

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

**Meeting of March 20, 2024**

The New Jersey Fire Safety Commission meeting was held on Wednesday, March 20, 2024 at the Bergen County Fire Academy in Mahwah, NJ.

**Commission Members Present:** Mr. Kevin Krushinski, Chairman  
Mr. Lawrence D. Wood  
Mr. Paul McGrath  
Mr. George Aleu  
Mr. Gerard Naylis  
Mr. Richard Blohm  
Mr. Charles Siedenburg  
Mr. Charles Maria  
Mr. Frederick Collender  
Mr. Raymond Heck

**Commission Members Excused:** Mr. Arthur Londensky, Vice-Chairman  
Mr. Armando Roman  
Mr. Kevin Bellew  
Ms. Kathleen O’Leary  
Mr. Daniel DeTrolio  
Mr. Nelson Wiest  
Mr. Steve O’Gorman

**DCA Staff Members Present:** Richard Mikutsky, NJ State Fire Marshal  
Charles Lavin, NJDFS  
Lenny Inzerillo, NJDFS  
Timothy Weiss, NJDFS  
Steve Taylor, NJDFS  
Daniel Timmerman, NJDFS  
Steve Dyl, NJDFS

<b><u>Guests:</u></b>	Ronald McGowan	Arthur J. Woods
Rich Heimbach	Mark A. Sulcov	Bernie Cunningham
Roy DeYoung Jr.	Charles Lind Jr.	Paul Cafone
John Gargagliano	Timothy Ferguson	Gary Morgan
William Quinn	Scott Russo	Ashley Soto
Gary Krautmann	John T. Klain	James O’Connell
Francis Walsh	Jason Macones	Michael Glizze
Christopher Ulshoefer	Samuel Antshall	Evan Kutzin
Thomas Quinton Jr.	Thomas Quinton Sr.	David A. Haenelt

James Zaconie  
Thomas Bernard  
Michael Dillon  
Patrick Chevalier  
Kevin Whitney  
Constance Zappella  
Steven Kochik  
Frank Velardi  
Gregory Lallo  
Gregg Cariddi  
Joseph Mara

Michael B. DeGidio  
John J. Hoffman  
Geoffrey Gibbons  
Gary Crift  
George S. Polster  
Joe Vallo  
Fred Dressel  
Steve Curry  
Tom Jennings  
Edward Fox

Jacob Hrywniak  
Gregory Laskowski  
Andrew Agugliaro  
John Dixon  
Michael J. Halzack  
Vincent Marciano  
Christopher Halloran  
Robert Dirr  
George Allen  
Tom Sheehan

#### **A. Call to Order**

Chairman Kevin Krushinski called the meeting to order at 10:13 AM. He led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for those recently lost in the line of duty and the men and women serving our nation overseas.

#### **B. Approval of Minutes**

With no discussion requested or additional corrections, the minutes of the regular meeting of January 17, 2024, were approved as submitted.

#### **C. Correspondence**

Chairman Krushinski noted that any and all correspondence for today's meeting was contained in the Commission packets.

#### **D. Public Comment I**

Chairman Krushinski opened up the meeting to any members of the public present wishing to address the Commission. The first members of the public recognized were from Medical Essential Diagnostics. They gave a comprehensive presentation of their "Save My Life Program", which provides thorough and extensive testing to frontline workers and state employees to ensure they are in optimal health while serving our communities and into their retirement. They have five clinics throughout New Jersey – in Marlton, Morristown, Englewood, Princeton, and Wall.

Chairman Krushinski recognized Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco and thanked him for hosting the Fire Safety Commission in Bergen County today. Mr. Tedesco spoke briefly to welcome the Commission and thanked them for coming up to Bergen County and giving the northern end of the State a chance to host the meeting, as well as have an opportunity to voice their concerns and have a dialogue with the members.

Glenn Corbett spoke about a Subchapter 4 proposal that was put forth years ago that called for retrofitting high rise buildings for radio signal amplification. He noted that this

proposal has been languishing for nearly 10 years, and asked the Fire Safety Commission to look into and advocate for this proposal so that it can be moved forward. Mr. Corbett stressed that the fire service does not want to be without optimal communication abilities when the next major emergency in a high rise building eventually comes.

