

MONTGOMERY COUNTY
FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING
MINUTES
March 13, 2025
Public Safety Headquarters/Tele-conference
Gaithersburg, Maryland

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Anita Powell, Chair
Commissioner Jane Callen
Commissioner Mark Dempsey
Commissioner Tony Coleman
Commissioner Robert Ford

OTHER:

Susan Williams
Alan Cohn
Lou Kaufman
Mark C.

STAFF PRESENT:

Fire Chief Cory Smedley
Assistant Chief Frantz Pinthiere
Assistant Chief James Carpenter
Assistant Chief Benjamin Kaufman
Battalion Chief Ashley Robinson
Battalion Chief Peter Dugan
Battalion Chief Anthony Scott
Dr. Steven Parker
Heather Jeffrey

100 – CALL TO ORDER

Chair Anita Powell called the meeting to order at 1901. No changes were made to the agenda.

101 – APPROVAL OF THE FESC MINUTES

Commissioner Callen offered comments/changes to the January minutes; however, Heather never received them. Heather requested Commissioner Callen to resend the corrections to her and BC Robinson. Motion to approve the January minutes contingent upon inclusion of the edits. Motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Powell stated that although there was a meeting in February, there was not a quorum and therefore there are no minutes to approve.

102 – CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Commissioner Powell did not have a report; however, she encouraged all commissioners to attend events, if they are known ahead of time, that are sponsored by the Fire Chief or presidents/chiefs of the LFRDs. She encouraged visits to the fire houses to meet with the staff and its members and thank them for their duty.

103 – FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

FCGOs & EMS

Fire Chief Smedley first opened the floor to Assistant Chief Kaufman to discuss questions regarding the Fire Chief's General Orders (FCGO) that are up for approval. Commissioner Callen wanted to know if there were any substantive comments received within the appropriate timeframe from the IAFF, and if so, what the county's response was to them. Assistant Chief Carpenter offered that there was only one

comment from the IAFF, and it had to do with the Shady Grove Medical Center Forensics FCGO (25-01 which replaces and rescinds FCGO 13-14), and units that are responding out of county.

Chief Smedley stated that all comments sent re: the FCGOs from MCVFRA were outside of the Notice & Opportunity time frame. From the county's perspective, all requirements based on the agreement were followed. In addition, Chief Carpenter stated the comments that were sent were in approval of the changes, not in opposition.

Commissioner Callen wanted to make sure that, going forward, the FESC has an opportunity to be informed of comments from the MCVFRA and the IAFF as well as the county's responses to the comments prior to commission meetings. This will ensure meetings are as efficient as possible and also enable Commissioners to render informed decisions at the time of the meeting. The chief asked to revisit the request after speaking with Chief Carpenter to learn past practices.

On March 17th, 2025 (in Council chambers 0930-1230) the department will go in front of the Public Safety Committee. MCFRS will discuss the change in legislation re: removing the word "transport" from the law. MCFRS will also speak to the capital improvement program.

Chief Smedley opened the floor to Chief Kaufman to update the commission on upcoming EMS legislation. Chief Kaufman discussed a bill that is being voted on to amend the EMS transport reimbursement law which cleans up insurance-specific restrictions on how the county currently does business with regard to billing. Chief Kaufman stated that it has nothing to do with money, but to actually remove the word "transport" from the law which would allow MCFRS to innovate and offer services such as treatment in place, the alternate destination program, and MIH services which we are restricted from collecting money because the law is specific to transporting patients.

Chief Kaufman stressed that clinicians would only be collecting insurance information if the patient is eligible for particular services and not if the patient is being transported to the ER. Chief Kaufman offered that the training burden is straightforward and would be worked into what is already being taught with the alternative destination program. In the future MIH care may be a possibility; however, questions of insurance would only be raised by the MIH team, which is a very small group.

Commissioner Callen also asked if Chief Kaufman sees any issue with the public being worried about not being able to and/or not wanting to give their insurance information in order to be transported to the hospital. Chief Kaufman responded that he did not see an issue. Commissioner Ford asked if this was similar to surrounding jurisdictions. Chief Kaufman answered that most jurisdictions are fully collecting insurance information.

Chief Smedley stated that MCFRS would be moving forward with increasing the fee schedule for our transport, which has not been done in several years and will bring the county more in line with our regional partners.

Introduction of Battalion Chief Robinson

Chief Smedley introduced Battalion Chief Robinson as being detailed to the Office of the Fire Chief for an indeterminate period to ensure that we are supporting the Commission and are 100% compliant with the requirements of the Commission. BC Robinson will also interact through the legislative process at the state and local level and start to address MCFRS' antiquated policies and procedures. Chief Smedley also noted that Chief Robinson would be in charge of Girl's Camp. Commissioner Callen asked what the outline and goals of the Girl's Camp are. Chief Smedley offered that the ultimate goal is to market the organization to young ladies in the county and let them know this is a great department, show what the department has to offer and encourage volunteering or making it a career. Commissioner Callen offered her assistance.

