

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY
NEW JERSEY FIRE SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING**

Meeting of September 17, 2015

The New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held on Thursday, September 17, 2015 at the Wildwood Crest Fire Department in Wildwood Crest, NJ.

Commission Members Present: Assemblyman John Wisniewski, Chairman
Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Acting-Chairman
Mr. Pasquale Intindola
Mr. Stanley Sickels
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood
Mr. Roger Potts
Mr. Frederick Collender
Ms. Kathleen O'Leary

Commission Members Excused: Assemblyman Anthony Bucco
Mr. Daniel DeTrollo
Mr. John Lightbody
Mr. Arthur Londensky
Mr. Richard Blohm

DCA Staff Members Present: William Kramer, NJDFS Acting Director
Lou Kilmer, NJDFS
Rick Farletta, NJDFS
Charles Lavin, NJDFS
Tim Weiss, NJDFS
Frank Clark, NJDFS
Craig Augustoni, NJDFS
Michael Scardino, NJDFS
Jerry Clark, NJDFS
Michael Whalen, Codes and Standards

Guests: Ronald McGowan Jr., Wildwood Crest Fire Co.
Nicholas Kikis, NJ Apartment Assn. Gina Cordero, Asm. Wisniewski's Office
Ralph Castellano, Belleville FD Robert A. Brenneck, Verona Fire Prevention
Lewis Ostrander, North Wildwood Vinny Corsaro, Jefferson Fire Bureau
Alden Blackwell, Tenafly FD Edward McDermott, Piscataway Fire Prevention
Ronald Narwood, Wildwood Fire Nick Lombardi, Piscataway Fire Dist. 1
John Mocharski, South Plainfield Artie Hayducka, Piscataway Fire Dist 1
Pat Bigoss, Camden County College Jermone Inderwies, Lower Twp.
Conrad Johnson, Cape May County Dominick McClain, North Wildwood Fire
John Turner, Salem County FM Thomas E. Simpson, Harrington Park

A. Call to Order

Chairman John Wisniewski called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM and began the meeting with the “Pledge of Allegiance”, a moment of silence, and pointed out the fire exits. Chairman Wisniewski asked that the Fire Safety Commission especially remember Carl S. Christensen from Woodbridge Township, who dedicated his life to the fire service and was instrumental in getting Chairman Wisniewski involved in working with the Fire Safety Commission.

B. Approval of Minutes

With no discussion requested or necessary corrections, the minutes of the regular meeting of July 15, 2015 were approved.

C. Correspondence

Chairman Wisniewski noted that all correspondence for today’s meeting is contained in the Fire Safety Commission packets. With no discussion requested on any of the items, the meeting was moved to Public Comment I.

D. Public Comment I

Vice-Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting to any members of the public wishing to address the Fire Safety Commission. With no members of the public wishing to comment at this time, the meeting was moved to Division of Fire Safety Activities.

E. Division of Fire Safety Activities

Acting Director William Kramer began his report by introducing a new addition to the Division of Fire Safety staff – code specialist Michael Scardino. This is a critical position in terms of the fire code operation. Mr. Scardino was selected from a field of great candidates and he will bring decades of experience to the DFS and be a huge asset. Chief Kramer also said that the Division recently took delivery of 22 vehicles to replace the same number of vehicles that had extremely high mileage. This is a big plus in updating the NJDFS fleet.

The NJ Division of Fire Safety has been heavily involved and working closely with authorities in Philadelphia and the surrounding area in preparation for the upcoming Papal Visit. They are expecting massive crowds and traffic issues, and the NJDFS has been working with Camden County on the pre-planning for the event. Captain Michael Gallagher will be deployed to the forward command post in Camden.

Chief Kramer spoke about representatives from nine large New Jersey cities who have been designated for FBI secret clearance. This program of intelligence sharing is being looked at on a national level, as it will potentially serve as a model for similar initiatives across the country.

NJ Division of Fire Safety staff was involved in the response to the recent large forest fire in Manchester Township. They have also been involved in the preparations for the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City and the Firefighters Convention in Wildwood. The K9 Arson Investigators were doing sweeps for both events. K9 Ashes was also used in a cadaver-dog capacity at a recent incident in Vineland.

On July 6th, Governor Christie signed legislation that allows municipalities to require the installation of fire hydrant locator poles. The Division of Fire Safety is now in the process of drafting regulations relative to this. Also, the annual report "Fire In New Jersey 2014" is in its final review. The report has been expanded upon since last year's and is a very thorough and comprehensive document that the federal government does use in determining grants. NJDFS staff is working with the departments that have not reported to try and get them to report.

The NJ Division of Fire Safety has taken receipt of 10,000 copies of the 2016 New Jersey Fire Safety Calendars. Distribution to all 21 county representatives will begin today. Also, the Division has taken delivery of two large panel vans that will be marked with a fire safety message and assigned to the Community Risk Reduction Unit.

