

MINUTES

Niagara County Fire Advisory Board

Date | time 8/17/2023 | 7:00pm *Meeting called to order by* Chairman Gurnett

Pledge to the Flag and Prayer

Arthur Kroening led the Pledge to the flag and Prayer.

Approval of Minutes

Previous Meeting Minutes 6/15/23 – Motion by Mickey Suitor, seconded by Arthur Kroening to approve the minutes - PASSED.

Correspondence:

Paul Gurnett reported that Jim Mihalko, Art Kroening and me had to meet with CGR yesterday.

Fire Coordinator: Jonathan Schultz

Jonathan introduced our guests from CGR, they are the group that has been hired by the County to investigate the County Ambulance Service. They have already spent two very busy days onsite going over the options, ideas of the County EMS, all the good the bad the ugly. CGR was at a meeting the night before with the County Chiefs so some of you may have heard some of the information already.

- Paul Bishop, the project lead for EMS Study. We are from Rochester, NY and have done a good amount of work in the past 10 years working with EMS and Fire Departments. Working with these business groups, trying to help find the best practices and looking at the challenges they are facing. We have an entire team that will be working on this project, but some background on myself, I was an EMS Instructor at a Community College and prior to that I was a full time Paramedic and continue to practice part time. We have a few other people on the team that have an EMS background.
- What we are being asked to do is look at how EMS is working in the County today and then make suggestions and how to make it better for the residents. What we have been doing so far is gathering data, we have been working with the 911 Call Center. Going to be looking at the data on how the service is working today from other departments and even the State. We have been doing a lot of interviews. Last night with the Chiefs, we talked with Mental Health, some Legislators, County Manager, the Sheriff, communication center, people from AMR, Twin City, Mercy, and Tri-Community. Some of the next steps is who else do we need to hear from, and we will be doing some follow up visits with some Fire Departments and Ambulance Companies.
- Once we gather all this information and we have worked, we then try and tell the story of what it is today, and then we talk about what the future could hold. We are being asked to look at a few different options, what a County EMS System would look like, how big would it need to be today and how it would need to be in 5-10 years down the road. We will be doing some cost modeling, what will the cost be today and what would be over the horizon. We are going to work as quickly as we can with this, we anticipate the final report or at least the key findings by the end of October.
- Peter Smith asked if they were going to talk to non-EMS personnel like drivers and others that go on the calls. One of the issues is transporting patients and it would be good to talk with those members.

- Mark Walters asked if the final report was going to be done and back by the end of October or the draft? Paul said that the draft is something that is turned over to the County to look at and make sure it is acceptable. We haven't determined if it is the final report accepted by the County. Mark then asked the Legislators, is this going to be good by the end of October or are we going to be sitting here once again with no action being taken? Legislator Foti said that is a yes and no answer, a lot must happen after we have the report, so I think the time frame is more like 4-5 months. Mark said we understand the State paperwork is 60 days and Legislator Foti said yes but then background work for the County is 3-4 more months. After I have had an honest conversation of why it is being held up, I now understand, and I would think it is going to be more like January 2024. The calls from this body and the chiefs have worked, they are being engaged now and we are having honest conversations, we are being more transparent now than we ever have.
- Michael Kislack asked Legislator Foti, you keep saying them and they, who are we talking about? Legislator Foti said it is a bunch of different people, Department heads, County Manager, County Attorney. We put the cart before the horse and now we understand this is going to be larger than just two or four ambulances. We can't put this into place and then find the money to pay for it, we need to know that up front as we don't want to push this off the municipalities like others are doing across the Country. Michael went on to say he respects that answer, but we keep kicking this down the road, the volunteers are going to just stop at one point as they are getting burnt out. When that happens, the County is not going to be ready, and we will have a much larger problem on our hands at that point. It is coming faster and faster so looking down the road is great, but we need to start today and then we grow with the needs. This is something larger than you know and I really don't believe the Legislators are running the County at this point, you are letting the Manager and Attorney run the County. I thank you Legislators for being here, but this is so large and so hot why are there not way more Legislators at this meeting, why is the Chairman not here taking the heat like you? I think this is going to come back to bite some people in the butt.
- Nick Baes said now you are saying it is going to be the first of the year, now if we don't do anything it is going to get pushed out even past the first of the year.
- Legislator Chris Robins this was originally approved by a by-partisan group. I am from the minority, and I want to say these folks sitting here care about this group and are working on your behalf.
- Jim Mihalko, we keep finding out information from the news media, we are appointed by the Legislators, and we are not being talked with regarding any of this information or decisions.
- Paul Gurnett said this is where a lot of the frustration tonight is coming from, this is the third going around with this and we feel like the Legislators don't care what we have to say. You appointed us but it does not seem like you are even listening to us because you don't communicate with us.
- Jim Mihalko asked after this report, does there need to be another motion and Legislator Foti said no. Legislator Robins said that the report comes back and say do this or that and then the Legislators may decide.
- Mark Walter said the County legislators are going to make the decision not the County Manager to keep the Mercy contract.
- Paul Gurnett asked if the original resolution with Mercy was null in void because there is now a public Hospital opened in Lockport?
- Legislator Robins said yes, and if a new one was to happen it would need to go out to bid. That was a big concern of mind, not that I want to say we made up an emergency, but we made up an emergency at that time and then we said were going to hire Mercy at that time. That is something that needs to go to bid, and we will look at that when. Mercy wanted this so of course they came in with a low price, they want this service down the road.

