

**Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission Meeting
March Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2021**

Commission Members Present:

Chad Major	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
Butch Browning	State Fire Marshal
Louis Romero	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
Matt Lee	Chancellor's Designee from LSU
Ken Himel	Louisiana Fire Chief's Association
Brandon Davis	Governor's Appointee
Bryan Adams	Governor's Appointee

Commission Members Absent:

Martin Latino	Louisiana Fire Chief's Association
William Parker	Louisiana State Firemen's Association (Phone Attendance)
Brian Lindberg	Louisiana State Firemen's Association (phone attendance)
Karen St. Germain	Governor's Appointee (Phone Attendance)

In Attendance:

Loree Ramezan	FETI
Christine Earnheart	FETI
Carey King	FETI
Ken Fowler	FETI
Kathe Jones	FETI
Dan Wallis	SFM
Michael Donahue	FETI
Miranda Meynard	FETI
Ken Fontenot	FETI
Keith Bennett	FETI
Thomas Vitti	
Albert Anthony	

QUORUM PRESENT

The Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission was called to order by Mr. Chad Major. Invocation was performed. Pledge was performed as well. Mr. Major called the roll and announced that a quorum was present. The meeting began.

Adoption of the minutes for the meeting held in January was addressed. Motion was made by Bryan Adams to adopt the minutes from the January meeting and Butch Browning seconded the motion. No objections were voiced.

MOTION PASSED.

Motion was made by Butch Browning to adopt the minutes from the February meeting and Bryan Adams seconded the motion. No objections were voiced.

MOTION PASSED.

Chief's Report

Mr. Fowler presented the report. He stated that he only a few updates. There was an increase in the enrollment of the 40-hour classes. They just completed two safety officer 40 hour classes in Alexandria and had several more scheduled. He also updated the commission on the Zoom class numbers. Since they had started, they had serviced about 1,700 students with around 5,100 student contact hours through 5 classes. They still had some Zoom classes on the schedule and would continue to do those as long as the demand was there.

Mr. Major asked if there were any other questions regarding the chief's report. None were voiced.

This concluded the presentation of the chief's report.

Certification Report

This report was not addressed.

Financial Report

Ms. Ramezan presented the financial report. They had not had anything out of the ordinary expense wise to report and the February balance sheet was included in the commission packets which had been provided. At the last meeting, an updated project list had been requested. She stated that a column had been added to show what was improvements and what was maintenance. After going back through the list, there were actually more improvements than she had realized. The SCBA group project was in play right now. The roof was being replaced. They were also working to get some concrete pads for municipal training. The contract was filed last week so they should be able to move forward in the next week or so. The maintenance items on the Mod-X Prop which is attached to the multi-story which had been identified in the inspection were scheduled to be completed in July.

Ms. Ramezan informed the commission also that they would begin to conduct first interviews for the accounts receivable position at the end of the week. When they entered the second round of interviews, they would need a member of the commission to assist. Mr. Major stated that he would be happy to help out with that when needed.

Mr. Major asked if there were any other questions regarding the financial/budget report. None were voiced.

This concluded the presentation of the financial/ budget report.

Chairman's Report

Mr. Major presented his report. He began by asking Chief Wallis to give a report at this point. Chief Wallis addressed the commission. He reported that he had been speaking with some industrial as well as municipal customers, some current employees and past employees as well. He stated that he would be travelling quite a bit in the coming weeks. He reported on data that he had received from various entities within FETI. His plan for the next few weeks was to focus on the voice of the customer throughout every FETI region.

There was discussion regarding various positions within FETI. Mr. Donahue explained that if it was a municipal Hazmat class that it was taught by their regional managers and coordinators. The industrial

Hazmat classes were currently being taught by Keith who was the former Hazmat manager. He is now serving as the fire manager which is an enormous load. He has not as of yet been able to accept 100% of the fire manager's responsibilities which was the reason that they needed to hire an individual as soon as possible. The Hazmat manager's job description would include client relations, booking classes, teaching classes, invoicing classes and collections to some degree if necessary. That being said, those two positions were separate.

