

Meeting of the Talbot County Emergency Services Advisory Board (TCESAB)
2 March 2022 - *Corrected*

Attendees:

Steve Mroczek - Chairperson

Members:

Shirley Bucci
Richard Smith
Mat Watkins

Jeanne Kuperberg
Ruth Sullivan

Brian LeCates
Debbie Timms

Steve Mroczek opened the meeting at 6PM 2 March at Talbot Center

The minutes of the 26 January meeting were approved as prepared with a correction noted by Ruth Sullivan.

Brian LeCates introduced Matt Watkins, the new Emergency Medical Services Division Chief. Matt is a long time Clinician and Training Officer in the EMS Division and most members of the Board have met him at earlier meetings.

Brian then presented an update on Department activities.

Emergency Management Division continues to be the focus for COVID 19 actives among local and State stakeholders. Work also continues on the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan. This effort continues on schedule with submission to FEMA planned for the Fall.

The Emergency Medical Services Division is in the process of hiring four paramedics and 1 EMT to fill vacancies created by recent retirements and promotions. Plans continue for the roll out of Ultrasound devices on the County's ambulances. The suggestion was made that a demonstration of the devices for the Board might be useful as most members have no experience with these portable devices.

The Communications Division continues with the migration of the 911 System to the "Next Generation" system. This effort is on track to complete in the second Quarter. Brian reported that the Division lost a seasoned dispatcher to Queen Annes County. The primary reason for the individual's decision was money.

There was a discussion of retention strategies to include bonuses, payback commitment for training, etc. Brian said the County's previous HR director was not in favor of these devices, but he would explore the topic with the new Director.

Brian discussed the submission made to the Council for the FY23 Budget. He used the slides he presented to the Council the previous evening. The following are the areas Brian stressed in his review of the slides.

The biggest issue for FY23 is moving the Department to the LEOPS Retirement System. Having a 25-year retirement program would be a significant recruiting tool. The study that will determine the cost of moving to LEOPS is not yet complete so the cost of the transition will not be known until mid-April.

Addressing a series of deferred maintenance issues in the five current EMS Stations is another important issue in FY23. Obtaining contractor services in the last two years has been difficult and has prevented this issue from being addressed.

A new budget line has been added this year for employee recognition. Brian said that there needs to be a department level program to recognize employees who go above and beyond. An employee grass roots committee has been established to design the details of the program.

Another new element of the budget are the costs of migrating the Surge unit into a sixth, full time North County Paramedic Unit. As previously discussed, land has been identified and contingent on successful soil tests will be acquired. Positions for four addition Clinicians will be added along with the supplies and technical infrastructure is in the new budget submission. Brian showed the “Eight Minute” response map with the impact of the new station in the norther portion of the county. Even with the Surge to help during the day, TCEMS was down to one or less ambulances 245 times in 2021. There was a discussion about other areas still outside of an eight-minute response. Brian said his ultimate goal was the relocation of the Units currently based in Trappe and Tilghman Fire Stations to more central locations. He also suggested that population growth will likely lead to a new surge unit in the Easton Area. The impact of the planned development in Trappe will also affect future plans.

Debbie Timms provided an update on the Hospital. The ER is a 32-bed unit. Many mornings they find themselves with 12 to 22 patients on holds; admitted but waiting for a ward bed or ground transportation to a specialty hospitals. These holds can last 12 to unto 120 hours. The combination of staffing shortages and patient load has created this congestion. Add to that the staffing difficulties currently being experienced by commercial ambulance providers have impacted inter facility transfers. The closing of Dorchester General limits the choices available to EMS. Many protocols require transport to a hospital-based ER and neither the Cambridge or Queen Annes Standalone ER qualifies. Both Debbie and Brian observed these conditions are well known in some the metro areas but until the last few months we have been spared.

Debbie said that she believed a Certificate of Need for a new hospital is being revised, resubmitted. Debbie said she had recently reviewed the plans for the new emergency department. She said she does not know the current schedule for its construction.

Richard Smith provided an update on the Maryland State Firemen’s Association Convention. It will be in person this year. He also discussed several bills currently working their way through this year’s Legislative Session

Steve Mroczek discussed the Talbot County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association budget presentation. The largest increase requested was a 15% increase in the County Appropriation.

The next scheduled meeting of the Board will be on 4 May at 6PM at Talbot Center