

Emergency Services Advisory Council  
September 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Rick Baker, Michael Guerin, Michael Robinson, Brett Six, Linas Saurusaitis, Andrew Wooden, Robert Buckley, Dan Plunkert, Blane Wright, David Coe (virtual until 20:00), Susan Mott, Dr. John Murphy, Dr. Stephanie Kemp

Members Absent: Michael Karolenko

Public Present: Marianne Warehime- CCVESA Secretary

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

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to approve the August meeting minutes. Dr. Murphy seconded. The motion was passed.

Board Member Comments: None at this time.

Public Comments: None at this time

Director/Chief's Report: Brief attached.

-Chief Robinson reported that 29 conditional offers were sent out for employees who will start Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>. Changes have been made to the orientation process to allow more time for training.

-Two EMS Billing Technicians will start work on Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>.

-Dennis Brothers was selected as Assistant Chief of Training, Health & Safety and will start work on Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>. His radio designation is SAFETY-100.

-The Data Analyst position should be posted by the end of the week and will remain open for three weeks.

-Vacant positions include nine floater positions and one Lieutenant position. The open FADO position is being filled with this round of hires.

-Chief Robinson explained the transition to DFEMS funded/managed medical supplies.

-Chief Robinson gave an update on the FY25 budget.

Commissioner's Report: Nothing to add.

### Medical Director's Report:

- Dr. Kemp gave an update on QA/QI. Gaps in knowledge are being addressed and opportunities to improve, both for individual providers and for the system overall, are being identified.
- Common area of weakness include obtaining patient refusals and airways.
- The first cadaver lab has been scheduled for Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> at the State Anatomy Board. The first one will be just for Shift Commander, Asst. Chief Stoner and Dr. Kemp, then they will teach other providers. They are hoping to offer it again in the spring.
- A debrief of the July mass casualty exercise was held with the Sheriff's Dept. and CCPS. Areas of improvement were discussed. Mass casualty triage will be incorporated into ALS skills recertification.
- Additional Stop the Bleed community outreach is needed. A new Fellow has volunteered to teach it if anyone has community events coming up.
- Quarterly meeting with Carroll Hospital was held and was very positive.
- Dr. Kemp reported that there were several good saves recently and they are working on recognition for those providers.

### CCVESA President's Report:

- Susan Mott said the Training Committee and subcommittees are doing well.
- A grant was received to help with EST program marketing.
- They are promoting the EST program in middle schools now.

### Committee Reports:

FROPS - Andrew Wooden provided an update.

- Hazmat is working on incorporating DFEMS employees onto the team.
- Minimal staffing was discussed among the chiefs and reviews were made.
- The chiefs discussed limiting the number of apparatus responding to calls.
- A portable radio inventory list is being sent to each chief.
- A county-wide driver clearance program is being developed.
- FROPS has concerns about the new Fireground Communication Policy.

EMSOPS- David Coe provided an update.

- The five HIPAA policies were approved through EMSOPS. Other policies were also reviewed and EMSOPS had no issues.

### Old Business:

- HIPAA Policies - Andrew Wooden made a motion to approve the five HIPAA policies that were provided to ESAC. David Coe seconded. The

motion was unanimously passed.

- QA/QI Policy - Dr. Murphy made a motion to approve the QA/QI Policy. David Coe seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- EMS Reporting Documentation Policy - Andrew Wooden made a motion to approve the EMS Reporting Documentation Policy. Dr. Murphy seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- EMS Chase Car Policy - Dr. Murphy made a motion to approve the EMS Chase Car Policy. Dave Coe seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

-Callie Williams will post the approved policies tomorrow with a revision date included.

- Fireground Communication Policy

-Andrew Wooden said that FROPS agrees the new Fireground Communication Policy, which was recently released, should be tabled until the train-the-trainer program can be implemented. That program is currently being developed as this a whole new way of operating. He feels an effective date of Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> is not enough time to implement the new policy.

-Chairman Baker stated that ESAC approved this policy but requested the communication style described in the policy be changed. The requested changes were not made before the policy was released.