Ridgefield Councilwoman Joanna Congalton-Hali spoke in regard to the physical fitness requirements being considered for firefighters. She asked that the members of the Fire Safety Commission hear the concerns of those present at today's meeting regarding this issue, and asked that the Commission not take any steps that would potentially make it harder for people to volunteer as firefighters.

George from Fort Lee asked for a general overview of what the Fire Safety Commission does and what their role is in establishing mandates for the state's fire service. Chairman Krushinski answered that the Fire Safety Commission serves in an advisory capacity. There are various aspects of the state's fire service represented on the Commission, and they serve to advise the NJ Division of Fire Safety and the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Community Affairs on matters relative to the fire service. All final decisions on regulations, mandates, etc. lie with the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs.

State Fire Marshal spoke about the discussion taking place to explore options for a minimum physical fitness standard. He stressed that this is merely discussion at this point, which is being held at the level of the Training and Education Advisory Council. Despite what is being said on social media, etc., nothing is being move on at this point and the NJ Fire Safety Commission does not have the final say on this matter anyway. Nor does State Fire Marshal Mikutsky. The ultimate decision lies with the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. In terms of a minimum physical fitness standard, this is not something that is unheard of and some county academies statewide have implemented this. But at this point the Training and Education Advisory is merely exploring the possibility to eventually make recommendations to the Fire Safety Commission. There will be no determination or vote or decisions made at today's meeting, as we are no where close to that at this point.

Commissioner Richard Blohm spoke about the issue of minimum physical fitness standard issue as well. He disagreed that this is only discussion at the Advisory Council level because a document in regard to it was distributed at a recent Eligible Organizations meeting on NJDFS letterhead. Director Mikutsky noted that there is an NJDFS logo on the document, it is not on NJDFS or State of New Jersey letterhead. This was a document drafted by the Chairman of the physical fitness committee. Commissioner Blohm, speaking on behalf of the Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey, express opposition to these standards and spoke about the detriments to firefighters – as well as recruitment and retention – implementing these standards would cause. He also expressed concern that there are no specifics related to the evaluators and evaluation process. Chief Klein also spoke in opposition to the minimum physical fitness standard and read aloud a letter written that outlined the adverse effects the standards would have on the volunteer fire service. He focused on the standards being a deterrent for people

who would otherwise be willing to volunteer in their communities, an area where the volunteer fire service is already struggling statewide.

Roy Young from the Borough of Maywood spoke about the minimum physical fitness document distributed at the Eligible Organizations meeting, and whether there would be consequences for the person who authored it using the NJDFS logo. State Fire Marshal Mikutsky answered that he has no problem with the logo being on the document which, as he said, was from the Training & Education Advisory Council. Advisory Councils regularly put the NJDFS logo on their minutes, agenda, and other documents – as they are within the scope of the Fire Safety Commission. The document was submitted at the Eligible Organizations meeting to keep them abreast of what the Training and Education Advisory Council was exploring, and was not meant to be widely distributed publicly. This has caused a lot of misinformation to be spread, resulting in today's discussion on the topic.

Jersey City Deputy Chief Constance Zappella spoke in favor of minimum physical fitness standards, and explained the situation that career departments are facing with the inability to get qualified candidates for firefighters and the money/time wasted when recruits drop out of contention when they can not handle the rigors of the job and training. Deputy Chief Zappella also highlighted the differences in the challenges faced by career departments and volunteer departments and suggested considering different standards to address the problem. Deputy Chief Zappella also stressed that this is an issue that should be taken to the Civil Service Commission, as it is their responsibility to determine eligible and qualified candidates for these positions.

George Heflich spoke about the need for cancer studies for firefighters – both volunteer and career alike – and implored those present to urge the politicians in Trenton to make this happen. Also, Stuart Blank from the Paramus Fire Department asked the Fire Safety Commission to consider the possibility of holding meetings in the evening so more members of the fire service could attend. Chairman Krushinski commented that they would look into it.

