

Emergency Services Advisory Council
November 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Michael Robinson, Rick Baker, JJ Lynott, Tim Legore, Michael Karolenko, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, David Coe, George Wentz, Robert Ruch, Dan Plunkert, Joe Brown

Members Absent: Michael Guerin, Blane Wright, Scott Dickson, Brett Six

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

Dan Plunkert made a motion to approve the October meeting minutes. Robert Ruch seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments: None at this time

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson announced that Jack Brown, Emergency Communications Manager for the county, has retired. Ashley Burgan and Amanda Poore will be the interim contacts.

-Chief Robinson stated that there are significant challenges with the state budget this year, but there is no change to DFEMS's revenue projections and he is still hoping to increase areas of the operating budget.

-Hiring process update: 11 new employees started on Nov. 7th. Chief Robinson hopes to staff station 10 (New Windsor) by the end of Dec. 2024 or in Jan. 2025.

-Changes to the DFEMS hiring process: There is a new written exam, the six-month waiting period after not passing the written exam has been eliminated, the psychological exam has been eliminated and the background check for candidates will now be done in house.

-The first of five new ambulances has been received and is in service (medic 59). Medic 49 will go in service next week followed by 29, 129 then 139.

-A sixth ambulance is being assembled in Florida and should be ready late winter.

-Chief Robinson thanked the fire companies that are backfilling tomorrow so that DFEMS personnel can attend the pinning ceremony for 2024 hires.

Robert Ruch inquired about statistical data on the chase cars. Chairman Baker responded that this information will be added to the Data Analyst's report for next month.

The group discussed how the chase cars are being utilized in the field. Some ESAC members feel that the chase cars are not being dispatched efficiently and that there are issues with personnel not adding themselves to calls. Chief Robinson asked that specific concerns be emailed to Callie Williams. Deputy Chief Supko will be working directly with dispatch to resolve issues. The group also discussed how the potential upgrade of the chase car medic position to Lieutenant will impact operations. Some ESAC members feel the role needs to be more clearly defined and for there to be greater accountability.

Commissioner's Report: Not present.

Medical Director's Report:

-Dr. Kemp reported that DFEMS is still working on the whole blood program. The plan is to utilize EMS billing revenue. A courier will be needed to transport the blood from another hospital as Carroll Hospital Center is not yet prepared to provide this service.

-ALS skills dates for January are coming out soon.

-The DFEMS monthly continuing education session was held last night with over 50 people in attendance.

-Dr. Kemp is tracking and looking for patterns in helicopter usage.

-LIFEPAK-35s are now on the chase cars and clinicians are being trained on them as part of the mandatory ALS skills sessions in January.

-Dr. Kemp noted that there is still an IV fluid shortage so please conserve when possible.

-Esmolol has been added to the protocol but is on backorder.

-An ALS training grant is being utilized for critical care skills including a virtual reality code simulation to help providers learn resuscitation.

-Three new medics have been cleared for independent practice and several more are in the precepting process.

CCVESA President's Report:

-George Wentz reported that CCVESA is working on their budget and continuing to look into recruitment.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS – No report

FROPS – No report

Old Business:

- Volunteer Background Check Policy
 - Dan Plunkert reported concerns from those he represents regarding section f under the list of disqualifiers. If you lose your license you are not allowed to be a member. Some may choose to let their license lapse.
 - David Coe suggested changing language from “Absolute” to “Potential” disqualifiers.
 - Dan Plunkert also reported that some members are concerned with having to provide their social security number.
 - Chief Robinson is considering implementing fingerprinting for volunteers in subsequent years.
 - JJ Lynott commented that we need to do a better job of explaining to the volunteers why the background check is necessary.
 - The group discussed refusal to complete the background check as a disqualifier. If they do not pass the background or refuse to complete it, membership is suspended until they do so.
 - New members as of March 1, 2025 will need to complete the background check. This date is proposed, but will not be determined until the policy is approved and in place.
 - Current members will have until July 1, 2025 to complete the background. This date is proposed, but will not be determined until the policy is approved and in place.

