

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

**WEDNESDAY, May 3, 2017**



**The Austin – Travis County EMS Advisory Board convened on May 3, 2017, 15 Waller Street, in Austin, Texas at 9:30 a.m.**

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mark Clayton, Chris Ziebell, Lisa Harris, Justin Otwell, John Villanacci, Tracy Dalbosco, Randall Higgins, Jerry Staton, Vard Curtis

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Other Attendees:** Keith Simpson, Jasper Brown, James Hawley, Vivian Holmes, Kerri Lang, Mark Escott, Jeff Hayes, Michael Benavides, Robert Abbott, Tom Vocke, Aaron Woolverton, Casey Ping, Josh Davies, Terry Browder, Katie Stewart

**1. CALL TO ORDER – May 3, 2017**

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.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 February 1, 2017 were approved on a motion by Board Member Villanacci and seconded by Board Member Harris on a 9-0 vote.

**4. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON EMS BUDGET HORIZON ISSUES**

Assistant Director Kerri Lang and Chief of Staff Jasper Brown presented to City Council on April 19<sup>th</sup>. The City Council is predicting a two-million dollar gap for FY2018. If there are dire needs for ATCEMS to address, the amount will need to come out of the current budget. Ms. Lang provided a handout on the EMS budget and answered questions regarding the Projected Baseline Expenditures vs. Revenue.

The department added back in the Designated Medical Officer from last year's unmet needs. The City Council is looking at Public Safety as a whole due to the high percentage of costs taken from the overall budget. The charts show a 25% growth in predicted budget which is due to wage increases, insurance, and possibly civil service contracts. Board Member Harris asked about population growth and if budgets are being adjusted due to the increase. Ms. Lang responded that the city's population growth is not taken into consideration for the budget.

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, EMS gave a presentation to City Council to answer their questions in reference to merging ATCEMS and the Austin Fire Department. The majority of City Council was not interested in a merger or privatization. The current focus for the FY18 budget is for the needs of Health and Human Services programs.

Vice Chair Ziebell asked if data shows how much it costs the city to save lives. City Council has asked for comparisons with other major cities such as San Antonio and the number of medics per 1000 citizens. Chief of Staff Brown will get the data and provide it to Board Members.

Alternative Transport Units (ATU) – EMS is currently doing a pilot by using a special EMS van that can transport low priorities which allows ambulances to go on the higher priority calls. The department is doing a lot of initiatives to stay within budget. Board Member Otwell asked about the data because it looks like the city has doubled the budget in the five year forecast; Ms. Lang will follow-up with the Budget Office and suggested Board Members go to the Austin Finance online website to see the budget presentations. The EMS proposed budget will be presented in August.

Chair Clayton reviewed the Advisory Board's letter of recommendation from last year and the process of the approach to discuss identified needs. He and other board members have met with Mayor and Council Members to discuss the budget and EMS needs. The next Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for August 2<sup>nd</sup>, which is the same time EMS is presenting their proposed budget; therefore it is recommended that a poll be taken to consider an alternate date for the August meeting.

Travis County Executive Manager, Josh Davies said that the impact of legislative proposals is significant and Travis County has been asked to cut 5%; including a cut to their EMS budget. He will be looking at different parts of the system. Board Member Villanacci suggested looking at where changes can be made efficiently to help lower costs.

Dr. Escott suggested departments need to focus on quality improvements and patient safety. EMS has been looking at new alternatives, however by doing so it could also reduce the revenue. Mr. Davies asked how can we better utilize ESD's and recommends looking at how the system provides services since only 1-5% of the transports are priority calls.

Chief Brown and Mr. Davies discussed IT needs. There is a strong need to have a single unified patient care record and it should be a system approach with all involved such as Travis County, City of Austin and hospitals. Discussion amongst all attendees continued and Vice Chair Ziebell encouraged the importance of collaboration between EMS operations and EMS medical direction. Board Members advised that everyone should work together and keep one another informed about common goals throughout the year.

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

**6. 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 about the reports.

**7. RECEIVE UPDATES FROM SYSTEM AGENCIES REPRESENTATIVES:**

a) Medical Director's Report: Mark Escott, Medical Director

Dr. Escott talked about the document he provided, "System Clinical Practice Change Process for Clinical Guidelines, Medications and/or Equipment". He plans to discuss this topic at the upcoming CAFCA meeting as well as other meetings. The OMD has a different process for imminent safety risks. This was the first introduction of the document and Mr. Davies doesn't think the ESDs and county are ready for this step and would like an opportunity to sit down to discuss the matter. Dr. Ziebell commented that everyone should have a chance to collaborate before finalizing this type of plan.

- b) Austin EMS Department: Ernesto Rodriguez, Chief  
Chief of Staff Brown said that EMS is in partnership with the new hospital. There is a significant radio issue being worked through with Seton that not only affects EMS, but APD as well. He discussed the Sobriety Center and has visited the Houston Sobriety Center and met with their executive director. Dr. Ziebell would like to see direct transport by EMS. Community leaders have made the decision for the center to only focus on alcohol addiction; however Austin has seen a large problem with K2 as well as other types of addictions. K2 patients are being transported in Houston to their Sobriety Center. Dr. Escott doesn't want EMS to be used as the sole transport to the center; it needs to be a dual effort with the police department.
- c) Travis County Emergency Services: Josh Davies, Executive Manager  
Mr. Davies invited Board Members to join them for EMS week at Commissioners Court for a proclamation to be given.
- d) Austin Fire Department: Tom Dodds, Chief of Staff  
Assistant Chief Aaron Woolverton provided a brief update on the status of SB 1408 that would allow first responders to conceal carry while on duty. AFD is opposed and CAFCA Chiefs are also opposed to the bill. The current City of Austin policy is that you can have a gun in the trunk of your personal car.
- e) Emergency Services Districts: Robert Abbott, CAFCA President  
ESD 2 Pflugerville has added a second medic unit and plans to add two more for a total of four ambulances. He has been following Senate Bill 2 as well and it could have an impact on ESDs. The annexation for ESD4 is moving forward and they will transfer some of their employees to AFD due to this annexation in their area.

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

- Board Member Dalbosco asked about the alternative transport unit and the readmission program. Chief of Staff Brown said the ATU would be a Medic I, but could also be a Medic II. The unit will transport to traditional transport destinations, but in the future EMS may decide to transport to other facilities depending on the care needed for the patient. The cost models that are currently being used were created by the LBJ School of Public Affairs.
- Board Member Higgins asked about a possible partnership between ATCEMS and the University of Texas-Austin. UT has tried to provide first response medical service on campus, but there has been an increase of calls generated by university students. Dr. Escott said he has met with UT Longhorn EMS comprised of undergraduate EMTs. They are looking at creating a sustainable model. Dr. Escott recognized EMS and AFD for their rapid response to the tragic incident that occurred on campus on Monday.

## **9. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

*The minutes were approved on this the 24<sup>th</sup> day of August 2017 on a unanimous vote.*