

Emergency Services Advisory Council  
March 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Rick Baker, Dan Plunkert, Robert Buckley, Susan Mott, Blane Wright, Brett Six, Mike Karolenko, Linas Saurusaitis, Michael Robinson, Dr. John Murphy, Dr. Stephanie Kemp (virtual), David Coe (virtual), Andrew Wooden (arrived 7:30)

Members Absent: Commissioner Michael Guerin

Guests: Eric Zaney- DFEMS Assistant Chief, EMS (acting)

Public: Marianne Warehime- CCVESA Secretary, Mary Carol Stiffler- CCVESA Treasurer

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

Dr. Murphy made a motion to approve the February meeting minutes. Mike Karolenko seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments: None at this time

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson just responded to a serious vehicle collision on Rt. 140. He thanked the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team for their response.

-Chief Robinson addressed changes in DFEMS leadership as of February 26<sup>th</sup>. There are now three people in an acting role including two Shift Commanders and the Assistant Chief of EMS.

-Chief Robinson shared that we have lost several more employees in the past few weeks which has caused challenges with staffing and holdovers.

-48 people are going through the hiring process and will hopefully start in May.

-DFEMS has 15 current vacancies.

-DFEMS is hiring now for Paramedic and Firefighter/Paramedic with no closing date. They will continue to attend job fairs and other recruitment events.

- The FY25 recommended budget was shared this week. CCVESA will present at agency hearings before the Board of Commissioners on March 26<sup>th</sup>. He encourages people to attend in support of CCVESA.
- Chief Robinson hopes to be able to staff medic units at the remaining seven stations and to have those up and running by August.
- The running assignments for the chase cars was changed as of February 26<sup>th</sup>. This will remain in effect until ALS is fully staffed.
- Monday March 25<sup>th</sup> is the deadline to submit nominations for the Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Please submit nominations to Callie.
- Chief Robinson shared plans to create a DFEMS Honor Guard and a Commendations Board with an annual banquet.
- Chief Robinson gave an update on the PSTC upgrades. We should see work starting in the summer.
- Chief Robinson stated the new ambulances purchased by the county will have the DFEMS logo and the name of the fire company where they are assigned.

Commissioner's Report: Not present

Medical Director's Report:

- Dr. Kemp reported that the joint education with the Sheriff's Dept. about patient restraint and chemical sedation is well underway and has been well-received.
- The cadaver lab is scheduled for April 16<sup>th</sup>, 8am-noon.
- Working with Hopkins for training on ultrasounds.

Guest Comments:

- Acting Assistant Chief of EMS Eric Zaney reported that he has been going around to the fire stations to get the Knox Box systems working properly. The third battalion is complete.
- He also will be coming around to get the cardiac monitors talking to each other.
- There will be CodeStat training occurring soon.
- 28 people from the volunteer side have EMS credentials expiring March 31<sup>st</sup>. He does not know which companies they are affiliated with, just their names.

CCVESA President's Report:

- Susan Mott reported that CCVESA's marketing team will be out on April 21<sup>st</sup> doing interviews and taking photos at the fire stations.
- MSFA and Carroll Community scholarships are available now.

Public Comments:

-Mary Carol Stiffler, CCVESA Treasurer, stated that for the FY25 budget CCVESA is requesting a \$100k increase over the base plus 3%. They have been struggling to get certain fire companies' budgets back to a reasonable place. Chief Robinson is in full support.

-CCVESA is also requesting an MOU fund of \$200k to be reevaluated in 2-3 years.

-Support from the volunteer fire companies or anyone for the March 26<sup>th</sup> presentation to the Commissioners would be great.

### Committee Reports:

#### EMSOPS

-David Coe reported that EMSOPS is working with Acting Assistant Chief Zaney on the expiring credentials to make sure we don't lose any providers.

-Questions about the Patient Restraint Policy have been answered and people have been receptive to the answers.

#### FROPS

-Andrew Wooden shared that the actions of those responding to today's vehicle collision were the epitome of teamwork with career employees and volunteers working together.

-FROPS's meeting with the county's Fleet Manager had to be rescheduled. He is scheduled to come to the next meeting.

-FROPS discussed Mt. Airy's apparatus request which they were against, but ESAC voted to recommend supporting the request. Chief Robinson approved the request.

-FROPS opted to defer to Ivan Browning with HazMat regarding the Lithium-Ion Battery policy.

### Old Business:

- FY25 Budget
  - 84 positions are in the recommended budget, but the budget will not be approved until May.
  - Commissioners are \$12 million short of balancing the budget.
  - Blueprint and Fire/EMS are the two biggest topics of discussion for the FY25 budget.
  
