

**Stanislaus County
Emergency Medical Services Committee
September 9, 2021
Regular Meeting Minutes**

Location: Via Zoom
 Time: 2:00 PM
 Committee Members Present: Paul Baxter, Richard Murdock, Bob Ott, Sharon Young, Dr. Bruce Laverty, Bryan Whitemyer, Dan Cummins, Dr. Niamh Seavy
 Committee Members Absent: Mary Ann Lilly, Joe Lopez
 Guests: Cherish Vaught, Lori Sicard, Joshua Brace, Deb Thrasher, Marc Hartley, Erik Klevmyer, Aaron Wilson, Michael Courtney, Wendy Silva, Keith Bowen, Cindy Woolston, Reymundo Marquez
 Staff: Cindy Murdaugh – Executive Director, Susan Watson – Executive Secretary/ Financial Services Assistant; Tom Morton – Communications/Data Systems Coordinator; Justin Murdock – EMS Critical Care Coordinator

1. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 PM by Chairman Paul Baxter with a quorum of six members present.

2. Introductions

The Committee members introduced themselves.

3. Review and Approval of Agenda

M/S/C (Whitemyer/Young) To approve the agenda.

Vote: 6-0

Motion Passed

4. Correspondence

None.

5. Public Comment Period

None.

Let the record show Dr. Niamh Seavy and Dan Cummins joined the meeting.

6. Approval of Consent Calendar

M/S/C (Young/Ott) To approve the consent calendar

Vote: 8-0

Motion Passed

7. Committee Reports

a) System Status – Cindy Woolston

The System Status Committee met yesterday and went through the standing agenda items. The main topic was the County System Status Plan. A subcommittee had been working on that and making adjustment to address some of the issues within the EMS system to include addressing low acuity calls and reducing the amount of mutual aid that has been occurring within the system. The changes to the plan were finalized and agreed

to by the entire group. Marilyn Smith from Mountain-Valley EMS will be cleaning up the document and sending it out to all providers.

b) SCHEPC – Aaron Wilson

- The SCHEPC is the Stanislaus County Healthcare Preparedness Coalition that meets quarterly. The next meeting will be in the first week of October 2021.
- The Coalition's Preparedness and Response Guide is being updated and will be brought to a vote for approval at the October meeting.
- There will be a redundant communications drill for the health care system in either late 2021 or early 2022.
- A communications plan is being developed to layout the succession path for primary and back-up communication systems.
- The health care system is also meeting regularly with the Public Health Department Operations Center for COVID.

Chairman Baxter asked for an update on the power outage at the 911 center.

Wendy Silva explained there was vandalism including a cut fiber inside an AT&T gated hub in area between Stockton and Tracy. A homeless encampment was located inside that same gated area and law enforcement had to come in to remove those blocking access to perform the needed repairs. The outage lasted 13 hours. The 911 system was functioning at about 50% capacity. The remaining 50% were rerouted to the non-emergency lines. There were no unanswered 911 calls. A detailed report is being requested from AT&T.

c) OES – Richard Murdock

- On a weekly basis Stanislaus County has been sending out resources to support the response to fires throughout the State. There are currently 30 staff and 13 different resources assigned out with the majority supporting the Dixie and Caldor fires.
- OES has been working with Mountain-Valley EMS Agency, County staff from the CEO's office, Sheriff's Department and Health Services Agency in a sub-committee working group with the Joint Powers Authority of Mountain-Valley EMS Agency regarding Stanislaus County withdrawing from the Joint Powers Authority. There will be a further update on this later in the agenda.

8. System Enhancement Fund Request

Cindy Murdaugh presented the request from the Fire Warden's Office to purchase eight intubation training manikins which will be shared by all Stanislaus County fire agencies. The request meets the requirement of Policy 951.20 and Dr. Vaishampayan has approved the use of System Enhancement Funds for this purpose. The total amount requested is \$8,231.78.

Sharon Young asked where the manikins will be located and how they will be accessed.

Chief Murdock noted the storage locations in the attachment to the request.

M/S/C (Cummins/Seavy) To recommend forwarding this request to the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

Motion Passed

8-0

9. System Enhancement Fund Discussion

Chairman Baxter noted this item had been placed on the agenda some time ago by Modesto City Manager, Joe Lopez. Since Mr. Lopez was not able to attend today's meeting and the Agency staff have not received any updated information, the topic was tabled to the next meeting. Chairperson Baxter asked Cindy Murdaugh to reach out to Mr. Lopez for his updated information on this item.

10. COVID-19 Response Update

Tom Morton reported Mountain-Valley EMS Agency is monitoring the EMS System responses and making sure resources are available primarily through the EMS Duty Officer program. The other role for the Agency is in support of the MHOAC program as the MHOAC Designee. There has been an increase in resource requests which have been primarily for ambulance strike teams for fires; hospital staffing to support the impact of the COVID Surge #4 since the beginning of summer; environmental health resources for fires; and an increase in PPE requests. The hospitals surge plans have been activated.

Sharon Young asked if anyone is supporting the hospitals right now for staffing issues?

Tom Morton explained the resource request path from the Operational Area up to the State level. There is a shortage of traveling nurses in California and staffing support availability is determined day-to-day.

