

Emergency Services Advisory Council
May 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Michael Robinson, Rick Baker, Michael Guerin, JJ Lynott, Tim Legore, Michael Karolenko, Robert Ruch, Brett Six, Dan Plunkert, Jeff Fleming

Members Absent: David Coe, Joe Brown, Blane Wright, Scott Dickson, Dr. Stephanie Kemp

Guests: Jim Mora- President, Pleasant Valley VFC, Capt. Russell Halterman- DFEMS Shift Commander, Susan Mott- CCVESA 2nd Vice President, Chief Andrew Wooden- Reese & Community VFC

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

Mike Karolenko made a motion to approve the April meeting minutes. Tim Legore seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments:

Chairman Baker welcomed newly elected CCVESA President Jeff Fleming and 2nd Vice President Susan Mott.

Tim Legore was reelected as FROPS Chair. EMSOPS meets next week to vote on a new chair.

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

-Chief Robinson expects that the recent pension enhancements will have a positive impact on retention for DFEMS.

-Chief Robinson reported that the first DFEMS press conference was held during EMS Week. It was a very successful event where a survivor was able to connect with the first responders who saved his life during a cardiac event at Texas Roadhouse in Westminster.

-CCVESA 2nd Vice President Susan Mott and Assistant Chief of EMS Eric Zaney attended the Maryland EMS Awards where an 8-year-old girl from Westminster was awarded the Right Care When It Counts Award.

- Chief Robinson highlighted specialized trainings held by Winfield and Union Bridge fire companies.
 - The National Fire Academy is set to reopen June 1st, but they are lacking staff.
 - The Training Lieutenant positions were not approved in the FY26 budget. Chief Robinson stated that DFEMS will end up paying more in overtime than the positions themselves would have cost.
 - Chief Robinson commented on the great job done with the Commendations Board and DFEMS Awards Ceremony.
- Chief Robinson and Chief Supko will continue to meet with individual fire companies.
- Chief Robinson shared that he has received a letter from CCVESA regarding changes to the MOU and he will be responding. The County Administrator and County Attorney will be participating in those conversations.
 - Chief Robinson is forming the Chief's Leadership Council which will hold their first meeting in July.

Commissioner's Report: Nothing to report

CCVESA President's Report: Nothing to report

Medical Director's Report: Not present

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS - Not present

FROPS -

- Tim Legore reported the SOP sub-committee is meeting for the first time tomorrow night.
- The Officer Standards SOP was tabled until June.
- FROPS also discussed radio channel issues on recent calls. Changes will be coming. Chief Supko will work with dispatch on this issue.

Old Business:

- FY26 Budget Discussion
 - Commissioner Guerin stated that the FY26 Budget will officially be adopted tomorrow, May 22nd. He expressed disappointment regarding the way the EMS billing revenue is being utilized. He will

continue his efforts to ensure the funds are being used to support DFEMS in the best way.

- Lt. Mike Karolenko thanked Commissioner Guerin and others for their work on the pension enhancements which will improve DFEMS' recruitment and retention.

New Business:

- County Low-Interest Loans
 - Changes were made recently to the low-interest loan application process through the county.
 - There was an issue with Gamber not getting their loan. The Comptroller's Office indicated that they did not fully complete the application process. The county has now reached their cap and is not able to give any additional loans.
 - This is the first time a fire company has been denied and it is a huge concern. The companies have never been made aware that there was a cap for the low-interest loans.
 - Commissioner Guerin stated that he will speak with the Comptroller's Office about this issue.
 - Dan Plunkert stated that the cost of apparatus has doubled in the past ten years. It is unrealistic for the county to expect the fire companies to pay for the apparatus as well the interest when the apparatus are being used by both career and volunteer members.
 - Brett Six stated that the ten year limit to pay back the loan must be examined. Taneytown Fire Department recently voted not to replace their ladder truck because they cannot afford the payments on a ten year loan.
 - Tim Legore mentioned the lack of reserve engines.
 - Chief Robinson noted the impact that not having these apparatus will have on insurance rates.
 - JJ Lynott commented that there will be a cascading effect, noting that many companies have apparatus that are older and will need to be replaced soon.
 - Chairman Baker noted that the low-interest loan application has been taken offline.
 - Chief Robinson stated that we also need to look at the status of our infrastructure.

