

Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission Meeting

Official Meeting Minutes

June 13, 2013

Commission Members Present:

Mike Donahue Chancellor's Designee from LSU
Chad Major
Kenny Hunts
Mike Arnold
Dwayne Thevis

In Attendance:

Loree Ramezan – FETI
Miranda Meynard – FETI
Carey King – FETI
TK Devall – FETI
Wayne Cruse – FETI
Eddie Tessmer – FETI
Eddie Pyle – FETI

Kenny Hunts reported that Boyd, as well as Buddha, would not be in attendance. In addition, Chairperson Karen St. Germain would not be available, being ill yet in supportive attendance with Butch Browning at a recent in-state event. Mr. Hunts proceeded to call the roll.

Roll Call

Mr. Hunts proceeded to call the roll, and welcomed everyone to the FETI commission meeting. Since Ms. St. Germain was not present, Mr. Hunts called for the financial report.

Financial Report

Mr. Donahue: If you'll look at your handouts, since we couldn't get together last month, there's two financial statements, the year-to-date balance through April 30th as well as the year-to-date balance through May 31st. I would advocate that we skip the April, because it is included in total in the 90, and if we go right to the big number, which is \$170,040,001. It shows that to date we have a running surplus of \$755,453, which we anticipate will be reduced by about \$125,000 in the month of June. So we'll have a little over \$600,000 in surplus -- and let me say that that is unusual for a couple of reasons: it's about \$350,000 higher than we originally budgeted for at the beginning of the year and the two biggest contributing factors to that are the salary and benefits for our new director; they were budgeted to come on line at the beginning of the year, and our original manager for Region I was also budgeted to come online; TK has been offered that position and accepted it.

So we will be back to full force in terms of region managers. We have an advertisement running for another regional coordinator for Region I, and that will bring us back to staff. So if you would take those two things into consideration, we would be just about \$75,000 from where we budgeted, and we did get back on track. We did get a report from the treasurer's office and our statutory-dedicated funds came in about approximately \$147,000 dollars more than the prior year and that came in right at \$3,057,000. I guess the other good financial news is that for the fiscal year we are entering, July 1st is \$3,057,000 and the other financial fiscally good news is that what FNA paid to the university went down, and that's based on the fact that it travels back in the revenue years, because our revenue's up. Are there any questions?

Now I should tell you that of the money going into the plant fund, approximately \$150,000 of it is allocated for one time expenditures; we have to replace four vehicles and we couldn't get those done in this current year; on top of that, we just recently submitted the paperwork to buy a regional training prop. It's a Paratech top trailer, so that we'll be doing municipal excretion of vehicle extrication out in the region; so it was a \$175,000 trailer and equipment, and we negotiated it to \$62,000.

If we take the numbers and look toward next year, it points back to where we're going to try to put \$250,000 a year into the plant fund until we meet again that million dollars, that's the magic number so to speak, where we feel like we can comfortably meet any emergency that comes up, yet by the same token, take advantage of opportunities like this Paratech trailer as they come along, and so that's the goal, fellows.

Directors Report

Mr. Donahue: I guess this is where we'll talk about our selection process. If you'll look a little deeper into your packet, you'll see the resumes of two of the eight individuals that we interviewed over the course of the last two weeks. We interviewed eight of the nine people that this commission identified as potential candidates, and one who came then withdrew her name from consideration,

The attendees queried whether the one who withdrew was an out-of-state lady from California.

Mr. Donahue: Yes. She accepted an increase in responsibility that had to do with training contracts in Alaska. She felt more comfortable recusing herself from consideration.

What you'll notice if you would please, is that the last page attached to each one is the correspondence that I sent out to them yesterday. We are planning for the open forum as we discussed on Tuesday afternoon, June the 25th, and I asked all candidates to prepare to speak to the audience, giving a 20 to 25 minute presentation on your academic background, fire service experience, and training background, specifically relating to the fire service. Then share your first year vision as the director of FETI, as it applies to the employees, the various stake holders, and the municipal programs that we do or do not offer. We'll take a short recess after that first 20 to 25 minutes, and then come back and the candidates will field questions from the audience. This will give the commission --we'll invite the LSFFA executive committee, or any member that wants to attend for that matter -- and the same with the chiefs. I don't know what interests the professionals will have in attending that, but if you'll tell me whom to send it to

-- if it's you -- I will invite your executive board as well to come, if they would like to sit in that open forum and obviously, the commission here.

I thought that the next fit step would be that this group would again have to meet in executive session and make a recommendation, and let's talk about the two candidates. From there, we would proceed with an offer. If you read the last couple of sentences here, I am actively pursuing professional and personal background checks. The university will do the criminal and financial, and I will do the references. And then, I will actually have a standardized form that I will share with everyone those responses from those individuals, and we'll go from there.

