

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

Meeting of May 20, 2020

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held virtually on Zoom on May 20, 2020.

Commission Members Present: Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman
Sen. Sam Thompson
Asm. Kevin Rooney
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood
Mr. Charles Siedenburg
Mr. Armando Roman
Mr. Kevin Bellew
Mr. Gerard Naylis
Mr. Fred Collender
Mr. Arthur Hayducka
Mr. Richard Blohm
Mr. Daniel DeTrollo
Mr. Raymond Heck
Mr. Arthur Londensky

Commission Members Excused: Mr. Steve O’Gorman

DCA Staff Members Present: Richard Mikutsky, NJ State Fire Marshal
Lou Kilmer, NJDFS
Rick Farletta, NJDFS
Charles Lavin, NJDFS
Frank Clark, NJDFS
Vincent Campagna, NJDFS
Jerry Clark, NJDFS
Kent Neiswender, NJDFS
Michael Whalen, Codes and Standards

Guests: Ronald McGowan Jr, Wildwood Crest Fire
David Kurasz, NJFSAB Bill Kramer, Cinnaminson Fire Chief

A. Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:10 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 January 15, 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. Cinnaminson Fire Chief and former State Fire Marshal Bill Kramer addressed the Training and Education Advisory Council regarding incident management training. He expressed concern about a memo stating that existing certified instructors would have to go back and take updated Incident Management courses in order to continue teaching. Director Richard Mikutsky responded that, as of yesterday, the NJDFS is staying the course with the rules from the past that have been laid out by the Training and Certification Office.

With no additional 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 commenting on the current state of the NJDFS during the COVID-19 situation. There is a small number of staff that has continued to work in the office during limited times, with the remainder working remotely and/or in the field. Director Mikutsky commended his staff on being able to operate fully after a brief adjustment period, and the NJDFS is basically functioning as if it is "business as usual". He specifically thanked the NJ Department of Community Affairs administration for their support during all this and commended their recognition of the importance of what the NJDFS does on a day-to-day basis. Through technology, staff has remainder in close touch throughout the spring.

Since the NJ Fire Safety Commission last met in January, Director Mikutsky gave a list of everything that has been canceled in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. This included the spring semester, New Jersey Weekend, FIRE Bowl, Homeland Security Conference, foam takeback program, etc. The fall semester is currently being looked at to see what can get up and running by that time.

Director Mikutsky spoke about the Governor freezing \$928 million statewide. This includes basically all spending statewide with the exception of personnel salaries. Any

spending going forward will require a justification and review. One thing that is still being worked on is the Fire and EMS Crisis Hotline, and the target kickoff for it is July. Director Mikutsky stressed the extreme importance of this hotline given the tremendous pressure and stress the emergency services are currently under. Director Mikutsky also spoke about the progressing of the new contract with Kean University for FY2021.

Director Mikutsky reported that a County Coordinators meeting was held back in January, where all Coordinators were sworn in for two-year terms. Director Mikutsky expressed his appreciation of both the DCA administration and Governor's Office for their continued support of the NJDFS. In terms of staffing, they were approved for seven new full-time employees for the new fiscal year.

A new New Jersey Addendum draft is being put together, something that hasn't been updated since 2011. Clearly a lot has changed throughout the state and at the NJDFS since that time, so Director Mikutsky is hopeful to put out the new, streamlined document relatively soon. Director Mikutsky also spoke about the kickoff of the Operation-7 Save-a-Life program in January. The NJDFS is very grateful to be involved with this program – now in its 21st year – and they have already received 5,000 ten-year sealed-battery smoke alarms. Director Mikutsky has been working with Charles Lavin to get the smoke alarms out as soon as possible.

The Junior Firefighter Bill passed the Senate unanimously and is still in committee in the Assembly. Director Mikutsky expressed confidence that the bill would ultimately be passed and enacted. Also, the NJDFS has been working with Jones & Bartlett on getting up online Firefighter I courses – where they can at least do the book-learning portion of the course. While Academies have inquired as to when classes can resume, the NJDFS will be following the Governor's Office guidance and orders on when and how to resume.

