

Virginia EMS Next Steps Workgroup Meeting
Wednesday April 17, 2024 – 0900 hours
Virtual Meeting through Zoom (100% online participation)

Members Present:	VDH/OEMS Staff:	Guests:	Members Absent:
Kevin Dillard, Chair	Christopher Lindsay, VDH	Frank Gresh, Fitch and Associates	Paula Ferrada
Tracey McLaurin	Rachel Stradling, VDH	Todd Sheridan, Fitch and Associates	
Gary Tanner	Cam Crittenden	Steve Simon, WEMS	
Ed Rhodes	Karen Owens	Mike Player, PEMS	
Beth Adams	Daniel Linkins, CSEMS	Heidi Hooker, ODEMSA	
Wayne Perry	Greg Woods, SWEMS	Laura Vandegrift, NVEMS	
Brian Frankel	M K Allen, BREMS	Laura Vandegrift, NVEMS	
Allen Yee		Ryan Scarbrough, ODEMSA	
Gary Critzer		Gary Samuels, EMS AB	
JC Bolling		Melissa Doak, York County Fire/Life Safety	
Andrew Slater		Hannah Garfinkel, JLARC	
Travis Pruitt		Chris Christensen, SWEMS	
Chip Decker		David Long, TEMS	
Jason Stroud			

Topic/Subject	Discussion	Recommendations, Action/Follow-up; Responsible Person
Call to order:	Meeting called to order at 0900 hours. Online quorum was confirmed.	
Approval of Meeting Minutes	ACTION ITEM: The meeting minutes from February 23, 2024 , were distributed to the WG prior to the meeting, a few small corrections were received and those have been incorporated. Motion by Gary Tanner, second by Beth Adams for approval. The motion carried.	MINUTES APPROVED
Chairman’s Report	<p>Kevin Dillard expressed his appreciation for everyone who has been involved in working through the financial issues at OEMS, appreciation also goes to Heidi Hooker and ODEMSA for arranging the Zoom meeting.</p> <p>At the last meeting, Kevin Dillard appointed two work groups and thanked them for their efforts. The Regional Medication Kit Transition Work Group, led by Michael Player, and the Regional EMS Council Task Force Work Group, led by JC. Bolling.</p> <p>Since the last meeting, operational changes were made at OEMS. Rachel Stradling is now the acting director for OEMS, and three deputy directors were appointed: Karen Owens, Deputy for Operations and Planning, Scott Winston, Deputy for Compliance and Education, and Cam Crittenden, Deputy for Trauma and Administration.</p> <p>Additional members were added to the EMS Next Steps at the request of Frank Gresh: Chip Decker from</p>	

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<p>Regional Awards</p> <p>VDH Update</p>	<p>Richmond Ambulance Authority and Jason Stroud from Virginia Beach Fire/Rescue.</p> <p>Kevin reminded everyone about the upcoming award ceremony scheduled for May 3rd, 2023, where the 2023 Governors EMS awards will be presented at the EMS Advisory Board meeting.</p> <p>Christopher Lindsay, VDH Chief Operating Officer, requested to make some comments and address the group. Christopher advised that Frank Gresh had been asked to moderate the meeting today.</p> <p>As you know, the EMS Next Steps WG is a key part of our EMS advisory board as we determine what the next steps will be for OEMS. As previously noted, the structure of OEMS, as it is right now, cannot go forward based on current funding levels. Therefore, there will be some significant changes moving forward in the coming year.</p> <p>As the leadership of VDH makes those decisions and carries out those decisions, we rely on people and boards like this which are integral and providing help to determine what that structure looks like.</p> <p>The current EMS council structure cannot continue as the current funding model for the councils is not sustainable. The current programs that we have in OEMS cannot continue with our current funding model. In addition, there needs to be significant changes in obligations that prior leadership took on, which are not sustainable. There was moving of money around between different categories. We are uncovering more information as we move through the process and we develop a better understanding of the situation. There was spending in areas that should never have been allowed to occur, so we need to make some changes and very difficult decisions going forward. Again, with people like those on the EMS NS WG, we're going to ask you to help us to make those decisions moving forward.</p> <p>I've asked Frank Gresh to moderate a discussion on some of these topics. It's going to be somewhat difficult in this virtual environment, and I wish we were in person for the meeting, but we still need to have a discussion. Among the things that we need to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does the future of the regional EMS Council system look like? - How many councils will we have? - What is the role of the regional EMS Council? - Do we have hybrid regional EMS Councils? Do we have traditional regional EMS Councils? - What programs does OEMS need to be concentrating on at the central office? - What programs do we need to be relying on regional EMS councils to provide? <p>There's a lot of decisions that we need to make. Again, it's important to have input from the EMS system. If you'd like to contribute, please raise your hand virtually. We'll seek to have a conversation that includes all sorts of different viewpoints. Our teams are going to be taking notes, and again, as we start to implement decisions over the next several months and into the coming fiscal year, we're going to be seeking feedback from this group in all those areas.</p> <p>I know that everyone has a lot of passion for what they're doing; that's why you're here and we're certainly</p>	

