

**PINELLAS COUNTY  
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES  
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES**

June 19, 2020

Zoom Conference Call

The Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council met via Special Virtual Public Meeting utilizing Communications Media Technology (CMT) on the Zoom platform at 10:01 A.M. on this date with the following members present:

Comm. Julie Peluso, Independent Fire District Elected Official – Chair  
Chief Ian Womack, St. Petersburg Fire & Rescue  
Chief Tom Jamison, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association  
Capt. Michael Leiner, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office  
Gayle Guidash, Pinellas County Health Department  
Mayor Woody Brown, Mayors' Council (Largo)  
Mayor Wanda Dudley, Mayors' Council (Kenneth City)  
Mayor Chris Alahouzos, Mayors' Council (Tarpon Springs)  
Karen Mullins, Citizen Representative (District 1)  
Larri Gerson, Citizen Representative (District 2)  
William Holmes, Citizen Representative (District 6)  
Jorge Mercado, Citizen Representative (District 7) – Secretary  
Nancy Hopkins, Emergency Nurses' Association West Coast Florida Chapter  
Chief Terry Tokarz, EMS Leadership Group  
John Peterson, Sunstar Paramedics  
Anissa Raiford, Pinellas County Medical Association  
Rosalie Bousher, National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Absent:**

Mayor Joseph Manzo, Mayors' Council (Belleair Beach)  
Dr. Steven Epstein, Pinellas County Medical Association  
Mike Jones, Citizen Representative (District 4)  
Becca Tieder, Citizen Representative (District 5)  
Dr. Kenneth Webster, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society

**Staff Present:**

David Hare, Assistant County Administrator  
Jason Ester, County Attorney's Office  
Jim Fogarty, Safety & Emergency Services  
Craig Hare, EMS & Fire Administration  
Dr. Angus Jameson, EMS Medical Director  
Dr. Donna Dooley, Office of the Medical Director  
Greg Woodrum, EMS & Fire Administration  
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration

### **Also Present:**

Comm. Kevin Kenney, East Lake Fire Rescue  
Jeri Reed, Citizen Representative (District 3)  
Chief Doug Zimmerman, EMS Leadership Group  
Chief Scott Ehlers, Clearwater Fire Department  
Chief David Mixson, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association  
Jeremy Tinter, Sunstar  
Dr. Aron Schlau, Pinellas County Medical Association

### **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Commissioner Peluso called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M. Roll call was taken, and it was determined that there was a quorum. There were 17 voting members in attendance.

Commissioner Peluso welcomed the members and introduced Mayor Chris Alahouzas, Mayor-elect of Tarpon Springs, and Dr. Aron Schlau, President of the Pinellas County Medical Association (PCMA).

Later in the meeting, Craig Hare related that a packet is being prepared for Dr. Schlau's appointment as PCMA's primary representative.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon presentation, Chief Jamison moved, seconded by Mr. Mercado, that the minutes of the April 6 and April 9, 2020 EMSAC Special Meetings be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

No citizens appeared to be heard.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

- Appointment of new Chair – Following discussion regarding nominations for Chair, Mayor Alahouzos moved, seconded by Mr. Mercado, that Commissioner Peluso be appointed Chair. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- Appointment of new Vice-Chair – Following discussion regarding nominations for Vice-Chair, Ms. Mullins moved, seconded by Mayor Brown, that Mr. Brown be appointed Vice-Chair. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- Appointment of Secretary – Following discussion regarding nominations for Secretary, Mr. Mercado moved, seconded by Ms. Raiford, that Chief Jamison be appointed Secretary. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- Refreshing/Confirmation of Executive Committee – Following discussion, Mr. Mercado moved, seconded by John Peterson, to accept Commissioner Peluso, Mr. Mercado, Chief Jamison, Mayor Brown, and Mr. Holmes as Executive Committee members. Upon call for the vote, the motion was unanimously approved.
- Refreshing/Confirmation of Selection Committee - Karen Mullins, Jorge Mercado, Mayor Dudley, John Peterson, and Larri Gerson agreed to remain on as members of the Selection Committee.

## **COVID 19 OPERATIONAL UPDATE**

Gayle Guidash, Assistant CHD Director, Florida Department of Health-Pinellas (FDOH-Pinellas), presented a situational update pertaining to the number of COVID positive cases and deaths in Pinellas County, the surge in percent positivity, increased community-spread transmissions, and concerns of public complacency, noting challenges due to the upcoming flu and hurricane seasons; whereupon, she thanked Craig and all the teams for their work with coordination of the long-term care facilities. In response to query by Chief Jamison, Ms. Guidash stated that the current 7-day average for the percent positives is 6.7 percent, and Chief Jamison commented that the rate had jumped from 1.2 to 2.1 percent to 6.7 percent in less than three weeks.

Craig Hare provided an operational summary of EMS system activity regarding call volume and type, hospital capacities, and increased number of patient transports. He discussed system PPE inventory, County and agency efforts to assist nursing homes/ long-term care and adult living facilities, and the use of interactive Live Stream sessions to reinforce safety messages.

