

Emergency Services Advisory Council  
April 17, 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), Commissioner Michael Guerin

Members Absent: Brett Six, Blane Wright

Public: Mary Carol Stiffler- CCVESA Treasurer, Shift Commander Lt. Josh Pierson- DFEMS

Chairman Baker opened the meeting at 19:00 with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence in memory of Charles Barnhart.

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

Board Member Comments:

-Chairman Baker stated that he and Callie Williams are working on the Volunteer Background Check Policy and will send it out when finished.

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson reported that the Board of Commissioners has approved the creation of the Deputy Chief of Operations position.

-Chief Robinson was asked to cut \$2.8 million from the DFEMS FY25 budget. He believes he can accomplish this and still be able to staff a medic unit at each of the remaining seven fire companies. He does not want compromise EMS delivery.

-The additional funding requested by CCVESA is not being included in the county's FY25 recommended budget.

-The hiring process for the new Assistant Chief of EMS will begin in the next several weeks.

-Chief Robinson asked that the remaining fire companies that have not been staffed by DFEMS maintain their corporate employees until August.

-Chief Robinson shared recruiting events/job fairs that DFEMS plans to attend.

- Chief Robinson is still offering to meet with individual companies to discuss concerns.
- The two new ambulances have been received and delivered to Mt. Airy and Westminster.
- The DFEMS Data Analyst is finalizing the annual report. She will be attending next week's FROPS meeting.
- Chief Robinson shared that the Data Analyst is also taking the lead on the transition to ESO. The cost is a concern and we are exploring which modules will be included in the package.

Commissioner's Report: Nothing to report.

Medical Director's Report:

- Dr. Kemp reported that QA is continuing. There have been some significant issues recently and there are still areas for improvement.
- Several new medics from recent hiring cycles have been cleared.
- Dr. Kemp has written a policy on DNR B patients that will be out soon.
- The cadaver lab was held yesterday and was well-received. Several chase medics have been cleared to do surgical cricothyrotomy.
- The Shock Trauma Go Team presentation will be held next week on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

CCVESA President's Report:

- Susan Mott thanked those that came and supported CCVESA during their budget hearing.
- Susan Mott addressed the letter that was sent to the Commissioners from CCVESA in January to which they did not receive a response.
- The marketing team are coming to several fire stations on Sunday to do interviews and take photos.
- Junior Day is scheduled for Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at Gamber.
- Volunteer Appreciation event is being held at Red Barn on Sunday.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS

- David Coe reported that EMSOPS met last month and is meeting again tomorrow. Acting Assistant Chief Zaney is doing a great job.

FROPS

- Andrew Wooden reported that the county's Fleet Manager came to the last FROPS meeting and the information he shared was helpful.

-The Training Committee also came to the last FROPS meeting. There are plans to come up with a standardized countywide training for the rapid intervention team (RID).

-FROPS discussed the Caltapo software that is being implemented. Chief Hipsley is working on this initiative.

-The Communications Policy is waiting on Chief Robinson to meet with Jack Brown.

### Old Business:

- Budget Going Forward
  - The new plan approved by the Commissioners for staffing the remaining stations includes 60 positions instead of 84. There are currently no plans for staffing in future fiscal years.
  - Mike Karolenko stated that, in his opinion, ESAC has not made the case for why the 84 positions are essential. Several members disagreed, saying the justification has been to get the stations to the staffing levels they currently have and to get a baseline for future staffing needs. Mike Karolenko states is confusion among the Commissioners about what is needed. He is concerned about spreading staff too thin and negative morale.
  - Susan Mott agreed that there is a lack of understanding among the Commissioners as well as the community about why these positions are important.
  - Linas Saurusaitis feels that ESAC has been clear about the need for 84 positions. He mentioned that Commissioner Kiler has met with Manchester and Hampstead Fire Departments and is setting up a meeting with Lineboro.
  - Commissioner Guerin described challenges with the FY25 budget including an \$18 million reduction in revenue. Fire & EMS was one of the only budgets to see any increase. He agrees that the BOC needs to “own” fire and EMS.
  - Susan Mott inquired as to how the remaining fire companies will pay for the FADOs if those positions are cut from the DFEMS budget.
  - Chairman Baker suggested taking any vacant positions that were eliminated within county government and moving those funds to the DFEMS budget.
  - Chief Robinson questioned if the county should be paying for FADOs and called on the volunteers to step up.

- Linas Saurusaitis stated that whatever is cut from the FY25 budget should automatically be added to FY26. The 84 positions are still needed. He emphasized that the volunteer system is not obsolete. Data will drive where we need to go next. Focus on what is rather than what if.
- Lithium Ion Battery Policy – Tabled until next meeting.

