

**PINELLAS COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
June 12, 2026**

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:

Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics (Primary) - Secretary
Christina Snoots, Citizen Representative (District 3)
Nancy Hopkins, Emergency Nurses' Association West Coast Florida Chapter
Chief Mike Carpenter, EMS Coordinator (Alternate)
Commissioner Kevin Kenney, Independent Fire District Elected Official
Mayor Dave Gattis, Mayors' Council (Belleair Beach)
Mayor Woody Brown, Mayors' Council (Largo)
Mayor Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayors' Council (Madeira Beach)
Mayor Sandra Bradbury, Mayors' Council (Pinellas Park)
Dr. Zachary Zimko, PEMHS, Mental Health Professional
Camille Hebting, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Pinellas (Alternate)
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society
Chief Trip Barrs, Pinellas County Fire Chiefs' Association (Alternate)
Erin Bates, Pinellas County Health Department (Alternate)
Chief Lindsey Kensinger, St. Petersburg Fire Rescue (Alternate)
Shalisha Preston, Sunstar Paramedics (Alternate)

Absent:

Christopher Markham, Citizen Representative (District 1)
Anthony Degina, Citizen Representative (District 2)
Becca Tieder, Citizen Representative (District 5)
Ty Dougherty, Citizen Representative (District 6) – Vice-Chair
Commissioner Jorge Mercado, Citizen Representative (District 7) – Chair
Chief Chad Pittman, City of Clearwater Fire Chief (Alternate)
Dr. Deanna Stentiford, St. Petersburg College (Alternate)
Capt. Jason Schmittendorf, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

Staff Present:

David Hare, Interim Bureau Director, Safety & Emergency Services
Craig Hare, Director – EMS, EMS & Fire Administration
Brett Schlatterer, Director – Fire, 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
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration
Marianne Merola, EMS & Fire Administration

Also Present:

Chaplain Bill James, All First Responders Matter
Michael Lewis, Citizen

Chief Scott Sanford, Palm Harbor Special Fire Control District
Chief Andrew Hughes, Pinellas Park Fire Department
Chief Mark Keenan, Seminole Fire Rescue

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Secretary Richard Schomp called the meeting to order at 10:05 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

MINUTES OF THE MAY 15, 2026 MEETING – APPROVED

Following brief discussion and presentation, a motion was made by Commissioner Kevin Kenney, seconded by Camille Hebting and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the May 15, 2026 EMS Advisory Council meeting be approved.

Mr. Schomp indicated that the Invocation will now be given by Chaplain Bill James, of Clearwater Fire & Rescue.

INVOCATION

Invocation by Chaplain Bill James, Clearwater Fire & Rescue, All First Responders Matter. Chaplain James asked for prayers for Dunedin Firefighter Tyler Zorich and his wife Courtney on the loss of their two-year-old daughter.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Fire Chief Scott Sanford, Palm Harbor Fire Rescue - Chief Sanford apologized for missing prior related meetings that included EMS funding discussions.

Chief Sanford shared that Palm Harbor Fire was not included in the recommended funding list for next year, Fiscal Year 2027-28. Based on Pinellas County staff data, Station 65 runs 22.38 calls per day, exceeding the County's 21-calls-per-day threshold for funding a fourth position. The County resolution states that exceeding 21 calls per day qualifies an agency for funding for four positions; Palm Harbor currently receives funding for three. Station 65 exceeded the call threshold in 2025 and 2024, noting that the station was also running over 20 calls per day in 2023. His agency has still not received funding for the additional position. The agency did not push the issue previously to remain cooperative, especially as the County focused on LR supervision positions.

Chief Sanford expressed concern that, if funding is not approved for this year, the agency may not see the additional position funded until FY2029, despite meeting criteria for the past three years. He relayed acknowledgement and support of the County's focus on supervision but emphasized that no resolution exists for that initiative, while one does exist for call-volume-based staffing, noting that improved revenue projections show that funding capacity exists. He requested that Station 65's fourth position be funded in accordance with the County resolution and closed by thanking the group and offering to answer questions.

INTRODUCTIONS

Craig Hare shared the following announcements:

- Julie Bacon, Chief Flight Nurse with Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital (ACH) for over 20 years, has retired. Megan Monahan joined ACH in 2008 and transitioned to the new LifeLine Clinical Operations Program Manager. Discussed ongoing County support for ground and pediatric transfer teams, noting that Sunstar staffs the vehicle operator, EMT and dispatch; ACH provides the medical component, and LifeLine is the Helicopter program.

- Christopher Hayes, former EMT and Homeland Security officer, will replace Tina Ambrose as the District 6 Citizen Representative as Ms. Ambrose has decided not to seek another term. The EMSAC recommendation of Mr. Hayes will be presented at the June 16, 2026 BCC meeting.
- Capt. Jason Schmittendorf was introduced as the new Pinellas County Sheriff's Office representative.

EMS Director Report

Craig Hare provided an overview of the following highlights:

Budget

- Dave Hare presented the EMS/Fire budget to the Board of County Commissioners on 6/11, covering Radio, 9-1-1, Ambulance Billing Financial Services, and EMS.
- A follow-up Q&A presentation with the County Administrator is scheduled for July.
- EMSAC's \$50 million request and the \$2.8 million in sustainable staff-recommended improvements are moving through the BCC process.
- Reviewed the annual budget cycle, TRIM notices, and September BCC budget adoption processes.
- Discussed tax reform impacts: potential reductions in service levels, staffing challenges, and 10% cost increases just to maintain current operations.
- Impacts span Fire Districts, EMS First Responders, and unincorporated Fire Districts; concern for both rural and residential areas.
- A deeper budget dive with the BCC is scheduled for August regarding 15 millages, unincorporated areas, and strategies for managing potential shortfalls.
- Situation is being actively monitored.
- Dave Hare emphasized unified effort with Fire & EMS partners, maintaining forward movement while awaiting referendum outcomes.