Chairman Baxter asked Cindy Woolston how the providers are handling the COVID surge with their staff.

Cindy Woolston said there had been about a 9% increase in volume during July-August 2021. September call volume is still high. Some AMR employees are going out again on quarantine either for active symptoms or positive tests. Other providers are experiencing staffing challenges as well.

11. Stanislaus County Withdrawal from the Mountain-Valley EMS Agency JPA

Chief Murdock shared there have been several meetings between the County Work Group and two members of the Mountain-Valley EMS Agency JPA Board of Directors to discuss the best option for Stanislaus County withdrawing but not leaving the JPA hanging without a plan.

The last update to the Board of Supervisors was on August 31, 2021 and included three staff recommendations that were unanimously approved by the Board:

- To accept the progress report on the financial forecast which has not yet been detailed out. Salary surveys and classifications are still underway as well as the budget detail of a single county EMS agency. That information will be reviewed, developed and relayed to the Board of Supervisors in January 2022.
- To authorize the staff to develop a provision of EMS administration to Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Mariposa Counties under a cost-based contract should this be a desired option by these counties to be effective July 1, 2022.
- To direct staff to complete the analysis of EMS job classifications and compensation, and to prepare the budget and staff recommendations for the Board for a single county EMS agency by January 25, 2022.

Discussion and dialogue continues with the JPA members. The JPA also has a work group for the mountain counties to look at the options. There has been discussion with El Dorado and Tuolumne Counties potentially becoming a part of the JPA to have contiguous county lines for a rural county EMS system. An office site has been located in Calaveras County that will be no cost to the JPA. Planning continues so that when Stanislaus County leaves, the JPA will have the sources and resources needed to administer an EMS system in the rural mountain counties.

Bryan Whitemyer questioned why Stanislaus County was considering this move.

Chief Murdock explained the benefits of having a single county EMS agency. About 84% of the population served by the current JPA model reside in Stanislaus County. There are about 60,000 EMS calls in Stanislaus County annually as opposed to 7,000 in the mountain counties. There is a huge dichotomy between Stanislaus County and rural EMS specifically as it relates to the five hospitals and the specialty care centers located in Stanislaus County.

Stanislaus County has been a part of the JPA since the 1980's and some challenging issues have been faced particularly with the activation of the Emergency Operations Center and the support requested from Mountain-Valley EMS Agency. The Agency has limited staffing to support five counties with Emergency Operations Centers activated during the pandemic as well as the fires in Amador and Calaveras Counties that pulled staff support away from Stanislaus County to provide support in those locations.

Economies of scale when looking at cost basis and what the smaller counties are paying to receive the services they receive versus Stanislaus County continuing to grow; continuing to have issues with regards to ambulance response time standards; the number of ambulances on the street; and looking at developing a 2-tier EMS response system. These issues cannot be addressed as quickly as the County wants them addressed because by being a part of the JPA, the County has delegated all statutory and regulatory authority to the Joint Powers Authority.

In the last year there were many challenges regarding decisions and progress that needed to be made for Stanislaus County to move forward. In several discussions among County leadership, the Board of Supervisors, several stakeholders and the fire agencies, the best model for Stanislaus County is to move forward with a single county local EMS agency.

Chairman Baxter asked if there will be more information available for the next EMSC meeting on December 9, 2021 that will help the Committee members better understand the final product since it is being taken to the Board of Supervisors in January 2022.

Chief Murdock expected there might be a final draft that could be shared at that time.

Chairman Baxter asked if there would be a change in the duties and responsibilities of the Committee.

Chief Murdock said that is a topic for discussion. There has been some discussion regarding the function of the EMSC and the opportunity to meet, noting several cancellations for lack of quorum. The statutory requirements are that a county may have an EMSC and a lot of counties are doing away with the committee because they have a single county EMS agency that reports directly to the Board of Supervisors. There would have to be some kind of group that has the administration of those disciplines to be involved in

discussions and provide feedback in moving forward in regards to fire, EMS, law enforcement and hospitals as communication within those groups is very important.

Chairman Baxter said it sounds like there is interest in keeping communication with the stakeholders, but the structure of that is yet to be determined as the implementation phase of the project approaches.

Chief Murdock envisioned that administrative group meeting on a regular basis and providing a report to the Board of Supervisors.

Bryan Whitemyer asked if the agencies within Stanislaus County would remain a part of an organization like what is currently in place with the County.

Chief Murdock said there would be some type of a group that meets to provide resolution to issues being faced in the EMS system. If approved by the Board of Supervisors in January, the EMS Agency would be moved into the Office of Emergency Services.

Bryan Whitemyer asked if the Stanislaus County Fire Chiefs are being consulted in this effort and if they endorse this approach.

Chief Murdock confirmed there have been multiple discussions in the Regional Fire Authority meetings as well as the Stanislaus County Fire Chiefs Association, and the fire service endorses this approach.

Chairperson Baxter noted this is a work in progress and requested more clarification at the December 9th meeting.

12. Next Regular Meeting

Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 2:00 PM.

13. Adjournment

Chairman Baxter adjourned the meeting at 2:37 PM.