



ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
ADVISORY BOARD

Minutes of the St. Lawrence County EMS Advisory Board Mtg.
September 24, 2024

Chris Towler called the meeting to order at 1807 hours.
Roll Call was taken and duly recorded.

Members present: Jay Moore, Tammy Sykes, Miranda Simpson, Lynne Backus, Ryan Coates, Douglas Bohl, Storm Cilley, Donald Thompson, Christopher Towler

Members absent: Mike Abrunzo, Aaron Johnson, Nicolas Wildey, Christopher Velez,

Members excused: No excuses received

Ex Officio Members present: Rita Curran, Richard Rusaw.

Guests present: Doug Wildermuth

A motion was made by Dr. Coats, seconded by Doug Bohl to accept the minutes from the July 2024 meeting. All in favor. Motion approved

Correspondence: Received a letter from North Star Alliance looking for support for a CON- Will discuss under new business

Emergency Services:

- Call numbers sent via email
- Harrisville Ambulance is done; they are transferring their CON to Natural Bridge. There was discussion about Star Lake or Gouverneur taking it, but neither seemed interested
- New dispatch center progressing nicely; desks are in, computers are starting to go in, hopefully, will be in by the end of the year
- Brandon Michaud, new full-time administrative assistant.
- The active shooter drill at Canton Potsdam Hospital went fairly well. There was some communication challenges noted- fire versus EMS terminology differences
- Drill for County Court House in December
- Turnover call reports are being worked on. The previous program to pull the data needs updated licenses, so the pathway to pull the data is longer. The percentage was flipped, so that has to be fixed.

SEMSCO

- Equipment regulations that were out for comment received significant comments during public comment and will potentially go back out again for public comment after current comments are addressed

- BLS IGEL was approved; we look forward to seeing guidance. The demonstration project will continue until guidance is completed. It will probably be a regional adjunct
- Two new policy statements on the Bureau of EMS website, both are education-related
- The Bureau of EMS is working on restructuring and will be hiring additional staff

REMSCO/REMAC

- Meeting is delayed until November or December

Air Medical – No report

Hospital Update

- CHMC
 - Discussed Letter for support for their plan to submit a Certificate of need to assist with patient movement. We understand there is a shortage of providers as well, looking to have their own transport, not to take calls away from anyone, but need to move patients. They indicated that they continue to struggle with getting patients transported. They are waiting for transition to critical access; sometimes, it takes 30 hours to transfer a patient
- CPH
 - The transition to the new ED has gone well. There are fourteen rooms and four hallway beds until the second part opens, increasing the ER to twenty-eight beds. Some issues were reported with ambulances getting in from the Leroy Street side. They have a two-shower decon now. Consultation company working with Seaway to provide recommendations. Volume has jumped since the new ED opened. Don asked what the policy is once the patient is unloaded. Do ambulances have to move to where the old ER entrance was? If room is needed for other ambulances, move. They will be doing construction at the old entrance, so they may have a dumpster there. You can move if needed.
- Gouverneur Hospital- Nothing new to report
- Clifton Fine Hospital
 - Lynne introduced herself; the hospital just received a certificate of need to change to a rural emergency health (REH) status. They can hold patients for observation but will not be admitting them. This was the only way that the hospital could stay financially viable.
 - Construction has begun on the new ER. Other improvements include a new radiology department, three treatment rooms (one set up for trauma), a triage room, three observation rooms, and a lab draw room.

We will have a Decon Room. They will definitely do an open house for the community and any EMS wanting to see it. CT capabilities and other new equipment will. Construction can be viewed on YouTube. ER provider has to stay on-site, so upstairs will have ER provider rooms and offices to move upstairs

Education Update

- Legislation passed on Friday for payment of Treatment in place and transport to an alternate destination.
- EMT courses are ongoing, and the first Paramedic cohort should be complete in October.
- AHA courses ACLS – Scheduled for tomorrow- 4 or 5 attending
- EMT certifications are now four years. There is speculation that we are a national registry state, but that is untrue. It is like during COVID when you can test the national registry and then get the reciprocity
- The virtual CME went well. Over 200 registered, 91 virtual and a few onsite. Next month, Drew Anderson will give a psychiatric presentation. We usually do not do December, but we will have one this December.
- Ground ambulances were approved to carry blood, followed by a discussion on ambulance transfusion services, indicating that it may take some time before we see guidance on carrying blood on ambulances. Cost versus benefit was discussed.

