

**PINELLAS COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
March 17, 2023**

The Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council met in person at the John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Building, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Conference Room 130, Largo, Florida, at 10:00 A.M. on this date with the following members present:

Commissioner Julie Peluso, Independent Fire District Elected Official – Chair
Jorge Mercado, Citizen Representative (District 7) – Vice-Chair
Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics - Secretary
Tina Ambrose, Citizen Representative (District 4)
Becca Tieder, Citizen Representative (District 5)
Ty Dougherty, Citizen Representative (District 6)
Mayor Dave Gattis, Mayors' Council (Belleair Beach)
Mayor Dan Saracki, Mayors' Council (Oldsmar)
Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Mayors' Council (Pinellas Park)
Gayle Guidash, Pinellas County Health Department
Chief Scott Young, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association (Alternate)
Chief Anthony Tedesco, City of Clearwater Fire Chief (Alternate)
Chief Terry Tokarz, EMS Coordinator
Capt. Michael Leiner, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Nancy Hopkins, Emergency Nurses' Association West Coast Florida Chapter
Capt. Thomas Kras, St. Petersburg Fire & Rescue (Alternate)
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society
Dr. Zachary Zimko, PEMHS, Mental Health Professional

Absent:

Mayor Woody Brown, Mayors' Council (Largo)
Karen Mullins, Citizen Representative (District 1)
Larri Gerson, Citizen Representative (District 2)
Jeri Reed, Citizen Representative (District 3)
Dr. Eric Carver, St. Petersburg College
Jo Dee Nicosia, National Alliance on Mental Illness
Denise Whitfield, National Alliance on Mental Illness (Alternate)

Staff Present:

Lourdes Benedict, Assistant County Administrator
Cody Ward, County Attorney's Office
Dr. Angus Jameson, Medical Director
Dr. Donna Dooley, Associate Medical Director
James Fogarty, Bureau Director, Safety and Emergency Services
Dave Hare, Safety and Emergency Services
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration
Ken Grimes, EMS & Fire Administration
Mark Eggers, EMS & Fire Administration
Chris Jordan, EMS & Fire Administration
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration

Also Present:

Fire Chaplain Rev. Milton Smith, All First Responders Matter, LLC
Chaplain Chris Ireland, Palm Harbor Fire & Rescue/All First Responders Matter
Commissioner Kevin Kenney, Independent Fire District Elected Official (Alternate)
Chief John Mortellite, Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue
Chief Douglas Higley, Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue
Chief Scott Sanford, Palm Harbor Special Fire Control District
Chief Alex Bowlby, Pinellas Park Fire Department
Chief Douglas Zimmerman, EMS Coordinator (Alternate)
Jeremy Tinter, Sunstar Paramedics (Alternate)
Jasmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics
Siomara Bridges-Mata, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Pinellas
Kelly Cisarik, Citizen
Dan Mynsberge, Citizen
Sarah Kochen, SPC Student

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Commissioner Julie Peluso called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M. Roll call was taken, and Lynn Abbott confirmed that a quorum was met. There were 18 voting members in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

Invocation by Chaplain Chris Ireland, Palm Harbor Fire and Rescue, All First Responders Matter.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- Appointment of Chair – Following discussion regarding nominations for Chair, Commissioner Kevin Kenney moved, seconded by Mayor Dan Saracki, that Jorge Mercado be appointed Chairman of the EMS Advisory Council. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- Appointment of Vice-Chair – Following discussion regarding nominations for Vice-Chair, Mayor Dan Saracki moved, seconded by Commissioner Kevin Kenney, that Mayor Sandra Bradbury be appointed Vice-Chair of the EMS Advisory Council. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- Appointment of Secretary – Following discussion regarding nominations for Secretary, Mayor Dan Saracki moved, seconded by Mayor Sandra Bradbury, that Gayle Guidash be appointed Secretary of the EMS Advisory Council. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- Refreshing/Confirmation of Executive Committee – Jorge Mercado and Chief Terry Tokarz agreed to remain on as members of the EMS Advisory Council Executive Committee.

