

Emergency Services Advisory Council
March 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Michael Robinson, Michael Guerin, Rick Baker, JJ Lynott, Tim Legore, Michael Karolenko, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, Robert Ruch (virtual), Blane Wright, Scott Dickson, Brett Six (virtual, joined 19:30), David Coe, Joe Brown, George Wentz

Members Absent: Dan Plunkert

Guests: Jim Mora- President, Pleasant Valley VFC, Melissa Long- DFEMS Data Analyst

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

David Coe made a motion to approve the February meeting minutes. Blane Wright seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments:

Chairman Baker reminded the group of those whose terms will be expiring in June (Dan Plunkert, Brett Six and Blane Wright). Jim Mora is considering taking over Dan Plunkert's role.

JJ Lynott commented that CCVESA held a successful Junior Day at the Gamber fire station last weekend with 70 kids in attendance.

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-DFEMS began staffing station 7 (Lineboro) and station 8 (Union Bridge) on Thursday, February 27th.

-DFEMS has 207 of the 220 approved positions filled with 13 vacancies remaining.

-Chief Robinson will go before the BOC on Tuesday, March 25th for agency hearings to discuss his request for a 3rd new ambulance for FY26.

-He is concerned about the county's overtime projection being short by several million and with how EMS billing revenue is being utilized.

-Chief Robinson is requesting that the word "man" no longer be used in radio transmissions, but to use "staffing" instead.

Commissioner's Report:

-Commissioner Guerin reported that the BOC, Human Resources and representatives from both fire/EMS and law enforcement put together improvements to the disability and death benefit package offered to public safety employees. He hopes this will make the county more enticing to candidates. Thank you to Lt. Karolenko and the other reps for their constructive thoughts and ideas.

CCVESA President's Report:

-George Wentz reported that CCVESA is looking over the MOU and has requested responses from the stations.

-Two members have been recognized for 50 years of service – Rick Baker and Pat Boone. Both joined the Winfield & Community Volunteer Fire Department, March 1975.

Medical Director's Report:

-Dr. Kemp/DFEMS is meeting with Carroll Hospital Center tomorrow, March 20th. They will be notifying the hospital of their intention to use the Direct to Triage Protocol and discuss a forced offload policy. Hospital wait times have been climbing with units sitting for as long as five hours.

-Dr. Kemp reported that the chase cars will soon carry ultrasound equipment. The training is on the Learning Management System and a hands-on training is scheduled for April 3rd.

-The whole blood program equipment was approved by the BOC and has been ordered. Starting out we will receive blood from the Inova Health System Blood Bank but may be able to switch to a closer source eventually. The hope is to have blood in the field by May, depending on when equipment arrives.

-Dr. Kemp announced that ALS skills sessions have wrapped up. They are coordinating makeups for four people.

-Several Continuing Education sessions are planned including Cardiac Arrest Dispatch on April 1st, review of a postpartum hemorrhage case in May, and a combined virtual/in-person session on drowning in June.

-An all-day dive medicine training has been scheduled for June 28th. It is open to career and volunteer medics, including those in Frederick if space allows.

Dr. Kemp reported that there have been several high acuity calls and some really great saves recently.

Joe Brown commented that the quality of care in the county has increased 100% in the past 2-3 years. Providers are engaged, asking questions, practicing new skills and saving lives.

JJ Lynott stated that there are currently a lot of young providers that want to learn.

Chairman Baker asked how we can get some positive new stories out there. Chief Robinson stated that photos/info can be sent to Callie Williams to be posted on social media. Dr. Kemp stated that there are many EMS successes, but they are HIPAA protected, so sharing is difficult.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS – David Coe reported that EMSOPS approved the controlled substance policy which had previously gone out under a General Order.

FROPS – Tim Legore reported that FROPS had good discussions on the policies that have been sent out recently.

-They also discussed the apparatus approvals.

-FROPS discussed Silver Oak Academy and making sure all related policies are up-to-date.

