

Emergency Services Advisory Council
January 15, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Michael Robinson, Rick Baker, JJ Lynott, Tim Legore, Michael Karolenko, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, Robert Ruch (virtual), Dan Plunkert, Michael Guerin, Blane Wright, Scott Dickson,

Members Absent: Brett Six, David Coe, George Wentz, Joe Brown

Guests: Deputy Chief Paul Supko - DFEMS, Jim Mora – President, Pleasant Valley Community Fire Company, Captain Max Nickey – DFEMS Shift Commander, Marianne Warehime – CCVESA

Chairman Baker opened the meeting at 19:00 with the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Baker asked for a moment of silence to honor LT Christopher Higgins, Montgomery County Department of Fire and Rescue. LT Higgins died in the line of duty this week.

Dan Plunkert made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. JJ Lynott seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments: None at this time

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson reporting 190 current DFEMS employees with over 20 in the hiring process.

-Several new employees resigned during orientation recently. He plans to provide a preview of the 2-week orientation when conditional offers are sent so candidates know what will be expected.

- DFEMS staffing of station 10 (New Windsor) starts tomorrow, Jan. 16th.

-Station 7 (Lineboro) and station 8 (Union Bridge) staffing will begin Feb. 27th. Union Bridge will be Basic Life Support (BLS) for now.

-The county has not received documentation from CCVESA for the funds that were authorized by the Commissioners to pay for EMS and FADO staffing for three stations.

-Data Analyst Katie Spurrier is leaving the department. Hiring for her replacement is underway.

Commissioner's Report: Nothing at this time.

Medical Director's Report:

-Dr. Kemp reported that ALS skills sessions are underway with the last session being this Sat. Jan. 18th.

-DFEMS Continuing Education sessions will begin again next month.

-New protocols include the medication Esmolol, but there is a national backlog. Carroll Hospital Center will help us stock the medication.

-Dr. Kemp attended the National EMS Physicians' Conference last week – whole blood and body cams for EMS were discussed.

-DFEMS is working on training and writing a policy for ultrasound.

CCVESA President's Report: Not present.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS – not present.

FROPS – Tim Legore reported that FROPS did not meet in December, but they are working with Chief Supko on polices.

Old Business:

- EMS Chase Car Data
 - Data on EMS chase cars was provided along with year-end stats.
 - Chief Robinson stated that DFEMS will publish an annual report by Feb.
 - JJ Lynott brought up issues with the chase cars that have been reported to him by his district. When chase cars are at the PSTC or on special projects and not backfilled, there are areas of the county not covered.
 - Chief Supko mentioned a new policy that requires chase cars to report their location to the Shift Commander.

- Recap on Meeting with the Commissioners
 - Chairman Baker met with the Board of Commissioners for 40 minutes on Dec. 19th during open session.

- Topics of discussion included apparatus replacement and budget issues.
- Dan Plunkert asked about the frequency of these meetings going forward. Per the ESAC bylaws, annual meetings are all that is required. There was a general feeling from all ESAC members to meet more with the commissioners like we were before.

New Business:

- Apparatus Replacement Request
 - Winfield is requesting to replace an engine that is over 20 years old with another like-engine with the same capabilities. Radios will be transferred from the old engine to the new.

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

- Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVO) Policy and Accident Review Committee (ARC) Policy
 - Chief Supko stated that he has seen an uptick in vehicle accidents due to newer or less experienced drivers.
 - Previously, stations have had their own individual policies. In some cases, policies have been “understood” but not in writing. The EVO policy will provide standardized guidelines for both career and volunteer drivers.
 - The Accident Review Committee Policy establishes the Accident Review Committee who will review accidents and recommend appropriate discipline for both career and volunteer members.
 - Chairman Baker stated that policies can be implemented while being reviewed when it is a safety issue. A more in-depth discussion can be had next month if needed.
 - In response to questions about volunteer chain-of-command when a company-owned piece is involved, Chief Supko stated he will add an algorithm to the EVO policy about who to contact.
- Inside Gas Leak Policy
 - This policy outlines the structured approach for investigating reported gas odors while minimizing risk to personnel.

- Chief Supko has received a lot of messages about companies parking right in front of the house during gas leak calls. The appropriate distance is 330 feet, per the Emergency Response Guidebook.
- He discussed the importance of staging correctly and approaching correctly. A gas leak is a hazmat call, not a fire call.
- FROPS will be looking at this policy in-depth.
- Training videos will be upload to the LMS for both policies.

