

Emergency Services Advisory Council  
January 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Rick Baker, Michael Robinson, Michael Karolenko, Linas Saurusaitis, Robert Buckley, Dan Plunkert, David Coe, Dr. John Murphy, Brett Six, Susan Mott, Blane Wright, Andrew Wooden (virtual)

Members Absent: Michael Guerin, Dr. Stephanie Kemp

Public Present: Marianne Warehime-CCVESA Secretary

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

Dr. Murphy made a motion to approve the December meeting minutes. Dan Plunkert seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments: None at this time.

Public Comments: None at this time.

Commissioner's Report: Not present.

Medical Director's Report: Not present.

CCVESA President's Report:

-Susan Mott reported that CCVESA sent a letter to the county officers regarding following through on what was agreed to in the MOU. She has not received a response.

-Susan Mott attended the State of the County address on January 9<sup>th</sup> and was surprised there were not any questions relating to Fire & EMS.

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson will meet with the Board of Commissioners tomorrow, January 18<sup>th</sup>, to discuss staffing options for FY25. He will share his alternative staffing plans with ESAC after he presents them to the Commissioners.

-Chief Robinson reports there are 65 applicants so far and not as many paramedics as they would like.

## Committee Reports:

EMSOPS- The last meeting was very short per David Coe. The next meeting is tomorrow.

## FROPS:

-Andrew Wooden reported that the Communications Policy is being finalized and will then come back to ESAC for review/approval.

-The county's Fleet Manager, Reid Oliver, will be coming to the next FROPS meeting to discuss vehicle maintenance.

## Old Business:

- Response to Mt. Airy VFC request for new Rescue 1
  - The proposed replacement unit does not meet the current engine spec which specifies a minimum 750 gallon booster tank capacity. Mt. Airy VFC is requesting a waiver. Both their current unit and the proposed replacement have a 500 gallon tank.
  - ESAC continued the discussion from the December meeting regarding the need to follow standards verses the need for exceptions.
  - This request will be discussed further at the next FROPS meeting.

Mike Karolenko made a motion to approve Mt. Airy VFC's request as proposed in their letter.

Members in agreement: Linas Saurusaitis, David Coe, Blane Wright, Bob Buckley, Brett Six, Mike Karolenko

Members against: Rick Baker, Dan Plunkert, Dr. Murphy

The motion was passed.

Action: Chairman Baker will write a letter/email to Chief Robinson saying that ESAC recommends approval of Mt. Airy VFC's request. This action is per policy.

- Fire 101 Status

- Mike Karolenko reported that after a lot of conversation, it has been determined that we are not equipped to hold the Fire 101 event at this time. We will use other means to educate officials about the fire service.

### Board Member Comments:

-Chairman Baker commented on inaccurate statements that were made by a county employee during a Planning/Zoning meeting. The comments implied that the volunteers would be going away now that there are career staff in the field. Chairman Baker noted that we need to do a better job of educating people about the combination system and the role of the volunteers.

-Susan Mott noted that she attends Chamber of Commerce meetings and often hears people asking why the volunteers are still needed.

-ESAC members made suggestions about ways to share the message including the CCVESA website/social media page, Carroll Magazine and a video that can be shared online.

### New Business

- Emergency Service Transporter Supplemental Payment Program (ESPP)
  - Chairman Baker suggested ESAC send a letter to the Board of Commissioners asking that any ESPP money that is received not go into the general fund but be allocated to Fire & EMS for enhancements.
  - David Coe shared that Frederick County made an internal commitment to put the money back into Fire & EMS, but it is allowed to go into the general fund.

Dr. Murphy made a motion for ESAC to send a letter to the Board of Commissioners requesting that any ESPP money that is received for Carroll County be allocated to Fire & EMS for enhancements instead of going in the general fund. Andrew Wooden seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Action: Chairman Baker will draft the letter to the BOC regarding ESPP money.

Action: Chief Robinson will send ESAC members information received from the state regarding the ESPP program.

Action: Dr. Murphy will use his knowledge and resources to look into the ESPP program further.

