

Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 10:00 am

Council members present: Nina Barszcz (Westfield Dispatch), BJ Calvi (Springfield Fire), 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), 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: Raine Brown (FRCOG), Bob Flaherty (Hatfield Fire), Brian Gavioli (MSP Fusion Center), Samantha Kittle (BRPC), Sandra Martin (BRPC), Jeff McDonald (Hampden County Sheriffs Dept), Rachel Mason (FRCOG), Nina Miscioscia (MAPC), Brian Nichols (EOPSS), Alex Rock (ASWIC), Avery Serra (MAPC), Mike Tetreault (DHS/CISA)

Council members absent: Paul Burns (PVTA; alternate for Benjamin St. Amand), Bruce Cullett (Peru PD), Dave Desrosiers (Granby DPW), Anthony Gentile (Wilbraham Dispatch; alternate for Nina Barszcz), Steve Kozloski (Monson PD/WMLEC), 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 10:06 am.

Approval of Minutes

The Council considered the minutes from the April 16, 2025 meeting.

<p>Motion: Nina Barszcz moved to approve the minutes from April 16, 2025 as submitted. Steve Gaughan seconded the motion. Jeanne Galloway, Larry Holmberg, Tom Grady, Steve Gaughan, Nina Barszcz, Thomas Sammons, Don Willard, Jay Hastings, John Paciorek, and Kristen Smidy voted in favor. The motion was approved.</p>
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Introductions

A round of introductions followed.

Cybersecurity Discussion

Brian Gavioli of MSP gave a presentation about the Commonwealth Fusion Center and what they offer. The presentation went through the history, activities, and services of the Fusion Center and the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Program. He also discussed current attack trends and information on how to report cyber incidents.

Mike Tetreault from DHS/CISA followed with a presentation about essential cybersecurity concepts, cyber hygiene observations, and what municipalities and agencies can do to mitigate risks and increase cyber resilience.

Both will share their slides and contact info with Raine to distribute to the Council. Discussion followed on how to mitigate risks from being connected to other entities that don't have sufficient cybersecurity.

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Updates from the Chair

Tom Grady reported. We are coming into Memorial Day weekend and large gatherings. Check your plans for major events. Report upcoming events to local MEMA representatives.

Updates from EOPSS

Brian Nichols reported. There is still no confirmation that there will be an FFY25 grant. The FFY21 and FFY22 contracts are ending June 30, 2025, with no further extensions available. They are continuing to process payments as usual.

Updates from Disciplines

- FIRE: Alan Sirois reported that agencies are continuing to have issues finding EMS personnel. There are not enough people and a large number of vacancies across the Commonwealth. BJ Calvi reported that the Iron Man will be taking place on June 6. They are gearing up for that and have plans worked out with MEMA. Thomas Sammons reported that County Ambulance and Action Ambulance are putting a grant funded program in place to pay for training.
- POLICE: John Paciorek reported that police are also short staffed. They are working through year-end training and waiting on the State budget for news regarding the co-responder program and academy costs. They are still dealing with populace needing housing.
- EMS: Steve Gaughan reported. Regional EMS offices have become short changed in the budget. There are continuous efforts to get that corrected, but it does not look favorable. OEMS and DPH have shed themselves of the MCI plan. OPEM is reviewing whether to take it on. The same has happened to the Communications plan, which might belong with the SWIC now. Tom Grady noted that we are putting a lot of money into training and exercise, while there is no statewide plan. Brian Nichols asked him to send an email with his concerns.
- EMD: Larry Holmberg reported that many people are hearing rumors about FEMA, but no one has any factual information. Larry just received a letter from one of the emergency management committees looking to open up lines of communication, both direct and indirect.
- PUBLIC HEALTH: Jeanne Galloway reported. Public health and emergency preparedness are also in a financial bind due to federal cuts.
- TRANSPORTATION: No one was present to give an update.
- DPW: No one was present to give an update.
- CORRECTIONS: Tom Grady reported that there are several academies going on in Western Mass. They are hoping to keep people.
- COMMUNICATIONS: Nina Barszcz had to leave the meeting but sent a report through Raine. Her center has been trying to tighten up cybersecurity. IMC could be compromised easily, and many dispatch centers are looking to switch or are in the process of switching to an updated CAD system. This does present some issues though, especially with Law

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Enforcement operations. Regionalization has had an impact across the Commonwealth; there are now only 199 open PSAPs instead of 264.

