

**AUSTIN – TRAVIS COUNTY EMS ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, August 29, 2016**



**The Austin – Travis County EMS Advisory Board convened on August 29, 2016, 15 Waller Street, in Austin, Texas at 1:30 p.m.**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mark Clayton, Paula Barr, Justin Otwell, John Villanacci, Tracy Dalbosco, Randall Higgins

**Board Members Absent:** Vard Curtis, Chris Ziebell, Lisa Harris

**Other Attendees:** Michael Benavides, Tom Dodds, Teresa Gardner, Jasper Brown, Ernesto Rodriguez, Ed Racht, James Hawley, Tony Marquardt, Casey Ping, Kate Remick, Mark Escott, Terry Browder, Ron Moellenberg, Rolando Rodriguez, Danny Hobby, Vivian Holmes, Ken Bailey, Donny Norman, Robert Maxwell, Darren Noak

**1. CALL TO ORDER – August 29, 2016**

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

**2. QUORUM DETERMINATION**

A quorum was met and the meeting proceeded.

**3. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Motion:** The minutes for the regular meeting of June 7, 2016 were approved on a motion by Board Member Villanacci and seconded by Board Member Barr on a 6-0 vote.

**4. RECEIVE CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS/COMMENT – None**

**5. INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBER: RANDALL HIGGINS**

**6. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEDICAL DIRECTOR: MARK ESCOTT, OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR**

**7. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON POSSIBLE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

Review of a Public Safety Commissioner's recommendation for a merge of AFD and EMS. EMS Chief of Staff Jasper Brown and AFD Chief of Staff Tom Dodds provided overviews. From AFD's perspective there has not been a directive to take any action on this issue.

**8. RECEIVE UPDATE FROM ADVISORY BOARD WORK GROUP**

- Board Member Dusty Otwell provided an overview of the workgroups letter of budget recommendations that was sent to city and county dignitaries.
- Chief Rodriguez provided an update on what was presented to Council for the FY17 budget. It included:

- (1) Division Chief for Community Health Paramedic Program; consideration for (1) additional Demand Unit; (1) Paramedic Response Unit, and 52 FTE's.

## **9. ANSWER QUESTIONS REGARDING SYSTEM REPORTS**

System reports are kept updated and posted on the city's website for the EMS Department. There were no questions or comments about the reports.

## **10. RECEIVE UPDATES FROM SYSTEM AGENCIES REPRESENTATIVES:**

- a) Medical Director's Report: Mark Escott, Medical Director
  - Dr. Escott provided a presentation (See attached copy of PowerPoint)
  - Future Considerations: Transition to bachelor's degree for medics in order to have a professional based program. Consider Bachelor of Health Services – Paramedicine. Dr. Escott gave an overview in regard to advancing education for medics. He will be doing additional research to see how they can move into this model.
    - Board Member Barr asked about affordability of a degree plan and who would be paying for the education, and how would the city afford to pay more for medics with this type of degree. It would be an added expense to an already expensive system and it would need to be affordable for the community to be able to support. Dr. Escott suggested looking at other areas to decrease the budget in order to afford the recommended model.
- b) Austin EMS Department: Ernesto Rodriguez, Chief
  - Chief Rodriguez discussed issues the department continues to support:
    - Health – Medics obtain a once a year physical with their own physician or with the physician at the EMS/AFD Wellness Center.
    - Fitness – The department will be hiring additional trainers.
    - Wellbeing and Spirituality – Continuing to keep a focus to help keep employees strong. The department has a chaplain readily available for staff as well they can contact the ATCEMS Peer Support Team; has created a Workload Alerting System which allows a medic to step away and take a needed break; has changed the shift schedule to allow more rest between shifts; and, will be providing training on sleep hygiene and nutrition.
- c) Travis County Emergency Services: Danny Hobby, Executive Manager
  - Mr. Hobby announced to the board that he will be retiring in February 2017.
  - Discussed the budget gap plan. Travis County is now an urban county and they must be able to grow and keep moving forward.
  - He provided information about the stability of ESDs, plus talked about collaboration between the districts and small cities.
  - Funding continues to be a challenge.
- d) Austin Fire Department: Tom Dodds, Chief of Staff
- e) Emergency Services Districts: Ron Moellenberg, CAFCA President
  - In October, Pflugerville Fire will roll out their first ambulance. Chief Moellenberg discussed medical direction and the process it took to get it worked out in order to move forward with providing medical first response. Pflugerville has grown to almost one-hundred thousand people. Due to this growth, there are now several hospitals close by which will be beneficial for when they begin transporting patients. He is looking forward to collaborating with Dr. Escott in the future and is taking this as a challenge and opportunity to grow and work together.
  - Board Members Paula Barr and John Villanacci are both ESD Commissioners and discussed the challenges of growth in their respective districts.

- In Board Member Barr's ESD #6, they have trained paramedics and squad vehicles. They need to work within the system to have needs met and do not have the ability to raise taxes. She discussed the high cost of credentialing and other expenses. Legislatively they are threatened and taxes are not guaranteed. She doesn't feel they had a voice at the table previously for Medical Direction. Dr. Escott said that they will be hiring a Deputy Medical Director and their main purpose will be to work with ESDs. The breakdown of calls is 15% Travis County and 85% City of Austin. His goal is for care to be seamless to the patient.
- In Board Member Villanacci's ESD # 3, they provide services at the EMT Intermediate level and have for a long time as they never felt it necessary to go to paramedic level. They have relied on ATCEMS for the higher level of care and it has been seamless to citizens. They are currently working through Austin annexation issues.
- Ken Bailey, ESD #11 Chief, discussed issues regarding a limited tax base and increase of their costs. They have appropriately trained staff and unit. They will go to the county for medical direction and wants Drs. Escott and Kempema's vision to be in alignment.
- Donny Norman, ESD #1 Chief, provided an overview of his district. He said very little can be annexed. They have three cities within their district. ESD #1 purchased an ambulance this year and sought medical direction during the time Dr. Hinchey resigned. They are working through the challenges and is not opposed to having Dr. Escott as their medical director.
- Tom Dodds, AFD Chief of Staff said that the City of Austin has challenged AFD to look at their model. The most efficient cost model is what they need and do not want duplication of services but rather collaboration. Chief Dodd's introduced Rolando Rodriguez who has been recently assigned to work in the Office of the Medical Director as a Medical Officer.
- NEXT STEPS: Board Chair Mark Clayton suggested collaboration within clinical guidelines and the importance of making care seamless to patients. Board Member Villanacci suggested coordination of Clinical Operating Guidelines (COGs); the credentialing process is not a one size fits all. Personable communication is necessary when discussing these important issues as misinterpretations can occur when only using email as a main communication tool.

#### **11. OTHER BUSINESS**

- None

#### **12. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:21 p.m.

*The minutes were approved on this the 1st day of February 2017 on a unanimous vote.*