

**AUSTIN – TRAVIS COUNTY EMS ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

WEDNESDAY, February 3, 2021



The Austin – Travis County EMS Advisory Board convened on February 3, 2021, in Austin, Texas at 9:30 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Tracy Dalbosco, John Villanacci, Janice Bray, Jerry Staton, Shandel Milburn, April Geruso, Tim Ruttan

Board Members Absent: Tim Mercer

Other Attendees: Ernesto Rodriguez, Jasper Brown, Kerri Lang, Andy Hofmeister, Teresa Gardner Mark Escott, James Kempema, Jeff Hayes, Patricia Bourenane, Keith Simpson, Vivian Holmes, Ashley Voss-Leibig, Charles Brotherton, Darren Noak, Michael Benavides, Rick Randall, Rob Vires, Ronnelle Paulsen, Wendy Rodriguez

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 9:38 a.m.

RECEIVE CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS/COMMENTS – None

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: The minutes for the regular meeting of November 6, 2019 were approved on a motion by Board Member Villanacci and seconded by Board Member Bray on a 7-0 vote.

2. WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS: Shandel Milburn, Tim Ruttan, April Geruso

A welcome was extended to new members. They each responded sharing some background history.

3. CONSIDER AND TAKE ACTION OF THE NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL FRANCHISE APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY CITY AMBULANCE SERVICES

Speakers:

- Kerri Lang – City of Austin
 - Rick Branning – City of Austin EMS Employee
 - Moe Massoud – CEO/Founder, City Ambulance – For/Support
 - Pikul Patel – Medical Director – For/Support
 - Arthur Abello, MD FACEP – Principal, Ally Medical – For/Support
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- Assistant Director Lang provided an overview of the staff report that was included in the board packet. If approved, this would be the fourth non-emergency medical transfer franchise service.
 - Mr. Rick Branning provided additional details that are included in the report and answered board member questions. The impact of not having enough transfer service providers, Dr. Escott said, is that volume rolls onto ATCEMS and increases their call volume. It does have a significant impact on service. There have been frustrations voiced by hospitals for not having timely service for non-emergency transfer services. He provided recommendation and said they have a good provider over site handled by their medical director. Board Member Villanacci asked questions about the need for the franchise, about their dispatch, over-site on their billing practices since that could get

costly, to which Mr. Branning responded. All non-emergency franchises are dispatched by their own dispatch center aside from the one that works through St. David's. All major hospitals are contracted with one or the other franchises. In the City Code, they are not allowed to refer a call to another franchise and it rolls over to ATCEMS 911 Center so they can refer it to another franchise or take the call and provide the response. Franchises provide the department with transport run reports, QA and QI monthly reports, and annual reviews are performed by ATCEMS; if any issue comes up, the department has the ability to review it.

- *Board Member Villanacci offered a motion to approve;* however additional discussion occurred.
- Board Member Bray asked about impact and load to the system, considering homelessness, and if there is a need for this franchise to have a five year term. Chief Rodriguez responded saying there would not be an impact on transport of patients that are not going in between facilities. The current volume is skewed because of Covid-19, therefore we cannot tell what will happen going forward with call volume. The transport numbers are looked at to determine if there is a need for this addition and the hospitals have said they are experiencing lengthening wait times for transfers. The five year term is necessary in order for a new franchise to get established and make the financial investment to provide this service.
- Chair Dalbosco thanked Chief Rodriguez for his input as to why there is a need for the additional franchise and to Mr. Branning and Assistant Director Lang for their hard work in reviewing this franchise application.

Motion: Approval is recommended for this franchise on Board Member Villanacci's motion and seconded by Board Member Staton. Chair Dalbosco confirmed a unanimous vote.

The board's recommendation and letter will be forwarded to City Council. There will be public hearings held and eventually a motion for City Council to approve the franchise.

4. PRESENT TIMELINE OF THE BUDGET PROCESS

Assistant Director Lang provided information about the budget process for FY2022.

- A memo was sent to all boards and commissions members emails by the City's Interim Budget Officer. Feedback on the budget process from boards and commissions is encouraged. The budget office is not only looking at maintaining current services, but also for feedback on efficiency, equity, and effectiveness. This feedback can be provided through the City Clerk's office.
 - April 9th is the deadline for the board to give feedback therefore a suggested special meeting may need to be scheduled.
 - Departments must submit their budgets for consideration on May 7th
 - July 9th a budget presentation will be given by the City Manager to City Council
 - July 22nd, will be the first budget hearing, followed by budget work sessions
 - On August 11th is the planned tax rate hearing and budget adoption
 - Due to the change in the 3.5% property tax cap that pushed the budget process dates earlier than in previous years
 - Chair Dalbosco asked for items that this board should consider. Assistant Director Lang indicated the city has a forecast process they must do first. EMS will submit their forecast on March 5th, then the department will roll into the budget process.

5. REVIEW AND TAKE ACTION TO APPROVE MEETING DATES FOR 2021

Board Members discussed the schedule for 2021 and will leave the option open to call a special meeting, if needed for FY22 budget considerations.

Motion: Board Member Villanacci motioned to approve the schedule of first Wednesday of each quarter from 9:30 a.m.-11:30a.m., seconded by Board Member Staton. Chair Dalbosco confirmed a unanimous vote.

6. PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE REPORT RESPONSIVE TO COUNCIL RESOLUTION NO. 20190619-092, WHICH HIGHLIGHTS GAPS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENTS OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR PUBLIC SAFETY FIRST RESPONDERS

Speakers:

- Patricia Bourenane, Executive Assistant to ACM Rey Arellano, Safety
- Ronnelle Paulsen, AFD
- Rick Randall, APD
- Troy Gay, APD
- Rob Vires, AFD
- Jasper Brown, EMS
- Andy Hofmeister, EMS

Patricia Bourenane, Rick Randall and Ronnell Paulsen presented their findings on Mental Health for First Responders to the Austin – Travis County EMS Advisory Board. Requesting feedback from boards and commissions is part of the directive from City Council to the City Manager in Resolution No. 20190619-92. The presenters have worked on this project gathering input from various stakeholders including EMS/AFD/APD first responder staff, City of Austin Human Resources Department, staff psychologists, first responder public safety employee association presidents, and looking into the gaps that need to be filled in order to provide first responders with a well-rounded provision for mental health care.

Board members voiced appreciation for receiving a copy of the resolution and other documentation prior to the meeting in order to review the vast amount of details and sensitive information. Board members provided feedback about current mental health care assistance for first responders and to look at what additions, changes, and resources could be made to what is already being provided. They agreed that more is needed from the city to give support and to provide the appropriate type of care that is needed for first responders. For the complete discussion on this important item refer to the posted presentation and audio file. A summary of some of the items discussed are:

- Insurance reduction of co-pays for mental health care
- Assurance of confidentiality for employees that reach out for help
- Provide training to supervisors so when an employee asks for help it is recognized not as a complaint, but for the person sometimes as a last resort
- Grant funding
- PEER Support Team – increased funding
- Additional staffing at the Public Safety Wellness Center – psychiatrist and administrative support
- Increased funding for current psychiatrist already on contract
- Revise policies to allow use of CBD products and to use available testing models that distinguish ratios of CBD from THC

Next Steps: Patricia Bourenane asked board members to provide written statements that should be sent to Vivian Holmes by early March. Their statements will be compiled into the final report that will be submitted to City Council.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

May 5th meeting - Election of officers for Chair and Vice Chair.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.