

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 16, 2025, 10:00 am

Council members present: Nina Barszcz (Westfield Dispatch), Jeanne Galloway (West Springfield Public Health), Stephen Gaughan (EMS/Amherst Fire), Tom Grady (BCSO), Jay Hastings (Westfield State PD), Larry Holmberg (HREPC), Sam Lemanski (Westfield State EMD; alternate for Jay Hastings), Steve Kozloski (Monson PD/WMLEC), John Paciorek (Deerfield Police/Western Mass Police Chiefs), Thomas Sammons (Pittsfield Fire), Alan Sirois (Agawam Fire), Kristen Smidy (Gateway Regional), Don Willard (Chesterfield Selectboard)

Non-members present: C.J. Bartone (West Springfield Fire/Hazmat), Raine Brown (FRCOG), Bob Flaherty (Hatfield Fire), John Hart (Hampden County Sheriffs Dept), Samantha Kittle (BRPC), Sandra Martin (BRPC), Rachel Mason (FRCOG), Nina Miscioscia (MAPC), Brian Nichols (EOPSS), Randy Quarles (Westfield Fire/Hazmat), Avery Serra (MAPC), John Warren (DHS/CISA)

Council members absent: Paul Burns (PVTA; alternate for Benjamin St. Amand), BJ Calvi (Springfield Fire), Bruce Cullett (Peru PD), Dave Desrosiers (Granby DPW), Anthony Gentile (Wilbraham Dispatch; alternate for Nina Barszcz), Hugh O'Callaghan (Baystate), 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 March 18, 2025 meeting.

Motion: John Paciorek moved to approve the minutes from March 18, 2025 as submitted. Nina Barszcz seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Thomas Sammons, Steve Gaughan, Don Willard, and Kristen Smidy voted in favor. Jay Hastings abstained. The motion was approved.

Introductions

A round of introductions followed.

Updates from the Chair

Tom Grady reported that we should be watching closely what is going on at the federal level in terms of funding. He asked Raine Brown to share a new update about FFY22 funds. Raine reported that FFY22 will not receive another extension, so the current deadline of June 30 will stand. The biggest project in that grant year is the Greenfield Prime Mover, which we are hoping to see by May. If that finishes in time, Raine can flip other projects with early invoices from FFY23 so that we can spend down those funds. Tom added that moving forward, we also need to keep an eye on what is happening with federal grants more broadly.

Updates from EOPSS

Brian Nichols reported. They currently have no guidance from FEMA/DHS about the status of the HSGP grants. On the EOPSS side, they brought on a new Program Coordinator II.

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 16, 2025, 10:00 am

Updates from Disciplines

- FIRE: Alan Sirois reported that we have had some rain this month so we are now in mild-to-moderate drought. Soft target outdoor venues are starting to open up. Thomas Sammons had no additional updates to report.
- POLICE: John Paciorek reported that departments are making sure all personnel are up to date in the ACADIS platform. The cost of full time academy went from \$3,200 to \$6,000, a major increase that is very concerning. In the Governor's proposed budget, there is a reduction of the clinician co-responder program funding from \$18 million to \$4 million. This has been a very successful program, and the proposed cuts are very concerning. It is budget and election season, so they are not only dealing with the State level but also the local level. Everyone is focused on immigration and INS. Police Departments in the Commonwealth are not proactively participating. When you are in a uniform, you don't participate in politics, you enforce laws. There are strong feelings on both sides of the aisle, but when in uniform, your job is to make sure the public is safe. Steve Kozloski reported that he has begun trying to solicit interest in his position on the Council, as he will be retiring in the next few months.
- EMS: Steve Gaughan reported that the annual meeting was held this month. Chief Norris has done a lot to support region, but his time as President has ended. He was replaced with Chief Phil Wonkka from Erving. The regional office is still way underfunded. People should be concerned. There is a lot of talk about regulation of first responders. EMS call volume is not going down, and there is still a staffing shortage. Questions about insurance reimbursement are concerning. ER wait times are also becoming more concerning.
- EMD: Larry Holmberg had no updates to report.
- PUBLIC HEALTH: Jeanne Galloway reported. It is still flu season, and Covid is also still out there, but both are decreasing. The drought is also decreasing, but that also means mosquitos are becoming more active. It could be a rough mosquito season. The Feds have cut \$11 billion from public health. They are still working on standardization across the State.
- TRANSPORTATION: No one was present to give an update.
- DPW: No one was present to give an update.
- CORRECTIONS: Tom Grady reported that they are currently running a regional academy in Franklin County. It continues to be a challenge to recruit and retain staff. They are sending out a team to every single college to recruit. Sheriff Donolon retired recently. He was one of the Mass Sheriff's Assoc reps for MPTC. He will be replaced by Sheriff Bowler in that role.
- COMMUNICATIONS: Nina Barszcz reported. This week is Telecommunicator Week. "What Three Words" is being featured by State 911 as a tool to supplement lat and long addresses. Nina can send the newsletter to anyone interested in learning more. The Iron Man is coming in June; MEMA is holding a tabletop exercise in May.

