

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY
NEW JERSEY FIRE SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING**

Meeting of November 18, 2020

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held virtually on Zoom on November 18, 2020.

Commission Members Present: Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman
Sen. Sam Thompson
Asm. Kevin Rooney
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood
Mr. Armando Roman
Mr. Kevin Bellew
Mr. Gerard Naylis
Mr. John Wisniewski
Mr. Richard Blohm
Mr. Daniel DeTrolio
Ms. Kathleen O’Leary
Mr. Arthur Londensky
Mr. Steve O’Gorman
Mr. Charles Siedenburg
Mr. Fred Collender

DCA Staff Members Present: Richard Mikutsky, NJ State Fire Marshal
Lou Kilmer, NJDFS
Charles Lavin, NJDFS
Vincent Campagna, NJDFS
Jerry Clark, NJDFS
Kent Neiswender, NJDFS
Justin Henry, Codes and Standards

Guests: David Kurasz, NJFSAB
Vincent Corsaro, Jefferson Twp. Fire Prevention

A. Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. He led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

B. Approval of Minutes

With no discussion requested or additional corrections, the minutes of the regular meeting of September 17, 2020 were approved.

C. Correspondence

Chairman Krushinski noted that any and all correspondence for today's meeting was transmitted to the Commission members electronically prior to the meeting. With no discussion requested on any of the items submitted, the meeting was moved to Public Comment I.

D. Public Comment I

Chairman Krushinski opened the meeting up to any members of the public wishing to comment before the Fire Safety Commission. With no members of the public wishing to address the Commission at this time, the meeting was moved to Division of Fire Safety Activities.

E. Division of Fire Safety Activities

Director Richard Mikutsky began his report by acknowledging the great work that the NJDFS staff continues to perform under the adverse conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Director Mikutsky also welcomed back the newly-appointed Commission, John S. Wisniewski. The Fire Safety Commission echoed this sentiment in welcoming back the former Chairman.

Director Mikutsky gave an update that the Junior Firefighter legislation – Senate Bill 238 - is currently on the Governor's desk. The NJDFS is already preemptively drafting the rules related to this bill in anticipation of the Governor's signing the bill. It is hoped that this will be done and in place for the Spring 2021 semester. Director Mikutsky also gave a report on the updating of the New Jersey Addendum, which should be fully completed within the next week or two. This will be the first update of the Addendum since 2011.

The New Jersey Division of Fire Safety is still working towards backfilling position and getting up to full staffing levels. Director Mikutsky and Bureau Chief Lou Kilmer continue to work with the DCA administration on this. The NJDFS is primarily working remotely and conducting meetings virtually since March. Some in-person activity had been starting to resume, but the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases has reversed this for the time being.

Director Mikutsky reported that – in conjunction with Dave Kurasz, Commissioner Kevin Bellew, the NJ Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, and Sprinkler Fitters Local 696 – there will be a side-by-side Christmas Tree Burn held at Monmouth County Fire Academy. It is currently scheduled for December 3rd at 11 AM, but further details will be sent when the arrangements are solidified in the coming days.

Director Mikutsky gave an update on Senate Bill 2051, which deals with lightweight construction standards and protocols. There was a committee meeting on the bill scheduled back in September, but that meeting wound up being cancelled. The bill is still in committee at this time and has not moved. Director Mikutsky also spoke about the

weekly call (Wednesday mornings) held with fire service throughout the state, where up-to-date information is shared with all participants.

Virtual NFIRS training is ongoing, and Director Mikutsky described this as something that fire departments really need to be up on with the latest information. Director Mikutsky reported that there were 45 school fire reports, 291 civilian burn reports, 63 fatal fire reports, and 26 residential fatal fires so far in 2020. The NJDFS has brought in a couple of interns to work with the NFIRS Unit to crunch numbers and compile the reports that are coming in. Two more will be brought in this January to further assist with the reports.

Chief Lou Kilmer reported that the Bureau of Code Enforcement has been extremely busy, but fortunate that the DCA administration has allowed them to bring back their hourly employees. The Bureau has done a great job of both keeping up with the current inspections and catching up on the backlog from earlier in the year. Staff will now be in N95 respirator masks, however these are pretty hard to come by and they are back ordered. In the meantime, supervisors have been working to develop a temporary system of conducting inspections virtually. As always, the safety of the NJDFS staff is the highest priority.

Chief Kilmer reported that the NJDFS has suggested to local enforcing agencies that LHU's be done first. The decision was made (after much deliberation) that they will not be given a pass this year as far as getting the inspections done. Since businesses are still being charged the fee, the inspections should still be done in one form or another. NJDFS staff continues to work on the adoption of the 2018 International Fire Code. We continue to work on the initial chapters with the Codes Advisory Council.

Chief Kilmer spoke about the Rule Relaxation Notice that the NJDFS published back in July. Some of the rule relaxations are set to expire on December 31st and others will not expire until the public health emergency is declared to be over. Many of these rules that are set to expire at the years end will be looked at individually and a determination will be made whether to extend them. The NJDFS has been working with CGI to make changes to the annual reports based on these rule relaxations. Chief Kilmer also commended the hard work of Director Mikutsky and the Lt. Governor Oliver, the staffing issues at the NJDFS have been able to be address and that will continue will backfilling positions and bolstering personnel.