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	<p>appreciate that. Let's keep the discussion professional and be respectful of everyone's comments. Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you all this morning and I'm looking forward to hearing the conversation.</p>	
<p>Regional Medication Kits</p>	<p>Following Christopher's remarks, the meeting continued with Michael Player's report on the Regional Medication Kit Transition Work Group. Michael highlighted the group's efforts in assisting the Board of Pharmacy with draft EMS informed regulations. The Board of Pharmacy responded positively and plans to enact emergency regulations at their next meeting. Michael also discussed ongoing discussions with the DEA regarding regulations and hospital participation in medication exchanges.</p> <p>Some of the changes that were proposed, and comments provided ask for the Board to consider recommendations for exempting EMS from the BOP Schedule VI medication regulations altogether, or to allow EMS agencies within a single jurisdiction or all within a region to be served by a single CSR certificate through a regional EMS Council. Other suggestions are to allow anyone with a Virginia EMS certification at any level to have access to medications under the supervising authority on the CSR for the purposes of medication supply or resupply. Then, finally, whatever regulations come from the Board of Pharmacy be structured such that they align with the minimum requirements from the FDA and DEA.</p> <p>The WG added some additional members at our April 8 meeting, they added another representative from the VAVRS, Kim Craig, and the group also added Beth Adams, Travis Pruitt, and Andrew Slater at the request of Kevin Dillard. The WG also added Steve Higgins and Curtis Sheets from the Virginia Ambulance Authority. The DEA is believed to have completed its revised regulations for the Protecting Patient Access to Emergency Medications Act (2017), but they have not yet been released. The Board of Pharmacy indicated that the DEA would usually publish rules twice a year, and April is one of the months they have been known to publish rules. However, if they don't publish their regulations in the spring timeframe they usually hold off until after the conclusion of a national election. We're monitoring the Federal Register and are concerned that if the DEA regulations are announced this spring, their traditional 30 to 60 day grace period before enforcement might create an additional time crunch for our transition.</p> <p>We continue to aim for releasing the toolkit items by May, which would allow 6 months to allow EMS agencies to use the tools that we provide them. No questions or comments were posed following the report.</p>	
<p>Regional EMS Council Task Force</p>	<p>Kevin Dillard advised the next item on the agenda, is an update from the Regional EMS Council Task Force.</p> <p>JC Bolling: The Regional Council Task Force was established to address various issues including invoice payments, technology issues, and matters related to the regional EMS Councils. The task force took a broad overview approach to identify urgent issues with recommendations for action. The report provided is an initial step, and further review is needed.</p> <p>Frank Gresh: Suggested letting the EMS Next Steps WG receive and read the report, incorporating it into the next conversation.</p> <p>Kevin Dillard: The task force's recommendations will be considered in our future meetings. Today, we can discuss any additional points after receiving an update from Fitch and associates.</p>	

