

Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission Meeting

Meeting Minutes February 14, 2013

Commission Members Present:

Mike Arnold	Louisiana Fire Chiefs Association
Butch Browning	
Michael Donahue	Chancellor's Designee from LSU
Kenny Hunts	
Louis Romero	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
Karen St. Germain	Louisiana State Representative, Governor's Appointee
Boyd Westbrook	Louisiana Fire Chiefs Association

Other Attendees

Loree Ramezan, FETI
Carey King, FETI
Eddie Pyle, FETI
Nick Palmer, FETI
Clay Crain, FETI
Wayne Cruse, FETI
Anthony Seymour, Plaquemine
Eddie Tessmer, FETI
Mackie Guillot, Plaquemine
Donald Milligan, Avoyelles/LSFA

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Karen St. Germain at 3:06 p.m. It was begun without a quorum (four members present; by 3:20 six commission members were present, and a quorum had been reached). The group said the Pledge of Allegiance and opened the meeting with a prayer.

Meeting with Chancellor Jenkins about Director position and placement of FETI

The first item of business was a discussion of a meeting between Chairperson St. Germain, Committee Member Browning and LSU Chancellor Jenkins about the search for the Director's position. Ms. St. Romain and Mr. Browning reported that Chancellor Jenkins seemed appreciative of the commission and values their input; he agreed that the commission should play a role in choosing the new Director. Although there has been a delay in sending out information for the Director search, once the notice is out, the committee will be involved in the search. The Chancellor promised to allow the commission to submit a list of their top five candidates; LSU will then choose from those candidates.

Ms. St. Germain and Mr. Browning reported that the Chancellor also agreed that with the changes currently taking place on campus, now is a good time to find the best place to put FETI. He understands that FETI generates its own funds and is not a degree program and that there have been some issues with its placement since its move from Continuing Education to Academic Affairs. Mr. Pyle said that under Academic Affairs, FETI reported to the Dean of Resource and Economic Development; Mr. Browning pointed out that there have been some communication problems under the current system and would like to ensure that FETI is placed within a major department at LSU. Mr. Hunts said that the LFCA is also concerned about where FETI should be placed and that at a recent meeting LFCA voted for a move to Public Safety, where he said similar agencies are often placed and where it is somewhat easier to get funding. Mr. Hunts reassured Mr. Romero that members of the Professional Firefighters Association have been privy to LFCA discussions and suggested that the commission should meet with the Chancellor re reorganization of FETI and where it should be placed. Ms. St. Germain reiterated that the Chancellor would be willing to come and speak to these issues, reassuring the committee that they would have a say in these matters. She said she and Mr. Donohue recognize the need for a new Director as quickly as possible and will make certain the notice to advertise for the new Director will go out soon; she will also call the Chancellor and set up a meeting soon to discuss the issues commission members have raised.

FETI Evaluation Survey

Mr. King reported that the Public Policy Research Lab is preparing evaluation surveys which they will send out to fire departments across the state; they will make copies available to the commission before they are sent out. He reassured Mr. Donahue that he will also keep LSU informed about the timeline for the surveys. Mr. Donahue made certain that only one survey will be counted from each department.

Financial Report

Mr. Donahue reported that there have been no unusual expenses, and that the current budget spends or obligates 50% of expected revenue and is on target. The Treasurer's Office should report by next week on how collections are measuring up to projections. Mr. Hunts asked when that report will be available, and Mr. Donahue said that he will send it out as soon as possible and reported that revenues are exceeding last year's and that some clients may find this year's schedule already fairly full since FETI can only train so many at one time.

Use of Facility

Wayne Cruse reported that he had talked with West Baton Rouge fire chiefs, gotten input from fire service personnel (not players) in the northern part of the state, met with Mr. Hunts and others, and put together a draft document regarding use of the facility. Commission members have received a copy of the draft. Mr. Hunts wanted clarification about whether the phrase SOPs or 1403 requirements meant that the two sets of