Joe Vallo from the Training & Education Advisory Council spoke about the minimum physical fitness standard document and stressed that in multiple places the document in explains that the standard is for new hires. He also stressed that this is a draft and comes from a place of love for the fire service. The committee working on this is looking to recruit and foster healthier firefighters who will have long careers and enjoy their retirements. Mr. Vallo feels that having standards, whatever the specifications are, will give firefighters the best chance of that walking in on day one healthy. Mr. Vallo also echoed Deputy Chief Zappella's comments that outlined the difficulty of getting quality, qualified firefighter recruits, as well as the amount of resources that are wasted by not having a standard. Rich Kent spoke against the physical fitness standard and told a personal story of physical challenges due to illness and injuries from time served in the military. Although he is physically able to fight fires better than most, his experiences would disqualify him from pursuing firefighting on a technicality. He urged the

commission to reconsider the standards and, if they must be implemented, that they are practical and considering the actual ability to perform the job.

With no more members of the public wishing to address the Commission at this time, the meeting was moved to Division of Fire Safety Activities.

#### **E. Division of Fire Safety Activities**

Director Richard Mikutsky began his report by talking about the NJDFS's participation in the Operation-7 Save-a-Life program. Staff attended the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Kickoff Breakfast in New York City on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Smoke alarms are anticipated to be received sometime in the spring. Also, on January 27<sup>th</sup> the NJDFS held a County Coordinators meeting at Middlesex County Fire Academy where all 21 coordinators were sworn in for a two-year term.

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, the NJDFS assisted with providing fire protection coverage in Plainfield and North Plainfield during the wake and funeral for the Plainfield line of duty death of Marquis Hudson. Director Mikutsky commended the NJDFS's Office of the Fire Department Preparedness for their assistance on this.

After approximately two years of meetings and preparation, on March 1<sup>st</sup> Frelinghuysen Township (Warren Co.) Fire Department began responding as their own fire department. Prior to this date, the township had been receiving fire protection from various neighboring communities. Director Mikutsky congratulated them for responding to their first call ever on March 2, 2024.

On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, a contingent from the NJ Volunteer Retention & Recruitment Task Force presented the finalized report and provided testimony to the Assembly Public Safety and Preparedness Committee. This was the first of what looks to be several requests by this committee to speak on the shortage of volunteers across the public safety arena. Also, Director Mikutsky reported Assembly Bill A-441, which would exempt 'experienced' firefighters from any training requirements has been reintroduced. The NJDFS and Training & Education Advisory Council are not in favor of this bill.

Director Mikutsky reported that, on February 5<sup>th</sup>, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) published a proposed rule revising its emergency response standard. This is the first time OSHA has revised this standard since 1980, and the public has until May 6<sup>th</sup> to provide comments. If enacted, this 321-page proposed rule could bring extreme challenges to volunteer departments. These changes will issue a new safety and health standard, titled Emergency Response, to replace the existing Fire Brigades Standard. The new standard would address a broader scope of emergency responders and would include programmatic elements to protect emergency responders from a variety of occupational hazards. It is especially important that the volunteer fire service understand how these changes would impact them. To that end, DFS has been meeting with the Department of Labor to discuss these regulation updates and their anticipated impact on the fire service. Commissioner Naylis asked about the financial impact on the

municipalities involved and whether OSHA is aware of this and Director Mikutsky answered that they are, and they will be sending data of their findings to the municipalities. Director Mikutsky said that, to this point, OSHA has not been receptive to the fire service's concerns on this. Commissioner Naylis expressed concern that most fire departments do not know this is coming and the impact it will have on them.

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, Governor Murphy announced which New Jersey fire departments will receive grants - totaling \$20 million - to help with the purchase of gear and equipment. The funds will come from the American Rescue Plan. The money will be distributed among 353 fire departments across the state. It will be used to help buy protective clothing, breathing apparatus, and other equipment. A list of the grant recipients can be found on the Department of Community Affairs website. This year's \$20 million doubled the amount earmarked for the last grant program in November 2022.

Director Mikutsky reported that the Department of Defense SERDP Project (Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program) is looking at PFAS-free technologies to treat textiles to enable them to be hydrophobic (water resistant) and oleophobic (oil-resistant), as well as being environmentally friendly.