- DFEMS Ambulance Request

- ESAC reviewed the letter sent by Chief Robinson for the purchase of six ambulances.
  - Medic 18- replacement for current unit
  - Medic 39- replacement for current unit
  - Medic TBD x4 – replacement for 4 current units

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to accept the apparatus request. Mike Karolenko seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

- Patient Restraint Policy
  - Dan Plunkert suggested replacing “police officer” with “law enforcement” throughout the document.
  - Dr. Kemp agreed with this change.

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to approve the policy with the suggested revision. Dan Plunkert seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

- Data Analysis
  - ESAC reviewed statistics produced by the DFEMS Data Analyst, Katie Spurrier.
  - Chairman Baker will email this document to the Commissioners. He encouraged ESAC members to send it to the stations they represent. He also requested that the stations that have not been verified do so as well.
  - The remaining 7 stations make up 34% of calls/over 10,000 calls.
  - Dan Plunkert suggested that mutual aid calls be broken down by category (fire or EMS).
- Lithium-Ion Battery Policy
  - This policy will be put in place now before being voted on at next month’s ESAC meeting. This will enable guidelines and procedures to be put in place.
  - Andrew Wooden discussed the off gassing of hydrofluoric acid associated with lithium-ion batteries. Symptoms develop 12-24 hours later and are fatal. He emphasized the importance of using proper PPE. Maryland Department of the Environment should be contacted right away.
  - Chairman Baker suggested that the reference to F500 on page 5 should be removed if we are not using it.

- Chief Robinson advised it should be removed for now and can be added back in if research validates.

New Business:

- Chairman Baker discussed the need to come up with a staffing, resource, and operational plan for FY26-30.
  - Chief Robinson noted that the plan needs to be data driven and there needs to be company buy in.
  - Susan Mott noted the Commissioners need to have a better grasp of what it is like to do EMS.

Action Items:

1. Chairman Baker will send a copy of the statistics compiled by the Data Analyst to the Commissioners.

Bob Buckley made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Murphy seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 20:30.



## Report to ESAC

March 20, 2024

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

I apologize for the late report, but I have been involved with an MVC/rescue with multiple patients and several fly outs as well as a working rescue with six medic units. Both the unity and strength of our combination system were demonstrated at this incident. We have just completed a CISM/debrief of the incident utilizing our career/volunteer internal Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM.) A great showing, continuity of command and Strong Work by all!

Since the last ESAC meeting we have been presented with a number of challenges. We have met each one of them and have responded appropriately. My report will highlight these challenges and provide and update on our continuing progress. I believe our recent meeting with the full Board of Commissioners was overall positive and ESAC clearly stated their goals and the recommendations for the FY-25 budget. As we enter the FY25 budget process we will determine where we are going based on approved funding.

**Personnel Issues:** As of 2/26/24 we have several members who have separated from service with DFEMS. A plan was implemented and an “interim” Assistant Chief of EMS, Eric Zaney has been placed in that position and will remain there indefinitely. A formal process for that position is underway. Acting Shift Commander Max Nickey is appointed to serve as the A-shift commander and Acting Shift Commander Russell Halterman has been placed in the B- shift commander position. A promotional process will occur for each of these positions. We have seen in recent weeks a net loss of 8 positions. An “open” meeting was made available to the entire DFEMS on Friday, 3/15/24 to discuss pressing issues and receive some feedback. This was a positive event with some great interaction.

**Hiring Process:** We are currently at 135 positions(uniformed) and eight civilian administrative positions. We closed our advertising for positions and have begun the processing of 48 persons who are now complete with the written exam, physical ability, interview and are now engaged in position specific testing. Out of this group we will be filling all remaining vacancies to make up to 148 FY-24 positions. We will then have an eligibility list to hire for the FY-25 positions which are still budgeted at 84 and will include 12 positions for each of seven stations. We currently have six (6) FF/PMs in the field being precepted and they will be released within the next two weeks. The loss of personnel has impacted our staffing with overtime and mandatory holdovers being utilized to staff the field. Our 12 station lieutenants and two of the shift commanders recently completed their one-year probation and we congratulate them on becoming tenured employees of DFEMS.

We have also asked for a third chief (Deputy director level) to manage field operations (4 shift commanders and assigned personnel) This will balance the duties better among three chiefs and allow a single point of contact for all operational issues. This is in the FY 25 budget along with

two training/safety lieutenants, an office assistant and the upgrade of the shift commanders to the captain rank and for one ALS car to be upgraded to four lieutenants. This would allow for greater supervision and create a back-up officer for the shift commander. These have been removed from consideration through the position request board and will go directly to the commissioners for their consideration. I am working to hire the additional chief as soon as feasible and prior to the new budget year. This will allow our EMS chief positions to focus on EMS quality assurance, billing, credentialing, and system development. Ultimately our staffing goal would be that all three ALS chase cars would reclassify to a new rank of paramedic lieutenant which would extend our administration and supervisory capabilities as we move to 50+/each of our four shifts with staffing augmentation.

