

**Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission
January Meeting Minutes
January 19, 2021**

Commission Members Present:

Chad Major	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
William Parker	Louisiana State Firemen's Association
Matt Lee	Chancellor's Designee from LSU
Butch Browning	State Fire Marshal
Brian Lindberg	Louisiana State Firemen's Association
Karen St. Germain	Governor's Appointee
Ken Himel	Louisiana Fire Chief's Association
Louis Romero	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
Brandon Davis	Industrial Seat
Bryan Adams	Active Firefighter Seat

Commission Members Absent:

Martin Latino	Louisiana Fire Chief's Association
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The special meeting was held over zoom. The zoom recording missed the chairman's call to order, roll call and the introduction of our two new members (Bryan Adams and Brandon Davis). The recording started while Chief Fowler was giving his report. Below is the word for word transcription of the meeting:

Ken Fowler: We're still fighting those same battles, other than that, the zoom stuff, we have been delivering some zoom classes that I talked about. Early on, I think a couple weeks ago last week, maybe or two weeks ago we delivered our first 2021 class via zoom and we had over 190 people attend the class. We also have, I think, five or six classes scheduled now over the next couple months via zoom. So we're getting a lot of good feedback.

Ken Fowler: The instructor three pilot we conducted was in December. This was the first time we actually turned the instructor three program into a class. And the format was a little bit different. What we did was we adjusted it to one of the more higher learning type environments where we work on the portfolio, which is a large undertaking. We had 20 people in the class, I believe we have 10 or 12 that actually have completed and submitted portfolios for review. Which is really good numbers, I would expect that the other seven or eight are going to get those completed and submitted. But right now, if these numbers are correct, Christine told me we only had 20 instructor threes in the state. So, we pretty much have gotten half that number in one week with the portfolio. A lot of good feedback from the class and when we advertised it, we actually hit our full mark of 20 people about three or four days after it being advertised as having it as a class. I've also had probably seven, eight, or ten people already reached out wanting to know if we're going to conduct another one which our intent is to run another instructor three in the northern part of the state in Pine Country and then try to schedule another class here in the Baton Rouge area later in the year, towards the end of the year.

Ken Fowler: The rapid intervention program that I talked about. We have that program. It's ready to roll. What I need to do right now is run the first train the trainer program for our instructors to get them up. The plan is to do this spring, and this will be a 40 hour class in NFPA 1407.

Ken Fowler: The other new class that I'm working on is the live fire instructor. We're trying to make that one a little more available to the Volunteer Fire Service. It's going to be roughly a 40 hour class we're going to break it into 3 12 hour classes. The very first of the 12 hour classes we have it up and ready to roll. And we're going to run the pilot, I believe over in New Iberia area in February.

Ken Fowler: Other than that, the Recruit Academy just started, they're actually in week one. I think they have 18 recruits in the class. They just kicked off, as I said, they're in there in week one yesterday, being Monday was a holiday. So today, they're getting their indoctrination of what to be expected over the next 14 weeks and upcoming as far as plans.

Ken Fowler: The biggest thing is in talking since I've been here, the Commission and several other people have mentioned Officer four being something that they would like to see us do. I've been talking with Christine working on a plan. We have something in place, and I believe we're going to be able to get that done in 2021 and be able to offer first fire officer four class in 2022. One of the issues is of course going to be getting through the hurdles of certification that Christine is working on. The other part I personally am going to have is developing a group of instructors who can deliver the program fire officer four as you know this is a high end program. We want to follow the format as close as possible with that class. But I've got to find a group four or five people. I've got three people that's already committed that are chiefs here in Louisiana that can deliver this program for us. So we're moving forward with that. Other than that, anybody got any questions.

Chad Major: Any questions of Ken. Any questions on chief's report. I see none, thank you Ken.

Chad Major: I think I got a little head of myself this the new year and we need to elect a chair and vice chair of the of the Commission.

Butch Browning: Majors as chair, since he's so patient

Chad Major: And

Karen St. Germain: I'll be down okay I . . .