Director Mikutsky announced some upcoming events. New Jersey Weekend will be held June 1-2 at the National Fire Academy. Registration began on February 5th at [www.keanfiresafety.com](http://www.keanfiresafety.com). The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual New Jersey FIRE Bowl is scheduled for May 23<sup>rd</sup> and will be held at Kean University's STEM Building. Also, the NJ Emergency Preparedness Conference will be April 22-26 in Atlantic City. The NJDFS will be presenting on Monday and Wednesday.

The NJDFS has a Youth Firesetting Intervention Specialist class set for April 17-18 at Monmouth County Fire Academy. It is filled with a waiting list of about a dozen people, so we are hopeful to plan another soon. This class will also be offered at New Jersey Weekend if anyone is interested in taking it there.

The 2024 New Jersey FIRE Bowl – the 17th Annual – is setting up to be the largest ever. There will be over 30 teams representing 9 cities and towns statewide. The program got underway on March 7th and will culminate with the State Championship at Kean University on May 23rd.

Director Mikutsky reported the Operation 6 and 7 Save-a-Life programs are ongoing as usual, but we are very short on alarms at this point. We anticipate getting a new shipment in late April/early May. Please be aware that fire departments that accepted alarms and agreed to provide distribution data from January 1, 2023, forward will not be receiving additional alarms without providing distribution logs. The program is not sustainable if alarms continue to be handed out with no accountability.

From the Office of Training & Certifications, Director Mikutsky reported that the Firefighter 1/2 SME group has completed updating Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations JPR skill sheets to the current NFPA 470 standard. The Academies are

delivering the updated material, reflecting the standard change. The RIC SME group will be meeting in March / April to discuss the upcoming Train the Trainers. There will be three scheduled. The first will be held in Morris County. There will be two additional, in the Central and Southern regions of the State.

The Training & Education On-line Committee continues to work on the standardization of the use of the J&B Navigate online platform. Many Academies are using it to supplement their programs. Some are using it to replace the classroom portion. T&E Chairman Nelson Wiest expressed a need for a standard use so that all programs remain the same across the state. The committee will poll the academies to develop a consensus.

Apparatus Driver and Operator train-the-trainers were successful and well attended. The program and delivery methods were well received. The driver portion of the program was recently delivered for the Carteret Fire Department; the exam is scheduled for 2/29/24. The practical testing will be conducted later. Steve Taylor from the NJDFS reported that program delivery is two parts. The NFPA 1002 Chapter 4 requirements and then the Pump portion. Once students have completed both programs, they will be eligible to apply for the Driver Operator/Pump Certification.

Over 25,000 applications for certification have been processed by the Office of Training and Certifications. They fall into the following categories:

- FF1/FF2/ARFF: 2,500+
- Hazardous Materials: 15,000+
- Incident Management: 2,600+
- Fire Officer: 200+
- Fire Official / Inspector: 1,400+
- Fire Police: 100+
- Investigator: 450+
- Instructor: 2,500+
- Contractor Certifications: 250+

These numbers will continue to increase, as the volume of receipts is still higher than previous years. There are many certifications being applied for that could have been done years ago.

Director Mikutsky also reported that the NJDFS & Kean held Hazardous Materials: WMD Awareness & Operations train-the-trainers in January to review NFPA 470, 2022 Edition. Jennifer Troup from Jones & Bartlett was the instructor. As previously reported HazMat Awareness and Operations programs have transitioned to the updated material for classes started after Jan 1, 2024. Starting January 1, 2024, on-line HMIC programs will need to provide proof of written and skills exams to be eligible for certification. Firefighter 2 equivalency exams ended on December 31, 2024. There were 53 exams administered to over 1,500 FF. The pass rate was very good.

The spring training brochure became available on February 21, 2024. Registration began March 5, 2024, at [www.keanfiresafety.com](http://www.keanfiresafety.com)

All certification applications have been updated. Director Mikutsky instructed all to discard any old applications and start using the updated forms. Only minor revisions were made. US Mail is best for Certification applications; Course Delivery Forms and Class Rosters can be emailed. As a reminder, ALL CERTIFICATIONS, must be applied for using the appropriate application. A Firefighter 1 certification will only be for Firefighter 1. It will not automatically award HazMat even though class completions were provided. The office is still backed up with data entry, Program Manager Steve Taylor is working to get caught up. Extremely large volume of items received to date.