**Transition to county employees:** I have recently met with New Windsor and last night with Winfield to discuss the implementation of DFEMS personnel in FY-25. I am scheduling with the other five stations. My goal is to assure a smooth transition and to work out any potential conflicts. It appears that Fy-25 staffing once hired, trained and precepted will not begin independent functioning until August 2024. A contingency to allow VFCs to provide staffing through that date is being developed. This will also impact our cutover to EMS billing for those stations.

**Response profiles: (ALS incidents)** I am very aware of the many response issues that exist with these units. These issues will be mostly resolved after July when all Carroll transport units are staffed as ALS. In the interim please review General Order: 2-6-24 for clarification as to how these units will function until we have full staffing in July 2024. We have listened to the issues, met with ECC and believe that we can best serve the system with these interim changes. This will include responding a chase car to ALS incidents where a Medic is down staffed to BLS and allow ALS to be initiated sooner. The ultimate decision to upgrade or have an ALS unit transport will be incident specific and in the best interest of patient outcome.

**General Orders:** Several additional orders have been issued since our last meeting and these are all available for review on our website.

**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 has some issues and has been sent back to FROPS for additional review/revision. I believe the chair will have some more under this. Tonight, we will review two SOPs: Patient restraint/EMS and Response to Lithium-Ion battery incidents. We are also updating /cleaning up several other SOPs without any substantive changes requiring review.

**FY-25 Budget:** The CCVESA budget process has been ongoing for months to discuss the FY-25 budget. A lot of concerns and issues were brought up. The CCVESA treasurer and officers, did a great job of managing the process and is nearing completion with the finished product going to the budget analyst for review and follow up meeting with our budget analyst. My sincere thanks to all of those involved as this will be I suspect a “challenging” budget year. During the next several weeks DFEMS will be meeting with the Department of Management & Budget as well as the

Commissioners to put forth our FY-25 operating budget. We have heard your budget concerns along with our overall needs and we will certainly advocate to assure your concerns are heard. This will obviously be a challenging year and support from ESAC is important to the process. DFEMS still has its 84 budgeted positions within the operating budget, and we will see how this progresses. Below are the related dates/highlights as the FY 25 budget goes through its process:

Today during Open Session, Director of Management and Budget Ted Zaleski presented the detailed FY25 Recommended Budget and FY 25-30 plans to the Carroll County Board of Commissioners (BOC). The budget process documents can be viewed on the county website.

Throughout March, April and May, a series of budget meetings will be held to develop and adopt the final budget. Please check the county website for meeting updates. The current schedule, which is subject to change, is noted below.

The board will next meet with any agency requesting funding not included in the Recommended Budget. Below is the list of meetings as they are currently scheduled:

**Agency Meetings with Commissioners:**

Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>

**Thursday, March 28<sup>th</sup> -Afternoon with DFEMS/CCVESA to present the volunteer budgets.**

After the commissioners meet with agencies, the board will begin discussing the budget options amongst themselves to create a proposed budget. The Proposed Budget Work Sessions will begin on April 2nd.

Once the Proposed Budget is agreed upon by a majority of the commissioners, a release of the FY25 Proposed Budget is planned for Tuesday, April 23rd.

Director Zaleski will then hold a series of community meetings to review and explain the Proposed Budget to the public. These meetings are currently scheduled as follows:

**Budget Community Presentations:**

Wednesday, April 24th	7:00 pm	Eldersburg Library
Thursday, April 25th	7:00 pm	Mount Airy Library
Monday, April 29th	7:00 pm	Exploration Commons (Westminster)
Tuesday, April 30th	7:00 pm	Taneytown Library
Wednesday, May 1st	7:00 pm	North Carroll Library

A Budget Public Hearing is scheduled on Monday, May 6, 2024, at 7:00 pm. at the Carroll Arts Center located at 91 W. Main Street in Westminster. More information will be provided closer to the date.



Additional Budget Work Sessions may be held by the commissioners to make any modifications to the proposed budget based on the information received during the Budget Public Hearing. These work sessions are tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 14th and Thursday, May 16th.

**The FY2025 budget adoption is planned for Tuesday, May 21st.**

Updated information can be viewed on the Bureau of Budget webpage as it becomes available: <https://www.carrollcountymd.gov/budget>. Comments and questions can be submitted via the webpage or can be sent to Director Ted Zaleski at [tzaleski@carrollcountymd.gov](mailto:tzaleski@carrollcountymd.gov) at any time.