requirements differ. Mr. Cruse said that everything must meet 1403 requirements and that he will rephrase the reference to the requirements to read simply SOP/1403 requirements. Mr. Cruse discussed insurance issues, and said that anyone using the facility would sign a contract to cover any apparatus they bring to the facility when they use the facility for their own training; perhaps a million-dollar policy. Mr. Westbrook expressed concern that asking municipal fire departments to sign such a contract might be prohibitively expensive for them, pointing out that both the departments and the training center are public entities, so the departments are not dealing with a private company. Mr. Donahue reiterated that the contract would only be required when the departments are simply using the facility for their own training; if LSU is responsible for the training, no contract is needed. Mr. Westbrook and Mr. Hunts would like to find a way to avoid forcing fire departments to sign such a contract, and Mr. Donahue said he will discuss the matter with LSU. Mr. Cruse commented that such a document would specify what each entity is responsible for and made clear that this use-of-service contract would apply to training at other locations as well. Mr. Westbrook suggested that new legislation might simplify the issue for fire departments and notes that the departments will not be happy about changes in the way things have always been done--they feel as though this facility is their own training center. Mr. Palmer asked whether the ten-mile radius rule would allow departments to avoid having to sign such a contract. Ms. St. Germain pointed out that it is the commission's job to work out such issues; she commented that if the ten-mile radius rule disappears, small fire departments would not be able to afford a million dollar policy. In response to a question about past and current policy, Mr. Donahue said that LSU may not have been actively enforcing such a policy and agreed to Ms. St. Germain's suggestion that LSU continue to do as it has been doing until the commission has had the opportunity to review/revise this document. Mr. Cruse reiterated that as long as departments aren't using their own equipment, things can continue as usual but that the facility can no longer allow departments to use their own equipment at the facility because of liability issues. Mr. Donahue added that without a contract, everything is fine unless there is a major problem. Ms. St. Germain said that the whole issue requires more discussion. Mr. Cruse said that he would review the upcoming training schedule and advise the adjuncts not to bring their own equipment. Mr. Hunt asked whether LSU's 15-million-dollar umbrella policy would suffice, but Mr. Donahue responded that LSU's policy won't cover fire department's own equipment if it is damaged. Mr. Hunts said that worker's comp is covered by each department's own policy, but Mr. Cruse responded that the issue is solely the equipment--whether the equipment itself is damaged or damages LSU's equipment or facility. Mr. Donahue confirmed that liability only becomes an issue if the equipment is the department's, not LSU's. Ms. St. Germain requested an update at the next meeting, and Mr. Donahue promised to make the document as non-threatening and simple as possible. Ms. St. Germain added that a waiver would be the easiest solution.

Monthly Meeting Notices and Locations

Mr. Hunts requested timely notification of meetings, and Ms. St. Germain and Mr. Donahue said that they would provide notices of dates and locations a week in

advance. Mr. Romero noted that the latest schedule of meeting locations will require onerous and costly travel for commission members and other interested parties. Mr. Hunts pointed out the importance of giving people in the northern part of the state the opportunity to be involved. Mr. Donahue suggested alternating meetings in various parts of the state with meetings in Baton Rouge; Ms. St. Germain agreed and suggested that meetings could be held earlier in the day to facilitate travel; she promised to work on the schedule. Mr. Hunts proposed a centrally located meeting place--Alexandria, for instance. Mr. Mulligan asked whether proxies could be used, but was told they could not. Several people reiterated that the northern part of the state does want the possibility to participate, that they sometimes see things differently from people in South Louisiana, and that it is as difficult for people from North Louisiana to drive to Baton Rouge as it is for people from South Louisiana to drive north. Ms. St. Romain suggested a compromise: include those from North Louisiana and support commission members who have to travel long distances. She said that if getting a quorum was impossible, she would bring back people's comments.

Mr. Romero noted that the commission wasn't stacked in favor of any region; several people expressed their concern that the northern part of the state feel included and commented that people there seem especially well satisfied with training under LSU. Mr. Palmer and Mr. Cory questioned whether commission meetings could be webcast or teleconferenced. Mr. Donahue asked whether the commission could do a media conference from this facility and was told that such a conference was not possible in this location, but could be held somewhere else at LSU. Ms. St. Germain will ask people from different regions of the state to discuss options.

Mr. Romero and Mr. Hunts asked where the next meeting will be held, and Mr. Donahue responded that the date and place of the next meeting will be sent out at least a week in advance. Ms. St. Germain added that Mr. Donahue will make certain the announcement goes out as soon as he gets it and said they will send a seven-day reminder and a four-day reminder. The information will also be put on the FETI website.

Adjournment

Acceptance of minutes from the January meeting was deferred until the following meeting to allow for distribution and reading by commission members. The meeting was adjourned by 4:32 p.m.

Approved By: Karen St Germain Date: 7-3-13