



Report to CCVESA

March 3, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Good evening, My report is below, and I will provide a brief overview and take questions, or you may contact me via email: mrobinson@carrollcountymd.gov

Staffing (VFCs): We began staffing both Lineboro (7) and Union Bridge (8) as of 0700 on Thursday 2/27/25. Lineboro is staffed with 12 total which includes a FADO, a FF/PM or PM and a FF/EMT across all four shifts. Union Bridge is staffed with 12 total which includes a FADO and two FF/EMTs. This should be temporary until we have hired enough paramedics to place them back at the ALS level. Given the proximity of M109 and an “on call” ALS crew at New Windsor this is where we are for now. Chief Supko and I have had meetings with the Chief and officers of each VFC and we have all logistics in place. My sincere thanks to both companies for both their accommodations for the new staff as well as providing the training to get a “pool” of personnel on overtime to fill staffing gaps for the next 6-8 weeks as we finalize our hiring of new personnel.

Our staffing as of today is 192 of 220 budgeted positions with a net vacancy of 28 positions. Initially we will continue to staff through overtime and with the intent of avoiding mandatory holdovers where possible. The shift commanders are empowered to make adjustments accordingly. A personal letter went to each employee from me to explain our situation over the next 6-8 weeks until our hiring is complete. This is compounded by the recent cyber-attack on the Frederick Health System which has completely complicated our ability to get physical results completed. As a result, we were only able to hire three of 13 anticipated personnel on 2/13. A total of 10 personnel began last Thursday and 18 were offered positions but we were still awaiting lab and final physical result which impacted Thursday’s hiring. I am currently evaluating some alternatives to increase our numbers by 3/13, and it looks as if we will start with as many as 20 new personnel. Chief Brothers will coordinate the orientation which will likely be two weeks as is our standard. Paramedics beyond that will need to complete field precepting. The good news is that at least two of them are previous corporate employees and already ALS cleared for Carroll.

Last week we began written testing of 24 applicants which include 9 PMs and FF/PMs, 10 FF/EMTs and 5 FADOs. We are currently still short and will be short 28 positions and PMs and FADOs are our priority. We are currently not taking any more FF/EMT applications as we will be complete with staffing those positions. We still have at least two PMs who are still being precepted. Once we process, complete orientation and precepting I am anticipating 5/1/25 at the earliest to accomplish our full field staffing give about a 12-week process from testing-hiring/orientation.

As an interim measure we will “down staff” some EMS units to accommodate our limited ALS numbers. This will include 139/BLS Only, 89/BLS Only, 49/BLS only to offset holdovers given that EMS 101 is at station 4 and they are flanked by M79 and M29. These will occur as needed and based on staffing to avoid “burnout” of our ALS providers who can by regulations work no more than 48 hours consecutively. Ultimately, we hope to get our PM and FF/PM numbers up so that we have ALS staffing on all 16 EMS transport units. Our ALS chase cars, the shift commanders and EMS-100 (day shift) will all be situationally aware and perform ALS upgrades as required.

We continue to recruit and have multiple recruitment events scheduled including CCPS/Career and Technology job fair was held last Thursday and we were participants along with Westminster and the EST Program. In the future we have the, CCC Job Fair, PA State EMS Conference, MSFA Convention and other events as we identify them. Our goal is to also build out our “floaters” with FF/PMs and FADOs where possible. Once we get to our 220 personnel our Commissioner approved staffing plan will be complete with the exception of 12 additional floaters for a total of 24 which are subject to budget approval.

Once our hiring and deployment are complete. Our staffing will be 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.

Data Analyst Vacancy: As of 1/29 Katie Spurrier our current data analyst was promoted to GIS technician and moving to the IT department. On Thursday 2/27 Ms. Melissa Long began as our data analyst. We are working with her to get acclimated to our systems and we have multiple levels of training that she is currently focusing on. She will be going for a week to the ESO annual school/conference to develop that skills set and will also take over as the coordinator for the ESO project. Katie will be working directly with her to allow for a smooth transition.

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. I will be meeting with the commissioners to present our requests for additional staffing in the FY-26 budget. This includes the following: 1. Upgrade of 12 paramedics to paramedic/lieutenants on the ALS cars. 2. Two lieutenant/instructor/safety positions at the PSTC (40 hr. employees) and a return of funding for 12 shift floaters for a total of 6/shift (24 total) to offset our daily vacancies and long-term injured, FMLA and other leave gaps.

