



**Clarke County Fire & EMS Commission**  
**101 Chalmers Court, Suite B**  
**Berryville, Virginia 22611**  
**(540) 955-5132**

MINUTES

January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020          6:30pm

Clarke County Government Center – Meeting Room AB

Attendees:      Matt Hoff, Chairman  
                      David Weiss  
                      Tony Roper  
                      David Beatty  
                      Diane Harrison  
                      Randy Buckley

Vacant:            Enders Representative  
                      Citizen Representative

Staff:             Chris Boies  
                      Pam Hess  
                      Brian Lichty  
                      Melanie Radford

Chairman Hoff called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. He then turned the meeting over to Director Lichty for the election of the new Chair.

1.      Election of Chair – Nominations for Chair-Mr. Hoff nominated Ms. Harrison. No others were nominated. Mr. Lichty called for the close of nominations. All voted in favor of Ms. Harrison as the new Chair. Chairman Harrison proceeded to take over the meeting.
2.      Mr. Hoff made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was passed with all in favor.
3.      Public Comment –
  - Mr. Van Armacost read the following statement:

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Good Evening

My name is Van Armacost. I'm a resident of Berryville and have been involved with our volunteer system for over 40 years.

I have been on both side of this joint venture as a Commission member and as a volunteer. It is a very tough fence to ride and has a lot of trials and tribulations with it. As a volunteer trying to adjust to all the changes that comes with growth AND as a Commission member trying to guide and implement a lot of the proposed changes and moving our system forward as a joint partnership.

As time changes and the need for more paid FFs and Medics is evident and supported by the vast majority of the volunteers, we have to remember who laid the first bricks for this Fire/EMS system. These 3-volunteer companies have worked their entire lives to keep this system afloat and provide excellent service to our community at a fraction of the real time cost.

This is due to unwavering support and money we have received from donations from our citizens and the money that the County and Town have appropriated us in the past PLUS our countless fund-raising efforts.

I cannot for the life of me understand how this document can propose to cut back on our stipends, take our Four for Life revenue and our State Fire Program funds.

Now I just learned from a detailed email from Director Lichy today that he is proposing using these funds to buy our fuel cost, EMS supplies, Maintenance Contracts on Life Packs and Lucas equipment along with various other smaller items. So basically, you want to our money and paid our bills, I have not quite digested all that yet. It sounds as if we are forfeiting our financial control.

We cannot financially support our vehicle purchases, building expenses and day to day costs without adequate funding to our Stipend. We are not Walmart's or Target stores who operate to make money. We run calls, we train a lot and we fund raise a lot, THAT'S IT.

We are a Team here consisting of volunteers, local government, paid personnel and our citizens. It takes all four of these to operate and function responsibly in order to help our neighbors in their time of distress.

I can say with confidence in my 40 years I have never seen absorbent waste or abuse of funds from any of these 3-volunteer company's. Please support the volunteers and support all our financial requests. Clarke County and the Town of Berryville with its current tax base cannot support a full-blown career department so we must utilize our volunteer base and their equipment in a joint partnership with the paid staff to provide our critical service to the community.

Thanks for allowing me to speak this evening.

January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Van Armacost

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- Chief Jacob White of Blue Ridge, read the following statement:

When the commission was first formed it had grand ideas on how to support the volunteers and improve service delivery throughout the County, while staying at the 50,000 ft view. Over the past several years it seems that supporting the volunteers has drifted away to nothing more than an afterthought. Frustration has been building with each new job at the volunteers like; County taking 4 for life and fire programs money, budget process with last minute changes, vehicle replacement fund...CHANGED to capital fund with zero access, lack of communication, fee for service, TNT, raw CAD data reports, you don't need a new ladder truck, and the County contract, just to name a few. The commission has gotten lost in the weeds.

The volunteers still want to do what gives them a sense of pride which is serving the community. The volunteers asked that some of the burden be lifted, not everything taken over. All we needed was assistance with financial constraints and more career staff to run these approved nursing homes and assisted living facilities that keep popping up. But that's not exactly what we are getting. The County's most important asset is a volunteer, so appreciate and support them. They raise funds to support millions of dollars of equipment and infrastructure while keeping your taxes lower. We are dwindling quickly, without your support; we will only be gone sooner than later.

