

Meeting of the Talbot County Emergency Services Advisory Board (TCESAB)
January 31, 2018

Attendees:

Wayne Dyott - Chairman

Jack Harrald

Lois MacDonald

Debbie Timms

Brian LeCates

Diana Mautz

Scott Mergenthaler

Steve Mroczek

Wayne Dyott called this meeting of the TCESAB to order at 6 pm.

Wayne began by reviewing or meeting with County Council on January 23. As planned we used the SWOT analysis as the basis for the meeting. Wayne said he believed the Council was very engaged by this approach and it generated a lot of conversation. Debbie Timms noted that they were not overwhelmed by budget considerations as they were in earlier meetings later in the budget cycle. Wayne said the outcome of this engagement were several "taskers" from the Council to the committee.

Council members raised a concern that the Health Professions Center at Chesapeake College (CC) was being underutilized. Wayne said He and Debbie had discussed how to explore this subject after the meeting. Debbie said she had opened a discussion with Jon Longest from CC to explore the issues. Initial discussion did not support the belief that it was underutilized. Both Nursing and EMS classes was reasonable full. Many of the students in both were not however from the Talbot County area. The Simulation Lab and other aspects of the program was a draw from outside the area. Brian LeCates spoke about the quality of the programs and wondered if their statistics included the two Paramedic refresher classes that CC had done for Talbot County.

Another area that Council members asked us about was the reported fact that Talbot County was losing EMS and Sherriff Department to other Counties. Dirk Bartlett said members of other County Councils had told him the opposite. Wayne said our Board should go back with an in-depth look at current attrition and recruiting statistics.

Scott Mergenthaler described the decrease in the number of applicants applying for Talbot County Sheriff Department openings. In addition to salary issues, they are the only law enforcement agency in the area that does not have at least a 25-year retirement program. Scott said they were gathering pay and benefits data from every county on the shore to submit with their budget package. This will be in addition to a complete history of applicants and departures.

Brian said they are having the same experience as the Sheriff. He has discussed the problem of pay scales, part time salaries and the retirement program with Andy Hollis

Budgets for public safety are due to Angela Lane on February 12th. Wayne asked Scott and Brian if they would share that analysis with the board for our review. Since our Board was asked to look at this issue, we could go back to Council to review this information separate from the budget discussions. Both agreed to share their findings with the Board at our next meeting.

Wayne discussed the article in the Star about the Tax Payers Association and the current Talbot County Revenue Cap. Compared to our neighbors it limits services Talbot County can afford. Council has discussed going to the voters to get some relief but has not done it. Successfully taking this to the voters would be a multi year effort. If you did and lost, it would be a long time before you got a second chance. Budget threats to public safety will not be real until there is a real impact on services.

Debbie said that Jack Harrald's discussion of how good the County's new Resilience Plan was well received. They need to know this is good work to maintain interest in continuing it.

Jack suggested that the changing demographics of the county will drive the need for future emergency services. Even with relatively steady population the age of that population is growing. Brian added that the aging population of the county is a major part EMS's "customer" base. In answer to a question, Brian said the absolute number of EMS 911 calls is growing. Jack said that looking at a five-year projection might be an eye opener for Council. Brian said he had described to Mr. Doyle of the Tax Payers Association the number of times that TCEMS has committed all their ambulances and the next call will require mutual aid from another county, volunteer company or a EMS Captain responding in a chase unit until an ambulance becomes available.

Steve Mroczek asked if the Board should consider looking the IT opportunities and risks. Debbie observed that some personal changes could be happening in that are with a pending retirement. Brian said that their requirement for IT support had grown beyond their expectation with opening of the new 911 Center. Everything is server based. To meet that need they have had to outsource some work but the cost of doing that is high. He said that they are considering hiring a network engineer next year as they are developing their budget. If a hire is done, that resource could be shared with others in County Government.

Wayne said that our role should be to help Council with long term planning. The two items coming out of the January 23 meeting can be a starting point to refocusing how we support them.

Next Regular meeting is as below. All will held in the Talbot County EOC at 6PM.

February 28 2018

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 PM.