

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 21, 2025, 10:00 am

Council members present: Nina Barszcz (Westfield Dispatch), BJ Calvi (Springfield Fire), Bruce Cullett (Peru PD), Jeanne Galloway (West Springfield Public Health), Stephen Gaughan (EMS/Amherst Fire), Anthony Gentile (Wilbraham Dispatch; alternate for Nina Barszcz), Tom Grady (BCSO), Jay Hastings (Westfield State PD), Larry Holmberg (HREPC), Alan Sirois (Agawam Fire), Kristen Smidy (Gateway Regional), Don Willard (Chesterfield Selectboard)

Non-members present: Michael Archbald (MAPHCO), Aaron Bannish (Easthampton Fire/Regional Dive Team), Raine Brown (FRCOG), Bryan Davis (Northampton Fire/Regional Dive Team), Nick Demetron (Agawam Fire/Regional Dive Team), Scott Flebotte (MEMA), John Ingram (Belchertown Fire), Nick Licata (FRCOG/HMCC), Sandra Martin (BRPC), Rachel Mason (FRCOG), Jeff McDonald (HCSO), William Millin (Northampton Fire/Regional Dive Team), Nina Miscioscia (MAPC), Brian Nichols (EOPSS), Chris Norris (Easthampton Fire), Randy Quarles (Westfield Fire/Hazmat), Alex Rock (EOPSS), Timothy Rowan (Agawam Fire/Regional Dive Team), Avery Serra (MAPC), Eric Stratton (HCSO/Regional Dive Team), Paul Wentworth (Mercy Medical Center), Mike Westcott (Southwick PD/Regional Dive Team),

Council members absent: Paul Burns (PVTA; alternate for Benjamin St. Amand), Dave Desrosiers (Granby DPW), Steve Kozloski (Monson PD/WMLEC), Sam Lemanski (Westfield State EMD; alternate for Jay Hastings), Hugh O'Callaghan (Baystate), John Paciorek (Deerfield Police/Western Mass Police Chiefs), Norene Pease (Shutesbury BOH/MAPHCO; alternate for Jeanne Galloway), Benjamin St. Amand (PVTA)

This meeting was conducted on Zoom. The meeting was recorded.

Chair Tom Grady called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Approval of Minutes

The Council considered the minutes from the December 17, 2024 meetings.

Motion: Kristin Smidy moved to approve the minutes from December 17, 2024 as submitted. Bruce Cullett seconded the motion. Jeanne Galloway, Kristen Smidy, Jay Hastings, Nina Barszcz, Alan Sirois, Tom Grady, Steve Gaughan, and Larry Holmberg voted in favor. Bruce Cullett and Don Willard abstained. The motion was approved.

Introductions

A round of introductions followed.

Updates from the Chair

Tom Grady reported. They had a call out this morning for a person who went through ice—the third one in three weeks. The only safe ice is in a skating rink. They have been fortunate that they have gotten all the people out of the water, but a pickup truck and an ATV were lost.

Updates from EOPSS

Brian Nichols reported. Last month he said they were hiring two new Program Coordinator IIs, but now they are hiring three because Joshua Gaucher Torres also left. The NSGP additional applications have been reviewed and are in the selection process. They are also in process of

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doing year-end reporting to FEMA. To follow up about FFY24 funds, there is still a hang-up on the NSGP funds, but HSGP funds are available. At the last All Hazards meeting there was a question about possible election security projects. Brian sent an email a few months ago with ideas, and he suggests that we go back and review that email for additional ideas to spend down that money.