- Commendation Board Awards Policy/Presentation
 - Mike Karolenko gave a presentation about the DFEMS Commendation Board, Awards and Recognition.
 - The Commendation Board is comprised of five members and was designed for unbiased, equal representation among stakeholders.
 - The DFEMS awards will not override any CCVESA, company level awards or traditions.
 - There will be an annual gala starting this spring.
 - The presentation outlined the process for nomination, investigation/review and recommendation by the committee, as well as the different types of awards and how they are to be worn.
 - 2024 nominations will be accepted during the month of February only. For next year, nominations will be open and ongoing. It is asked that nominations be submitted within 30 days of the incident/action.

- Recruitment – Commission Guerin
 - Commissioner Guerin recently discussed DFEMS hiring with the Human Resources team. He is impressed with the hiring progress so far.
 - There is a need to create a pipeline to get more people working for the county. Commissioner Guerin would like to hear some ideas about how we can spread the word about volunteer and career opportunities to young people/students. Also, what incentives can be offered, such as reduced education cost. He recently learned about the Juniors program and would like to hear more.
 - Chief Robinson shared information about the EST program which is through CCVESA. EST graduated ten students last year. This year there are seven. There are at least 20 current employees who have gone through EST.

- JJ Lynott shared that he is giving a presentation at Shiloh Middle School on January 22nd.
- Blane Wright stated that a lot of people are unaware of the opportunities available in the fire service.
- Scott Dickson emphasized the need to reach students before they get to high school.
- Commissioner Guerin would like to continue the conversation and learn more. Human Resources is willing to assist with recruitment efforts.

Action Items:

1. Discuss at the next CCVESA meeting getting a group together to talk to Commissioner Guerin about recruitment in schools and put together some ideas.
2. Commissioner Guerin will mention to Commissioner Kiler about the correct number of people that will be staffing Union Bridge and Lineboro.

Mike Karolenko made a motion to adjourn. JJ Lynott seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:28.



Report to ESAC

January 15, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Good evening, I hope everyone had a happy and healthy holiday season. Welcome to 2025 and to what should be another good year for Fire & EM232 questions.

Condolences: To the family of one of our original DFEMS Shift Commanders, R. Scott Svoboda who passed away suddenly on 12/27 at the age of 46. He leaves behind a wife and a son who is a career firefighter in South Carolina. Although with us for only a short time Scott was instrumental in developing the operational component of our DFEMS. He retired from the Annapolis Fire Department as a Captain after a 25-year career and had been an active volunteer in PG County, A life member of the United Communities VFC in Queen Anne's County and a member of the Marion VFC in Franklin Co, PA. We provided peer support to many of our employees following this loss. I attended the funeral on Kent Island with several of our lieutenants. RIP Captain Svoboda.

Montgomery County had a Line of Duty Death (LODD) this past week. Master Firefighter Christopher Higgins a 23-year veteran assigned to Burtonsville/Station 715 suffered a medical emergency while operating on a mutual aid working fire in Prince Georges County. Lt. Andrew Wooden (CC Chief 9) was his officer. Chris was also a life member of my fire company, Earleigh Heights. He was 46 years old and leaves his wife and two young children. We will be supporting MCFRS with transfer companies and the logistics are being worked out currently. The funeral and memorials will occur over a four-day period, and it will all be held in Anne Arundel County. Our recently formed honor guard will also participate.

"State of the County" was held yesterday, and this is an annual Chamber of Commerce event which allows the commissioners to present their perspectives on where the county is currently and the direction and initiatives for the coming year. Chairman Baker and I attended this address and DFEMS was mentioned at least four times by the various commissioners. Positive comments were made as well as the fiscal challenges that will exist as we progress as an agency. I had an opportunity to interact with several community and business leaders who have an interest and expressed support for our progress.

California Wildland/Urban Interface Fires: We are certainly monitoring these events and there will be lessons learned and changes in firefighting practices, codes and construction for generations to come. This is also impacting public sentiment regarding fire departments and resources across the world. We were requested by the California OES (emergency services) to provide an engine strike team (5 fire engines) for a deployment to the Los Angeles area. We denied the request as we don't have such resources available and there are many parameters that must be met including an opportunity for reimbursement but very complex to move forward. This is a catastrophic situation that will be ongoing for months and will redefine the approach to

disaster management and recovery. We may have some volunteer members who are part of FEMA USAR teams being deployed for search/recovery operations.

Recent Storm: Over the past two weeks we were hit with significant winter storms. I wish to thank each of the companies who prepared and turned out to assure staffing at their stations and support the system. The EOC was activated, and Chief Brothers served as our representative and coordinated countywide operations through Emergency Management and our other county agency partners. We had some logistical challenges with access/egress and a few other areas. Overall, each VFC provided great resources and supported our DFEMS employees with meals as well as our partners in DPW and the CCSO. My sincere thanks for the cooperation. We also experienced several accidents with primarily medic units including the new unit at Pleasant Valley that may be “totaled.” In the future we will have an “on-line” readiness meeting at different intervals prior to and during the storm just to keep information flowing and allow for discussion of our operational contingencies.

