

September/October 2007

Mayor Appoints Fire Review Panel

Implementation and factors that impede reform are part of third study

Mayor Menino appointed a three-member panel on October 10, 2007 to review the policies and procedures of the Boston Fire Department. This marks the third time since 1994 that the Mayor requested an assessment of the Fire Department. An analysis of what factors impeded the implementation of key recommendations of the prior two studies is an important aspect of this year's review.

The Mayor's charge to the Review Panel is of three equally important issues. They are:

- Departmental supervision and accountability
- Personnel and Human Services
- Substance Abuse and Impairment

Drug Testing - One expected recommendation from the Review Panel is that the firefighters should be subject to mandatory random drug testing as Boston's police officers have been since 1999. Drug testing for firefighters was a recommendation of the O'Toole Commission in 2000. However, can mandatory drug testing be achieved in current negotiations with the International Association of Firefighters, Local 718? The City's new health insurance agreement and changes in firefighter sick leave practices also should be in the contract.

After protracted and unproductive negotiations over 16 months with Local 718, city officials requested that the Joint Labor Management Commission take jurisdiction and bring the case to binding arbitration. The JLMC has yet to act on this request, but there

is no guarantee that drug testing would be included as part of a decision by the JLMC.

Both parties could negotiate over drug testing outside of the arbitration process but at what price? The new contract should be negotiated within the 14% compensation increase agreed to by the police this year. The police accepted enhanced drug testing in this contract.

The broader issue is why is it not in the best interest of the state to require by legislation that all state and local uniformed public safety personnel undergo mandatory random drug testing and exempt drug testing from collective bargaining?

Review Panel - The three members have begun meeting and will present a preliminary report by December 1. They are:

- Sheila Chapman, M.D., Associate Professor of Medicine at Boston University and a specialist in substance abuse and addition medicine.
- James Shannon is President of the National Fire Protection Association. He is a former Congressman and Attorney General of Massachusetts.
- Craig Coy is President and Chief Operating Officer of L-3 Homeland Security Group. He is the former Director of Massport.

For more information about the Bureau's view of the Fire Review Panel, [click here](#).