MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION

**Minutes**

## **Monday, December 5, 2022**

**10:00am**

**Office of the Maine State Fire Marshal**

Chair Chief Chief Brooks convened the meeting at 10:00 AM on December 5, 2022

Present members: Chief Brooks, Secretary Vicki Schmidt, Second Vice Chair Ronnie Green, Senator Chip Curry, Larry Willis, MFW Robbie Gross, Jim Graves, Bill Gillespie, Charlie Soltan, Harty Norris, Stephen Bunker, Troy Dare, Myles Block, Chief Wytock.

**I. Committee Reports**

A. **Best Practices**

Could not hear what was said or who said it.

B. **Professional Development Conference**

Members discussed aligning the Commission meeting with the Conference date.

There was further discussion as to what room the Commission will be meeting over at the legislature. In previous years it had been in the Judiciary Meeting room due to the former clerk, Sue Pinette, being the clerk for the Judiciary Committee.

It is uncertain as to where future meetings are going to be. Senator Curry volunteered to look into on behalf of the Commission but stated he’ll have to wait until Legislative Committee members are made and assigned.

C. **Education and Training**

Jim Graves said MFSI to put on Firefighter 1 & 2 training.

Chief Brooks said some departments were looking free training.

The issue of freed versus tuition-based training and it was concluded that any free training would have to be directed toward areas in need.

Grant applications were discussed briefly and in particular the effort being made to get the most bang for the buck from those awarded funding.

Senator Curry inquired as to whether there was any measurement system of quantitative measures for scoring grant applications.

Chief Brooks state that no scoring matrix has been created.

Senator Curry inquired as to who reviews the grant applications and Chief Brooks responded that the Commission’s Education Committee does the review.

Jim Graves mentioned that one facility grant application had been received. He went on to talk about costs associated with firefighter training only included the books and instructor.

Stephen Bunker inquired as to whether the facility grant funds could be used for apparatus.

Chief Brooks discussed his wish to see that local instructors get involved in training and mentioned that regarding grant proposals that the best narrative grant.

Chief Brooks continued with a discussion about funding training programs and stated that absent an economic turndown the legislature would continue funding programs.

The Legislative Breakfast will be January 16th.

Chief Brooks stated that he hopes the Commission can announce some of the grant awards in front of the legislature at the February Commission meeting.

D. **Recruitment and Retention**

Chief Willis provided a brief update on the efforts being made including one to have the Social Security Windfall Program removed or amended. Under the program workers (firefighters in this case) who haven’t worked enough hours to count as “substantial hours of income” under the Windfall can’t count that time and collect social security based on those hours. It’s hoped that substantial hours requirement can be removed or the entire program so that all the hours firefighters work can go toward social security.

Not having those hours be counted has inhibited some potential recruits from joining fire departments.

It was pointed out that many fire departments do not have adequate equipment and that also inhibits training and subsequently recruitment. In addition, those that acting as independent departments should be incorporated into communities so as to allow them to approach selectboards and request funding.

At present the independent fire departments are often involved in mutual aid agreements where they only provide a small fraction of aid, i.e., less than 50 or even 20% of aid in each area.

E. **Wildland Fire**

Forestry’s Robbie Gross talked about his meetings with local officials where training and equipment needed to fight wildland fire were discussed.

He reiterated his previous calls for communities to put wildland fire on there agenda and that they should be concerned. He went on to point out again that the federal government has made funding for community risk reduction available to communities to do so. Hancock County has applied for that federal funding. Mr. Gross suggested the issue might warrant a discussion with the legislature.

Mr. Gross mentioned other forestry efforts including legislation to strengthen the burn permit program. The proposed legislation would focus primarily on redefining terms such as “burn permit” and others.

Senator Curry ask Mr. Gross if there was a report on Maine’s efforts to address wildland fire to which Mr. Gross answered no.

Mr. Gross ended his discussion pointing out the need to have members of the fire service (firefighters) committed to and equipped to fight wildland fires and how difficult it is to outfit firefighters to fight wildland fires statewide. Personal gear to protect these firefighters from PPE/PFAS could be and should be used. Forestry is not prepared to do respiratory testing as the Fire Marshal’s Office does.

