

EMS Advisory Board Minutes
Friday, August 2, 2024

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DRAFT

Full Board Meeting Minutes
 Embassy Suites By Hilton Richmond
 2925 Emerywood Parkway
 Richmond VA 23294
 Friday, August 2, 2024

I. Opening Session

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 10AM by Chair Kevin Dillard.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by John “JC” Bolling.

Members Present:	Members Absent:	OEMS Staff:	Others:
Kevin Dillard, Chair	Bill Streett (EXCUSED)	Rachel Stradling	Daniel Linkins
Brian Norville	Matt Lawler (EXCUSED)	Mohamed Abbamin	Greg Neiman
Gary Samuels	Bryan Rush (EXCUSED)	Ashley Camper	Mary Kathryn Allen
Allen Yee, MD	Melissa Meador (EXCUSED)	Crystal Cuffley	Peppy Winchel
James Reynolds		Jacqueline Hunter	Tammy Johnson
Brian Frankel		David Thomas	Linda Johnson
Rebecca Branch Griffin, Ph.D.		Barry Reeves	Stephen Simon
Angela Pier Ferguson		Julie Franchok	Dallas Taylor
Gary Tanner		Scott Winston	Wayne Bowen

Members Present:	Members Absent:	OEMS Staff:	Others:
Sonny Saxton			Matthew Mary
John C. Bolling, Vice Chair			Robert Hawkins
Victoria Smith			Matt Cowherd
Dillard Ferguson			Chad Blosser
Beth Matish			Jessica Goodman
Kim Craig			Tanya Trevilian
Patrick Mclaughlin, MD			Heidi Hooker
Benjamin Nicholson, MD			Allyson Tysinger
Joseph Williams			Bob Ramsey
Robert Lipscomb			David Long
Paula Ferrada, M.D.			Ed Rhodes
R. Bruce Stratton			Gary Dalton

		Adam Warwick
		Greg Woods
		Byron Andrews
		Michael Player
		Thomas Breibeil
		Steve Powell
		Wayne Perry
		Heather Campbell
		Megan Middleton
		Micelle Luderman
		Jason Ferguson
		Joseph McGuire
		Valerie Vogts
		Jeff Ferguson
		Jenny Wilson
		Mike Watkins
		Ryan Scarbrough
		Hannah Garfinkel
		Tarsha Robinson
		John Bianco
		Chris Christenson
		Monty Dixon
		Ali Akbar
		Cary Taylor

Topic: Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on May 3, 2024, were reviewed.

Motion: To approve the May 3, 2024, board meeting minutes.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Motion Carries

Topic: Approval of Current Meeting Agenda

The agenda for the current meeting was reviewed.

Motion: To approve the August 2, 2024, agenda.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Motion Carries.

II. Reports

Chairman's Report

Topic: Chairman's Report

Discussion: Presented by Chairman Kevin Dillard.

- The annual EMS awards presentations were held on May 20th at the Governor's mansion, providing a great opportunity to properly recognize outstanding individuals within the EMS system.
- A special acknowledgment was given to the regional EMS councils and VAVRS for their financial support of the awards.
- Congratulations were extended to the Tidewater EMS Council on their 50th anniversary, celebrated on May 17th. David Long, Executive Director, and his team were commended for their exceptional work in the region.
- The National EMS Memorial Service Moving Honors event was held on July 17th at the Richmond Ambulance Authority, with a special mention of appreciation to Chip Decker and his team for hosting. The actual National EMS Memorial Service was held on July 20th in Arlington with 36 providers from eight states being honored

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

VDH Office of EMS Report

Topic: VDH Office of EMS Report

Discussion: Presented by Rachel Stradling

- Ms. Stradling expressed gratitude to the Board for their continued support over the past year.
- VDH plans to share the results of its internal audit and the consultant report from Fitch & Associates soon. The audit, still in draft form, is focusing on specific corrective actions and is expected to be finalized in the coming weeks.
- A special meeting of the EMS Advisory Board will be requested by Chairman Dillard to review the audit findings before making them public. VDH leadership and auditors will present their findings and answer questions.