- Dan Plunkert brought up the agreements made under the MOU that he feels have not been fulfilled by the county and noted that Westminster has had to pay over \$70k to replace AC units.
- Commissioner Guerin asked how many apparatus loan applications are typically submitted to the county each year. Chairman Baker provided an estimate of ten per year.
- Dan Plunkert commented that it is much easier for the county to assist the fire companies in purchasing apparatus than to purchase units themselves.
- Apparatus Requests
 - Hampstead Volunteer Fire Company is requesting to purchase an ATV. This would be an addition to the fleet.
 - Tim Legore pointed out that there are already six ATVs in service in Carroll County.
 - Robert Ruch noted that the county will still have to pay to insure the vehicle.
 - Dan Plunkert made a motion to forward the proposal to FROPS and the 14 fire companies for their opinion before having a discussion next month. Brett Six seconded. The motion was passed with JJ Lynott opposed.
 - Reese & Community Volunteer Fire Company is requesting to replace Engine Tanker 94 which is 19 years old.
 - Mike Karolenko made a motion to recommend approving the request. Robert Ruch seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
 - Harney Volunteer Fire Company is requesting to replace Brush 115 (55 years old) and Special Unit 11 (26 years old) with a single unit.
 - The new unit will be on a Ford 550 chassis and will have a 750 GPM PTO pump and at least a 250 gallon booster tank.
 - Mike Karolenko made a motion to recommend approving the request. Brett Six seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- Lieutenant Promotional Process
 - The 12 individuals currently in Chase Car assignments are not guaranteed to get the Lieutenant positions. They will still have to

apply for the position once posted. The goal is to have people in these positions by late August.

- The source material for the exam will be shared after the budget is adopted. The process will also consist of a situational interview with outside evaluators of the same rank, an in-basket writing exercise and a final interview.
 - These positions will have assigned stations and will also serve as safety officers. They will still upgrade BLS units and do second tier ALS skills.
 - The vehicles will be marked as EMS Supervisor.
 - Some Lieutenants will be cross trained to act as Shift Commanders.
 - Chief Robinson feels adding these positions will provide depth and build incentive. It will also help alleviate issues stemming from lack of supervision at some stations.
- Carbon Monoxide Policy
 - No comments at this time.
 - Will vote on this policy next month.
 - The Wildland Search policy will be voted on in July.
 - Statistics were sent out. Please let Mel Long or Rick Baker know if there are any issues with the numbers.

Action Items:

1. Chief Robinson will write apparatus approval letters for Reese and Harney.
2. Chairman Baker will let Hampstead leadership know that their apparatus request was tabled.
3. Commissioner Guerin will meet with the Comptroller's Office on the low-interest loan issue.

Brett Six made a motion to adjourn. Mike Karolenko seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 20:53.



Report to ESAC

May 21, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

I have the below report for ESAC for you to read and update yourselves with current issues and areas relevant to DFEMS. I will answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

National Fire Service Issues: as an addendum in advance of this report I sent you the CFSI Newsletter to update you on some national fire service issues. They also have a website that can Provide you with ongoing and additional information.

Specialized training programs: Two companies recently held specialized training programs which were “off the charts” and highly successful. The first was the rural water supply program hosted by Winfield and led by past chiefs Mark Davis and Tim Legore. Lots of great information and practical skills opportunities. The second was when Union Bridge hosted along with “Mid Atlantic Rescue” their technical rescue program which was also a great success. Both of these programs provided positive PR for both your companies and Carroll County. An outstanding job by all and some great training that benefits many personnel!

Staffing (VFCs): Our staffing as of today is 212 of 220 budgeted positions with a net vacancy of 8 positions. We had 10 personnel begin two weeks ago and were released for staffing last week and 5 are FF/PMs, 1-PM and 4 FADOs. There are several paramedics who continue to be precepted prior to their release. Assignments were sent out with a recent transfer list. Our goal is obviously to fill all vacancies and finally gain some consistency with staffing. We currently have 8 conditional offers that are out and depending on how quickly we can schedule/complete physicals the start date will be June 5th. This finalizes staffing for all station positions and 12 floaters for 3/shift. We currently have at least 6 personnel out on long- term leave (FMLA) or on modified duty which also impacts our staffing. We have also received two recent resignations and had one separation. These positions are also being processed for replacement.

Our goal is that by early June we should return Gamber (M-139) and Union Bridge (M-89) to ALS staffing. Mt. Airy’s second ALS will follow. This will give us a total of 16 EMS (ALS) transport units with three stations having two units (1, 3,12.)

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.

Everyone will be an integral component of this, and we must all concur on the” What, How and Why” with regards to NERIS reporting which will drive our staffing needs. Our work group under the coordination of our data analyst continues to move forward on this project and an implementation schedule is ongoing. We must understand that we can only further increase

staffing based on the Commissioners direction and approval.

Again, let me assure you that we will not make our recommendations unilaterally but with consideration to the volunteer corporations and your willingness to receive additional personnel and also on evidence-based data that we will achieve through the ESO/NERIS implementation and subsequent data analysis. I will state that the data must be transparent and realistic based on a mutually agreed upon criteria. Our NERIS implementation group is working towards that end.

Our recruitment will continue based on our budget initiatives for FY-26 which will include upgrade of 12 ALS car paramedics to Lieutenant/paramedics. Our request for two training/safety lieutenants and 12 requested additional floaters to offset leave, sick and injury staffing were not recommended in the operating budget. We did receive four (4) floater positions in the budget which will increase our floaters to 4/shift. This would bring our total staffing to 236 in FY 26 if approved on this Thursday (tomorrow), 5/22 when the operating budget is presented for a final vote and approval.

Regarding our recruitment we have a list of applicants who are in various stages of application. We will be advertising for the FADO position again and we are currently recruiting paramedics and FF/Paramedics. We believe this is a good situation and we look for some staffing stability among our current personnel with some movement as we re-staff three medics to the ALS level. I have secured exhibit space at the MSFA convention in June to allow us to have a recruitment display/opportunity as our recruitment/applications continue.

Data Analyst: Ms. Melissa Long (Mel) continues progressing as our data analyst. She spent a week in Austin, TX with the ESO organization at their user's conference. Many of our ESO challenges and issues were addressed and Mel is moving towards significant abilities with this system. Our user groups/implementation goals remain, and we look for greater progress. Our goal is to transition to ESO by 12/31/25 as previously stated with some "test" stations to come online sooner.

Mel recently served as the lead to produce our first annual report for DFEMS which is available at: <https://www.carrollcountymd.gov/government/directory/fire-and-emergency-services/department-of-fire-and-emergency-medical-services-annual-report/>. This is the DFEMS annual report and each company and their officers as well as their data are identified in the report. This was based on our validated criteria for data. I have a "hard copy" of the report for each of you this evening as well.

Budget: The operating budget for FY-26 has been released and public meetings have occurred, including the public comment meeting on Tuesday, 5/6. I was in attendance and there were no comments on the DFEMS operating budget which the volunteer budget is a component of. There was no representation at that meeting from CCVESA and a single representative from the career firefighter's organization. Just to clarify, the CCVESA submission was neither reviewed nor cut in any way by myself or by our staff and it was provided to budget as submitted. The final Commissioner approval will occur tomorrow on 5/22/25 and we believe that there are no changes in what we reported under staffing.

We were successful in securing a third medic unit which was originally removed from the proposed operating budget. There was no movement on the request for a replacement reserve

engine and this will be increasingly problematic. We will continue to validate this need. We will also receive two additional Tahoes to have reserve units in our fleet. Other operational expenditures were increased at 3%.

The CCVESA budget also included an increase but limited in requested enhancements. There were no increases to LOSAP but there was a suggestion for an updated actuarial study.

508 funding: The funding for this program has been received and was provided to CCVESA for distribution to each VFC. I would assume that each company has received their allotment at this time. Despite state challenges this remained the same consistent to the funding formula.

County funding of apparatus loans: On 5/8/25 representatives from Winfield and New Windsor along with myself and the Comptroller, presented loan requests to the commissioners. A \$1 million loan was approved for New Windsor for a new engine (2000gpm with 1000 gal. tank) and Winfield for \$700,000 for a new tanker (3500 gallon/elliptical) The county can only provide loans up to 5% of the total funding of public projects which are covered by a bond issue as VFC loans constitute a loan to a private organization. That specific amount has been satisfied to its maximum extent for the Fy-26 fiscal year by the recent approval of loan funding to New Windsor and Winfield. The application on the comptroller's site has been removed at this time as no additional funding is available.

There is also no funding available from the state loan fund which is complicated by their recent lowering of the state's credit rating. If you follow the news, there was an audit done on the state loan funds which are under MDEM and they are unable to account for about 62 company loans so I would not anticipate much funding availability from the state VCAF loan funds
<https://www.baltimoresun.com/2025/05/15/audit-maryland-department-emergency-management/>

So, this is obviously going to be a significant issue given the amount of loans that were anticipated or in the process of requests. The county is bound by existing laws so please understand the limitations of this. With the new CCVESA leadership I am going to have a meeting to discuss some viable options. One possibility could be private funding through a municipal loan organization that specializes in such funding. Also, Joe Dennis with his significant financial background is looking at some options and I had a brief meeting with him on this issue. I recognize both the needs and the challenges, and the county is limited under the laws which limit the amount of loans that can be made. You may want to discuss this under new business.

The Commendations Board did a remarkable job and our first DFEMS Commendations ceremony was a resounding success. Special thanks to the board's co-chairs, Todd Tracey of Gamber and Lt. Michael Karolenko of DFEMS and all of the board members. This was held, April 29 at the "Flood Zone" with over 60 awards being awarded to both career and volunteer members and roughly 200 in attendance. This will be an annual commendations ceremony and the SOP for awards is posted in our SOP library. I would encourage more submissions for both incident specific awards as well as for the several categories of administrative awards. Significant financial support for the event was provided by CCVESA, the IAFF and other businesses and organizations.

The Carroll Chamber Public Safety Awards were held yesterday May 20 with a breakfast at

Pleasant Valley and there were many awards given to include a volunteer Fire & EMS provider of the year-Dennis Mann from Westminster. FADO Kyle Stull of Westminster as the career provider of the year. Lt. Michael Karolenko as the career supervisor of the year, and Callie Williams as the public safety administrative employee of the year. Also, several FD lifesaving awards including ESAC member Dr. Kemp. Congratulations to all awardees!

Meetings with all corporations/VFCs? I have completed meetings with about 9 of the 14 companies and the discussions focused on 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 am still awaiting meetings with stations 1, 2, 3,7, 11. 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. I am doing the same with each shift/station for our career employees to create a dialogue and to discuss their issues and concerns. A lot of good feedback and we are making changes as needed. Most of the discussions have been about in station duties, maintenance and additional funding. I will be sure to notify each chief when we will be holding meetings with career personnel, and these are open and not exclusive meetings with many in station volunteers attending so far.

National Fallen Firefighter's Memorial Weekend: was held the first weekend in May at the NFA. Bobby Jones, LODD from Reese was honored at this year's ceremony. Despite the weather, it was a very moving ceremony and Reese and DFEMS were well represented. Our honor guard also participated in the "joint" honor guard with over 100 flagbearers, color guards and pipes & drums. A reminder that the MD Fallen Firefighter's memorial ceremony will be held on Sunday, June 1, 2025, at the memorial in Annapolis. Also, past CCVESA president Dennis Beard continues to lead the memorial's board.

Temporary DFEMS Offices: For the past year the COB has been undergoing an incremental upgrade/replacement of its HVAC system. There are plans in place and we are a part of that plan which is flexible but not accurate as far as time frames go. So, the DFEMS Admin offices and personnel are temporarily working out of the PSTC for 4-5 weeks during renovations of our space.

The CCVESA liaison has retained their office and as a result our billing and data analytics are working out of conference areas. We are working with the CCVESA leadership and once the work is complete, we will transition back to the COB. A portion of the offices for CCVESA may be relocated as we adjust our overall PSTC space to accommodate some additional needs. We are in dialogue and will certainly work together to adjust to the space issues.

The work will begin shortly on our warehouse building on the PSTC campus. The bids are in process and the work should begin in July with a completion by early fall. This will provide needed space for our growing stores of uniforms, EMS equipment and PPE. The Quartermaster and their operation will relocate here as they are currently working from several locations on the campus.

MOU: I have received some correspondence from CCVESA leadership, concerning a review of the current MOU and discussion and movement to make some substantive changes. I am certainly open to a discussion on the MOU, and we can go over each of their issues. I will

immediately entertain movement on this, and we will begin an audit/review of the document. We can have some initial discussions, and I will also request that the county attorney and administrator be involved in this direction. If you recall, during the development of the original MOU there was a smaller “working group” from CCVESA and once the drafts were finalized all of the VFCs participated. I would suggest something similar and that ESAC and FROPs both have representation on such a group. Since its implementation the option has been available for such a process to occur, and I would welcome it on my end to review and update as we near two years of operations.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr