

**Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes
January 28th, 2016**

Commission Members Present:

Charlie Metcalf	Louisiana State Firemen’s Association
Michael Donahue	Chancellor’s Designee from LSU
James Wood	Louisiana Fire Chief’s Association
Chad Major	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
Louis Romero	Professional Firefighters Association of Louisiana
Martino Latino	Louisiana Fire Chief’s Association
Butch Browning	State Fire Marshal

Commission Members Absent:

Karen St. Germain
Brian Castille

In Attendance:

Loree Ramezan	FETI
Christine Melancon	FETI
Carey King	FETI
Eddie Pyle	FETI
Wayne Cruse	FETI
T. K. Devall	FETI
Gray Young	FETI
Kathe Jones	FETI
Nick Palmer	FETI

The Louisiana Fire and Emergency Training Commission was called to order. Mr. Major called the roll and announced that a quorum was present. The meeting began.

Chairman’s Report

Mr. Major presented his report. He began with election of a new vice chair. Donald Milligan would no longer be filling that position. Mr. Major nominated and made a motion for Mr. Metcalf to fill the position of vice chair. Mr. Latino seconded the motion. None opposed the nomination. Nomination was accepted. Mr. Metcalf was elected as the new vice chair.

Mr. Major noted that they would be discussing money. He recognized everyone’s concerns. There was a lot of talk going on regarding possible cuts and new taxes passed. The hole was bigger than they had thought it was and they will not be able to cut their way out of it. They would need to play a role in the legislative process because it was going to be a battle. With state supplemental pay, they really felt that they were like individuals on retainer. During crunch times, they would be called to assist in passing

taxes or they as a department would be cut. So during those times of legislative process, all the players would be present and a part of the process. They would speak to their legislators and make the effects of their vote personal to them. They would encourage those legislators to vote for or against whatever item was on the table. He asked Mr. Browning to give a few comments in regards to this topic. Mr. Browning agreed with everything Mr. Major had said and added that as far as the governor was concerned, he was not the one raising taxes. He stated that it disappointed him when he would hear entities on TV talking against the governor for raising taxes. The governor was not the one who raised the taxes, but it was the legislature. They ultimately were the ones who approved tax increases and passed the budget. They were the ones who gave them their protection and supplemental pay in the stat debt account there and the fire marshal stat debt.

The governor could veto any decision by the legislature which has what had been happening over the last eight years. Currently, they were at the point of either ceasing to have government or having to bring in more money. Last year, there was a bill presented to do away with the stat dedicated accounts and it would come up again. There were currently 48 stat dedicated accounts and when it did come up again, there would be more than just firemen up there "lobbying" to keep it. He had spoken to John Bell Edwards and Jay Dardenne and both of them had issued their support for the stat dedicated funding.

Basically, the governor would bring the current budget and propose 3% cuts so that the budget would balance or he would propose a host of taxes that they could smorgasbord from. All the taxes didn't need to be passed, but some could be to keep down the cuts. The cuts would bring things such as no summer school at LSU, etc. This was given to the legislature to decide. He encouraged everyone to be talking to their senators and representatives, many of which went home to rural areas that needed the state to support the services they provided.

There was a lot of false information out there and many people want to do away with the stat dedicated funding and take that money to fill the holes which was why they all needed to be advocates for the region and get involved with the legislature. Mr. Metcalf stated that he had seen the cuts going down to LSU and he asked how that was going to affect the role there at FETI and what kind of plan was in place to help them through this. Mr. Donahue answered that they were not funded by any higher education dollars. Their funding was total stat dedicated funding so they were independent of any cuts that they were reading about with LSU.

Mr. Metcalf was concerned that if LSU started to have cuts then the campus might start looking for ways to raise more money. This had happened in the past. Mr. Donahue answered that no one had brought this topic up, but currently they paid LSU 3% in administration and overhead. They could possibly raise that and it was a possibility that it could be raised to level that was a detriment to them. Of course, if that happened then it would cause LSU so much trouble that it would probably not be worth it. The biggest threat to them was for the stat dedicated funding to cease.

