

Members:

Larry J. Straitiff, Chairman
Robert Billingsley
Hon. Lawrence F. Clark, Jr.
Marshall R. Davis
William R. Erickson, Jr.
Lieut. David Howells
R. Scott Schlechter
Keith B. Snyder
Hon. William F. Ward



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May 25, 2001

A meeting of the County Probation and Parole Officers' Firearm Education and Training Commission convened at 9:00 AM on May 25, 2001 at the Holiday Inn East, Harrisburg PA. The following Commission members and guests were present:

Larry J. Straitiff, Chairman
Robert Billingsley
Marshall Davis
Lt. David M. Howells
Keith B. Snyder
Chester A. Kope, Executive Director

Dan Klarsch, Administrative Officer
Ron Copenhaver, Administrative Advisor
Gary Scicchitano (PBPP)
Linda Laub, Legal Advisor
Gregory Young, (Guest) JCJC
Keith Gebler, (Guest) Temple University

I. Commissioner Straitiff called the meeting to order. He requested that a motion be made to accept the minutes from the March 20, 2001 meeting.

MOTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Straitiff to accept the minutes of March 20, 2001. Commissioner Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken and unanimously approved by the Commission.

II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mr. Kope reported that on May 24, 2001 he, along with Linda Laub and Dan Klarsch, attended a meeting at Fort Indiantown Gap (FITG) with Col. Joseph Laneski, Garrison Commander, and several of his staff. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of entering into an agreement to improve an existing range, or build a new police pistol range, for Commission training activities. Colonel Laneski was receptive to this idea, however he did emphasize that under no circumstances would he be willing to turn over FITG property to another agency. Mr. Kope responded that it was not our intention to acquire property, just an agreement to improve and/or use a range. The Colonel recommended that the Commission develop a generic plan and agreement and submit it to him for review. Mr. Kope agreed to do this, and concluded the meeting.

Chairman Straitiff issued a directive that a draft plan and agreement be developed for FITG and all other possible agencies with whom the Commission may wish to explore such an agreement. The other agencies currently contacted include the Dauphin Co. Commissioners and the PA Game Commission.

Mr. Kope provided three (3) applications for approval to become certified firearms instructors. The first was for Richard Worley of the Dauphin Co. Adult Probation Dept. Mr. Kope recommended approval. The Commissioners reviewed the application.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve this application. Chairman Straitiff seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

The second application was for Norman Mueller of the Westmoreland Co. Juvenile Probation Dept. Mr. Kope recommended approval. The Commissioners reviewed the application.

MOTION: Commissioner Snyder made a motion to approve this application. Commissioner Billingsley seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

The third application was for Robert Hakel of the Westmoreland Co. Juvenile Park Police. Mr. Kope recommended disapproval, citing no record of this applicant having provided training in the past year, as required by the Commission. The Commissioners reviewed the application.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis made a motion to table the application until the applicant has an opportunity to provide more training. Commissioner Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

Mr. Kope presented a Sample Court Order prepared for President Judges to sign authorizing their county probation officers to carry firearms. This was in response to a motion from the March 20, 2001 meeting that some written authorization is needed from the President Judge for county probation officers to carry firearms. After a discussion it was decided that the statement on the basic training and requalification applications, that indicates that the court authorizes (chief's signature) probation officers to carry, be enhanced to further clarify the authorization. It was decided that in future letters to chiefs, a recommendation be made that a Court Order be obtained, but that it would not be a requirement. It was also decided that no further formal review of this was needed prior to implementing it.

Mr. Kope presented a letter sent to the Honorable John D. Payne, Chairman of the Dauphin County Commissioners, requesting a meeting to discuss entering into an agreement to improve or build a range. Mr. Kope will contact the Commissioners to set up an appointment, and will supply them with a copy of the draft plan and agreement being developed for prospective agencies.

Mr. Kope discussed the 18th and 19th Basic Firearms Training Academies that were held in April and May. He also discussed the fact that any officer determined to be unsafe by the Range Master and line instructors were sent home. After a discussion, a "failure" was defined as any student who did not complete the training, including failing the Course of Fire. The policy for failing due to safety concerns was discussed, including efforts made during the training, as well as remedial training, to address and correct any problems before a student was sent home. The policy for students who fail to report for training (failure) was also discussed.

The Student Evaluation Summaries from the 18th and 19th Basic Firearms Training Academies were presented to all Commissioners. After review it was recommended that any parts of the training that were not favorably reviewed by the students on a consistent basis be looked at and steps taken to improve those areas.