### New Business

- New Windsor Apparatus Requests
  - Request to replace Engine 101
    - Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to approve the request. Dr. Murphy seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
  - Request to replace Brush 105.
    - Need clarification as to whether this is a refurbishment or replacement. If it is a refurbishment, this process does not apply.
    - Mike Karolenko made a motion to approve the request if it is a replacement. Andrew Wooden seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- Background Checks for Volunteers
  - Susan Mott shared some questions from Pleasant Valley about the background checks.
  - Chief Robinson commented that this was a recommendation from our insurance provider and a liability for the county if not done. If companies can show documentation that they have completed a recent background check on someone, he would look into it.
- Chairman Baker stated that the ESAC citizen representative vacancies were shared on social media and as a result we have at least two applications.
- Statistics from Data Analyst
  - The number of fire and EMS calls have gone down for most stations. This could be due to DFEMS staffing in other stations.
  - Certain stations did see an increase in calls.

- Andrew Wooden stated that Reese 's increase in calls may be due to them having their Rescue Squad back after not having it for a year.
- Please let Chairman Baker or Katie Spurrier know if there are any issues with these statistics.
  
- Hospital Wait Times
  - Chairman Baker stated that there have been complaints from providers about wait times at the hospital.
  - Lt. Pierson said average wait time is 3-4 hours.
  - Dr. Kemp emphasized that providers need to document accurate wait times. The data shows much lower wait times.
  - David Coe suggested an SOP defining transfer of care.
  
- The June ESAC meeting is tentatively moved to June 26<sup>th</sup> due to the Maryland State Firemen's Association Convention.

Action Items:

1. Commissioner Guerin will investigate the letter sent by CCVESA in January and provide a response.

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Murphy seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 20:41.



## Report to ESAC

April 17, 2024

**Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director**

Since our last meeting, I have been focused in multiple areas with prioritization of our budget process and on our personnel recruitment and hiring. As I elaborate, I want to recognize the passing of **Reverend Charles Barnhart** whom I have known for over 40 years.

Charlie was a true Carroll County legacy and, in his 50, + years in the emergency services of the county he was dedicated on many fronts including active membership with the Taneytown VFC, as a pioneer who helped establish EMS within the county and at the state MSFA level on many committees and finally as a long term MSFA chaplain. Charlie was an original dispatcher when Carroll established a central alarm system and as a clergyman he was at the forefront of countless events and presided at hundreds of weddings, baptisms and funerals of emergency services members. Services will include a viewing tomorrow evening and a funeral on Friday morning. ESAC member Brett Six can provide further details. Condolences to all who are impacted by Charlies passing and his legend will certainly remain. RIP good and faithful servant!

I am also pleased to announce that the Commissioners have approved in the FY-24 budget the position of **Deputy Chief of Operations**. This position which was supported by ESAC will become reality by 7/1/24. We are in the process of finalizing a position specification which will then require advertising which we will do nationally as well as a promotional process. This position will provide oversight to our four shifts for consistency and also serve as the professional standards officer to provide oversight for internal affairs, discipline management and policy development.

**Budget:** The process has been ongoing for several weeks and most have been following the live deliberations among the commissioners. Our focus has been on two fronts the first of which has been the 84 positions from the finalized 2023 staffing plan which provided for 28 FADOs, 28 FF/EMTs and 24 PM or FF/PMs for FY-25. These positions would staff the remaining seven stations to assure 24/7 staffing for a medic unit and a FADO at Hampstead, Pleasant Valley, Lineboro, Union Bridge, New Windsor, Gamber and Winfield. I have met with the Commissioners several times on this funding, and it has been the topic of significant deliberation. At this point we have been asked to cut \$2.8 million from our FY-25 budget and that I was to determine the “how/what” of this proposal. Based on prior input from ESAC and within DFEMS I am currently working on several options.

Fundamental to this direction is the essential staffing of our EMS assets which will equate to a staffed medic unit 24/7 in all of the seven remaining stations. This will assure coverage for 80% of our mission and Katie has the data to support this direction. This leaves us with no funding for FADOs at each station which has a significant impact on DFEMS/VFC operations. The most viable option here could be 50 hr./week staffing by restoring CCVESA funding that was not

placed in the FY-25 budget for corporate FADOs. This would require full volunteer staffing of suppression units on nights/weekends. There would be no funding in this for benefits and billing monies would no longer be available. The other option is to look at placing a medic crew consisting of a FADO and an FF/PM and implementing a “handle first emergency” policy at the seven stations. In any case these cuts will greatly impact our staffing capabilities.

Another option will be to eliminate our 24 “floater” positions and redistribute those to cover the vacancies from the loss of 28 FADOs which decreases the net loss by only four positions which would then be covered through overtime. I am working on these contingencies at my level as that is the direction provided to me. I will certainly seek the input of ESAC as we choose the most efficient direction that can still allow us to provide a consistent level of service. This is not yet a final “deal” so I will consider this a work in progress as we face the inevitable challenges of the FY-25 budget.

