

NH Fire Standards and Training Commission

STRATEGY AND PLANNING SPECIAL SESSION – MINUTES *(Approved)*

May 4, 2017

8:30AM to 3:30PM

Richard M. Flynn Fire Academy, dormitory day room

98 Smokey Bear Boulevard

Concord, NH 03301

FST Commission members present:

Richard C. Bailey, Jr., Robert M. Buxton, William Campbell, Stephen Carrier, Amy C. Clark, Justin Cutting, J. William Degnan, Michael J. Joyal, Peter Lennon, Kevin Pratt, Steven Sherman, Nancy Smith, and Jeremy Thibeault. **(13)**

NOTE: Four members could not attend for the whole day due to scheduling conflicts, but a quorum was present at all times.

FST Commission members not present:

Kerry M. LeBlanc and Richard P. McGahey **(2)**

Division of Fire Standards and Training & EMS Staff:

Director Deborah A. Pendergast, Assistant Director Jeffrey Phillips, Chief of Strategy and Planning Nick Mercuri, Paula Holigan, and June Connor **(5)**

Meeting Facilitator: Director of Human Resources, Michael Moranti

Guest Speaker: Commissioner John Barthelmes

After the opening of the session, led by Director Pendergast, who welcomed the group, and Nick Mercuri, who gave a system overview, Michael Moranti asked the group to begin by talking about their shared vision for the Fire Service, its current state, and the concerns and barriers that are holding back progress.

Shared Vision Brainstorming – Where will we be in 3-5 years?

(POST MEETING NOTE: Randomly expressed ideas were grouped into categories by note taker.)

Money:

- There must be a sustainable budget source.
- The FSTC should support the Division in terms of time, funds, and energy.

Legal:

- The mission of the FSTC should be well laid out in RSA.
- The FSTC should be well aware of its authority – what it can and cannot do.

Role of the FSTC:

- The FSTC should be a policy board.
- The role should be a supportive one once needs are identified.
- The FSTC should be a liaison between constituencies and the Division.
- There must be clear communication between the FSTC and the Division.

FSTC involvement with the fire service (scope):

- Recruitment and retention issues should be addressed (retention defined as 25 years and call/volunteer for 10 years).
- The FSTC should also be involved with other disciplines within the fire service, such as fire alarm operators, dispatchers, etc.
- Fire training...PERIOD!
- Training should be of the highest quality, on a par with ProBoard, and available for all departments, including call and volunteer.
- Pilot programs should be an avenue for trying out new approaches.
- Fire service training should include mandatory continuing education as a way of ensuring the integrity of the profession.

The Future:

- The FSTC should understand and advocate for the emerging needs of the fire service, such as emergency trends and technologies.
- Fire service training should be adaptive to changes, such as cancer awareness.
- The fire service should be able to respond quickly when there is an emergency, such as the carfentanil crisis.
- Provided services must be measurable, including the impact of training in terms of injury prevention, etc.

- Decisions should be made based on the results of good data collection and accurate analysis.

The Current State/Barriers/& System Challenges

- **Data collection** – not timely, difficult to get, incomplete, and not universal
- **Budget** – structurally underfunded Division, not sustainable, 10-15% may be coming from General Fund (not yet approved by Senate), grants are used to purchase big ticket items, partner agencies, outreach training, research
- **Lack of systematic continuing education** – dependent on municipality funding and culture (no requirements)
- **Chief credentialing** – tier training requirement/job descriptions/ranks up to local jurisdictions - no clear title structure, fewer people applying, volunteer migration to more densely populated areas, time limitations, rural areas more difficult to reach, lessening quality and number of instructors.
- **Geography** – regional facilities going away and people can't always get to training areas that are available.
- **Technology** – fire response good but supporting data is sporadic (info. systems)
- **Online training** – good quality, but the demand is high and the Division is not keeping up
- **Equipment** – using grant money; mobile equipment is okay though it still needs to be replaced because things are always aging.
- **Communication** – not always effective between the FST Commission, their constituencies, and the Division
- **Legislation** – needs updating
- **Standards** - Will communities accept FST Commission standards?
 - Local control is a big issue.
 - Lack of fire training standards for officers.
- **Volunteers** - dwindling
- **Retirement system** – changes to system result in people leaving
- **Rural areas** - affected negatively by time limitations for training
- **Instructors** - Availability, quality, and reliability is an issue. Evaluations are needed that go beyond the traditional student evaluation form; supervisor evaluations are needed, and there should be minimal CE requirements. Recruiting is also a challenge.

BRAINSTORM: OUTREACH & TRAINING NEEDS

Data & Communications	VOTE: 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications with stakeholders to identify gaps - inform about training activities and supply topical information; get needs, wants, and staffing/membership information <u>back from</u> departments, Get information <u>out to</u> departments, Understand the value of good data 	
Continuing Education/Professional Development	VOTE: 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be required and delivered on a volunteer basis; provide best practices and requirements for CE, officer qualifications, customer service, Meet or exceed the standard, Executive level of continued development, Increase the instructor pool and use specialty instructors, Targeted training for different positions, <p>CAUTION: To require any level of CE for certification would require a legislative change and no certification for volunteer or call would also need legislation.</p>	
Instructors	VOTE: 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should be trained every year, Many have been let go and not mentored, Certification needs to balance need and time (length of courses and entire certification) 	
Outreach	VOTE: 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current model seems to be meeting geographic requirements, Develop an organizational mindset of being a fire service "tool box", Identify pool of best candidates (full time/call/volunteer), Training demand low in rural areas – explore ability to accept/cooperate with cross-state borders (Does this require additional legislative authority?) Buy-in for changes that may be made, Call/volunteer outreach classes to satisfy regular training needs, What media outlets are frequented by candidate pools? 	
Training	VOTE: 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispatchers, Decentralize training, Call/volunteer training access, Up-to-date high level basic training, 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FST&EMS center of all remote training areas – need to fill that role, • Overextending training/recertification mandates too difficult to maintain, • Health, safety, and wellness, • Expand training topics for new trends 	
Personnel	VOTE: 0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retirement obstruction, • Penalty for working in state 	
Budget	VOTE: 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of subsidized classes, especially FFI and II, • How do we know where to spend the money? • Restrictions and regulations, • Outreach training funding, • Props 	

BRAINSTORM: FUTURE NEEDS – RECRUITING & RETENTION

Hours & Standards	VOTE: 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in required training • Minimum required number of hours for Firefighter I • Structured training progression • Evaluate the impact of the minimum standards • Establish minimum standards for all firefighters • Keep training and certification hours attainable • Job fatigue • Time commitment issues for volunteers • Make the instructor hiring process as simple as possible while still maintaining quality 	
Applicant Pool	VOTE: 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants for full time jobs • Identify potential candidate pools • Qualified applicant pool • Conduct a study to evaluate/identify recruitment changes • FST as a hiring resource for communities • Recruitment/retention of firefighters is a local issue; don't waste state resources • How do we "sell" the fire service as a career? 	

- How do we make the fire service a competitive industry?
- Marketing strategy for recruitment
- Do we connect with military veterans when they separate?
- Connect with technical college programs
- Can active continuing education help retention?
- Firefighters move from town to city.

Benefits & Retirement

VOTE: 4

- Concerns over changes to retirement and continued threat of legislative changes,
- Benefits for call firefighters; state RSA
- Retirement limitations and changes
- Better health and safety
- Incentives for firefighters
- Work to increase Fire Academy pay to help attract more full-time fire service personnel
- Training cost share for small towns

Health & Wellness

VOTE: 4

- Develop a health and safety culture with every class.
- To retain, we need to focus on health and wellness.

BRAINSTORM: OTHER METHODS OF CERTIFICATION

Portfolio (a method)

VOTE: 11

- Explore portfolio review for NH ProBoard certification
- For executive level programs
- Develop criteria for what is acceptable for certification level portfolio reviews
- Allow for out-of-state training to determine NH training levels
- There must be a consistent way of reviewing portfolios; set standards

Accreditation (a standard)

VOTE: 11

- Ensure NH standards are consistent with national standards.
- Look into dual accreditation.
- Maintain validity and consistency of testing level process.
- Develop method to bring old certificates into compliance with current standards.

Commissioner John Barthelmes spoke to the group after the lunch break. He emphasized the things that organizations must do in order to be transformational: provide good customer service, perform continuous process improvement, be good at

project management, focus on employees, and respect the views of individuals with effective conflict resolution and internal and external collaborative agreements.

Rather than brainstorm the remaining items on the agenda, the group decided to rank the importance of the following:

Credentialing, Code of Ethics, Cancer Training, Standard Error of Measurement, and Suspension and Revocation.

The following table shows the results of the votes, where #1 means "High" and #5 means "Low":

CREDENTIALING	CODE OF ETHICS	CANCER	STANDARD ERROR OF MEASUREMENT	SUSPENSION & REVOCATION
1	3	4	5	2
1	4	3	5	2
1	4	2	5	3
4	2	1	5	3
4	1	3	5	2
1	3	2	5	4
2	4	1	5	3
4	1	2	5	3
3	1	4	5	2
2	3	1	5	4
3	2	4	5	1
26	28	27	55	29
1ST PLACE	3RD PLACE	2ND PLACE	LAST	4TH PLACE

Chief Nick Mercuri gave the final summary of the day's events. The next step will be to develop a survey.

(Notes prepared by June Connor, Administrative Assistant I)