FCEMS Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2008

5:30 – 8:10 pm

Health Department Conference Room – Earl Bennett Building

Attendees:

Rob Bates	FCEMS Medical Director
Art Bielz	Representing BLS Non-Transporting Units
Marty Boehm	FCEMS
Brian Rauch	Representing ALS Transport Units
Chuck Curry	ALERT
Gary Mahugh	Representing BLS Non-Transporting Units
Bill Tidwell	Representing BLS Non-Transporting Units
Mary Granger	Representing BLS Transport Units
Wayne Miller	Board of Health
Lance Westgard	Representing ALS Transport Units
Mike Rensmon	Representing ALS Transport Units (Alternate for Lance Westgard)
Joe Russell	Chairman
Lela Sistok	Representing BLS Non-Transporting Units
Kim Vierra-Diehl	Representing BLS Non Transport Units
James Brower	Marion Fire & Rescue
Wendy Stefaniak	Badrock Fire & QRU
James Boyce	Evergreen Fire
Rod Dresbach	West Valley Fire & Rescue
Russ Sappington	West Valley Fire & Rescue
Tracy Norred	Representing BLS Transport Unit
Doug Smith	Bigfork Ambulance
Craig Williams	Representing BLS Transport Unit
Russ Sappington	West Valley Fire & Rescue
Dan Diehl	Representing ALS Transport Unit
Bob Webber	Columbia Falls Fire
Kathleen Mayer	FCEMS

Meeting Minutes

Joe Russell opened the meeting at 5:30pm with a general announcement regarding the Board of Health meeting that happened two weeks ago. They will be advertising them in the future. Mary Granger and Russ Sappington attended that meeting. Joe explained that these meetings aren't

always scheduled and can be called with short notice by four members of the board but as a rule, in the future they will be advertised. If there is an n agenda, that too will be made available. The agenda tonight came from that Board of Health (BoH) meeting.

Joe said that when we started the EMS Committee, we wanted a loose kind of system. He personally didn't like the voting system. For big groups, a unanimous vote is the goal for everything going out of here. He would rather not vote and have everyone come to consensus. For example, when a person leaves here with and I don't agree but I can live with it attitude. If you're not comfortable with what we do here, let us know.

The first item on the agenda was to elect a co-chairperson from committee voting members. Joe is here to represent the Board of Health. The new co-chair can talk to your colleagues and come up with an agenda. You and your cohorts can help plan these meetings. Right now, we need someone on the committee to represent the committee. How do you feel about Lead or Co-Chair to represent the committee – someone who's not afraid to talk to Bates, Marty, or Joe?
Mary Granger addressed the entire group saying that up until now, this council has been a reactionary council and not an advisory council. We've sat in silence and sometimes this silence was taken as agreement. She said that she went to the Board of Health meeting, shared some opinions, and felt that there should be 1-3 people from the EMS Committee present at those meetings as watchdogs. Part of our feelings of frustration is because we're not speaking in the meeting. We need to say in the meeting what we're thinking not griping in the hallway. This was one of the issues brought up at the BoH meeting.

Lela said that a lot of here questions were coming from the simple fact, that she didn't know what was going on. We didn't have info from the BoH meeting. One of the issues was the ambulance at Creston. Since I wasn't getting any support here at the meetings, I decided to see how many other people felt the same way. Out of 11 members, 6 showed up. The issues that came up were

- Why doesn't anybody know how the money is being spent?
- Accountability –afraid of accountability. How did money get spent? We don't know.
- How does the County account for the money from us? Some people had to bring two different quotes. Some people had to provide receipts.
- Who decides funding for special requests?
- Paramedic position- who introduced this idea? Mark Peck said that we did but no one remembers doing it. We didn't even know about the job.

So Lela called a meeting at West Valley out of frustration. Kalispell Fire even showed up at the meeting which showed her their interest in it too. Kim Vierra-Diehl joined in saying that a year ago the idea of an advisory meeting was great but no one has a say. What happened to the organization?

Mike Rensmon wanted to explore the paramedic position idea. He wanted to know where it came from. He said that he didn't miss very many meetings but the BoH representatives kept saying that this position was asked for by the committee members and was mentioned several times. He says that he backed off because he personally didn't remember it.

Mary G agreed with him, saying that she too had a missed a couple of meetings and thought that she had just missed it as well. Mary suggested that there should be time allotted to bring people up to speed if they have missed a meeting.

Mike said that he went and talked to other members and found that there was mass confusion with everyone. Mary said that if another person is going to be hired, the BoH should come to the committee and ask what we need or think that person should do. Who knows if the action to hire a paramedic might have come from a couple of opinions and not the whole committee agreeing? Lela commented that it's like we said something and the next thing we knew it was at the commissioner's. The public reads things in the paper and ask us and we can't even explain why it happened.

Joe said that he was very aware of the overspending in certain areas of budget like the Creston Ambulance. I want to be clear that where we set a mil is not how much we spend. It's how much we save. When we maxed it up to two mils, it didn't change anything about expenditures. It just brought the budget up to date. And as far as the paramedic position, it was brought to the committee as a draft. We wanted the committee to have input.

BoH was asked to pick this charge (EMS) up from the hospital. We've stumbled and run into walls. That's what happens when programs start. When the programs start, when the money is flowing, everything is great. But when it's not, you have to answer.

EMS provision is public health. Joe does not charge for time here in meeting to EMS. It comes out of Health Department. Kim Vierra said it is failing. Joe disagreed. It's not thriving. We need to fix it. There's a good backbone – a good structure. If it wasn't, you need to let him know.

Lela said that no one had answers. If you remember, my topic was tabled until this meeting. Mary G. interjected that the paramedic position was a draft so we can make changes to it. Joe said that at the next meeting, we would bring it out but tonight we need to focus on tonight's agenda.

Dr. Bates, said that from his perspective, we need to worry about medical direction. 1995-2007, there wasn't any hospital representation until '07. It's been 1-1/2 years and we're rolling along. We have some structure. The Health Department inherited an old system that wasn't structured so we needed to go back and create it. Everyone needs to be patient.

Co-Chairperson Position

Co- Chairperson position was presented. That person should be available to meet with EMS Subcommittee members. That person should discuss with cohorts/colleagues and brought back to Joe or Marty. It is critical that the advisory committee has that contact with the EMS Subcommittee. Doug Smith was in favor of the co-chairperson and wanted to vote on it in this meeting. The general consensus was to move forward and vote on it now. Lance Westgard nominated Mary Granger. Lela seconded it. Mary Granger was voted in.

Mil Levy Budget

Joe gave a brief synopsis of the EMS budget. The voted levies are the only place that the county

can extend it. If we don't extend it, the revenue becomes cash. It was asked if it would then be kept as a reserve or put in the County Fund. No. It will be reserve for the paramedic position. Next year, when we have 2 mil, we will go back to 1.5 mil budget. The first year Creston and Evergreen Fire didn't spend their allotment. All of a sudden, we had to spend the reserve down because we weren't spending it like it was expected. Then all of a sudden in the third year, everyone was spending and we only had 417,000 left in a $400,000 budget. It wasn't good. Mary Granger asked about benefits for the new paramedic position. Joe said that benefits were included for the paramedic position.

Russ Sappington brought u the earnest money issue for educational classes. Marty explained that the EMS office does this so that class retention is better. If they've invested a little money, then they show up for class. Russ wanted to know if the MS office is not losing money, why do you keep the earnest money when they don't show up. Marty explained that the "no show" person is preventing someone else from attending the class. Joe said that he and Marty would discuss that issue because the government doesn't want checks sitting around.

Lance brought up the Express Personnel issue for instructors that work for the EMS office. Joe explained that if the county employed the instructors then they would have to pay benefits, taxes, etc. Before, no one was getting a 1099 form. The county attorneys said that wouldn't work anymore. So now, we're paying Express Personnel to do it. Joe encouraged all present to continue to help out with instruction in the EMS office. Mary Granger told everyone that the application process was not difficult at all. Dr. Bates is an independent contractor and he already has his paperwork filed with the county. If you bring in your independent contractor license, you do not have to go through Express Personnel.