Director Mikutsky went over some statistics for the year 2020 to this point. As of May 19, there were 113 civilian burn reports, 22 fatal fire reports – nine of which were residential. There were also 21 school fires reported. On a positive note, there have been long stretches in the spring with no fatal fires reported. The NJDFS has also been in contact with local departments to get data on their staffing situations relative to COVID-19. This is allowing the NJDFS to track how many departments have members that are quarantined, hospitalized, out of work, etc. Similar to the overall state numbers, these statistics are all trending down. Director Mikutsky also explained the process of putting information out relative to COVID-19, which must be reviewed and approved by the State's legal team. This is why there has been some lag time in information being disseminated.

Commissioner Richard Blohm asked if there would be an extension for requiring CEUs to maintain certifications. Director Mikutsky answered that, yes, anyone set to expire in April was issued their certifications and the October 31st deadline will carry through as well because we are unsure at this point when things will get back to normal. Commissioner Blohm also spoke about Jones & Bartlett and the fact that they have bent

over backwards to work with them on the online trainings. He asked if there was any progress on the bids for the future Firefighter I, II, and HazMat programs. Kent Neiswender answered that the bidding process has been able to continue and there should be a new contract in place by July – at which point the new editions will kick in. Commissioner Blohm expressed that the academies would ideally getting the 4th edition of the Jones & Bartlett books, as there is a disconnect with the 3rd edition and the online edition now being offered. Mr. Neiswender explained that the 3rd edition is still available on up to five digital devices per student for the current program. Mr. Neiswender and Commissioner Blohm agreed to speak after the meeting about getting everyone up and running on what they need for these programs. Commissioner Blohm also asked about the possible halting of insuring junior firefighter programs. No one from any other counties was aware of this at this point in time.

Chief Lou Kilmer called in with his report and began by talking about the unprecedented challenges that the NJDFS staff and general public having been dealing with in the COVID-19 crisis. Back in March all in-person inspections and dealings with the public were halted, but they were able to resume (under a new set of guidelines) on May 11th. The NJDFS had an excellent week last week, the staff was able to make up a significant amount of ground on inspections for the year. The silver lining to the situation has been the work on, and adoption of, the 2018 International Fire Code. This otherwise would not have gotten the amount of attention it did.

Frank Clark has been working on an updated LEA Operations class. This is something that used to run several years ago and it will be brought back. Chief Kilmer said it is coming along nicely and will be ready for the fall semester if there is one. The Inspections Unit is also hard at work with New Jersey's farms, specifically now identifying all that have labor housing camps.

The rebates for the 3rd quarter of FY2020 went out about two weeks ago. Chief Kilmer said that the NJDFS is required by regulation to withhold money on inspections that were not done in 2019. (This is from before the pandemic hit.) Also, initially the Local Assistance Unit was not deemed essential and were working strictly from home – but they have been deemed essential now and are in the field when necessary. Chief Kilmer also spoke about the NJDFS staying to contact with what they deemed “high risk” facilities and have been fielding questions from there on a daily basis.

Chief Kilmer spoke about fire protection contractors and what they could/could not do. The determination was that they were to do necessary work such as bring systems back up into service, but that normal maintenance and routine testing could wait. Chief Kilmer also spoke about the Compliance Unit at the NJDFS being deemed essential, which is a very important unit to have up and operating to make sure all are registered. Chief Kilmer reported that RIMS has remained stable throughout the spring and all Annual Reports have been submitted.

Back in March, the NJDFS stopped in-person smoke alarm, CO alarm, and fire extinguisher inspections because it was not worth the risk to unnecessarily expose staff.

Chief Kilmer spoke about the 19-page “rule relaxation” document that has been put together with the NJDFS and Codes Council. It is a comprehensive guideline that outlines temporary modifications to the Fire Code due to the COVID-19 crisis. This document would need to be approved by both the DCA administration and the State’s COVID-19 legal team. Much of it has to do with the pushing back of deadlines to make things more workable for people.