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<p>Discussion after VDH COO update</p>	<p>Frank Gresh used a PPT presentation to outline several key points regarding the organizational structure changes at OEMS and the findings from their recent work. Here's a summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Organizational Structure Changes</u>: Frank discussed the structural changes that occurred within OEMS and how they were part of their contract with Fitch. He highlighted the challenges faced with the previous organizational structure, such as wide span of control, silos, and limited cross-division interaction. The new structure was described as an interim step to address these issues and provide a framework for future changes. - <u>Challenges and Opportunities</u>: The goal of the engagement was to discuss the challenges and future opportunities for OEMS and provide recommendations to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). Frank emphasized the importance of providing options, structure, strategy, and ideas to VDH to facilitate future changes. - <u>Findings and Recommendations</u>: Several findings were highlighted, including the detachment from VDH, the impact versus intent of OEMS decisions, and the insufficient and highly restricted funding. Recommendations included improving communication, addressing internal conflicts, and conducting a survey to gather feedback from stakeholders. - <u>Financial Analysis</u>: A detailed financial analysis was presented, showing that the current funding stream was inadequate to support OEMS operations. The analysis revealed a significant gap between revenue and operating costs, posing a challenge for the sustainability of the office. - <u>Survey and Strategic Planning</u>: Fitch planned to conduct a survey to gather feedback on challenges, desired characteristics of OEMS, and stakeholder needs. This input would inform the strategic planning process, which involved conducting visits, reviewing office functions, and providing recommendations to VDH by the end of July 2024. - <u>Role of the EMS Next Steps Work Group</u>: The WG is expected to engage with stakeholders, gather feedback, and support the recommendations. Their role will include discussing tough issues, providing guidance, and participating in open discussions to inform the strategic planning process. <p>Rachel Stradling acknowledged the challenges faced by OEMS in the past, including issues related to communication, collaboration, and transparency. Rachel also emphasized the importance of collaboration within OEMS and with external stakeholders to address challenges effectively, highlighting the need for fostering strong partnerships and communication channels to enhance the office's operations. Rachel also described the importance of using data and metrics to inform decision-making within OEMS.</p> <p>Christopher Lindsay stressed the importance of accountability within OEMS, suggesting that clear roles, responsibilities, and performance metrics were essential for ensuring accountability at all levels. Christopher</p>	

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	<p>emphasized the need for actionable recommendations to address the challenges identified within OEMS. Christopher also highlighted the importance of engaging with stakeholders to gather feedback and insights that could inform decision-making and strategic planning within OEMS.</p> <p>Open Forum Discussion: Fitch and Associates invited questions and feedback from the EMS NS WG and emphasized the importance of open dialogue to inform their work. They encouraged participants to share their thoughts, raise concerns, and provide input on the strategic direction of OEMS.</p> <p>Gary Critzer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressed concerns about the EMS system’s historic distrust of the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and emphasized the need to bridge that divide. Highlighted that while EMS is part of public safety, it is fundamentally a healthcare service and should work closely with VDH to enhance efficiency. - Raised issues about past disconnects with VDH leadership and the Office of EMS, which compounded challenges. Advocated for a strong, cooperative relationship to better the EMS system statewide. - Shared experiences from the Board of Health and his work with regional health districts, recommending closer ties with local health departments. - Discussed a hybrid model for EMS, which has proven efficient under certain conditions due to funding and support variability across regions. <p>Chip Decker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spoke about the historical context of EMS work, noting changes in the role of EMS from public safety to public health and how that impacts the interaction with the Department of Health. - Discussed the administrative changes and how they influenced his view and operations within EMS. <p>Allen Yee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Briefly discussed EMS’s role in public safety and healthcare, emphasizing the need for EMS to align under the Department of Health to meet future goals. <p>Wayne Perry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed his perspective from experience with regional councils, highlighting both the traditional and hybrid council models. - Mentioned the practical advantages of different models, such as hybrid councils, which allow for flexibility in engagement and operation, potentially offering more benefits depending on the regional needs. - Stressed the importance of strategic planning and the need for a long-term vision to guide council activities, and effectively engage stakeholders. <p>Stephen Simon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questioned the productivity of some meetings and reiterated the need to effectively evaluate funding and organizational structure. 	

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	<p>Brian Frankel: - Expressed the need for practical and operational efficiencies in EMS operations and suggested reevaluating committee structures within advisory boards.</p> <p>Jason Stroud: - Provided an agency perspective, emphasizing the need for a supportive, streamlined state program that directly caters to regional and local operational needs.</p> <p>Tracey McLaurin: - Contributed her perspective on the function and efficiency of hybrid and traditional regional models within EMS councils.</p> <p>Andrew Slater: - Commented on the perceived redundancies in committee structures and the potential for more strategic and less siloed work within the advisory board framework.</p> <p>Gary Tanner: - Requested that the task force report be shared not only with Fitch and Associates but also with the Advisory Board at their meeting, emphasizing the importance of wide dissemination for informed decision-making. - Kevin Dillard agreed to ensure the report would be shared appropriately.</p> <p>Ryan Scarbrough - Highlighted a comment from the chat that emphasized the significance of having non-Advisory Board members on committees. This inclusion is a mechanism for agencies to express their concerns and impact outcomes, emphasizing the operational importance of committee work. - Allen Yee elaborated on the point about the essential role of committees in shaping detailed policies and giving agencies a voice. He argued that limiting discussion to the Advisory Board level could mute agency input and impact.</p> <p>Chat Entries: Beth Adams asked that the slides presented during the meeting be shared with the EMS NS WG.</p> <p>David Long cautioned against duplicating services, especially differentiating between VDEM and EMS communication needs. Regional Council services should have a significant uniform component with adaptable elements to meet unique regional needs. Expressed skepticism about the utilization of the Strategic Plan in operations. Mentioned ongoing issues with the reliability of data collection systems like ESO and the need for formal education for Performance Improvement coordinators. Critiqued the communication patterns with OEMS and stressed the unique value of relationships and local execution in the regional council model.</p> <p>Daniel Linkins discussed the benefits of the "Genchi Genbutsu" philosophy for tailored regional services and</p>	

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	<p>emphasized the importance of decision-making proximity to enhance public health. Highlighted potential conflicts between Virginia Code and Council MOUs and stressed the healthcare provider role of EMTs and paramedics within public health systems.</p> <p>Allen Yee expressed a lack of interest in OEMS running EMS agencies, but stressed the importance of bottom-up feedback through committee involvement. Pointed out redundancies in committee activities and advocated for significant committee contributions beyond mere report repetitions.</p> <p>Brian Frankel agreed with concerns raised about data collection and expressed alignment with the customer-centered approach in EMS services.</p> <p>Ryan Scarbrough highlighted the importance of Mobile Integrated Healthcare and Telemedicine in expanding EMS roles.</p> <p>Frank Gresh confirmed that the questions discussed will be integrated into future meetings and reports with EMS stakeholders.</p> <p>Frank Gresh and members of Fitch and Associates responded to discussions throughout, highlighting the need to delve deeper into models and strategies to improve EMS services under VDH. Fitch and Associates also showed an interest in continuing discussions around council models and relations with VDH.</p> <p>Beth Adams: - Raised concerns regarding the short duration for which executive level positions within the VDH are open for applications. She questioned whether a two-week application period might just be procedural. - Christopher Lindsay responded by explaining that the application period was extended based on similar feedback. He clarified that no preferred candidate was pre-selected and mentioned the current number of applicants.</p>	
PUBLIC COMMENT	None	
Next Meeting:	Next meeting is Thursday May 30, at 1000 hours at Old Dominion EMS Alliance	
Adjournment:	Meeting adjourned at 1441 hours	
Attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Approved meeting minutes from February 2024. 2- Medication Kit Exchange WG report 3- Fitch and Associates report 4- Regional EMS Council Task Force Cover Letter and report 	