From the Office of Fire Department Preparedness, Director Mikutsky reported that the NJDFS is meeting with the Department of Labor to discuss the upcoming OSHA rule regulations updates with the anticipated impact on the fire service. The NJDFS is also engaged with meetings at multiple fire and intelligence / security levels with state and federal partners planning for the World Cup games in 2026. Multiple New Jersey regions to be impacted with the eight scheduled games at MetLife, as well as six scheduled games in Philadelphia.

Director Mikutsky reported that the Foam Survey closed on February 28<sup>th</sup>. The next step will be for DEP to go to bid for the disposal. The reimbursement of disposed foam, which will be a NJDEP project, has an initial fund of \$250,000.00. Fire departments that disposed of foam will need to apply for a reimbursement grant from NJDEP. This process will have parameters set forth by NJDEP and the signed legislation. (This will not be a gallon for gallon reimbursement.) Total survey results are 303 fire departments reporting approximately 155,000 gallons of foam, for disposal.

Also, the NJDFS is a state agency member of the SAVER working group. This group's goal is to provide a standardized emergency response to active violent events in the state. Active shooter classes are being conducted by OFDP members with the state agencies. OFDP is also preparing for the upcoming NJEPA conference in April. NJDFS will provide seminars on the NJ Deployment Act, NJ Fire Threat Task Force, as well as the NJDFS display booth at the vendors area. There are currently 13 ongoing fire department complaint investigations-dual investigations or referrals with NJDOL/PEOSH/NJ DOH.

Director Mikutsky gave the following statistics from the NJDFS NFIRS Unit:

- Civilian Burn Reports: 87
- Total Fatal Fire Reports: 16
- Residential Fatal Fires: 12
- School Fire Reports: 14
- Electric Vehicle Fires: 1
- Lithium-Ion Battery Fires: 17 (includes 1 electric vehicle, 1 airsoft gun, 1 drone, 5 portable electronic devices, 4 power tools, 3 batteries, 2 Micro Mobility Devices-e bikes/dirt bikes)

Only 543 fire departments out of 705 (77%) fire departments have reported NFIRS for 2024 to date. A Monthly Participation Report was sent March 6, 2024, to Fire Chiefs statewide indicating same. There are 780 active USFA eNFIRS user accounts (Free NFIRS Software). This is an increase of from 235 users in November 2023.



There are three upcoming NFIRS/Fire Incident Report Writing trainings scheduled. They are as follows:

- April 6, 2024, Toms River Fire Academy
- April 7, 2024, Middlesex County Fire Academy
- April 8, 2024, Passaic County Fire Academy

Director Mikutsky reported that the NJDFS Fire Investigations / K9 Unit has a total of 170 calls to date in 2024. There have been 60 investigation responses, 10 FF injury follow-ups, and 100 incident notifications. The K9 Teams assisted Ocean County Prosecutor's Office with 3 recent vacant residential structure fires that resulted in multiple arson arrests. All cases appear unrelated. In following up on the Newark line of duty deaths, the US Coast Guard is still holding limited hearings to gathering remaining info. As far as the Plainfield line of duty death, PEOSH sent the SCBA for analysis and incident info is still being compiled.

Commissioner Blohm asked about the train-the-trainer courses that are being done and asked if they could potentially be staggered a little more. This is because there is some cost involved for the academies to send their instructors when the train-the-trainers are held. Director Mikutsky answered that he can have a conversation with the Office of Training & Certifications regarding this.

Commissioner Naylis suggested establishing a working group within the Fire Safety Commission that focuses on working with NJDFS staff on their most critical needs going forward. Commissioner Naylis spoke specifically about the challenges faced due to lack of inspections staff. He also cited several large-scale fires throughout the state in recent years that need to be examined and learned from going forward. Director Mikutsky replied by speaking about the revamped version of the Fire Act, which will be very helpful if and when the legislation is passed to adopt it. The NJDFS has also submitted a proposal to raise the hourly rate of inspectors to address some of the staffing issues.

