

Emergency Services Advisory Council
December 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Rick Baker, Michael Robinson, Michael Karolenko, Linas Saurusaitis, Robert Buckley, Dan Plunkert, David Coe, Dr. John Murphy, Michael Guerin, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, Brett Six, Andrew Wooden

Members Absent: Susan Mott, Blane Wright

Public Present: Louis Stiffler- 2nd Battalion Representative IAFF Local 5184, Guy Garheart- Lt. Shift Commander DFEMS

Guests: Katie Spurrier- Data Analyst DFEMS

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

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

Board Member Comments:

Chairman Baker would like to add the proposed bylaw change and the Mt. Airy VFC apparatus replacement request to tonight's agenda.

Public Comments: None at this time.

Commissioner's Report:

-Commissioner Guerin attended several fire company breakfasts this month.
-Commissioner Guerin notes that we are six months into DFEMS staffing and there have been challenges. There may be additions necessary to the plan for year 3. He emphasized the importance of fire, EMS and police in the county. He also spoke of the need for the County Commissioners to take ownership of the DFEMS and its success or failure.

Chairman Baker introduced Katie Spurrier, Data Analyst for DFEMS. Katie shared a draft of a report she has been working on. Chairman Baker asked that fire companies send Katie their total incident/call numbers for comparison.

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

- Chief Robinson outlined some projects that the Data Analyst will focus on.
- Chief Robinson stated that the proposed change to the ESAC bylaws is on the agenda for the BOC Open Session tomorrow, Dec. 21st. Volunteer background checks will also be on the agenda.
- Hiring update: Five Firefighter/Paramedics will report for new employee orientation on January 4, 2024. Nine additional Paramedics and Firefighter/Paramedics are currently going through the hiring process.
- Applications for the anticipated 84 positions will open in January 2024.
- Chief Robinson discussed the increase in accidents involving employees and/or volunteers and plans to mitigate this issue.
- Chief Robinson invited companies to schedule individual meetings with him if they have questions or concerns as we move forward in the transition.

Linus Saurusaitis commented that companies need to be informed as soon as possible if they will not be staffed in July 2024 as planned.

Dan Plunkert inquired about the ability of the fire companies to apply for/receive grant funds once we move to a single silo for data.

Medical Director's Report:

- Dr. Kemp shared that the ALS recertification is underway and gave an update on the Ketamine program.
- Dr. Kemp discussed problems with Airtraq and the possibility of using UEScopes instead.
- Dr. Kemp shared plans to pilot ultrasound in the field. Some equipment has been purchased and an education program is being developed.
- The quarterly meeting with Carroll Hospital was held. There were around 200 consults for the year. Wait times continue to decline despite high acuity.
- Dr. Kemp reported there have been several very high acuity calls with good patient care and good saves.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS- No meeting last month per David Coe. The next meeting is tomorrow.

FROPS:

- Andrew Wooden reported concerns about vehicle maintenance. FROPS is hoping to meet with the Fleet Manager and try to streamline the process.
- Andrew Wooden inquired about assisting older members with computer use for online trainings.

Dan Plunkert commented on the lack of communication regarding the allotment money for ambulance maintenance and the lack of a cost analysis.

CCVESA President's Report: Not present.

Old Business:

- Staffing Committee Update
 - Linas Saurusaitis reported that the committee met November 8th. They discussed the primary staffing option which is the 84 positions to staff the remaining seven stations. They want to investigate the initial ESAC staffing plan. Groundwork was laid for future discussions.
 - Mike Karolenko commented on the lack of depth in management and supervision. Adequate supervision would help with the goal of recruiting and retaining quality, cross-trained people.
 - Dan Plunkert recommended that the committee utilize the UMBC report that was previously completed.
 - Linas Saurusaitis noted that anything less than the 84 positions for year 3 would be a reduction in service. He noted that it will be difficult for the committee to come up with answers in such a short amount of time.

- ESAC Bylaw Change
 - Chairman Baker will be attending the BOC Open Session tomorrow regarding the proposed bylaw change. He was unaware that this item was on the agenda until this week.
 - Chairman Baker noted the original language for the bylaws did not mention the union but it was changed by the previous Board of Commissioners. If the majority of employees are union members, then most likely both ESAC career representatives will be union members.
 - It was Mike Karolenko's opinion that this issue goes beyond just ESAC. The line about the union was added to guarantee them a seat at the table. The change sends a negative message to the career employees.
 - Commissioner Guerin plans to inquire about how this item came to be added to the agenda and whether or not protocols were followed.

