

**St. Mary's County Emergency Services Board - Special Meeting
Monday, November 30, 2020**

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 1000

2. Roll Call

Members Present:

JA Nelson, Chair of County Fire Board
Stephen Walker, Director of Emergency Services
James Mattingly III, Chair of ESB
Steve Facini, Vice-Chair of ESB
Dr. Dan Geary, Jurisdictional Medical Director

Members on the Phone / WebEx:

Shawn Davidson, Emergency Medical Services Chief & Secretary of ESB
Gary Bell, County Fire Chief
Hattie Norris, SMC Ambulance & Rescue Vice President (Proxy Voter)

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. EMS Billing

Steve Walker, Director of Emergency Services, discussed supplemental staffing that the county has funded through the Cares Act Grant. This funding must be spent by December 31, 2020. Any funding that has not been spent must be returned to Grantor.

Currently, the supplemental staffing that is being provided to our rescue squads is scheduled to end on December 31, 2020. Tomorrow morning, I am briefing the Commissioners on supplemental staffing and its current status. I will be discussing the effectiveness of this initiative.

Currently, I have letters from 3 of the Rescue Squads that are in support of supplemental funding; the program is working well.

As you know we have very little data at this stage of the program. However, I have a snapshot of EMS calls for service between the dates of November 2, 2020 and November 13, 2020.

This is broken down into two sections.

The first section, November 2 through November 6th is the week immediately before supplemental staffing began. In the week before contract staffing began, the average response time was 17 minutes from the time we received the call until an ambulance arrived on the scene.

However, we experienced a response time as high as 57 minutes, with many over 20 minutes. Response rate was very inconsistent.

The second section, November 9th through November 13th is the first full week of supplemental staffing. In the **first week** of contract staffing the average response time was 12 minutes with a high of 17 minutes. One observation I had was the response times throughout the county became very stable and consistent.

I have been researching this in preparation for laying out a plan. I have learned that Charles county currently does EMS billing. In Charles County, the County Government bills for county employees provided EMS transport. Rescue squads bill for volunteer transport services. Of the 14 rescue squads, only 3 of the rescue squads bills for transports. Reportedly, the lack of administrative capacity is the main reason for not engaging in billing. **This is a substantial amount of lost revenue.**

- I. Is also interesting to note that Charles County reports 1.6 million dollars in revenue for EMS billing for last year (not including volunteers). They report that collection rates for EMS billing is only 40% of what they mail out. Collection rates for volunteers is unknown. This is an important factor to consider; I don't believe EMS billing will cover all costs for staffing.

How will it work.

- I. Charles county, the 3 volunteer companies bill for services and the county bill for services. The County staff reports some confusion for residents as they can receive different billing invoices depending on who transported them. The county is currently working on a solution to have one billing coordinator for paid and volunteer services.

For our county, I think the RSA has done a good job of researching and framing out a billing plan. Moving forward, that framework will be extremely beneficial to whatever path we take in St. Mary's County.

Therefore, the county and the RSA should develop a plan ensuring fairness to all.

Funding,

So where do we go from here? How will we pay for this after January 1? I have brought a few options to the Commissioners for consideration. EMS billing is possible, however, there are many considerations.

In my presentation to the commissioners tomorrow I am offering the following for discussion.

Option 1:

CURRENT MODEL - On January 1, 2021 the County continues to provide the current model of supplemental contract staffing based on the request of the Company by assisting the staffing in every rescue squad. The estimated cost is \$906,000.00 for the time period of January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021

Option 2:

HYBRID MODEL - On January 1, 2021 the County would provide supplemental staffing via 16 – 20 hourly County employees. The estimated cost for this is \$500,000 for the time period of January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021.

Option 3:

NO SUPPLEMENTAL STAFFING

ITEM #2 FUNDING:**Option #1**

ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT - One funding to consider is that which is currently budgeted for and provided to the Advanced Life Support Unit. Currently St. Mary's County provides a total of \$702,531.00 to the Advanced Life Support Unit of St. Mary's County. This funding could be reassigned to the Department of Emergency Services to assume responsibility for this service. If that occurs the contractor could continue to provide services until we transitioned Medics into County employees. Hiring county employers for these services will be less expensive than using contract services.

Option #2

RESCUE TAX - Rescue Tax Increase for the various rescue squads. VRS submit their budgets to the County in December for the following budget year. This could provide some funding to help support this, however, this will take time to work through.

Option #3

EMS BILLING - Efforts are currently underway; however, the mechanism for how this will occur is yet to be determined. Possibilities are:

1. The county will bill for all rescue squads and funding will be disseminated based on who provided service. This can be accomplished through an MOU agreement.
2. Rescue squads will handle their own billing.
3. The county can pursue legislative action that provides enabling legislative that provides authority to mandate EMS billing by St. Mary's County Government.

Option #4

FUND BALANCE – CSMC Appropriation Fund Balance was authorized in May 2019 to support COVID Relief. Funding could be used to support supplemental staffing but would only be temporary.

Legislation.

The last thing for me is a discussion on the proposed legislation that has been offered by Commissioner O'Connor. I am here to brief you on this legislation. The County Attorney's Office was tasked with drafting this legislation. They turned to Calvert County and used legislation that they originally drafted.

The original draft for our county specifically talked about jurisdiction and did not specifically mention EMS Billing. It has now been redrafted to specifically address EMS billing. The roots of this draft are from Montgomery County Maryland, who also does EMS billing.

This legislation will enable the county to ensure there is consistent billing, countywide, using one vendor and ensuring payments are disbursed to respective Rescue Squads and the county, based on services provided.

4. ADJOURN

A. Motion to Adjourn

I move to adjourn the meeting at 10:37.

Motion by JA Nelson, second by Steve Facini.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Shawn Davidson, JA Nelson, Stephen Walker, James Mattingly, Steve Facini, Gary Bell, Hattie Norris.

Angelique Clem, Recorder

Minutes approved by St. Mary's County Emergency Services Board on 12/10/20.