Staffing (VFCs): We currently have 190 of our 220 budgeted positions filled which leaves us with only 29 vacancies to fill. We lost three persons from our current orientation program which ends today, and six new personnel will be deployed tomorrow. We did another written test today for 10 and also last week. We have 20+ conditional offers that have or will go out. We will also begin staffing of New Windsor tomorrow with 3/shift to include an ALS unit and a driver who will also be a Haz Mat Technician to assure greater continuity with the HM program in concert with the team. A Haz-Mat Tech program will be held at the PSTC in February, and we will have 25+ personnel enrolled. Our goal is to have all station 10 personnel and additional HM qualified personnel on each shift. DC Supko is also assuming many of the administrative functions for the team in concert with Tom Coe at New Windsor.

By February we will have two hiring dates which will allow us to staff Lineboro and Union Bridge by 1/27/25 which is consistent with the sunsetting of the supplemental CCVESA funding for those stations. This staffing will absolutely occur, and no additional funding will be made. Depending on our hiring parameters one or both of those units may initially begin as BLS units. We sent out a General Order today to begin receiving transfer requests for those additional stations.

As of this date CCVESA has not reported the use of the supplemental staffing funds that were approved by the commissioners retroactive to October 24. I have sent a correspondence requesting a resolution to this. A condition of this funding was the ongoing reporting of expenditures for this staffing. The lack of reporting could hold up additional funding which is essentially a reimbursement to those companies who are utilizing these funds. As of tomorrow, only Union Bridge and Lineboro will be impacted. EMS billing revenues will continue to these companies for several months.

This will bring our staffing up to 232 personnel which will complete our original Commissioner approved staffing plan. This will assure 16 transport EMS units daily (24/7) as well as FADO staffing of 13 stations 24/7. In addition, we will continue with our lieutenants at Westminster, Sykesville and Mt. Airy. Three ALS chase cars at Manchester (EMS 101), Taneytown (EMS

102) and Winfield (EMS 103.) We have also upgraded OPS 101 to the Captain level and they will remain as the shift commander running from the PSTC complex.

Future staffing growth is obviously tied to the budget, and we will determine our needs jointly through VFC requests, ESAC recommendations and based on our ongoing data analysis which will be enhanced with the advent of our new ESO reporting system which is in the implementation phase and will go live by 12/25 or sooner if we are comfortable with the implementation progress.

Our recruitment will continue based on our budget initiatives for FY-26 which include upgrade of 12 ALS car paramedics to Lieutenant/paramedics, two training/safety lieutenants and 12 requested additional floaters to offset leave, sick and injury staffing. This would bring our total staffing to 246 in FY 26 if approved. I have secured exhibit space at the MSFA convention in June to allow us to have a recruitment display/opportunity and our applications continue.

Data Analyst Vacancy: As of 1/29 Katie Spurrier our current data analyst is being promoted to GIS technician and moving to the IT department. We have already advertised for this position which closed on Friday 1/10 and interviews will occur next week with five candidates. Chairman Baker will be on the interview panel. There will be a period of transition with Katie, and we look for this person to begin on February 6. We had over 60 applicants for this position, with many well qualified applicants. Katie is also working with us on an annual report which will serve as a tool during the budget process and be made available on our website for public information. There will also be a short overview of ESAC in the report.

Budget: We are beginning our progress with the initial stages of the FY-26 budget and DFEMS requests were discussed and updated in a budget work session among our staff last week. We are meeting weekly with our budget analyst. We anticipate another challenging budget year given uncertainty with revenues and specifically with state funding, federal transition and tax yield. I have no specifics and would suggest all companies to keep abreast of developments at both the state and local levels. The CIP (capital) budget was introduced at the Commissioner's session last Thursday. That budget includes an SCBA replacement program to be phased in consistent with the life span of our current SCBA. This will result in the centralization of our SCBA and related logistics to a single system as a matter of uniformity and cost effectiveness.

On the DFEMS side with recommendations from ESAC we have asked for the personnel requests as explained above in order to grow and support our current staffing.