- Fireground Communications Policy
 - Andrew Wooden stated that Emergency Communications (ECC) will not be able to manage switching talkgroups so that portion of the policy will be removed. An unmonitored talkgroup will be provided. The train-the-trainer has been halted. A lot of what is in the policy is already happening, but the policy will set the standard and hold people accountable.
 - Linas Saurusaitis and Chairman Baker have both been informed that some volunteer fire chiefs are not okay with the policy.
 - Andrew Wooden proposed to table to policy for now. He made the suggestion that an ECC representative attend FROPS meetings.

New Business

- Mt. Airy VFC Apparatus Request
 - ESAC discussed the letter sent by Mt. Airy VFC Chief Russell Halterman requesting to replace the current Rescue 1.
 - The proposed replacement unit does not meet the current engine spec which specifies a minimum 750 gallon booster tank capacity. MAVFC is requesting a waiver. Both their current unit and the proposed replacement have a 500 gallon tank.
 - Discussion focused on why have standards if we are not going to use them, but several in the group understood the reasoning for the 500 gallon tank to get the hose bed lower for safety reasons. No response was drafted but will have to be at the next ESAC meeting.
- Bob Buckley inquired about the chase cars not being utilized as promised. Chase Cars have not been upgrading BLS units, but instead an additional ALS unit is being dispatched.
 - Chief Robinson stated that this issue has recently been addressed. Chase cars will now do the upgrade.
 - Andrew Wooden suggested taking the floater medic and putting two medics in a chase car with a second set of ALS gear so if one upgrades the BLS unit the chase car can still be utilized.

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Murphy seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:30.



Report to ESAC

December 20, 2023

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Attached is my monthly report and please review and provide me with any follow up questions.

Data Analyst: DFEMS welcomes Ms. Katie Spurrier to our team, and she is here this evening to meet members of ESAC. Katie is already focused on data analytics in a number of areas. She will be producing a monthly statistical summary for ESAC as well as the Commissioners. In addition, we are going to be producing a comprehensive annual report of our CY-23 activities. Some ongoing projects will include:

1. Transition to the ESO or comparable incident reporting system
2. Transition to the NERIS system which will replace NFIRS in 2025
3. Moving to DFEMS as the reporting entity and thus gaining recognition as a Fire/EMS jurisdiction.
4. Working with the 14 companies to standardize reporting and specific data points.
5. Determining EMS unit/hour utilization
6. Integrating enhanced GIS use to our data
7. Establishing a volunteer data base for administrative purposes
8. Applying data analytics to our budget process to include cost-analysis.
9. Greater integration of EMS reporting with Fire reporting

Recommended By-laws changes for ESAC bylaws. Whereas the ESAC bylaws are a component of Chapter 37 under the Code of Regulations for Carroll County, there has been a recommendation made to change language. Specifically, this would change the career representation on the ESAC from a union representative and a non-union representative with language that will state “two career employees.” I believe this is more in line with our direction as of 7/1/23 where there will no longer be any corporate employees, so the term union is no longer applicable, and the BCC is still the appointing authority for members. This will make things more equitable if we compare employee representatives with the geographic representatives which come from the volunteer companies. The county attorney is responsible for the language change and the process will begin with a reading of the changes and then a period of time for public comment, review and then a final vote from the BCC to codify the recommended changes. Each member should have received a “DRAFT” of the legislation and if that hasn’t happened contact Callie.

We are on the BOCC meeting agenda for tomorrow around 10-11 range and all are invited to attend, and I believe Rick may have a comment and be in attendance. This actually goes back to the original bylaws, so this has been discussed/debated at length. I anticipate some discussion but confident that the change will be incorporated.

Leadership retreat: This will be held on Saturday 2/24 from 0700 to 17 at the National Fire Academy. The leadership retreat objective: air our differences, discuss challenges and move forward. The meeting would be limited to the Fire Chief of each of our 14 VFCs (or alternate chief), the two assistant chiefs,

shift commanders and myself. We will determine an agenda and are securing a facilitator. Formal invitations will go out in early January.

Hiring process:

Is ongoing and we have just made final offers to five FF/Paramedics who will begin with their orientation on Thursday, January 4, 2023. They will spend about 5 days at the academy with a curriculum tailored to their experience and focusing on compliance, driving and safety. They will then be additional staffing on medic units until cleared by their preceptors. This week we had 9 additional paramedics and FF/Paramedics successfully complete our written exam and they are now in the remainder of the testing process to be hired by mid-February. These groups will put our field staffing to a level of all budgeted FY-24 positions with 148 personnel and another 10 in staff positions for a total of 158 DFEMS personnel. This is quite an accomplishment over two years.

