

Emergency Services Advisory Council  
August 21 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Michael Guerin, Michael Robinson, JJ Lynott, Dan Plunkert, Rick Baker, Tim Legore, Michael Karolenko, Robert Ruch, George Wentz, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, Blane Wright, Scott Dickson

Members Absent: Brett Six, David Coe, Joe Brown

Guest: Captain Max Nickey (DFEMS), Deputy Chief Paul Supko (DFEMS), Chief Andrew Wooden (Reese), 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Leon Fleming (CCVESA)

Chairman Baker opened the meeting at 19:00 with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chief Robinson introduced Deputy Chief of Operations, Paul Supko (DFEMS).

Chief Andrew Wooden was presented with a certificate from Chief Robinson and a letter from Chairman Baker thanking him for his service on ESAC.

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson reported that by October 1, the \$320k provided to CCVESA by the Commissioners will likely be spent. DFEMS will fund the corporation positions (EMS staff and 50 hours per week for FADOs) at the remaining stations until DFEMS is able to staff those stations.

-FY26 capital budget requests are due Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>. This includes our SCBA replacement project.

-FY26 budget priorities include upgrading the ALS chase medics to Lieutenants, restoring the 12 floater positions that were cut for FY25 and adding two Training Lieutenant positions.

-Chief Robinson is working with budget to decide how approximately \$5 million in EMS billing revenue will be spent.

- Chief Robinson is awaiting direction from county leadership regarding whether we will apply for a SAFER or AFG grant.

-Chief Robinson gave an update on the hiring process. DFEMS began staffing Gamber on August 1<sup>st</sup>. He hopes to staff Pleasant Valley by the end of September.

-The incident reporting software (ESO) purchase will go before the Commissioners in tomorrow's open session. The purchase of the asset module is still being discussed and has been controversial.

- Chief Robinson discussed issues with the annual physicals for career personnel and volunteers.
- DFEMS will host this year's 9-11 Ceremony at the training center.
- DFEMS is moving forward with creation of a commendations board and honor guard.

Chairman Baker asked that ESAC members let him know if they are interested in serving on the commendations board. Recommendations need to be submitted to Chief Robinson by October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Commissioner's Report: Nothing to report.

Medical Director's Report:

- Dr. Kemp reported that all new hire EMTs and several current EMTs are being trained as IV Technicians (IVTs).
- Dr. Kemp discussed ways to expand the skills of clinicals in the field including partnering with UMBC on critical care, looking into a rapid sequence intubation (RSI) program and whole blood program.
- A social media post was published with information on donating oxygen masks for animals.
- September's Continuing Education topic is sports injuries.
- In October we will be partnering with the Sheriff's Dept. on crime scene preservation.
- Dr. Kemp was approached by the Sheriff's Dept. regarding EMR for new hires.

CCVESA President's Report:

- George Wentz reported that the EST class has been moved to January. They currently have 9 students and need 10. The class has not been cancelled.
- Josh Shaffer has resigned as the Training Center Coordinator and the position has been posted.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS – Not present

FROPS

- Tim Legore reported that FROPS has not yet met this month.

- Ivan Browning resigned as hazmat core leader.
- FROPS has approved the respiratory policy.

### Old Business:

- Statistics
  - Chairman Baker reviewed incident statistics put together by Data Analyst, Katie Spurrier. Mutual Aid given or dispatched by Carroll ECC numbers are now included. Figures are accurate within 1 or 2 calls.
  - Incoming mutual aid calls are difficult to capture because of the way dispatch inputs the information. This issue will be fixed once we switch to ESO.
  - Please continue to let Katie know if there are discrepancies in the numbers.
- FY26 Budget
  - Chairman Baker discussed setting up a meeting with the Board of Commissioners and ESAC.
  - There are 18 new positions being requested for FY26 (2 training lieutenants, 12 EMS supervisor upgrades, 4 safety officers).
  - Also requesting the 12 floater positions that were cut in FY25.
  - Justifications for the positions: Gets us to the baseline of the previous plan, decreases overtime, decreases holdovers and improves work-life balance for employees which will improve recruitment/retention. More work needs to be done on the justifications before they are presented to the Commissioners.
  - Chief Robinson stated that without built in step increases or merit increases we will be at a staffing crisis within 3 years.
  - Mike Karolenko feels that we need to leverage the data we have from ERS to justify what we have now and what we need. He expressed concern over the lack of manpower on fire calls. ESAC understands the concern, but we need to ensure we get stations filled first with the required manpower to meet current staffing requirements.
  - Chairman Baker stated there are issues with how the data is entered in ERS and some companies are months behind in entering data. Once we start with ESO, we will need to train people on how to enter

the data accurate. A policy for inputting the data needs to be written as well as train-the-trainer classes before we switch over to ESO.

- The EMS lieutenants will be beneficial from a risk management perspective as well as providing a career ladder and checks and balances.
- Dr. Kemp commented that physical oversight is necessary for the skill opportunities we are offering people.

