MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION

**Minutes**

## **Monday, March 7, 2022**

**8:00am**

**(ZOOM)**

Chief Dan Brooks called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission meeting of March 7, 2022 to order at 8:07 a.m. via ZOOM. Fire Commission members present for the meeting included:

Chief Brooks, Stephen Bunker, Gerry Gay, James Graves, Ron Green, Vicki Schmidt, Charles Soltan, Fire Marshal Joseph Thomas, , Chief William Gillespie, Matt Gomes, Ronnie Green, Rob Peters, Ken Desmond, Chip Curry, Robby Gross MFR, Chris Wytoch, Ronnie Green, and Tray Dare.

**Introductions and other business:**

Chief Brooks introduced two new members: Chris Wytoch, Rockland Fire Chief and member of the Maine Fire Chiefs Association and Johanna Oberg of the State Legislatives Offices.

Johanna will be taking Susan Pinette’s place as Commission Secretary.

Chief Brooks made a motion to approve the January 3, 2022 and February 7, 2022 Fire Commission Meeting minutes. The motion was seconded, carried and the motion prevailed.

Matt Gomes of the Maine Forest Service announced this would be his last meeting and thanked Commission members for the opportunity to have worked with them. Robby Gross from Maine Forest will be taking his place. Various members of the Commission thanked him for his service.

**Committee Reports**

1. Best Practices

Chief Brooks stated he has some plaques to be given to Old Town FD and other departments for their good work in developing and implementing best practices. He went on further to state that the plaques would be presented at the Maine Fire Chief’s Association Conference in April.

1. Professional Development Conference

Regarding the upcoming Maine Fire Chief’s Conference, William Gillespie reported that the conference center has been revamped and both the trainers/trainings and vendors are ready to go. 54 Vendors have been secured for the event. Mike Dugan of FDNY will be guest speaker at the conference. Stephan Bunker express his appreciation that one of the trainings is focusing on fire fighter related cancer.

1. Education and Training Strategy Committee

Jim Graves requested permission to review responses to MFSI’s RFP for engineering reviews of some of Maine’s training facilities. He stated he has the MOUs and is ready to move on selection. Several towns’ facilities will be reviewed, and some may need repairs.

After discussion it was agreed that any amount of funds to be allocated toward the engineering reviews be decided when the Commission has actual numbers (bids) it can review.

The Fire Marshal’s Office is working on rules that provide guidance as to rewarding organizations providing services to MFSI via an RFP process.

Vicki Schmidt brought up the idea of getting bulk prices on various products used in repairing facilities.

D. Recruitment and Retention Committee

Ken Desmond had no news to report.

E. Bylaws

Dan pointed out that the bylaws committee reports are being taken off the agenda.

F. Wildland Fires

Matt Gomes informed the Commission that the federal government will be providing additional funding to combat wildland fire in the coming months. He went on to state the Federal Government will be focusing on regulation of prescribed burning processes.

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He suggested examining Maine’s laws regarding prescribed burning through the lens of what the Federal Government will be doing.

G. Staffing Committee

Fire Marshal Thomas informed the Commission that the application for AFG funding the University of Maine/Fire Marshal’s Office grant to examine fire department staffing issues in Maine had been submitted.

He went on to mention that the meeting he and Stephan Bunker had attended with the Maine Municipal Association had gone well.

Gerry Gay expressed his concern that it will be difficult to get fire departments in Maine to complete the surveys. Fire Marshal Thomas pointed out that the University was going as far as to send out individuals to conduct/fill in gaps in surveys.

H. Treasurer’s Report

Chief Brooks reported a $2,774.70 balance and that $700.00 will be going to Susan Pinette for her services leaving a final balance of $2,074.70.

Plaques will also be purchased from that balance. The plaques are to be awarded at the conference later in March.

Vicki Schmidt suggested giving gift certificates from PetCo or Longfellow’s in lieu of a plaque for Susan Pinette.

II. Old Business

A. LOSAP

Chief Gillespie informed the Commission that there will be LOSAP participants at the conference in March. He pointed out that the Chief’s will have numbers that might help with the University of Maine/Fire Marshal’s Office study on staffing.

Chief Gillespie is hoping for a special appropriation to help with the 3rd party administrator which is an ongoing need.

Charlie Soltan pointed out that there is not much money left to be used for additional state spending.

B. Other

Nothing brought up.

IV. New Business

Stephan Bunker discussed the idea of amending the state’s compensation laws to help those in the fire service who have cancer resulting from their service. He pointed out that the law is missing certain populations of the fire service.

Fire Marshal Thomas responded by stating the current law is old and has been put together piecemeal over several years and lacks up-to-date science and hence, needs to be completely overhauled. He suggested creating a special subcommittee to study the law.

Stepan Bunker asked Ronnie Green what other states are doing regarding compensation and cancer. Mr. Green stated that that could be something to bring up at the Conference in March.

Matt Gomes mentioned that a Portsmouth, NH firefighter-Chief Osgood had discussed the cancer risks associated with wild land fire fighting and would be a good resource to reach out to.

Chief Brooks endorsed the idea of creating a subcommittee to examine the Maine statute on compensation and cancer.

It was mentioned that perhaps some language could be added to LD 305 which addresses compensation. It was pointed out that an attempt to change the proposed legislation this late in the game could do more harm than good.

In the context of cancer and compensation the idea of examining PFAS further was mentioned.

Jim Graves discussed the difficulty MFSI is having recruiting highly qualified candidates to teach at MFSI. He stated the major reason this is happening is because candidates from Maine’s fire service don’t want to lose their local retirement packages to come to MFSI and must start all over. Joe Thomas added it simply isn’t portable from one employer to another.

It was suggested that Jim touch base with the University System and talk about the portability issues.

Joe Thomas suggested that Jim Graves give him the details so that he can bring it to the MFSI advisors to discuss and subsequently deflect any backlash aimed at Jim.

Other business:

Vicki Schmidt mentioned that a map has been created that shows where moving water is located and might be of use to the fire service to avoid using that water to pump out of to fight fire.

Ronnie Green pointed out that LD 1879 which aimed to repeal the provision of law repealing a section that establishes the presumption that emergency response providers, including the fire service, having been diagnosed with PTS be removed is not doing well and will likely be delayed.

Chief Brooks pointed out the next Commission meetings will be on April 4th and May 7th, both Mondays and start at 8AM.

There was a brief discussion as to when the Commission can meet in person or do hybrid meetings and where and what facilities could host such hybrid meetings. Senator Curry provided a brief as to where the legislature is moving on holding meetings.

Chief Brooks moved to adjourn at 9:32

The next meeting of the Fire Commission will be held Monday April 4thth, 2022 at 8: 00 AM

Other schedule meetings:

Spring Conference March 23rd thru 25th, 2o22

Monday April 4th, 2022