

Emergency Services Advisory Council

May 20, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Rick Baker, Michael Robinson, JJ Lynott, Michael Karolenko, Blane Wright, David Coe, Brett Six (virtual), Jeff Fleming, Robert Ruch (virtual), Jim Mora, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, Joe Brown

Members Absent: Commissioner Michael Guerin, Tim Legore, Scott Dickson

Guests: DFEMS Deputy Chief Paul Supko, DFEMS Firefighter/EMT Joshua Tohn

Public: DFEMS Battalion Chief Josh Pierson

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

David Coe made a motion to approve the April meeting minutes. Jim Mora seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments:

Mike Karolenko- The EMS picnic at Carroll Hospital today was a fantastic time. This event has been growing and improving over the past few years.

Public Comment: None

Director/Chief's Report: (Report attached)

Commissioner's Report: Not present

CCVESA President's Report:

-Jeff Fleming shared the results of the election at the annual CCVESA conference this month: Jeff Fleming- President, Bruce Fleming- Vice President, Bridget Weishaar- 2nd Vice President, Mary Carole Stiffler- Treasurer, Heather Blum- Secretary.

-Thank you to Chief Robinson and the Commissioners for their support with the FY27 budget.

Medical Director's Report:

-In light of the battery warehouse fire, Dr. Kemp reminded the group that Maryland Medical Protocols do allow for an optional supplemental protocol (OSP) for hydrochloric acid exposure, a concern from lithium-ion batteries combusting. Treatments for exposure are carried on our chase vehicles.

-DFEMS is transitioning from the HandTevy app to OneDose, a more user-friendly app that allows unlimited subscriptions for the same price.

-OneDose also offers a scale that goes on the stretcher and gives an immediate weight for the patient. Hoping to purchase the scales with the Rural Health Transformation Program funding.

-Mandatory Training for LifePak 35s coming out soon. Will be required for all ALS providers.

-New EMS protocols go into effect on July 1. If someone hasn't attended an ALS skills session and does not complete their protocol review their affiliation will be removed.

-Johns Hopkins neurology group is doing a study on the implementation of a pre-hospital dizzy consult which looks at getting patients with symptoms of posterior stroke to appropriate facilities.

Committee Reports:

FROPS – Not present

EMSOPS – David Coe shared that EMSOPS is reviewing several policies and will have them to ESAC next month.

Old Business:

- Apparatus Replacement Policy
 - Chairman Baker reviewed the recent changes to the policy. There were no objections or further comments from the group.
 - **Motion to approve the revised Apparatus Replacement Policy 1.14 by Mike Karolenko. Seconded by Jim Mora. The motion was unanimously passed.**
- FY27 Budget
 - Chairman Baker thanked the Commissioners for their support with the budget, especially Commissioner Guerin for his advocacy.
 - DFEMS is at the staffing level we originally set as a goal and will now exceed that staffing level.

- Funds for building maintenance and apparatus were addressed in the budget.
 - The addition of four Safety Officers was addressed as well.
 - Chief Robinson – DFEMS will now be up to 248 employees including administrative staff. We have seen a lot of growth in a short time.
 - Deputy Chief Supko – Money for overtime has been added to the budget, our float pool will now be balanced, some of the pay scales have been decompressed.
 - DFEMS will have Firefighter/EMT positions available in July.
 - EST graduation is coming up and Chief Robinson will promote those opportunities to the graduates.
 - EVOC and Hazmat Ops are no longer required to apply for DFEMS. They will be taught in the orientation instead. This will benefit DFEMS with recruitment.
- Medic Unit Utilization Policy 4.1.11
 - Deputy Chief Supko shared the history of the policy.
 - Started six months ago with just box alarms, expanded to structure assignments. Does not include gas leaks.
 - It allows the medic crew to assist the first due engine with fire suppression.
 - Staffing of first due engine was enhanced by utilizing this policy.
 - There was no further discussion at last night’s FROPS meeting.
 - Mike Karolenko noted that this policy is currently being utilized and is benefiting our service. He suggested we vote on the policy tonight instead of next month.
 - In future cases where there is a six-month trial period, a reminder will be sent at five months.
 - **Motion to approve the Medic Unit Utilization Policy 4.1.11 by Brett Six. Seconded by Mike Karolenko. The motion was unanimously passed.**

New Business

- Proposed Bylaw Amendment
 - Mike Karolenko discussed his proposal for a bylaw amendment that would allow the Carroll County Professional Firefighters &

Paramedics Association President to be an ex-officio member of ESAC.

