



Report to CCVESA

June 2, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

I have the below report for CCVESA 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.

Congratulations: To the new CCVESA leadership! I look forward to another year of cooperation and productivity as we continue our progress with the combination Fire & EMS System of Carroll County.

MD Fire/Rescue Memorial: The annual memorial service was held in Annapolis yesterday. My condolences to the Winfield Community VFC who were in attendance with an outstanding showing as Keith Phillips of Winfield, who was an occupational cancer LODD was installed on the memorial "Wall of Honor." Four other LODDs were recognized including Lt. Chris Higgins from my home VFC of Earleigh Heights who was a career LODD in Montgomery County. Our DFEMS honor guard participated as part of the MD "joint honor guard." I was also in attendance for the ceremony. I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the Memorial Chair Dennis Beard-CCVESA past president who dedicates hundreds of hours each year administering the Memorial, its upkeep and the related programming. Continued fiscal support is key to maintaining this beautiful site in Annapolis.

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 three weeks ago and they 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 7 personnel who will start on Thursday 6/5 and 4 are PMs or FF/PMs and 3 are FADOs or FF/EMTs. We recently tested some additional personnel and they are processing. 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 in the next two weeks we will 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. We recently had three of our FF/EMTs graduate from college paramedic programs with associate degrees and National Registry. I just came from a promotional ceremony for FF/PM Julianna Lynott who also remains an active volunteer and EMS officer at Hampstead. Congratulations FF/PM Lynott.

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. We will be meeting with the OSFM NERIS coordinator in the next several months to further integrate our transition with the state reporting which will transition with NERIS.

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.

Budget: The operating budget for FY-26 has been approved on May 20 and will be published on the county web site. The budget analyst should also be in touch with your treasurer as the FY 26 budget will be in effect as of July 1, 2025. All purchasing under FY25 will end on 6/12 so we are moving forward with our final expenditures.

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. An administrative change was also approved this past Thursday, and your chair will report on that.

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. Joe Dennis with his significant financial background is looking at some options and I will update 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. I am working with the comptroller and they will have some new processes on their web site once determined.

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 on 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. A special lifetime service presentation was provided to past Chief Mike Gist of Pleasant Valley. Also, several FD lifesaving awards including ESAC member Dr. Kemp. Congratulations to all awardees! Pleasant Valley did an excellent job of hosting this event.

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 and several of these are scheduled. 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.

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 3-4 weeks during renovations of our space. We should be back at the COB by early next week.

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 have met with the county administrator to discuss some of the presented issues and we are currently looking at each of them. We can have some initial discussions, and move from there. 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.

CLC-Chief’s Leadership Council: I am currently putting together a new focus group which will meet every other month. The goal of this group is to have the organizational leadership: CCVESA, ESAC, FROPS and Career FF/PM association to meet with myself and my command staff. This will not replace the defined work of any of the organizations. The group will look at a submitted agenda and discuss areas of mutual concern so we can approach issues and resolve with a single focus. The operational rule of this group will be that we will have “only” the leader of the organization and no alternates. All parties must be present, or we will not meet. Our first meeting is in July. This will be a working group with transparency, equity and no hidden agendas only systemic issues and mutually agreeable resolutions. This will hopefully create greater trust and unity with a single unified front. The minutes of each meeting will be published and distributed. All of the respective members have been notified and provided with a set of operating guidelines. I look forward to some productive discussion and movement with this concept.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr

