

**PINELLAS COUNTY  
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES  
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES  
March 22, 2024**

The Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council met in person at the John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Building, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Conference Room 130/132, Largo, Florida, at 10:00 A.M. on this date with the following members present:

Jorge Mercado, Citizen Representative (District 7) – Chair  
Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Mayors' Council (Pinellas Park) – Vice-Chair  
Gayle Guidash, Pinellas County Health Department – Secretary  
Christopher Markham, Citizen Representative (District 1)  
Becca Tieder, Citizen Representative (District 5)  
Siomara Bridges-Mata, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Pinellas  
Mayor Dave Gattis, Mayors' Council (Belleair Beach)  
Mayor Woody Brown, Mayors' Council (Largo)  
Mayor Dan Saracki, Mayors' Council (Oldsmar)  
Chief Scott Ehlers, City of Clearwater Fire Chief  
Chief Ian Womack, St. Petersburg Fire & Rescue  
Chief Chad Pittman, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association  
Nancy Hopkins, Emergency Nurses' Association West Coast Florida Chapter  
Chief Terry Tokarz, EMS Coordinator  
Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics  
Capt. Brian Browne, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (Alternate)  
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society  
Commissioner Kevin Kenney, Independent Fire District Elected Official

**Absent:**

Doreen Caudell, Citizen Representative (District 2)  
Jeri Reed, Citizen Representative (District 3)  
Tina Ambrose, Citizen Representative (District 4)  
Ty Dougherty, Citizen Representative (District 6)  
Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth, St. Petersburg College  
Commissioner Casey Cane, Independent Fire District Elected Official (Alternate)  
Dr. Zachary Zimko, PEMHS, Mental Health Professional

**Staff Present:**

Lourdes Benedict, Assistant County Administrator  
Patrick Allman, County Attorney's Office  
Dr. Angus Jameson, Medical Director  
Dr. Andrew Smith, Office of the Medical Director  
Dr. Ken Dumas, Office of the Medical Director  
James Fogarty, Bureau Director, Safety & Emergency Services  
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration  
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration

### **Also Present:**

Chaplain John Trese, Largo Fire Rescue and All First Responders Matter  
Meg Ross, First Responders Hope Line  
John Mikula, First Responders Hope Line  
Chief Tony Tedesco, Clearwater Fire Rescue (Alternate)  
Chief Mark Zipeto, Dunedin Fire Rescue  
Chief Mike Handoga, Dunedin Fire Rescue  
Chief Scott Sanford, Palm Harbor Fire Rescue  
Chief Jeffrey Davidson, Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue  
Chief David Karpinecz, Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue  
Chief Josh Stefancic, Safety Harbor Fire Rescue  
Chief Lindsay Judah, St. Petersburg Fire & Rescue  
Jazmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics

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

Chairman Jorge Mercado called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M. Roll call was taken, and Lynn Abbott confirmed that a quorum was met. There were 17 voting members in attendance.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **INVOCATION**

Invocation by Chaplain John Trese, Largo Fire Rescue and All First Responders Matter.

### **MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 15, 2023 MEETING - APPROVED**

Upon presentation by Chairman Mercado, a motion was made by Commissioner Kevin Kenney, seconded by Dr. Anthony Ottaviano and unanimously approved, that the minutes of the December 15, 2023 EMS Advisory Council meeting be approved.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

- **Appointment of Chair:** Following discussion regarding nominations for Chair, Richard Schomp moved, seconded by Mayor Woody Brown, that Commissioner Kevin Kenney 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, Jorge Mercado moved, seconded by Mayor Woody Brown, that Mayor Sandra Bradbury, be reappointed 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, Jorge Mercado moved, seconded by Mayor Woody Brown, that Gayle Guidash be reappointed Secretary of the EMS Advisory Council. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- **Refreshing/Confirmation of Executive Committee:** Jorge Mercado, Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Gayle Guidash, and Chief Terry Tokarz agreed to remain on as members of the EMS Advisory Council Executive Committee. Mayor Woody Brown moved, seconded by Mayor Dave Gattis, that Jorge Mercado, Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Gayle Guidash, and Chief Terry Tokarz be reappointed to the Executive Committee. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