With no additional questions raised regarding Division of Fire Safety Activities at this time, the meeting was moved to Advisory Council reports.

## **F. Advisory Council Reports:**

### **1. Codes Advisory Council**

In the absence of Commissioner Arthur Londensky, Commissioner George Aleu reported that the Codes Advisory Council met on February 21<sup>st</sup>. The minutes of that meeting are not yet available, but will be transmitted electronically once they are finished. The Code is still under review, so Commissioner Aleu did not have anything further to report at this time.

The next meeting of the Codes Advisory Council is scheduled for April 17<sup>th</sup>.

## **2. Training and Education Advisory Council**

Commissioner Charles Siedenbug reported that the Training and Education Advisory Council met on February 20<sup>th</sup> at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City in conjunction with the New Jersey State FMBA's 2024 Educational Conference. The minutes of that meeting are contained within today's meeting packets for the Commission members to review.

Commissioned Siedenbug noted that much of the Training & Education Advisory Council's report had been hashed out during Public Comment I and under NJDFS Activities. Commissioner Siedenbug commented that all firefighters should make sure that they have a number from the Relief Association.

The next meeting of the Training and Education Advisory Council is scheduled for April 16<sup>th</sup> at the Burlington County Emergency Services Training Center in Westampton.

## **3. Statistics and Information Advisory Council**

Commissioner Gerard Naylis began his report by speaking about the importance of not only submitting NFIRS data, but submitting quality data so that good decisions can be made based on the data available. Commissioner Naylis stressed that now, more than ever, the fire service needs to have comprehensive and correct information to be able to advocate and get what they need to do their job effectively.

## **4. Master Planning and Research Advisory Council**

Commissioner Raymond Heck added to Commissioner Naylis's sentiment regarding the gathering and use of fire incident data. Commissioner Heck added that the financial impact of having solid data available is significant, especially as the fire service prepares for the challenges of the future – thinking 10-15 years down the road, and beyond.

## **5. Public Education Advisory Council**

Commissioner Paul McGrath reported that the last meeting of the Public Education Advisory Council was held at Union County Fire Academy on March 13<sup>th</sup>. The minutes of that meeting have been submitted into today's meeting packets for the Commission members to review.

Commissioner McGrath spoke about the main topic that the Public Education Advisory Council is focused on, which is lithium-ion batteries. Commissioner McGrath said the Council is working on unified messaging on this issue – a hazard which is growing by the day – so that the fire service can give clear and consistent information to the public. They are focusing on UL's "Take Charge of Battery Safety" initiative and will continue to share this resource via their various channels.

Commissioner McGrath added that the Public Education Advisory Council is still looking to add members, so anyone interested can contact him for more information. The next meeting of the Public Education Advisory Council will be held at Union County Fire Academy on May 9<sup>th</sup> at 10am.

#### **6. Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council**

Commissioner Richard Blohm reported that the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council met on January 30<sup>th</sup> at Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville. The minutes of that meeting are contained in today's meeting packets for the Commission members to review.

Commissioner Blohm spoke about the increase of staff at the Department of Labor, with Jim Revar being promoted to Assistant Director. They now have a total of nine compliance officers with the possibility of two more. Also, on February 1<sup>st</sup> the new OSHA 300 log is supposed to be posted for 2024. The Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council also discussed what would be considered a reportable injury and the OSHA 300 logging procedures.

The next meeting of the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council is scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Middlesex County Fire Academy.

Edward Fox from the Elizabeth Fire Department asked if the Firefighter Safety and Health Advisory Council would be reviewing the minimum physical fitness standard document that was debated earlier under Public Comment I. Mr. Fox spoke in favor of some kind of standard, as that is the future of having a healthy and effective fire service. Mr. Fox offered his services if a committee could be formed to look into this matter further. Commissioner Blohm answered that his fear is that, if and when this is done for entry-level firefighter, that will be a gateway to retesting all firefighters on physical agility, etc. Commissioner Blohm added that he would be glad to work with the Commission members and all the organizations they represent on working towards bettering the health and safety of firefighters throughout New Jersey – both career and volunteer alike.