Following discussion, Mayor Sandra Bradbury and Gayle Guidash volunteered to serve as members of the EMS Advisory Council Executive Committee. Follow up to be conducted with Dr. Eric Carver regarding refreshing his membership on the Executive Committee.

- Refreshing/Confirmation of Selection Committee – Jorge Mercado and Gayle Guidash agreed to remain on as members of the EMS Advisory Council Selection Committee. Follow up to be conducted with Mayor Woody Brown and Larri Gerson regarding refreshing their membership on the Selection Committee.

Commissioner Peluso passed the gavel to Jorge Mercado, who chaired the remainder of the EMS Advisory Council (EMSAC) meeting. Craig Hare thanked Commissioner Peluso for her dedicated service to EMSAC over the years.

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 16, 2022 MEETING - APPROVED

Upon presentation by Chair Jorge Mercado, a motion was made by Mayor Sandra Bradbury, seconded by Mayor Dan Saracki and unanimously approved, that the minutes of the December 16, 2022 EMS Advisory Council meeting be approved.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Chair Mercado called for citizens wishing to be heard, and Kelly Cisarek provided commentary on Sunstar's response time regarding a 9-1-1 call made in February and commented that a review of how the Growth Management program is working systemwide be conducted at the next EMSAC meeting in June.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF FIRST RESPONDER ENHANCEMENTS

Craig Hare provided an overview of the budget recommendation/approval processes, cost increases, sustainable funding, and system operation complexities, noting that call volume jumped 7 percent from 2021 and was 4 percent higher from January to January.

Referring to a draft document titled *Pinellas County EMS – ALS First Responder Program Enhancement Request Summary FY23-24*, Mr. Hare discussed various countywide projects, and the following agencies presented their FY23-24 enhancement recommendations:

- Clearwater Fire & Rescue, Chief Tony Tedesco.
- Largo Fire Rescue, Chief Terry Tokarz.
- Oldsmar Fire and Rescue, Chief Scott Sanford.
- Pinellas Park, Chief Alex Bowlby.
- Pinellas Suncoast, Chief Douglas Higley (gave PowerPoint presentation).
- Tarpon Springs, Chief Scott Young.

Discussion ensued regarding the following topics:

- Levrum – Rolling out of the Levrum system workload and response times. It was developed by a retired fire chief out of Oregon, and 15 of our fire chiefs have been trained as power users and plan to meet this afternoon to finalize some of the modules.
- Community Paramedic Program – Our new Growth Management Coordinator will be assisting with program. One of the core takeaways from models across the country is that you really need to identify a specific gap in your community and bring in a resource to address that gap.
- Fire Academy – Discussed the lack of a regionally available fire training facility and upcoming plans to conduct a fire training center assessment, with an eye to restoring our aging Fire Academy.

EMS DIRECTOR REPORT

Craig Hare presented an EMS operations report and briefed the members on the following topics:

- Staffing
 - Welcomed Ken Grimes, the new EMS & Fire Operations Manager, and provided background information and a brief employment history.
 - Craig Queen is retiring, and the Credentials Coordinator position to be posted soon.
 - Looking to have a dedicated coordinator position for ImageTrend, the new Fire and EMS records system.

