

## Emergency Services Advisory Council February 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

Members Absent: Andrew Wooden

Guests: Eddie Ruch

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

Dan Plunkert asked for a revision to the January meeting minutes to include comments made by Chief Robinson about alternative staffing plans.

Dr. Murphy made a motion to approve the January meeting minutes with the revision. Dan Plunkert seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

### Board Member Comments:

Chairman Baker stated that several board members have terms ending in June. Linas Saurusaitis and Bob Buckley are not able to be reappointed. Dr. Murphy's term is also ending, but he can be reappointed if he chooses to apply and is approved by the Commissioners.

### Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson gave an update on the hiring process. There are seven ALS providers starting Feb. 29<sup>th</sup>. 170 applications have been received for the FY25 positions. 68 people are currently going through the hiring process. There are plans to reopen the hiring process soon.

-For FY25, Chief Robinson hopes to hire a Deputy Chief, to upgrade the Shift Commanders to Captains and to make one chase car position a Fire Lieutenant.

-Chief Robinson is available to meet with fire companies to discuss any transition issues.

-The leadership retreat has been cancelled and will be rescheduled for a later date.

-The Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards are on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Send nominations through DFEMS.

#### Commissioner's Report:

-Commissioner Guerin stated that the FY25 budget process will be starting in a week or two. He is advocating for the Deputy Chief position and other DFEMS requests.

#### Medical Director's Report:

-Dr. Kemp reported that 36 people (career and volunteer) completed the ALS recert and skills session. There will be one more held for new hires.

-The ALS downgrade policy was resent. It mirrors what is used in other counties.

-Handtevy will be going live soon. All career and volunteer providers will have access.

-Dr. Kemp discussed wanting to place AEDs on all Sheriff's Dept. vehicles as well as the municipalities because law enforcement is often first on the scene.

-Dr. Kemp provided updates on several initiatives including the purchase of UEScopes, ultrasound devices, and cyano kits, as well as ERMC radio traffic issues.

-The Patient Restraint policy was recently sent out. The four Shift Commanders are authorized to use Ketamine and Dr. Kemp would like to extend that to the chase cars. Dr. Kemp notes that the DFEMS policy is more restrictive than the state protocol. She requested these restrictions since the county providers are riding on her license.

-Dr. Kemp gave a presentation to the Sheriff's Department Crisis Response Team about death in custody.

-There is a cadaver lab on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Kemp hopes to train all chase car providers. Please email her or the Assistant Chief of EMS if there are volunteers who need this training as a priority.

-There is a Shock Trauma Go Team presentation on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

-Dr. Kemp hopes to have some form of monthly training and/or case review. It is an opportunity to highlight some of the great care being provided as well as introduce new topics.

-Six providers and our Data Analyst are attending a Code Stat class in Howard County where they will learn how to generate documentation from the Life-Pak devices.

### CCVESA President's Report:

- Susan Mott reported that CCVESA's marketing campaign is moving forward. They continue to spread the word about volunteering and the need for communities to still support the volunteer fire companies.
- Susan Mott encouraged people to submit nominations for the Public Safety Awards in May and to spread the word to others.

### Committee Reports:

EMSOPS- Nothing to report.

FROPS- Not present.

### Old Business:

- Prepare for joint ESAC/BOC meeting tomorrow.
  - Chairman Baker sent a letter to the Commissioners that will be the basis for the discussion at tomorrow's meeting.
  - The action items from the January ESAC meeting are addressed in the letter to the Commissioners.
- Report from Eddie Ruch, Chair of committee to explore future DFEMS staffing.
  - The committee included Eddie Ruch, Linas Saurusaitis, Dennis Brothers, Tim Legore. They came up with four options for staffing. These options were provided to Chief Robinson, along with the impacts to service. Bottomline, not staffing the 84 positions needed will result in a reduction of service delivery to county citizens.
- Mt. Airy VFC Apparatus Request
  - Chief Robinson agrees that Mt. Airy VFC should proceed with the purchase. He trusts the company and their leadership. Mt. Airy VFC is working toward re-engineering the piece to accomplish everything that is needed. It takes 36+ months to receive apparatus and any further delays would only increase cost.
  - Chief Robinson will draft a letter to Mt. Airy VFC regarding their apparatus request.