At the federal level there may be some impact and recently the NFA terminated all of its probationary employees and FEMA lost over 400 personnel. Several NFA initiatives are cancelled such as the Women's Weekend which violates the DEI policy. The AFG and SAFER grants are certainly being scrutinized and today, FEMA issued some direction on additional validation to continue grants that are current. The future of the AFG and SAFER programs are uncertain.

The CIP (capital) budget was introduced at the Commissioner's session two weeks ago. 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. We will also be using grant funds to begin construction of our warehouse on the PSTC campus which will begin in July. There is also funding for a groundwater remediation project to address PFAS contamination at the PSTC. We are on track to proceed with the phase II construction to possibly begin in FY-26.

Joe Dennis who headed up the CCVESA/company budgets this year has done an outstanding job and has submitted the company budgets to the Department of Management and Budget. 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. The recommended county operational budget will be presented to the Commissioners on March 18 and then departments (DFEMS) will be scheduled for work sessions/budget hearings with the commissioners.

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. The continuation of both AFG and SAFER grants are being impacted by the directions of the DOGE as stated previously so we will determine a direction based on that.

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, at M49, M59, M29, M139, M128 and a sixth

unit is on the assembly line in Florida. We are currently engaged with review of our current specs and meeting with the potential vendors for future units.

We met before the last CCVESA meeting with the Department of the Comptroller and her staff. We reviewed the accounting and tracking of the state 508 funding. We are preparing to distribute those funds to all 14 companies shortly. ESAC has recently approved some additional apparatus, and I have sent correspondences approving the procurement process at each company. We have multiple companies with apparatus either in production or in planning with my estimate of approximately \$15 million in new equipment investment. This includes multiple engines, rescues, pumper tankers, tankers, and utility and command vehicles. Many are through county low interest loans which coincides with the issuance of bonds. We are currently working with several companies who intend to apply for these loans.

Volunteer Backgrounds: A new “draft” SOP was presented at ESAC, and your representatives should have or will provide you with a copy of the proposal. This will require initial backgrounds for the following company members.

1. Any new member who applies as of 3/1/25
2. All operational members (responders) current- based on occupational physicals data
3. All members not covered above who are involved in junior/youth programs
4. Other members not covered above at the discretion of corporate leadership

Members who are administrative are to be “grandfathered” and will require no new background checks. Chiefs should review the draft and provide any feedback to your ESAC representatives.

Commendations Board has met several times and has submitted for the deadline for the Chamber awards. The deadline was 2/28 and we received very limited submissions for those awards. This will include the volunteer member of the year. Please contact President Todd Tracey (Gamber) for further information. We will be looking for a date/location for some time in May for a DFEMS awards ceremony to be led by the commendations board and this will include submissions from 2024.

SOPs/Policies: Several are in the revision stage and were amended at the last ESAC meeting. I won't get into too many details and they include accident review, emergency vehicle operations, background checks and several others. Your ESAC reps should be contacting you and providing a draft for company discussion and comments. We are looking to approve those at the March ESAC meeting. Also, DFEMS implemented SOP 2.17 which involves employee and employee/volunteer relationships. This is a DFEMS HR specific policy, so it does not require an ESAC review. This is posted on the DFEMS website under SOPs. Its goal is to avoid conflicts of interests involving “romantic” relationships among employees or employees with volunteers and assignments to stations where relatives at those stations could negatively influence job performance and/or work environment.

Meetings with all corporations/VFCs? I am scheduling in 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 have many of these already scheduled or 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. If you have not scheduled, please do so by calling or emailing me with some dates that are mutually agreeable.

Meetings with all field career staff: I am meeting with each shift/station for our career employees to create a dialogue and to discuss their issues and concerns. I will notify each chief prior to my meeting with the “on duty” shift. You and your staff are more than welcome to attend these “open” meetings which will discuss pension, compensation, promotions, staffing and primarily career related issues. I have been notifying the respective company chief at least 24hrs. prior to such meetings being held at your stations.

Honor Guard: Our honor guard has been in place for about four months and has eight career members currently and two volunteer members who will be joining the group. FF/EMT Juan Alfaro of Station 1 is the Honor Guard Commander, and he also commands the Wheaton VRS honor guard in Montgomery County and has a wealth of knowledge. The unit will support, DFEMS, other county and state level events as well as this year’s National Fallen Firefighter’s Memorial Weekend at the NFA on May 3-5. Robert Jones (LODD) from Reese (employee) will be honored at this year’s ceremony. We recently supported the funeral of Reese past chief Howard “Pete” Link. If you have members interested in participation, they can contact Juan at jalfaro@carrollcountymd.gov

Have a productive meeting and I will see many of you at your banquets this month!

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr