

**PINELLAS COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
May 15, 2026**

The Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council met in person at the John Morrone 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
Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Mayors' Council (Pinellas Park) – Vice-Chair
Dr. Ulyee Choe, Pinellas County Health Department (Primary)
Anthony Degina, Citizen Representative (District 2)
Becca Tieder, Citizen Representative (District 5)
Ty Dougherty, Citizen Representative (District 6)
Jorge Mercado, Citizen Representative (District 7)
Chief Tony Tedesco, City of Clearwater Fire Chief (Primary)
Chief Chad Pittman, City of Clearwater Fire Chief (Alternate)
Chief Doug Zimmerman, EMS Coordinator (Primary)
Chief Mike Carpenter, EMS Coordinator (Alternate)
Chief William Schobel, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association (Primary)
Capt. Jason Schmittendorf, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Dr. Deanna Stentiford, St. Petersburg College (Alternate)
Chief Lindsay Judah, St. Petersburg Fire & Rescue (Primary)
Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics (Primary)
Shalisha Preston, Sunstar Paramedics (Alternate)

Absent:

Christopher Markham, Citizen Representative (District 1)
Christina Snoots, Citizen Representative (District 3)
OPEN, Citizen Representative (District 4)
Nancy Hopkins, Emergency Nurses' Association West Coast Florida Chapter
Mayor Dave Gattis, Mayors' Council (Belleair Beach)
Mayor Woody Brown, Mayors' Council (Largo)
Mayor Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayors' Council (Madeira Beach)
Siomara Bridges-Mata, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Pinellas (Primary)
Camille Hebting, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Pinellas (Alternate)
Dr. Zachary Zimko, PEMHS, Mental Health Professional
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society

Staff Present:

David Hare, Interim Bureau Director, Safety & Emergency Services
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration
Brett Schlatterer, EMS & Fire Administration
Dr. Angus Jameson, Medical Director
Dr. Morgan Uebelacker, EMS Fellow
Patrick Allman, County Attorney's Office
Ashley Giovannetti, Marketing & Communications
Sean Davenport, EMS & Fire Administration
Sabina Ortiz, Safety & Emergency Services
Josh Harrington, EMS & Fire Administration
Derek Schauer, EMS & Fire Administration

Thomas Hund, EMS & Fire Administration
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration

Also Present:

Chaplain Terri Harrison, All First Responders Matter
Chief Michael Handoga, Dunedin Fire Rescue
Chief Rick Graham, Lealman Fire Rescue
Chief Jim Millican, Lealman Fire Rescue
Chief Allen Smay, Lealman Fire Rescue
Chief Clint Belk, Madeira Beach Fire Department
Chief Andrew Hughes, Pinellas Park Fire Department
Commissioner Jacob Knighton, Pinellas Suncoast Fire Rescue
Chief Chris Wilfong, Pinellas Suncoast Fire Rescue
Chief Brady Hummer, Safety Harbor Fire Department
Chief Greg Newland, Safety Harbor Fire Department
Chief Mark Keenan, Seminole Fire Rescue
Jazmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Kevin Kenney called the meeting to order at 10:02 A.M. Roll call was taken, and Lynn Abbott confirmed that a quorum was met. There were 14 voting members in attendance.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INVOCATION

Invocation by Chaplain Terri Harrison, All First Responders Matter.

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 27, 2026 MEETING – APPROVED AS AMENDED

Chair Kevin Kenney indicated that Mr. Markham recently requested a change to the March 27, 2026 EMSAC meeting minutes under the ALS First Responder Enhancements Presentations item, Funding and Budget Reduction Inquiry topic. Commentary was read aloud, and the following amendment was agreed to by the members: Christopher Markham asked if the property taxes were eliminated, what would be the effect on the EMS budget and where could we look internally to increase efficiency to make up for those cuts, noting the importance of identifying opportunities for efficiency and having additional budget discussions. Craig Hare responded that possible property tax cuts could result in a 3 to 5% budget reduction.

Following brief discussion and presentation by the Chair, a motion was made by Jorge Mercado, seconded by Mayor Sandra Bradbury and carried unanimously, that the amended minutes of the March 27, 2026 EMS Advisory Council meeting be approved.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

No citizens came forward to speak.

INTRODUCTIONS

There were no new introductions.

RECONSIDERATION OF OFFICER ELECTIONS

- Appointment of Chair – Upon call for nominations, Chair Kevin Kenney nominated Jorge Mercado as Chair and moved, seconded by Richard Schomp, that Jorge Mercado be appointed Chair of the EMS Advisory Council, for a one-year term ending March 2027. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- Appointment of Vice-Chair – Upon call for nominations, Jorge Mercado nominated Ty Dougherty as Vice-Chair and moved, seconded by Mayor Sandra Bradbury, that Ty Dougherty be appointed Vice-Chair of the EMS Advisory Council, for a one-year term ending March 2027. Upon call for the vote, the motion was unanimously approved.
- Appointment of Secretary - Richard Schomp will retain his March 27, 2026 appointment of Secretary of the EMS Advisory Council, for a one-year term ending March 2027.

