



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
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TIMOTHY T. BURTIS
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

401 Montgomery Street • Court House • Room 407 • Syracuse, New York 13202
Phone: 315.435.2070 • onondagacountylegislature@ongov.net • www.ongov.net/legislature

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES – OCTOBER 22, 2024 **MARK A. OLSON, CHAIR**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. McCarron, Mr. Bush, Ms. Hernandez, Mr. Garland
ALSO ATTENDING: Mr. Burtis; also see attached

Chair Olson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m., and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: Dan Wears, Commissioner **a. 2024 Transfer Resolution (\$200,000)**

PURPOSE:

To modify the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget to transfer \$200,000 from Legislative contingency into a project account identified by the Office of Management and Budget for the purpose of evaluating the public safety system and implementing supporting suggested improvements from the study.

OBJECTIVE/ WORK PLAN:

The Onondaga County Department of Emergency Management requests funding to conduct public safety system improvements. Onondaga County does not currently provide any EMS to the county, relying completely on 18 independent transporting ambulance agencies, which are a mix of 11 non-profit corporations, two (2) for-profit corporations, four (4) municipal fire-based, and one (1) collegiate based. There are 53 fire agencies in the county, of which the majority are Basic Life Support First Response agencies. At this time, there is not a county-wide EMS system in place in Onondaga County. This funding will provide the opportunity to conduct a study of the current EMS system and provide scalable, recommended improvements. The projected outcomes of this project are not only to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the current system, but to also provide the county with adequate resources and EMS sustainability.

FUNDING SOURCE: \$200,000 - Local Funding

BUDGET: \$200,000

- Money was put into Legislature contingency supporting public safety in 2024 budget
- EMS had some challenges
- Request to transfer money into operating budget project account to perform an EMS comprehensive study of pre-hospital care emergency services
 - Everything from 911 dispatch transfer to hospital care
 - Look at what is done, make recommendations on how to improve it, how to sustain for long term, and continue to provide vital services to county

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- Is the study going to be an overlap of what EM has done, or is it looking at the best way to get ambulances to people?
 - More than what EM can do on their own, which is very basic
 - EM got good information, but it did not tell whole story and was not comprehensive, or a full picture
 - Few companies do this; one is a gold standard and have had conversations with them
 - Looked at RFPs from other counties within the state on cost and what the study was

- Will it be a request for moving forward, is the county moving toward a countywide EMS, or is it expanding independent ambulances services?
 - Yes, goal is to provide recommendations on how to do it
 - Intent to be inclusive of agencies and not a surprise to agencies that provide the service
 - Want them to be partners in the study and let them have a say on how to move forward
- Is there a timeline from start to finish once the RFP is back?
 - Study will be 6-9 months
 - Looking at a year once the process is done
- What is the greatest challenge EM is facing regarding the study?
 - Hear a lot anecdotally including (i.e.) people complaining about how long they are at the hospital, mutual aid
 - Looking at this holistically instead of taking little nuggets of information
- Is EM looking at fire or emergency service?
 - Fire service will be included, BLSFR (Basic Life Support First Response) organizations
 - Provide initial EMS care
 - Only a few fire departments in the County that are transporting agencies (Fayetteville, Manlius, Tully, LaFayette, Minoa)
 - Dewitt Fire Department (ALSFR – Advanced Life Support First Responder) will be looked at even though not transporter
 - Will look at how Nurse Navigation is working – making impact, but part of pre-hospital care
 - What can be done from dispatch to the transfer of care to the hospital
- There are other agencies like EAVES and SAVES, looked at as having issues
- Comment hearing the most is the wait time in the emergency parking lot, which can be hours
- Starting to see outside organizations like Fayetteville and Manlius repeatedly going to city of Syracuse for EMS calls, due to lack of available ambulances
 - This will look at call volume, available staffing, mutual aid given and received
 - In-depth analysis of the entire system to address these things
 - Where is coverage too high, inadequate, etc.
- Agencies that are fully staffed are taking care of calls and taking care of other people's calls that are not fully staffed
- Consensus talked about studying the whole EMS as an environment
- Great first step; if it works well, road map to go forward and start process of helping out fire departments having trouble recruiting, staffing and responding to calls
- Is this going out to public bid?

Yes

A motion was made by Mr. McCarron, seconded by Mr. Garland, to approve this item.