Becca Tieder nominated Mayor Woody Brown and moved, seconded by Mayor Dave Gattis, that Mayor Woody Brown be appointed to the Executive Committee. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- Refreshing/Confirmation of Selection Committee: Jorge Mercado, Gayle Guidash, and Mayor Woody Brown agreed to remain on as members of the EMS Advisory Council Selection Committee. Mayor Sandra Bradbury moved, seconded by Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, that Jorge Mercado, Gayle Guidash, and Mayor Woody Brown be reappointed to the Executive Committee. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.
- Refreshing/Confirmation of EMS Management Committee: Current representatives of the EMS Management Committee agreed to remain as members. Mayor Sandra Bradbury moved, seconded by Dr. Anthony Ottaviano, that the current members be reappointed to the EMS Management Committee.

Following discussion, Chief Scott Ehlers nominated Chief Tony Tedesco. Chair Kenney indicated that the motion would be amended to include Chief Tony Tedesco as well as the current members to the EMS Management Committee. Upon call for the vote, the amended motion was approved unanimously.

Jorge Mercado passed the gavel to Commissioner Kevin Kenney, who chaired the remainder of the EMS Advisory Council (EMSAC) meeting.

### **CITIZENS TO BE HEARD**

There were no citizens to be heard.

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Craig Hare welcomed Chief Lindsay Judah, St. Petersburg Fire Rescue and congratulated Chief Ian Womack on his promotion to St. Petersburg Fire Marshal. He introduced Meg Ross and John Mikula and thanked them for appearing to give their presentation on the First Responders Hope Line.

### **CRISIS CENTER FIRST RESPONDER HOPE LINE**

Referring to a presentation titled *First Responder Hope Line*, Meg Ross, with input by John Mikula, provided background information on her experience as a First Responder Ambassador and participation with the First Responder Hope Line. She presented an overview of the purpose of the program for current/retired First Responders and their families and discussed trauma exposure, other stressors, suicide rates among First Responders, barriers to seeking help, and available resources. Craig Hare indicated that he will follow up with Ms. Ross and Mr. Mikula for additional program information.

### **PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF FIRST RESPONDER ENHANCEMENTS**

Referring to a draft document titled *Pinellas County EMS – Enhancement Request Summary FY24-25*, Mr. Hare shared information regarding accomplishments in FY22-23 and upcoming projects for FY23-24, and the following agencies presented their FY24-25 enhancement recommendations:

- Safety Harbor Fire Department, Chief Josh Stefancic.
- Clearwater Fire & Rescue, Chief Scott Ehlers.
- Dunedin Fire Department, Chiefs Mark Zipeto and Mike Handoga.
- Palm Harbor Special Fire Control District, Chief Scott Sanford.
- Pinellas Suncoast Fire Rescue, Chiefs Jeffery Davidson and David Karpinecz.
- Seminole Fire Rescue, Craig Hare.
- St. Pete Beach Fire Department, Craig Hare.

- St. Petersburg Fire Rescue, Chief Ian Womack.
- Largo Fire Rescue, Chief Chad Pittman.

Craig Hare indicated that he plans to meet with agencies regarding Fire and EMS budgets and will come back to this Board in June with staff recommendations.

### **EMS DIRECTOR REPORT**

Craig Hare presented the EMS Director's Report and briefed members on the following items:

