



WISCONSIN FIRE & EMS COALITION

321 E. Main Street, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703



August 2022 Fire & EMS Coalition Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2022 – 10:00am – Madison, WI

In attendance: Members: Mahlon Mitchell (PFFW), Chris Anderson (PAAW), Mike Stanley, (WI State Fire Chief's), Brad Bowen (WI Fire Chief Education Assn), Bob Salov (WEMSA), Ken Asselin (WI Fire Inspectors Association), Jim Flannigan (WI Fire Inspectors Association), Dan Williams (Rural EMS Coordinator), Amanda Bates (DHS EMS Section Chief)



Lobbyists: Joe Strohl (PFFW), George Klaetsch (WI State Fire Chief's), Tom Fonfara (WI State Fire Fighters Association), Forbes McIntosh (WEMSA),



Meeting called to order and roll call taken at 12:00 pm.

Marcia Reinboldt from the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) reported on their efforts to secure a more reliable funding mechanism for public safety services.



Mike Stanley inquired about the WCA joining our coalition to help advocate on issues of mutual interest. Marcie noted that if our efforts benefit the WCA they are willing to join in that effort and lend their name to letters of support. She invited a representative group from our coalition to come to their next board meeting to outline our priorities and see where they align with WCA.



Joe Strohl suggested broadening our coalition to include the Public Safety Coalition which would include law enforcement to give us more clout with the legislature.



Brad Bowen noted that the Towns will be a challenge since they believe they are ok with volunteer departments. Brad noted that the Towns of Hoard and Sugar Creek have figured out a way to assess a service fee for fire protection on all property, including nonprofits, such as hospitals and churches. It was suggested we invite Attorney Carlson from the Towns Association to give us more details on this. This has survived a Supreme Court challenge. This is currently only allowed under statute for fire protection, so it does not include EMS. The law would have to be changed to include that.



Joe Strohl noted we will need a new Assembly lead on the PTSD for EMS bill since Rep. Horlacher is not seeking re-election. Senator Jacques will be the Senate lead again.



There was discussion on whether to include volunteer firefighters and EMS in one bill or have 2 bills again. Chairperson Mitchell noted that by including them in the beginning we will win the support of more rural legislators.

Amanda Bates asked whether we could look at another avenue to cover volunteers such as state health insurance to cover only mental health services. It was pointed out that volunteers are already covered by Workers Comp.

All agreed that we need to broaden PTSD coverage for everyone represented by this coalition.

Joe noted that the Workers Comp Advisory Council has an informational hearing in December and encouraged all in attendance to testify on this issue.

Bob Salov spoke about testing standards for EMR and have the Tech colleges administer the tests so we can get away from the National Registry test.

George Klaetsch pointed out that the National Registry test is considered a big hurdle by volunteer departments in getting personnel. They agree that some sort of credentialing is necessary, just not this particular test.

Brad noted that the general public does not understand the difference between EMT-Basic, EMT Intermediate and Paramedics, so it's a hard sell to carve out one group and say they're exempt from this test.

Amanda noted the problems with the National test. The Tech colleges don't feel they have enough time to teach the course correctly and recent grads have complained they need more class time. The Tech colleges are building a new curriculum and looking at a competency-based test rather than number of hours for the course work.

Lobby Day – Is set for March 15, 2023. Chairman Mitchell noted the Madison Library space is \$160/hour. We can start at 10:00 a.m., have a box lunch, then go to the capitol and lobby. We will put together a "Save the Date" flyer for all of us to distribute to our membership, as well as a "Lobbying 101" document. We will lobby on 3 issues and have a white paper on each.

Brad will reach out to UW Rural Health; they will help with the cost of this.

Agency Update:

- Amanda reported they were able to get FAP funding from AARPA funds
- There were 496 applications for EMS Flex Grants which far exceeded the amount of money available. These should be distributed before the end of fall. She wants to use the stories from these applications to tell the story of the challenges of EMS providers.
- Community EMS program is now up and running. Madison has the first program with 9 members approved.
- The state plan has been submitted to CMS which includes priorities of this coalition.

Treasurer's Report

- Chris Anderson reported no changes since the last meeting. Chris will look into organizing this coalition as a 501 (c) (6) entity so we have our own bank account.

Approval of Minutes

- Jim Flannigan, Bob Salov Seconded, to approve the minutes of the June 29th meeting. Motion passed.

Federal Issues

- GEMT – Chris noted CMS has issues with for profit providers doing non-emergency transports (it's not an issue for non-profit providers). There was discussion about contacting the Governor and Senator Baldwin to talk to CMS to include both non-profit and for-profit providers.
- State plan amendment must be submitted to CMS by 3/31/2023, so probably won't see any reimbursements until summer of 2023.
- The public funds will be sent to the municipalities, so we need to make sure they get to the fire departments.

New Business

- Mike Stanley has spoken to both Governor Evers' office and candidate Tim Michaels about public safety being a Triade – fire – EMS – police. He advocated for PTSD coverage, sustainable funding for public safety and GEMT.
- He's working with the League of Municipalities on a 30-minute video on the impact of the lack of funding for public safety. It will be for departments to present to their local elected officials to highlight the problems they face without adequate funding.

Next meeting – September 30, 2022, at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy McGinnis, PFFW
September 19, 2022