When voting please think about how it will affect the volunteers, if you are not sure, talk with them and listen to what they have to say. Like the vote you are to take tonight on rank structure/flow chart, it was never brought to the Chiefs for discussion. You should ask a lot of questions like; who developed it, why was it developed, why the sudden change, why was it not produced to the "SYSTEM" members for comment???? Communication is key!!!!

Thank you for your time.

Jacob White, Fire Chief

Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company

- Mr. Jason Burns commented that here we are again at budget time, we're thrown a document that shows that we are looking at or the idea of taking money away from the volunteer stations and use it for other things. When we agreed as a volunteer system to do Fee for Service to fund a Director's position, a couple of other paid positions, there was no contract, there was no agreement, there was a handshake saying, yep this is what we're going to do and if there are leftover funds then we're going to start taking over some stuff, we're going to pay the insurance, did that, if there's even more money we'll try to get fuel, we'll try to capture some other things,

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that this Fee for Service money may help us with. In that very budget document it shows a projected increase of a lot of money in Fee for Service but yet we are taking money out of the volunteer budget, a stipend that was said is not going to go down, volunteers you can count on that stipend to be there for you, doesn't get associated with Fee for Service, yet we bill \$11.00 a mile, that may not be accurate but it's close, for transporting patients for Fee for Service. Who gets that money? The County doesn't pay for maintenance on these units, they don't pay for maintenance on the chase vehicles, they don't pay for fuel in them, where's that money at? How do you bill a patient for mileage in a vehicle you don't own, yet that money doesn't come back to the volunteer station? Yet we want to take over Four for Life and fire programs money, we want to cut a stipend by \$5000 to pay for fuel and do these great things. Fee for Service money, maybe that Physio cloud, maybe the Physio contract, those are LifePaks on the medic unit. Why isn't Fee for Service money, projected increase of like a \$100,00, I don't remember what it was, supposed to be up in the \$400,000's, way beyond what Fee for Service was ever slated to make for this jurisdiction. We bill \$11.00 a mile, we get no fuel back out of it, I don't even know how you are allowed to bill for mileage on vehicles and not turn it back to those who maintain it and run them. We've been told the stipend wouldn't be touched, the chief's would see stuff, the system, we want to keep volunteers, all these things we've been told, but at the last minute we get documents that show, nope. We wouldn't have known about this document if Dave didn't forward it out to our station before tonight when this is presented to you guys. And it's projected to cut, for Blue Ridge \$20,000, the projected funds that we are going to use it for Physio cloud integration, Blue Ridge already has it, radio purchases which should be a capital expenditure not a Four for Life expenditure, if you're going to buy portables at \$30,000 a year, not even half of your fleet is going to be replaced before they are out of date and need another model. That is a capital expenditure of over a half of million dollars. You don't buy radios 2 or 3 at a time for a system. Anyway, I think Mike Oak's email said it right, everybody's tone deaf to what the volunteers have been saying for years.

- Mr. Harold Rohde commented that he has been in the volunteer community out here at Enders for about 25 years now, served as Chief, currently as President. I've been involved in developing our budgets, working on that kind of stuff, I was involved in when the Commission was even created. We've already talked about the budget but there's a whole lot to talk about with budget, I want to talk about the process of how all this stuff came down. The budget process has changed every single year for the last 3 years and we were asked to make recommendation of what we wanted to see or maybe have financed, or provided in our budgets, and there was no discussion what so ever with the Director or anyone until he writes his recommendation up and then he has an opportunity to present it here as the Director's recommendation for all of Fire and EMS, he sits on this Commission, he gets to explain all of that and he gets to sit in meeting with the BOS and other county people and finance people, that the volunteers not afforded. Again as Jason said, had Jacob not forwarded me the packet, because he refuses to speak to anyone except for the Chief of the company and quite honestly our volunteer Chief works late in the evening and doesn't have

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an opportunity to sit there on top of his email all day long, but I started getting phone calls going what's going on?, what do you think about the budget?, did you see this?, I don't know what you are talking about. I went on the County website to find the packet, it wasn't there, nothing was out there. Had it not been for the ability of people to email thru around, no one of us would know what the heck was going on here. The other thing that I would like to talk about is the fiscal policy that's proposed. Never seen it before. I have never in the 25 years that I've been out here, seen any entity that would try to take an individual private company and say if you want to buy something you have to come to me and we have to approve that for you, if you want to do anything that involves any money, you have to come to me and you have to use my process on how you're going to spend that money. In the past we have been able to take our stipends we have gotten from the County and money that our community has donated to us, leverage that through grants, through other assistance and provide top quality apparatus in our stations. There has never been any fiscal impropriety in our station, we do audits every single year, we provide those audits, we do our 1099's and I don't see how you can take that control from a private corporation.