There was some discussion regarding salaries and how it would affect hiring and retention of qualified candidates.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 29 at 10 am.

This concluded the presentation of the chairman's report.

Old Business

Mr. Major opened the floor for the presentation of old business. The Hazmat manager candidates Q & A was conducted. The candidates were brought in one at a time.

Mr. Albert Anthony introduced himself. He gave some background on himself and answered questions from the commission. He stated that he had been in industrial for 16 years and emergency services around 20 years. He started in the Army. He had worked for several ambulance services early on and then worked for DOW Chemical with 5 years on the operations side. He had been with FETI for about 2 and half years and he did part time work for a third-party company doing industrial Hazmat response, rescue response as well as fire standby. Mr. Brandon Davis asked him to speak to his experience with the industrial facility through his incident command and the emergency services role. Mr. Anthony answered that he had worked about 6 years in operations and from there he rolled into strictly the fire emergency side. He worked in that department for about 8 months and was hired on as an incident commander. As an incident commander or site coordinator, he had dealt with security measures for any incident that occurred, the majority being with Hazmat. They also dealt with EMS and fire. They also responded to the local facilities in their area that did not have a full-time fire brigade. Mr. Brandon Davis asked how long he had been doing instruction outside of the 2 years he had been with FETI. Mr. Anthony stated that pretty much the entire time he was with the emergency services and security department he did instruction there which was around 5 years before he came to his current job. They had done a lot of their own classes which included Hazmat, rescue and various other courses. Mr. Butch Browning asked him what was the most significant emergency that he had been involved in and what was his role. He stated that there were several but the most significant was when they had a tank field fire that they dealt with over the course of 8 days. He had been the initial incident commander when they found the fire, so the role required set-up of all the phone lines, reaching out for resources, and pulling in manpower. This concluded the Q & A for Mr. Albert Anthony. He left the meeting at this point and the next candidate arrived.

Mr. Thomas Vitti introduced himself. He gave some background on himself and answered questions from the commission. He was from Salt Lake City, Utah and had recently retired from Chevron Refinery in Salt Lake City. He served 4 years in the Marine Corp as a bulk fuel specialist and combat engineer. He had received an honorable discharge. He had moved to Hawaii after the Marine Corp where he served 3 years in the Hawaii Army National Guard. He also worked full-time as a custom support drug

interdiction team. He was activated for Hurricane Ineki in 1992 which allowed him to serve some time doing disaster relief. He had started with Chevron in 1992 following that and immediately joined the emergency response team. He had transferred to Salt Lake City in 1995 and was a part of the emergency response team there as well through his entire career of 29 years. Within in a year of his transfer, he was promoted to captain and was the industrial training officer for 11 years. He was also the interim chief for a short time. He was also a volunteer fire fighter for a couple of years. His industrial team background included Hazmat technician, industrial technician, rescue captain, Hazmat captain and certified fire fighter in the state of Utah. Mr. Brandon Davis asked for him to speak to the time he was in charge of training at the industrial facility. He answered that at the time he was basically given a program that was not set up well, so he developed his own training program using OSHA, EPA, and NFPA regulations and the refinery needs. He was stated further that he was responsible for training about 35 team members in hazardous materials, industrial rescue and industrial fire fighting and EMS. When he put together the program, the team's scores and training attendance were right around 64% but within a year, they were in the 90th percentile. He had also been responsible for scheduling all offsite training, forming all the materials and conducting most of the training himself. He also conducted trainings for incident command, so he trained all levels of refinery leadership for the industrial setting. Mr. Brandon Davis asked what his role had been if there was an incident inside the facility. He answered that as far as an incident inside the facility, he was the on-scene command. If the alarms went off, he responded with the team. He was responsible for setting up the apparatus for the applicable incident, fire or Hazmat and then would turn the incident over to the refinery leadership team to run from there. He would serve as the officer on-scene as well. He stated that he had NFTA 472 leadership and technician certification, the industrial certification for hydrochloric acid response as well as OSHA certification. Mr. Butch Browning asked him what was the most significant emergency that he had been involved in and what was his role. Mr. Vitti answered that there were a number of incidents that he had responded to but the one that he had learned a lot from was actually an internal floating roof tank sealed fire. It was a mutual aid response for another refinery. Their team had been called and they were fifth in line. The first four attacks failed due to the fact that it was a unique situation. When it came their turn, he was the officer in charge and had come up with a plan. They were able to extinguish the fire within 20 minutes. He did admit that he had used their failures for his success but that is the best way to learn is from mistakes. This concluded the Q & A for Mr. Vitti. At this point, Mr. Vitti left the meeting.

