



Department of Emergency Services  
Advisory Council  
February 28, 2019

Present: Non-Voting Members:  
DES Director, Scott Haas; Assistant Chief, Scott Wheatley; Assistant Chief, Jeff Morgan  
Assistant Chief, Jim Alfree; Assistant Chief, Michael Rich Richardson

Staff Support:  
Office Coordinator, Rebecca Rombro

Voting Members:  
Doctor Ciotola (QAC Dept. of Health), Faye Williams (Consumer),  
Chuck Melson (Consumer), Sandra Early (Consumer), John Cvach (Consumer),  
Scott Svoboda (Vol. Ambulance Committee), Buddy Thomas (Volunteer Firefighter)

Absent:  
Billy Faust (FEC)

Excused Absense:  
Mike Ranelli (Consumer)

Represented: None

Non-Member Guests in Attendance: Kevin Brenner, EMS Captain

- Executive Director Haas called meeting to order at 6:00pm
- Note that we do have a quorum

Minutes from the two previous meetings were reviewed and approved, with all in favor and none opposed.

Executive Director Haas welcomed the newest Consumer appointed to the Council, Ms. Sandra Early. We will give a tour of the building and 9-1-1 Center at the end of the meeting.

Sandra Early: I live on Kent Island, and am a 12<sup>th</sup> generation Queen Anne's County resident. I have been involved with Kent Island's Volunteer Fire Department for 16 years, keeping their books. I am looking forward to learning more about EMS and hope to be an asset to the Council.

Executive Director Haas; we are happy to have you on the Council. There will not be a Commissioner update tonight so we can begin with updates on each of the divisions.

## EMS Division

Executive Director Haas informed; EMS has been very active. Nine new employees have been brought on board; four full-time and five part-time. Replacement vehicles are on order; a new replacement ambulance, EMS24; and a new supervisors' unit, EMS3. Progress continues with the AED project; along with the Office of the Sheriff, we intend to add an AED to all law enforcement vehicles in the county so law can also respond to cardiac arrests. The remaining Sheriff's Office vehicles and Centreville Police Department's vehicles are being outfitted with AEDs. CPD's portion should be finished next year. In the future, we are pushing to equip all county vehicles with an AED.

## Communications Division

Executive Director Haas informed; Next Generation 9-1-1 has been the largest project for the division. Two bills are being reviewed to fund Next Generation 9-1-1. We recently attended the meeting at the State House in Annapolis in support of the bills.

## Office of the Fire Marshal

Executive Director Haas informed; our new part-time employee is practically working full-time hours based on the division's workload. The FMO has hotel inspections, businesses, liquor stores, etc. We have always had a fee for these services, but until recently we have not had the staffing to conduct all of the inspections. With the addition of the new Inspector, Joey Thompson, there has been an increase in available testing. There have also been increased results.

Assistant Chief Morgan: the Four Seasons community is in full swing. The biggest feedback we are seeing is in regards to the sprinklers standard update. This change now requires any living space above a garage to have a sprinkler, effective January 1, 2019. For any remodel, if there is a fifty percent change to the structure then sprinklers are now required. This applies to any type of living space above a garage even if there is a half door or pull down steps. Planning and Zoning now has to stamp their approval of plans to renovate a space.

## Special Operations Division

Executive Director Haas advised; the Hazardous Mitigation Plan is in the final stages of completion. The final draft is at FEMA for review and approval. There has been a delay due to the government shutdown. The County is required to have this plan written and approved as a prerequisite to funding for Hazardous Mitigation grants. Property in Millington lies in a low area next to the river. FEMA bought one of the houses on the property for 75% of its value and then turned it over to the County. There are additional structures on the property which will go through this same process. No one will buy these houses, they have endured repetitive water damage. The plan is for the County to eventually utilize the area as a park or ramp area into the river.

Faye Williams: flooding is common throughout Millington, is this located within Queen Anne's?

Executive Director Haas advised; the property is on Chester River Heights Road. Kent County is also utilizing this grant program for their part of Millington. The Town of Millington facilitates their grant. The HazMat plan includes a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and must be updated every five years. The Special Operations division has also been focusing on Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. Our 'Weather Joe,' is a grant-funded employee, hired under the Emergency Management Preparedness

Grant (EMPG) to revamp the County's CERT program. There are currently three new community classes in the works.

Assistant Chief Morris: if you know an organization or group, either faith-based or not, which would be interested in this training, please contact us to set this up.

#### Support Services Division

Executive Director Haas; the department has replaced a technician, Patrick began just recently, as the former technician continued on to pursue his career in law enforcement with Kent County's Sheriff's Office.

#### Budget Submission

Executive Director Haas advised; the department is required to submit a number of different budgets. This year, the budgets were submitted using a new method and the submission due dates were earlier than in previous years. The capital budget is usually the first piece, due two months earlier than usual this cycle, capital projects must be prioritized and some do not receive funding approval. There is also our operational budget for flat line items which are mostly reoccurring. Pricing increases are included only if they are mandatory, otherwise they are applied to the Enhancemnet budget..Enhancements have become a sort of 'wish list' budget, they allow for growth and adaptation allowing the department to perform above and beyond the current capabilities but they are not considered mandatory.

#### Capital Budget

Executive Director Haas advised; some of our top priorities for capital projects are the 9-1-1 Center update which goes along with the implementation of Next Generation 9-1-1. We plan to upgrade to 10 employee positions in the 9-1-1 Center, currently there is space for six employees to work in the room. These renovations are the most important as we will be required to meet NextGen compliance regulations. Our center is also a backup for Caroline County and should they need to use our facilities, our space is not capable of housing additional bodies in its current state. A portion of these renovation costs will be grant funded, through the Emergency Number Systems Board (ENSB) and partially funded by the county. The room needs to be redone; there is carpet on the walls which is 20 years old; there are skylights in the ceiling which are not hurricane-proof and, during a thunderstorm can complicate communication with callers and with one another within the room. New flooring, wiring, fiber optics, and electric are all needed in the room. We will temporarily setup a trailer behind our headquarters to house Dispatch while the renovations occur.

Another capital priority is the CAD replacement for the 2021 fiscal cycle, not for next year like the other projects. We will need to hire a consultant to help choose an appropriate CAD replacement. We will have input from fire and locals to assist with the selection. Our current CAD is 20 years old, but the technology is 30 years old. The company we use to manage the CAD was sold twice, we have gotten word that support might end in July so replacement is crucial.

Other prioritized capital project requests include:

- Ambulance replacement - as we continue to phase out the older models
- Public Safety Network - funding to keep servers running, data terminals, volunteer units, etc.
- Emergency Management Planning - funding to increase training activity for county-wide response
- SCBA and PPT - protective gear and pressure testing bottles - gear is to be rotated every 10 years

- Tower Inspections - required inspection every five years of two County-owned radio towers. (Costs for inspections only, not for any repairs which may be necessary.)
- Cot Powerlifts - to cycle in with the ambulance
- AEDs - for County buildings, DES and law vehicles
- Enclosed trailer - transport and storage for gator and bike team equipment
- Phone System upgrades – grant funded, not County funds

Assistant Chief Alfree: collected 9-1-1 fees go to this grant so as long as the department operates within the limits, the grant is required to fund this project.

Executive Director Haas; the Phone System project is a high priority for the department, however it will be grant funded.

Scott Svoboda; are there heavy impact fees going to DES from the new development? Something similar to an education offset when appropriate, the development may adversely affect EMS. Has this conversation been brought up with the Commissioners; funds to DES to offset the impact to DES?

Executive Director Haas informed; some options have been discussed, but with this scenario, it would take away from the Fire side, which would not be supported. We would also be limited as to how funds could be spent, restricted to capital or impacted projects.

Buddy Thomas: County Code addresses the topic; Fire side is to receive funding.

Scott Svoboda: is there any type of shift of funding, because the development is age restrictive?

Executive Director Haas; the Commissioners could change the fee level and amounts collected. We are not adding to our fleet, if we were, or adding a station, we could use impact fees, but most of the things we use would not be allowed. But the path you are going down is something the county will have to discuss.

Scott Svoboda: education impact fees are important too but if there is an age restriction and they are not bringing children in, the County should still receive an impact fee.