Mr. Donahue commented that he realized the last stat dedicated fund conversation didn't go anywhere, but he did recall part of that conversation being about stat dedicated fund balances. There were recipients who were receiving stat dedicated funds and had millions already. He asked if there were discussions about leaving the stat dedicated alone, but going after the fund balances. Mr. Browning answered that the current administration conversation was that dedicated money was for that purpose. There would be no more sweeps or anything.

Mr. Browning added that it was not Bobby Jindal who had swept the funds. It was the legislature who did. There was always a bill at the end of the session that took the millions in fund balances. These balances came from cuts taken throughout the year and allocated funds in the budget. It may have been politicked by the governor, but there was a house bill that basically said to take all that money. LSU was never a part of that which was a good thing. It was more than likely because it was another budget unit. Mr. Browning felt strongly that the new governor and legislature would equalize the budget. Mr. Major agreed. He stated that the most important priorities on the agenda this year were to open up all stat dedicated funds and to make all public pensions define contribution instead of define benefits, both present and future.

Mr. Major asked if there were any questions regarding the report. None were voiced. This concluded the presentation of the chairman's report.

Director's Report

Mr. Dave Casey presented his report. First order of business was the tuition increases which were discussed at the last meeting. It had been asked if they were planning to increase the cost of other programs to offset the tuition increase on the recruits. They did review the other courses that they had. There were several that were in major revision status right now so it wasn't going to be a good time to change the price because they hadn't re-costed it with how they were looking at it.

He stated that he had laid out the prices in the right hand column. With the current anticipated schedule and recent PIL changes, a lot of departments were coming up with significant class requests. A conservative investment would be about a \$20,000 increase if they decided to make the requested changes within the classes they had now. He recommended continuing to work toward the hybrid classes which are a more economical delivery.

At this point pending the approval process, he suggested that they stabilize the prices with courses which meant that the Officer 1,2, & 3 would come up. The Inspector 1, 2, & 3 and Instructor 1 & 2 would go down. The current cost of the Officer class was \$80, but the book cost around \$115. With the price stabilization at \$120, the course would include a downloadable textbook, the ability to highlight, and the online content specific to their classes, videos, and Powerpoints. All that would be included in the tuition. In doing it this way, it would give them more time to work through the course at home which was an added benefit.

If the individual wanted the written textbook, they would need to do some discussion. They could sell it to them at half the price estimated at \$40, but that was not concrete because the books varied so much between courses. He felt that it would be easier for everybody if they did price standardization. The books that were used for the I-Series also varied in price, but only by \$35. Mr. Romero asked if there was a time when the e-book would expire for use. Mr. Casey stated that it did, but they could adjust that with Jones and Bartlett to a degree. Currently, the book would be on the device for 18 months.

Mr. Romero asked how much money the students would be saving if they went to e-books. Mr. Casey said for Officer there was not a significant one at all, but the others, it would be dropping the cost by \$15. The savings actually came from FETI not having to buy the book. It would increase their revenue. They were not suggesting a change for Fire Fighter One, but only the other classes they were re-doing so it would be premature to ask for any numbers.

Mr. Steve Gervias reiterated that they were only talking about pre-req's, such as Instructor being a pre-req for Fire Officer. If an individual was going to do Instructor as a class, and then Fire Officer, then this proposal would decrease the cost by \$15. He felt that in the end they would just be equalizing out by taking something away here and putting something back in. Mr. Casey stated that the savings were actually in the 2's. FETI was having to purchase the same book for two separate classes. So by going to e-books, they would save a significant amount. Mr. Metcalf asked if there was a possibility of getting a hard copy if the student chose to do so. Mr. Casey answered that it would certainly be available. The student would just have to pay for it.

He added that with the e-book, the online content that was a part of the legal package of the course would disappear after the 18 months, but any downloadable content would stay with the student. What he suggested for today was that they not move ahead with the 20% across the board and let them bring back a more detailed report on costing this out to go toward trying to stabilize prices. Mr. Major voiced his support for it. He did ask that they come back with an overall package so they didn't pass something now and then have to band-aid it in a few months down the road. He wanted them to bring back the overall package for everyone to digest so there wouldn't be any surprises 3 months down the road. Mr. Metcalf agreed with him.