We are optimistic that our 84 field positions to convert 7 VFCs to DFEMS will occur after July 1, 2025. So, we are currently offering multiple information sessions (12/28 is next) as well as marketing for 28 FF/EMTs, 28 PM or FF/PMs and 28 FADOs as well as a lieutenant vacancy or 85 total positions. An application period of 1+ month will begin in January through early February. This will give us about 5 months for the hiring process. These exact numbers may fluctuate depending on the FY 25 budget process. We have also requested the upgrade of an ALS car to 4 lieutenants, 2 training lieutenants, an operation chief (AC or DC level) and an additional admin support person. So, we are and will continue to remain busy.

Transition to county employees: With the final component of our three-year staffing plan being on the horizon for FY-25. 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! It is my intent soon to schedule meetings with at least the president, chief and (boards if desired) of each impacted company to go over such concerns as staffing. Who will be assigned? The transition to county billing? Compliance with the MOU and other issues. 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 and to avoid any conflicts. These meetings will begin in February 2024. For your planning purposes you can submit meeting request dates directly to Callie: Cwilliams@carrollcountymd.gov

FY-25 Budget/CCVESA: The budget submission process is complete, and I will be working with our budget analyst to review both the CCVESA and the overall operating budget for FY-25. At this time there will be no EVOD or EMS personnel funding requested. We will have a budget contingency for continuation of corporate employees as required and that would be funded under DFEMS as required while we hire/transition the remaining DFEMS employees. We are also looking at other areas as recommended by the CCVESA budget, and this will include a strategic approach to additional building maintenance and infrastructure. The budget will be our greatest challenge both this year and in the near future. We can only recommend and the ultimate approval rests with the Commissioners.

EMS Maintenance: As discussed, previously the county took over the responsibility for the maintenance of company owned EMS/ambulance units that are staffed by county employees. According to budget those funds were removed from company budgets for FY-24. Since there seems to be some discrepancy

as to this action, I have asked our budget analyst to validate and that is still being worked on. In the interim please save all receipts for ambulance repairs. We have approval on allowing multiple vendors to provide services but since the county will be funding, we must work within their procurement parameters. This is county law in terms of how goods/services are awarded, and we will need to fall into compliance with this. More to follow upon my return as budget reconciles the funding part of this. An SOP for this will be forthcoming.

SOPs: We are continuing in our process with FROPs and ESAC to move forward with our operational SOPs. We recently implemented the new Fireground Operations Policy, Communications and several others that have been vetted through the process. Communications will be discussed tonight. Training is now developed to educate the field personnel and then we will move to our mutual aid partners. Both groups along with DFEMS are working collaboratively to move this forward. Our personnel/HR SOPs along with a review by the Law office and HR Department are complete. Our next priority is to incorporate the former CCVESA SOPs into the DFEMS SOPs where applicable. As these have all gone through a prior approval process it would be my intent to format them and move forward.

One of our companies was recently visited by MOSH and cited for multiple issues regarding MOSH regulations. Our Health & Safety Officer, AC Brothers, is working with the company to resolve and there will be a follow up meeting with MOSH this week. As a result, we are continuing work on a comprehensive set of Safety & Health SOPs which may require some subsequent station inspections as we began last spring. These inspections would involve our insurer (VFIS) along with your corporate representative and AC Brothers. Compliance training is underway and must be completed by 1/1/24. We have several modified duty personnel to assist in this area.

Department of Public Safety: I am now engaging with Director Hawkins on a weekly basis to address issues related to DPS and specifically the 911 center and communications issues. In addition, we are discussing radios and expansion of electronic needs as new apparatus is purchased. DPS will no longer engage individual companies for new radio/MDT resources. These will need to come through DFEMS so we can better prepare. Also, for any apparatus replacement the ESAC/Apparatus policy is now in place and that should be the first step for companies procuring new or used apparatus. Generally, replacements that are 1:1 should not be an issue. However, per the agreed upon policy any new service or change of apparatus type must be vetted through the ESAC process. After the first of the year there will be a recall of numerous radios from each company. We are going to place current edition radios at the PSTC so all who are trained can utilize the current radios within our system. With the evolution of DFEMS we no longer have EMS persons coming from home to staff primary EMS units, so we have a number of portables that are no longer required. This will be handled through FROPS, EMSOPs and the individual chief officers.

Training Center Expansion: Some progress and AC Brothers can elaborate. We do have a new county card key system that was in our budget process. This caused some concerns that volunteers would not be receiving access and that never occurred nor was that our intent. All CCVESA officers, training personnel and MFRI instructors have received their cards for access. This is part of a comprehensive IT project at the PSTC since it was not built with any county IT infrastructure. This project will also put all PSTC IT on a schedule for upgrades and replacement. We are moving forward with some changes related to the required site drainage design. AC Brothers can provide an update on this.