We did not apply for this year for either SAFER or AFG and are working towards a possible submission for next year's process. This must be approved by the Commissioners as the budget must pick up the funding after year 3 of the grant. We will also need to determine what positions we would request and could facilitate with continuing funding. Remember that SAFER also deals with recruitment/retention grant funding. The deadline for all AFG submissions was December 20,2024. So, we are looking at 11 months to prepare for a submission 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. We have received our five new medic units, and they are in service, or will soon be at M49, M59, M29, M139, M128 and a sixth unit is on the assembly line in Florida. (see photo below)

I know that the CCVESA budget is in progress, and we will certainly work with them to move this forward requests will need to be reasonable as the budget will be a challenge. State funding for certain initiatives such as 508 and the state loan fund will be challenge as well. The Governor's budget message today shows some significant issues with unrealistic solutions in many areas. We will continue to support low interest apparatus loans through the county process which coincides with the issuance of bonds. We are currently working with several companies who intend to apply and may have an additional request this evening from Sykesville.



Chapter 37 changes: Chapter 37 under the county Code of Regulations is the area that codifies the rules, regulations, and policies of the DFEMS. There are some changes to the current code that involves FLSA/pay cycle, promotions and the ability to provide acting pay. These were approved in December and will be published on the county website.

Congratulations: To newly promoted Lt. Christopher Troutman now assigned to Mt. Airy/1D shift. This was effective on January 2 and Lt. Troutman was previously a FADO on 1C, so he knows the station/territory well. We had 24 personnel who tested for this single position and our selection was based on a multi-phase internal assessment center. We will no longer hire lieutenants from the outside but rather will make this an internally competitive position.

Station Operations/Supervision: We are challenged as a system on an ongoing basis in those stations without 24/7 career supervision. Issues occur including career/volunteer relationships, completion of maintenance, housekeeping, supplies and HR management. In an effort to gain greater control of this a General Order that has gone into effect and was released last week and attached to these minutes. This does not circumvent the authority of VFC officers but rather affixes accountability of all of our employees to a single direct supervisor consistent with supervisory concepts. Although not optimal it is a beginning initiative to assure greater accountability and consistency with station issues. Contact Chief Supko with any questions or concerns with this.

Volunteer Backgrounds: These are not progressing at the rate we anticipated, and Callie is working to answering some questions as we have a revised SOP to present at tonight's meeting. 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. This has been discussed considerably at the ESAC with some guidance to move forward. We are looking at doing the initial background check one time for each VFC member. In subsequent years we would possibly 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. Given your approval, we will move forward with our SOP with the goal being the initial backgrounds by July 2025. This would apply to all members initially and is consistent to the recommendations of our insurer. A draft of this SOP is presented this evening.

Commendations Board members had their initial meeting several weeks ago and have since developed a DRAFT SOP which includes procedures and awards classifications. The CCVESA representative Todd Tracey (Gamber) will serve as the Co-Chair along with Lt. Michael Karolenko representing the career side. Beginning in February they will accept submissions for incidents and activities that occurred during calendar year 2024. The goal will be to review and determine the awardees. A ceremony will be determined and should occur sometime in the Spring of 2025 and if sponsorships allowed, we would like to make the annual event a countywide DFEMS awards banquet. The award types and criteria will be determined by the board. They will also process and recommend the annual Chamber of Commerce awards which include a volunteer and career member of the year. They will provide an overview at tonight's meeting along with a draft SOP. ESAC's representative Scott Dickson is very involved with this effort and can also report on the progress.

SOPs/Policies: In concert with the FROPS committee and EMS committee there are a lot of operational, response and other policies that are moving forward and progressing in specific work groups. This includes response, staffing, command officers, training requirements and regional supervision using our limited supervisors. We are also working on a policy that addresses relatives working at the same stations and or shifts. Many of these will be presented and reviewed for your action this evening.

Legislative Session: The MD General Assembly opened last week in Annapolis. I am part of the MD Metro Chiefs legislative group and will also be attending the weekly fire service meetings each Friday in Annapolis. This involves all MD fire related organizations and is lead by Theresa Crisman of the State Fire Marshall. We will be following those legislative initiatives that may have an impact on the Carroll County DFEMS and career/volunteer personnel. CCVESA members such as VP Simpson and Exec Comm Chair/PP Mark Bilger, PP Bob Cumberland and others are involved. The session will end in early April. Anyone who desires to follow the fire related legislation can get a weekly update from the MSFA by signing up through their website. www.msfa.org

Meetings with all corporations/VFCs? I will be scheduling in early 2025 a meeting with each company and either their board of directors or primary officers. The purpose of these meetings is to review our successes as well as our challenges under our evolving DFEMS and where we should be moving together, as we progress in the future. I will be sending out a formal letter and will schedule at a mutually agreeable time at each company. I will attend along with DC Supko, and we would like to have an open, civil and honest conversation with each company to get some feedback and determine where we are going.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr

Attachments: General Orders