The fall training semester began registration on September 9th and the training brochure is available on the NJDFS website. There are a lot of new and exciting offerings and Chief Kramer encouraged everyone to check out the catalog. Technical assistance is available for anyone having difficulty with the online registration.

Chief Kramer also mentioned a few news items that occurred recently involving fire code enforcement officials arrested for being involved in illegal activities. The Division has been involved in the capacity of keeping the inspections running in those municipalities. The Division has also been heavily involved in the investigation of the recent fire in North Brunswick that destroyed a one million square foot warehouse. That is an ongoing investigation and will be reported on going forward.

Chief Lou Kilmer began his report by speaking about a RIMS User Group that had been formed based on discussions held at the NJ Fire Prevention & Protection Association's County Presidents meeting. The Division has gotten a lot of good feedback from this group and hopefully will continue to work closely with them on developing the system going forward. Chief Kilmer also spoke about the Division's Code Enforcement Unit inspecting smoke alarms in change-of-occupancy situations. They started with 10 percent and this will be bumped up to 20 percent as of October.

In terms of staffing, the Division of Fire Safety was able to promote Frank Clark to Supervisor of Local Assistance. They are in process of back-filling Mr. Clark's old position and have promoted some inspectors to senior inspectors. All of these personnel moves, with the DCA Commissioner's and Chief Kramer's support, have allowed the Code Enforcement Unit to do things like the smoke alarm inspections, non-LHU inspections, etc. The Division of Fire Safety is on target to complete all inspections for the year.

Commissioner Lawrence Wood asked if there was any kind of report on the PSE&G fire that recently occurred in Bergen County. Chief Kramer said the Division of Fire Safety was involved with coordinating the response to the incident, but did not have jurisdiction as far as investigations.

F. Advisory Council Reports:

1. Codes Advisory Council

Commissioner Pat Intindola reported that the Codes Advisory Council cancelled its August meeting. However, on September 3rd, Commissioner Intindola, Chief Kilmer, and Commissioner Stanley Sickels met with DCA Commissioner Chuck Richman to discuss several pressing issues. This included: the appointment of Chief Kramer, the staffing of the NJDFS, and the many adoptions from the Codes Advisory Council. Commissioner Intindola was happy to report some process in regards to a lot of the adoptions and that is reflected in the most recent Codes Council Log.

Commissioner Intindola spoke about the Fire Prevention Code 2015 edition and referred to Bob Davidson for a report on it. Mr. Davidson said the goal was to have the work done on the Codes Council level by the December meeting and get it submitted early the following year. They have teamed up with Code Specialist Michael Scardino on this, so there shouldn't be a problem hitting that deadline. Commissioner Intindola also talked about the issue of fire officials not participating in the voting on ICC code changes. Chief Kilmer said they have looked into a bulletin to get the word out that voting can now be done by phone.

Commissioner Intindola reported that the DCA Commissioner was given the Codes Council's report on Lightweight Construction and he has taken it under advisement. Commissioner Stanley Sickels added that they had a robust discussion on the need for all people doing fire code inspections be certified. Currently, the code only requires that inspectors be certified that are inspecting life hazard uses. There are also Subchapter 4 requirements that are still not being addressed. Commissioner Sickels talked about the certification requirement would go far in closing some weaknesses in the code. Also, while not using the word "tenure", some protections for fire officials were discussed with the DCA Commissioner. Some language on this is currently being worked on.

2. Training and Education Advisory Council

Commissioner Lawrence Wood reported the Training and Education Advisory Council met on August 18th and the minutes from that meeting are contained in the Commissioners' packets. The one issue that Commissioner Wood wanted to call attention to was the exam for Fire Inspector should be ready by January 1, 2016.

The next meeting of the Training and Education Advisory Council is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20th at the Dempster Training Center in Lawrenceville.

3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that, as previously mentioned by Chief Kramer, the new “Fire In New Jersey 2014” report was recently finalized. Commissioner Naylis commended Heather Allen and the NFIRS Unit staff on continuing to put together a tremendous document. Commissioner Naylis also urged all fire departments to not wait until the end of the year to submit their data.

4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner John Lightbody, no report was given. The minutes from the most recent meeting have been distributed via the Commission packets.

The next meeting of the Master Planning and Research Advisory Council is scheduled for November 9th at the Toms River Fire Academy.

5. Public Education Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Daniel DeTrollo, no report was given. The minutes from the most recent meeting have been distributed via the Commission packets.

The next meeting of the Public Education Advisory Council is scheduled for November 10th at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville.

6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council

In the absence of Commissioner Richard Blohm, no report was given.