Chad Major: Miss Karen, go ahead and second. We have a motion. Second. As any other names for Chairman. Hearing none. Thank you all very much. Now for Vice Chair.

Butch Browning: CHAIR TO MAKE A MOTION. I like running as a vice chair.

Chad Major: We have a second. Are there any other nominations for vice chair? Any other nominations for Vice Chair? The nominations are close and will be Butch

Butch Browning: Thank you.

Chad Major: Okay, we'll talk about that in a little bit. Now we'll go into the financial report, Miss Loree.

Loree Ramezan: Morning everyone. Sorry for information overload. I sent you all a bunch of documents, financial documents. So you received multiple balance sheets.

Loree Ramezan: The balance sheets are broken up into different sections.

Louis Romero: Yes, Loree I never got it.

Loree Ramezan: Okay, I'm going to email you later, and I'll send you those again. So you'll have them.

Karen St. Germain: Loree, neither did I. So try that again for me.

Loree Ramezan: You didn't receive these?

Karen St. Germain: No, ma'am.

Loree Ramezan: It was attached to that email. I think you did get this, Karen, I sent them, you had responded to that email.

Karen St. Germain: Oh, hell, there goes my memory. Okay.

Loree Ramezan: Yeah, it has a bunch of PDF documents attached to it. Okay, I'll resend them to y'all just in case but I think you had responded and I did not hear from Lewis though on that. OK. OK, so I'll send those to you as soon as the meeting is over. So the balance sheets that I sent, you're going to have February through May of 2020 in one batch. You'll have June of 2020 in a different batch; that's our final fiscal year set and then you're going to have July through December of last year in a different set. So for the June one you're going to see that there are three balance sheets, the one that is marked final is going to be the final one. We run these a couple times during June, while we're doing the close out process. So basically, last year, obviously, we haven't had a meeting, so I'm kind of going to go over some old stuff. Back in March, we had to shut down due to COVID and as a whole, FETI we operated in a very limited capacity from March to about July.

Loree Ramezan: We had a significant loss of revenue because we weren't able to hold classes like we normally would, on the municipal side of operations we lost about \$90,000 in revenue and on the industrial side of operations we lost about \$925,000 in revenue. So those reports, those losses we did report that up to the main campus. They were keeping all of the fema reports and we haven't heard anything but it's not looking very hopeful that will be receiving any money from lost revenue. So in order to survive the COVID closure, our administration team here, we implemented several cost saving measures, we immediately implemented a spending freeze on March 13. We cancelled/suspended any services that were not being used during the closure. We cancelled the purchase orders that were in progress that we could. Any scheduled travel was also postponed or cancelled. We also limited and in some cases completely eliminated use of part time staffing. Any rental equipment that we had on property was sent back and any projects that we are in the middle of were all put on hold and so that we could continue through last fiscal year. And as a result of those cost saving measures, we were able to still put 71,000 into the plant fund on the municipal side. For industrial operations, we were able to minimize the impact of the loss to 220,000 and on the very last day that we were closing the books, our parent organization which is the Office of Research and Economic Development. They contacted us and they had funding and were able to cover our loss. So we ended up breaking even for the year. So we were very fortunate to finish last fiscal in the black. It was kind of scary there for a little while with the closures and we just didn't really know what was going to happen, you know, as the COVID pandemic progresses. For fiscal year 2021 that began on July 1, I also gave a copy of the budget for fiscal year 21

Loree Ramezan: The budget, just you kind of know, each of our programs they operate separately and they have their own budget. So you'll see different little sections and you'll see the account numbers and those also tied to the balance sheet. So you can see the budget that's outline for each of those programs. And we are still as a university under a spending freeze and we're also under a hiring freeze and there have been travel restrictions also imposed due to COVID so we're still seeing the impacts of COVID starting out in fiscal year 21. In July and August, we're really slow. We had a lot of customers canceling. A lot of customers have travel restrictions. And we lost probably about 30,000 in revenue on the municipal side of operations and 130,000 on the industrial side. Some business was extremely slow, but the good news is, is everything started to pick up in September as restrictions started to ease. Our fall was a very busy fall and our calendar for the spring is looking really good.

Loree Ramezan: So you've got in your packet that I'd sent you. There are those balance sheets from July to December, you can look at those. We didn't have any unusual or out of the ordinary expenses for that. So that's all that info.

Loree Ramezan: From an HR standpoint, the university is under a hiring freeze. However, if there is a position that is critical that must be filled justifications can be submitted and they will give us exemptions to the hiring freeze. So in October of last year, we ended up losing our business manager Carrie-Anne Slaton. She took a job in the private sector. And so we were able to justify this position to LSU HR and we were able to post this job. The Posting went live on October 20 and it closed November 10. We conducted the interviews at the end of November and December and ultimately we selected Megan Broom for the position. Megan is a current or was a current FETI employee and was serving as our accounts receivable coordinator so her promotion to business manager was effective January 1 and we are in the process right now of trying to get approval to backfill her old position. And then once that post will keep y'all, you know, in the loop will let y'all know.

Loree Ramezan: We also have a hazmat manager position we're in the process of hiring. That job posting closed on January 4 and our intentions are to conduct first interviews on January 25 so that's all we've got on the hiring front at the moment.

Loree Ramezan: I'm not sure if everyone already knows, but unfortunately we had to make the difficult decision to cancel the equipment show. It was scheduled for January 29 and 30th, but with the covid restrictions, there was no way that we could safely, you know, continue with that process with that show. So we look forward to holding the show again next year in January, and I think that is all that I have. Any questions.

Chad Major: Any questions for Loree.

Butch Browning: I do . . . So Loree, I'm in current budget right now. I know we got copies of it here. It's hard to read it, but we're going to work to try and you know understand it better, but current budget right now from an industrial municipal standpoint, I mean what you said that the revenues were down the first two months of the of the fiscal year. Kind of, say, again, where we are with that.

Loree Ramezan: Sure, absolutely. So the budget that you have, um, what you'll see is for each account, you'll see a line that will say, Well, let's see. Let me look at and make sure I'm giving you the right info. So you'll see a line on the accounts that says it is ledger account 4000 students tuition and fees that will indicate how much money that we anticipate bringing in the budget is, you know, these are revenue estimates, there is no guarantee that we will bring that in, and as I said we have to watch very cautiously

the revenue that we have before we spend the money. So one interesting thing since we've got some new folks on. Here's one interesting thing of the way that we work when we start the fiscal year, we start with no money, basically. We only have what is in our reserve accounts. We do have some statutory dedicated money that we received, but we do not receive that money until May. So we will operate the entire year with no money. Basically LSU will support us while we are operating. And then in May, when we receive our money. We basically reimburse LSU.

Loree Ramezan: Same deal on the other side. Anything that is self-generating we start out with nothing and we have to earn it. So we will start the books, literally with zero dollars. And as we teach classes, you'll start to see that revenue increase on the balance sheet. So the budget, the numbers you see those are estimates that we think we will be able to bring in, but there again, there's no guarantees and with this year it's extra hard to budget when you just don't know how COVID is going to affect that.

Brian Lindberg: Loree. I have a quick question for you.

Loree Ramezan: Absolutely.

Brian Lindberg: Those reserve accounts. Can you tell me on the balance sheet where those are?

Loree Ramezan: Absolutely. So on the balance sheet. If you look at the last one, the December one, the balance. So the two fund accounts that we have. One of them is the plant fund numbers PJ000105 . . . it's towards the top of the balance sheet. That account currently has \$526,124 and if you look down a little further, you'll see a number FS0016 and it's just listed as FETI and you'll see below that all of the accounts are the industrial accounts that is the fund balance on the industrial side and we're at \$662,285. Which is the same number that we were at the end of the prior fiscal year because we broke even.

Brian Lindberg: Okay. And so those reserve accounts those stay the same at all times or are those working off projections?