## New Business

- Purchase of County Ambulances
  - Per the policy regarding Purchase of New or Replacement Apparatus, all apparatus purchases need to be presented to ESAC including those made by DFEMS.
  - DFEMS needs to provide a letter to ESAC for the purchase of the new ambulances and other vehicles.
  - Mike Karolenko asked if the scope of the policy should be adjusted to include only larger purchases that would have a bigger impact on the system. Chairman Baker understood where Mike Karolenko was coming from, but all vehicles still come with an insurance, maintenance, fuel, radio, lettering and lighting costs.
- Linas Saurusaitis inquired to Chief Robinson about the performance of the EMS billing company. Lineboro is paying more than 7% of all money collected. Chief Robinson suggested reaching out to the DFEMS EMS Billing Technicians.
- Dan Plunkert requested an update from Chief Robinson on the volunteer background checks.

## Action Items:

1. Chief Robinson will send a letter to Mt. Airy VFC in response to their apparatus request.
2. DFEMS will provide a letter to ESAC requesting the purchase of ambulances and other vehicles.

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Murphy seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:34.



## Report to ESAC

**February 21, 2024**

**Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director**

You will find my report herein and things are busy at DFEMS with new employees being tested, processed and moving forward with a number of initiatives. Just to dispel any rumors, on the evening of 1/31/24 while driving home and in my personal vehicle I experienced a medical emergency and became unconscious crashing into a guardrail in PA. Once I awoke and very disoriented, I drove (bad decision) to a gas station and was unable to communicate and my wife tracked me down and took me to a local ER several minutes away. Once I arrived, they declared a “stroke alert” and stabilized me and I was transferred to the ICU at Wellspan Chambersburg where I spent four days in the ICU then step-down and discharged to home. I had medical complications caused by too high of a dose of steroids which caused my emergency. Many scans, neuro, and other consults later I am back to duty with no lasting effects and many follow ups. A special note of thanks to AC Denny and Sandy brothers who came to the ED in Waynesboro to offer assistance and check on my status although I have no recollection! Any other rumors or speculations are entirely false and I thought it important to clarify. I thank all of those who reached out as well as those who left me alone!

**Hiring Process:** We are currently remain at 155 positions which includes 147 uniformed and 8 civilian support staff. Next Thursday 5/29 we will bring on 7 additional PMs/FF-PMs to add to our staffing. (see attached G.O.) These new hires will go through a 5-day orientation at the PSTC and will then be assigned to a preceptor and will be cleared once they demonstrate proficiency as ALS clinicians. We did receive about 170 applications for our anticipated hiring for FY-25. We provided several information sessions and two testing sessions. We now have a total of 68 persons who are in the process for hiring some at various stages due to past participation in the process. As is the case throughout the country currently we had only 12 paramedics competing and in the process. We do have the ability to reopen for hiring and plan to do so. Our recently hired 5 paramedics from January are in the field and are being cleared. This will leave us with only four positions that are unfilled out of what is budgeted for FY-24 and continue with our “floaters” to offset overtime. We have had several instances where we have upstaffed to cover for corporate employees in stations that we plan to staff in FY-25.

We have also asked for a third assistant chief or DC/Deputy Director 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. It would also designate a “second in command” to address command continuity for various contingencies. 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. The position request board was provided with justifications and they will make recommendations for the operating budget. this morning and provided a presentation in favor 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:** There are undoubtedly a multitude of questions and how? Why? What if? Etc. that will be raised by this transition. This will include some emotion as this is a big step by all companies! I have begun to schedule meetings with at least the president, chief and (boards if desired) of each impacted company to go over such concerns as “interim staffing” contingencies once current employees are hired but not yet reporting to stations? Who will be assigned? The transition to county billing? Our goal is to assure continuity of service and a smooth overall transition. This is many years in the making, we have a signed MOU, and our goal is to make this seamless with our objective to address your concerns. In the interim, the chief of each company may contact the shift commanders if they have a void with current EMS position staffing prior to FY-25. All of these positions must still be approved for FY-25 although we are moving forward with the hiring process which can't be finalized until 7/1/24.

**Response profiles: (ALS incidents)** We continue to monitor the situation with ALS upgrades and the response of a chase vehicle v. a transport medic unit. Our goal is to get the nearest ALS unit deployed to an incident based on the EMD/dispatch profile that is incident specific. We must also assure ongoing ALS coverage and manage countywide coverage which is occurring between the ECC and the shift commanders.

**FY-25 Budget/CCVESA:** 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 have submitted the finished product going to the budget analyst for review. I recently had a follow up meeting with our budget analyst. My sincere thanks to all of those involved as this will be I expect a “challenging” budget year. During the next several weeks DFEMS will be meeting with the Department of Management & Budget to determine our recommended 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. Please understand that there is a process, and we can hopefully be successful in our funding. There will be public budget hearings in the Spring, and we will ask for your support there as well. The challenges of inflation, state cuts and limited grant funding are a reality and so we must all be prepared for alternatives, compromises and adjustments. Tomorrow when we meet with the Commissioners you will have an opportunity to discuss further.