- Unable to attend in person, Chairman Harrison read the following email in Mr. Michael Oak's absence as requested:

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From: "Michael Oak" <mco29@cornell.edu>  
To: "Jason Burns" <jburnschief8@aol.com>  
Cc: "Brian Lichty" <blichty@clarkecounty.gov>, "Jacob White" <jcwh7@aol.com>, "David Weiss" <dweiss@clarkecounty.gov>, "DW Beatty" <beattydave28@gmail.com>, "Doug Lawrence" <dougmlawrence@hotmail.com>, "Diane Harrison" <ringm50@gmail.com>, "Mary Daniel" <mdaniel@clarkecounty.gov>, "Terri Catlett" <tcattlett@clarkecounty.gov>, "cgrubbrock" <cgrubbrock@yahoo.com>, "Chris Shipe" <iowaquaker@hotmail.com>, "Harold Rohde" <robdeeng@comcast.net>, "J C Blaylock" <jerry.blaylock1@gmail.com>, "Carolyn Trent" <catrent92@yahoo.com>, "Chris Boies" <cboies@clarkecounty.gov>, "Donald Jackson" <djackson@clarkecounty.gov>, "Wade Wilson" <wwilson@clarkecounty.gov>, "Mark Barenklau" <mbarenklau@clarkecounty.gov>, "Dave Peach" <dpeach@clarkecounty.gov>, "Van Armaost" <vanlisaj@verizon.net>, "Tony Roper" <troper@clarkecounty.gov>, "Travis Sumption" <tsumption@clarkecounty.gov>  
Sent: Thursday, January 9, 2020 8:56:39 AM  
Subject: Re: Budget Document

Brian,

I will be unable to attend the Commission meeting this evening. However, I would like to express my thoughts on some of the items in the meeting materials. These are my personal views and are not intended to represent those of the Company.

I hope you recognize from our many conversations that I respect both you and the career staff. I agree with your "ever improving" mindset in terms of making our system stronger to better serve the community. We can always find areas to be better. I also recognize the need for additional career staff in the County while also ensuring the current staff are competitively paid. To that end, I can appreciate your efforts to improve the benefits, promote employees, and offer ALS-training to attract, retain, and motivate qualified staff. As a tax payer, I appreciate any economies of scale that can be gained by combining purchasing efforts rather than individual contracts (e.g., insurance, MDTs, etc.). In reviewing the proposed budget, however, there is a strong perception among volunteers that the current proposal strengthens "the career side" but falls short of meeting the volunteers' needs.

As both a volunteer at Enders and resident of the County, I applaud all efforts – volunteer and career – to provide Fire & EMS services to our community. 120 years ago, John H Enders, our Company's namesake, partnered with the Berryville Town Council to form Berryville's first fire department. In 1962 the Rescue Squad was created. In more recent history, our Company has relied on valuable assistance from career staff to provide fire & rescue services to our Community. For the last several decades, the number of active volunteer firefighters has declined across the county – and our Community has not been immune. Over that same period, the demand on our services has only increased. As a system, we need to do a better job at attracting, retaining, and motivating volunteers, in addition to the much-needed career staff.

To keep up with this increasing demand on fire and rescue services, our Company has needed help. Help from the County providing career staff 24/7 – particularly for EMS calls – and help from residents, the Town, and the County to fund the ever-increasing costs of maintaining the building, apparatus, and equipment necessary to respond to calls. When we've asked for help, our Community has stepped up to answer the call.

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For the upcoming year, our Company once again asked for financial assistance. While the proposed budget incorporates many of our requests through County-wide initiatives (for example, the Physio cloud integration and radio replacement program), it also proposes a \$5,000 reduction to our stipend and appears to ignore some of our other requests (e.g., financial assistance to replace aging furniture in preparation of doubling the 24/7 staffing).

