

Emergency Services Advisory Council
February 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Michael Robinson, Rick Baker, JJ Lynott, Tim Legore, Michael Karolenko, Dr. Stephanie Kemp, Robert Ruch (virtual), Dan Plunkert, Blane Wright, Scott Dickson, Brett Six, David Coe, Joe Brown

Members Absent: George Wentz, Michael Guerin

Guests: Donald Nott – Manchester VFD, Todd Tracey – Gamber VFD, President

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

Mike Karolekno made a motion to approve the January meeting minutes. Dan Plunkert seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

Board Member Comments: None at this time

Director/Chief's Report: Report attached.

- Chief Robinson reported that DFEMS will begin staffing station 7 (Lineboro) and station 8 (Union Bridge) on Thursday, February 27th. Union Bridge will be BLS only, Lineboro will have a paramedic.
- DFEMS has 207 of the 220 approved positions filled with 13 vacancies remaining.
- Chief Robinson shared that the ransomware attack at Frederick Hospital has affected DFEMS hiring. Carroll Occupational Health has been delayed in clearing potential employees.
- Chief Robinson stated that DFEMS will be challenged for the next 6-8 weeks in regard to staffing. Every attempt will be made to limit holdovers.
- The new DFEMS Data Analyst, Melissa Long, starts on Thursday, February 27th.
- Chief Robinson and Deputy Chief Supko are still looking to set up meetings with individual companies.

Commissioner's Report: Not present.

Medical Director's Report:

-Dr. Kemp reported that permission has been granted to repurpose funds for the whole blood program. She and Chief Zaney are working to purchase equipment, draft an MOU, write policies/procedures and develop training.

-DFEMS was approved for dive medicine protocol by MIEMSS. Training is planned for spring/summer. If anyone is interested in becoming a dive medicine EMT or paramedic let Dr. Kemp know.

-Dr. Kemp, Russell Halterman and Tyler Jaworski are working on IVT protocol which will be submitted through the review committee.

-All scheduled ALS skills sessions have been completed. There is one more makeup session.

-There is one more ALS recert day which was rescheduled due to a power outage.

-The next DFEMS Continuing Education session is Tuesday Feb. 25th and the subject is cold emergencies.

-Dr. Kemp reminds providers to wash their hands and wear a mask when transporting patients with flu, COVID or RSV symptoms. A lot of people are sick right now. This is one of the deadliest flu seasons ever.

CCVESA President's Report: Not present.

Committee Reports:

EMSOPS – David Coe reported that EMSOPS is meeting tomorrow. There was no quorum at last month's meeting.

FROPS – Tim Legore reported that FROPS continues to work with Chief Supko on policies.

Old Business:

- Final Review of Policies
 - The group suggested revisions to the following policies:
 - Emergency Vehicle Operations (EVO) Policy
 - Accident Review Committee Policy
 - Gas Emergencies
 - Additions and changes were made to these policies and will be included in the documents for final review and will be voted on at the March meeting.

- Commendations Board Policy
 - Brett Six made a motion to approve the Commendations Board Policy. JJ Lynott seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- First Review of Volunteer Background Check Policy
 - Chief Robinson clarifies that all operational members would need to get the background check, meaning anyone who gets an occupational physical.
 - There is discretion for the fire companies to run checks on additional members.
 - Tim Legore noted that a date is needed for when those who oversee youth must complete the background check.
 - Scott Dickson noted that fire companies should be sure to run the background check on potential new members before voting them in.
 - Dan Plunkert clarified with Chief Robinson that fire companies will be notified of flagged reports that meet the threshold for potential disqualification.
- Follow up on Youth Outreach Action Item
 - Chairman Baker put Commissioner Guerin in touch with Bruce Fleming to discuss the EST and Juniors programs, and other youth outreach efforts. This action item is closed.

New Business:

- Apparatus Replacement Requests
 - The volunteer fire companies have contributed/committed to \$12 million in new/replacement apparatus since January 2024.
 - Manchester is requesting to replace Engine 43 that is over 20 years old with another like-engine. They are hoping to order by the end of 2025.
 - JJ Lynott made a motion to recommend approving the purchase. Brett Six seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.

- Manchester is requesting to replace Rescue Squad 4 which is almost 30 years old. A committee has been formed and they are looking to order by the end of 2025.
 - Brett Six made a motion to recommend approving the purchase. Mike Karolenko seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- Sykesville is requesting to replace Engine 124 which is 18 years old. They are considering decreasing the amount of water the unit carries from 1500 gallons to 1000 gallons.
- Sykesville is also discussing the possibility of keeping the old Engine as a ready reserve. The group discussed that new radios and SCBA would be an added cost to the county.
 - David Coe made a motion to recommend approving the purchase. Mike Karolenko seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
 - Tim Legore made a motion to approve Sykesville continuing the discussion about possibly keeping the old engine as a reserve. David Coe seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- Gamber is requesting to keep Ambulance 139 as a reserve. Todd Tracey shared their justification for the request including the increase in call volume, desire to collaborate with the county and expand EMS, and the need for a medic unit to go with the dive team when they are dispatched.
- The group discussed the drawbacks including the cost to the county of radios, new equipment to replace the unserviceable equipment currently on the unit and the fact that there may not be volunteers to staff the unit very often.
- Chief Robinson pointed out that the request for the FY26 operational budget has already been submitted. The county's Budget and Fleet departments are not in support of keeping the old units as reserves.
 - Mike Karolenko made a motion to not endorse the retention of ambulance 139 as a ready reserve. Brett Six seconded. The motion was passed with one opposed (Legore).
- Westminster is requesting to replace their 2011 Spartan/Rosenbauer class A pumper with another of the same

capabilities. They are in the early stages of planning and have not yet formed a committee.