Mr. Major added that the incremental increase that they had been discussing needed to be added to it as well. Mr. Browning asked how they were doing in industrial. Mr. Donahue answered that soon he would share with them a five year plan. All of the money that they were generating in industrial was being re-invested in the facility. In the past, the industrial program would generate \$150-200,000 annually. It would sit there and then it would be used for a myriad of things. Right now, they were in a position that over the next five years, if they were going to be sustainable, they would be forced to invest \$1.5 million into the facility and 100% of those funds would come from the industrial side.

Some of the upgrades included re-doing the water flow systems, re-doing the fuel/oil separator, doing a nominal expansion in the classroom and some miscellaneous upgrades across the board. Mr. Casey wanted to assure the board that they were stable in their funding. Last year, they had a rough year. They had a lot of items to break, some major repairs, and things that just simply wore out. They had the new props that were purchased last year on the road and there were more new props coming through. Even though, they could not expand on anything they were doing, they were doing okay at this point with what they had.

Mr. Metcalf asked what the latest was on the burn building. Mr. Casey stated that they had met again with campus and the specifications had been drawn up. He was waiting to hear back from them again. The consensus was to go ahead with the WHP project, but it also had to be done legally. This was related to the modular construction that would go on the back of the building which would probably outlast the building itself. It did meet the AFG requirements which meant that it could not be brick and mortar. The building was steel with protective linings.

He did have the request for changing the scope of work and he was proofreading it. That should be turned in with a request for an extension and the changes. The original one was for conex containers. If they were to turn them down, they would still be okay. This was just better because it facilitated more square footage using the existing building. They were using the standpipe stairs and all the features that were in the current building. They could still burn, but they couldn't burn in the old building.

Mr. Metcalf asked about the status on the women's dorm. Mr. Casey stated that there had been some progress. Yesterday, they had approved their recommendation for the bid. That went back to campus yesterday and the bid should be awarded any day. It was anticipated that the concrete piers to set the building on, the sidewalks, the plumbing, the waste water, the electric and the building itself all would be onsite and ready to go for the next class.

He moved on to state that the strategic planning group had not met since the last meeting. They currently had a lot on the table right now so they were trying to do some electronic discussions with them because they were not under the same restrictions that their commission was. The group was looking at the four tier program. Interestingly enough, NFPA was looking at a very similar proposal two weeks ago. They had voted it down as far as the change to the Fire Fighter One certification. They had also voted down a proposal to merge the Fire Fighter One and Two. They were still arguing about Hazmat and looked like they would be taking Ops out of Fire Fighter One which would be good in his opinion.

Three other states were doing similar to what they were talking about. The other states were trying the recommended changes and they were commenting that it seemed to be working. New recommendations included the first step of on-scene orientation, the second step of on-scene Fire Fighter exterior only, and the third step of an interior Fire Fighter. The argument with the NFPA was that they did not want to water down Fire Fighter One. It was a good argument and it came up at the strategic planning group meeting. They were discussing identifying Fire Fighter One as the lowest recognized level versus going with the new four tier program which might actually be more training than many of the departments currently had. He believed that it was a really positive step for them. The group was split on their opinion about it. It would be brought back to the next strategic planning meeting which was February 11th.

Mr. Casey did ask if they would like to be copied on when those meetings were and the information discussed. He added that he had given them what was on their table the last time and had proposed an electronic discussion board but he had only had one taker so he wasn't moving very fast on that.

Mr. Romero pointed out that he didn't think they had decided what they were going to do about the recruit academy tuition last meeting. Mr. Casey thought they had decided for the next class they were going to keep it the same as this class. What would happen after that was not determined. Mr. Romero commented that people were starting to have to work on budgets for next year so he felt they needed to come up with something. June and July was there budget time for September 1st.

Mr. Major thought that they had decided to leave it the same for this class and then what was proposed was to spread it out a little longer. They wouldn't get to their goal quite so quickly, but it would give the departments time to adjust budgets to meet those obligations over a 4-5 year period. Mr. Romero reiterated that he had suggested \$500 a year to get to the \$4,500 and then he had said if they had to then they could go to the \$5,000. Currently, they were paying \$3,000 and then in 2017, they could move to \$3,500.