**SOPs:** We are continuing in our process with FROPS and ESAC to move forward with our operational SOPs. The prior CCVESA approved SOPs and some of those from the previous director where applicable are being converted to 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 recently met with the ECC staff and we will work collaboratively to address this area in an effort to make our incident scenes safer with assured communications access.

**Data Analyst: Katie Spurrier,** has hit the ground running and is becoming acclimated to both Keystone and ERS. A sincere thanks to Chairman Baker who has spent some time with Katie as well as several “test” companies to get our process correct. She is going to be developing an “annual report” which should go out in a validated/correct format 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. We continue to work on a proposal for the budget to assure funding for this initiative which is not an option.

**Annual Report:** Working with our data analyst we are currently compiling data for an “Annual Report.” This will be a reflection of CY-23 and the many accomplishments of DFEMS. I still need to have a section on accomplishments and an overview of ESAC and their activities.

**LMS (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. We are in contact with our LMS vendor and the ESO vendor so the two systems can integrate and we can avoid duplication of effort.

**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. An update to the project is that we are moving ahead and we will be meeting with the architect in the next several weeks to verify the project elements, design and get a schedule to move ahead. The environmental concerns are being addressed by the county land use/planning department.

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 or later. The demolition of the interior is complete and the bidding process for various parts of this project have begun. This will house our quartermaster who is working out of a temporary office at the PSTC.

**EMS Billing: So far since we began 7/1/23 we have billed for >\$6 million with a return so far of close to \$2 million.** Kudos to our EMS Billing Technicians Amy and Jennifer whose efforts 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. We recently met with the MD Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to get on board with the ESSR 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. We have made application and even with just six companies on board we estimate an additional revenue from this of \$800K for the current year. We are currently in discussions with Budget/Finance as to how we can best utilize this funding to offset DFEMS costs with a focus on enhancing our EMS capabilities and to stay current with technology.

**OPEERATIONS STAFF RETREAT:** We have had to cancel this event and I am in contact with the NFA to reschedule this. The academy had some logistical issues due to MD weekend cancellation and no other programs on campus. We will try to reschedule asap so we can go through this important process to better define “where we are and where we want to go!” More to follow.

**Background checks:** These have begun and AC Brothers presented an overview and some direction at the last CCVESA meeting. Specific issues can be vetted through Callie and we are progressing with many backgrounds having been completed. Again our personnel to use this program are:

1. All riding/operational members
  2. All new applicants for a VFC
  3. Anyone who participates in LOSAP and is a functional administrative member.
- We are developing an SOP which will come to ESAC and will include the exclusionary criteria which will essentially consist of felony convictions, sexual convictions, financial crimes and we would welcome input as we move forward. I appreciate everyone’s assistance and support of this project.

**VEHICLES:** We now have the shift commander and two of our three ALS cars in their new Tahoes. We are awaiting on two additional Tahoe’s to complete their upfitting. We also now have six medic units on order and the Commissioners approved two demo units that we have purchased for about \$820,000 and meet our specifications. We met today with the dealer, and these are both Demers units on Ford Chassis and will include the new stretcher systems and an ultraviolet decontamination system. We anticipate delivery by the end of March, and these are being built in Canada and currently on the assembly line. He also are awaiting four Ford/Horton units which we anticipate by September. The first two units will go to Westminster and Mt. Airy and we are determining based on mileage/age where the next four units will go. These units will be the DFEMS color scheme of white with red reflective striping and lettered with Carroll/County DFEMS. The station name will be prominent and on the front door of each unit. We are also awaiting a new QM van for our quartermaster which is several weeks away. In FY-25 we will be procuring two 4x4 pickup units (Ford F-250 diesels) to be configured as a shift commander and a safety officer unit. In addition, we will also order two additional medic units. We are also continuing to discuss our future maintenance needs with DPW/fleet.

**COMMENDATIONS:** The Carroll County Chamber of Commerce is moving forward with their annual awards program. I will send out to all companies the criteria and will centralize the applications through our office for pass on to the chamber committee to prevent duplication and assure consistency. It is important that we recognize our “heroes” and other contributors that keep Carroll County safe. There are both career and volunteer awards to be made and anyone can submit persons in the various categories. The event will be held as a breakfast in May at Pleasant Valley and it is important that we all support this cause. In the future? It would be appropriate for a county-wide/DFEMS commendations board and the creation of county awards in multiple categories. More to come on that and ESAC would certainly be a part of it.

*Chief Michael W. Robinson*