

**PINELLAS COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
June 27, 2025**

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:

Commissioner Kevin Kenney, Independent Fire District Elected Official – Chair
Christopher Markham, Citizen Representative (District 1)
Christina Snoots, Citizen Representative (District 3)
Ty Dougherty, Citizen Representative (District 6)
Commissioner Jorge Mercado, Citizen Representative (District 7)
Chief Tony Tedesco, City of Clearwater Fire Chief (Alternate)
Nancy Hopkins, Emergency Nurses' Association West Coast Florida Chapter
Chief Terry Tokarz, EMS Coordinator (Primary)
Chief Doug Zimmerman, EMS Coordinator (Alternate)
Mayor Dave Gattis Mayors' Council (Belleaire Beach)
Mayor Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayors' Council (Madeira Beach)
Siomara Bridges-Mata, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Pinellas (Primary)
Dr. Zachary Zimko, PEMHS, Mental Health Professional
Chief William Schobel, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association (Primary)
Chief William Barrs, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association (Alternate)
Dr. Ulyee Choe, Pinellas County Health Department (Primary)
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society
Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth, St. Petersburg College
Chief Lindsay Judah, St. Petersburg Fire & Rescue (Primary)
Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics (Primary)

Absent:

OPEN, Citizen Representative (District 2)
Tina Ambrose, Citizen Representative (District 4)
Becca Tieder, Citizen Representative (District 5)
Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Mayors' Council (Pinellas Park) – Vice-Chair
Mayor Woody Brown, Mayors' Council (Largo)
Capt. Jose Camacho, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

Staff Present:

James Fogarty, Bureau Director, Safety & Emergency Services
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration
Dr. Angus Jameson, Medical Director
Patrick Allman, County Attorney's Office
Jessica McGlothlin, SES

Thomas Hund, SES
Dawn Shontz, EMS & Fire Administration
Marianne Merola, EMS & Fire Administration

Also Present:

Fire Chaplain Rev. Milton Smith, All First Responders Matter
Chloe Polce, Citizen
Chief Scott Sanford, Palm Harbor Special Fire Control District
Commissioner Jacob Knighton, Pinellas Suncoast Fire Rescue
Chief Mark Keenan, Seminole Fire Rescue
Jazmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairman Kevin Kenney called the meeting to order at 10:07 A.M. Roll call was taken, and Dawn Shontz confirmed that a quorum was met. There were 18 voting members in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

Invocation by Fire Chaplain Rev. Milton Smith, All First Responders Matter.

Later in the meeting, Chaplain Milton Smith addressed the Fire Chiefs regarding the need for chaplains, noting there are courses for Fire and EMS Chaplains, and he is teaching one in Polk County. The class will be recommended by the State. Craig Hare emailed a document titled *Essentials of Fire Chaplaincy Polk County 2025* to all members.

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 28, 2025 MEETING - APPROVED

Upon presentation by Chairman Kenney, a motion was made by Mayor Dave Gattis, seconded by Dr. Anthony Ottaviani and unanimously approved, that the minutes of the March 28, 2025 EMS Advisory Council meeting be approved.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

INTRODUCTIONS

Craig Hare welcomed the following members:

- Mayor Anne-Marie Brooks, Madeira Beach, appointed Mayors' Council representative.
- Dr. Ulyee Choe, Director of Florida Department of Health - Pinellas, appointed Pinellas County Health Department primary representative.

HCA LARGO WEST FIRST RESPONDER PROGRAM PRESENTATION - DEFERRED

Dr. Kevin Butler was unable to attend and will conduct presentation at a future meeting.

PRE-AUTHORIZATION OF NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE TRANSPORTS

Craig Hare referred to the last page of the agenda packet and presented information regarding Jim Fogarty's letter regarding the protocol update for requiring a preauthorization for non-emergency ambulance service for hospital and skilled nursing facility (SNF) discharges that was sent to all Pinellas County hospitals and nursing facilities. Discussion ensued related to potential billing compliance issues and ensuring revenue collection.

Craig Hare indicated that the topic was discussed at yesterday's Medical Control Board (MCB) meeting on June 26, 2025, and relayed concerns voiced by hospital administrators that getting the pre-authorization approved before the transport will add time to the process and additional hospital staff needed are not currently available.

Following discussion by EMSAC members, Craig Hare, with input by Jim Fogarty, related that requiring the pre-authorization is more of an issue for skilled nursing facilities than for citizens; that the change should not cause an increase in 9-1-1 calls; that a working group needs to be convened to work through the details; and as soon as the facility knows the patient will be receiving a procedure, then the ambulance pre-authorization needs to be obtained also. Richard Schomp presented statistical information on the number of Sunstar daily transports and hospital transport discharges.