### New Business

- Reese Brush Truck Request
  - Chief Andrew Wooden presented rationale for Reese Volunteer Fire Company reestablishing their previous brush truck service. This would be an addition to the fleet, not a replacement.
  - The previous brush truck was sold as part of the procurement of Engine 92.
  - Reese hopes to purchase a brush truck that is being sold by Upperco Volunteer Fire Company.
  - Dan Plunkert feels this issue should go to FROPS first.

JJ Lynott made a motion to recommend the approval of the brush truck purchase to Chief Robinson. Blane Wright seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

### Action Items:

1. Rick Baker will send an email to Roberta's office about setting up a joint ESAC/BOC meeting.
2. Chief Robinson will write a letter to Reese regarding approval of their apparatus request.

JJ Lynott made a motion to adjourn. Dan Plunkert seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:16.



## Report to ESAC

August 21, 2024

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Since our last meeting, I have been focused in multiple areas with prioritization of our budget process and continuation on our personnel recruitment and hiring. We are making slow but steady progress with our hiring and with the implementation of our new Deputy Chief-Operations position we are moving forward in many areas. My report is below, and I will discuss the highlights and answer any questions.

**Congratulations:** To Deputy Chief Paul Supko who joins us here tonight. Paul has been on board for a few weeks and is very engaged learning our system and most importantly the people on all levels who make up DFEMS. Welcome to Chief Supko!

**Budget:** The process is now complete, and we have a total budget of \$33,688,170. This is all inclusive of funding for Fire & EMS and includes LOSAP and CCVESA. Our focus has been on two fronts the first of which has been the 72 positions from the finalized 2023 staffing plan which will provide for 28 FADOs, 28 FF/EMTs and 24 PM or FF/PMs for FY-25. 72 of these positions are newly budgeted and we will utilize 12 of our funded 24 floaters to offset the difference. Currently we have staffed Hampstead, Winfield and Gamber from those funds and we anticipate staffing Pleasant Valley by the end of September.

I have met with the treasurer of CCVESA, and she has provided me with data that suggests that beginning on October 1 the \$320K that was budgeted for the remaining volunteer stations will be fully expended. I have met with our budget analyst and as needed we will fund the remaining corporate positions from our budget until we have hired the positions to staff the remaining stations. This will assure EMS staffing and 50 hrs. of FADO staffing for what will likely be three remaining companies. We will be developing a distribution process, and the billing money will be retained by those VFCs until we are able to staff them.

**FY-26 Budget:** We have begun work for next years budget and the CIP (capital) budget is due by September 3, 2024. We are working with our budget analyst with weekly meetings to look at where we are and where we might go with the next fiscal year. ESAC has made some suggestions, and our priority is to upgrade the ALS chase medics to lieutenant level to allow for supervision. Our next priority is to restore the 12 lost floater positions and to establish staffing in the form of two training lieutenants assigned to the PSTC. We are also exploring additional EMS equipment. There is also consideration to apply for an AFG or SAFER grant and that will require a lot of work, so I am awaiting approval to move forward on that before investing too much time into a significant process. More to follow on the budget once we have better clarity on revenues that will drive our direction.

**Staffing:** We are currently in the hiring process and on boarding of some recently hired personnel. We had seven (7) additional personnel that began on August 15, and they will finish

their training in the next week and at this time they will fill vacancies that are in the existing stations. This will allow us to cut back on overtime staffing which has led to multiple instances of needing to use mandatory holdovers to staff stations. We began staffing Gamber on August 1 and were able to maintain them as an ALS unit. We are currently processing 18 personnel for a September 12 hire date and will be administering our written test again with at least 10 candidates. We still have at least 30 vacancies for all positions.

Our goal is to staff Pleasant Valley sometime in September and we are moving quickly but must follow our process which now includes a two-week orientation/training process. The volume of ALS units that are going out of jurisdiction is being looked at. We will be training our new FF/EMT hires as IV technicians, and we will be allowing EMTs to do 12 lead ECGs in the field. This will lessen our scene time and absorb some of the impact of not being able to staff all ALS. We are evaluating our EMS data daily to look at some alternatives to our ALS staffing. This could include a fourth ALS chase unit on at least a temporary basis if there is an identified need.

**Shift Commanders:** We will be conducting a promotional process next Monday and Tuesday for two shift commander vacancies. We have 5 candidates for the positions, and we will be utilizing an assessment center format and using outside evaluators. This is an internal position only. The promotions will be effective with the first 28-day cycle pay period in September and that will add two additional FF/PM vacancies to be filled.

**Field Supervision:** Chief Supko is working on the plan to have the station lieutenants to provide administrative oversight for their adjacent stations. This will include leave administration, discipline and other administrative areas specific to our employees. The shift commanders will make up the difference although they will now have 55 on each shift for a total of 220 field personnel and 12 staff personnel or 232 total budgeted positions.

**Incident Reporting:** We have a committee which has been diligently working to replace our current ERS reporting with ESO who has bought out the ERS provider. Tomorrow we will go before the commissioners for the approval of funding to move forward on our incident reporting project with ESO as the vendor. Once the software is received it will take 6-9 months to do the training and implementation and we will cut over to the new system by late 2025.