Lance asked if the $172,727 was the expected expenditure. Joe said that we haven't been spending on 1 mil and so they are trying to get it higher. Right now a mil is worth $204,000. Voted levies can actually move so don't ever reduce your mils if you have an old levy. Flathead County can't reduce their levies.

Dan Diehl would like a list of courses from the past year and the prices of the classes. Mahugh observed that the salaries on the budget seemed a little low. Rod Dresbach wanted an explanation of the line item memberships and registrations. Marty explained that it was for journals like the National Safety Council Newsletter. Alice (bookkeeping) could probably give a better idea of that line item. .

Adjustments to the Funding Formula of Mils 2 & 3

(See handout #2) Population 2000 vs. 2007. The board looked at 2007 population estimates. There's been an 11,961 increase in population. Whitefish has seen an 85% growth, Columbia Falls - a 75% growth, and Kalispell - 30% growth. The ES zone was taken out of Lakeside Response Area and, therefore, Lakeside's allotment was reduced. As for Three Rivers (TREMS), we took half and adjusted their allotment while the other half went to Canyon QRU, etc. Joe ran this formula at $300,000. Mary Granger wanted to know if he was keeping the $1.8 for the county. Joe explained that he ran the numbers at $300.000 instead of $360,000 like last year. The smaller units need to get a bigger chunk of money especially the ones like Marion and Somers that are on the "high accident" highways. We need provide for them by taking a certain amount

of money and setting it aside in reserves for them.

Mary Granger wanted to know how the county came up with this population. Was it strictly census and population? Joe pointed out that the census doesn't count second homes. Last time we gave Olney a flat population rate. Tracy Norred interjected that some of Bigfork's area is in Creston and Somers. Joe agreed that issues like that confound the formula. The county looked at tiers and couldn't find a perfect way to do it.

The Fire Service Resolution is just for Fire service. It doesn't pay on medical calls. A lot of departments aren't getting any money to land ALERT helicopter when they are called in to fire service areas. Fifty percent of Blankenship medical calls are in fire service area. The fire service area is huge. It used to be that a call out there maybe four times a year wasn't bad. But now there are too many calls and the cost of fuel is too great. Joe said that he wanted to discuss this issue more in the future and possibly get BOH to put funds aside for that purpose. Mahugh suggested that they sit down with Lincoln (Fire Service Coordinator) and discuss it. Lincoln will organize a meeting with all the fire service areas.

James Brower questioned that his service area population had only increased by 25 people. He also added that now that they have an ambulance, it takes more money to support a transport than to do a fire station. Right now, their running off of the fire budget. Linc said that there are 50 homes not listed in the fire service area and that we need money from these taxes as well. He said the numbers weren't panning out. Joe used Bigfork and Kalispell as an example of flux in the summer and said that he was well aware of the situation but we need to get one year down for this fiscal year.

Miller wanted to know why the numbers were done at $300,000. Joe said that he did it at $200, 0000 and others as well. He would like to propose the $300,000. Chuck explained to the group that with mils you get your money in two chunks. One year you get $200,000 and the next year you get the other $200,000. Joe added that when you don't have money, you go to another fund to cover it and pay interest. End the year at 4130,000 but basically 4108,000 is in reserve. Where's the $108,000? It's still in the $130,000. A good healthy reserve is 20-25% cash fund. It would be prudent for us to get back to $130,000. Mahugh interjected that basically like fire units; the unit is broke for four months until the money comes in again. Joe reiterated that stability comes in reserves. Whatever we spend is off of the $130,000 so units can spend money before they get their money. They can spend until July. Reserve is off maintenance and operations not the capital.

Joe proposed to Board that we establish a capital fund but won't do it until next year. This year we need to focus on building the cash reserve. Russ S. clarified that cash reserves weren't mixed with the special funds. Joe said that it will probably be a lean year for special fund requests. Maybe the fire service area issue discussed earlier but it has to come out of the $130,000. If we give money to Marion and Olney it has to come out of that $130,000.