-Winfield VFC is hosting a rural water supply drill on April 5-6. 60-70 people have RSVPed.

Old Business:

- Discussion and voting on policies.
 - Chairman Baker shared that Chief Supko is working on reformatting all the policies.
 - Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVO) Policy
 - Section 9, eliminate the line “
 - All personnel involved in the accident must submit to drug and alcohol testing as per CCDFEMS policy”. Only the operator is to be tested.
 - Michael Karolenko made a motion to approve the policy with the correction. David Coe seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
 - Accident Review Committee Policy

- JJ Lynott made a motion to approve the policy. David Coe seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
 - Gas Emergencies
 - Michael Karolenko made a motion to approve the policy. Tim Legore seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
 - Volunteer Background Check Policy
 - There were no additional comments from CCVESA.
 - The effective date is April 1, 2025.
 - David Coe made a motion to approve the policy. JJ Lynott seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- FY26 Budget Discussions
 - EMS Billing Money
 - Chairman Baker brought up how EMS billing revenue is being used to pay for salaries.
 - Salaries were assigned to the EMS billing fund retroactively for FY25 and the same is planned for FY26.
 - Chief Robinson has requested three new ambulances, but only two are being recommended in the budget. EMS billing money could be used to cover the third.
 - Chief Robinson and Chairman Baker expressed that the Chief should have some leeway on how the EMS billing money is spent and a certain percentage should be set aside for enhancements and/or unexpected expenses. For example, funds could be needed to implement protocol changes.
 - Overtime
 - The Budget Office has not accurately accounted for the overtime needs of the department. Only 1.3 million is budgeted which is 2 million short.
 - Chief Robinson was not consulted by Budget on the cost of overtime.
 - Chief Robinson is attending agency hearings on Tuesday, March 25th to discuss his request for a third new ambulance for FY26.
 - Commission Guerin clarified the main issues with the FY26 budget for DFEMS:
 - 2.5 million budget reduction
 - Incorrect overtime amount budgeted
 - Use of EMS billing money
 - Third ambulance not approved

- He encouraged people to share their opinions by writing to their Commissioners.
- Chief Robinson stated that the amount anticipated from the ESPP money has been reduced.
- Chairman Baker emphasized the need for data to justify and make improvements to the system.
- JJ Lynott feels that the FY26 budget could have a cascading effect, resulting in people leaving employment and catastrophic staffing levels, which will in turn cause even more to leave.
- Tim Legore emphasized the need to make sure the volunteers also know what is going on.
- David Coe pointed out that the schools are requesting a lot of money, so we need to make our voices heard as well.
- Chairman Baker plans to draft a letter to the BOC voicing ESAC's concerns about the FY26 budget.
- DFEMS Awards Ceremony
 - Mike Karolenko shared details about the DFEMS awards ceremony on April 29th at The Flood Zone. Doors open at 6:00 PM, ceremony at 7:00 PM. CCVESA, the IAFF Local and others are sponsoring and providing food. Invites have gone out electronically. Dr. Chizmar is the MC.
 - If you see something that deserves recognition, submit a nomination as soon as possible from when the event happened. Email DFEMSnominations@carrollcountymd.gov.

New Business: None

Guests Comments: Jim Mora asked if there were any changes to the LOSAP death benefits. The benefit is currently only \$5000. George Wentz commented that Mary Carole, CCVESA Treasurer, has been working with Accounting to see about the next actuary study.

Action Items:

1. Chairman Baker will draft a letter to the BOC voicing ESAC's concerns about the FY26 budget.

2. Callie Williams will send the electronic invitations to the DFEMS awards to ESAC members.

Scott Dickson made a motion to adjourn. JJ Lynott seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 20:43.