Committees:

- Volunteers were requested for committees and their tasks were overviewed based on what is outlined in the bylaws.
 - Communication- Donald Thompson, Chris Towler
 - Rick Rusaw reported the radio system is progressing, working on getting tower permits. Will hope to start pushing out more information by the end of the year and finalizing list of what is needed. It won't go live until possibly April of next year.
 - Executive Committee- Christopher Towler, Jay Moore, Ann Smith
 - Legislative- Doug Bohl, Ryan Coats
 - Personnel- Ann Smith, Rita Curran, Miranda Simpson
 - Secretary is part according to the bylaws
 - Duties include
 - Nominations of candidates for office at the January Meeting
 - Submit Names of vacancies and reappointments
 - Contact those who have two unexcused absences
 - Recommend replacement for those who have four absences in a year.
 - Ann provided a list with expiration dates for terms to obtain any that

were missing

- Doug Bohl to be completed at the October board meeting
- Storm Cilley provided his
- Awaiting approvals for Lynne Backus and Keegan M. St. Lawrence County Emergency Service will send to the legislature.
- The following members need to complete a biodata sheet as their term expires in December. Rick Rusaw will send them and any potential new members the biodata sheets.
 - Tammy Sykes
 - Aaron Johnson
 - Donald Thompson
- Mutual aid and MCI plan: should we assign a committee to it? The mutual aid plan may be a higher topic priority. Discussed to send it to the executive committee

Old Business

- County Ambulance Service
 - Rick reported that their contact for Steuben County is no longer there, he will work on getting a new contact for Steuben and will try to meet with them
 - The group meeting with the other counties was asked to assemble what they have seen so far and discuss county differences. Geographic challenges will be one of the more difficult aspects.
 - Discussion that something similar to Steuben County may work. What was described sounded a lot like the plans that were previously presented in 2021, except the plan included purchases instead of leasing—interested in how supplies would be managed. Need to look at plans and update data, but that will put a lot on Rick's shoulders as no one else has access to that data. The emergency management office is tasked with a lot, and it is difficult not to have someone to focus on the EMS plan. Rick will look at the plans to see what data is included; there is concern that they do not have the capacity.
 - Storm reported that local legislatures he spoke with said they never saw the previous plans
 - We need to decide soon which direction to go so data can be updated

New Business –

- North Star Alliance request for support of a CON
 - NYS does not do a CON for transport only
 - OVRs asked that it not be endorsed. A few rigs will not solve the problem, they have been exploring ways to help the hospital over the past few

years. OVRs had a meeting with Northstar, and they stated they had not made a decision to move forward with CON, but the letter and news conference was dated before the meeting. Losing one transport a day may not be a problem. OVRs needs to have at least five transports a week to survive. Insurance companies are not paying well

- The county is hearing complaints from constituents who have had to wait for transport.
 - Many times, there is no ambulances in the county to move patients, the hospital calls all the agencies.
 - Where are the providers going to come from for the proposed service? This was unknown.
 - Miranda suggested having Dominic Doldo attend the next meeting to answer questions.
 - discussed that we should support this as long as they will support any hospital that needs to move patients.
 - It was discussed that we do not have an ambulance problem in this county; there is a manpower shortage. Providers work at three or four agencies to make ends meet, and wages are poor.
 - We are sitting on a county board right now; we all have personal opinions that may color our opinions, and we need to think larger. The definition of public need was read, and it certainly appears there is need.
 - Adding another agency probably won't solve the problem it will just swing the pendulum and provide another job for paramedics to cover.
 - Letters of support are nice but will not necessarily sway a CON action if there is data to prove a need. There will be a public hearing.
 - Chris indicated that as a county board, our job is to focus on the 911 system.
 - Transports of critical patients out of Clifton Fine were discussed, and at times, the volunteer agency will transport them with hospital staff. Approximately two a month over the summer, as that was the only way to get the patients transferred.
 - Fort Drum is deployed, so resources are unavailable for critical patients.
 - Hospitals used to send nursing; hospitals are not willing to do this
 - Approximately 215 transports a month per county data.
 - It is more than just money that results in hospitals not sending staff
 - There is support for having Dominick come and do a presentation.
 - There is no way we can decide with the short time frame given.
 - Interfacility has been an issue for a long time; multiple agencies have unsuccessfully tried to solve it, and we need change.
- **Peggy Truesdell for Messina Hospital Representative, motion made by Dr. Coates, seconded by Don Thompson, all in favor, passed.**

- **Rita Curran reported that Julie McBath from Waddington Rescue was interested in being on the board; Ann Smith made a motion to approve Julie McBath for a rescue position, which was seconded by all in favor, and the motion passed.**
- **Miranda Simpson moved for Kathryn Terwilliger to fill the nurse opening. Jay Moore seconded, and all were in favor; the motion passed.**
- Rick Rusaw will send biodata sheets to them; please send contact information for the recommended members.
- We will work with the program agency on advertising to fill rescue positions, and there was a discussion on other potential advertising to fill layperson positions. We will explore if you can send the advertisement to the public through North Country Now for free. It was suggested that it could go out on the county's Facebook page. Ann will put a summary together of open positions.
- It was discussed that due to the issues with EMS within the county, meeting frequency should increase
 - **Meetings to be monthly- October 22nd, November 26th, December 30th, January 28th at 6 pm**
 - Can have a virtual option but need a quorum in person.
 - Rick asked if he could work on straightening out the invites.

Don Thompson made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Miranda Simpon. All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 1945 hours.

The next meeting is on October 22nd at the County Office Building, 80 NY-310, Canton, NY 13617