Mr. Donahue was asked whether he had set a time yet for the open forum.

Mr. Donahue: I have not, and the reason that I did not yet do is that it's going to be in the afternoon and it's going to start between 1 and 2 p. m. I thought 2 would be ideal, but a lot of that choice is going to be determined on the flight -- I'm probably going to fly the candidates on the night before, so that they're well rested; they won't have to worry about practicing their presentation on the plane. Also I talked to a couple of chiefs from a greater driving distance, and they were interested in coming, so I thought two o'clock to be most appropriate, then we can be wrapped up by five.

Mr. Donahue was queried as to whether he would let the commission know, to which he replied that he absolutely would send an announcement out.

In explaining the process further, Mr. Donahue related: So in that process, the State Fire Marshall Bush, myself, and I guess an assistant vice chancellor from human resources (I think he's the assistant vice chancellor for EEOC and Diversity at LSU), sat in with us and we did interviews again, lasting about an hour and to an hour and fifteen minutes per person. After we finished all of the interviews, Miranda sat in as our note taker, so that we could engage in questioning. She took all of the notes and of course we took some, and then she compiled all the notes and provided them to us. On Tuesday of this week, we met and went down through all of the candidates. Gentlemen, what we found was that there were a lot of great people -- a lot of great people -- but the two resumes that you have in front of you, by unanimous consent of the three people in the group, separated themselves significantly in terms of the depth and breadth of their experience. So that's how we came to that conclusion.

The question was asked whether the two candidates were from out of state.

Mr. Donahue responded that the two candidates were from Florida and Texas. In response, a second query came as to whether the remaining two candidates were aware of the pay scale.

Mr. Donahue: Yes. Yes, because of one of the things done prior to the interviews being started. I contacted everyone on the interview list and said, "Even though it was posted, when you applied for the job, it said what the salary range was," but I wanted to reiterate, especially to the out-of-town people, that "Before I fly you in here, let's discuss what we're talking about here (salary-wise), it's going to come within the \$100,000 to the \$110,000 range -- somewhere in there -- is what we anticipate.

Mr. Donahue was asked whether he had any more data. His reply was that he had none, but as soon as he was certain of the meeting time, he would advise all involved, and then they could go from there.

Survey Result

Mr. Donahue reported that the last word of the survey, in an initial report, was that FETI received 53 responses out of a potential 600. A member of the committee commented that the responses were comprised more like 400 in play, and that as far as on-line surveys go, the survey did ok; only getting about 10% usually; so the response percentage was only a little ahead of curve but still open, should anyone want to take the survey. The member noted that there was a shortened URL, so if the survey distributors agreed to share it, the survey could be kept on line as long as wanted. Mr. Donahue commented that LSU ran the survey, which rendered it completely independent of anything at FETI. All the commission did was to obtain the results.

Mr. Donahue noted that in regard to the survey, there were some inconsistencies as well as one-offs, and he searched for common themes in groups. While some were departmental-specific, others were based on the nature of the organization, such as a small combination to the mid-sized combination to the large career organization, but that good information was garnered, which would provide an opportunity to address the issues.

Mr. Donahue remarked, "For instance, people would like more coordinators out in the field training. The view taken is that all our instructors here work full time, when the reality is there's only two. And so there will be a complement of seven out in the field, that is, two in terms of municipal -- our recruit academy -- and all of the other guys that teach classes are coming from the region. Although some of that is perception, some may see the need to have more FETI faces out there consistently, but we are really looking forward to getting TK out there. Wayne's done a great job but he was stretched too thin. I'll publically thank Wayne for his effort and sacrifice for the last couple of years. I'm also looking forward to TK's team taking care of Region I and their training needs.

Mr. Donahue then presented the 50th annual publication put together to advertise classes, and noted the publication would be presented at the LSFA conference, remarking, "We carry and company-produce literature with Christine so that we can advertise the courses that are scheduled for the balance of the year, as well as different opportunities; hopefully, people are looking for more training.

Mr. Donahue said that Alan was not in attendance, but that a letter to explain a small shift in certification would be forthcoming, due to Al's retirement. In reply to a query regarding how much of a shift, Mr. Donahue said, "On the front end, it's a lot faster, on the back end, it's a little slower. We now utilize the adjunct proctor system, and in so doing, put forth more certifications per week. In meeting the fire service needs, we can have three proctors in three different places at 10 o'clock in the morning and in the afternoon, thereby inundating certification with more process than we've ever had, but with a lack of personnel, the process is taking longer. With Al, chiefs would see it the next day. It's not like a class certification. Every seal has to be registered, and so there's a lot more administration involved in presenting a certification seal. Our goal is to meet that two week timeline."

