

Minutes from the EMSAC Executive Committee meeting April 28, 2011

Meeting called to order at 10:00 by Michael Wallace. Present: Dr. Berko, Ray Neri, J.P Medani, Mark Postma, Don Sayre, Chris Taylor, Carl Brody

The subject for the meeting is to identify points of discussion for the executive committee members to bring to the BOCC acting as the EMS Authority on a regular basis. It was discussed that quarterly meetings with the Commissioners would provide an ongoing information flow and help in developing relationships with each Commissioner.

Mr. Wallace had prepared four items for consideration by the group.

1. The EMS system is one of the finest in the country. Contrary to generally accepted opinions it is not the most expensive and is comparable in costs and superior in outcome to other Metro systems. The system is finely tuned to the point that we can have tornado touchdowns with storm damage, displaced residents, search and rescue, debris clearance and still be able to respond to the normal load of requests for service from 911 callers without disrupting the system.
2. The discussion of FD transport is an expected reaction to the funding pressures that result from unwillingness to raise the EMS millage rate. The current rate is less than 1/2 of the voter-approved cap. The rate is at historic lows and the needed increase would result in approximately \$20.00 per household. Juvenile Welfare Board has a higher millage rate and PSTA has a higher millage rate and both have raised their millage rate recently. More people use EMS than use either of these two other bodies.
3. Attempts at cost savings have been counterproductive and have created more costs. The new heart monitor is an example of an attempt to save money and ultimately costs the system more in fixes and adaptations. Cell phone connections, EKG tracing, transmission of heart attack EKGs to receiving hospitals have all required additional action to perform the same tasks that the old unit did.
4. The unique population of Pinellas County geriatric, retired, create demands on the

system that other communities will not be facing for 15-20 years. Obesity has resulted in the ambulance company putting in service dedicated “bariatric” units to handle these transports. Obese patient numbers are high enough to warrant this.

After his presentation of the four points Dr. Berko stated that we reinforce the concept that the system is “not broken why fix it.” Dr. Berko stated that in an attempt to save money we may be actually costing the system.

Mr. Neri stated that the Commission may be willing to raise the EMS millage because the elected officials know that we need to fund the system and this is a public safety issue. Mr. Neri questioned how the system decided to change to another medical device without the input from the EMSAC and how no field testing was done to ensure that it was compatible. Mr. Wallace stated that the EMSAC had been advised of the change and that Pinellas County Purchasing controlled the process of bidding and acceptance.

Mr. Medani stated that by using reserves in the past instead of raising millage has brought the system to a crisis that did not need to be. If millage had been raised in small increments as needed no crisis would exist today. Mr. Medani also stated that the EMS Grant funds may not be available in the future to fund the purchase of EKG equipment.

Mr. Postma stated that he wanted to be sure that the facts stated in item # 3 regarding millage increases by JWB and PSTA were accurate before they were presented to the Commission.

Mr. Neri stated that the EMSAC needed to be more involved in the equipment selection.

Mr. Medani stated that the EMS professionals are the subject matter experts in Pre Hospital medicine. A committee looked at the equipment and now Sunstar has to be trained on the Philips device that they do not use and FD had to be retrained on a new device. This had a cost to the system. Mr. Medani also stated that the Physio Control device user interface was the same on the new device as on the old device and that the required training needed to put this unit in service would have been much less. A discussion about the St Peterburg fire Rescue field testing of the Philips device did occur but only after the contract had been awarded.

Mr. Neri stated that the EMSAC needed insist that equipment be field tested prior to purchasing.

Mr. Brody stated that County Purchasing department controls that process.

Mr. Wallace stated that he would like to have this Executive Committee meet with Mr. LaSala prior to setting meetings with the Commissioners. It would be more appropriate to not bypass the County Administrator and that he should be fully aware of the points we wanted to bring to the Commission. It was agreed to do this first.

Mr. Sayre wanted to express that the system was already very finely tuned, and that the EMS management committee was continuously working to make refinements to the systems response process.

Mr. Taylor stated that if we only have a limited amount of time with the Commission, we should focus on the positive aspects of the EMS system. Just telling them what is wrong will not be productive. We need to emphasize the positive.

Mr. Wallace was directed to set a meeting with Mr. LaSala and to send the minutes out to the EMSAC members.