Dr. Jameson presented a clinical update on the current pandemic level and COVID disease trends in younger relatively healthy patients, noting that the County remains in Condition Yellow; and that the curve is no longer flattened as the predicted increase in the more severe cases is materializing. Responding to queries by Ms. Mullins regarding hospital staff infections, testing practices, and number of affected EMS personnel, Dr. Jameson provided statistical information on the nationwide fatality rate for healthcare workers and indicated that the virus is easily transmitted and requires exercising extreme diligence with PPE and treating every patient with a high index of suspicion, relating that the County is continuing to maintain baseline PPE protocol to protect our First Responders.

Dr. Jameson provided an overview of the pandemic condition structure, preparedness modes, and community impacts; whereupon, he discussed, with input by Craig Hare, recent EMS personnel exposures, workforce impacts, PPE sustainment, improved infection control/service delivery policies, and a formalized system notification plan to ensure uninterrupted field service delivery. Dr. Jameson thanked the DOH-Pinellas for proactively facilitating swab testing to ensure the safety of our workforce and commended the entire EMS system, Sunstar, and fire departments for going above and beyond with community missions.

John Peterson expressed thanks to Dr. Jameson and EMS & Fire Administration for quickly implementing the baseline PPE protocol for use on every patient, relating that the measure significantly protected all of the paramedics and EMTs within the county by keeping exposures to a minimum.

Mr. Hare presented additional information on the following:

- Working with Sunstar and Fire Chiefs to utilize three-person units consisting of two Sunstar personnel and a Hazmat paramedic to handle long-distance transports to assist with local hospital decompression.
- Recently held a Long-Term Care Facility Task Force workshop that resulted in approval and support at the federal level to expand hospital capacity through the use of swing beds.
- Working with County Administration to create COVID-safe Super Skilled Nursing Facilities (Super SNFs) and ensuring that the facilities have PPE supplies, training, isolation wings, and a funding stream in place, similar to a model called University Gardens in Hillsborough County.
- Specialty Hospital Divert Plan for COVID+ patients, allowing the nursing home patients to be directed to any open hospital, noting that the current protocol specifies the closest facility.
- Utilization of a three-person crew to transport suspected and confirmed COVID+ patients.
- Restored the EMS Hospital Transport Plan to handoff/pickup patients at the emergency room ramp, instead of inside the ER.
- Diligently decontaminating ambulances after every run and replenishing unit supplies, relating that there is one dedicated person to ensure there are decontamination supplies at each hospital.
- Noted Emergency Management's sheltering plans.
- Discussed preparation strategies for peaceful protesters, noting that EMS Tactical Medics are on standby with the Sheriff's Tactical, SWAT, and Riot Control officers.

Councilmembers discussed concerns regarding the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases, potential impacts of local protesting efforts, and proactive public safety messaging; whereupon, Mr. Hare, Dr. Jameson, and Chief Tom Jamison provided input on community compliance of recommended safety guidelines, implementation of risk mitigation measures for First Responders, and work undertaken by the Executive Policy Group and County Administration to formulate a local county-wide ordinance; and discussion ensued.

Following lengthy discussion, the Council recognized the efforts and contributions by the of all of the stakeholders, agencies, and community leaders and discussed the upcoming Board of County Commissioners' meeting in which a local ordinance regarding masks and other preventive efforts will be discussed, indicating unanimous support for the following:

- Handing out masks and COVID-19 prevention literature at any peaceful protests or other mass gatherings.

- Mass media efforts locally to encourage prevention efforts, including masks and social distancing in public places.

Later in the meeting, Mr. Hare asked the Council if it wished to relay its position of support to the Emergency Medical Services Authority; whereupon, Ms. Mullins moved, seconded by Ms. Gerson, that a letter be drafted expressing the Council's support for masks and other preventive measures for submission to the BCC as the EMS Authority. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Budget Update**

Mr. Hare presented a budget update, as follows:

- Baseline budgets to be funded for Fire Protection and ALS First Responder services.
- Taking a conservative approach, enhancement requests are being held to a minimum due to next year's predicted decrease in commercial property values and discussed various cost-neutral agency requests being considered.
- St. Petersburg plans to switch its current medic units operating in high-volume areas to civilian, non-firefighter paramedics, adding that Medics 1 and 3 will be located in downtown St. Pete and Medic 7, in Northeast St. Pete. Chief Ian Womack discussed the model transition and benefits of the change.
- Provided an overview of the North County EMS Coverage Analysis study and discussed funding sources, reserve levels, and millage rates. Responding to query by Mayor Alahouzos, Mr. Hare discussed a multi-faceted partnership with the cities, fire districts, St. Petersburg College, and the County to create a North County Fire Training Facility, noting that Dr. Eric Carver is planning to return as SPC Provost.