- This would mirror the CCVESA President's position and does not change the number of voting members. There would still be only two voting career employee positions.
 - Mike Karolenko stressed the importance of having the Association President involved in ESAC. At one point the President was not on ESAC and he feels that did not work out favorably.
 - There are six volunteer voting positions and two employee voters on ESAC currently.
 - Jim Mora commented that there was some negative feedback from his district, with some feeling that one person should not be allowed to stay on ESAC for that long. He emphasized the need for new voices.
 - It was noted that the IAFF does not have term limits.
 - David Coe feels that having the IAFF President on ESAC provides a valuable historical perspective.
 - Chief Robinson commented that this is an opportunity to perpetuate the value of this organization and grow in the right direction.
 - ESAC reps will share the proposal with their districts and it will be discussed again next month.
- Officer Standards
 - Deputy Chief Supko- The Volunteer Officer Certification policy is about getting our riding members to have certifications and providing a path that allows them to acquire those certifications.
 - Overall, the response was positive except for one point and that was the EMS training requirement for Lieutenants.
 - ESAC voting members unanimously supported that this position should be required to be at a minimum an EMT.
 - ESAC strongly suggested the policy show that in 2026-2029 members who strive to fill those positions in the future, get their EMT training and meet Pro-Board certification.
 - ESAC agreed to the grandfathering principle for now and forever as long as the person holds that position.
 - ESAC suggests that the proposal also address firefighter training requirements. The council felt that this would help personnel who are interested in pursuing an officer position, they would know what training would be required to ride and advance in rank.

- ESAC felt strongly that they did not want to see a difference in training requirements for volunteer or career members. It was felt that this could potentially cause issues and potentially changes in the chain of command.
- Third-Party Study
 - Need to set some parameters rather than a clean slate otherwise the recommendations may be way beyond our capability. If the results are too overblown, the study loses credibility.
 - Chief Robinson expects the 5-minute response time to be brought up during the study.
 - Chairman Baker- The study must be data driven. Will ESO be able to provide the information needed?
 - Chairman Baker expects equipment deployment locations to be brought up.
 - Chief Robinson will send the group an example of what a study would entail.

Action Items:

1. Chairman Baker and Deputy Chief Supko will come up with parameters for officer requirements and send out to group.
2. Start thinking about 5 year and 10 year goals for the study.

JJ Lynott made a motion to adjourn. Joe Brown seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:12.



May 2026
Chief Michael Robinson
Monthly Report to ESAC

Attached herein is my report for May 2026. Please review and I will answer any questions at tonight's meeting

Operations: A significant number of recent working incidents. On Monday, 5/18 the fire box for the Battery Warehouse at 1926 hours resulted in perhaps the shortest FROPS meeting on record and we will have several policies this evening.

A great job on the 2nd alarm Battery Warehouse Fire with 130 responders, lots of chiefs and just two minor injuries given the significant heat conditions that day. Accolades to BC Garhart the IC along with vol. AC Robby Kemp who coincidentally is also the HM Deputy Chief for the BCOFD. Great response, strategy and tactics. This ended up being about a \$5-6 million loss and is still under investigation by the OSFM. There were both lead-acid and Lithium-Ion batteries involved so "thermal runaway" of the lithium batteries may be related but still undetermined.

There were/are some concerns about the toxicity of the smoke as well as decon issues with the PPE. Chief Supko has done some extensive investigation and research into the post fire impact and will be contacting the chiefs of the companies involved. We do have a contingency in place and decon was done extensively on site and recommendations are being provided. I am also in contact with Carroll Occupational Health on the need for "heavy metals" testing in concert with our future annual physicals. An after-action review (AAR) will be planned.

There has been great staffing and outstanding tactical focus and safety. The new policies are being implemented regularly, and our mutual aid partners appear to be integrating with our new policies. Command is being established effectively and seamlessly. We have been addressing the NERIS issues, and we will continue with monthly work groups to address ongoing and unresolved issues. Statistically our overall incidents have dropped by the hundreds, and we are evaluating our data to validate. We have several hundred NERIS reports that have not been entered. This will impact on the 508 funding as NERIS reporting remains a requirement.

STAFFING: We currently have 15 vacancies and have recently had some resignations and terminations. We had 7 new personnel: 2 FF/EMTs and 5 PMs and FF/PMs who continue to be precepted and some have been released to staffing. With our new budgeted positions, we will have 24 vacancies. We will drop the EVOG and HM Ops prerequisites in the interest of recruitment. We are currently processing 8 potential FF/PM and PM hire for a July start date. With the new budget if approved tomorrow, we anticipate hiring both FF/EMTs and PM -FF/PM positions. This will bring our department's staffing total to 248 personnel.