While I'm confident these recommendations were developed with thoughtful deliberation, it has the appearance to many volunteers as being "tone deaf" to the volunteers' needs. For example, the reduction to our stipend represents less than 1% of the total proposed expenses – a relative "drop in the bucket" to the total. However, these funds are more meaningful to our Company and, without them, it puts further pressure on volunteers' fundraising efforts (and, ultimately, community residents). Moreover, this same proposal is asking for substantial increases to spend on career staff salaries and benefits. As mentioned above, I very much support the County's ability to recruit and keep qualified Fire and EMS personnel. However, reducing the direct support of the volunteer companies while spending substantial amounts on career staff creates a negative perception for the volunteers who are left to "pick up the slack" relative to funding. Lastly on this topic, quoting the new "Incentive Program" as one justification for reducing our stipend has a strong appearance of "bait and switch" – these funds were understood to be additional funds to increase volunteer participation. As mentioned above, we need more efforts on recruiting and keeping active volunteers.

In addition, I would like to express my concern of the County retaining Four for Life and Fire Program Funds rather than distributing it to the volunteer companies. For all the same reasons listed above, reducing funding to the volunteer departments adds to our already heavy fundraising burden. While it very well may be a good idea to allocate this year's expected Four for Life funds to the Physio Cloud Integration (or similar allocations for Fire Program Funds to related needs) – this is a decision that all volunteer companies should agree.

With respect to the proposed Financial Policies, I hope there will be sufficient time for the volunteer companies and all other interested parties to review as there have been many questions and concerns raised by the current draft.

In closing, I am very much a supporter of our combined career and volunteer system. Having personally spent hundreds of hours alongside career staff I see how hard they work and the challenges they face in this field. I applaud the efforts to provide competitive compensation for career staff while also addressing several requests from the volunteer companies. However, on balance, I believe more consideration should be given to the needs of the volunteer companies in the current budget proposal. As they say, "perception is reality" – the current proposal, from my observation, has not been perceived well by the volunteers. I encourage you to revisit the proposed budget and work with the respective volunteer companies on addressing more of their needs while also providing clarity on the rationale for your recommendations.

As always, I'm happy to discuss in person or assist in any way I can to strengthen and improve Clarke's fire & rescue system.

Respectfully,

Michael Oak

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- Ms. Carolyn Trent, Rescue Captain at Blue Ridge, commented that she is also the person who has been trying to implement the Physio cloud county wide and I have concerns with the proposed budget for the Physio cloud. Most of our stations or I've heard, Blue Ridge and Enders for certain already pay for wifi hot spots coverage in their ambulance and their other apparatus for other utilities besides ImageTrend and I don't understand how it costs \$30,000 for 5 years of service for something we are already paying for. We don't need the data program, the modems themselves cost \$1000 for the wifi only modem, everything else is already in place. So it would be my concern regarding that line item.
4. Mr. Roper made a motion to approve the December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019 minutes. The motion was passed with all in favor. Mr. Buckley and Mr. Beatty abstained as they were not present at the last meeting.
  5. Organizational Meeting Items
    - Set Meeting dates and times – All agreed to the proposed dates as listed.
  6. Committee Reports – Information Only
    - Standards - Mr. Lichty reviewed with the group.  
Discussion - Mr. Beatty, Mr. Lichty, Mr. Weiss and Ms. Harrison discussed definitions/clarifications, how the data is compiled, the members of the committee, how the process was derived to include the methodology used for response times, measurements for improvements and progress, and mutual aid. The definitions will be added to the bottom of the page from now on to keep everyone familiarized.
    - Technology – Mr. Roper reported there was no meeting held.
    - Budget/Preparation - Budget Proposal, FY21  
Discussion - Mr. Beatty, Mr. Lichty, Mr. Weiss and Ms. Harrison discussed the budget process, receipt of late submissions, postponement due to vacancies, timeline, deadlines, public notification, entering into Munis, presentations to the multiple committees and BOS. Mr. Weiss reminded everyone that this is just a proposal, a document that starts the process. Mr. Hoff identified with the public comments regarding the proposed reduction in stipends and the negative impact it would have on Boyce. He reiterated what the regulations are on the use of their Bingo proceeds and how their part time payroll would be effected with a reduction.
    - Committee assignments - current listing
      - Technology - Mr. Roper stated this position can wait until the other vacancies are filled.
      - Standards - Mr. Buckley agreed to take the vacant position.
      - Budget - Mr. Beatty agreed to take the vacant position.
      - Enders Representative - The new representative has been appointed by Enders and is on the BOS meeting agenda for next month.