Mr. Donahue asked if the increase was going to take place in fiscal or calendar year. Mr. Casey stated that the increase to \$3,500 should be taking place this year. Mr. Major reiterated that the change to \$3,500 would take place this year and then in 2017, it would increase to \$4,000. Each subsequent year, they would raise it by \$4,500 until they reached the \$5,000. If they needed to go further, then they could. Mr. Donahue again asked if the increase would take place in the calendar year or fiscal. Mr.

Gervais stated that the fiscal year for everyone was not consistent so that was an issue. Mr. Metcalf was under the impression that the change to \$3,500 would not take place until 2017 and the current class would remain the same. Mr. Major read an excerpt from the previous meeting's minutes. Mr. Romero reiterated that the current rate was \$3,000 and the increase of \$500 would take place in 2017 on a calendar year basis which would raise the price to \$3,500.

After reading the minutes, Mr. Major was concerned about not raising the prices for 2016 and the lack of funding affecting the services in the regions. He suggested that they might make the \$500 increase occur for August 1st, 2016 and then the next increase occur again the next August 1st, 2017. It was already being prolonged as it was. Mr. Donahue brought out that doing the increase in January however would cover everyone's budget. Some budgets started on January 1st and some budgets start on September 1st. Mr. Romero verified that they had a recruit academy in January, May and September. Mrs. Christine Melancon confirmed that.

Mr. Browning pointed out that there was a pretty consistent list of departments that used this service and he asked what were they saying about the increase. Mr. Casey stated that there was written information distributed to all the departments, but there was misunderstanding about it all because it seemed that no one had received the information. Then when it was presented to everyone at a meeting, there was a lot of excitement over it all. Mr. Gervais added that when the price was being raised by this January to \$4,500, it caused discontent. The result of the aftermath was that they would go up in increments. Mr. Wood proposed as a motion that they stick with going up in January 2017 so that everyone would be prepared with their budgets for this year and then if it needed to be increased quicker than every calendar year then it could be increased again in September 2017. Mr. Latino seconded the motion. The final decision was made to increase the tuition from \$3,000 to \$3,500 in January 2017, increase to \$4,000 in September 2017 and then a final increase to \$4,500 in September 2018. Everyone was in agreement. No further discussion. Motion passed.

Mr. Romero asked if a letter could be sent out to all the fire chiefs right now. Mr. Casey stated that he would send out an email and letter in the mail as well. They were also planning to visit with the fire chiefs individually so the tuition increase could be addressed in person and the program changes that were not working well could be discussed. Mr. Major felt that they needed to get the information out as soon as possible because as soon as the news started to spread they would start getting calls. Mr. Metcalf asked when the lead evaluator program was this year. Mr. Casey stated that it was the week of March 22nd. Mr. Metcalf felt that it would be a good opportunity to cover the changes then. Mr. Casey stated that he would plan to cover it at that time, but they would be getting the information out before then. Mr. Major added that the LSFA and the LSFC conferences were coming up and that would give them the opportunity to discuss it there. Mr. Wood suggested that they put the information on the recruit academy website. Mr. Casey said that the information regarding the incremental increases would be made available.

Mr. Casey moved on to the next item on the report. The information was up to campus on the pick-up truck purchase. They were waiting on them to move it on to the state. Mr. Major asked if they had dropped some out of the inventory. Mr. Casey answered that they had dropped two vehicles from the inventory.

As far as new, they were setting up for the company leadership conference. They had the primary speakers set up and they should have the dates for the lead evaluator and the fire department training workshops soon. Mr. Romero asked if they had a cost yet for the conference. Mr. Casey stated it was

the same as last year. Mr. Gervais stated that it was \$195 for the 3 day and \$75 for individual. It would be held again at LSU E in the performing arts building.

Mr. Major asked if there were any questions regarding the director's report. None were voiced. This concluded the presentation of the director's report.

Certification Report

Mr. Steve Gervais presented his report. He began by stating that at the last meeting he had given them revenues based on the end of November because they did not have December completed. The report stated \$96,815 for their end of the year, 12/31/16, but with some of the invoices not getting processed before holiday, the actual calculation was \$103,000, 6 months revenue in certification. To his knowledge, this had never been done in certification. He was proud of some of the processes that were happening. There were roughly 300 more exams done this year than last which resulted in some of that revenue.