Sandra Early: the Four Seasons community entered into an agreement, there is an ordinance that they contribute to the fire department. They are supposed to assist.

Chuck Melson: living down Rt. 8, attempting to drive in the area when there is an emergency, there never seems to be a plan or any control. Regardless of who lives there.

Executive Director Haas; Rt. 8 would benefit from an additional lane on at least one side of travel

Buddy Thomas: we look at upcoming projects and the affect on the area, like the new car wash; we received the plans and had a conversation and discuss ways in which we could both benefit.

Scott Svoboda: contribution should be required. The legislators should create a county fee schedule, so you will know what you are getting

Chuck Melson: we do not know what we are getting; there are no controls; expansions continue.

### Operational Budget

Executive Director Haas advised; OpenGov, the application through which we submitted our operational budget, will eventually be opened to the public. A separate page is created for each of the divisions in the department, and all of our backup documents are uploaded, including; justifications, enhancements, new positions, promotions, etc. Everything can be exported to Excel. The 'flat' budget is our core budget, and costs generally remain consistent from year to year. Some of Support Services' regular maintenance contracts have increased over the years due to technological advances, but each one is laid out in the application with an explanation. Increases such as this are allowed, but if we are requesting a new service, then it would be entered into our enhanced budget instead. The Finance Department has not finished entering in all of the numbers at this point.

Executive Director Haas reviews PowerPoint display with the Council:

Communications' budget is relatively baseline

Salary line items have been addressed; our part-time staff for both COM and EMS sign contracts to work up to 1300 hours although some were not working anywhere near that many hours. Last year the part-time salary budget was cut because they were not meeting the hours.

Scott Svoboda: the salary budget is short? This is already more than what was approved, where does the coverage come from?

Executive Director Haas: the line items were cut but we still have to pay by cutting staffing. EMS 4 does not go in service 24/7. The 9-1-1 Center is not fully staffed. Our other divisions do not work on holidays; FM, SPT, EM.

Fire Marshal's division: the cost for a regulations codebook has increased; this is updated every three years

Special Operations: the bulk of these funds are for drills which are mandated by the state

Animal Control: reorganized some funds into other activities which will more appropriately suite the division's needs.

Admin: the supplies needs have increased

Holiday and Compensatory pay for both EMS and Communications has increased

### New Positions

Animal Control: we have requested to increase one of the part-time Animal Control Officer position to a full-time position. When we originally inherited Animal Control, they came to us with four full-time positions. The division has struggled to keep the part-time spot filled and has been operating with just two full-time employees. The part-time position fills the gaps and only works holidays and weekends, which is not an ideal schedule for many.

Logistics Coordinator: converting our current part-time coordinator to full-time status

Quality Assurance: this would be a new position to the department; listed under COM, the employee would manage COM and EMS quality assurance. Doctor Ciotola currently oversees QA, but there is no follow through from the initial call into 9-1-1, to the response, to the delivery to the hospital. EMS has 11 different employees conducting QA, and COM has nine. Consistency has been challenging so we need one person to oversee all of it.

John Cvach: if the department increases the number of employees hired it does not leave wiggle room for benefits, to retain employees

Executive Director Haas informed; retaining employees has been a challenge. With the current pension system, employees are not qualified for retirement until age and years of service equal 90; many are working for 34 years. One of our employees transferred to another department and will only need to work for 15 years until he can retire, he would have had to work 30 here. Our employees have a good chance of getting a job anywhere. There are different options to help fix the issue. The HR Department will conduct a study to weigh the options. The Department of Corrections is having the same issue right now; Corrections does not qualify for LEOPS. With this department, whichever program is chosen, not all divisions will qualify. COM may not, EM, ADMIN, SPT all would not.

Scott Svoboda: they are limited to the employees who work in the field; EMS, law. It's assumed picking up the stretchers for example; they will not last as long as a desk job. But that should not stop DES from seeking opportunities that the EMS staff could qualify for.

Executive Director Haas advised; we are looking into our options. It will not be decided upon this fiscal cycle. After our initial budget submission we meet with Finance and review each line item. The budgets are then reviewed by the County Administrator. Then the Commissioners will review the budget for their approval.

