



# WISCONSIN FIRE & EMS COALITION

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



## Fire & EMS Coalition Meeting Minutes January 12, 2023 – 9:00am – Madison, WI

In attendance: Members: Mahlon Mitchell (PFFW), Bob Salov (WEMSA), Ken Asselin (WI Fire Inspectors Association), Dan Williams (Rural EMS Coordinator), James Small (UW Office of Rural Health), Mike Stanley (WI State Fire Chief’s Association), Todd Blaser (WI State Fire Fighters Association), Brad Bowen (WI Fire Chiefs’ Association), and Jim Flanagan (WI Society of Emergency Services Instructors).



Lobbyists: Joe Strohl (PFFW), Matt Kussow (PAAW), Forbes McIntosh (WEMSA), and George Klaetsch (WI State Fire Chief’s Association).

Guests: James Fenley and Steve Lyons (WI Chiefs of Police Association), and Alice O’Connor (Wisconsin Professional Police Association).



Meeting called to order by Mahlon Mitchell and roll call taken at 9:00 am.

2023/24 Legislative Agenda – Joe Strohl recapped recent meetings with Representative Kurtz and Senator Felzkowski and Speaker Vos and Representative Kurtz. Speaker Vos stated they are planning to take 1 cent of the sales tax and direct it toward municipal aid which translates to \$1.4 billion in funding. They would keep the Shared Revenue program and put more funding into that, then take a percentage of the remaining funds and create an innovation fund to encourage municipalities to share services and increase efficiencies. The consolidation could be any community service as long as they show a savings. That service entity would then be able to keep that savings and get an additional 25% of their department budget.



Senator Felzkowski has stated she is not interested in addressing the Milwaukee problem or earmarks for EMS in this legislation. Speaker Vos is of the opposite view and is willing to address Milwaukee and EMS.

Forbes McIntosh noted that all this planning is very fluid at this point and the Senate and Assembly are not at all in agreement on a plan to assist local governments with the one penny sales tax revenue.



Matt Kussow noted that the Assembly wants new programs with lots of strings attached and the Senate is more inclined to put more funding into the existing Shared Revenue program with some restructuring.



Chairman Mitchell noted there need to be more stakeholders in the legislature. Rural communities can’t be leaner and more innovative than they already are.



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George Klaetsch will reach out to Senator Marklein and his Chief of Staff to find out who in the Senate will be leading the Shared Revenue discussion on the budget.

Matt pointed out that we need to have a unified message when talking to legislators.

Chairman Mitchell stated that we need to fight for allocated funding for public safety and not an innovation program.

Forbes fears that the League of Municipalities will capitalize on our groundswell of support and garner all the power to distribute the funds with no earmarks.

Steve Lyons doesn't believe the innovation fund is Vos' idea, rather that of his caucus. He believes they are supportive of adding \$100-\$200 million to shared revenue and the rest to the innovation fund.

Chief Mike Stanley reiterated that small communities have no ability to consolidate further, they've already done that to realize savings. They have nowhere else to go. In order to consolidate, they have to have a neighboring community willing to do that. Some don't so they will not be able to access the innovation fund.

Bob Salov added that we need to bring base level funding up for all services but extra for public safety.

Joe noted that if savings are generated by the innovation proposals, then those funds could go back to the municipality to spend how they wish, not necessarily the department that generated the savings.

Matt added that this innovation fund idea further fuels the urban/rural debate and rurals don't have the same ability to consolidate services and generate savings as urban communities.

James Small reported that their EMS survey results report should come out on February 1<sup>st</sup>. They are working with PBS on a documentary on the state of rural EMS and they're timing it with the release of this report.

Jim Flanigan noted that while the focus is on funding, we also need to look at that lack of people available to fill the service voids.

James agreed but pointed out that funding for more personnel is a hard sell but very necessary. We also need more funding for training and recruitment in the EMS/EMT ranks.

Chairman Mitchell asked to group to identify next steps.

George said he would contact Sen. Marklein and identify key legislators on Joint Finance who will lead this conversation, and then this group can meet with those key people to get our message across.

Matt noted that we need to agree on a funding source and priorities and not focus on a dollar amount.

Chairman Mitchell pointed out we need to meet with other legislators who have not heard our stories, so they are aware of our acute needs.

Steve Lyons said that he wanted to be in on the meetings with Senators Marklein and Felzkowski. Rep. Kurtz has stated that if police and fire are not unified in their message then separate proposals are going nowhere, so their messages have to be on the same page.

Alice asked about what measurements we will use to gauge our funding needs. Additionally, should we ask Speaker Vos who we should be working with in the Assembly?

Joe noted that we need to better understand where the Senate is so we know how close or far apart the two houses are.

James noted that their report will show that at the same time call volumes have increased, staffing levels have decreased causing dramatically increased response times and in some cases, no ambulances available to respond in some cases.

Chief Stanley added that we need to really highlight the findings of this report and asked James to put together a 1 pager that identifies key takeaways from the report that we can give to legislators – show them actual data, not just antidotal stories.

Chairman Mitchell suggested a press conference with our group around the release of this report.

Timing of a press conference was discussed. All agreed it had to be prior to the Governor's budget address which is February 15<sup>th</sup> and should be as close to the February 1<sup>st</sup> draft report release as possible.

Forbes noted that we should be sure local EMS directors have good talking points since they will be the ones local press will contact.

Joe noted we should meet with the Governor's staff next week and continue with individual legislator meetings until the end of the month. After the February 1<sup>st</sup> release of the draft report, meet with Senators Marklein and Felzkowski to discuss the report.

Chairman Mitchell will reach out to Mueller Communications on an effective messaging strategy. Forbes will also reach out to a communications firm for additional guidance.

Joe reported on the recent Workers Comp Advisory Council meeting. Our members were the only ones who showed up at the meeting and the only ones who brought up the expanded WC benefits for PTSD proposal.

Forbes will write a follow up letter to WCAC on behalf of the coalition.

Bob Salov will recruit people to write letters on behalf of the volunteer firefighters and EMTs.

Matt reported that Representative Tranel has proposed a bill to get rid of certification requirements for EMTs.

Chief Stanly motioned, Bob Salov seconded to approve the minutes of the December 12, 2022, meeting. Motion passed.

Federal update: Chief Stanley reported that CFSI is in DC May 22-23, registration is still open. He'll send a link to the group.

Old Business: George asked if the meeting with Senators Felzkowski and Marklein include law enforcement? All agreed it should be an inclusive meeting.

Lobby Day – Joe, James, Forbes and PFFW Executive Assistant Cindy will work on the details and report back to the group.

Next meeting – February 6, 2023, at 1:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at Noon.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cindy McGinnis, PFFW  
January 31, 2023

DRAFT