- General Orders
  - Chairman Baker stated that DFEMS needs to review the general orders.
  - Andrew Wooden agreed that General Orders need to be removed when no longer relevant and we need to continue to work on policies.
  
- Goals for 2024
  - ESAC members discussed their top goals for 2024. Better communication between all parties was the most frequent response. Other goals included securing the 84 positions for year 3, educating the community about the role of the volunteers, building collaborative relationships and strengthening the individual fire companies.
  
- Mike Karolenko brought up importance of getting the third Assistant Chief in place as soon as possible.

David Coe made a motion for ESAC to write a letter requesting to expedite the hiring of the Assistant Chief of Operations ahead of the FY25 budget. Mike Karolenko seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

#### Action Items:

1. Chairman Baker will write a letter saying that ESAC recommends approval of Mt. Airy VFC's request.
2. Chairman Baker will draft the letter to the BOC regarding ESPP money.
3. Chief Robinson will send ESAC members information received from the state regarding the ESPP program.
4. Dr. Murphy will use his knowledge and resources to look into the ESPP program further.
5. Chairman Baker will draft a letter requesting to expedite the hiring of the Assistant Chief of Operations ahead of the FY25 budget.

6. Chief Robinson will share alternative staffing plans with ESAC after they are presented to the Commissioners.

Linas Saurusaitis made a motion to adjourn. Dr. Murphy seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:10.



## Report to ESAC

**January 17, 2024**

**Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director**

A happy New Year/2024 to all and on behalf of the DFEMS, my sincere gratitude for your significant contributions to Carroll County and its citizens! Cy-23 was a milestone year for DFEMS as we hired our initial personnel and began staffing for six fire stations, implemented ALS chase vehicles and established the shift commander. On all fronts we continued to create a “combination system” to best serve the needs of Carroll County and its citizens and visitors. I thank ESAC and its leadership for continuing a collaborative relationship that assures a partnership and the development of a viable emergency services delivery system. As we move into 2024, we will continue to diligently move forward and meet challenges as they occur.

**Hiring Process:** We are currently at 155 positions which includes eight civilian administrative positions. We are also advertising for the FADO, FF/PM, Paramedic and FF/EMT positions from January 8<sup>th</sup> and the application period will extend until February 5, 2023. This will be to finish out the three-year staffing plan which includes medic unit and FADO staffing for stations: 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14. That is contingent on the budget approval by the Commissioners for a total of 84 additional positions. We will see how well we do in recruitment and those who were unsuccessful in our prior processes due to the written exam will all be eligible to apply. This breaks down to 28 FF/EMT’s, 28 FADOs and up to 28 PMs or FF/PMs.

We have 5 new FF/PMs who began employment this Thursday 1/4/23. They were assigned to the PSTC for an orientation process until Wednesday 1/10/23 and are now assigned with preceptors until they validate their ALS skills and will be released accordingly. A General Order was sent to show their assignments. We also have 9 additional PM and FF/PM candidates who are going through the hiring/testing process currently and this will complete our field staffing of 148 positions for FY 24 and provide us with 6 floaters/shift or 24 total. We have also have several situations where we have provided extra staffing at Hampstead and Sykesville so we are taking advantage of all of our staffing. We also recently upgraded two personnel to FF/PM positions.

We have also asked for a third assistant chief to manage field operations (4 shift commanders and assigned personnel) This will balance the duties better among three chiefs and allow a single point of contact for all operational issues. This is in the FY 25 budget along with two training/safety lieutenants, an office assistant and the upgrade of the shift commanders to the captain rank and for one ALS car to be upgraded to four lieutenants. This would allow for greater supervision and create a back-up officer for the shift commander. I met with the position request board this morning and provided a presentation in favor of the additional positions. Ultimately our staffing goal would be that all three ALS chase cars would reclassify to a new rank of paramedic lieutenant which would extend our administration and supervisory capabilities as we move to 50+ each of our four shifts with staffing augmentation.

**Transition to county employees:** 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 in the near future to schedule meetings with at least the president, chief and (boards if desired) of each impacted company to go over such concerns as “interim staffing” contingencies once current employees are hired but not yet reporting to stations? Who will be assigned? The transition to county billing? 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. In the interim, the chief of each company may contact the shift commanders if they have a void with current EMS position staffing.