Commissioner Gerard Naylis asked if there was any update to the Hot Work or Fire Protection Tag systems. Chief Kilmer answered that there was no real update on either since the spring has been consumed with dealing with the COVID-19 situation. Chairman Krushinski asked about the inspection of schools. Chief Kilmer answered there will be an extensive of the deadline of school inspections – from June 1st to December 31st.

Commissioner Armando Roman asked if a fire official could give guidance to a private housing complex in regards to the residents grilling in their common areas. Chief Kilmer answered that the fire official can certainly provide guidance as to what the code permits, and many municipalities have additional regulations they could provide guidance on as well.

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

F. Advisory Council Reports:

1. Codes Advisory Council

Commissioner Arthur Londensky reported that he was unable to comment on the most recent meeting since he was unable to attend. Chief Kilmer reported that a virtual meeting was held, and it mainly consisted of discussion on the COVID-19 rule relaxation document. He reported progress.

2. Training and Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported that the Training and Education Advisory Council met over the phone back in February. Unfortunately, there are no minutes from that meeting available yet – they will be distributed to the Commission members as soon as they are. No meeting of the Training and Education Advisory Council was held in April.

Commissioner Wood concluded his report by thanking Director Mikutsky and Kent Neiswender for all their help and leadership throughout what was an unprecedented spring. Training and Education will look to plan another virtual meeting in June.

3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that the NFIRS Unit at the NJDFS has been gathering data throughout the spring and compiling the surveys that went out to fire departments regarding the COVID-19 crisis. Commissioner Naylis suggested that this time period was a good opportunity to look closely at personnel and response patterns of the fire service. Commissioner Naylis concluded his report by stressing the importance of submitting data – including anything and everything related to COVID-19.

4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council

Due to an unforeseen emergency, Commissioner Raymond Heck needed to leave the meeting early. Therefore, no formal report was given on the Master Planning and Research Advisory Council.

5. Public Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Daniel DeTrollo submitted a report of the Public Education Advisory Council, which is reorganizing at this point. Commissioner DeTrollo also reported that the FIRE Bowl and Poster Contest had been cancelled this Spring. He spoke about the unfortunate passing of Marc Kiempisty, “Marc from Clark”, who was a long-time member of the Advisory Council and great supporter of the NJDFS and public education efforts statewide.

6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council

Commissioner Richard Blohm reported that the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council met in January. The minutes of that meeting were distributed to the Fire Safety Commission. At that meeting, Commissioner Blohm spoke about the use of face shields and the appropriate way to utilize them, as well as gave statistics from Vince Campagna in regards to firefighter health and safety.

The March meeting of the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council was cancelled and there is no meeting scheduled at this time.

7. Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council

Chairman Kevin Krushinski reported that the March meeting of the Youth Firesetter Prevention was held right before everything shut down due to the COVID-19 crisis. All plans and events discussed at that meeting wound up being cancelled – including Youth Firesetter Intervention Specialist and Youth Firesetter Program Manager courses. It is hoped that these will run in the fall semester.

The 18th Annual New Jersey Youth Firesetter Intervention Conference is (now tentatively) scheduled for December 3rd and 4th. A decision on whether to move the

Conference forward would have to be made by sometime in August at the absolute latest to allow for planning, registration, and the coordination of instructors and facilities.

G. Committee Reports

1. Residential Sprinkler Committee

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that, unfortunately, there is no progress on residential sprinklers at this time. On a disturbing note, Arizona has moved to allow individual municipalities to decide whether or not to enforce fire sprinkler regulations. Here in New Jersey, there is no progress to report at this time.

2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation

Commissioner Kevin Bellew reported on behalf of the Committee and submitted comprehensive guidelines to the Commission Secretary. These were disseminated to the Commission and Commissioner Bellew asks that everyone review the document. Going forward, David Kurasz will be putting together a list of bills that the Committee is tracking and the Commission members will be kept up to date on those through the Commission Secretary.

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. He took this opportunity to thank Michael Whalen for his long career of dedicated service and his upcoming retirement on June 30th. The Commission as a whole echoed this sentiment and wished Mike the best.

J. Public Comment II

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

K. Adjournment

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Roman made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner DeTrollo and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:33 AM.