We will be going through a promotional process beginning in July for 4 lieutenants and 3 captain positions. This will cause a cascading effect which will also lead to some FADO promotions which we will address following the officer process. The captain's positions are not additional but will come from our 12 station lieutenants. There will be one captain at stations 1, 3 and 12. We will work with those chiefs to determine the best fit for each station, and the captains will provide oversight for their lieutenants and become the primary point of contact for each chief.

Our **Quartermaster** will be out on a job-related medical issue for approximately three months beginning on 5/29. Jeff Bangerd, a long-time Westminster member, has been hired as a contractual employee and will take Rob's position until his rehab/recovery by the end of the summer. Jeff will shadow Rob for several weeks prior to his departure. I am confident that our interim quartermaster who has many years in the Carroll System will do a great job. Under the Quartermaster, we will be issuing a 250th US Anniversary T-shirt to be worn under the uniform SOP through 2026. These will also be available to volunteer members, ECC staff and CHC ED personnel for purchase through an "online" store run by the vendor. All profits will be donated to the CC Historical Society to help fund 250th events. A link will be published soon.

Logistics Warehouse: Has been turned over to DFEMS. We were able to add a poured epoxy floor. The shelving units are being installed, we are working on concert with DPW to resolve some identified issues. We anticipate occupancy in the next several weeks and will consolidate into the new warehouse from three current locations on the campus. This should streamline all of our logistics capabilities and stock. We have begun our move and hope to be operational out of the warehouse once our IT and security are installed and hopefully by early June. This will centralize our PPE, EMS supplies and career uniform inventory for greater storage capacity and hopefully more efficient service.

LEGISLATIVE: There are a number of successful bills with the end of the legislative session for 2026. These include in no priority order:

SB 439- Will allow medical cannabis to use by our personnel for medical purposes and this will impact our tort liability as THC remains in the system and will be positive for drug testing even days after use. We will be working on an applicable policy to address. This could also impact other issues such as LODD and the payment of the federal benefit since cannabis is still illegal at the federal level even with the FDA's reclass to a schedule III medication. Personnel with a CDL can not use even medical cannabis. We have no plans to change our driver credentialing process. We are currently drafting a policy to comply with this.

SB 159: EMS unit inspections to be mandated by MIEMSS along with a specific equipment check list- to be determined by MIEMSS director.

SB 553: Re-establishes Lithium-Ion battery/energy storage commission for study of the issue.

Volunteer cancer testing bill was successful and we are including career/volunteer testing under a grant for FY-26 and through our annual physicals line item in FY-27 and beyond.

There were also several VFC debt/loan bills to include Hampstead and Manchester. Manchester advised they will be receiving \$265K for station renovations.

EMS Fleet:

We continue to deal with maintenance issues with both our ambulances and SUVs. We do have a new Tahoe on order to replace EMS-103. We have finalized the specs on the F-150 pick-up which will replace BC101 sometime this summer. With the FY-27 budget, then we will order 5 additional ambulances and 3 SUVs (Tahoe's). This will provide us with some needed reserve units as our current reserves as on their last leg of service. We are finalizing those specs and will be ready to begin the procurement process on July 1. Working with the county fleet personnel we hope to get commissioner approval for procurement by August 2026. Our spec committee are working with the possible vendors currently and we will consider available demo units that meet our specs.

FY-27 Budget:

The budget recommendations/deliberations are now complete and the formalized budget recommendations were presented on Tuesday 4/21 by Management and budget. Public comments have been made, and the budget will be presented and voted upon on Thursday, 5/21. We thank the commissioners for their support with our initiatives and highlights which are all subject to final approval by the commissioners are as follows:

1. 12 new positions: 8 floaters (FF/PMs) and 4 Safety/Training lieutenants
2. Station Captains at Stations 1, 3, 12, (upgrades from 3 lieutenants)
3. Five (5) new medic units, 4 additional SUVs
4. Funding for cancer testing aligned to annual 1582 physical exams
5. Funding for a comprehensive "third party" Fire/EMS system study
6. \$5 million additional for PSTC -Phase II construction (CIP budget)
7. Additional funding for SCBA replacement project (CIP budget)
8. Proposal to establish \$10 million low interest loan fund for volunteer apparatus purchase
9. 4.5% employee raises
10. Increase to the volunteer budget by \$720K for FY-27 and 500K increase each year after
 - a. I.T. equipment to be centralized under DFEMS for procurement
 - b. Hose, nozzles and appliances to be centralized through DFEMS procurement
 - c. Training funds to be centralized under training committee (except for Union Bridge Rescue training program)
 - d. Fire Prevention/Community Risk Reduction funding to be centralized under CCVESA
 - e. Increased accountability for expenditures -to be determined

You will note in the DFEMS portion that our budget is broken down into three areas: Fire/EMS Administration, Fire and EMS. This is based on our revenues from EMS billing and the mandates placed on expenditures on those funds. Also, our benefit costs are now removed from our budget and aligned as with other agencies, so our overall budget appears less than for FY-26. The presentation explains the specifics of this breakdown.