Brett Six made a motion for ESAC to recommend the Fireground Communications Policy be temporarily suspended. Andrew Wooden seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

-Chief Robinson stated that he will send out a General Order temporarily suspending the policy, but that the policy contains the NIMS approved communications model. Chief Robinson feels it could be an issue of liability if something happens and we are not using the approved model.

-Linas Saurusaitis commented that the policy approval process needs to be fixed so that we can get a finished product.

- Letter to Commissioners About Apparatus Policy
  - Linas Saurusaitis shared the letter that was drafted to the Commissioners explaining ESAC's response to the Reese purchase decision being overruled.
  - Rick Baker and Linas Saurusaitis will sign the letter and email it to the Commissioners, cc-ing County Administrator Roberta Windham.
  
- Joint ESAC/BOC Meeting
  - The meeting has been requested for early/mid-October and we are still waiting to hear back on a date and time.
  
- FY25 Budget
  - Chairman Baker would like to form a small committee through ESAC to look at future staffing/organizational structure of DFEMS and contingency plans.
  - Andrew Wooden suggested the committee also look at the current staffing model to see if it is effective. He also brought up recruiting people from the EST program.
  - Chief Robinson is interested in doing an apprenticeship program.
  - Chief Robinson shared that there are still issues with the application process that are being worked though.
  - Commissioner Guerin stated that the work of this proposed committee could have a significant impact on the Board of Commissioners.
  
- Fire 101
  - Fire 101 is being planned for early December.
  - Susan Mott and Lt. Karolenko have not yet met to discuss details.

New Business:

Action Items:

1. Callie Williams will post the policies that were approved tonight.
2. Chairman Baker and Vice Chair Linas Saurusaitis will send letter to Commissioners on Apparatus Replacement Policy.

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 20:54.



## Department of Fire & EMS

### Report to ESAC: September 20, 2023

A great 911 remembrance was held last week and was well attended with ESAC being well represented by many current and past representative. My thanks to all who played a role in this somber but meaningful event. “Never forget!” Last week I reached the milestone of Director, Chief for the past two years. I believe that great progress has been made in creating our system while preserving our traditions. This is due to the efforts of everyone and having the support of our elected officials, our county staff and the ongoing cooperation with our allied organizations. We still have a lot of work to move forward and I appreciate all of the support!

**STRONG WORK BY ALL!**

#### **Career Staffing Update:**

We have made 29 offers of conditional employment and those personnel are currently finalizing their physicals, backgrounds and psych evaluations. These personnel will begin on Thursday, October 12 with a swearing in by the clerk of the court. Unlike our previous two classes these personnel will be assigned to training for their first two weeks and not count as staffing. We will be providing an orientation program (mini academy) as well as an opportunity for an internship and be cleared as drivers and clinicians prior to counting as primary staffing. We are confident that this will streamline the transition of these employees and the result should be less issues in comparison to what we experienced with the first two classes.

The **quartermaster position** has been created with job specifications and a hiring announcement was sent out on 8/14/23 and the position was posted through 9/4/23. This position will report to the Asst. Chief, Training, Safety and Health. We had 41 applications and have screened them and will be interviewing the week of October 3<sup>rd</sup>. We are looking for a start date of October 26.

Our **billing technicians** have been hired and are due to start this Thursday. Both billing technicians come from the medical billing profession and are certified medical coders. They will both work out of our administrative offices at the COB. In the interim, FF/EMT Elyssa Cool of Station 5A shift has been doing a tremendous job with our billing duties on a part time basis. We are currently receiving payments and have brought in since July over \$1.5 million. The participating volunteer companies receive their payments with their allotments through the Comptroller’s office.

The vacant **Assistant Chief of Training, Health & Safety** is Dennis Brothers who is a former Carroll Co. Volunteer Chief (Gamber) CCVESA past president and a 29-year employee of the Baltimore County FD where he retired as a bureau chief who oversaw logistics and prior to that the fire rescue academy. He is well educated and has extensive experience including his 47 years as a Carroll County volunteer. Please join me in welcoming Asst. Chief Brothers who will begin this Thursday 10/28. He will be designated as Safety 100 and will handle all training, safety & health areas and will oversee the PSTC as well as the quartermaster and other logistics functions. A special note of thanks to Chief Jeff Leppert who served as a member of the interview panel. When key positions in our staff are selected it will always be our goal to have a representative

from the volunteer side of our system. Jeff was representing FROPS and added significantly to our process.