Loree Ramezan: So, no, sir. I'm sorry, those accounts. Those are the balances. That is the only money that we do have in the bank in those accounts. The way that it works is we don't put money into the till the end of the year. So any money that we have that was not used, it will be placed in those reserve accounts. You'll see it transfer up. So at the end of last year we put 71,000 back into the plant fun. So that's the new plant fund balance and we broke even.

Brian Lindberg: Thank you.

Brandon Davis: This is Brandon and I have a question, relative to the fund balance in future projects or things improvements on the facility. Is there a certain location that you keep them funds or is that things that has to be planned out and then you find them the funds to allocate to that specific project?

Loree Ramezan: Yes. So for those projects we kind of keep a running list of projects that need to be done, but any of the funds that we use for those they will either have to come, like you said was plant fund or those reserve funds or if we have excess money during the year. We try to plan for those um It is, it's a difficult process when you don't have any money. And so we don't really, we're not able to plan for that until normally the second half of the year, as you see the revenue come in.

Brandon Davis: Understood and looking at alone item relative like industrial prop maintenance and infrastructure. It's, it's pretty scary that it, you know, and I understand that it works like that as zeros, up until May, but it's pretty scary that we may have some things that need to be addressed on the field and there's no money basically budgeted for that line item. So, you know, it's kind of scary that we may overlook some things. Also, you mentioned that you had a list of improvements to the facility. Can you share that with the committee?

Loree Ramezan: I do. It's really just a list of projects that we are currently working on with campus. But yes, I can put together something for y'all and share that. And Brandon on that account, you were looking at, that industrial maintenance account. So what that account does and all of the accounts that are in that little section under FS0016 on the balance sheet, all of those accounts roll up into the FS 0016 account. So, there never is going to be revenue in the industrial maintenance account. That is an expense only account and there is no budget for that particular account that is just the holding place where we put those expenses to keep them separate. So they're easily identifiable.

Brandon Davis: Thank you.

Loree Ramezan: You're welcome.

Brian Lindberg: We have one more question. So is there a defined capital outlay line item for y'all or how do y'all do capital?

Loree Ramezan: So no, we do not have a direct line item is for capital outlay the way that we look at our projects is we base our estimates. So obviously, any project we do depends on us having money so when we base our estimates we have to look at what we did in previous years, which again was very difficult. This year, considering we have to look at what was happening in the previous year and what revenue we expect and then from that we can look at our project list and try to determine which projects are things that we have to have versus things that would be nice to have. And so anything that is necessary, we have to do those projects. Then we have to fit those in and then anything that is nice to have those get phased in, as we go through the year, and as the money presents itself.

Brian Lindberg: Thank you

Loree Ramezan: You're welcome.

Chad Major: Any questions? Thank you Loree.

Chad Major: I know we haven't had a whole lot going on for the past few months. I hope everyone had a great new year. The issues are a lot better. I'm looking forward to when things get normal like everyone else is so but really, that's all I have. Right. Any new business? Anything to come for us under old business?

Butch Browning: I got some

Chad Major: Yes.

Butch Browning: I guess, old business. Dating back to August 1 last year is when the new law went into effect. I know it's been a struggle implementing it. Number one, because of COVID and now I guess