He went on to state that he had introduced the satisfaction survey for their processes. It was in progress last month and it had now been completed. He had only a 25% response initially so he had sent a friendly email which brought in another 205 response. 144 people in total had responded. The responses were favorable and people generally were happy with the processes of what they were doing. The survey targeted the training officers and chief officers in their system that created test requests and sent them in. He was trying to work out how to get an email database of their users. He mentioned a link in the report that was the actual link to the report with graphs, questions, and responses. He invited them to take a look at it. They were planning to put it in HOTLap and the web page as well.

He updated them on the IFSAC site visit. It was officially confirmed that it was scheduled for March 1-3. If anyone wanted to see him the week before that, they would be more than welcome to but it will be a little hectic at that time. When they got through that one, they would have ProBoard in another four years.

He updated them on the new Scantron grading software. The new Scantron sheets were newly designed and they had been received a couple of weeks ago. There were some new changes. They would no longer pull socials on the Scantron sheets which was a thorn in his side because of the security issues and identity theft. They now were going with the last four because that was the way the database system was currently set up. The parish code was no longer there, but the FDID had been put in its place so that individual departments could be better segregated out. They did add the state driver's license or state id number to be included as part of the identification process.

They had added an optional demographic section so they could better analyze and study different groups, such as male, female, department size, etc. He reiterated that the section was optional. He hoped to use the information to run some reports and stats and try to find certain areas that may not be performing as well and find out what's being done and suggest training initiatives to help. Mr. Latino asked if it would allow them to track individual items on tests. Mr. Steve Gervais stated that it did, but they did not have that feature in their software turned on yet. That would be the next thing. The software was configured, and Scantrons were configured to the new software in a trial mode and all they were waiting on was going through to purchasing to get the site license for the new software feature. It was all ready to go. They just needed to make the purchase of the software. That was

however definitely a critical node. He stated that he wanted to use the software to do individual question analysis.

He moved on to the topic of the certification calendar which was brought up at the last meeting. The 2016 full calendar was published online which was completed about a week after they returned from holiday. They did have over 100 regional exam locations pre-scheduled and they were anticipating that there would be more that would come along the way where people requested a site for their department and they would agree to have it as an open site. Then they would be added to the calendar. Mr. Latino asked how many individual test proctors they had now. Mr. Steve Gervias stated that it was probably around 25 and some were more active than others.

He was trying some different things with proctors in different locations. Prime example was that he had a request in at LSU Eunice to potentially put some Saturday test sessions 3 times a year. He was actually trying to use a non-firefighter as a proctor, someone who lived and worked in Eunice. They would be changing up some processes with the proctors. They would be creating a packet or a booklet with all of the instructions included. The regulars probably already knew what needed to be done, but someone who was not versed on what was to be done then they could just flip through a book to get any questions answered.

Mr. Metcalf asked if there had been any issues since going this route of using proctors. Mr. Steve Gervais stated that there had been a few issues with some of the proctors getting individuals coming in saying that they wanted this and that. It was also an issue with emailing of the forms, but there were more people doing this now so it was easier to verify what the chief wanted and if the proper forms had been filled out. This was being addressed. They were telling the proctors if there was a situation like that then they shouldn't make the assumption or go on what the recruit was telling them. They should call to verify with Nate or himself. The phone number had been provided to them in the folder when they were given their rosters.

Mr. Metcalf stated that he had not heard anything about that, but he had heard about tests not being there when people showed up. Mr. Steve Gervais stated that they had been addressing this over the last year. He explained that when you got a test site and you had 6 or 7 different departments going to that site, they would package a box and send it out. Once it was out, it was out. This was why 7 day test requests were so important. They were trying to hold out because they might get a test request 2 days before then they could overnight the box to the proctor, but then there had been issues with UPS. So they were becoming more stringent on 7 day test requests.