- Following the audit release, the Fitch report will be shared, providing forward-looking options for OEMS after reviewing the past state in detail.
- The OEMS Director position will be reposted within two weeks with an increased salary. Board members are encouraged to share the posting widely to attract top candidates with EMS organizational management experience.
- Efforts are underway to ensure timely board appointments through the governor's office.
- Relocation of the Office of EMS back to the Madison building is being considered for cost savings, with the move planned for July of 2025. Visitor parking challenges are being addressed.
- The RSAF grant process is open, and Ms. Stradling encouraged applications. She also thanked fire programs for their recent collaboration, aiming for progressive future projects.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

State Board of Health EMS Representative Report

Topic: State Board of Health EMS Representative Report

Discussion: Presented by Gary Critzer

- The State Board of Health last met on June 12th and 13th, 2024 in Norfolk. This was the first time in many years that the Board held a meeting outside of its usual location.
- On June 12th, the Board visited the Virginia Beach Housing Authority Office and the Norfolk Vector Control. The visits were informative, providing valuable insights into the Department of Health's involvement with the homeless population and vector control issues. The Board found these visits to be very positive.

- On June 13th, the Board of Health meeting was held at Norfolk State University, where they were warmly hosted and had the opportunity to hear from the university's leadership.
- During the meeting, the Board approved several regulations, including the revised regulations for DDNR, which will now move forward for final regulatory review and submission to the governor's office.
- The Board also approved cooperative agreements, including one in Southwest Virginia, and the interim EMS strategic plan, which will guide the group until all reports are released and the strategic plan can be revisited in collaboration with the Office of EMS.
- The Chair of the Board was reelected through June 2025.
- The next Board of Health meeting is scheduled for September 19th, 2024, in Richmond at the Perimeter Center. The agenda will be posted on the Virginia Town Hall website, and public participation is encouraged.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Regional EMS Council Executive Directors' Report

Topic: Regional EMS Council Executive Directors' Report

Discussion: Presented by Tracy McLaurin.

- Ms. Tracy McLaurin, representing the Regional EMS Council Directors, expressed gratitude to the board members for their contributions to the EMS system within the Commonwealth.
- Regional EMS councils have been actively preparing agencies for the upcoming changes to the medication exchange programs, set to take effect in November 2024. Significant effort has been put in by council staff across the state to ensure a smooth transition.

- The EMS Directors met on Wednesday, July 31, 2024, in Richmond and decided that all board committees and most agencies should be ready to implement the new program two weeks prior to the November 2024 deadline to address any potential issues beforehand.
- The medication exchange program is a grassroots initiative developed at the regional level, along with other programs like the whole blood and blood product program, which is now available in nearly half of the Commonwealth. The goal is to expand full blood availability statewide in the future.
- A new initiative involving the use of ultrasounds in the field is being rolled out, with the Tidewater region set to go live on August 15th.
- IT services for EMS councils were discussed, with concerns raised about funding challenges since OEMS support was reduced following last year's financial crisis. The Western Virginia EMS Council has provided financial support for IT services across councils, and their efforts were acknowledged.
- Ms. McLaurin concluded by stating that the councils will emerge stronger from these challenges and offered to take any questions from the board.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

III. Committee Reports

Executive Committee

Topic: Executive Committee

Discussion: Presented by Kevin Dillard

The Executive Committee has not met since the last meeting; therefore, there is no report to present.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Financial Assistance Review Committee (FARC)

Topic: Financial Assistance Review Committee (FARC)