EMS DIRECTOR REPORT

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

- Redington Beach EMS Building
 - Madeira Beach is handling construction management of the new Redington Beach EMS Building.
 - Plans to put a medic unit at Redington Beach.
- County Administration
 - Lourdes Benedict, Assistant County Administrator (ACA), is retiring. Matthew Spoor has been named the new ACA over Safety and Emergency Services, sharing he is the former Safety Harbor City Manager and has served as an Assistant to the County Administrator.
- Budget
 - Overall costs are up 10.5% for First Responders, noting property values are up 4%.
 - Plans to hold off on any type of enhancements to ensure existing service coverage and to balance the budget through a six-year financial forecast.
 - Will continue to work with Fire and EMS Chiefs over the next year regarding training, mentoring, and support of the work force.
- Water Rescue Update
 - The Pinellas County Sheriff and Fire Chiefs met to improve Water Rescue coordination during hurricanes. A small working group was created, consisting of Sheriff's dispatch and EMS & Fire/9-1-1 Center Administration. Plans to continue to immediately dispatch Fire Rescue for operations. Looking to add working group inside of County EOC to monitor calls for duplication and deconfliction, ensuring proper call dispatch.

- Adding a PCSO representative to South Beaches' EOC to improve and increase coordination.
- Water Rescue Committee is looking to increase budget package for EMS Grant from \$300K to \$400K, adjusted for inflation. Plans to bring to EMSAC in the future after budget sessions.
- Discussion ensued pertaining to water tankers/adequate fire hydrant coverage, water rescue issues, and rising water levels.
- Active Assailant
 - Continuing with field training. Active Assailant presentation and classes are meeting and exceeding benchmarks.
 - The new RAMP Triage protocol worked well on the Clearwater Ferry Boat crash from a clinical standpoint. Patient Tracking is the next piece to work on.
 - Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) has a family reunification system. The plan gathers families with victims under tents that are set up. Chief Anthony Tedesco encouraged the working collaboration with PCSO. Craig Hare responded that a review will be conducted on the tracking system.
- EMD Change
 - Working with PRIME on the Hexagon CAD system. The next big software update is July 8th. Testing to take place on Aug 7th with plans for going live in April 2026, if all goes well with testing.
- DDFG Response Planning Group
 - Worked through EMD codes. IT study results presented at yesterday's MCB meeting to reduce dual response codes.
 - EMT codes for ambulance to change. Unit hours to keep in system so they can go on the next call.
 - Dr. Jameson recommended the reduction of the number of dual responses. Fire Rescue will continue to go; however, several codes do not require transport, releasing ambulances to go on their next call.
- New Fire Stations
 - Clearwater Station 47 moved to Hercules, near Clearwater High School.
 - Largo Station 39 expected to be operational within the next month, with Medic 39 coming on in the near future.
 - Pinellas Suncoast Station 27 to come online within a month or so.

Later in the meeting, Craig Hare shared the following information:

- Traffic Preemption Project
 - Traffic Preemption Project is just about ready to go live with Clearwater on the US19 corridor.
- EMS Advisory Council Vacancy
 - There is one opening for a Citizen Representative, district to be announced.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR REPORT

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

- RAMP Triage
 - Two national presentations took place: one in Philadelphia covering RAMP Triage and the other for Active Assailant in Fort Lauderdale. National standards writers were impressed with presentations.
- Medical Control Board
 - Yesterday's MCB meeting went well with updates and changes to the Critical Care Team protocols. Deployment of new electrical IV pumps to be in place on trucks before end of this year. This will help with efficiency of patient care.
 - Clinical changes to take place after July 4, 2025. Sepsis and Preeclampsia patient care to be updated. Plans to implement a new checklist approach and rollout of a new medication, with meds onboard, for how they address pregnant and post-partum patients with preeclampsia, to address fetal mortality.
- Blood (LTWB) Project
 - Working towards getting whole blood available by ground across the system.
 - Partnering with OneBlood and hospitals for blood product storage and safety issues. Plans to deploy by the end of the year.
- Personnel
 - Dr. Jeffrey Darko has officially graduated from his EMS Fellowship.
 - Dr. Morgan Uebelacker is the new EMS Fellow and starts next week, July 1, 2025.

FIRE CHIEFS' REPORT

Chief William Schobel provided information about the Fire Chiefs' meeting, noting that the group discussed the following items:

- House Bill 929 – Firefighter health and safety - addresses hazardous materials in bunker/turnout gear/required notification to employees.
- Reducing the traditional 56-hour workweek to 42 hours and the impacts to scheduling, compensation, retirement, and staffing/recruitment challenges.

SUNSTAR REPORT

Richard Schomp presented statistical information regarding call and transport volume and discussed Sunstar paramedic/EMT staffing and hours worked, shift rotation, and EMR enrollment. Mr. Schomp relayed his deep appreciation for all hospital systems' partnerships.

AFFILIATES & STAKEHOLDERS

Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth shared that Fire Academy received \$2M from St. Petersburg College and \$2M from Pinellas County for reconstruction of the burn building and tower. The project is underway and on track for the fall academy. Dr. Liao-Troth shared that there was no summer class due to the construction, noting there was super large class in spring and will be in fall. The total number of graduates is the same as last year.

OPEN FORUM

Commissioner Kenney related that the response time goal was not up to snuff, noting system issues on log-in times. He asked that the problem be fixed and backdated. Craig Hare indicated that the item will be sent to DDFG so the group can look at how those time intervals are collected.

MEETING

The next EMSAC meeting to be held in person on September 19, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., at the John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Building, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Conference Room 130/132, Largo, Florida 33774.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Kenney adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

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