we're at a point now where we've got our two new members. I just feel like a lot of needs to be done to spin up the Commission members, especially the new members as to what is the condition of the program and where we want the program to go. So pleased as far as a staff is concerned, don't take any of the comments that I'm making to be anything but complimentary. I appreciate the great work that's been going on, and I appreciate the behind the scenes peddling in this pandemic to make things happen. But I think clearly from this point forward, you know, we need to start engaging the Commission. I mean, I see two vacancies that are being interviewed that the Commission, you know, is not a part of. I see some great work to cover a deficit because of COVID, but I think it's time that commission, you know, starts doing what it's supposed to be doing, or it will never, you know, fully be functional like we all think it needs to be. So with that said, you know, I'm very skeptical of filling any full time positions until the Commission feels as needed. Just as you have to justify filling a vacancy to the university. You should have to justify it to this Commission first. I understand the central jobs and that kind of thing. So I'm very concerned about, you know, I guess offers that may be going out there and interviews that are occurring now because I think we're probably ready to engage in that. I fully, fully admit we weren't able to engage in it after the new law with the pandemic and being able to meet. That being said, I'd like to make a recommendation to the chairman that we create some sub communities, made up of possibly two commission members. The Commission and the subcommittee groups need to real quickly, engage with the different leadership within FETI and get understanding as to what's going on, what are the needs, what are the directions. Then need to come back, real quickly. I'm thinking, this could be a 30 day turnaround come back, real quickly, and we have a true commission meeting. It's a work session, maybe, maybe an all day work session. We need to figure out a way that we can do it Covid compliant and do it in person. And there's a way we can do that you know, based on the number of people we've had from the public and commission in the past, there is a code compliant way we can do that. Let's sit down as a commission and let's work with what we have. Let's make sure that what the fire services needs are being met and if it's not being met, financially, if it's not being met with people, whatever it is we need to do that. But I think the right thing to do is to form the subcommittees to dig in deep and work with the people in there doing the jobs to get a good understanding. The final piece is, you know, my biggest concern as I look at what we've been doing over the last year or so is it just seems like that we're missing a chief. You know, I mean, we get our reports from assistant chiefs over the different divisions and it is very valuable, but we need a chief. We need somebody in charge. We need one person that the chairman can communicate with and I think that kind of communication on a regular basis is going to help the Commission make the right decisions. You know, I mean, many of you out there, you know, run fire districts and you have a board of Commissioners that do a phenomenal job but it's your relationship is the chief with those Board of Commissioners that move forward. So with that said, and my suggestion is, is basically for committees, a finance committee, a municipal programs committee, an industrial programs committee and a certification committee. And I think that pretty much paints a broad brush of the major functions that go on at FETI. And again, I mean, you know, I think if we could come up with two, maybe three if necessary commission members to serve. Then I want the subcommittees to really go in and get technical involved. As a look across this room, I mean, we've got people with expertise and municipal industrial certification on this, on this Commission now. So that's just my suggestion, but I'm very concerned if we don't do this, then we can never I guess show validity in the changes that need to be made because changes need to be made it FETI. Let's all be honest. I mean, we will not have gone through the things that we've gone through without the fact that changes need to be made. We all want the right changes and the changes that need to be made, need to be what the Louisiana fire service needs not what which Browning's needs are. Our Bryan Adams, because he's sitting here and I can never forget what the heck Bryan Adams needs. That's a daily function but, I really think if we can honestly put these subcommittees together and bring some real data back to a to a full work session of the full Commission. I mean, I almost like doing a strategic

planning session, but until we get the data we can't do it. So that's my suggestion, that number one we hold off on hiring anybody and filling full time positions till we get our arms around this. And secondly, that we go into a very quick mode of gaining information and gaining data and be a Commission that could speak to the to the validity and the needs of the fire and rescue and training needs of the State of Louisiana.

Chad Major: Okay, but that was in the form of a motion. Do I have a second?

Bryan Adams: I'll second.

Chad Major: Okay. We have a second. So the motion to establish for subcommittees as what's before us, is there anyone else that wishes to speak on it?

Matt Lee: Yeah, this is Matt, I would just like to comment. I'd like to thank Butch for bringing this forward. I know that since I was appointed to the committee last year, I've been made aware that there's been some concerns and really some need for some good robust dialogue. Of course, coming in from the outside and not being familiar as much with FETI or the fire service, I'm less educated on this, but I think it sounds like a great idea for us to dig in and like he said kind of put in some strategic planning work to make sure that we're aligning the resources with the need. So thank you for putting some thought into that bringing that forward. I'm 100% on board.

Chad Major: Thank you, Matt.

Butch Browning: Matt. Thanks, Matt.