Along with this project we are moving forward with a logistics/warehouse facility on the PSTC campus. There are some delays and we have reiterated our need for that building renovation to progress as this will be the site of the new quartermaster and his operation. A meeting did occur and that is going out for bid with progress to begin by the Spring. The new QM is on board and doing well.

EMS Billing: Along with our two new EMS Billing Technicians (Jennifer Canary & Amy Rigler) - We are making progress in this area. We have seen a significant increase in our billing capabilities and volume. The volunteer payments are being resolved and payment should be normalized by now. We are formally applying for the Medicaid Windfall payments and have set up a meeting with the state to officially begin our process. This yields additional funding for all MD Medical Assistance (Medicaid) and should yield substantial funding into the DFEMS budget. However, it will take a year to fruition. If you have any issues, you can contact the EMS billing section: (410) 386-6800 and Jen or Amy can assist you.

Training: The MD Fire Chief's: Will be hosting here at the PSTC the annual "Mark Falkenhan Fire Operations Seminar." This will occur on Saturday, 1/24/23 beginning at 0800 with a national speaker. You can pre-register via MFRI.org

Background Checks: We have selected a vendor for our volunteer background checks which will begin for all VFC members in January. We will be on the agenda for the BOCC tomorrow and will hopefully be approved to start the process and will work with each VFC to assure a user friendly process. The vendor selected currently performs the checks for Rec & Parks volunteers who also share in some of the same concerns as we do. These will be done initially and then we will discuss and make a decision on the frequency. MVA checks will include flagging any members with a moving violation and this is a preference from our insurance carrier. We recently had an MVA flag on a corporate employee who is no longer authorized to drive any county or corporate vehicles. Another reason for these checks which may also impact our insurance premiums.

Health Issues: I am not placing details in the minutes but will personally speak with ESAC on some significant health issues that I am currently dealing with now and into the near future. More to follow.

Holidays:

I want to extend to each of you on ESAC my "best wishes & season's greetings" for a joyous holiday season and a prosperous New Year! I thank you for all that you do for DFEMS and Carroll County!

Michael

Respectfully submitted,
Michael W. Robinson, MA, CFO, NRP
Director/Chief



MWR/mr



MOUNT AIRY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY, INC.

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BUSINESS PHONES
301-829-0100 • 301-831-7454 • 410-795-8055
FAX LINE
301-829-2353
EMERGENCY PHONE
911

December 18th, 2023

Chief Michael Robinson
Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS
225 North Court Street
Westminster, MD 21157

Chief Robinson,

The Mount Airy Volunteer Fire Company is requesting approval to replace our current Rescue 1 with a similarly specced Rescue Pumper. This replacement unit's spec is being written to meet the Carroll County's current Rescue standard. As with our current unit, we are also designing the unit in accordance with the county's Class A pumper standards, except for the minimum listed booster tank capacity of 750-gallons. To meet the current Class A standard, we are seeking a waiver to design the replacement Rescue 1 with the same 500-gallon booster tank that our current 2007 Rescue 1 is equipped with instead of the county recognized standard of 750-gallons.

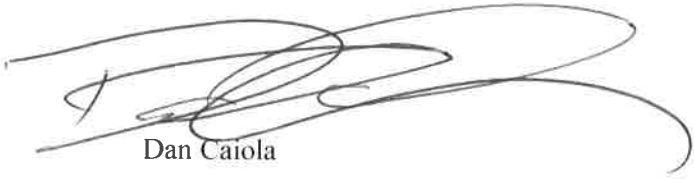
This waiver is requested to save on the unit's gross weight and to maximize overall compartment space. Currently our frontline engine, Engine 12, is reaching the end of its front-line service life and it is highly likely that E12's out of service time may increase in the future. As we are all aware there is a limited pool of reserve suppression apparatus currently within the county fleet. Once the new Rescue 1 is completed without this waiver and given the lack of available reserve resources it would be extremely difficult for us to ensure a class A standard pumper remains available at Mount Airy if Engine 12 goes out-of-service. With the addition of the county career staff, increases in our response staffing and the presence of our 3500-gallon tanker, we are confident that the minimal loss of 250-gallons of water on this new unit will not jeopardize safety or county operations.

We plan to use corporation funds to purchase the replacement unit, with the possibility of utilizing a low interest loan from the County. Delivery time is likely to be between 3 to 4 years from now depending on the manufacturer we decide to purchase from.

Our goal is to build a versatile dual-purpose unit that will ultimately be safer and more efficient to meet the community and county needs. We believe approving this waiver will not unfavorably impact or delay service to the community in the future. We are happy to discuss this request in greater detail should you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Russell Halterman, ADN, RN, NRP
Fire Chief

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Caiola', with several large, sweeping loops and flourishes extending to the right and upwards.

Dan Caiola

President

cc. Andrew Wooden – FROPS Chair