Chief Kilmer reported that quarterly rebates have been coming out on schedule, which is encouraging because these are funds that are necessary for the local enforcing agencies to operate. Chief Kilmer also noted that Life Hazard Use fee collections are down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however they have not fallen off drastically. NJDFS staff is also continuously working on COVID-19-related documentation (outdoor structures, indoor dining capacity, layouts, etc., etc.). After December 1, outdoor tents fall under the UCC due to snow and ice-load requirements – and propane heaters will not be permitted to be used inside these temporary structures. Director Mikutsky added that firefighter training will not be affected by the newly-released restrictions on outdoor gatherings.

With no questions asked regarding Division of Fire Safety Activities at this time, the meeting was moved to Advisory Council reports.

F. Advisory Council Reports:

1. Codes Advisory Council

Commissioner Arthur Londensky reported that the Codes Advisory Council held a virtual meeting on October 21st. A number of topics were discussed, most of which were covered by Chief Kilmer during his NJDFS Activities report.

Commissioner Gerard Naylis inquired as to whether there had been any movement relative to Hot Work Permitting or training requirements. Commissioner Londensky answered that there was no update on the matter as this time, as it was not discussed at the most recent Codes Advisory Council meeting. Chief Kilmer concurred and said that unfortunately this type of issue has been overshadowed at this point by all the COVID-19-related problems that have arisen since the spring.

2. Training and Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported that the Training and Education Advisory Council met virtually in October. The minutes will be distributed as soon as they are available. Commissioner Wood noted that the meeting minutes from August had been completed as distributed.

Commissioner Wood stated that Jones & Bartlett had won the bid to provide the Firefighter recruit training programs and Train-the-Trainer meetings are being scheduled for the Academies in December.

3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that there was a total of five NFIRS Incident Report Writing classes held throughout October and November. These classes were led by the NJDFS's NFIRS staff and are available upon request and more of them will continue to be offered heading into 2021.

Commissioner Naylis noted that new NFIRS software was rolled out by the federal government back on October 28th. This replaces the old FEMA software. Commissioner Naylis also noted that there was a memo circulated that gives guidance on documenting COVID-19 related incidents and data.

4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Raymond Heck, no formal report was given.

5. Public Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Daniel DeTrollo reported that the Public Education Advisory Council is continuing to reorganize and referred to Charles Lavin from the NJDFS to give an update on the ongoing public education programs. Mr. Lavin reported that the Operation-7 Save-a-Life smoke alarm program has just about been completed for 2020. Nearly 5,000 smoke alarms have been distributed to fire departments

Mr. Lavin also reported that – although slightly behind schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic – the 2021 New Jersey Fire Safety Calendars have just been green-lit for printing and will be distributed right around the holidays. He made a point to thank Atlantic City Electric, City Fire, the American Fire Sprinkler Association, the New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board, and Sprinkler Fitters Local 696. He also thanked Commissioner Kevin Bellew, David Kurasz, and NJFPPA President Rich Silvia for their continued dedication to supporting this program.

6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council

Commissioner Richard Blohm reported that the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council did not hold a meeting since the last time the Fire Safety Commission met. Commissioner Blohm did note that he received correspondence from the NJDFS NFIRS Unit that crashes involving fire apparatus are up, and that a few inquiries from fire departments have been received relative to driving simulators/training.

7. Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council

Commissioner Kathleen O’Leary reported that no meeting of the Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council was held since the last time the Fire Safety Commission met. Commissioner O’Leary did note that the Youth Firesetter Conference, originally scheduled for December 3-4, had been pushed off until 2021. The next meeting will be scheduled for January 14, 2021.

G. Committee Reports

1. Residential Sprinkler Committee

Commissioner Gerard Naylis stated that there was no report to be given from the Residential Sprinkler Committee at this time. Commissioner Naylis expressed his appreciation of the side-by-side fire sprinkler demonstration that is being scheduled to promote holiday fire safety at Monmouth County Fire Academy.

2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation

Commissioner Kevin Bellew reported on behalf of the Committee and thanked the NJ Division of Fire Safety for distributing the spreadsheet of bills that are being monitored

by the Committee. No meeting has been held by the Committee since the last meeting of the Fire Safety Commission.

H. Old Business

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone had any Old Business to bring before the Commission. There being none, the meeting was moved to New Business.

I. New Business

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone had any New Business to bring before the Commission.

Commissioner Kevin Bellew requested that a newly-updated roster of the NJ Fire Safety Commission be sent to all members. Charles Lavin agreed to do this following the meeting. Commissioner Bellew also asked about outdoor-dining facilities and whether there were fire prevention items and/or ventilation requirements that should be in place. Chief Kilmer answered that there are no requirements for detection devices, but there are requirements in place for how the tents must be set up and how they must be ventilated. The NJDFS is currently working on further guidance documents to help clarify what is required. A question was also asked about plastic domes that can be used to outdoor dining. Chief Kilmer answered that the guidance document will address these structures as well.

Chairman Krushinski noted that the 2021 Meeting Schedule for the New Jersey Fire Safety Commission had been distributed to all members for review/approval. Commissioner Gerard Naylis made a motion that the schedule dates be approved as is. Commissioner Londensky seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

J. Public Comment II

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone from the public wished to comment at this time.

A question was fielded from the public regarding the inspection of generators and whether it was necessary to have a comprehensive inspection and report done every month. Chief Lou Kilmer agreed to follow up with the person asking the question and provided his contact information for follow-up.

K. Adjournment

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Kevin Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Londensky made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner DeTrollo and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:56 AM.