**Response profiles: (ALS incidents)** I am very aware of the many response issues that exist with these units. These issues will be mostly resolved after July when all Carroll transport units are staffed as ALS. In the interim please review General Order: 12-7-23 for clarification as to how these units will function until we have full staffing in July 2024. We have listened to the issues, met with ECC and believe that we can best serve the system with these interim changes. This will include responding a chase car to ALS incidents where a Medic is down staffed to BLS and allow ALS to be initiated sooner. The ultimate decision to upgrade or have an ALS unit transport will be incident specific and in the best interest of patient outcome.

**(Unconscious) General Order:** 12-2-23 assures that unconscious subjects all have a support apparatus responding on the initial response as these are usually critical patients and additional staffing is required to support such incidents. The minimal staffing level for such units is two personnel and with the responding ambo/medic and ALS chase car there will be a minimum of 5 personnel on such calls.

**FY-25 Budget/CCVESA:** The CCVESA budget process has been ongoing for months to discuss the FY-25 budget. A lot of concerns and issues were brought up. The CCVESA treasurer and officers, did a great job of managing the process and is nearing completion with the finished product going to the budget analyst for review and follow up meeting with our budget analyst. My sincere thanks to all of those involved as this will be I expect a “challenging” budget year. During the next several weeks DFEMS will be meeting with the Department of Management & Budget to put forth our FY-25 operating budget. We have heard your budget concerns along with our overall needs and we will certainly advocate to assure your concerns are heard. Please understand that there is a process, and we can hopefully be successful in our funding. There will be public budget hearings in the Spring, and we will ask for your support there as well. The challenges of inflation, state cuts and limited grant funding our a reality and so we must all be prepared for alternatives, compromises and even going without? We are however a critical element of public safety and if you watched the recent “State of the County” address that remains a priority for each of our five commissioners. I had the opportunity to attend the MSFA Legislative Reception in Annapolis and among those legislators in attendance they appear to be supportive of our combined fire service initiatives which include continued funding of the EMSOF funding as well as local tax credits and incentives for volunteer and career recruitment/retention but no defined funding source.

**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. I believe the chair will have some more under this.

**Data Analyst: Katie Spurrier**, has hit the ground running and is becoming acclimated to both Keystone and ERS. She is going to be developing an “annual report” which should go out in February and will show data at various levels to include responses, staffing and GIS mapping of her findings. She will be looking at all data points and we will be standardizing our reporting which will include an upgrade to new reporting software for DFEMS which will mean that the current ERS will be replaced with a new product and that will be ESO. This is a complex process that will take at least a year to transition. Included will be single silo reporting where all data will be sent to the data analyst v. the OSFM. This will enable us to provide grants and on-going data to the Commissioners, MIEMSS and OSFM/NFIRS. Part of this process will be the end of NFIRS reporting and a migration to a new federal system known as NERIS or National Emergency Response Information System. ESAC Chair Ricky Baker is very active with this along with Chief Ruch, Richard Koons and other representatives from IT as well as the ECC, and IT. This will be a participative process with our goal of centralized data repository and recognition as a jurisdiction which will then enable us to compete for AFG, SAFER and other grants in the future.

**Annual Report:** Working with our data analyst we are currently compiling data for an “Annual Report.” This will be a reflection of CY-23 and the many accomplishments of DFEMS. I would like to have a section on accomplishments and an overview of ESAC and their activities. We would welcome areas of interests and will include a makeup of ESAC membership and progress on the Strategic Plan.

**LMS (Learning Management System)** Our thanks to the CCVESA Liaison-Richard Koons for his valuable assistance with getting some compliance programs up and running. We are looking to expand this system for training delivery and tracking. A recent MOSH complaint has established that we must centralize compliance and other training information.

**Training Center Expansion:** As most are aware the Phase II of the PSTC which is an expansion of the practical training area to include a new burn facility, flammable liquids/gas props and other enhancements has been held up by the presence of PFAS compounds in the soil. The county did an \$80K assessment of the site which was submitted to the MDE for review. The county’s Department of Land & Resource Management has been tasked to oversee the site remediation. AC Dennis Brothers is the DFEMS point of contact, and we are moving forward with some site remediation.