#### **7. Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council**

Chairman Kevin Krushinski reported that the Youth Firesetter Prevention Advisory Council met on March 14<sup>th</sup> at Monmouth County Fire Academy in Freehold. The minutes of that meeting are contained in today's meeting packets for the Commission members to review.

Chairman Krushinski reported that the upcoming Youth Firesetting Intervention Specialist class scheduled for April 17-18 at Monmouth County Fire Academy reached its maximum number of students (24) and has a waiting list in case of cancellations.

The Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council expressed concerns about current drafts of pending State legislation, specifically Senate Bill S1319 (session 2024-2025, last session A5169

& S3911) which excludes the application of delinquency charges and the intervention of the Family Court for youth under the age of fourteen (14) years. The Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council have strong concerns regarding the elimination of Family Court involvement for youth under the age of fourteen (14) years who engage in dangerous firesetting behavior. Chairman Krushinski made a motion that a letter from the NJ Fire Safety Commission addressing these concerns be sent to all members of the State legislature. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Naylis and passed unanimously. Chairman Krushinski agreed to work with Secretary Charles Lavin on composing and sending the letter.

In lieu of their May meeting, the Youth Firesetting Prevention Advisory Council is set to host (along with the NJDFS and Mercer County Program) a Seminar on County Youth Firesetting Intervention Programs. This will be held on May 8<sup>th</sup> in Princeton at 9:30am.

## **G. Committee Reports**

### **1. Residential Sprinkler Committee**

Commissioner Gerard Naylis stated that there is no formal report to be given at this time.

### **2. Ad-Hoc Committee on Legislation**

No report.

### **3. NJ Statewide Utility Safety Team**

In the absence of Commissioner Steve O’Gorman, no report was available at this time.

### **4. Cannabis Committee**

There was no official report from the Cannabis Committee available at this time.

## **H. Old Business**

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone had any Old Business to bring before the Commission. State Fire Marshal Mikutsky reported that the NJDFS met with the Sate Commission on Cannabis and made a number of recommendations to them. They are currently awaiting response to those recommendations.

With no further Old Business to be discussed at this time, the meeting was moved to New Business.

## **I. New Business**

Chairman Krushinski took the opportunity to thank Commissioner Richard Blohm and his staff at the Bergen County Fire Academy for hosting today’s meeting and providing coffee and refreshments.

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone had any New Business to bring before the Commission. There being no additional New Business to conduct at this time, the meeting was moved to Public Comment II.

**J. Public Comment II**

Chairman Krushinski asked if anyone from the public wished to comment at this time. Joe Vallo spoke once again in reference to the earlier discussion on the minimum physical fitness standards document. Mr. Vallo expressed that they are trying to follow established guidelines and collaborate with a number of organizations and agencies in working on these possible standards. Again, Mr. Vallo stressed that the overarching goal is to ensure that everyone goes home and that firefighters live long, healthy lives. Scott Russo from Ridgefield asked if there was representation of the Volunteer Fire Service on the Fire Safety Commission and Chairman Krushinski answered that he was the representative. Mr. Russo urged him to examine this issue from a volunteer perspective and come out against the minimum physical fitness standards. Edward Fox from Elizabeth Fire Department again spoke in support of Mr. Vallo’s comments and reiterated the need these standards because of the physical nature of the job. Mr. Fox, speaking as a current career and former volunteer firefighter, spoke about the standards being needs to change the culture of the fire service for everyone’s benefit.

Glenn Corbett spoke about the proposal made earlier by Commissioner Naylis to establish a committee that would hone in on some specific challenges facing New Jersey’s fire service and the NJDFS. He felt this was a great idea and urged the Commission to move forward on this. Ken Schulz from Wood Ridge echoed this sentiment and added that the committee should be looking closely at large-loss fires – particular in terms of the cost, impact, long-term effects, etc. Mr. Corbett also expressed concern about the new NERIS fire incident reporting system that is coming soon from USFA. He spoke about its potential negative impacts of replacing the current NFIRS 5.0 system.

**K. Adjournment**

With no further discussion requested, Chairman Kevin Krushinski called for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner George Aleu made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Gerard Naylis and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:09 PM.

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