Discussion: Presented by JC Bolling

- The Financial Assistance Review Committee (FARC) met on August 1, 2024, as scheduled. Key discussions included funding for the Fall 2024 Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) grant cycle, which has been restored. The application period opened on August 1, 2024, and two partial applications were submitted as of August 2, 2024.
- **Virtual Meetings:** A lengthy discussion took place regarding the possibility of conducting FARC grading meetings, held twice yearly for each RSAF grant cycle, as virtual meetings. No action was taken as FARC is awaiting a response from the Attorney General's Office regarding meeting-related clarifications.
- **Priority Funding:** FARC discussed establishing priority funding to assist localities and agencies with costs related to compliance with new EMS medication management regulations. After extensive discussion, FARC approved and submits the following for the Advisory Board's consideration: priority funding for RSAF grant applications related to EMS Agency Medication Management Systems. This may include first-year fees for DEA and Virginia Board of Pharmacy, security monitoring, initial medication purchases, and cabinetry. Capital improvements and building utilities are excluded from funding. See Motion 1.
- **Next Steps:** Additional written clarifications and guidelines will be provided to applicants within 10 business days, pending approval by the appointed workgroup of FARC.

- **Conclusion:** The report concluded with a respectful request for the Advisory Board's consideration of the proposed action item. See Motion 1.

Motion 1: The Financial Assistance Review Committee (FARC) moves to approve priority funding for the current RSAF grant cycle under the "EMS Agency Medication Management System." This funding may cover first-year fees for DEA and Virginia Board of Pharmacy, security monitoring, first-year medication purchases, and cabinetry. Capital improvements and building utilities are excluded from this funding. Detailed clarifications and guidelines will be provided to applicants within 10 business days by a workgroup of FARC upon approval of this motion by the Advisory Board.

Enclosure 1

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Motion Carries.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Administrative Coordinator

Topic: Administrative Coordinator

Discussion: Presented by Gary Samuels

Gary Samuels referred to the updates from the Rules and Regulations Committee and the Legislative and Planning Committee.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Rules and Regulations Committee

Topic: Rules and Regulations Committee

Discussion: Presented by Daniel Norville

Mr. Norville reported that the Rules and Regulations committee met with no action items for the board. They completed administrative tasks, including the appointment of a recording secretary, and discussed ongoing projects.

Mr. Samuels then called on Chief Michael Player to provide an update on the EMS Drug Kit Workgroup. Chief Player, co-chair of the Virginia Regional EMS Medication Kit Transition Workgroup, reported that the Board of Pharmacy, during its May 2, 2024, meeting, unanimously approved the draft EMS amendments as emergency regulations. The board reminded attendees that these regulations are still undergoing an administrative review process involving the Attorney General's office, the Department of Planning and Budget, and the Governor's office.

Due to the approved changes in the emergency regulations, the Board of Pharmacy repealed its previous guidance document (110-4) and issued a new FAQ document to guide EMS agencies during this transition. Chief Player highlighted several key regulatory changes, including the authorization for EMS agencies to be served by a regional council with a single CSR and DEA license, continuation of hospital one-to-one exchanges for Schedule 6 medications, and the removal of the requirement for alarm systems for temporary storage of medication kits in certain circumstances.

The Workgroup has transitioned to Phase 2, focusing on implementation and providing ongoing support to EMS agencies. Chief Player also noted that as of July 10, 2024, there were 125 active CSR holders designated as EMS and 52 pending applications, with many representing multiple EMS agencies.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Legislative & Planning Committee

Topic: Legislative & Planning Committee

Discussion: Presented by Gary Samuels

Mr. Samuels provided the report for the Legislative and Planning Committee, noting that the committee met earlier in the day. The committee had a productive discussion on upcoming legislative session bills and those carried over from 2024.

Chief Player updated the committee on the Medical Kit Workgroup, and the committee also reviewed the virtual and remote meeting policies to enable future use of these platforms for members unable to attend in person.

Gary Dalton was selected as the recording secretary for the committee, having volunteered for the position. The committee discussed concerns regarding the upcoming significant turnover on the board, with 18 members scheduled to be replaced. This turnover is seen as potentially disruptive, as it could lead to a loss of institutional knowledge and consistency, impacting the board's ability to maintain progress.

The committee expressed concern that this large turnover, scheduled to occur at the November meeting, may result in new members lacking the background necessary to continue the board's work effectively. The issue was raised with VDH leadership, the Governor's office, and the Department of Health, emphasizing the need for staggered appointments to avoid such a large turnover in the future.