<https://www.carrollcountymd.gov/media/1rjnxtoe/final-operating-recommended-budget-summary-book.pdf>

The training/safety Lieutenants positions would be assigned to each of the 24/72 shifts and would focus on the training and compliance needs of each shift as well as the volunteers. They would have an immediate safety officer response profile and perform other duties such as accident/injury investigations, station and PPE inspections and provide driver training and OSHA compliance. All other departments in the region currently have such a position. Our goal is to have this position in place along with our captains by the end of September. We are working on the location/quarters for what will be known as Safety 101. They will report to AC Brothers and operationally under the shift commander. Their office will be located at the PSTC where they will work from 0700-2300 and then will sleep at the designated station.

Insurance is another ongoing concern in terms of cost and coverage. The 10K deductibles based on accident history are not sustainable and I am working with risk management and our insurer VFIS to see what options there are. We also looked at that issue in our budget discussions. Given the industry trends based on national risk models it is not likely that our deductibles will be going down. The FY-27 policy renewal is currently out for bid. As part of our insurance coverage, we will need to maintain an accurate list of all volunteer membership. This will assure claims processing and compensation in the case of injury, disability or death. More to come on this area and our goal is to have a comprehensive database of all members both operational and administrative.

APS Enhancement: We are currently working with APS/Firehouse Alerting to make some enhancements to the informational capabilities of the system. Our goal will be to provide daily information including staffing and the shift commander's report to each display countywide. We will also be adding display screens to each floor of PSTC, the shift commander's office and our HQ offices at the county office building. This will take several months and we have begun the preliminary process.

Grants: Some good news! We were recently notified by Congressman "Johnny O" who represents portions of Carroll that we will be tentatively receiving an award of \$550,000 towards a new reserve fire engine. This would be available as a county reserve and for PSTC use. There are several more steps to this and we should receive this by December 2026. This will require a match from the county so we will be doing a needs analysis and have personnel assigned to work on this project. This will be a "user friendly" and practical apparatus that will need to be cost

effective. We can assume features like a 1500gpm pump, 1000-gallon tank and consistent to the minimum standards for a pumper apparatus.

EMS has also received a \$900K /5-year award under a rural healthcare grant. This will be used to increase our whole blood capabilities. It will allow us to increase our storage/operational capacity to two units/supervisor as well as to attain accreditation as an official “blood bank” and less dependence on the INOVA northern Virginia vendor that we currently use. This will also include the procurement of additional equipment and a vehicle to support this project.

We are also looking at an additional rural health grant in concert with our Health Department and Lifebridge Carroll Health. The goal of this grant will be to establish a community paramedic/Mobile Integrative Health program along with our partner agencies. This is not our first attempt at this, and we are hopeful given the amount of available funding. We will seek to develop the best model to meet our needs and to reduce the number of repeat calls for EMS service. AC Zaney will lead this initiative for the department.

PSTC improvements/ Phase II: We are also submitted in our budget at the request of the training committee a replacement container/module for our burning facilities which have become worn giving the age. This current configuration of a burn facility was intended to be temporarily pending phase II of the PSTC.

There is also project in the budget for approximately \$8 million. These funds would be used to remediate the current PSTC practical area which meets the federal threshold for PFAS remediation based on geotechnical drilling and testing conducted during 2024. DPW’s construction division has made some recommendations and are now developing a timeline and total project cost. The total for remediation and construction of Phase II will be around \$22 million. The commissioners are funding FY-27, the first phase of this which will be remediation. Once that is complete construction can begin which will provide a new two-story burning building, an outdoor classroom building, new flammable liquid/gas props and associated civil engineering projects such as drainage, new parking facilities and other environmental compliance. There is some additional discussion on the remediation component, and a direction will soon be determined. The impact on our facility and our ongoing training capabilities is a huge consideration with this.

I am awaiting a timeline/cost analysis from DPW/construction. The reality of this plan will be a need to shift all practical training from the PSTC to an alternative site for as long as (18-24 months.) Obviously, this will have a significant impact on our training programs and especially fire and rescue courses as well as applicant testing and recruit training. We are working on some alternative plans that will obviously involve MFRI, neighboring jurisdictions and our CCVESA training committee. For many reasons we must have a plan to ensure training continuity given our focus and mandates in the training area. All elements of county government as well as the commissioners are fully supportive of our needs and our future direction. We will all need to be prepared to improvise and adapt to some temporary solutions. This is subject to scrutiny and

alternatives as PFAS is a planet-wide issue and spending millions on remediation may or may not address the issues.

