissioner Sherman understands the negative student evaluations on the online portions and agrees, but those all came in after the changes occurred, after adding the online component to Wildland. Going with a 24 hour programs will allow the program to meet NWCG qualifications when it is tied in with FFI training. When approving a state curriculum we need to recognize the State of NH pays for 50% of the suppression costs for Wildland fires back to the community as well as workers comp.

Commissioner Smith asked about having 2 motions on the floor. Chair Thibeault confirmed the amendment to the initial motion has to be addressed before voting on the primary motion.

Assistant Director Phillips asked Commissioner Wilking for clarification on the hours. The existing portion, the Academy does the NWCG portion and then the practical. Currently, there are 12 hours of practical and it takes students 20-25 hours to complete the online component. Are you suggesting added 12 hours to the online content or developing online content? Wildland is a total of 36 hours.

Commissioner Wilking doesn't disagree with the confusion. The intent of the motion was not to change what was done previously, but to offer the Academy to look at the online portion and develop a 16 hour online component followed by an 8 hour practical.

Chair Thibeault clarified the vote about to take place is to vote on the amendment to add a total of 12 hours to the forestry module of FFI. Commissioner Wilking confirmed.

➤ **Roll Call Vote for Amendment.**

Bailey	No
Buxton	No
Campbell	No
Clark	No
Cutting	No
Field	No
LeBlanc	No
Parisi	No
Sherman	Yes
Smith	No

Thibeault	No
Wilking	Yes

Amendment fails with 10 no votes and 2 yes votes.

- Chair Thibeault asked if there was any more discussion about the initial motion to move the curriculum forward as presented by the Visiting Committee. Seeing none, moved to a vote.
- **Roll Call Vote for the Initial Motion to accept the proposed NFPA FFI and FFII curriculum.**

Bailey	Yes
Buxton	Yes
Campbell	No
Clark	Yes
Cutting	Yes
Field	Yes
LeBlanc	Yes
Parisi	Yes
Sherman	No
Smith	Yes
Thibeault	Yes
Wilking	No

Motion carries with 9 yes votes and 3 no votes.

Item 2. Curriculum Committee Approval Process & Policy

A glitch in the flowchart was recognized, the Commission sent this to the Curriculum Committee to clean up the flowchart. Commissioner Clark asked if we could wait on the work of this until FFI & FFII was cleared up. Commissioner Clark will schedule a meeting to get to work on this, address the concerns and bring it back to the Commission.

Please note the agenda change here.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Item 1. FFIII Glitch

FFIII will need to be revisited. Coming out of FFII, students will need to take another class to meet prerequisites for FFIII. Until the curriculum for FFIII is revisited, there is no way to remove those prerequisites. The Commission will need to take action regarding this by either changing the prerequisite from FFI or removing the prerequisite entirely, or by FFIII module, or make a blanket statement. Come April/June 2021 nobody will be able to join this class.

Commissioner Cutting clarified that the Commission cannot change the prerequisites today without a public hearing. He suggested establishing a Visiting Committee for the curriculums to begin work on evaluating all the Firefighter Level 3 programs.

Chair Thibeault confirmed 1006 is approved for review. The staff was going to take it module by module. The Commission would not need to vote on this, the Visiting Committee is just not seated yet.

Commissioner Cutting stated that if we were to remove the prerequisites and skills needed to be added in, that would be considered altering the curriculum and there is a process for that.

All Commission members agreed on the establishment of a Visiting Committee for the curriculums. The Commission should direct the Visiting Committee to discuss prerequisites only to ensure the changes are done in a timely manner.

Vice Chair Buxton confirmed the ability to teach ITRF is still there.

Item 2. 2021 Commission Schedule

A motion was made (Buxton/Wilking) - to accept the 2021 FST Commission Schedule as presented; passed unanimously.

Bailey	Yes
Buxton	Yes
Campbell	Yes
Clark	Yes
Cutting	Yes
Field	Yes
LeBlanc	Yes
Parisi	Yes
Sherman	Yes
Smith	Yes
Thibeault	Yes
Wilking	Yes

Moving forward with the upcoming Commission Meetings, the Chair wishes to utilize WebEx, rather than in person meetings due to the statewide pandemic.

Item 3. Chair and Vice Chair Reappointment

Tabled until the January 7, 2021 meeting until the Nomination Committee can accept nominations and bring it back to the Commission for approval.

Chair Thibeault expressed interest in being reappointed for another year. Vice Chair Buxton stated that he would consider.

VII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Item 1. Commissioner Cutting asked about extending formal thanks to the Visiting Committee. Chair Thibeault and Vice Chair Buxton confirmed yes.

Item 2. AD Phillips responded right away to all public comments thanking them for their submission.

Item 3. Hayley mentioned the Financial Disclosure Forms that are required to be submitted every year to the Secretary of State is undergoing a new process which will be done online. AC Bailey confirmed this new format is in the process and could be last minute.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made (Buxton/Field) – to adjourn the meeting at 10:55 AM, passed unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: January 7, 2021 at 9:30 AM – Virtual WebEx

(Minutes: Hayley O'Brien, Administrative Assistant)