The committee had no other action items for the board.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Infrastructure Coordinator

Topic: Infrastructure Coordinator

Discussion: Presented by Eddie Ferguson

Eddie Ferguson referred to the updates from Transportation, Communication and Emergency Management Committees.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Transportation Committee

Topic: Transportation Committee

Discussion: Presented by Eddie Ferguson.

The Infrastructure Committees have been actively working on identifying vice chairs and recording secretaries. However, the Transportation Committee has not met since the last advisory board meeting. The next meeting of the Transportation Committee is scheduled for October 21st, where they plan to review and discuss pertinent matters.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Communications Committee

Topic: Communications Committee

Discussion: Presented by Sonny Saxton.

Mr. Saxton reported that while there were no action items from the committee, they had a productive meeting with strong participation, including over 20 attendees. The committee received a report from the Office of EMS on the EMD accreditation program, noting a significant number of re-accreditations over the past year, although exact figures were not provided at the meeting. Mr. Saxton expressed appreciation for the Office of EMS's efforts and suggested that an update on recent communications upgrades could be beneficial for the members in the future. He concluded his report by thanking the committee.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Emergency Management Committee

Topic: Emergency Management Committee

Discussion: Presented by Joseph Williams

Joseph Williams from Emergency Management reported that the committee met the previous day, achieving a quorum and engaging in a lively discussion with strong attendance. While no action items were presented, the committee appointed a vice chair and recording secretary, with the names forwarded to the appropriate personnel. The discussions focused on new 21st-century ideas related to triage and other innovations, as well as advancements in CAD systems to improve regional emergency notifications. Mr. Williams expressed appreciation for the committee's efforts and the support received.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Professional Development Coordinator

Topic: Professional Development Coordinator

Discussion: Presented by Brian McIntosh on behalf of, Matt Lawler.

Brian McIntosh referred to the updates from Training and Certification Committee, Workforce Development along with EMS Provider Health and Safety Committee.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Training & Certification Committee

Topic: Training & Certification Committee

Discussion: Presented by Brian McIntosh

Brian McIntosh, serving as vice chair and recording secretary for the Training and Certification Committee (TCC), reported that the committee met on July 10th, with the next meeting scheduled for October 2nd. The committee continues to work on the education and training components of the State EMS strategic plan through a dedicated workgroup.

McIntosh presented one item for the board's consideration: a motion to reiterate the importance of the Virginia EMS Symposium as a critical component of EMS education and recertification in the state. The motion emphasized the symposium's role in promoting high-quality patient care and called for it to be a high priority for the Office of EMS. The motion was passed unanimously.

Motion 2: Recognize the Virginia EMS Symposium as essential in promoting high-quality patient care across the Commonwealth and to designate it as a high priority for the Office of EMS. This motion was unanimously approved.

Vote: Unanimous

Action: Motion Carries.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Workforce Development Committee

Topic: Workforce Development Committee

Discussion: Presented by Matt Rickman

Mr. Rickman reported that the Workforce Development Committee met with a quorum but had no action items. The committee received an informative presentation from representatives of Virginia Works (formerly the Department of Labor and Industry) on the potential integration of registered apprenticeship programs into Virginia's EMS system. The presentation highlighted the benefits of these competency-based programs, including potential funding streams for certifying new EMS providers in Virginia.

The committee recognized that registered apprenticeships align with current areas of focus within Virginia Works and the Governor's initiatives. However, it was noted that the program is currently limited to EMS providers earning at least minimum wage, with ongoing efforts to explore opportunities for volunteer EMS providers.

The committee concluded that due to the diversity of the Commonwealth, a registered apprenticeship program would be most effective if regionalized or kept at the local level. Virginia Works has 14 access points across the state, allowing local agencies to engage with representatives who can assist with the grant process and funding for initial EMS training.

Additionally, the committee discussed new meeting and administrative changes, with Ms. Christina Smith of VACO volunteering as the recording secretary and Mr. Cody Jackson continuing as vice chair. The committee also agreed on a virtual platform for future meetings. Mr. Rickman concluded his report by forwarding these updates to the Chair.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

EMS Provider Health & Safety Committee

Topic: EMS Provider Health & Safety Committee

Discussion: Presented by Brian Frankel.