Scott Svoboda: overages there come from where, will the department be given more funding from someplace else?

Executive Director Haas; it is not allowed unless an emergency situation occurs; such as an activation. To account for overages in salary, we eliminated part-time staffing hours.

Assistant Chief Wheatley: we severely down-staff; EMS 4 was cut. We take stations' staffing out

Sandra Early: are you going into the first budget meeting now?

Scott Svoboda: I don't see how we can help if we are already behind so many steps

Executive Director Haas; the budget is usually reviewed with DESAC before the financial review, but with this cycle, but the process was unexpectedly pushed up three months. Vendors sometimes struggle to produce quotes around December. The budget presentations are open to the public. We are called to the table and asked questions on every line. A new County Administer has been selected; Todd Mohn, who is an excellent choice.

Chuck Melson: can we get these numbers in another format?

Executive Director Haas: we can pull the numbers and supply everything on spreadsheets.

Sandra Early: can residents access this?

Executive Director Haas advised; not at this time but eventually they will be able to do so. The county is allowing the departments to become familiar with the system first

Scott Svoboda: can you breakdown the numbers into separate sheets for salary and operations budgets, since we will be going to the hearings?

Motion to approve budget submission  
All in favor, none opposed.

Executive Director Haas: we will send out budget hearing dates and send separate budget sheets for our salaries and operational.

#### Senate Bill Update

Doctor Ciotola: Senate Bill 682 required a study by MIEMSS and MD Health Care Commission to develop a reimbursement process for certain emergency services. The report was sent to legislation, but there has not been a hearing. The federal side now is pushing this for February. The Center for Medicare/Medicaid and the Secretary of Health, Mr. Azar, are proposing a test pilot program in 2020 for jurisdictions in the state for treatment without transport, reimburse ems system. Now, if a patient refuses transport to a hospital, there is no reimbursement for the treatment. There is an upcoming meeting to decide how the state will want to progress. There is also a problem with urgent care facilities; a certificate is not required for the urgent care label.

Senate Bill 1010: If passed, an audit will be required by Chester River and Shore Medical for activity at the Chestertown hospital. Services delivered over the past five years in Chestertown, compared to the services offered currently. What has changed? I have requested our QA/QI pull stats for calls from 2018. We will send a list to Shore Health to coordinate. Our crew has been uncertain of where to take residents of northern QA's county since the Chestertown hospital cannot take many call types.

Another new bill is in the works; there is no number assigned yet, to classify hospitals; acute beds, no ICU, not open 24/7, Operating Room, etc. This is to specifically address what the needs are in the upper QA and Kent Counties. There may be oppositions to this.

#### Opioid Update

Doctor Ciotola: last year, Queen Anne's county was the worst on the shore. Cocaine is being mixed with fentanyl. A percentage of the deaths were cocaine users. Two certified recovery specialists were hired as peer counselors. If we receive a call for an unconscious person or an overdose which is confirmed, then the peer counselors are notified, and they respond to the receiving facilities. We have had 15 cases like this, and the counselors were able to get nine people into treatment. Maryland Community Resource applied for a grant to hire a third counselor. We intend to increase our home visits to a third day per week, with the counselor, nurse, and paramedic. The Whitsitt Center has had a good success rate, and Project Chesapeake is also willing to help with outpatient treatment.

Faye William: in the northern county do citizens have a choice of hospitals to go to? Can we say no to Chestertown when we have serious issues?

Assistant Chief Wheatley: Chestertown is not capable of treating heart issues, for example. Our goal is a quick response, but we also need to take the patient to the correct hospital for their treatment.

Doctor Ciotola: certain priorities are taken to Chestertown, but otherwise, they would be going to another facility

Executive Director Haas; if someone wants to go to Baltimore for example, we cannot go passed a hospital which is capable of treatment

Faye Williams: I don't see why anyone would be sent to the Chestertown hospital

Doctor Ciotola: on occasion, they do not have nurses on duty. They may see seven patients daily.

Motion for adjournment

Seconded motion

All agreed

Adjourn 7:40 pm