### **Ambulance Contract Extension Update**

Mr. Hare provided a Paramedics Logistics Florida, operating as Sunstar, Ambulance Contract Extension update, noting that the three-year extension is being presented for approval to the BCC on June 23, as follows:

- Expansion of the Critical Care Transport (CCT) Program to include a staff critical care nurse on day shift Monday through Friday, to pair up with new critical care ambulance and crew already in the field running 911 calls.
- Addition of a Special Operations Supervisor to manage ambulance support for special events and Special Needs Shelters.
- Hiring one full-time employee for Central Supply Warehouse support.
- Planning a conversion of its ambulance fleet over the next three years with the purchase and installation the Stryker Power-LOAD System, a powered cot loading system that improves operator and patient safety by supporting the cot throughout the loading and unloading process. A video was shown highlighting the technology. Responding to query by Mr. Mercado, John Peterson discussed the operation of the Power-LOAD system and safety mechanisms. Mr. Hare added that the \$3 million project is being accomplished at no additional cost to Pinellas

County, noting the change is a win-win for patients, paramedics, and taxpayers.

- Referred to a photograph and announced that on-duty field crews are transitioning to new uniforms consisting of blue/black polo shirts with reflective striping and black BDU-style pants, hoping to have full implementation by the end of the month. See attachment.

## **REPORTS**

- **Director, EMS & Fire Administration – Craig Hare**

- Capt. Eric Dinan is nearing retirement and is transferring to Shore Acres Fire Station 12, and Capt. David Kadau is coming on board as Rescue Captain.
- Rescue Captains have been added as Shift Commanders. Chief Womack presented brief work histories for Capts. Dinan and Kadau and discussed organizational changes within St. Petersburg Fire Rescue.
- Discussed the implementation of mid-year enhancement recommendations for various agencies.
- Construction on the Redington Beaches EMS Station to begin in the next year, working with Seminole and Madeira Beach to jointly staff the medic unit.
- Reported that the PSTRax inventory management project is going well. Five cities are currently online, and work is in progress for a countywide conversion, noting that features include vehicle and equipment checks and controlled substance, asset, and medical supply inventory tracking.

- **EMS Medical Director – Dr. Angus Jameson**

- Dr. Andrew Smith, our current Fellow, is graduating from his fellowship and is moving to the MD3 Associate Medical Director position.
- Dr. Marshall Frank, currently MD3, has stepped down to become the Sarasota County Medical Director and plans to remain on as an Online Medical Control doctor.
- Dr. Alicia Nassar, a Seminole native, will be joining the Office of the Medical Director as the new MD4 EMS Fellow starting on July 1, noting that she is connected with Tampa General Hospital.
- Preparing to field-test Pediatric King Airways.
- Evaluating junctional tourniquets for SWAT medics.
- Adding Push Dose Pressers as a new option for field medics for temporary management of shock states.
- Discussed concerns related to impacts of delaying elective procedures.

- **First Responders – Chief Tom Jamison**

- Recognized the work of Craig Hare, Dr. Jameson, and all community leaders to ensure the health and safety of all firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, and staff.
- Thanked the Department of Health and Agency for Health Care Administration for their collaborative partnership with First Responders to proactively monitor cases and assist with PPE provisioning in the long-term care facilities.

- Reminded members of the importance of practicing social distancing and wearing masks.
- **Sunstar – John Peterson**
  - Echoed Chief Jamison’s comments, adding thanks to Dr. Jameson, Craig Hare, and the entire EMS system for stepping up to ensure the safety of clinicians and patients.
  - Sunstar has participated in multiple statewide missions to serve Region 4 to assist with transports, information-gathering, and COVID testing at long-term care facilities for over 14 straight weeks.
  - Stephen Glatstein, Special Operations Supervisor, was selected by the State EOC as the Florida Ambulance Association’s Liaison for Ambulance-Related Missions to coordinate support at the state level.
  - Reported that two Sunstar employees won the Pinellas County EMS Professionals of the Year Award, as follows:
    - Emergency Medical Dispatcher: Chris Kannenberg, EMT/Emergency Medical Dispatcher, Sunstar Paramedics Communications Center.
    - Emergency Medical Technician: Jason Melzer, EMT, Sunstar Paramedics.
  - New uniforms represent another positive workforce change.
  - Met with the manufacturer of the new critical care truck ambulance, noting that a team of critical care employees is engaged to help with unit design.
  - He and Richard Schomp are holding regular weekly video calls with a counselor on standby to assist employees with questions and counseling opportunities.
- **Affiliates and Stakeholders – Rosalie Bousher**
  - The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is meeting the mental health needs of the community by increasing the number of support group sessions for peers, family, and friends to eight peer sessions and seven family sessions per month via Zoom, noting that sessions are also offered on an as-needed basis.
  - NAMI Pinellas, Central Florida Behavioral Health Network, and Personal Enrichment through Mental Health Services (PEMHS) have combined efforts to implement a certified Peers in Recovery Mentorship program. Eight interns will take a state exam to become certified community peer specialists. The next wave of applicants to begin on July 15.
  - All programs are offered via virtual platform.
  - See the following link for additional information: [www.nami-pinellas.org](http://www.nami-pinellas.org), <https://nami-pinellas.org/peers-in-recovery-mentorship-program/>.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

No discussion of Old Business.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

No discussion of New Business.

## **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2020, format to be determined.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Peluso adjourned the meeting at 11:57 A.M.

*Audio and any correspondence received for this meeting is on file at the  
Pinellas County EMS & Fire Administration.*