- Plans to upgrade the previous Training Coordinator position to a Clinical Manager.
- Brenda Dixon has retired, and recruitment is ongoing to replace her position.
- Membership Updates
 - The Pinellas County Medical Society has dissolved. Plans to update the MCB Ordinance to amend MCB Bylaws to include a pediatrician from All Children's Hospital, Dr. Meghan Martin, and the EMSAC Bylaws to include a mental health professional, Dr. Zachary Zimko.
- Appointment/Reappointments
 - The reappointments of Becca Tieder, Jorge Mercado, Chief Chad Pittman, Chief Scott Young and Commissioner Kevin Kenney and the appointment of Commissioner Casey Cane to be presented for approval to the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on April 11.
- EKG Project Restart
 - Philips is on a continued FDA hold. Discussed plans to move forward with second vendor, Stryker Physio's LifePak 15, and estimated time frame for training and equipment deployment.
 - EMS Training Committee to have agency-by-agency cardiac training with American Heart Association standards.
- ImageTrend
 - Project is well underway on this new integrated medical records system. There are about 45 people on ten different committees who will undergo workshops over the spring and early summer. The link to the CAD system, Hexagon, will likely occur Spring 2024.
- Pandemic Condition Plan
 - Pinellas County plans to follow rescinding the National Public Health Emergency declaration on May 11 and turning off Pandemic Condition Green, with two exceptions. By resolution from the Medical Control Board, we will keep the Emergency Medical Responder component as well as a the BLS ambulance to 9-1-1 program.
- EMS Academy
 - Mark Eggers, EMS Academy Coordinator, spoke briefly about the implementation of a new immersion room that provides real-life scenarios for trainees. Further discussion ensued over financial support for prospective students.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR REPORT

Dr. Angus Jameson presented the Medical Director's Report and briefed the members on the following topics:

- Protocols
 - Reminded the Board of the new Pinellas County Office of the Medical Director's website, <https://pcemsomd.com/>, a one-stop repository for all system stakeholders.
- Personnel
 - Noted that the current EMS fellow, Dr. Andrew Kropp, will be graduating in June and that for next year, Dr. Ken Dumas, one of our chief residents at Tampa General, has been matched as next year's Fellow.
 - Indicated that today is Match Day across the country and encouraged anyone who knows of a student in medical school to find out where they are going for their residency.
- Clinical Operations
 - Increased Freestanding Emergency Department utilization, as approved by the Medical Control Board, that will help balance the workload across available resources in the community.

- Substance Use Disorder Programs
 - Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP), a federal grant program that Pinellas County has been using for about a year and a half that provides for direct referrals from the back of the ambulance to an opioid treatment provider in the community. In two years, hundreds of patients have been referred to treatment, and state funding from the Comprehensive Opioid Recovery Program (CORP) has recently been secured that will allow us to make the program available on weekends.
 - Leave Behind Narcan, a program that went live in January authorizing EMS agencies who have either responded to an individual experiencing an opioid-related overdose or someone they believe may be otherwise at risk of opioid overdose to leave behind an overdose response kit. Kits are being distributed during calls, at special events, or at fire stations. About 50 kits have been given out to date.
 - ED Bridge to Medication-Assisted Therapy (MAT) Pathways to Care, a Pinellas County Human Services partnership with Bayfront, a replication of a program started by Dr. Heather Henderson at Tampa General, who along with Dr. Andrew Smith, is providing another pathway of care to avoid opioid overdoses. Program was implemented 8 months ago. Looking forward to expansion to more hospitals.

FIRE CHIEFS' REPORT

Chief Scott Young provided statistical information regarding Fire Rescue Core CAD responses, including structure fires, extrications, and Hazmat calls. He also announced that there will be a Fire Ops 101 event coming up in May.

SUNSTAR REPORT

Richard Schomp discussed the system's increased call volume, noting that Sunstar was able to respond to the recent shooting of a deputy with a level of service that led to a positive outcome. He provided statistical information regarding transport volume, recruiting efforts, and staffing challenges. Sunstar has graduated nine EMTs into the system through a fully paid program and just started its fourth EMR hiring class. It takes two years to grow a paramedic, but he emphasized that the BLS to 9-1-1 program is working as designed and provides a great outlet when the system gets overwhelmed.

AFFILIATES & STAKEHOLDERS

Craig Hare shared that Jo Dee Nicosia has been promoted to a larger role within NAMI-Pinellas. NAMI's Board meeting is today, and we will be advised of her replacement.

OPEN FORUM

There was no Open Forum discussion.

2023 MEETING SCHEDULE

June 23, September 29, and December 15, 2023.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 23, 2023, format to be in person.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made by Mayor Dan Saracki, seconded by Mayor Sandra Bradbury and carried unanimously, Chair Mercado adjourned the meeting at 12:03 P.M.

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