Discussion followed regarding the candidates once they had left the meeting. Mr. Brandon Davis stated that he had had the opportunity to review the candidates and he did not feel that they were strong enough. He mentioned the ability to attract better candidates could be about the pay. If he did have to choose, his choice would be Mr. Anthony. Ms. Jones stated that there had been seven applicants. She stated that one of the key things that she had heard from clients was there was not enough industrial input into the facility and training. They did not have any industrial staffing on the self-generated side. She said that when they hired Mr. Anthony for his current position, they were glad to finally have an instructor who could speak the industrial language and had been in the plant setting. He had been an asset. However, he did not have the seasoning that Mr. Vitti had. As well, Mr. Vitti also had all the required certifications and disciplines and he had also been a customer with their competitors, so he brought something to the table for that. Mr. Vitti also had extensive experience with curriculum development which was something that this managerial position at this level needed to be able to do. The only downside for either candidates was the degree, so experience was used to offset or substitute for the degree requirement. She stated that Mr. Vitti would be her first choice.

It was felt that really this job should be two different levels of positions, a manager and an instructor who would answer to that manager. Ms. Jones stated that it may not work to do it that way because

the current budget had to sustain those positions. There was discussion also about possibly looking at cross-training someone who was already hired that could sell the business side of industrial and manage that department but not necessarily be an instructor. This idea was not completely received as the FETI staff are spread too thin. Cross-training was definitely agreed on, but they still needed to fill these positions so as to spread the workload and assign specific portions of that workload to specific people. Mr. Donahue added that one of the major responsibilities of this managerial position was to grow the business. There was outreach, conferencing and all types of things required to build the business. It was suggested that possibly the rescue manager position and the hazmat manager position could be combined as they would be overlapping with many customers anyway. Mr. Major stated that initially needed to grow and then positions could be generated once the program was growing and sustaining itself.

Mr. Donahue commented that part of the thought process behind hiring for this position was the fire program on the self-generating side is 8-9 times bigger than the hazmat. So, every single thing they did with a client was exacerbated. They were hoping that Mr. Keith Bennett would have time to mentor and train the new hazmat manager before retiring. He added that it could be in two years that the hazmat manager could move to fire manager and someone from their own staff would work to fill the hazmat manager position. There had to be career development and position progression which was part of the plan. He reiterated that they were all spread very thin, working 65-70 hours a week and woefully under-compensated as Mr. Wallis had already pointed out which is why it was imperative to fill these positions.

Mr. Browning felt that he was not convinced that we need the position. He is really relying on Dan on to determine if the position is needed. If industrial does their own hazmat and they are accomplishing those classes with their instructors. Now, we are talking about a manager to supervisor those instructors and grow the business. If he was in charge, he would ask who else can go out and grow the business? If there is someone already employed, then you cross over their duties. If not, then I would look to hire. He isn't saying it is a bad plan, he is just not convinced. His priority is to make sure the municipal training is done the best it can be done. In the past it has been done on the ability to make money mainly on industrial. He doesn't think that is what we have been doing for the last 10 years. If that is not what we have been doing then he really has a problem with that because that is what industrial is supposed to do . . . service the industrial clients but at the end of the day give us more money to do more municipal. We have a big opportunity to do more municipal now. He isn't saying it isn't needed, he just isn't convinced. If it is just to build the customer base, then he thinks we should be able to do it with the people we have on staff now. When asked who he would pick, he stated he would go with the second guy. He didn't feel either candidate was really a marketing person. He liked Thomas better.