In addition, electronic confirmations would be going out. Hopefully, the fire chiefs and training officers would review these to ensure that the appropriate individuals were on the list to take the test and also, if there was a change that needed to be made then they could contact them before the test site and adjustments could be made. Confirmation would be made mandatory. He was hoping as the next year progressed that they would get much tighter ensuring that the individuals who had test requests are the people that were present and they would have the test for them. They would get out of the situation of people walking in and saying that their chief sent them, etc.

Mr. Major asked if there were any questions regarding the certification report. None were voiced. This concluded the presentation of the certification report.

Financial Report

Mr. Donahue presented his report. He stated that they were in good shape. The spend rate on the municipal side was slightly less than it was last year, but he anticipated with a couple of things in the works that they would catch back up and run very similar to the run rate of last year. On the revenue self-generated side, they were currently about \$88,000 behind where they were last year, but if 90% of the scheduled training on the books happened then they would probably exceed last year's number by about \$200,000. Again for the industrial side, expenses scheduled would exceed the revenue by about \$25,000, but that was what they had a fund balance for because as he mentioned earlier, rather than just stockpiling money and doing a project, they were doing continuous improvement throughout the course of the year and re-investing.

They did just purchase 120 new fire extinguishers because they were out of date. Over the next 18 months, they would probably have 75 air packs that would exceed their life cycle so they would be in the process of replacing those. They were worn out. Mr. Casey commented that the current air packs were from several standards back. Mr. Metcalf added that he thought they followed AFG and their qualifications for air packs.

Mr. Donahue explained that there were two air packs that they bought the NFPA compliant for the municipal side and then an EPA compliant on the industrial side which didn't need the pass device or the heads up display. So a good price on an NFPA compliant pack was around \$4,200 and on the non-compliant or the EPA air pack was probably around \$2,400. It was still a significant amount of money no matter which one was purchased. All in all, he felt that they were on sound footing and they would continue to do upgrades. He asked them to give him about 90 days and then he would be sharing the details of the five year plan.

Mr. Major asked if there were any questions regarding the financial report. None were voiced. This ended the presentation of the financial report.

Old Business

Mr. Major asked that the motion, second and vote be noted under old business. Motion was made by Mr. Major to approve the incremental increase of \$500 beginning in January 2017, to be followed with another \$500 increase in September 2017, and again in September 2018, bringing the total to \$4,500 ending tuition cost and Mr. Donahue seconded the motion. No discussion. No opposition. Motion passed.

New Business

Mr. Metcalf brought up that a few months back had an issue with the number of trucks that they had and that Ms. St. Germain was going to see if she could get us an exemption. He asked if there was an update on that. Mr. Donahue stated that he had met with his new boss and some of the leadership of LSU and raised the issue to them. They had the process started on two new vehicles, but those were one to one trade-offs which wouldn't expand the fleet size, but it was Dave's intention to increase that by two more. He didn't know what the new division of administration position would be on that, but he knew that LSU was working to get the fleet increased, specifically for tow vehicles.

Mr. Metcalf asked what the word was on the fire truck that was trying to be sold. Mr. Casey stated that it was in the back and it was just going to surplus. It had very little sale value. Mr. Metcalf stated that he had asked some months back for the group to be presented with an organizational chart. Mr. Casey stated that he could send it to everyone by email.

Mr. Major opened the discussion regarding setting the meeting date. They had discussed previously about trying to hold the meetings in conjunction with the respective organizations annual conferences. Theirs was in a week and a half so they would not try to worry with that. He asked if anyone had the dates on the LSFA and the LFCA. Mr. Latino stated that their chiefs' meeting was in April. Mr. Wood stated that theirs (LSFA) was March 29-31. Mr. Browning pointed out that April 2nd was the firefighter memorial. Mr. Major suggested that if they wanted their meeting to be in conjunction with the LFCA then they could have a meeting at the very end of February or the very beginning of March and then it would be almost a month later to have the next one somewhere in line with the LFCA conference. Some discussion ensued and the final decision was to have the next meeting scheduled on February 24th at 10:00 am.

Motion to adjourn was entertained by Mr. Major. Motion was made by Mr. Romero and Mr. Latino seconded the motion. No objections were voiced. Meeting was adjourned.

C. Major
Approved by: Chad Major

4-13-16
Date:

Charlie Metcalf