

*Washington County, Maryland
Emergency Services Advisory Council*



REGULAR MEETING

Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2014

Attending: Kevin Lewis, Director, Emergency Services, Ex-Officio
Dale Hill, WCVFRA, Ex-Officio
Jack Latimer, Chairman
Larry Hines, Citizen-at-Large
Paul Miller, Citizen-at-Large
Rev. Alan Weatherholt, Citizen-at-Large
Dave Hays, WCVFRA
Mike Reid, WCVFRA
Kingsley Poole, Citizen-at-Large
Bonnie Keltner, Administrative Assistant

Guest: James Ulrich, Chief, Smithsburg EMS

Absent: Dwayne Lunsford, Citizen-at-Large
David Kline, Citizen-at-Large

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairperson Jack Latimer called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Minutes:

On a motion made by Paul Miller and seconded by Kingsley Poole, the ESAC voted to accept the minutes of October 8, 2013, as presented. MOTION CARRIED

New Business:

Discussion on expectations and level of accountability to the stake holders in Washington County

Jack Latimer - When we say stake holders, we are talking about fire & rescue companies, the community at large, the Board of County Commissioners and the Dept of Emergency Services. We have issues with fire & rescue companies who have limited staffing and limited resources wondering about what the future holds. We need to discuss with elected officials what we are facing. For example, the duplication of apparatus in this county is a subject that has to be dealt with. Also, what can we do to better inform the general public about how fire & rescue companies operate in this community?

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Paul Miller suggested using Fire Prevention week and EMS week to put together something for the media.

Dale Hill said the Association is going to reallocate some funding specifically on recruitment. We have talked with the Chamber of Commerce about using radio announcements, which is more cost effective than television. We may be able to develop some kind of program with Antietam Cable. The Public Information office for the county would be another way to get the word out, but would not be able to address funding.

Jack commented that it seems that the fire tax issue is not under active consideration, but it may need to be on the table. One other initial approach would be to let the general public know that we need the support to make this system work. In order to make the point about accountability, individual companies will have to be willing to sit down, whether it is with Budget & Finance or someone else, and show them the whole picture. You could even have someone from the newspaper. However it's done to get the word out – we have two different worlds that we are discussing. We're discussing fire & EMS, as it is known to the companies, and we're talking about the general public, who has completely different expectations and perceptions. I think the companies will have to address an apparatus duplication issue. There is the perception that companies are sitting on hundred's of thousand's of dollars that nobody ever knows about. There has to be better sharing of information and more accountability before anything is going to change. I'm not sure if the County Commissioners have the confidence that the companies are willing to open things up and say this is what we've got. Even if there is some money that would surface, I don't think, in my estimation, that will solve this problem.

Paul – Put something together to take to the County Commissioners and say this is what is needed or the companies will fail. Companies on a yearly basis need this much money.

Dave – I don't think this would be threatening to the Association to develop through this committee a collection of data and then use the resources of some of the committee members. Also, through the Div. of Emergency Services and the Association, we can target the fleet size as a whole. A savings can be born out of this for the taxpayer. Reducing the fleet size reduces annual operating costs.

Jack asked Kevin to provide the same kind of information that Joe Kroboth provided to the ESAC when the committee was putting the early version of the EMS Master Plan together. We can't meet the expectations of the community if we don't have the resources in the right place to respond. Kevin said that some of that information is available.

Dave suggested two things. 1. We have a prime opportunity to engage the potential elected bodies for an educational campaign to make sure they understand the situation for fire & EMS companies as far as financial in order to put something out in the current year's budget. 2. To come back and continue the educational campaign with the newly elected officials and also to try and identify capital issues.

Jack – We need to work out a plan for getting the financial information that we need that represents the system as a whole with input from all of the companies. Kevin said that information is available from the fire plan. Jack said that this committee is not trying to compete with the fire plan. He is

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looking further down the road. The fire plan is one thing for the near term, but we have a bigger set of issues than what the fire plan can address based on the resources we've been told are available. We should ask for a meeting with the County Commissioners and have a specific agenda with points that we can back up and support. I'd like to see a good representation from this group to be at this meeting.

Dale said we are not competing with the fire plan. We will be promoting phase two of what we know has to be brought forth.

Dave feels the three steps to take before the County Commissioners are:

- Financial (service fee, contribution)
- Service needs
- Service delivery

Jack and Kevin will meet to summarize some of the expectations for an agenda to take before the commissioners. We will come up with several ideas and share them with this committee and get your input. Jack does not want this to be steered by one or two people.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

Next Meeting:

- Tuesday, February 4, 2014, 5:00 pm, at Elliott Parkway, lower level training room

Respectfully submitted,
Bonnie Keltner, Administrative Assistant
Washington County Div. of Emergency Services