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 16, 2025, 10:00 am

- HOSPITALS: No one was present to give an update.
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Don Willard reported. Towns are in the middle of budget and election season. A lot of towns are waiting on State numbers for regional school systems. Some Western Mass towns are in the middle of an MVP program to address climate resiliency. No one is sure about the next phase of money coming in, so it is crunch time for those programs.
- K-12 EDUCATION: Kristen Smidy reported. Schools are watching what is happening at the Federal level. A request came from the DoE for all schools to send certification of compliance with Title 6, which includes eliminating DEI programming. The State Commissioner asked superintendents not to respond, because he was going to respond on behalf of all of the State's superintendents. However, there are some school committees that are discussing responding anyway, because losing federal funding would be extremely debilitating.
- HIGHER ED: Jay Hastings reported that schools are gearing up for commencement activities.
- Massachusetts State Police (MSP): No one was present to give an update.
- MEMA: No one was present to give an update.
- DHS/CISA: John Warren reported. Outdoor season means more mass gatherings. Soft targets are high priority. They are preparing for the West Springfield Iron Man, including the 360 degree infrastructure visualization tool for the race. They will be doing some assessment work at the Brimfield Fair. They are also watching what is happening at the Federal level.

Updates from Subcommittees

All Hazards Planning and Equipment: Larry Holmberg reported. Election security is done, with reimbursements in progress. The subcommittee is looking at what to do with the money left over. The cybersecurity spenddown project is well underway. MFA keys were delivered; Kristen Smidy confirmed that they were already distributed. The subcommittee gave their comments on the fairground project template to the vendor. They are a little behind working with Cummington because of coordination issues with them, but the project is still on track.

Interoperability/Information Sharing: Nina Barszcz brought forward two motions from WMRIC. The first was for the Hampshire County Fire Chiefs Roip Gateway, and the second was for Berkshire Mobile Command Unit upgrades.

Motion: Nina Barszcz moved to approve \$7,000 for the Roip Gateway. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Steve Gaughan, and Thomas Sammons voted in favor. The motion was approved.

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 16, 2025, 10:00 am

Motion: Nina Barszcz moved to approve \$41,400 for the Mobile Command Unit upgrades. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, John Paciorek, Don Willard, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Steve Gaughan, Jeanne Galloway, Larry Holmberg, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, and Thomas Sammons voted in favor. The motion was approved.

Training and Exercises: Tom Grady brought forward six motions from the subcommittee. The first was to send members of the Crisis Negotiation teams to the annual conference.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$15,282 for the Crisis Negotiation Conference. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, and Steve Gaughan voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The next motion was to send a member of the WMSAR Team and her hound to a Search and Rescue K9 training in South Carolina.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$8,600 for the Search and Rescue K9 Training. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, and Steve Gaughan voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The third motion was for an additional \$500 for the upcoming crush and impalement training to cover the training venue. The training doesn't meet the criteria to use the DFS location, so the training was switched to Springfield College for a discounted cost of \$500.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$500 for the Springfield College location fee. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, and Steve Gaughan voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The next motion was to send members of the D4 and D5 Hazmat teams to the annual conference.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$13,080 for the annual Hazmat conference. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, and Thomas Sammons voted in favor. Steve Gaughan abstained. The motion was approved.