Updates from Disciplines

- FIRE: Alan Sirois reported. Ice is dangerous; please use caution. We are moving through winter and looking forward to warmer weather. BJ Calvi had no additional updates to report.
- POLICE: Bruce Cullett had no updates to report but offered thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of the border patrol agent killed in Vermont.
- EMS: Steve Gaughan reported. There is a new Deputy Director at OEMS, Michael Hunter, who has an extensive career in EMS. The new protocols are not out yet but are expected soon. The regional office has re-posted a part-time technical advisor position. The annual meeting will take place in April. Chris Norris added that it will be April 10 in Easthampton.
- EMD: Larry Holmberg reported. Advise MEMA if you open warming shelters. EMDs are looking at what the new administration means for EMDs as well as for the population. Many are also looking at reunification plans, as there is widespread interest in dusting off and updating plans this year.
- PUBLIC HEALTH: Jeanne Galloway reported. Flu is kicking in, and Covid still out there, as are RSV and other respiratory illnesses and norovirus. The cold might kill off the bugs and the snow melting might replenish the water supply.
- TRANSPORTATION: No one was present to give an update.
- DPW: No one was present to give an update.
- CORRECTIONS: Tom Grady had no updates to report.
- COMMUNICATIONS: Nina Barszcz reported. There are a lot of staffing issues and a lot of communications postings out there. State 911 posted for a Radio Systems Manager.
- HOSPITALS: Paul Wentworth reported that the regional HMCC met last week and discussed decon planning. They are conducting a survey and have a few good trainings coming up.
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Don Willard reported that municipalities are interested in seeing if there are changes in federal funding. Many communities are involved in MVP process, but they are not expecting changes in that.
- K-12 EDUCATION: Kristen Smidy reported. Everyone is sick. A third of kids were out district wide, and staff are going down too.

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- HIGHER ED: Jay Hastings reported. Students are returning to campuses. They anticipate lowered temps with regard to protests now that there is a cease fire in the Middle East.
- Massachusetts State Police (MSP): No one was present to give an update.
- MEMA: Scott Flebotte reported. They just added an ICS course in Shrewsbury, as well as some virtual ones. MEMA is also looking at reunification plans across the State, and will start with colleges and universities.
- DHS/CISA: No one was present to give an update.

Updates from Subcommittees

All Hazards Planning and Equipment: Larry Holmberg reported that we are wrapping up the election security project. Raine Brown added that they will do one last call for reimbursements before wrapping that up and bringing remaining funds to the subcommittee. Larry reported that the fairgrounds project is underway and the consultant is asking a lot of good questions. They are trying to stick to an aggressive timeline. The cybersecurity project is underway, or will be shortly following procurement.

Interoperability/Information Sharing: Anthony Gentile reported that the next meeting will be held today at 12:30. He also reported that Wilbraham took delivery of four electrical buses, and this morning they all caught on fire. It is being investigated.

Training and Exercises: Tom Grady brought forwards two motions. The first is for \$6,500 for an advanced body recovery training for the Western Mass Dive Teams.

Motion: Larry Holmberg moved to approve \$6,500 for the advanced body recovery training. Nina Barszcz seconded the motion. Jeanne Galloway, Nina Barszcz, BJ Calvi, Alan Sirois, Bruce Cullett, Don Willard, Kristen Smidy, Steve Gaughan, Larry Holmberg, and Jay Hastings voted in favor. Tom Grady abstained. The motion was approved.

The second is for \$8,500 for ERD1 training to enhance and build on skills for the Hampshire/Hampden/Franklin Dive Team. The Berkshire group already had this.

Motion: Larry Holmberg moved to approve \$8,500 for the ERD1 training. Jeanne Galloway seconded the motion. Jeanne Galloway, Nina Barszcz, BJ Calvi, Alan Sirois, Bruce Cullett, Don Willard, Tom Grady, Kristen Smidy, Steve Gaughan, Larry Holmberg, and Jay Hastings voted in favor. The motion was approved.

BJ Calvi asked about the long term sustainability of the team. Tom replied that the Berkshire team has occasionally come to the Council for training money, but otherwise is entirely self-sustaining. Everyone who joins the team is responsible for purchasing their own equipment. Eric Stratton reported that the eastern team currently has 20 members and is following the Berkshire

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model because it has been successful. Several team members already come from established teams, e.g. Chicopee and South Hadley. They have support from the Chiefs and the Hampden County Sheriff's office. He does not foresee any problems with sustainability. Jeff McDonald asked if Berkshire County expended the resources to train instructors, could they do the training? Tom replied that they ran that idea by the ethics committee, and it would present a conflict of interest because it's an ERDI-specific class with certification and ERDI would require them to charge members of their own team for the class. They are trying to resolve that.