Recruitment

Chief Smedley offered a recruitment strategic plan from Chief Gibson which will be shared with the entire department. MCFRS will continue to make sure best practices are utilized across the department. Conversations have begun with the MCVFRA re: improving how to staff holes in the system using some creative ways, especially during peak hours.

Budget

Chief Smedley will talk about the budget when the County Executive has publicly spoken about it. The County Executive is slated to unveil the budget tomorrow – March 14th. In addition, April 21, 2025 (1330-1630), is when Fire/Rescue will go before the council to speak about the budget.

Capital Improvement Plan

Chief Smedley said he would be speaking about the CIP program in front of the Public Safety Committee, which includes discussion about Rockville Volunteer Fire Department's \$500,000 place holder for several years for renovations to station 3. The responsibility of the CIP lies with General Services, but Chief Smedley stated he would be there in support of Rockville VFD mission critical capabilities and will answer questions. Other discussions that will be brought up will have to do with station 23 and station 43. Chief Smedley states he has been working hard to make sure the county keeps station 23 when station 43 comes online.

Susan Farag will discuss the net annual work hour and how every seat that we have to fill takes anywhere between 4.7 and 5.2 positions. County Stat is responsible for the report, but we are the subject matter experts giving them clarity on any questions.

Master Plan

The Master Plan inaugural annual conference will happen on March 27, 2025 – it is an all-day event, at the PSTA, 0900-1600. The conference is to talk about the framework of the Master Plan, get some insight, and go through a decision-making process when we look at anything we do to improve our service to the community. The conference is open to volunteer, career and surrounding jurisdiction leadership, other agencies within the county government, as well as regional services directors and the public. RSVPs will go out to the commissioners.

Deployment

The Operations Chief was asked to evaluate deployment with regard to stations, apparatus, and ways to improve working conditions and service delivery to our community. Commissioner Dempsey raised a question re: quick changes to stations 15 (Burtonsville) and 17 (Laytonsville) regarding positions. Chief Smedley offered that the apparatus was going on calls undermanned. The Operations Chief offered an alternative idea to the leadership at station 15 to be a tractor-drawn aerial that has extrication equipment.

The Operations Chief worked with Chief Ryman (station 15) and the volunteer leadership, and they agreed to move in the direction of a tractor-drawn extrication truck. Commissioner Dempsey raised concern about volunteers getting training opportunities to drive the truck. Chief Smedley does not see an issue with training. Chief Smedley stated that Station 17 is still not in favor of changing the rescue squad to a rescue engine, but the process is still being worked on. When asked about the extra resources by station 17 leadership, Chief Smedley explained we are starting to deplete our transport units on a regular basis. The lack of transport units on the road has an impact on the community and the service we are

providing. Commissioner Dempsey raised the question about flex units where Chief Smedley concluded with every reasonable idea will be considered.

50th Annual Public Safety Awards

The 50th Annual Public Safety Awards will be held on 04/28/2025. More information to come from Heather.

Business Items

Fire Chief's General Order No. 25-01, Shady Grove Medical Center Forensics. Motion by Commissioner Callen, seconded by Commissioner Dempsey to approve FCGO 25-01. Motion passed unanimously.

Fire Chief's General Order No. 25-02, EMS700 – Clinical Disposition Officer. Motion by Commissioner Callen, seconded by Commissioner Ford to approve FCGO 25-02. Motion passed unanimously.

Fire Chief's General Order No. 25-04, EMS Credentialing. Motion by Commissioner Callen, seconded by Commissioner Dempsey to approve FCGO 25-04. Motion passed unanimously.

Fire Chief's General Order No. 25-03, Handling Requests for EMS Transport of Service Animals. Motion by Commissioner Callen, seconded by Commissioner Dempsey to approve FCGO 25-03. Motion passed unanimously.

104 – Comments from Commissioners

No comments from Commissioners

200 – Public Comment

No comments from the public.

300 – Discussion

301 – Old Business – Commissioner Powell pointed out that several months ago there was a discussion about moving the June 12th meeting date to another date to allow for commissioners to attend the volunteer graduation. The commissioners voted unanimously and settled on combining the June and July meeting set for July 10, 2025.

302 – New Business – Commissioner Callen agreed with Commissioner Powell that the commission should begin to have some of the meetings out in the field and asked Commissioner Powell if she had a proposed agenda for when she would like to do so. Commissioner Powell did not have any suggestions.

400 - Adjournment

Motion to adjourn from Commissioner Callen, seconded by Commissioner Dempsey. The meeting was adjourned at 2006.