Report to ESAC

March 19, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Good evening, My report is below, and I will only discuss the highlights and answer any relevant questions. We have a busy agenda for tonight's meeting

Staffing (VFCs): We began DFEMS staffing at both Lineboro and Union Bridge. Beginning on 2/27/25 at 0700 hrs. we staffed both stations and have continued since, Lineboro is staffed with a FADO, FF/EMT and PM or FF/PM on each of four shifts. Union Bridge will be BLS only for the interim and is staffed with a FADO, two FF/EMTs. A total of 12 personnel for each station across four shifts. Chief Supko and I have had meetings with the Chief and officers of each VFC and we have all logistics in place. I want to thank both companies for their great "Welcoming" of DFEMS personnel. Chiefs Green and Krebs each worked with our assigned and potential overtime personnel to assure proper training. We are working to fill some vacancies at each station which should be complete in a matter of weeks or sooner.

Our staffing as of today is 207 of 220 budgeted positions with a net vacancy of 13 positions. We will be giving conditional offers this week to fill those positions which will be FADOs and paramedics. The FF/EMT positions are filled and so we are accepting no additional applications for those. Our next start date will be either 4/10 or 4/24 and then our hiring is complete. It could resume if we are approved for any of our requested positions in the FY-26 budget. We will maintain a list of applicants who will have gone through our process up to the "conditional offer."

As an interim measure we continue to "down staff" some EMS units to accommodate our limited ALS numbers. This still includes 139/BLS Only, 89/BLS Only, 49/BLS only to offset holdovers given that EMS 101 is at station 4 and they are flanked by M79 and M29. These will occur as needed and based on staffing to avoid "burnout" of our ALS providers who can by regulations work no more than 48 hours consecutively. Ultimately, we are getting our PM and FF/PM numbers up so that we have ALS staffing on all 16 EMS transport units. Our ALS chase cars, the shift commanders and EMS-100 (day shift) continue to be situationally aware and perform ALS upgrades as required.

Last week I did three staffing upgrade presentations for the commissioners. These were all positions that were not approved by the position committee, but I was given the opportunity to present our requests for 12 FF/PMs to upgrade to lieutenant/paramedics (no new positions.) Two Lieutenants for training, safety & health and 12 floaters that would be a restoration of lost positions from the FY-25 budget. As the budget process progresses, we will see where this goes.

Future staffing growth is obviously tied to the budget, and we will determine our needs jointly through VFC requests, ESAC recommendations and based on our ongoing data analysis which will be enhanced with the advent of our new ESO reporting system which is in the

implementation phase and will go live by 12/25 or sooner if we are comfortable with the implementation progress.

Our recruitment will continue based on our budget initiatives for FY-26 which could include upgrade of 12 ALS car paramedics to Lieutenant/paramedics, two training/safety lieutenants and 12 requested additional floaters to offset leave, sick and injury staffing. This would bring our total staffing to 246 in FY 26 if approved. I have secured exhibit space at the MSFA convention in June to allow us to have a recruitment display/opportunity and our applications continue.

Data Analyst Vacancy: On Thursday 2/27 Ms. Melissa Long (Mel) began as our data analyst. We are already working with her to get acclimated to our systems and she has had multiple levels of training since her arrival. She will be going for a week to the ESO annual school/conference to develop that skills set and will also take over as the ESO coordinator. Katie continues to work directly with her to allow for a smooth transition. The ESAC chair and others are also providing support and transitioning Mel to comprehend our reporting and other sources of data. Mel is attending this evening's ESAC meeting so take a few moments to meet her and she wants to understand the role and functioning of ESAC.

Budget: The budget process is in full swing. Last week as previously discussed, DFEMS requests were provided and updated in a budget work session among the commissioners last week. We are meeting weekly with our budget analyst. We anticipate another challenging budget year given uncertainty with revenues and specifically with state funding, federal transition and tax yield. I have no specifics and would suggest all companies to keep abreast of developments at both the state and local levels. The CIP (capital) budget was introduced at the Commissioner's session several weeks ago. That budget includes an SCBA replacement program to be phased in consistent with the life span of our current SCBA. This will result in the centralization of our SCBA and related logistics to a single system as a matter of uniformity and cost effectiveness.