- HOSPITALS: No one was present to give an update.
- LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Don Willard had no updates to report.
- K-12 EDUCATION: No one was present to give an update.
- HIGHER ED: No one was present to give an update.
- Massachusetts State Police (MSP): No one was present to give an update.
- MEMA: No one was present to give an update.
- DHS/CISA: No one was present to give an update.

Updates from Subcommittees

All Hazards Planning and Equipment: Larry Holmberg reported. The subcommittee is concentrating on the fairgrounds project. All draft deliverables have been received and are being reviewed by committee members and the fairgrounds. The project is on schedule.

Interoperability/Information Sharing: No one was present to give an update.

Training and Exercises: Tom Grady reported that a few trainings have wrapped up in the last few weeks and we have gotten good feedback. The Berkshire dive team conducted a training at Laurel Lake in Lee that went very well. Some members of the eastern team attended. Eric Stratton informed Tom that they got a call out last night for two kayakers in the water; one was successfully recovered, and the team is back out today searching for the other.

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

CBRNE/IED: Alan Sirois reported that the Greenfield Prime Mover is up against the wall because funds need to be spent by the end of June. For the Tech Rescue Prime Hauler, we got a quote in from one vendor and MAPC is reviewing the specs. The ASHER equipment is in the final stages of procurement. Purchase orders have been issued for the Search and Rescue equipment. The portable barriers are expected in June. The drone request still at DHS.

Raine reported that between FFY23 and FFY24, \$230,000 was allocated for the ASHER equipment project, but the total came in at \$249,820.48. There is a little over \$21,000 from other CBRNE projects that came in under budget that could be re-allocated for this.

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Motion: Alan Sirois moved to approve an additional \$19,820.48 for the ASHER equipment project. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Don Willard, BJ Calvi, Thomas Sammons, Tom Grady, Steve Gaughan, Larry Holmberg, Alan Sirois, John Paciorek, and Jeanne Galloway voted in favor. The motion was approved.

Fiduciary Report:

Raine reported. As previously discussed, FFY21 and FFY22 are coming to an end at the end of June. We should be all set, unless the Greenfield truck doesn't come in. We received word last week that the vendor is having difficulty receiving the utility body. If we can't get an extension of FFY22 and the truck has not come in, Raine is not sure what we will do. We would have to take money from other grant years, but we have nothing to spend the Greenfield truck money on by the end of June. We are hoping for an extension on FFY23. FFY24 is looking to be on track for the current end date of July, 2026. Several equipment projects have gone out to bid and we have issued purchase orders on them.

Old Business: Jeff McDonald recalled that the Council had spoken about the fact that the WRHSAC message boards in Hampden County have reached end-of-life, but we never saw action on that. How can we proceed on that? He noted that the WRHSAC website still lists those as available for deployment and asked that this information be removed, as they are out of service. If we are not getting replacements, how do we proceed with disposal of those units? Tom responded that disposal can be worked through with EOPSS. Raine added that we just need to let them know, and as for how to get rid of them, take them to the dump.

New Business:

FAST Board Demo – John Paciorek had asked that the flier for this event be shared with the Council. Tom explained that it is another asset that has been developed to do rapid extrication, with applications for day to day use and for ASHER events. Info is in today's meeting packet.

Business Unforeseen by Chair:

Raine reported that Hugh O'Callaghan has left Baystate, so we need a new hospital representative. Raine will push that out in the next newsletter and will also ask HMCC to send it out. Nick Licata offered to send out a message.

Next Steps/Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 10:00 am, in person/hybrid, John W. Olver Transit Center, Greenfield.

Motion: BJ Calvi moved to adjourn. John Paciorek seconded the motion. Don Willard, BJ Calvi, Thomas Sammons, Tom Grady, Larry Holmberg, Alan Sirois, John Paciorek, Steve Gaughan, and Jeanne Galloway voted in favor. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 11:57 am.

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List of Documents Reviewed at the Meeting

- WRHSAC Council Meeting Agenda for May 20, 2025
- WRHSAC Council Meeting Minutes from April 16, 2025 (draft)
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY21 Homeland Security Grant, 5/20/2025
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY22 Homeland Security Grant, 5/20/2025
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY23 Homeland Security Grant, 5/20/2025
- WRHSAC Fiduciary Report for FFY24 Homeland Security Grant, 5/20/2025
- WRHSAC FFY21 Budget Report through 5/16/25
- WRHSAC FFY22 Budget Report through 5/16/25
- WRHSAC FFY23 Budget Report through 5/16/25
- WRHSAC FFY24 Budget Report through 5/16/25
- FAST Boards and FAST Shields informational brochure

Respectfully submitted by:

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