Chad Major: Anyone else, Anyone else? Okay, so I will motion to establish committees. Any opposed? All those in favor to establish subcommittees, signify by saying I.

Chad Major: Seeing, no one opposed the motion is adopted. So we would need to establish the committees. So first would be the Finance Committee. I think two people per committee is adequate, just to do findings and bring back to the full commission. So, um, yeah. Finance Committee, municipal committee, the certification committee and industrial committee. I was just over industrial and know we will put Brandon on as industrial rep. We need someone else to serve with Brandon on industrial committee.

Matt Lee: I would just like to say that I will be happy to serve on whatever committee. You think I'm best placed on

Chad Major: Thank you, Matt.

Butch Browning: I might suggest Matt to be an ad hoc member of all the committees, I would think, because he's a voice from the university. Right?

Matt Lee: I'm happy to do that. If that best meets our needs.

Butch Browning: Thanks, Matt.

Chad Major: Sure. Okay. So Matt would be an ad hoc third person on each committee. So back to the Industrial committee. So we have Brandon and I need one other person.

Butch Browning: William will embark on a journey.

William Parker: Okay.

Chad Major: So Willie is on there with Brandon. So then we got the certification committee.

Brian Lindberg: Yeah, I don't mind doing that, we just need one other.

Karen St. Germain: How about Marty on them.

Chad Major: I know Marty had been involved with that for a while, if I'm not mistaken. Correct, Loree?

Karen St. Germain: Experience necessary I agree beyond this one.

Loree Ramezan: You are correct. Marty has worked with the certification office in the past.

Chad Major: Right, so I think he would be a good fit. So Marty and Brian on that committee. And then we have the municipal committee.

Ken Himel: I'll get on the municipal jet.

Chad Major: Okay Ken. And how about Buddha? Buddha is a fire chief as well. Alright. So Buddha and Ken. Then the money committee, the finance committee.

Bryan Adams: I suggest me, Butch and Karen

Karen St. Germain: Okay, fine with that.

Chad Major: So that rounds out our committee appointments. So we're still under old business. Anything else to come before us on the old business? Under new business? Is there anything on the new business? Next meeting day? Today is the 19th or somewhere. The, the week of the 15th of February 16th through the 19th or the following week

Matt Lee: I'm out of town. What are you going to? 15 to 19?

Chad Major: Right. I think more integral to 16, something like that.

Matt Lee: That week

Chad Major: 22nd through the 26th

Butch Browning: Yeah, I think that's better. That gives the committees a little more time to dig in and come back with something.

Chad Major: How about February 24, the middle of the week, is a Wednesday?

Brian Lindberg: I'm good with that. I gotta come to a meeting that day with Ken.

Butch Browning: 25th.

Chad Major: Everybody good 25th? 25th at 10 O'clock am and maybe we'll get to meet in person, maybe not. Who knows.

Karen St. Germain: We can't count on that yet.

Chad Major: I can always be optimistic. So okay, so February 25 at 10am

Ken Himel: Chad, I have a question.

Chad Major: Yes, sir.

Ken Himel: Lindbergh and I were talking. Imagine that. And we were just curious if there's anything special that we have to do to get one of those fancy certificates like Bryan Adams and Willie Parker got

Bryan Adams: I knew it was just like the Bryan Adams show today.

Brian Lindberg: Come on, I've got to. Okay.

Bryan Adams: All right and then we can just make up. My name is. . .

William Parker: Bryan, I got to, so I can't wait. I wanted to let Lindberg . .

Brian Lindberg: Not an award for shadowing and got to be a West Bank.

Chad Major: You will get twice your average pay now.

Ken Himel: So double your pay for sitting on a committee

Bryan Adams: One extra zero on the check. I love it.

Chad Major: Absolutely. Is there any other business to come before the Commission? Hearing no, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Brandon Davis: Move.

Louis Romero: Second

Brian Lindberg: Go.

Butch Browning: Thank you.

Brian Lindberg: Have a good one.

Brandon Davis: Have a good day.



Approved by: Chad Major

3-15-21
Date