Clinical Advancements

- Video laryngoscope order expected by end of summer.
- Prehospital blood program launching for critical care over the July 4th holiday; includes end-to-end tracking, compliance requirements, and completed nurse training.
- Partnership with Bayfront Medical Center to accept unused blood units; program costs \$1200–\$1500 per patient including disposables.

Ms. Hebling asked how individuals or groups can educate the public on tax reform impacts; guidance needed from the Board regarding communicating cost-shifting implications. Ashley Giovannetti noted 2022 legal changes restrict government entities from speaking about ballot initiatives; reliance will be on elected officials for public education. Craig Hare clarified that EMSAC, as a publicly noticed body, can educate the public on operational impacts.

Mr. Schomp requested a review of ambulance budget cycle mechanics. Craig Hare explained that ambulance transport revenue from Medicare, insurance, and private pay is not affected by tax reform and generally offsets EMS tax needs, noting in strong years, surplus revenue supports the EMS fund; and the EMS reserve stands at 57%, with a 25% requirement. Ambulance contract bid in 2024 resulted in a 5-year agreement with two optional 3-year extensions, adding that inflation increases were capped at 4%.

Mayor Woody Brown asked whether any layperson-focused analysis of response-time impacts is available. Craig Hare confirmed that the Fire Chiefs are studying potential impacts at the DDFG meeting over the summer as part of system planning and service-shift evaluation.

Medical Director Report

Dr. Jameson relayed that the academic year is winding down and shared that the Johns Hopkins All Children's Pediatric Emergency Medicine EMS Fellow rotation has been successfully completed with strong reviews and a continued partnership is expected. He briefed the members on the following topics:

Protocol Improvements

- There is a major protocol package going to Medical Control Board next week that includes full framework and operational protocols for the Prehospital Blood Program rollout and significant updates to system Airway Management protocols. Working to prepare protocols in advance so implementation can begin as soon as equipment arrives.

Personnel

- Dr. Michael Lozano, Jr., is stepping away from his day-to-day duties after 30-plus years of service. He will be transitioning to a full-time faculty position at USF School of Medicine as Director of Research & Informatics at the Florida Center for EMS but will remain connected in an emeritus status as MD-20. Recognition expressed for his long-term contributions to the EMS system.
- Dr. Uebelacker, current EMS Fellow, is scheduled to graduate and has accepted position as Associate Medical Director beginning July 1.
- Incoming EMS Fellow Dr. Gilbert begins fellowship July 1 after completing his EM residency at USF.

Mission Lifeline

- Mission Lifeline is an American Heart Association program recognizing high-performing EMS systems and hospitals in cardiac arrest, stroke, and STEMI care.
- The EMS system and hospital partners jointly submit as one continuum of care, reflecting coordinated performance from 9-1-1 calls to cardiac catheterization lab.
- This year, the system again received Mission Lifeline recognition, demonstrating continued excellence in meeting national benchmarks.
- Referring to page 7 of the agenda packet, 15 agencies have achieved Gold Level and 3 agencies achieved Silver Level.
- System received its first year of recognition for the Medical Oversight category as well.
- Leadership expressed pride in consistent national-level performance and long-term success across participating districts.

Fire Chiefs' Report

Chief Trip Barrs shared that the PRIME Board consolidation is going well. The Pinellas County Sheriff has tentatively reached a settlement with a former contracted company. There are no updates yet for moving forward, noting the group is in research mode.

Sunstar Report

Richard Schomp provided an operational update, highlighting key performance metrics, system improvements, and community service activities:

System Performance & Volume

- As the second quarter ends, call-volume review shows the system is down about 4% for the first half of the year. This decline is unusual, despite hotels being full and local bed-tax revenue reaching record levels. The reduction is attributed to fewer long-term winter residents, particularly from mobile home parks and seasonal visitors who typically stay three to four months. This drop in seasonal population is believed to be the primary reason for decreased transport volume.

Community Service

- Sunstar is hosting the ARC Tampa Bay, a major organization supporting adults with

developmental disabilities. He noted that the purpose of the event is to introduce clients to EMS in a safe, familiar environment to reduce fear and increase comfort if they ever need EMS services. Group home staff and caregivers will accompany participants to support the experience. Sunstar welcomes tours for any community groups interested in learning about EMS operations; elected officials and citizens can request visits.

Affiliates & Stakeholders

Camille Hebting shared that a recent NAMI Walks event had record participation with 499 registered supporters; not all attended in person, but there was a strong engagement. Fundraising continues toward an \$80,000 goal, noting that all funds remain in Pinellas County to support cost-free programs for families and individuals. Programs include educational resources that help residents understand alternatives to 9-1-1 for non-emergency needs, including guidance on using 9-8-8 for mental-health crises. The organization operates an information and resource helpline to redirect callers who might otherwise dial 9-1-1 without an emergency. Public is encouraged to support the effort. Link: namiwalk.org/Pinellas. Ms. Hebting expressed appreciation to Pinellas Park Fire Department for hosting CPR training for staff and volunteers, adding that training increases readiness to respond to cardiac emergencies during support groups or program activities.

Open Forum

There was no Open Forum discussion.

Next Scheduled Meeting: September 18, 2026, 10:00 a.m. Conference Room 130/132 at the John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Center, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL 33774.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

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