Mr. Frankel reported that the Health and Safety Committee met with a quorum and had a productive discussion. The committee has no action items but presented several requests to the board.

Safe Haven Law Presentation Request: The committee received a presentation from Ms. Carolina Craig of the Medical Society of Virginia on the Commonwealth Safe Haven program, which provides protections and confidentiality for licensed medical professionals seeking mental health services. The committee believes there is an opportunity to extend these protections to EMS providers, even though they are not licensed statewide. Mr. Frankel requested that Ms. Craig be allowed to present this information to the state EMS advisory board, which was approved by Chair Dillard for the next meeting's agenda.

Infection Control Workgroup Participation Request: The Infection Control Workgroup provided an update on filling gaps in training and education related to infection control throughout the Commonwealth. With the Virginia EMS Symposium no longer available, the committee is seeking additional participants from EMS agencies or associations to ensure comprehensive coverage of infection control processes. Mr. Frankel asked attendees to encourage interested members to join the workgroup.

EMS Safety Officer Program Development: The committee has been discussing the development of an EMS safety officer position or program to promote a culture of safety within agencies. Mr. Frankel sought support for this initiative from the board.

Lastly, Mr. Frankel expressed personal thanks to Mike Player for his dedication to addressing pharmacy challenges across the state, noting that his efforts have significantly improved the situation for EMS agencies.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Patient Care Coordinator

Topic: Patient Care Coordinator

Discussion: Presented by Allen Yee, M.D.

Dr. Yee cited that there were no reports.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Medical Direction Committee

Topic: Medical Direction Committee

Discussion: Presented by Allen Yee, M.D.

Dr. Yee cited the committee met with a quorum and successfully voted on the positions of vice chair and secretary, both of whom graciously accepted. One of the individuals was not present during the vote but had volunteered for the position.

The committee has one action item, which dates to two meetings ago and is outlined on page 3 of the quarterly report. The action item involves endorsing efforts to review the EMS symposium, aligning with a similar motion from the TCC. Lastly, there were no other action items to report.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

State Air Medical Committee

Topic: State Air Medical Committee

Discussion: Presented by Victoria Smith.

The Air Medical Committee met on Thursday, August 1 and has no action items to present to the board. The committee has identified a volunteer to serve as the committee's secretary moving forward.

Recent discussions, including those at the latest meeting, have focused on safety, particularly in relation to landing zone operations and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) both within and outside public safety operations. Air medical agencies are also working on developing safety-focused videos for social media to enhance awareness of safety in air medical operations.

Additionally, Tim Bergmans reported on the latest statistics for the weather turn down application used by helicopter EMS, noting that the data has remained consistent over the past several quarters, demonstrating the robustness of the application.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for November 14th.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

EMS for Children Committee

Topic: EMS for Children Committee

Discussion: Presented by Patrick McLaughlin

Dr. Patrick McLaughlin, Chair of the EMSC Committee, reported that the committee met on Thursday, August 1 and has no action items to present. The committee has submitted the names for the vice chair and secretary positions.

At the August 1 meeting, it featured presentations from several special guests, including Renee Soniat from the Partnership for People with Disabilities, the Center for Family Involvement (CFI), and Virginia Family Voices. The committee is exploring ways to enhance educational opportunities, particularly focused on safely transporting children, considering the absence of the fall EMS symposium.

Dr. McLaughlin concluded with no further updates.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Trauma System Coordinator

Topic: Trauma System Coordinator

Discussion: Presented by Paula Ferrada, MD

Dr. Ferrada began by thanking the Chair for the opportunity to serve and noted that all committees met with a quorum. Secretaries have been appointed, and the committees have adjusted to changing resources.

Action Item: Dr. Ferrada presented a motion to pause the Post-Acute Care Committee for an indeterminate time due to its ongoing issues, including the failure to meet quorum for three years. The motion was approved unanimously.