Mr. Kope presented a revised version of Page 1 of the Pistol/Revolver Questionnaire. Language was added, as well as sign-offs for the probation officer (PO) and certified firearms instructor, to help ensure firearm familiarity on the POs part prior to attending Basic Training. The statement about criminal penalties for supplying false information was discussed. Ms. Linda Laub, Legal Counsel, questioned whether it was enforceable and suggested that civil penalties language be added as well. It was directed that civil penalties language be added to all forms that require this type of sign-off.

Mr. Kope provided the current list of applicants for the September 2001 Basic Firearms Training Academy. He informed the Commission that due to the large number of applicants, it was necessary to schedule two (2) range sessions (21st & 22nd Basic Firearms Training Academy), instead of the single range portion initially scheduled. All of the applicants will attend a single classroom portion of the training as originally scheduled for the 21st Basic Training.

Mr. Kope provided the Commissioners with a copy of a letter that was sent by Mr. James Anderson, Executive Director of the Juvenile Court Judges Commission (JCJC), to Mr. Mark Navarro, Deputy Director for Boards and Commissions recommending that Mr. Gregory Young be appointed to the Commission replacing Commissioner Keith Snyder, whose term expired on May 8, 2001. A discussion followed regarding expiration dates for all of the Commissioners and the need to re-apply if an expiration date is nearing and the Commissioner wishes to remain on the Commission

Program Evaluation Summaries for the two (2) Train the Trainer Conferences (March 22-23 & March 29-30, 2001) were presented and reviewed. Evaluation comments were generally positive and encouraged the Commission to continue this conference on an annual basis.

Mr. Kope provided the Budget Request and Draft Budget for fiscal year 2001-02. A discussion followed about the reserve funds and the restricted status of the funds. He also stated that he is taking steps to make the Administrative Officer I position a permanent position. It is currently Limited Term.

Mr. Kope showed a set of electronic hearing protectors to the Commissioners and recommended that the Commission purchase twelve (12) sets for the Firearms Instructors to use at Basic Trainings.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis made a motion that the Commission approves the purchase of the electronic hearing protectors. Commissioner Straitiff seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

Mr. Kope provided a copy of a letter sent recently to all Chief Probation Officers in counties that carry firearms notifying them of the In-Service Firearms Training to be conducted over the next two (2) years by Temple University, the contractor for the training. He introduced Mr. Keith Gebler of Temple University, who provided an update regarding the status of the program. He provided copies of the In-Service Training forms and the curriculum. Concern was raised about using the officers' Social Security Numbers (SSN) on the forms. After a brief discussion, the Commission decided it wants the contractor to use the Commission Certification Numbers in their place of the SSN. The Executive Director must approve all forms used by the contractor. In addition, all certified firearms that the contractor wants to use and are not in the In-Service Firearms Training contract must be approved by the Commission. A discussion about the ranges proposed by Temple University to be used for the trainings, as well as their proximity to classrooms (within 15 minutes), was addressed.

At approximately 12:00 PM, the Commission went into an Executive Session to discuss Temple University's contracted employee. This session concluded at 12:30 PM, and the Public Session resumed.

MOTION: Commissioner Snyder made a motion to approve the use of Scotia Range for the In-Service Training if a classroom facility is available within 15 minutes driving time. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis made a motion to approve the use of the Gem City Gun Club Range in Erie County for the In-Service Training. Commissioner Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

MOTION: Commissioner Billingsley made a motion to approve the use of the Twin Rivers Council of Governments Range in Allegheny County for the In-Service Training. Commissioner Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

MOTION: Commissioner Davis made a motion to disapprove the use of Shrimersville Recreation Center Indoor Range for the In-Service Training, unless the range is inspected and approved by the Executive Director. Commissioner Snyder seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved. Commissioner Howells abstained.

MOTION: Commissioner Snyder made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to approve ranges and dates, submitted between today and the next Commission meeting on July 17, 2001, for the In-Service Training. Commissioner Billingsley seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

In a general discussion, it was again emphasized that Commission Certification Numbers, not the SSN, should be used on the In-Service Firearms Training Forms, and that Temple University needs Commission approval for the instructors they propose to use for the trainings. It was suggested that they use Commission certified firearms instructors.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE

Mr. Kope gave everyone a copy of the financial report as of May 22, 2001, showing a balance of \$767,710.89.

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

V. NEW BUSINESS

There was no additional new business.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS

There were no public comments or questions.

VIII. LEGAL ISSUES

There were no additional legal issues.

IX. ADJOURN MEETING

Discussion about the date for the next meeting, July 13, 2001, was discussed.

MOTION: Commissioner Billingsley made a motion that the meeting date for the next Commission Meeting be changed to July 17, 2001. The location would still be the Ramada Inn, State College, PA. Chairman Davis seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was approved.

Chairman Straitiff adjourned the meeting.