**MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, August 2, 2021**

**Via ZOOM**

***(Draft Copy Only, Not Approved)***

Chief Dan Brooks called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 8:00 a.m. via ZOOM. Fire Commission members present for today’s meeting included Stephan Bunker, Senator Chip Curry, Gerry Gay, Matt Gomes, Steven Greeley, Ron Green, Chief Thomas Higgins, Sam Hurley, Representative Grayson Lookner, , Vicki Schmidt, Charles Soltan, Chief Joseph Thomas, Chief Michael Thurlow, Representative Bruce White, Chief Larry Willis (RET). Members unable to attend the meeting were Senator Scott Cyrway, Deputy Chief (RET) Kenneth Desmond, James Graves, Chief Joseph Guyotte, Harty Norris, Peter Rogers, Representative Timothy Theriault and Susan M. Pinette (staff). Guests joining today’s Fire Commission meeting were Chief William Gillespie of the Liberty Fire Department and Chief Roger Hooper, York County Fire Administrator.

Committee Reports and Old Business

The Best Practices Committee reported no new nominations for last month. Committee members suggesting printing nomination papers and distributing at the Conference later this month. Members agreed that outreach to other members in the fire service was important in identifying and recognizing best practices in Maine.

The Bylaws Committee distributed copies of the new public law dealing with remote meetings. The Committee will review the current law and draft language amending the Commission’s bylaws. These proposed bylaws changes will be distributed to Commission members for their consideration following the procedures outlined in the present bylaws (see below in blue).

**ARTICLE VII- AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS**

These Bylaws may be amended or revised at any regular or special meeting by a majority vote of the members present, subject to the 7 vote minimum requirement pursuant to Article IV, section 4, provided that any proposed amendment or revision shall have been presented to the Fire Commission members at its previous regular meeting.

The Education and Training Strategy Committee met on July 20th and discussed the results of the past legislative session and next moves. **LD 242** *“An Act To Support the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission”* sponsored by Senator Cyrway was signed by the Governor and became public law on July 8th. Funding results were $250,000 in year one and $78,147 in year two, minus SMCC’s cut, for a total of $313,000. The Committee discussed the requirement to conduct engineering studies every five years which will be due in September 2022. Funding for these studies may cost $20-25,000 (estimate) and was previously funded by the Maine Fire Service Institute. Members suggested monies should be set aside now or through a grant and include all the facilities. Further discussion and suggestions included the pros and cons of funding for repairs existing and future projects versus funding for new projects. Committee members agreed the new grant process would be limited to repairs and renovations up to a total of $125,000 for the summer of 2022. The majority of the funding would be held until all monthly payments were received and the results of the engineering studies were complete or if additional funding becomes available. MFSI plans to issue an RFP for the engineering studies in spring 2022. The grant process may need to be altered and funding limits adjusted depending on the results from the engineering studies. Committee members reported on two additional items of interest that included York County’s interest in pursuing and all hazards training facility and actively seeking funding for the project. Members also learned that the new St. George live fire training facility, described by Chief Polky at the May Fire Commission meeting, is now officially open and available for training by MFSI.

The Recruitment and Retention Committee reported no new information this month but plan to have handouts at the conference later this month.

The 2021 Spring Conference Committee reported the Professional Development Conference sponsored by the Maine Fire Chiefs’ Association, and rescheduled for August 25th through August 27th at the Sunday River Grand Summit Resort Hotel and Conference Center in Newry has distributed the conference brochures and registration forms. Ninety attendees have preregistered and forty five vendors have signed up for the conference. Registration will remain open for another three weeks.

The Staffing Committee reported that the Hancock County staffing survey was distributed last week. The Committee still hopes this survey will eventually include all Maine counties and will work with the Margaret Chase Smith Center on this goal.

The Wildland Fire Committee reported a very busy start to the season but all the rain this past month has helped lessen the fire danger in the state. The online burning permit fee was eliminated by the Legislature and the Forest Service will meet with the Maine Fire Chiefs’ Association seeking their feedback on a new online burning permit program. Maine Forest Service continues to monitor the CMP corridor issue and are presently providing training to local fire departments and contractors working on the corridor project. The Forest Service is pleased to announce that 6.7 million was approved in the budget for new helicopters. Following the procurement process, the Forest Service hopes to announce the addition of two used Bell 407s to its fleet.

The Treasurer’s Report indicated that the Fire Commission’s balance for August is $2,774.70. This amount reflected the addition of the state’s allocation to the Fire Commission in FY21 ($2000). The LOSAP balance remains at $602.15.

The LOSAP Board reported that the $500,000 allocated in this year’s budget will allow the Board to hire a third party administrator to solicit fire departments and add more individuals to the program.

New Business and News from Members

The Fire Commission discussed the insurance industry’s new five year statistics on fire loss in the state. Maine lost over $10 million more than the previous report. Higher property values may account for some of the increases however that would not be the entire explanation. Further evaluation of the numbers is needed before making any final recommendations.

The Bureau of Labor Standards announced the retirement of Mike LaPlante. The new BLS Workplace Safety Program Manager is Mary Matthews. Happy retirement Mike!

BLS noted two new laws that impact the fire service. OSHA passed a new emergency temporary standard that impacts first responders. This new legislation will give BLS the ability to enact emergency work rules starting in October and updated directives will be available so departments can remain in compliance. BLS will provide additional information at the conference later this month. The Maine Legislature passed **LD 1245** “*An Act To Ensure the Provision of Adequate Personal Protective Equipment to Firefighters Who Are Women”* sponsored by Representative Grohoski of Ellsworth and was signed by the Governor on July 9th. This new law requires BLS to notify fire departments about proper fitting PPE for female firefighters.

Fire Commission members reflected on the past Legislative session and the many successes and disappointments. Commission members agreed that it was a very challenging session yet many members worked extra hard and deserve the gratitude of all members. Several individuals were recognized during the meeting for their time and hard work spent lobbying for the fire service. The Fire Commission is very grateful to the women and men of the Fire Commission, members of the Maine Legislature and Maine’s fire service who worked tirelessly to pass positive legislation.

Fire Commission members agreed that next meeting scheduled for Monday, September 13th would be in person starting at 10:00 am at the Department of Public Safety Building. Alternate sites suggested were the University of Augusta which has accommodations for hybrid meetings. Commission members were cautioned that the location could change depending on state COVID numbers and notice would be sent via email.

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chair Brooks adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette

Staff

*My sincere and continued gratitude to Chief Thurlow, for without his notes, I would not have been able to produce these minutes. Thank you!*