On the topic of Firefighter Safety and Health, Commissioner Naylis did call attention to a document that was recently promulgated by OSHA, available for fire departments electronically. It has a lot of good information in terms of water supply, sizing up fires, how to integrate planning in the fire protection process, etc. Commissioner Naylis thanked Bob Davidson for his work on this document.

7. Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council

Commissioner Kathleen O’Leary reported that the Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council met on September 10th at Middlesex County Fire Academy. Commissioner O’Leary noted the name-change from “Juvenile” to “Youth” in order to stay current with the national programs. Chairman Wisniewski noted the change and said that the agenda, and in turn the bylaws, would be amended going forward.

Chief Kilmer and Charles Lavin recently held a telephone conference with the Attorney General's Office on the Parents Legal Responsibility Pamphlet. They advised the DFS to remove anything related to legal advice and to focus more on informational-type material. Charles Lavin compiled the notes given by the Deputy AG's and will be taking them back to the Council for discussion at the November meeting.

Commissioner O'Leary spoke the 13th Annual Conference scheduled for December 3rd and 4th at Middlesex County Fire Academy. The full program and all pertinent registration information is scheduled to be released on September 28th. The theme of this year's Conference is "Addressing Youth Firesetting in Our Diverse Communities" – which lends itself to the unique and varied mix of people and places New Jersey has to offer. Commissioner O'Leary encouraged all Commission members to spread the word and attend if possible.

The next meeting of the Juvenile Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council is scheduled for November 12th at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville.

G. Committee Reports

1. Residential Sprinkler Committee

Commissioner Gerard Naylis reported that, relative to the lightweight construction issue, many segments of the community are weighing in on what should be done. Most recently, a group of several fire service representatives held an event at the site of the Edgewater fire to recommend a number of code requirements for those types of buildings. Commissioners Naylis, Intindola, and Sickels will be taking more time to examine all the factors involved and reports on the incident and will report further at the November meeting. Commissioner Sickels spoke in further detail about the recent history of the code and how a change was made saying the model code cannot be changed or exceeded. Chairman Wisniewski said that, through the Office of Legislative Services, he will look into how and why this is the case. Commissioner Sickels stressed that the most important factor is that you do not want to lose the safeguards that you already have.

H. Old Business

Commissioner Gerard Naylis asked about the issue of public employee pension/volunteering situation that was discussed at the prior meeting. There is not an upcoming bill that states that volunteering would not count as continued employment relative to someone being able to collect their pension. Chairman Wisniewski said he has the Office of Legislative Services working on this issue as well.

Chairman Wisniewski spoke about the issue of having a fire service representative serve on planning boards in given municipalities. He is working on legislating a requirement that someone with a fire service background either serve on planning and zoning boards, or have a review/approval of the fire official of that community.

I. New Business

With no New Business to be discussed at this time, the meeting was moved to Public Comment II.

J. Public Comment II

Alexi Assmus spoke about the issue of massive fires in lightweight construction. Ms. Assmus engaged Commissioner Sickels in a discussion about the need for area limits in Type V construction, and they were in agreement on the need for masonry walls when you get to a certain size limit. Commissioner Sickels thanked her for her work and reports on this issue. She is part of a citizens group that has put together a nine-point remedy to the dangers that lightweight construction present. Ms. Assmus also spoke about the problems associated with the way luxury apartment structures are now being constructed by developers.

Paul Driscoll asked if the Cause and Origin Report from the Edgewater fire had been released yet. Chief Kramer said it had been released a while ago and it was determined that the fire was started accidentally based on the misuse of an acetylene torch.

North Wildwood Fire Official Lew Ostrander stressed the need for residential fire sprinkler systems and also talked about the possibility of lessening the fees that municipalities can charge for the inspection process. He said this is counter-productive and towns would wind up with tons of multiple dwellings not getting inspected. While all the legislation is being lobbied against from the building industry based on cost, they are losing sight of the safety aspect. Mr. Ostrander gave examples locally where buildings and residents are not protected despite the fire officials calling attention to it. He feels the fire service is being out-lobbied on this issue at this point.

Michael Whalen from Codes & Standards spoke about the fact that every fire official in the state has the privilege of voting on the national codes. You have to register with CDP Access and the hearings can be watched remotely on any computer or smartphone. The voting then begins two weeks after the hearings conclude. Mr. Whalen urged anyone and everyone who is able to in New Jersey to make a difference by registering and voting. Commissioner Sickels added that this is something that code officials should be trained in as part of the process and be part of the discussion. It is important to work with our counterparts across the country to help move things forward.

K. Adjournment

Chairman Wisniewski asked if anyone had any additional business they would like to bring before the Commission. There being none, the meeting adjourned at 11:18 pm.

*** The next meeting of the Fire Safety Commission will be on Wednesday, November 18, 2015 at 10am. It will be held at the Atlantic City Convention Center in Atlantic City, NJ ***