Chad Major asked when we had the last HazMat Manager. Keith Bennett responded and stated he was promoted in March 2020 to the Fire Manager position. He was promoted to the HazMat manager position about 7 years ago. Keith stated that he is stretched thin. Keith Bennett stated that when he was the HazMat manager he spent 80% of his time on that job and the other 20% on environmental, water treatment, and props. He is doing both jobs and he is stretched thin as he still teaches classes and dealing with clients on both sides. Mr. Louis Romero asked who was the HazMat Manager before Keith. Ms. Kathe Jones stated that Richard Browning was the prior HazMat Manager before Keith. Keith Bennett continued that it is important to consider succession planning. He doesn't want to leave something without having something in place when he retires. Michael Donahue stated that Keith would be able to mentor the new Hazmat manager to further the business.

Mr. Major suggested that we bring in someone to work under Keith and leave Keith as the HazMat/Fire Manager. Keith could then mentor them. Michael explained that Kathe can't do her job because she is still doing a portion of the Fire manager's job. Keith can't fully do his job because he is still doing the HazMat manager job. Also, Kathe is doing 100% of the Rescue Manager's job. Kathe went on to explain that we conduct a nationwide search for positions, but when it comes to succession planning, we do not have the rigorous rules like civil service. We can promote from within or we can pull from outside the organization.

Chad Major suggested that we look at combining the Rescue and HazMat manager positions. This will allow everyone to focus on their discipline and would be a better way to do things so people are not putting in the 60-70 hours. Chad thought each of the candidates had something to offer. He would like to have Dan look at the business model and ensure the balance is correct and that no one is overloaded.

Chad doesn't want any of our employees to be worn out. He wants to get a clear cut picture on what the Commission is looking at and then we can reconvene and determine where we are, where we want to be, and how do we get there. He wants to make sure we do things right on the front end.

Chad Major recommended that they wait to choose a candidate for the position in question for Hazmat. He wanted to make the best decision they could on the front end. Mr. Wallis stated that he could begin reviewing the job descriptions and possibly come up with a survey to send out to the employees regarding job description versus what they were actually doing.

Mr. Major made an official recommendation for Mr. Wallis to review job descriptions and come back with correct data on the workload that everyone was carrying and what positions were actually needed to be filled. He also recommended that this would become priority for Mr. Wallis and all other projects should be paused. He also requested that Mr. Wallis be prepared to give a report at the next meeting.

Michael Donahue posed the question, would there be an issue with us going ahead and filling the position? The only thing that changes is we would have a manager in HazMat and everyone can go back to doing their job duties. We can do this while Dan does an analysis to determine if we should morph the Rescue and HazMat manager positions. If it is determined that we morph these positions, then we do so. How does the study that Dan is tasked to conduct affect us hiring a HazMat manager?

Chad Major stated that he understands the position we are in. If we hire someone now and then we change the job duties of the person after they have started, Chad would prefer we be upfront with the candidate on the front end. Mr. Louis Romero asked the salary. Ms. Kathe Jones replied she believed it was \$64K-68K.

Motion was made by Mr. Browning to postpone for two weeks on hiring the Hazmat manager and Mr. Brandon Davis seconded the motion.

Mr. Louis Romero verified with Dan Wallis that two weeks was enough time to get the data needed. Dan Wallis stated that he has already reached out to get the data and he would have a report for the next meeting.

No objections were voiced.

MOTION PASSED.