Request for Clarification: Dr. Ferrada sought clarification on whether workgroups could continue to meet remotely without the presence of someone from the Office of EMS. Chair Dillard confirmed that it is acceptable to continue with online workgroup meetings, though the presence of OEMS staff can be requested if desired.

Committee Updates:

- **Trauma System Improvement:** The committee reviewed data and discussed continuing work on pediatric systems.
- **Injury and Prevention:** The committee is collaborating with Virginia Drive Smart and the Virginia Department of Health to create an advocacy workgroup focused on injury and trauma prevention.
- **Emergency Preparedness Response:** The committee is working on creating a white paper and a centralized resource space on the OEMS website for emergency response information, highlighted as necessary after recent mass casualty incidents (MCIs).

Dr. Ferrada then handed over the floor to Mr. Watkins, Chair of the Pre-Hospital Care Committee, for his report.

Pre-Hospital Care Committee Report:

Mr. Watkins reported that the Pre-Hospital Care Committee met with a quorum and engaged in discussions about data and other concerns. The primary action item was a motion to retire the existing goals of the committee as part of their ongoing work.

Acute Care Committee Report:

Mr. Dallas Taylor, a member of the Acute Care Committee, reported that the committee met with a quorum. Two open seats were filled: Cary Taylor will represent Level 3, and Courtney Cann will represent Level 2.

The committee discussed ophthalmology coverage in relation to state standards and appropriate responses. Additionally, a workgroup is collecting data on trauma center activation criteria, focusing on triage events and evaluating the resources dedicated to communication between hospitals and EMS during report calls. The goal is to identify and share best practices and lessons learned from these experiences.

Dr. Ferrada acknowledged the important role of trauma program managers, noting that while they are not part of the formal committees, they are essential to maintaining appropriate trauma systems and care in Virginia. She then invited Tanya Trevilian to provide a brief report on the ongoing and future work of the trauma program managers.

Trauma Program Managers (TPM) Group Report:

Tanya Trevilian reported on the Trauma Program Managers (TPM) Group, which met on Wednesday July 31, 2024. Tanya has accepted the role of chair, with Autumn Davis from Winchester serving as co-chair. The meeting included a presentation by Ashley Camper on a pilot checklist project designed to streamline site visits for trauma centers. The checklist received positive feedback and will be shared with the TPM group via email.

The TPM Group is working on establishing standing agenda items relevant to all trauma centers, including topics like registry products, site visit discussions, and education sharing. A focus is on collecting resources for new and current TPMs to support their success. A poll will be conducted to set a schedule for monthly virtual meetings, with plans for future in-person meetings either quarterly or bi-annually, including visits to other trauma centers within the Commonwealth.

Tanya expressed appreciation for Ashley Camper's efforts in supporting the TPM group, recognizing her as a valuable asset to the Office of EMS.

Additional Announcements:

Dr. Ferrada announced a significant transformation in the Trauma Committees, highlighting increased diversity and inclusion. The committees now have vice chairs from various institutions, including EMS and nursing representation, which is seen as crucial for providing the right education to better serve patients.

Discussion on Workgroup Guidelines:

Dr. Yee raised concerns about conflicting interpretations of the regulations governing workgroups versus official committees, particularly regarding the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). He read an email from the Office of EMS stating that any workgroup or task force communication must be initiated and managed by the Office of EMS to comply with FOIA. Dr. Yee requested written clarification from OEMS and VDH to ensure consistent application of these rules across all committees.

Chair Dillard agreed to seek written direction and asked Dr. Yee to forward the email as a starting point for this clarification.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: OEMS will provide written answer.

IV. Public Comment

Topic: Public Comments

Discussion: Public Comment.

Chair Dillard reminded attendees of the public comment procedure, emphasizing the two-minute time limit for each speaker.

Public Comment Summary:

Public Comment 1: Connie Moore, a representative from Southside Virginia spoke on the challenges that EMS agencies, particularly in rural areas, are facing with the implementation of the new DEA drug box program, effective November 27th. The speaker, representing two volunteer agencies, highlighted a significant concern: the financial burden of restocking drug supplies used on scene during non-transported calls, especially during code situations. These costs, ranging from \$800 to \$1500 per incident, are now expected to be borne by the EMS agencies themselves, with no provisions for cost recovery since patients are not transported.

The speaker emphasized the need for reform, suggesting that the EMS community consider advocating for changes that would allow billing for non-transported calls in these specific situations. Additionally, the speaker noted the urgency for emergency funding through the RSAF, as the guidelines for the new drug program take effect on November 27th, but funding availability remains uncertain. The representative urged the board to start discussions on finding solutions to these challenges.

Public Comment 2: Michael Player, Executive Director of Peninsula's EMS Council, addressed the state EMS advisory board, expressing concern over the recent limitations on EMS community access to Office of EMS (OEMS) staff during meetings. He noted that for decades, the collaboration between the EMS Advisory Board, its committees, and OEMS staff has been crucial for improving the EMS system. However, the reduced participation of OEMS staff outside their specific committee assignments has hindered this collaboration. Mr. Player respectfully requested that VDH and OEMS leadership reconsider this approach and allow staff to attend the full schedule of EMS advisory board and committee meetings, as in the past, to foster an atmosphere of open access, collaboration, and partnership.

Public Comment 3: Mr. Mike Watkins expressed his appreciation for the dedication and efforts of the EMS staff, specifically mentioning Ashley Camper, Debbie Akers, Jessica Rosner, and Daisy Banta, for their instrumental roles in various programs and committees. He emphasized the importance of allowing these staff members to continue their work.

Mr. Watkins also highlighted the need for leadership in the EMS community, stressing that leadership is about guiding and supporting people, not just managing budgets and tasks. He urged the release of the Fitch report and the audit as soon as possible to eliminate uncertainty and allow EMS employees to move forward with clarity.

Finally, Mr. Watkins strongly discouraged the proposed relocation of the Office of EMS to the downtown area, arguing that it would make access more difficult and disconnect the office from the Department of Fire Programs, which frequently interacts with EMS. He pointed out that many in the EMS community also serve as fire personnel, underscoring the close relationship between these roles.

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

V. Business Matters

Unfinished Business

Topic: Unfinished Business

Discussion: No unfinished business.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

New Business

Topic: New Business

Discussion: New Business

1. Transparency and Reports:

- Eddie Ferguson called for more transparency regarding the audit and Fitch reports.
- Ms. Stradling clarified that the reports are with the Attorney General's office and cannot be released until criminal investigations are completed.
- A special state EMS advisory board meeting will be called to discuss the audit report once it is released.

2. Office Relocation:

- Ms. Stradling explained that the move to downtown is a cost-saving measure, with reduced foot traffic post-COVID justifying the move.
- Concerns were raised about parking and accessibility, which are being addressed.

3. Staff Attendance:

- There was discussion about the importance of having the necessary staff present at meetings while being mindful of costs.

4. November 27th Deadline:

- Mr. James Reynolds expressed concerns about the November 27th deadline for various agencies, requesting an extension to the new fiscal year (July 1).

5. Special Meeting Attendance:

- Ms. Beth Adams requested that all current members and newly appointed board members be invited to the special meeting, given the ongoing appointment process.
- There was consensus that the special meeting should include both in-person and virtual attendance options.

6. **Virtual vs. In-Person Meetings:**

- There was a strong preference for in-person meetings for discussing important issues like the audit and Fitch reports, though virtual options should be available for those unable to attend.

7. **Future Focus:**

- Dr. Yee emphasized the importance of focusing on the future and learning from past issues highlighted by the audit, rather than dwelling on past mistakes.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

- **Recommendation/Action Follow-up:** The special meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks, with a focus on the audit report first, followed by a separate meeting for the Fitch report.
- The next regular meeting is scheduled for November 15th at the Embassy Suites.

VI. Adjournment

Topic: Adjournment

- **Discussion:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 A.M.

Vote: NA

Action: NA

Recommendation/Action Follow-up: NA

Prepared by: Mohamed G. Abbamin, MPA

Date of Preparation: 08/12/2024

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