Commissioner Kevin Kenney passed the gavel to Chair Jorge Mercado, who chaired the remainder of the meeting.

- Refreshing/Confirmation of Executive Committee - Following discussion, Chair Jorge Mercado, Vice-Chair Ty Dougherty, and Secretary Richard Schomp agreed to serve as members of the Executive Committee. Pending acceptance, Mayor Woody Brown will serve on the Executive Committee.
- Refreshing/Confirmation of Selection Committee – Following discussion, Chair Jorge Mercado, Secretary Richard Schomp, and Commissioner Kevin Kenney agreed to serve as members of the Selection Committee. Anthony Degina volunteered to serve as a Selection Committee member. Commissioner Kevin Kenney moved, seconded by Mayor Sandra Bradbury, that Anthony Degina be appointed to the Selection Committee. Upon call for the vote, the motion was unanimously approved.

EMS Management Committee Membership Refresh

Craig Hare shared that the EMS Management Committee primarily handles recommendations to change the EMS Rules & Regulations, noting recent work with provider agencies and Dr. Jameson to update Rules & Regs. Members agreed to keep the existing members on the EMS Management Committee, and the following changes were noted:

- Dr. Kenneth Dumas to replace Dr. Michael Lozano as Associate EMS Medical Director representative.
- Chief Chad Pittman to replace Chief Tony Tedesco as City of Clearwater Fire Chief representative.
- Frank Velez to replace Robb Smither as Labor – Ambulance Contractor representative.
- Chief Lindsay Judah requested membership on the EMS Management Committee as City of St. Petersburg Fire Chief representative.

EMS System Enhancements Update

Craig Hare referred to a PowerPoint titled *EMS Advisory Council EMS System Enhancements Fiscal Year 26-27 Briefing* and provided information related to following topics:

- Project Updates.
- Feedback from last EMSAC Council Meeting.
- Mission Statement.
- ALS First Responder Budget.
- EMS Fund 6-Year Forecast.
- FY26-27 EMS System Enhancements.
- Deferred EMS System Enhancements.
- Recommendation to the EMS Authority.

EMS System Enhancements Discussion and Recommendation

Craig Hare referred to a document titled *Enhancement Requests for FY26-27* and presented the recommended enhancements. Chair Jorge Mercado shared his thoughts that the purpose of the meeting was to evaluate EMS system enhancement needs and determine clear priorities rather than simply adopting a predetermined list of recommendations.

Craig Hare explained that the recommendations focused on system efficiency, response times, and performance metrics, and noted that new analytical capabilities were being developed through the Peregrine software project. He confirmed that approximately \$2.8 million in recurring funding was available for EMS system enhancements based on long-range financial forecasting.

Craig Hare presented an outline of property tax revenue projections, personnel cost increases, and reserve levels, adding that current reserves were reported at 56 percent, and forecasts indicated that required fund balances would be maintained through Fiscal Year 2031. Personnel costs have increased sharply and limit the system's long-term capacity to add recurring enhancements. He relayed that one fully staffed operational position costs approximately \$800,000 annually; and that enhancements must be sustainable without requiring future tax increases.

Following discussion regarding enhancement prioritization, several members emphasized the need to improve field supervision/geographic service gaps and expressed concern that they expected a more detailed cost list for all potential enhancements to assist in making informed decisions, noting that the prioritization process would benefit from more structure and earlier engagement in the future. The group also discussed the ongoing expansion of the traffic signal preemption program. Craig Hare shared that the traffic project has been started and emphasized that major intersections were prioritized based on complexity and traffic volume.

Discussion ensued regarding concerns about the overall decision-making process and requested that future budget cycles include earlier and more in-depth work sessions to allow council members to fully understand costs, constraints, and tradeoffs. Craig Hare noted his appreciation of members' dialogue, and David Hare agreed to have deeper involvement from county staff in future meetings.

Following this discussion, Ty Dougherty moved, seconded by Richard Schomp, that the EMS Advisory Council recommend approval of the EMS System Enhancements for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Upon call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Open Forum

There was no Open Forum discussion.

Next Scheduled Meeting: June 12, 2026, 10:00 a.m. Conference Room 130/132 at the John Morrone EMS & Fire Administration Center, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774.

Adjournment: Commissioner Kevin Kenney moved and seconded by Chief William Schobel, Chair Jorge Mercado adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

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