We have finalized the position description/specifications for our data analyst position and the posting for this should go out by Friday of this week. It will then be advertised for three weeks, and we anticipate interviews the last week of October with a start date by early November. I would ask ESAC members to get the word out so we can find a highly qualified individual with hopefully a Fire/EMS background. Our future migration to a countywide reporting system, new software and other areas will be within the responsibility of this position. They will also be assisting us with grants preparation.

The DFEMS is currently at 116 personnel which includes civilian and staff positions. With our hiring in October and our additional civilian staff we will be at 154 personnel which breaks down to 145- Uniformed field operations and 9 staff personnel. With our October hires all budgeted station positions will be filled and we will have 15 of our budgeted 24 floater positions or 9 short.

We have also held a FADO hiring process and have both internal and external candidates in a hiring pool and their status will be held for a one-year period to fill such vacancies. A single lieutenant's vacancy also exists and that will be filled through a promotional process by the end of the calendar year. There are many moving parts to hiring positions and with our limited support staff we are moving as quickly as possible. We also want to acknowledge our HR partners who have provided us with two dedicated personnel, and this will continue beyond our hiring process. I want to thank Bridget Herring and Samantha Reeb from our HR department as well as the Director, Kristy Bixler for their partnership and through these processes they have come to understand thoroughly our hiring process, needs and the specificity of Fire/EMS positions.

Our next step with our hiring process is that we are going to go to an "open hiring" process by next week for PMs or FF/PMs. In other words, we will continue to accept applications and hire at these levels until we have 9 additional employees at these levels. ALS providers continue to be our priority. The new numbers should move us closer to not requiring mandatory "hold overs" of personnel and lessen our overtime liability. It is also noted that we have lost 6 employees so far due to other jobs, returning to school or terminations.

**FUEL:**

We recently went before the Board of Commissioners and presented a request for a \$66,000+ increase in fuel reimbursement from the FY 23 budget. We were granted the supplemental funds which are distributed among VFCs as follows:

<b>Hampstead:</b>	<b>\$12027.50</b>
<b>Manchester:</b>	<b>\$ 3,388.34</b>
<b>Pleasant Valley:</b>	<b>\$15,051.35</b>
<b>Reese:</b>	<b>\$18,009.04</b>
<b>Westminster:</b>	<b>\$17,620.00</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$66,096.23</b>

Given the variability of fuel prices in FY 23 this was unanticipated but necessary. In the current FY we must reign in on fuel costs and consider options for apparatus response. Our centralization of fuel billing and consolidation of vendors should provide some relief in this area. We are closely monitoring the overall situation.

### **MEDICAL SUPPLIES: /EMS Issues**

The current transition to CCDFEMS funded/managed medical supplies is underway. We have ordered and should be receiving soon, three vending type machines that will be placed at Manchester, Taneytown and Winfield which parallels the location of the ALS cars. Once these arrive, in addition to the CHC site we will be able to quickly replace our used medications. With the arrival of the QM position in the fall that individual will assure that the machines are stocked and that other medical supplies are ordered and received in a timely fashion. All CDS medications will be controlled/distributed by the battalion ALS units. Contact AC Stoner with any question or concerns.

### **Background Checks/ Member assistance programs:**

I have received proposals and discussed with three potential bidders. This now goes through procurement and gets placed on the Commissioner's agenda for approval and then we will select the vendor. The process will cost around \$30-50/member. I would anticipate that we will begin, and I will then have a presentation at a later or special meeting, and we will involve the President of each company to take the lead. This will take several months for full implementation and the companies will receive the results.

### **Improving our communications/information:**

Following concerns of this group and many member companies, we have taken immediate steps to improve our ability to disseminate information and thus communicate better with each of you. Some highlights have included:

1. Placing all approved SOPs on our "home page" with the county as well as CCVESA site with authorized access to presidents/chiefs
2. Doing the same with all General Orders
3. Immediate emails to chiefs/presidents for any critical or sensitive issues
4. Access to the county "SharePoint" DFEMS site for all volunteer chiefs
5. Monthly meeting with CCVESA executive board
6. Monthly meeting with CCVESA president and the ESAC chair
7. Daily roster to be sent to all chiefs once we work out some issues.