Mr. Bryan Adams asked if there were any updates on the request to move FETI to Continuing Education. Chad Major replied that he has not heard anything from the LSU President's office. Mr. Matt Lee informed the commission that he had spoken to the President and he was not opposed to the recommendation. However, the President needed to have a conversation with Dr. Sam Bentley which is where FETI currently sits.

This concluded the presentation of old business.

New Business

Mr. Major began the presentation of new business.

Chad Major read an email that he received regarding reciprocity. There was a need to clarify how one would receive a reciprocity certificate for a degree in fire science whether it be associate's, bachelor's, etc. Mr. Major read the law that addressed this issue. The question was how was a person supposed to get a degree re-issued by LSU under the reciprocity agreement required by law. Also, can the commission issue a clarifying statement on would it require a law change to prevent any departments or boards from recognizing degrees issued by Tulane, Delgado, or other universities that are not IFSAC certified. Whether it is a program that is in state or out of state, that does not meet the IFSAC standards and can not be re-certified through LSU. We have civil service boards that are recognizing degrees that are not LSU or IFSAC. In the case in question, their civil service board was allowing a person to qualify for a degree requisite test and use a degree in lieu of experience. It would seem that if one was going to be allowed to do this, the degree should have to meet LSU IFSAC standards. To allow in state or out of state non-IFSAC programs to be used for any purpose in Louisiana seems to water down the intent of the law which is to guarantee uniform training and education and fire technology throughout the state.

Ms. Ramezan provided a response. She stated that they were talking about two different things, ProBoard and IFSAC. They were issuing certifications for these entities. They were not a degree granting program there at FETI. There were degree granting facilities across the state. There are three locations where you can get an associate's degree in Fire Science. She believes that LSU Alexandria are currently working on a bachelor's degree in Fire Science. As well, if a certification was two standards behind then it would not be re-certified. The reciprocity really only applies to people out of state. If you are an in-state firemen and received an IFSAC/ProBoard certification, then you do not need reciprocity as it is already a Louisiana certificate. She also added that universities could choose to accept those certifications as credit towards a degree, but FETI did not issue any degrees.

Mr. Ken Himel stated that he is not aware of any degree program that is IFSAC. He knows there are a lot of degree programs that model the FESHE program and they are all alike. You can get a Fire Science degree from Yale but it doesn't mean that it will comply with what we go through for Proboard and IFSAC.

Chad clarified the question is based on what the law states, the person should be granted reciprocity through Academic Affairs as well as it should be IFSAC. We are talking about certifications, 2 year degrees and 4 year degrees. The law does not specify. RS 40:1541-1543.

Ms. Ramezan stated that when you get a degree from a university, you wouldn't take that degree and then try to go to a different university and request that they then issue you their degree. For example,

you wouldn't take an LSU degree to Yale and request they then issue you a Yale degree. In terms of IFSAC and Proboard certifications, you can request reciprocity. If you have a Louisiana certificate, then you don't need reciprocity. If you don't have a Louisiana certificate, then we will accept the current standard or one standard back. If you do not meet those criteria, then we will still accept your certificate, but you will have to retake the written test.

Per Kenn Fontenot, he stated that the statute applies to certification only. Mr. Matt Lee suggested that Chad forward the email to him and his office would issue an official response.

Mr. Ken Himel asked if there was a possibility to have a Zoom meeting for those were not able to be there in person. Ms. Ramezan stated that they could do it if that is what the commission wanted. Mr. Major felt it was a great idea.


He made an official recommendation that they do some research on the Zoom meeting and figure out the set-up logistics for it.

Mr. Major asked if there were any more questions or objections. None were voiced.

This concluded the presentation of new business.

Motion to adjourn was entertained by Mr. Major. Motion was made by Mr. Bryan Adams to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Ken Himel seconded the motion. No objections were voiced.

Meeting was adjourned.



Approved by: Chad Major

4.21.21

Date: