

NEW HAMPSHIRE FIRE STANDARDS & TRAINING COMMISSION

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MINUTES OF MEETING November 5, 2015 (Approved)

Voting Members Present:

Robert Buxton, Stephen Carrier (Chair), Michael J. Joyal, Kevin Pratt, Brad Simpkins, Nancy J. Smith, Esq., and Jeremy Thibeault

Voting Members Absent:

William Campbell, Timothy Carney, William J. Degnan, Kerry LeBlanc, Peter Lennon, David Lindh, Jr., and Richard McGahey

NHFSTEMS Staff:

Deborah Pendergast, Director; and June Connor, Administrative Assistant (minutes)

Guest:

Justin A. Cutting, future representative of the Professional Firefighters of New Hampshire, International Association of Firefighters

I. CALL TO ORDER

Item 1. Call to Order The meeting of the New Hampshire Fire Standards & Training Commission was called to order by Chair Carrier at 3:20PM on Thursday, November 5, 2015 at the Richard M. Flynn Fire Academy, 98 Smokey Bear Blvd., Concord, NH. A quorum was not present with only 7 voting members in attendance.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Buxton.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the September 3rd meeting were not approved because no vote could be taken. Members present did not have any corrections. **The vote will be taken at the January 7, 2016 meeting.**

III. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Carrier welcomed Justin Cutting to the meeting. Justin will be taking the place of David Lindh, Jr. at the January 7, 2016 meeting, representing the Professional Firefighters of NH – IAFF.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Item 1. Emergency Medical Services (Director Pendergast for EMS Bureau Chief, Nick Mercuri)

Topics covered are from the latest EMS Bureau Report ([September-October 2015](#)), some of which are listed below:

- PHTLS Courses – 144 providers trained with grant funding
- 2015 roll-out of protocols - completed
- EMS in the Warm Zone pilot program which includes an incident command piece
- AEMT Transition – 76% overall pass rate (about where we were 6 months ago). 500 still have to transition.
- Bariatric project – used equipment in 10 caches around the state

Item 2. Fire Marshal's Office (Fire Marshal J. William Degnan)
Commissioner Degnan was not present and no report was submitted.

Item 3. Forest Protection Bureau (Chief Brad Simpkins)

Fire statistics for the year in NH:

- 113 fires reported (low number – working with Fire Marshal's Office to determine real number)
- 622 acres – have not had a high number like this since 1989.
- Late August through most of September – extremely busy out-of-state season; multiple crews were sent out of state and the mobilization center was opened up at the Manchester-Boston Regional Airport; 175 resources were sent out through this center to support the fires on the west coast. NH firefighters were sent to about 6 different states.
- Nationally – over 9 million acres have burned. This year set the record for the most number of resources deployed at the same time (27,000 firefighters). The previous record was 25,000 back in 2002.

Fire Tower maintenance:

- Green Mountain in Effingham and Warner Hill in Derry – about 95% completed (total rebuilds)
NOTE: The Green Mountain tower was in such bad condition that it could not be staffed. Ironically, one of the biggest fires of the season was in that area. Fortunately, a civilian saw the smoke and called it in.
- Prospect Mountain in Lancaster – stone fire tower – completed
- Federal Hill in Milford and Pawtuckaway in Nottingham – next on the list

Fire Billing:

- This project will be worked on this winter.
- The Fire Chiefs Association requested this be looked into because it is affecting mutual aid groups. **Commissioner Simpkins will be assembling a committee to work on this issue.** Under state law, towns are reimbursed by the state for 50% of their fire suppression costs. Certain mutual aid groups have decided not to bill each other. The problem is that this year, because of the mobilization activation, there were towns coming in from outside many of the mutual aid regions. Those towns did submit bills which caused a lot of concern. Rates are also an issue due to the fact that the state reimburses using their own set rate rather than the rate set by the town.
- The system currently works as follows:
When a town from outside a mutual area assists with a fire, they submit their bill to the town where the fire was located and are paid by that town. After those bills are paid, the “fire” town submits its final bill to the Forest Protection Bureau, and their fire suppression costs are then reimbursed.

Letter regarding online blended wildland program:

Commissioner Simpkins stated that a letter will be forthcoming from Carroll County Ward’s Association stating that this program is not working.

AED Training for DRED – Kudos to Bill Wood for a tremendous job!

Clark Davis – was DRED’s law enforcement training officer and the executive director of the Northeast Fire Fighting Compact – passed away on November 4th. His funeral will be on Saturday on the Warner/Sutton town line.

Item 4. Curriculum Review (Bureau Chief Jeffrey Phillips)

Bureau Chief Phillips was not present. Director Pendergast covered some curriculum items in her report. (See V.)

Item 5. Academy Awards

Thanks to Commissioners Carrier, Thibeault, Buxton, Carney, and Smith for their help at the ceremony! Thanks also to Commissioner Campbell for writing one of the citations.

V. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

Director Pendergast was present and gave the following report:

Facilities:

- The North Country classroom is complete. The only infrastructure we are arranging is for telephone/internet.
- Last week the DOT Aeronautical group met with FAA to further discuss the grant funding of our much needed repairs and upgrades to our ARFF site. They had originally denied the request, but with further documentation and justification, we are coming closer to being approved.
- We are engaging in some “fall cleaning” of our buildings. Some of our staff is currently working on the large storage closet across from the cafeteria.
- We are working on a “history display” cabinet that will be set up somewhere on the first floor. We will have historical fire and EMS articles that will be available for viewing during our business hours.

Apparatus:

- Our grant funded mini-pumper is in production and slated to be complete in December. We are looking at early January for a delivery time. (Contractor – Lakes Region Fire Apparatus)
- The used Concord engine that we were using for some pump and fire classes is now out-of-service. The transmission and radiator failed and the quote to repair this is over \$30,000. We only paid \$5,000 for the truck. This will be surplus to the White Farm.

Budget:

- We are in the process of receiving quotes and preparing to spend our \$440,000 2014 AFG grant funds. This is for the training ambulance and simulation mannequin, airpacks, and drill yard equipment.
- We met yesterday to discuss our needs and will be applying for the 2015 AFG grant in December.

Programs:

- We currently have two FF I programs going on as well as LR Tech program and high school programs.
- We graduated 21 students from our summer recruit program. We started the class with 26.
- NOTE: None of the recruit students were from career departments, but rather from combination or volunteer ones. Non-affiliated students taking courses that have a tuition fee pay a higher, non-subsidized rate and also have to pay for gear. Insurance is not provided.
- I am continuing to meet with representatives from PFFNH having discussions on our physician sign-off policy, but otherwise this has been fairly well received. Some Chiefs and departments feel this was past due.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Item 1. Hiring Practices

Notice of Hearing Letter:

A copy of the amended letter was distributed. This letter was voted upon at the September meeting and was passed out just so that the commissioners could see the final result with the amendments added that they had approved.

There have been no further developments regarding the Division's working relationship with the NH Retirement System. **Commissioner Buxton volunteered to reach out to a trustee he knows in Nashua.** (Note: At the last FST meeting, Commissioner McGahey stated that the Hiring Practices Committee reached out to George Walker, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, who was unaware that the Retirement System had ended its business with the Division. Mr. Walker said that he would bring this issue up at the September meeting of the Board of Trustees. **Director Pendergast will follow-up with Mr. Walker.**

General Finding Letter and Fingerprint and National Criminal Record Check rule: These were sent to rule change so were passed on to Attorney David Hilts. **This item should be kept on "Old Business" for the January meeting.**

Item 2. Report from the EVDT/DOAV Visiting Committee

Deputy Chief Anderson was not present at the meeting, so this item will remain on "Old Business" for the January meeting.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Item 1. Budget report – Fire Academy and Fire Fund (Director Pendergast for Bureau Chief Jeffrey Phillips)

- The Division's budget year begins on July 1, 2015.
- Due to errors found on the handouts regarding the budget, **Bureau Chief Jeffrey Phillips will email the correct figures to the members of the FST Commission. The topic will then remain on the agenda for the next meeting.** (Note: Commissioner Joyal stated that this budget report can just be raw data from the State (example: statement of appropriations); a PowerPoint presentation is not necessary)
- In this year's and next year's budget, the Division has been asked to stick to the 93% spend rate because of the flat revenues in the Fire Fund.

- * By the end of 2017, the Fire Fund will be almost depleted, even with Homeland Security having been taken off of the Fire Fund.
- * In addition, the Fire Marshal's Office will not take as much from the fund as they have thus far; to make up the difference, they are looking into charging fees to do inspections in towns that do not have their own fire inspectors.
- * The Division is also trying to increase its revenues by increasing some of its fees; for example, we now charge facility use fees to outside DOS agencies.
- * Tuition fees are also being examined; for example, we were not charging for instructor prep time and consumables. In fact, we were losing about 15% of the actual cost of running a program.
- * Finally, an audit of the Fire Fund is also being done which will hopefully expose some shortfalls; part I of the audit has been completed by the Business Office.
- The question was asked as to why the state doesn't just set the budget at the 93% rate to begin with rather than to ask state agencies to not spend 7%. The State builds in an expected lapse to a budget. There are statutes in RSA-9 that require the State to have a balanced budget; the State can achieve this goal by including an anticipated lapse.

Item 2. FST Commission Nominating Committee Report

This report will be postponed until the January meeting. The following is what was in the minutes for the Nominating Committee at the September meeting:

“Task for the Nominating Committee (LeBlanc, Simpkins, and McGahey): Work needs to be done on nominating the FST Commission Chair and Vice Chair for the 2016 season. This needs to be done by the next meeting on Nov. 5th. The vote will be taken on January 7th. Commissioner Carrier welcomed all those who wish to throw their hats into the ring. Please contact Commissioner LeBlanc (kleblanc@hanover.com) to express your interest in being considered by the Nominating Committee.”

Item 3. FST Commission Sub-Committees

An updated list of the sub-committees was handed out. Typically, new members of the commission take on the responsibilities of the people they replace. However, commission members can switch with each other at any time, depending on their interests and time availabilities. The commission must vote in order to delete or add a standing committee to the list. **At the next**

meeting, a vote should be taken regarding the “Length of Service Award Program” sub-committee. (Keep this item on “Old Business” for the next meeting.)

VIII. GOOD OF THE ORDER

Academy Awards: This needs to be discussed in depth at the next meeting. The current nomination process does not work. The intent of the ceremony also needs to be re-examined. Several ideas were expressed about what should be done, from eliminating the event altogether to combining it with the Committee of Merit to reducing the number of awards given out, but no conclusions were reached. **Chair Carrier will convene the Academy Awards committee and reach out to the Committee of Merit for their input.**

IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting concluded at 4:15PM. No adjournment vote was taken.

2016 FST Commission meeting schedule:

January 7, 2016 (next meeting)

March 3, 2016

May 5, 2016

June 2, 2016

September 8, 2016

November 3, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah A. Pendergast, Director

Prepared by June Connor, Administrative Assistant I