Training: Dan Leven

- A couple of training classes coming up: BFO, EVOC and Self Rescue.
- Not officially out yet, but we will be having a Hazmat Incident Command Class next year.
- Also looking for a Hazmat Tech Refresher class for later this year.
- Looking for a Hazmat Tech class for the first quarter of next year.

Area 1: Edward Zimmerman

- No written report supplied.
- One Hazmat calls for Upper Mountain.
- Next meeting will be September 10th at 7pm at Niagara Falls Air Reserve.

Area 2: Robert Walker

- No Report
- Next Area 2 meeting will be August 29th, 2023, at Sanborn. @ 7:00pm.

Area 3: Jeff Dewart

- July 14th – Barker structure fire. Barker, Olcott, Hartland, Miller Hose, Gasport for aerial, City of Lockport for Fast Team, Car 32, Origin and Cause called and National Grid.
- August 9th, 2023, Wrights Corners had a call. Car 32 and 32A were on scene.
- Next meeting will September 6th at Olcott at 7pm.

Area 4: Jeff Baes

- No Report
- Next Area 4 Meeting will be October 17th, 2023, at Gasport @ 7:00pm.

EMS Deputy: Chad Shepherd

- Two incidents to report. July 2nd 3 car MVA – Wrights Corners. July 16th 1 car MVA – Wrights Corners.
- Vital Signs will be in October 2023 in Syracuse, NY

NC EMS: Thomas Eggert

- No Report

Fire Investigations: Dennis McAvoy

- There have been several vehicle fires in the County.
- Looking forward to having some classes in the fall.

Haz-Mat: Kevin Hodgson

- No Report

TRT: Les Myers

- No Report

Fire Police: Mark Walter

- Helped with traffic on July 8th.
- Next meeting September 19th, 2023, at Rapids

LEPC:

- No Report

Lockport City: Chief Luca Quagliano

- We have one new Investigator, and one more in September.
- Three new recruits are going through Fire Academy in Montour Falls.
- Hope to be able to hire four new people in 2024.
- We have three Ambulances in service if we have staffing.

Niagara Falls City: Chief Joe Pedulla

- No report

North Tonawanda City: Chief Joe Sikora

- Our ladder truck is back in service, not happy with Sutphen on this truck.
- We have one new Investigator and two of the NT Police will be taking the class starting in a week.

Niagara Falls Air Base:

- No Report

Sheriff's Office: Matt Swierczek

- No Report

Legislators:

- Legislator Shawn Foti said some of us are pushing for the EMS and I'm fighting very hard for it.
- Chris Robins said that he did his investigation into the EMS, and it should be up and running already.

Tower Committee:

- Lockport Tower: Everything is good, and the tower is being used.
- Wheatfield Tower: Everything was good.

Critical Stress Debriefing: Jonathan Schultz

- No Report

Old Business:

- None

New Business:

- Greg Robertson asked if any minutes had been taken at the Chiefs meeting the night before and was told no minutes were taken.

Discussions:

- None

Good of the Organization:

- Next County Chiefs Meeting will be September 14th at Wilson.
- Next County Meeting is TBD

Next Meeting

October 19th, 2023 / 7:00pm, PSTF

Motion to adjourn was made at 8:30pm by Robert Walker and seconded by Peter Smith – Passed

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Kislack

Michael Kislack

Secretary