The plan is to have 75% go to the units and 25% to reserves. Mary asked if there was a procedure or guideline as to what a special fund can be spent on. Nothing was really mapped out now but we can discuss it more at a later date. Basically if the request can be justified, there's a

good chance that it will be okayed. Joe advocated for moving forward with the $300,000 to units. If there is a better way to allocate these funds, let him know. Consider this year base $150,000. It's what we need to catch up. Please list how you want to spend the money. During November, make your requests for 50%. Mary wanted to know about the other 50% and we decided to discuss it at the next meeting. The Board meeting is on the November 13th so before the end of month, we should know the budget. Then we'll know the funding but we still have to work on it. We all have to talk about being accountable. Canyon and Middle Fork were combined but we need to look at other smaller units that need more assistance.

Medical Director Update

- Bond is up for vote next week for the 911 Dispatch Center. It involves the consolidation of the centers. The consolidation will go ahead regardless if it's a separate site or in the Justice center.
- Bates had to review the CAD system one more time on protocols before approving them.
- Asked if everyone was clear that there are two levels - LAS and BLS. It can be modified as issues arise.
- A Medical Director Meeting was held recently and the EKG transmission issue was discussed. The unit medical directors agreed to set up the faxed EKG system for use in the ER's. The goal is to send EKG's to the ER o they can see if MI and activate the CAT lab. It used to be 90 minutes to get patient to the cat lab. Now with the EKG, the patient can get to the lab earlier. Then the patient can be in the ER for maybe 10 minutes before being taken to the CAT lab. Who can do it? EMT's or Paramedics? Talked to Ken Threet at the state BOME and he thinks all the way down to EMT's. His only concern was that EMT's would focus on the EKG's and forget the ABC's.

Doug said that the EMT's would not be reading the EKG's only performing them. The ER would be reading them. Lance said that TREMS has there's and it cost about $500. He requested in writing the authorization of who's able to perform them. Bates said that he would get them written up and sent to the Board and approved. Marty interjected that only Critical Care Paramedics can do it right now. Realistically, it will start at the ALS level and trickle down. Is the 12-Lead information available? It is in the curriculum but we don't test them on it. Ultimately we need to do it.

Issues that came out of the medical directors meeting:

- uniform countywide re-certification for endorsements. Medical Directors don't care about numbers - just want proof that they're keeping up on the endorsements
- draw up policy for change of medical director
- medical directors will have to be trained through a course in the near future
- developing chest pain, elevated ST, MI transfer protocols
- tiered response - BLS call off ALS protocol

Rod Dresbach wanted to address economics. For example, there's a $200.00 fee from KFD on any patient contact whether another unit transports or not. If BLS is on the scene and guy is refusing help. BLS should be able to cancel. For example, MVA's, - BLS is on scene and says they’re not a transport. ALS gets refusal from patient and there's a $200.00 fee. Requested an explanation at the next meeting.

Bates explained that the dispatch is based on the quickest most immediate response. Doug Smith brought up the liability issue. If the Basic's make a wrong call, the liability is tremendous. Bates said the goal was to not over call. It's a pure resource issue like dispatch errs on the side of caution.

Open Topics

Mary asked if the group discussed the King Airway issue. Bates said that it was approved by the state BOME. The EMT's just need to be trained in the King Airway. It's much easier to use than the combitube.

Marty informed the group that John Ungaretti from Missoula will be at the next meeting to discuss billing options for the units.

Mary's Proposed Agenda for next month:

- Ungaretti - billing issues
- Funding idea to plug into formula
- accountability of last year's unit funding
- explanation of line item of journals/registrations from EMS office
- recommendation on how to redistribute EMS money.

Need to find out if committee members endorsed for this year only and then re-formulate for next year.
Lela asked if the last 50% of money is going to go to special fund. Mahugh thought that the second 50% needed to be available to the units with no strings attached.

Mary asked whether the committee agreed with the money amount for this year and with the building up the reserve as they put it to the committee. The advisory committee was in agreement. Lela asked if the committee agreed with the special request plan for the last 50%. The committee did not agree even when it was explained that only 10% would go to the special projects, 15% into reserves for a total of 25%. Miller said that if you have issues with the 50%, you need to communicate them to the board.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.