A commission member commented that if test candidates could call to inquire about a passing grade, it would keep the test-takers from worry.

Mr. Donahue reported that it was determined that AI's position would have a replacement, who would do tests personally within an hour's drive of Baton Rouge, but not with the same job stipulations; rather, utilizing the proctor system for the rest of Louisiana. Detailing future plans, Mr. Donahue said, "We send out a complete packet with all the tests and all the materials and the pre-filled out mailing information, so all the adjunct has to do is just stick it in the box, seal it, and drop it in FedEx or UPS, depending on what service we're using. If they drop it, we should have it back in two days. If they let it ride around in their car for a week, that's where we have an issue, but we are tracking and we know everything that leaves and everything that comes back. AI and Christine did a good job in putting that together. "

Old Business

Mr. Hunts moved to the old business regarding the selection, such as fixed dates and travel in the state, and asked the group for input.

A committee member recalled that the last thing discussed in the last meeting was that meetings would be most frequently held in Baton Rouge, with the exception of three events yearly in tandem with LFCA, LSFFA, and FETI. The chiefs would have a spring and fall meeting, as well as FETI, for 2013. In the following year, the chiefs from LSA would be together, thus creating one opportunity other than the fall opportunity.

Mr. Donahue queried whether they could pick four, i.e., to have three meetings and then pick one in random that hadn't been geographically hit, like West Monroe or Rustin or Shreveport, so those folks would feel like part of the process. The member suggested addressing the issue by choosing New Iberia and Baton Rouge the next year, Marksville, and then New Orleans. Mr. Donahue agreed, saying the committee should have meetings at least once or every six months in northern Louisiana, with one meeting above the Mason-Dixon line, such as Alexandria. If subsequent plans were not made, the committee could ensure that it would be arranged to be so.

Mr. Donahue posed a question, "If I'm not mistaken, don't the chiefs geographically have a meeting north or south each year? So in fact, if we hit the northern one with the chiefs, that would satisfy that objective. All of the business happens down here and I'm sorry they don't get more inclusion. The concern is there, so we need to do something. Our next three meetings are on the website, posted 'Commission meeting dates.' Once we make a decision, Lori will continue to keep that posted for about 3:00 p.m. After August, we're looking at one a year." Mr. Donahue's remarks met with approval from the committee.

Mr. Wayne Cruse was concerned with the classes at Baton Rouge being cancelled due to lack of participation, pointing out that when a decision was made to have mandatory classes, the instructors would not cancel. Mr. Wayne Cruse added, "At present with a class starting the 17th; the instructors have only two students registered in a fire for the one class. You cannot effectively teach a class with

two students. The class was ultimately cancelled, but since classes in the region have a minimum number of ten, the instructor wanted at least a minimum number of six people required in a class.”

When Mr. Donahue was asked whether that had been addressed, he responded that the original intent was to teach those who signed up, but that no threshold minimum had been established with guaranteed classes. It was recognized that learning was primarily achieved by learning with other people and classes. The cost at present is \$85 a class and \$135 an instructor.

Mr. Donahue calculated that at two minimal classes a year, the sum would attain about two or three thousand. Guaranteed classes might hold only two people. Mr. Donahue surmised that only one guaranteed class per class would be needed, regardless of location, but that six people would have to attend to fill the class.

Mr. Wayne Cruse responded that it was about the grades, noting that “One of the things that affects our classes is that we’re now doing an out-in-the-field. Mike’s got three people that need Instructor II, and can pay for a class to be held in his fire department -- 10 people, minimum. He can pay the tuition costs and the instructor costs cheaper than he can send those three people to Baton Rouge. Wayne continued that a tremendous amount of 40 and 80 hour classes were being taught presently: “This week we have an Instructor I class here; we have an instructor I class going on in Morgan City with 11 people. Next week I start a vehicle extrication class running for 40 hours in Lafayette with 25 people in it. Two weeks after that, I start an 80 hour Driver-Operator class in Montague, and we got 12 people enrolled in it. Somewhere along the line, we might discuss some needs in making these open enrollment classes. So are we in agreement?”

Mr. Donahue paraphrased, “I’d like to entertain a motion that we put a six person minimum up for attendance on our guaranteed classes that we offer each year.”

The motion was seconded and approved.

There was a motion to adjourn, which was then seconded and approved.

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes submitted by Susan Sarnataro.

Approved by:



7-3-2013