Cancer screening grant: The career grant has been funded fully and we will be testing all personnel while on duty with little if any disruption to operations. Once we finalize the logistics we will apprise you of our plan. This will likely be done in station and coordinated through our EMS lieutenants. We will begin our career testing to personnel while on duty and this will be coordinated by our three EMS supervisors for each shift and we will complete by the end of June. Remember that CCVESA has a separate grant for this year only so I will defer to Sue Mott who is managing that grant for your logistics and implementation. For Fy-27 and beyond we will integrate into the annual physicals so that everyone is tested in compliance with the state legal requirements.

Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards:

On Tuesday, May 19 at Pleasant Valley, along with many others, I attended the annual CC Chamber Public Safety Awards. A great event our own Rick Baker received a lifetime achievement award and our main lifesaving award brought out our patient from a 12/25 incident where Lt. Josh Myers of EMS 101 performed a “lifesaving” surgical airway. Other DFEMS personnel BC Max Nickey was the Career Officer of the year and Chief 14 Austin Johnstone was the Volunteer Officer of the Year.

The Commendations Board now coordinates the submissions for both events and I want to commend the Co-Chairs, President Todd Tracey from Gamber and Lt. Michael Karolenko from DFEMS and their board members for the many hours they have worked to make these events a success and more importantly to recognize both career and volunteer members who are going above and beyond in service to their communities and to Carroll County.

Federal Funding: Is now fully restored and FEMA and the USFA are now operational. What this means is the following:

1. Web based ICS 100,200, 700, 800 and other training is again available
2. The National Fire Academy is open and has many vacancies, go to their website for info
3. AFG grants are available, and the window is now open for submission
4. FEMA grants are available, and we are working on several for special operations

The **National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend** at the National Memorial in Emmitsburg occurred on May 3-5 with the NFF ceremony on Sunday, 5/5. I was in attendance as was our Honor Guard and Winfield VFC who honored their LODD- Captain Keith Phillips who died as the result of occupational cancer. This was well attended, and I wish to thank Chief Franklin and Manchester who provided an engine for display at the three-day event and it was prominently displayed as part of the ceremonies. Captain Phillips was also recognized at the Maryland Fallen Heroes Memorial at Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens and I was honored to escort his wife to receive this honor from our Governor on 5/1/26.

On Sunday, June 7 at 1300 the annual **Maryland Fire/Rescue Memorial ceremony** will be held at the memorial in Annapolis. Our honor guard and I will be participating, and companies are encouraged to attend. Also, if you are going to the MSFA Convention in June their annual memorial service will be held on Sunday, 6/21/26 beginning at 1500. Also, there are many outstanding educational programs being held at the convention and there is no charge for these, and they will be held from Sunday-Wednesday.

Low interest loan program: With the implementation of the FY-27 budget the commissioners have approved the development of a low interest loan program for apparatus procurement by VFCs. The loan terms and amount of funding available is yet to be determined. We are meeting along with the comptroller, management & budget and the county administrator and the commissioners to develop the criteria, loan terms and other dynamics that need to be determined. There should be a comprehensive program with initiation hopefully by the end of this current year. At a minimum the rates and repayment terms should be more reasonable than what is available commercially. We may also make this available for station improvements. More to follow.

Training Opportunity: On Saturday, September 19, 2026, we will be hosting an all-day seminar to be broken down into two parts. The first area will be recruitment/retention, and the second portion will be leadership. This is being provided through the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) and we will need at least 20 participants for this to run. This is grant funded and there is no charge for this valuable training which will be at the PSTC (flier attached) from 0830-1700.

EMS Week: Beginning on Sunday 5/17- Saturday, 5/23 EMS Week is being observed, and this year's theme is "Improving Outcomes Together!" Please take some time to thank your EMS crews for what they do. We have a full week of activities including our annual EMS Picnic with CHC/ED which was held today and a blood drive to support our blood transfusion held today at the PSTC. Thanks to Lt. Chris Petry for another successful blood drive. Tomorrow at 1630 here at the PSTC the MIEMSS leadership will be here to present MD "Star of Life Awards" to the EMS team members involved in the 12/25 surgical airway incident in Manchester. All are invited to this brief ceremony.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

Michael W. Robinson, MA, CFO, NRP
Director, Chief