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7. Unfinished Business

- Incentive program review – Mr. Lichy reviewed with the group.  
Discussion – Mr. Beatty, Mr. Lichy, Mr. Hoff and Mr. Weiss discussed the program format, algorithm/calculations, exclusion of County career staff, inclusion of Boyce’s part time staff, and the definition of hours. Mr. Weiss conveyed from the BOS perspective, their understanding was by giving a monetary incentive there would be more volunteers present to run calls, utilizing more duty crews and relying less on the career staff. One company did not meet the required criteria of the program. Mr. Lichy will submit the others for payment.
- Strategic Plan Review – Mr. Lichy reviewed with the group and took action notes.

8. Report from the Director of Fire and EMS – Mr. Lichy reviewed with the group and noted a typo. He identified under the Top 3 categories for errors, the second “Signature” should be listed as “Procedure”. No questions or comments.

9. New Business

- Communications/Succession Document-Draft- Mr. Beatty and Ms. Harrison discussed the reason behind this document-the outlining of the integrated parts, a better understanding of the system structure, identifying a clearer “chain of command”, methods to bring topics or concerns before this Commission and/or for lines of communication. Mr. Beatty expressed that this draft doesn’t paint a clear picture to him and should be revisited. Mr. Hoff made a motion to table the communications document until there is a full Commission session. The motion was passed with all in favor. Mr. Beatty asked if notations or comments could be sent via email and discussed that way. Mr. Weiss explained that 3 or more members commenting or responding would classify as a formal meeting therefore it cannot be done.
- Staffing Plan – It was noted by Mr. Weiss for the word “month” to be added in behind the number 3 and 6 to clarify the appropriate designation and stated that the BOS if going to evaluate what criteria will be used and will need flexibility to have real time trials. Mr. Lichy explained this plan is still a draft, has not been fine-tuned yet, but should see some better data in response times and reduction in failures. Mr. Weiss articulated the importance for everyone to understand that this is not written in stone, you have to start with trying something, tweak it, and in the end it may not even look like this. The main goal and/or objective is to get to the people. Further discussion between Mr. Lichy, Mr. Beatty, Ms. Harrison, Mr. Hoff and Mr. Weiss regarding the data gathered and evaluated used to base the location at Enders, the level of service and criticality, geographics, age of the patients, first due, second due, box numbers, mutual aid, etc. Mr. Weiss voiced that you can debate the methodology, you can argue it all you want, but that is what the data showed. Ms. Harrison also voiced that everyone needs to be patient during the process.
- Use Agreement – Information only-Mr. Lichy reminded these are all drafts, recommended the Commission members to look over during the next month and discuss at the next meeting.
- Fiscal Policy – Information only - Mr. Lichy reminded these are all drafts, recommended the Commission members to look over during the next month and discuss at the next meeting.
- CIP Plan – Information only Mr. Lichy reminded these are all drafts, recommended the Commission member to look over during the next month and discuss at the next meeting.

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Mr. Roper asked if there was a specific timeline for these documents. Mr. Lichty would prefer them to be done before next budget year and stated that it's always better to look forward to the nearing future big expenditures. Trying to offset some of the costs but the time is coming for them to be done.

10. Summary of required action

- Setup budget sub-committee meeting with Ms. Harrison and Mr. Beatty. They all agreed on January 14th, 2020 at 9:30am.
- Process the payments for the incentive.
- Mr. Roper suggested a timeline/deadline for presenting the Medicare data collection information, the capital plan and fiscal policies. Mr. Lichty will put together a projects spreadsheet.

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11. Mr. Weiss thanked Mr. Hoff for his efforts and time as the previous Chairman. Mr. Roper made a motion to adjourn. The motion was passed with all in favor at 8:20pm.

All meeting documents will be distributed at meeting. Next meeting is on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 6:30pm in the Clarke County Government Center – Meeting Room AB

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