The next motion was for a Western Mass Fire Chiefs leadership training, which would bring in a speaker from the Boston Marathon sometime in the fall, for up to 100 people.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$8,000 for the WMFCA Leadership Training. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, and Steve Gaughan voted in favor. The motion was approved.

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 16, 2025, 10:00 am

The final motion was to support two sessions of an investigative interview and interrogation training through Baystate Health.

Motion: Tom Grady moved to approve \$31,500 for the Investigative Interview and Interrogation Training. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, and Steve Gaughan voted in favor. The motion was approved.

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

CBRNE/IED: Alan Sirois reported that the ASHER body armor grant is in process. The Greenfield Regional Prime Mover should be delivered by the end of May. We had to re-do the specs for the WMTRT Prime Hauler; a vendor is on track to bid on that. We are in the early stages of procurement for other equipment. The PJ for the Ludlow drone is at EOPSS.

Fiduciary Report:

Raine reported. Spending down FFY22 by the end of June should be fine as long as the Greenfield Prime Mover arrives as expected. There is \$2.10 left in FFY21, which Raine will apply to the next invoice we receive. Remaining FFY22 funds will also be spent on the next invoices that come in. In FFY23, we have a fair amount in T&E and Hazmat, but we expended some of that today. There is about \$20,000 left over from the Tech Rescue Team equipment project and the Dive Team equipment project, but that might be needed for the TRT Prime Hauler now that the specs have changed and it has been over a year since the initial quote of \$185,000. We will need an extension of FFY23, which currently runs through July of this year. Raine will work with MAPC on that extension. In FFY24 there is just under \$230,000 in T&E, \$30,000 for Hazmat training, and just over \$26,000 in WMRIC. There is a project that will likely come before WMRIC in the next month or two that would use that. Overall we're in good shape, but we still don't know about future funding.

MAPC – Avery Serra and Nina Miscioscia had no updates.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

Occasional In-Person Meetings – When we were waiting to see if virtual meetings would be extended, Raine heard from several people that they miss in-person meetings. There have been requests to do 2-4 in-person meetings per year. Kristen Smidy has offered space at Gateway in Huntington, which is fairly central. As an alternative, we could probably go back to Hatfield Fire, or meet at the FRCOG office in Greenfield. Following discussion, there was agreement to schedule the June meeting as a hybrid meeting, with the in-person component at FRCOG.

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 16, 2025, 10:00 am

Business Unforeseen by Chair:

John Warren reported that he has reached out to two people about giving a cybersecurity briefing for the Council. Would we prefer to have them brief in person? Raine responded that they are already on the schedule for next month, which will be virtual.

Next Steps/Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at 10:00 am, as a virtual meeting.

Motion: John Paciorek moved to adjourn. Larry Holmberg seconded the motion. Tom Grady, Jeanne Galloway, John Paciorek, Steve Kozloski, Jay Hastings, Larry Holmberg, Don Willard, Alan Sirois, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, Steve Gaughan, and Kristen Smidy voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 am.

List of Documents Reviewed at the Meeting

- WRHSAC Council Meeting Agenda for April 16, 2025
- WRHSAC Council Meeting Minutes from March 18, 2025 (draft)
- Project Justification for ROIP Gateway (draft)
- Project Justification for Berkshire Mast Camera and Router Antenna (draft)
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY21 Homeland Security Grant, 4/16/2025
- WRHSAC FFY21 Budget Report through 4/11/25
- WRHSAC FFY22 Budget Report through 4/11/25
- WRHSAC FFY23 Budget Report through 4/11/25
- WRHSAC FFY24 Budget Report through 4/11/25

Respectfully submitted by:

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