- Staffing:
  - Steve Fravel is retiring as Credentialing Coordinator at the end of the month after 22 years with the County and 33 years in the field with Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties.
  - Chris Jordan has left the QA Coordinator position to teach the EMS program at St. Pete College.
  - Michael Hammond has come from Regional 9-1-1 to assist with Quality Assurance until the position is filled.
  - Katie Bower has joined our staff as the new EMS Training Manager.
  - QA position has been posted.
  - Dr. Stephen Haire is retiring from Morton Plant Hospital after 28 years and will be cycling off of the Medical Control Board (MCB) with 19 years as a member and 12 years as Chair. Shared plans to recognize Dr. Haire at the next MCB meeting scheduled to take place on June 20, 2024.
- LifePak 15: Finished deployment of 240 cardiac monitors across Fire Rescue and Sunstar. Successful deployment of \$10 million project.
- ImageTrend:
  - Completed implementation of new EMS and Fire reporting to 18 Fire Departments, Sunstar, and Airport.
  - Next phase will be to improve standardized reports and automated data management.
- First Watch/First Pass: Chief Bill Gorham has lead role in the automatic review and audit of medical records project.
- Ambulance Billing & Financial Services: ABFS is back to normal reporting operations.
- Hexagon:
  - Integration of the CAD system is underway.
  - PRIME group to bring local law enforcement, 9-1-1, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Fire Rescue, and Sunstar to one common dispatch system.
  - Implementation planned for second quarter of 2025. Plans to configure, fully test, train, and deploy agency by agency.
- First Responder:
  - Focusing on mid-County improvements with (1) breaking ground on a new Largo Station 39 at Wilcox and Ulmerton; (2) received clearance from the County Administrator to move forward with a new Redington Beach EMS Station, in partnership with Madeira Beach to construct and staff the building and strong support with Redington mayors; (3) in the design phase for a new Seminole station in the Bay Pines area on 100th Way; and (4) working with Pinellas Suncoast to build a new station in North Indian Rocks to improve response times.
  - Levrum to evaluate first station locations.
  - Budgets are in, seeing a lot of cost increases for personnel and delayed equipment/truck purchases. Plans to hold on some systemwide enhancements.
- Ambulance Service Request For Proposals (RFP) Update:

- Bid process is complete, and RFP Evaluation Committee has ranked-ordered Paramedical Logistics as No. 1, AMR as No. 2, and Falck as No. 3.
- Recommendations presented yesterday to County Administration, and BCC to be briefed in the next week or two.
- Plans to bring forward a service agreement with a five year-term and two 3-year extensions. New three-year collective bargaining agreement from the ambulance union is in place.
- Resetting to a new five-year plan by adding 10 BLS and 5 ALS ambulances focusing on hospital discharge and meeting response times.
- Medical Control Board Hospital Data Exchange:
  - Plans to implement a Health Information Hub (HIH) to automated transmission of records to get outcome data and send 12-lead EKGs ahead of patient transport.
  - Presented a proposed resolution for a bi-directional data-sharing agreement. Received member support, noting IT and security concerns. Established a subcommittee to discuss bi-directional data flow between EMS and hospitals to meet soon.
- EMS Training: 2024 theme is trauma.
- Active Assailant:
  - EMS and Fire Working Group is meeting monthly. Provided an overview of the new Active Assailant response plan, consisting of 28 responding apparatus with 45 personnel – currently working to determine what those roles would be. Plans to invite hospital administrators to help create a hospital support plan. Shared information on a regional drill with All Children’s Hospital, Bayfront, and St. Anthony’s on April 24. Noted that the PRIME Committee members, comprised of the Sheriff, local law enforcement, County staff, Fire Chiefs, 9-1-1, and hospital representation, has combined approximately 13 different Active Assailant SOPs into one comprehensive countywide Mass Casualty plan.
  - Dr. Jameson shared the goal for Law Enforcement is “stop the killing,” and the mission for EMS is “stop the dying.”
- Trauma Triage Study: Presented information on Dr. Jameson’s upcoming study. Prehospital Trauma Life Support (PHTLS) training to be offered over the summer.
- Lifeline Transports: Lifeline is no longer transporting trauma patients. We have transitioned to Aeromed at Tampa General for helicopter trauma patients to ensure closest helicopter dispatch.

## **MEDICAL DIRECTOR REPORT**

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

- Protocols
  - Discussed updates to medical records technology. Data analytics will come back online after recent medical records transition in next few weeks.
  - Noted deferment of usual end-of-year protocol updates due to large ongoing ePCR and monitor projects.
  - Provided information pertaining to the Medical Control Board’s approval of protocol update package at yesterday’s meeting.
- Trauma Triage Study: Presented information related to improving triage in multi-casualty incidents by using the Rapid Assessment of Mentation and Pulse (RAMP), noting it allows life-saving interventions to be done as patients are processed. Findings and processes to be written up by the end of April.
- Trauma Resuscitation Improvements:
  - Looking at revamping the way resuscitations are guided and exploring the idea of converting our medical resuscitation goals to Mean Arterial Pressure (MAP)/Shock Index Adoption instead of a systolic pressure, noting that there is

good evidence that MAP is more reliable, particularly with automatic blood pressure cuffs.

- Hospital Data Exchange: Working to continue working with hospital systems to improve data flow to ensure chain of survival for patients, noting earlier discussion under EMS Director Report.
- Office of the Medical Director (OMD):
  - Announced that Dr. Kenneth Dumas, current EMS Fellow, graduates in June and has accepted a position to stay on as an OMD Associate Medical Director, noting he is working to pass his EMS Boards next year.
  - All current OMD Associate Medical Directors, as well as Dr. Jameson, are board certified in EMS.
- Substance Use Disorder:
  - Saw a slight decrease in our rate of overdose incidents and deaths as the data for 2023 is being finalized.
  - Noted that, unfortunately, we are seeing a peak in number, perhaps as a result of a population increase and an uptick in synthetic opioids in the community. This particular class of drugs is difficult to reverse with Narcan.
- Mental Health Resiliency and Wellness:
  - Presented information related to the establishment of a research partnership with the Center for Applied Brain and Cognitive Science with Tufts University with a focus on resiliency and performance of soldiers, noting the development of interesting ways of predicting the capacity of a small unit to accomplish certain tasks.
  - Based on this theoretical work, we are going to try to train their model on what a firefighter/EMT is exposed to and use that information to develop a similar type model that we can apply to make some interventions in terms of keeping our EMS/Fire workers safe. More information to come.

### **FIRE CHIEFS' REPORT**

Chief Chad Pittman discussed work with the various fire unions in the county and the Fire Chiefs' Association and offered an invitation to non-civilians or anyone who is interested to participate in Fire Ops 101 to learn about fire suppression and vehicle extrication activities, to be held at Station 48's training ground. Information to be shared.

### **SUNSTAR REPORT**

Richard Schomp shared that Sunstar is excited to be taking the next step in the RFP Ambulance Contract process, and the contract will be presented soon to the BCC for approval, noting his thanks to everyone for their support. He indicated that Sunstar will be increasing its fleet by about 20 percent, including ALS and BLS interfacility vehicles.

Mr. Schomp presented information regarding the new *Ride Central* program to better facilitate interfacility transfers and to handle bed delays more efficiently.

### **AFFILIATES & STAKEHOLDERS**

Siomara Bridges-Mata relayed that NAMI is a nationally recognized organization, and NAMI Pinellas is working with NAMI national to develop and release a peer-net training for EMS and Fire. She is working with Jeff Ulevich, South Pasadena Fire Department, to roll out a 16-hour training that focuses on mental health in terms of fundamental skills and tools to support their peers' well-being before the end of the calendar year. There is also a program called *Stronger Together* that supports couples on their mental and physical health journey. *NAMI Walks* is holding their annual mental health awareness walk on May 18 at England Brothers Park, 5010 81st Avenue N., Pinellas Park, FL, and there are six more sponsorships open, looking for five more teams to cultivate. Please reach out to Ms. Bridges-Mata for additional information at [smata@nami-pinellas.org](mailto:smata@nami-pinellas.org).

## **OPEN FORUM**

- Chief Tony Tedesco shared information regarding an upcoming class being offered next month in collaboration with Largo Fire Rescue to improve First Responder safety, noting there have been several violent incidents over the last several months. The goal is to bring awareness of what's going on and how to disengage before a situation becomes threatening.
- Chairman Kevin Kenney presented information about Youth Leadership Pinellas, a group he works with that is comprised of a group of local high school students that get together to do various training. Chairman Kenney indicated that First Responders Emergency Services Day is coming up, and Sunstar annually supports Youth Leadership Pinellas by providing lunch, CPR training, a vehicle walk-through, and Sunstar system education. He extended a personal and professional thank you to Richard Schomp and the Sunstar family for their dedicated support.

## **2024 EMS Advisory Council Meeting Schedule**

Upcoming 2024 EMS Advisory Council Meeting dates are June 21, September 20, and December 20, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. All meetings are held in person at the John Morrioni EMS & Fire Administration Building, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Conference Room 130/132, Largo, Florida 33774.

## **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for June 21, 2024, format to be in person, and annual elections will be held at the March meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon motion duly made by Jorge Mercado, seconded by Richard Schomp and carried unanimously, Chairman Kenney adjourned the meeting at 12:12 p.m.

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