Along with this project we are moving forward with a logistics/warehouse facility on the PSTC campus. Working with facilities we have established a temporary warehouse in an unused area of the barn on the first floor. That is currently operational, and we are storing medical supplies, PPE and other items since last year. Dennis Brothers is leading the project and is also coordinating the rehab of the block building that was in use by the Sheriff. We will do a rebuild of that building which will become the DFEMS warehouse and office of the quartermaster. This project has been approved and is moving forward with an anticipated Spring 24 completion. This will house our quartermaster who is working out of a temporary office at the PSTC.

We did meet recently with the CCVESA leadership regarding ongoing and future needs of the PSTC for space as DFEMS expands while meeting the needs of the association. We are looking at repurposing some space by the late Spring in anticipation of our training staff. The long-range plan will be for a DFEMS HQ facility on the main county campus and in the design, we will incorporate permanent space

for CCVESA and assure that the DFEMS needs are met with adequate office, meeting and support facilities. This is a long-term project.

**Incident Response:** The end of CY 2023 actually shows decreases in our overall responses although not that significant we are working on the final data and await station end of year reporting via our data analyst. See the attachments from Katie for a sampling of what is being done and our overall direction. We are currently doing a cost analysis and meeting with vendors to determine the best path forward in this area and again Rick Baker continues with his direct involvement and we will be bringing on others so we can get this right. Data analytics will be the foundation for our future expansion and related initiatives. We will also “cautiously” explore Artificial Intelligence or AI and its possible role with this?

**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. proposal) to solicit and select a new billing vendor. We recently met with the MD Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to get on board with the ESSR program which will provide us with “windfall” payments based on on covered state Medicaid reimbursement. This is a federal program that reimburses annually and could yield us \$3-5 million in additional revenues. This requires 100% of our transport resources/associated billing to be on board with DFEMS which will coincide with our 7/1/24 complete EMS transition.

**MD Fire Chiefs:** Will host on Saturday 1/20/24 the Mark Falkenhan Operational Leadership Seminar with an all day (0800-1600) presentation at the PSTC which includes a free lunch. The seminar has relevance for operational and administrative officers and will be presented by Chief Tiger Schmittendorf who is an award-winning fire service educator and speaker. You can pre-register: via MFRI.

**OPEERATIONS STAFF RETREAT:** Is moving forward at the National Fire Academy and is scheduled for Saturday, February 24 from 0800-1700 in Emmitsburg. This will be limited to each of the 14 corporate fire chiefs, the shift commanders, assistant chiefs and myself. We plan on bringing in a facilitator and doing some pre-retreat surveys with the goal of identification of key operational issues and a strategy to resolve so that we can move forward as a countywide system.

**Background checks:** We were approved for \$50,000 recently by the Commissioners. We are now finalizing the logistics and hope to begin later in the month. I may need to request a training session for each company and include the president or designee who will have access to a portal to begin the process. The next question is who will need these backgrounds:

1. All riding/operational members
2. All new applicants for a VFC
3. Anyone who participates in LOSAP and is a functional administrative member.

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*



# MOUNT AIRY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY, INC.

702 NORTH MAIN ST. • MOUNT AIRY, MARYLAND 21771



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

December 18<sup>th</sup>, 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.

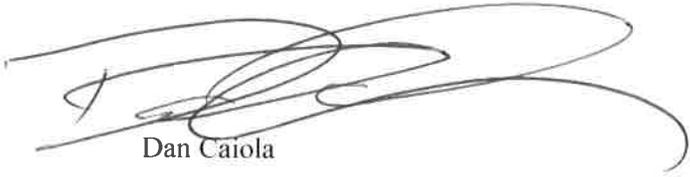
This waiver is requested to save on the unit's gross weight and to maximize overall compartment space. Currently our frontline engine, Engine 12, is reaching the end of its front-line service life and it is highly likely that E12's out of service time may increase in the future. As we are all aware there 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