- Brett Six made a motion to recommend approving the purchase. JJ Lynott seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- Westminster is requesting to replace their 2013 Ford F-250 Utility 3 with the same make/model. Radios will be moved from the old unit to the new and there will be no change in functionality. The old unit will replace their Safety 3 vehicle, a 2005 Crown Victoria.
 - Brett Six made a motion to recommend approving the purchase. Mike Karolenko seconded. The motion was unanimously passed.
- Support for Pension Plan Enhancements
 - Mike Karolenko shared that there will be a presentation tomorrow during open session on the results of the actuarial study on the public safety pension plan. He asked ESAC to consider providing a letter of support for pension plan enhancements or for a work group on the subject. He feels enhancements to the pension plan would benefit recruitment and retention and the system overall.
 - The group felt that more information was needed on what the enhancements would include, but that they would be in support of a work group.

Brett Six made a motion to adjourn. JJ Lynott seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 21:44.



Report to ESAC

February 19, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

Good evening, My report is below, and I will only discuss the highlights and answer any relevant questions. We have a busy agenda for tonight's meeting

Staffing (VFCs): We currently are on track to staff both Lineboro and Union Bridge. Beginning on 2/27/25 at 0700 hrs., Lineboro will be staffed with a FADO, FF/EMT and PM or FF/PM on each of four shifts. Union Bridge will be BLS only for the interim and will be staffed with a FADO, two FF/EMTs. A total of 12 personnel for each station across four shifts. Chief Supko and I have had meetings with the Chief and officers of each VFC and we have all logistics in place.

Our staffing as of 2/27 will be 207 of 220 budgeted positions with a net vacancy of 13 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. At this time, we have 18 persons awaiting results which will impact next weeks hiring. I am currently evaluating some alternatives to increase our numbers by 2/27. Rest assured that DFEMS in concert with HR are doing all that we can and working to do whatever we can to bring on these positions.

On Monday of next week, we will begin written testing of 39 applicants which include 11 PMs and FF/PMs, 21 FF/EMTs and 7 FADOs. We are currently still short and will be short 13 positions and PMs and FADOs are our priority. We tested for three internal FADOs today and we still have at least three 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, CCC Job Fair, EMS 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.

As of this date CCVESA has not reported the use of the supplemental staffing funds that were approved by the commissioners retroactive to October 24. I have sent a correspondence requesting a resolution to this. A condition of this funding was the ongoing reporting of expenditures for this staffing. The lack of reporting could hold up additional funding which is essentially a reimbursement to those companies who are utilizing these funds. As of today, only Union Bridge and Lineboro will be impacted. EMS billing revenues will continue to these companies for several months. On 2/27 we will assume the EMS billing and revenues for both of those companies.

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. I have secured exhibit space at the MSFA convention in June to allow us to have a recruitment display/opportunity and our applications continue.

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 will begin as our data analyst. We are already working with her to get acclimated to our systems and we have multiple levels of training awaiting her arrival. 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. 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. The CIP (capital) budget was introduced at the Commissioner's session last Thursday. 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.

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.

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 may be impacted by the directions of the DOGE who has already eliminated 400 positions yesterday at FEMA and specifically at the nearby Emmitsburg-USFA/NFA campus.

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, or will soon be at M49, M59, M29, M139, M128 and a sixth unit is on the assembly line in Florida

I know that the CCVESA budget is in progress, and we will certainly work with them to move this forward requests will need to be reasonable as the budget will be a challenge. My thanks to Chief Joe Dennis of Sykesville for his financial expertise in leading this process. State funding for certain initiatives such as 508 and the state loan fund will be challenged as well. The Governor's budget message today shows some significant issues with unrealistic solutions in many areas. We will continue to support low interest apparatus loans through the county process which coincides with the issuance of bonds. We are currently working with several companies who intend to apply and may have some additional requests this evening.

508 funding: A special meeting was held earlier this month with the Comptroller and her staff to review the reporting and accounting requirements for these funds. The funds are now available and will be distributed shortly.

Chapter 37 changes: Chapter 37 under the county Code of Regulations is the area that codifies the rules, regulations, and policies of the DFEMS. There are some changes to the current code that involves FLSA/pay cycle, promotions and the ability to provide acting pay. These were approved in December and will be published on the county website.

Volunteer Backgrounds: These are not progressing at the rate we anticipated, and Callie is working to answering some questions as we have a revised SOP to present at tonight's meeting. These are still considered essential to assure safety and quality among volunteer membership.

The policy will be an initial background check and then we will enroll the members into a data base monitoring program that will provide notifications to DFEMS and then we will push them out to your company. some guidance to move forward. Callie will have the DRAFT with the. Given your approval, we will move forward with our SOP with the goal being the initial backgrounds by July 2025. This would apply to all new members initially, all operational members who are currently operating as responders and based on current NFPA 1582 physical database. Anyone engaged with corporation youth programs and is consistent to the recommendations of our insurer. Current administrative members will not require a new background check. A draft of this SOP is presented this evening.

Commendations Board has met several times, and we are approaching the deadline for the Chamber awards. Vice Chair Karolenko will have an update. Scott Dickson continues to represent ESAC in this effort and can also report on the progress.

SOPs/Policies: In concert with the FROPS committee and EMS committee there are a lot of operational, response and other policies that are moving forward and progressing in specific work groups. This includes response, staffing, command officers, training requirements and regional supervision using our limited supervisors. We are also working on a policy that addresses relatives working at the same stations and or shifts. Since that is an HR policy it does not require ESAC approval and a copy of that SOP and related General Order are attached. Many of the other SOPs for operations will be presented and reviewed for your action this evening.

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. I am doing the same with each shift/station for our career employees to create a dialogue and to discuss their issues and concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

MWR/mr

Attachments: General Orders, SOP 2.17