- Meeting with the Commissioners
 - ESAC will have a 20-minute audience with the Board of Commissioners on Dec. 19th during open session.
 - Chairman Baker would like to discuss statistics and the \$4.2 million that the fire companies plan to contribute to apparatus purchases requested through ESAC since Jan. 2024.

- Dan Plunkert inquired as to how MOU issues will be addressed. He stated that the county’s refusal to pay for certain capital projects and building

maintenance/repairs for the fire stations are a perceived violation of the MOU between the county and the fire companies.

- Chairman Baker stated that these issues should be addressed between CCVESA and Chief Robinson. Also, clarification is needed as to what constitutes a capital project.
- Dan Plunket and JJ Lynott suggested that this topic be brought up in the Dec. 19th open session.
- Chief Robinson suggested that the county establish a fund to cover fire station repairs that come up.

New Business:

- Apparatus procurement request
 - DFEMS requests to purchase a 2025 Road Rescue medic unit (replacement for a current unit) to be placed in service January 2025.

Mike Karolenko made a motion to recommend approving the purchase. JJ Lynott seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Action Items:

1. Callie will make updates to the Volunteer Background Check policy and send to ESAC members.

Mike Karolekno made a motion to adjourn. JJ Lynott seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:33.



Report to ESAC

November 20, 2024

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Staffing (VFCs): The transfer of funds from our FY 25 budget was made and \$450,000 is in place to continue staffing New Windsor, Union Bridge and Lineboro. All of these stations continue to staff daily, and reconciliation of the funding is between the budget department and the individual corporations. The funding is available and is reviewed monthly. Our goal is to complete our staffing prior to full expenditure.

Retirement: Mr. Jack Brown the long-time manager of the ECC/911 center has retired as of Monday, 11/18/24. We wish him the best in his next chapter. Ashley Burgan and Amanda Poole the assistant managers will handle his functions as a replacement process moves forward within DPS. Also, they have been successful in their hiring process for a number of ECC vacancies so they should soon be returning to full staffing which will allow for some of our changes to move forward. Chief Supko is now our liaison to the ECC and will be our POC for all related issues.

Budget: We are beginning our development of the FY-26 budget and DFEMS requests were discussed and updated in a budget work session among our staff this week. We anticipate another challenging budget year given uncertainty with revenues and specifically with state funding, federal transition and tax yield.

On the DFEMS side with recommendations from ESAC we have asked for the upgrade of the 12 ALS car positions to lieutenants. This will require upgrades and no new positions. This will assure supervision for EMS incidents and will reflect the increasing responsibilities for these positions. In addition, this will assist us with enhanced regional supervision of our career personnel. We are also requesting two lieutenants (daywork) to be assigned to the PSTC. They would perform a number of duties including continuing education, compliance training, recruit training, academy status courses, assist with EST and cover as incident safety officers. The prerequisite for this position will be current MICRB credentials. Ideally one of these positions would also be an EMS instructor so we can increase our number of EMT refreshers. We are working on position specifications with HR and discussions with the county position committee which recommends new positions.

We are also going to request of return of the 12 floater positions that were lost in the FY 25 budget, and we are determining how many additional floaters we will need to support the leave needs of 220 field personnel given up to 8 allowed off/shift. These would all be new positions. We will not be applying this year for either SAFER or AFG we have simply not had the resources available to focus on this area and to be successful with these we need to have our efforts in the right place. We will consider again for next year.

We also are going to continue with medic replacements and are requesting 3 units/budget v. the two we currently have. Other vehicles to be requested include additional Tahoes for reserve status, a replacement reserve engine and pick ups for the training lieutenants.

I will await the wishes of the CCVESA regarding some recruitment/retention initiatives as well as LOSAP enhancements and a loan fund for station repairs. That will be contingent on CCVESA and their budget process. I don't anticipate a lot of additional funding being available. Again, we have our wish list, but it will all be dependent on the budget/revenue outlook.

Staffing (Career): We are currently in the hiring process and on boarding of some recently hired personnel. We continue to have significant shift vacancies and now have several long-term injuries which are on modified duty for up to six months. These positions add to the vacancies to be backfilled. We are currently doing an audit of our FY25 overtime expenditures and creating a forecasting model to better predict the funding for our overtime needs. The full staffing of floaters would greatly reduce this amount.

We staffed Pleasant Valley on October 10. A transfer list has been sent out and followed up with GO #9-3-24 with new assignments. We had 11 new employees, begin on 11/7/24 and will have a two-week orientation with release to the field after tomorrow.

Our latest staffing breakdown is as follows as of today at 1700:

176 current chapter 37 employees- 220 are budgeted.

12 administrative staff/command staff-12 are budgeted.

4 shift commanders, 11 lieutenants (15 supervisors) 1 lieutenant vacancy

39 FF/PMs, 22 PMs, 41 FADOs, 59 FF/EMTs

44 vacancies to be hired (23 in processing, 21 remaining)

36 needed to staff remaining stations: 7,8,10, (8 floaters to be staffed)

We are going to be advertising for transfers to New Windsor later this week and that will be for a FADO and PM, FF/EMT for each of 4 shifts (12 total) We look to staff them by the end of December or early January. We will also be assigning Haz-Mat techs at New Windsor to allow for immediate HM capability in the county and to assist with HM related duties and equipment maintenance. We have scheduled a HM tech course in January which will also be open to volunteers and so far, we have 19 preregistered. Full tech staffing is a goal and will not necessarily occur when we staff the station.

As we move to complete staffing our greatest concern is the hiring of sufficient ALS providers and should we fall short initially we may staff some of the remaining stations at the BLS level until such time that we have enough ALS providers. We are currently looking via GIS some response times and considering some adjustment of ALS chase responses and locations. We are also looking at percentages of priority 1 and priority 2 calls v. BLS countywide and will adjust based on data analytics.

Incident Reporting: We have been approved and have ordered the ESO software. We must now develop the implementation phase to do the training and orientation to ESO/NERIS and we will cut over to the new system by late 2025. Katie Spurrier our data analyst is heading up this project and FROPS is represented with Chiefs Hipsley and Ruch. Rick Baker, Richard Koons and several other volunteers are also on the group. This will result in a single silo and possibly a single FDID although there are many questions to be answered as we move towards full implementation as well as archived data migration. This is currently ongoing. Katie is currently negotiating for the initial “Train the Trainer” courses to be done on site here with ESO providing the training. From there we will be offering multiple courses, and the goal is each station will have a primary ESO trainer and additional expertise will be through the committee.

SOPs: The recently approved SOPs have been posted and are now in effect. We are continuing to address many additional areas and Chief Supko is working with FROPS on a number of operational areas. We are also working on an HR section SOP to address relationships among employees and volunteers including relatives, significant others and dating relationships. The goal is to avoid conflicts of interest.

Vehicles/procurement: We have received the beginning of our five new ambulance/Medics. M59 went into service last week and 49 is having the electronics installed and should go in service in the next week. That will be followed by 29 and then 129 and 139. Our sixth unit is on the assembly line at Road Rescue in Florida, and we look for a late winter delivery. We now have an established spec and are going to begin the process for three units for FY-26. We will likely ask for some additional funding from EMS billing to add some additional units. Our fleet of existing ambulances are presenting with some expensive repairs, so our goal is to speed up the procurement process.

Our greatest challenge is having enough reserve cars available as we will now have 6 Tahoes, 3 Explorers and three reserves in our fleet as well as 9 medic units by early 2025.

Our next challenge is the replacement of the reserve engine which is nearing the end of its life cycle. A new replacement reserve will cost around \$800,000 or greater. I am in preliminary discussions with fleet and budget on this. This unit will be owned by the county and once approved we are anticipating a 3-4yr. delivery. We will create a committee to determine the specifics and subsequent specs. This will be at least 1500 GPM with a 1000-gallon tank, and we will follow the new NFPA 1910 standard. We probably need more than just one reserve and will look at justifications in that area? This has been placed in the budget for FY-26

Reid Oliver our Fleet Bureau Chief and liaison for equipment procurement left the county this past week. There will be a process for his replacement and an acting person in that capacity. We wish Reid well as he has gone to Horry County, South Carolina (40 fire stations) -Myrtle Beach, as their county fleet manager.

EMS Billing: We are doing well with our EMS billing revenues. 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 we will need to manage all billing. You will still continue

to receive revenues from your previous billing companies and joining with us know you will continue to receive your revenues until our staffing of your station begins.

In our first year of billing with only six stations we brought in \$5.7 million in revenues and will recoup about \$1 million additional in uncollected billing and reimbursement for Medicaid (state medical assistance) We are expecting as high as \$8 million for the current year. I am currently working with the administration to develop guidelines for investment of these funds for EMS enhancement to include medic units, electronics, stretchers, ventilators and other EMS related equipment. We will also use these funds for advanced training and continuing education for our providers both career and volunteer. We have ordered 10 of the new model Lifepak 35s to begin an attritional replacement for our cardiac monitors which are at the end of their life cycle. These have begun to arrive. Chief Zaney along with Dr. Kemp is putting together a plan to advance our standard of care to include new skills such as whole blood, RSI, ventilators and other areas. Please keep in mind that all of this will require approval through budget and then by the commissioners as this is county funding and not specifically DFEMS funds. Our goal is that EMS revenues can be reinvested into system enhancement and continuity. However, we must recognize that this is not funding that we control and is subject to the direction of the Commissioners as a component of the budget process.

Volunteer Backgrounds: These are not progressing at the rate we anticipated, and Callie is working to answer some questions as we develop a related SOP that will address some issues. These are still considered essential to assure safety and quality among volunteer membership. The policy will be an initial background check and then we will enroll the members into a data base monitoring program that will provide notifications to DFEMS and then we will push them out to your company. We did meet with HR and a background investigator from Washington County to look at some other processes. We are looking at doing the initial background check one time for each VFC member. In subsequent years we would do fingerprinting internally and then have access with flagged reporting for the major criminal databases to include: CJIS, NCIC, MVA, Judicial System and national child offender registry. This would cover our intent and the policy will be modified to reflect this. I am awaiting a review of this from the county attorney. We would like to discuss this evening and Callie has a draft SOP which will require some more modification.

Pinning Ceremony: 11/21/24

All are invited to this promotional and recognition ceremony beginning in 1900 at Winter's Mill HS tomorrow evening. We will be promoting two chief officers, the four shift commanders and about 40 new employees will receive their badges and be pinned by family members. Chairman Baker will represent ESAC. There are significant logistics involved as 11 of those being recognized are on duties and we will not diminish county coverage. We reached out to the companies, and I am impressed by their level of assistance to cover our gaps in staffing to allow for these members to attend.

OSHA Fire Brigade Standard: There has been a lot of discussion on various levels on this proposal that would challenge the very core of the Fire/EMS service. Formal hearings began last

week with over 1000 signed up for comment. Given the results of the presidential election and a new Secretary of Labor, I am confident that the original direction will be significantly revised and will be less of an impact. I believe that we need enhanced standards and compliance but not to the degree that is proposed! All of the state organizations are following this and have sent correspondences to OSHA. This is also an unfunded mandate, and the requirements are significant.

I wish everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving! Our offices will be closed on Thanksgiving and the day after.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr

C: ESAC distribution lists
DFEMS staff