These sessions are in person and open to the public, will be televised on Channel 24, and streamed live on the county website. All meetings will be held in the County Office Building, 225 N. Center Street, Westminster, MD 21157, unless otherwise noted. Meeting times and places are subject to change, so please check the county website or call 410-386-2400 to confirm.

Meetings are available for viewing on the county meeting portal and the county YouTube channel. In addition, all meetings will be replayed on Comcast Channel 24.

**Data Analyst: Katie Spurrier**, has hit the ground running and is becoming acclimated to both Keystone and ERS. She is going to be developing an “annual report” which should go out in the next few weeks and will show data at various levels to include responses, staffing and GIS mapping of her findings. She will be looking at all data points and we will be standardizing our reporting which will include an upgrade to new reporting software for DFEMS which will mean that the current ERS will be replaced with a new product and that will be ESO. This is a complex process that will take at least a year to transition. Included will be single silo reporting where all data will be sent to the data analyst v. the OSFM. This will enable us to provide grants and on-going data to the Commissioners, MIEMSS and OSFM/NFIRS. Part of this process will be the end of NFIRS reporting and a migration to a new federal system known as NERIS or National Emergency Response Information System. ESAC Chair Ricky Baker is very active with this along with Chief Ruch, Richard Koons and other representatives from IT as well as the ECC, and IT. This will be a participative process with our goal of centralized data repository and recognition as a jurisdiction which will then enable us to compete for AFG, SAFER and other grants in the future.

**ALMS (Learning Management System) Our** thanks to the CCVESA Liaison-Richard Koons for his valuable assistance with getting some compliance programs up and running. We are looking to expand this system for training delivery and tracking. A recent MOSH complaint has established that we must centralize compliance and other training information.

**Training Center Expansion:** As most are aware the Phase II of the PSTC which is an expansion of the practical training area to include a new burn facility, flammable liquids/gas props and other enhancements has been held up by the presence of PFAS compounds in the soil. The county did an \$80K assessment of the site which was submitted to the MDE for review. The county’s Department of Land & Resource Management has been tasked to oversee the site remediation. AC Dennis Brothers is the DFEMS point of contact, and we are moving forward with some site remediation.

Along with this project we are moving forward with a logistics/warehouse facility on the PSTC campus. Working with facilities we have established a temporary warehouse in an unused area of the barn on the first floor. That is currently operational, and we are storing medical supplies, PPE and other items since last year. Dennis Brothers is leading the project and is also coordinating the rehab of the block building that was in use by the Sheriff. We will do a rebuild of that building which will become the DFEMS warehouse and office of the quartermaster. This project has been approved and is moving forward with an anticipated Spring 24 completion. This will house our quartermaster who is working out of a temporary office at the PSTC.

We did meet recently with the CCVESA leadership regarding ongoing and future needs of the PSTC for space as DFEMS expands while meeting the needs of the association. We are looking at repurposing some space by the late Spring in anticipation of our training staff. The long-range plan will be for a DFEMS HQ facility on the main county campus and in the design, we will incorporate permanent space for CCVESA and assure that the DFEMS needs are met with adequate office, meeting, and support facilities. This is a long-term project.

**Incident Response:** The end of CY 2023 actually shows decreases in our overall responses although not that significant we are working on the final data and await station end of year reporting via our data analyst. See the attachments from Katie for a sampling of what is being done and our overall direction. We are currently doing a cost analysis and meeting with vendors to determine the best path forward in this area and again Rick Baker continues with his direct involvement, and we will be bringing on others so we can get this right. Data analytics will be the foundation for our future expansion and related initiatives. We will also “cautiously” explore Artificial Intelligence or AI and its possible role with this?

**EMS Billing:** Along with our EMS Billing Technicians Amy and Jennifer we are making progress in this area. We are working directly with the VFCs that have come on board with our vendor Digitech and although slow to come in the revenues appear to be steady and thanks to feedback from the users, we are making improvements towards greater efficiency and quicker turn-around. proposal) to solicit and select a new billing vendor. We recently met with the MD Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to get on board with the ESPP program which will provide us with “windfall” payments based on covered state Medicaid reimbursement. This is a federal program that reimburses annually and could yield us \$3-5 million in additional revenues. This requires 100% of our transport resources/associated billing to be on board with DFEMS which will coincide with our 7/1/24 complete EMS transition.

**Background checks:** We were approved for \$50,000 recently by the Commissioners. We are now finalizing the logistics and hope to begin later in the month. I may need to request a training session for each company and include the president or designee who will have access to a portal to begin the process. The next question is who will need these backgrounds:

1. All riding/operational members
2. All new applicants for a VFC
3. Anyone who participates in LOSAP and is a functional administrative member.

I realize that there may be some additional questions and you can email these to me, or we can discuss at the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Chief Michael W. Robinson*