**F. Staffing**

Fire Marshal Joe Thomas, in his last meeting with the Fire Commission, pointed out that finding and implementing much needed remedies to Maine’s Fire Service staffing issues is a long process. The recent effort to secure funding through a Fire Prevention Grant (AFG) to continue the survey work being done by the Fire Marshal’s Office and the Hancock chiefs fell short. Other funding will be sought, and planning will continue as well.

Rich McCarthy will take Joe’s place on Hancock study group upon Joe’s retirement.

**G. Treasurer’s Report**

No change in the balance but a continued need to work on funding.

**II. Old Business**

**A. LOSAP**

Chief Gillespie stated that efforts to visit Maine Fire Departments in each county to discuss LOSAP are continuing. And several have departments are interested.

**B. EMS Report**

The EMS resolution supporting the Maine EMS Naloxone Leave-Behind Program was discussed at length.

Those still unsure as to whether to support the resolution cited uncertainty regarding the cost of the product. Others wondered if strategies that reduce the root cause, addiction, and aim to at reducing overall use might not be a better approach in the long run. Others pointed to the sheer burnout firefighters are facing responding to these incidents.

Those in favor of supporting the resolution cited the need to keep people alive so that they can be treated and that any action that can be taken to prevent the loss of any life should be taken as it is our inherent purpose as first responders.

A motion was made to support the resolution and prevailed. The resolution has been attached to these minutes.

Senator Curry expressed his conviction that first responders need to be recognized for the work they do about the opioid crisis as well as all other actions they take on behalf of Maine citizens.

**III. New Business and News from Members**

**A. Legislation**

Chief Brooks stated that he was looking forward to working on the four bills moving before the legislature this session as well as LD 37 sponsored by Senator Stewart of Aroostook.

**Other:**

Before adjournment, member of the Commission took a moment to present a plaque to Joseph E. Thomas, Maine State Fire Marshal, and Former Portland Fire Chief for over 30 years of service to Maine through numerous organizations including the Maine Fire Protection Commission.

Chief Brooks adjourned the meeting at 11:00.

**Resolution 2022-12-05-01 Supporting Maine EMS's Naloxone Leave­ Behind Program**

**Whereas** over 60% of EMS agencies in the State of Maine are fire-based;

**Whereas,** the State of Maine continues to see a rise in the count of opioid overdose fatalities throughout the state;

**Whereas,** the State of Maine continues to see a rise in the number of EMS activations associated with persons experiencing an opioid overdose and/or utilization of naloxone;

**Whereas,** the 130th Maine Legislature passed LD 1333 and it was signed into law by the Maine Governor in 2021. This legislation authorizes EMS clinicians throughout the State of Maine to dispense naloxone to patients, their family, and their friends in alignment with protocols adopted by Maine EMS;

**Whereas,** Maine EMS has developed and deployed a free, online asynchronous training available via th'e Maine EMS Education (MEMSEd) system;

**Whereas,** Maine EMS's Medical Direction and Practices Board (MDPB) has adopted a protocol to guide EMS clinicians in the dispensation of naloxone when treating a patient experiencing an opioid overdose;

**Whereas,** Maine EMS has secured multiple sources of funding to ensure that no EMS agency participating in the Naloxone Leave-Behind Program will need to fiscally support the acquisition of leave-behind naloxone associated with this program; and

**Whereas,** contemporary research strongly supports the expansion of harm reduction strategies like Maine EMS's Naloxone Leave-Behind Program as an effective approach to help mitigate increased morbidity and mortality associated with opioid overdoses.

**Now, therefore be it resolved,** the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission strongly encourages all EMS agencies, especially those that are associated with fire departments, to support and adopt the Maine EMS Naloxone Leave-Behind Program as an effective harm reduction strategy for persons experiencing opioid use disorder throughout the State of Maine.

Adopted December 5, 2022.

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***VJ?.***

Dan Brooks

Chairperson, Maine Fire Protection Services Commission

**Intended Distribution:** Maine Fire-Based EMS Agencies