Equipment /PPE: Raine Brown had no updates to report.

CBRNE/IED: Alan Sirois reported that Daryl Springman completed a virtual inspection of the high water vehicle, and delivery is imminent. Raine reported that the JHIRT vehicle arrived. Randy Quarles thanked the Council for the truck and explained that it is awaiting registration and should be in service by the end of this week. Regarding the ASHER equipment project, Raine reported that we need to speak with MAPC about the challenges, as we have requests for more equipment than we have money for. Getting specs for the WMTRT prime hauler continues to be a challenge, due to its size. MAPC is following up with vendor. The Greenfield truck is in process.

Fiduciary Report:

Raine reported. FFY21 looks to be in good shape to end at end of June. FFY22 will likely be extended through December. FFY23 currently has an end date at the end of July but will definitely need an extension. FFY24 is also online now. T&E has a lot of money to spend; get requests in. Besides trainings and exercises, also consider equipment caches that can be a regional resource for trainings. There is no word yet on when we will see guidance about FFY25, but that usually happens in March or April.

MAPC – Avery Serra had no updates to report.

Old Business:

New Fire Representative – Tom Grady reported that Chief Thomas Sammons of Pittsfield is the only nominee to replace John Dearborn. His name was put forth by WMFCA. BJ Calvi noted that he would be a great addition to the Council and has been very involved in fire service. Alan Sirois echoed that, adding that WMFCA voted unanimously to support him.

Motion: BJ Calvi nominated Thomas Sammons to the position of Fire Representative. Larry Holmberg seconded the nomination. Jeanne Galloway, Nina Barszcz, BJ Calvi, Bruce Cullett, Don Willard, Tom Grady, Kristen Smidy, Steve Gaughan, Larry Holmberg, Jay Hastings, and Alan Sirois voted in favor. The nomination was approved.

WRHSAC Co-Chair Selection – Tom reported that there is interest in the position from both BJ Calvi and Alan Sirois. Raine added a poll to the Zoom meeting for an anonymous vote. With 82% of the votes, Alan Sirois was chosen to fill the co-chair position.

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New Business:

None.

Business Unforeseen by Chair:

Tom reported that we're already two years into the requirements for ASHER trainings, which are required to be refreshed every two years. Tom reached out to EMS director Lisa Herringshaw to see if anything had changed in the course. It remains the same. Anyone working on an ambulance needs to refresh the training every two years. Tom also asked BJ Calvi to share the story about his lengthy efforts to identify and repatriate the remains of his great uncle, a North Adams native and WWII POW who was killed in the Bataan Death March. The story can also be found in The Berkshire Eagle.

Next Steps/Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 10:00 am, as a virtual meeting.

Motion: BJ Calvi moved to adjourn. Jeanne Galloway seconded the motion. Jeanne Galloway, Nina Barszcz, BJ Calvi, Bruce Cullett, Don Willard, Tom Grady, Kristen Smidy, Steve Gaughan, Larry Holmberg, Jay Hastings, and Alan Sirois voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 10:44 am.

List of Documents Reviewed at the Meeting

- WRHSAC Council Meeting Agenda for January 21, 2025
- WRHSAC Council Meeting Minutes from December 17, 2024 (draft)
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY21 Homeland Security Grant, 1/21/2025
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY22 Homeland Security Grant, 1/21/2025
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY23 Homeland Security Grant, 1/21/2025
- WRHSAC FFY21 Budget Report through 12/12/24
- WRHSAC FFY22 Budget Report through 1/16/25
- WRHSAC FFY23 Budget Report through 1/16/25
- Email from Eric Stratton re 2024 MERT Statistics
- Cover letter and resume from Thomas Sammons
- Cover letter and resume from Alan Sirois

Respectfully submitted by:

Rachel Mason, WRHSAC Program Assistant
Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council
Franklin Regional Council of Governments