We are still anticipating the creation of four additional lieutenants to upgrade four of the FF/PMs on one of our ALS chase cars. In addition, we have requested the upgrade of our four shift commanders to the level of captain. These positions are even more critical if our anticipated staffing additions do not materialize completely.

The second area of the budget is the proposal presented by the CCVESA treasurer and president for FY-25 which recommended a \$300,000 increase in the budget to support several initiatives to include funding for ongoing maintenance consistent to the MOU. Those recommendations were not approved to go forward in the operating budget presentation. We are looking at alternatives as to how we can meet those areas of the MOU. The individual station budgets will meet the 3% threshold and I see adequate funding being provided for each station. However, we are still going to be challenged given the ongoing inflation rate which impacts the costs of goods and services. We also recognize the increased challenges for VFC fundraising given the current economy.

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.

**Personnel Issues:** AC Eric Zaney continues to do an outstanding job and has made some great progress within EMS. His many years of EMS administrative experience are being used to positively impact further development of our EMS system. At the same time our acting shift commanders Max Nickey (A) and Russell Halterman (B) are doing an excellent job and along with our other shift commanders Josh Pierson (C) and Guy Garheart (D) they are doing great with daily operations, staffing and troubleshooting. Their call volume has also gone up and they have been busy with a number of working incidents. Our goal is to replace the vacancies through a position advertisement and then a promotional process which can hopefully be complete by July 1.

**Hiring Process:** We are currently at 135 positions(uniformed) and eight civilian administrative positions. We continue our advertising for paramedic positions and have begun the processing of 48 persons who are now complete with the written exam, physical ability, interview and have now completed 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 budgeted. This week we made conditional offers to 7FF/EMTs in addition to 7FF/PMs who are processing and the reclassification of a FF/EMT to a FADO vacancy. We are anticipating a start date in May which will give us some latitude for vacation coverage.

This will take is up to our 148, FY-24 positions. The remaining persons being process3e will provide for FY-25 staffing which will begin on 7/18/24. We will again advertise for FF/EMTs to begin the needed staffing for the anticipated 56 positions for FY 25. We are very active with our recruiting efforts and did two college job fairs yesterday with other recruitment events on the horizon. We will have a recruitment booth at the MSFA convention in June as well. Information sessions will be scheduled as needed and when we get candidates, we will test them within weeks



of their application process. HR is fully vetted and part of our process which given our experience over a year we now have a viable hiring process in place. We are also looking at each element of the process for quality improvement and have been meeting with other vendors to address testing, backgrounds and other areas.

**Transition to county employees:** Meetings with stations to receive county employees are ongoing and they will be included in discussions regarding how their stations are staffed and the priorities and order in which the new staffing will take place.

**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.

**Vehicles/procurement:** We recently received our two 2023 Ford F-450/Demers Type I ambulances and both have been placed at their respective stations: Westminster and Mt. Airy. We are now working to have each of them titled and mounting/installing equipment. We are going to be standardizing equipment locations on each for redundancy. These units will hopefully go in service in the next two weeks. They will be followed by four additional units slated for August delivery and then we will order two additional units within the FY-25 budget. These will go out for competitive bid, and we are evaluating our current specifications for ambulances.

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 awaiting some final marking. Our challenge now is having enough reserve units to facilitate down time of these first line vehicles. We also have additional vehicles for FY-25 including a vehicle for the deputy chief.

**Data Analyst: Katie Spurrier,** has a report this evening which shows her progress. She has done a tremendous job and we will soon be publishing our annual report for CY-23. She is also taking the lead on our incident reporting data replacement project and will provide an overview on that process. That initiative is included in the Fy-25 budget. As we move towards that we will need to discuss what an incident is and how we calculate our data so that we have uniformity. We will also be moving to a single silo and will be coordinating all reporting through DFEMS which we will then send to the state. This will allow us to be recognized as a jurisdiction for FEMA grant purposes.

**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. 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 manage their billing.

**Chamber of Commerce: Public Safety Awards** will be held on Monday, 5/13/24 at the Pleasant Valley VFC at 0800 with a breakfast. We will be recognizing quite a few personnel who provided life saving and even heroic actions during multiple 2023 incidents. We will also honor a career and a volunteer Fire/EMS provider of the year. I thank all of those companies who submitted awards. As a member of the committee, it was challenging to make the selections and I believe those who are being honored have earned exemplified their roles. Tickets are available through the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce site.

**CCVESA:** I will be in attendance at the annual convention at Pleasant Valley on 5/11/24. I want to acknowledge President Mott for her leadership and focus over the past year of her term. I look forward to working cooperatively with the new president and elected officers beginning after the convention. I thank CCVESA for their objectivity and on-going support of our DFEMS system as we move forward.

Finally, I will be going in for surgery on Monday, 4/22/24 for removal of a metastasized tumor so I will be out for several days next week. Prayers are welcomed and I anticipate returning to full duty. AC Brothers will be covering my duties during my absence.

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*