### **Behavior/Civil Rights Compliance:**

We have recently had additional incidents involving "human dignity." One of these incidents has resulted in a complaint to the Department of Justice/EEOC and the complaint has been validated and will now move forward. Several investigations are ongoing. That means that an individual company as well as the county may be liable for punitive and compensatory damages that could be substantial. Our insurance coverage may cover. However, the issue is quite simple: Given our

societal standards there is **ZERO TOLERANCE** for anything that violates human dignity and especially where defined under Title VII the US Civil Rights law. My response to these events is necessary and will involve:

1. Training for all career/volunteer members annually that must be taken/validated for anyone employed or holding membership.
2. Development of a process to provide progressive discipline to volunteer members who may be in violation and create accountability for all.
3. Career employees are covered under Chapter 37 already.

I am reaching out to ESAC to develop some standards/direction for handling these situations and to move forward with a process to adjudicate when these situations arise. Given recent events in a neighboring jurisdiction with a \$3 million settlement we will take all complaints of Title VII or hostile work environments seriously. The perpetrators of such incidents will be dealt with up to and including termination. In significant cases I will ask companies to remove individuals from membership and on our end, we will discontinue insurance, worker's comp and operational affiliation. There are many possible repercussions, and we are all held accountable. Ongoing training, open discussions and ongoing situational awareness is our best defense against such actions.

#### **FY-25 budget:**

Our longtime budget analyst Taylor Hockensmith has resigned and is now employed by the State in their Department of Management & Budget. We wish Taylor much success in her new position and will certainly miss her mathematical mind! Our new budget analyst is Lydia Rogers who was trained by Taylor and shares many of her competencies and expertise. We are currently working with Lydia to begin formulation of the FY 25 budget. Predictions and observations indicate that we will be challenged to meet the funding in many areas of the budget. We are currently budgeted for year #3 of our staffing plan which is currently at 7 additional stations or 84 additional positions. We are doing what is prudent and developing scenarios that will prioritize where DFEMS will go. I have met with the ESAC chair and Rick will have more to say on this under the Strategic Plan or new business. In any case we will need to "tighten our belts". CCVESA has had some preliminary discussions as well. We are still optimistic but must have options which will begin with an analysis of our adopted plan and its efficiencies. This will be a developing issue in the months ahead and in discussions with the BOCC they have indicated that we are a priority and need to determine cost effectively the best staffing model going forward. We must also not lose sight of the fact that recruitment/retention is the #1 issue of the fire service and the state commission established to assess these areas is due to report to the legislature by the end of November. We are fortunate to have several Carroll County members or residents on this group.

At the same time we are going to be over 250 personnel and to manage that number we must have an adequate level of staff positions to include administration, operations, EMS, training and logistics. We must also have the space, vehicles and logistics to support each of these areas. Once we have a data analysis capability we will see where we are in efficiency and service delivery and make changes as required.



## **Upcoming events:**

### **Junior Firefighter's field day at the PSTC:**

This event will be held on Saturday, September 30, 2023, and will run through the afternoon. This will provide many activities for our Junior firefighters from a number of VFCs. If you are available, please stop by to observe and support the future of our fire/EMS.

**Fire Prevention week** is October 8-14, and many companies will have scheduled events, school visits and open houses. Although this is a year around function this is an opportunity to focus on prevention and community risk reduction in many areas relevant to safety. We are working at a proclamation to be given during a Commissioner's meeting and most likely on October 5.

**The Westminster Fire Engine and Hose Co. 1** will continue their bicentennial with their Muster and Parade to be held on Saturday, October 7, 2023, with a parade through the downtown beginning at 10 AM and followed by a display and antique fire apparatus muster to be held on the company grounds. This will be a great opportunity for Westminster and the Fire/EMS service of Carroll County. Contact ESAC member Dan Plunkert for more information.

This concludes my report and I'm always available for any questions.

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Yours in service,

*Michael W. Robinson*

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