**SOPs:** We are continuing in our process with FROPs and ESAC to move forward with our operational SOPs. The prior CCVESA approved SOPs where applicable will become part of the DFEMS SOPs. Both ESAC and FROPS continue to work along with DFEMS and are working collaboratively to move this forward. The previously approved communications policy had some issues and is being reworked via FROPS. There are several additional SOPs for review/approval tonight. Chief Brothers will work with each station to assure compliance with all areas of MOSH requirements. He recently met with VFIS, and they are planning a site visit/inspection with Hampstead next month.

**Vehicles/procurement:** We have received the new vehicle (Tahoe) for the Deputy Chief and Chief Zaney will also be moving to a Tahoe and will provide additional EMS coverage while on duty. We are moving quickly on the FY-25 units x2 and will allow these to go to competitive bid. Our four Horton ambulances/Ford F-550s are on the assembly line and we expect delivery by late

October. We will be doing an inspection trip to Horton on October 8. Since Gamber cancelled their ambulance order we have an opportunity to take over the contract and use our specifications which would allow us to have a new unit by Spring. Horton has offered a similar opportunity. We are finalizing our specs and in discussions with several dealers/manufacturers. Pending commissioner approval next week, we will be ordering a 5<sup>th</sup> Horton based on our current spec. We are also looking at our ability to expend some of our EMS billing revenue and add additional medic units as our current reserve fleet and several volunteer units are having mechanical issues and we must address the limited life span that remains on several units.

Our greatest challenge is having enough reserve cars available as we will now have 6 Tahoes, 3 Explorers and three reserves in our fleet as well as 9 medic units by early 2025.

We have now received all five of our Tahoe chase vehicles and are now rotating them back to the upfitters for some warranty and modification issues. These vehicles have been a challenge regarding the upfitters and that will be taken into consideration. We also have our logistics van placed in service and the graphics are complete. Our next challenge is to consider replacement of the reserve engine which is nearing the end of its life cycle. A new replacement reserve will cost around \$800,000 or greater.

**EMS Billing:** We are doing well with our EMS billing revenues. We are asked all remaining companies to join our billing as of July 1, 2024. We will transition the billing of the remaining VFCs as they come on board with DFEMS staffing. Until that occurs, they will continue to receive their revenue and we will need to manage all billing. Please contact Amy or Jennifer our billing technicians to coordinate. You will still continue to receive revenues from your previous billing companies and joining with us now you will continue to receive your revenues until our staffing of your station begins.

In our first year of billing with only six stations we brought in \$4.3 million in revenues and will recoup about \$1 million additional in uncollected billing and reimbursement for Medicaid (state medical assistance) We are expecting as high as \$8 million for the current year. I am currently working with the administration to develop guidelines for investment of these funds for EMS enhancement to include medic units, electronics, stretchers, ventilators and other EMS related equipment. We will also use these funds for advanced training and continuing education for our providers both career and volunteer. We have ordered 10 of the new model Lifepak 35s to begin an attritional replacement for our cardiac monitors which are at the end of their life cycle.

**Volunteer Backgrounds:** These are not progressing at the rate we anticipated, and Callie is working to answer some questions as we develop a related SOP that will address some issues. These are still considered essential to assure safety and quality among volunteer membership.

**Annual Physicals:** We recently met with Carroll Occupational health to create equity between the career v. the volunteer annual 1582 physicals. These should be the same with the exception of career nicotine testing. Chief Brothers and Susan Mott of CCVESA recently met with Dr. Mann and his staff at Carroll Occupational Health (COH) and we are working to address several identified issues. In the future there will be only one physical for career and volunteer personnel.

**911 Ceremony of Remembrance:** DFEMS will be coordinating this event which will be brief but meaningful on Wednesday 9/11/24. The time is being determined and all ESAC members are invited to the memorial site outside of the PSTC to attend the ceremony. Invitations will be forthcoming.

**New Initiatives:** two general orders were sent out yesterday to begin two new initiatives within the department. The first is the formation of an Honor Guard Unit. This will be open to both career and volunteer members. It will be used to represent the department at official DFEMS, and outside ceremonies and we have funding for start-up in our current budget. Once the members are selected there will be a training period, selection of a commander and procurement of related equipment. This is anticipated to take approximately six months.

Our other initiative is to form a Commendations Board. This group will be a 5-person board with representation from: ESAC, CCVESA, IAFF, FROPS, and a DFEMS employee. A chair will be elected internally, and this group will develop award types, criteria and design of both heroic as well as merit awards. An SOP will then be drafted, and the goal will be to begin an annual awards cycle based on the calendar year. This group will not supplant company level, chamber of commerce or other awards but will standardize DFEMS awards with an independent group to investigate and validate these awards. ESAC will need to appoint a rep and will also be reviewing the operational SOP for the board.

**Personal:** I will be undergoing surgery for a total hip replacement (my second) to complete the set on August 29. I will be out for about two weeks recovering and DC Supko will be in an acting capacity. I will be working from home after a few days to allow for my recovery. It's tough getting old!

**New business:** We will discuss our strategic direction moving forward and will get into more detail during our meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Chief Michael W. Robinson*