On the DFEMS side with recommendations from ESAC we have asked for the personnel requests as explained above in order to grow and support our current staffing.

We did not apply for this year for either SAFER or AFG and if you are following the national spotlight, these are all being held in place until further notice. We are monitoring the overall situation to determine if we make a submission for next year's process. This must be approved by the Commissioners as the budget must pick up the funding after year 3 of the grant. We will also need to determine what positions we would request and could facilitate with continuing funding. Remember that SAFER also deals with recruitment/retention grant funding. The deadline for all AFG submissions would be December 20, 2025. So, we are looking at 11 months to prepare for a submission for next year. The continuation of both AFG and SAFER grants may be impacted by the directions of the DOGE who has already eliminated positions throughout FEMA and specifically at the nearby Emmitsburg-USFA/NFA campus. All NFA courses that are not virtual both at Emmitsburg and in the field are postponed till further notice.

We also are going to continue with medic replacements and had requested 3 units/budget v. the two we currently have. Other vehicles to be requested include additional Tahoes for reserve

status, a replacement reserve engine and pick ups for the training lieutenants. We have received our five new medic units, and they are in service, and are at M49, M59, M29, M139, M128 and a sixth unit is on the assembly line in Florida

I know that the CCVESA budget is in progress, and they will present to the commissioners on Tuesday afternoon. My thanks to Chief Joe Dennis of Sykesville for his financial expertise in leading this process. State funding for certain initiatives such as 508 and the state loan fund will be challenged as well. The Governor's budget direction and the current general assembly continues with significant issues with unrealistic solutions in many areas. We will continue to support low interest apparatus loans through the county process which coincides with the issuance of bonds to the extent that it remains fiscally sound and feasible. We are currently working with several companies who intend to apply and who have been approved to move forward by ESAC.

508 funding: A special meeting was held and accounting practices and company responsibilities with the Comptroller have been reinforced. The funds are now available and will be distributed shortly.

Volunteer Backgrounds: The draft was distributed, and I will assume that the companies whom you represent have been briefed. Unless there are any additional changes/recommendations I will wait for your approval of the policy so we can continue with backgrounds and their importance. The ongoing issue within the county schools over a substitute teacher certainly reinforces our need for these backgrounds in those companies with junior or youth programs.

Commendations Board has met several times and should have a report this evening. April 29 at the "Flood Zone" will be the premier of the annual commendations' ceremony and Lt. Karolenko will report further. Also, the Carroll Chamber Public Safety Awards have been determined and that event will be on May 29 with a breakfast at Pleasant Valley.

SOPs/Policies: Work continues in concert with FROPS, and we are developing a new format for SOPs and reviewing many of the previous director's and CCVESA policies for currency. Unless they require significant revision, they have already been approved and we will simply reformat.

Meetings with all corporations/VFCs? I have completed meetings with about 7 of the 14 companies and the discussions have focused on moving together, as we progress in the future. I have many of these already scheduled or will schedule at a mutually agreeable time at each company. I will attend along with DC Supko, and we would like to have an open, civil and honest conversation with each company to get some feedback and determine where we are going. I am doing the same with each shift/station for our career employees to create a dialogue and to discuss their issues and concerns. A lot of good feedback and we are making changes as needed. Most of the discussions have been about in station duties, maintenance and additional funding.

International Women's Month: Is celebrated this month and we salute the countless women who continue to make a difference in Fire & EMS. Carroll county has a long history of women's involvement including many leadership and operational roles. There are currently 98,000 women

engaged in Fire & EMS nationally. To acknowledge where we are, we are looking at April 1 to become “Gender neutral” with our radio communications and terms like manning and manpower will be replaced with the more generic term staffing. This is a shift to reflect our society and once we have the logistics worked out with the ECC a General Order will be sent out to delineate this change.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr

Attachments: General Orders, SOP 2.17