- With this study, if the consultant says to consolidate, is this something that would be looked at?
 - Yes, will look at all the options presented
 - Will take buy-in and support from agencies that are doing it
- What are some of the other counties that were looked at?
 - Monroe County did a study, but have not seen it
 - Erie County has 17 911 centers, public safety answering points
 - Westchester has done a study recently
 - Some counties did studies pre-COVID, and seen numbers post-COVID at 30%
 - EMS providers in state licenses has decreased
 - Other thing to look at is call types, dispatch types
 - Can the county go to a BLS (Basic Life Support) with EMTs, versus an ALS (Advanced Life Support), which the county has historically been; is that a good use of resources

A vote was taken on the item. *Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

b. INFORMATIONAL: Update on budget

- Highlight of 2024 was moving into new building in Liverpool with the new EOC (Emergency Operations Center)
- Bringing in classes
 - May – October there were 30 different sessions that would not have been done historically
 - 700 participants
 - Class going on today and tomorrow with 30 people
 - Hoping to bring new opportunities to new agencies throughout the county
- Financially the 2024 budget looks good
 - Should be well under budget, biggest reason is salary savings
 - Tried to hire a couple of positions this year without success
 - Reworked a couple positions and made some salary changes
- Personnel changes in the 2025 budget
 - 2 new titles, unfunded a couple and created a couple
 - Small local dollar impact
 - One of them is 100% grant funded
 - Other is \$10k or \$15k increase
 - Intentions to attract more candidate
 - Unfunded another title and created a Citizen Preparedness and Community Outreach Organizer
 - Do not have great Citizen Preparedness program – direct people to ready.gov (standard for federal government)
 - State does presentations throughout county and want person attend those for county level information
 - Improve the county’s stakeholder outreach engagement and how to work together
 - Work with 100 public agencies under towns/villages
 - Having someone takeover more responsibility would be beneficial
- This past year we did Fire and EMS Recruitment website
 - Launched from funding from the Legislature
 - The marketing firm that specialized in this created it
 - Goal to drive people back to the fire department websites or EMS agency websites
 - Limited success with activity on the website; looking to put together a marketing plan with same company
 - Proposal for six-month marketing plan with money left over from this initiative
 - Look at data and numbers and see if it is worth it
 - This company does this for agencies all over including websites locally and nationally on recruitment
 - Use branding and logo for social media accounts and do a lot of promotions and targeted advertisements
- Over the summer there was MCI (Mass Casualty Incidents) exercises with agencies and directors
 - Recognize a need to continue to work on
- In September, hosted Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC)
 - Free and presented by FEMA
 - Applied for it a year ago
 - Over 4 days did 2 table top exercises and a functional EOC exercise
 - Learned a lot of little and big things to help the department and continue to improve
- In February, there will be another EOC exercise
 - Contractor hired to do this attended a couple days of the IEMC to observe and take notes
 - Build on what was done in September
 - In February, will target and do EOC training
- In April, expecting the new mobile operations vehicle
 - ½ locally funded and ½ federally funded
- Regional HAZMAT – 2025 project
 - Coordinator of the HAZMAT team which is the City of Syracuse, Madison, Oswego
 - Applied for a federal DOT grant received
 - Will do table top exercises in each of 4 municipalities on HAZMAT team
 - Focus on pipeline emergencies involving hazardous materials
 - Look at other capabilities and secondary impacts on hazardous materials incident

Questions/Comments from the committee:

- What is the greatest obstacle with hiring?
 - Less candidates than ever in 10 years
 - There was a time when there was 47 or 52, average was 50 applicants, now much lower
 - Salary is the biggest obstacle
 - 10 or 12 applicants this time and most not interested due to salary; massive pay cut for similar job

- What is going to be done to make positions more attractive?
 - Did better specifying jobs and rewriting job descriptions
 - Before titles were more generic
 - 1 is an Emergency Management Coordinator and one is a Training Exercise Coordinator
 - Do more outreach and publicize
 - Emergency Management and Emergency Responder are not the same thing
 - Trying to target national and/or statewide organizations to advertise jobs and get candidates with some experience, or those that are trying to break into it

- The facilities are much improved
 - Yes, it has been very well received
 - Lot of people interested in being there more
 - Great feedback and more willingness to use EOC for intended purposes

- Is the Mutual Aid agreement moving forward?
 - County Fire Mutual Aid Plan has not been officially rewritten since 2008
 - Few minor updates like taking out reference to old radio system and putting in new radio system
 - Fire Advisory Board (FAB) has been working to update that plan
 - Getting some push back from fire departments throughout the county
 - Better received this last time
 - FAB submitted to Director of Fire 2-3 weeks ago; working on reviewing and status of changes
 - Making sure it still meets goal of what need to do; will continue working with FAB
 - Will have to be presented to Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC) for approval
 - (i.e.) Arson Control Plan brought to Legislature a year ago and took 6-9 months to get it back from OFPC

- Has the training been broadcast throughout the County?
 - Yes, naturally where it fits
 - Trying to bring in classes that EM has not historically gotten
 - Classes for active shooter preparedness, designed for property owners and building managers
 - Cumbersome to do it before with borrowing space, but now there is the space to host; easy and efficient process
 - Class today is Special Event Incident Management for 2 days – would never hosted it before
 - Have other agencies request classes, and work with state to put requests in

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

COMMITTEE: **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **OCTOBER 22, 2024**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Dan Weas	OCDEM
Doug Dowdy	Syracuse.com
Ben Yaus	LAW
Nancy Lowery	CE
John DeSantis	Leg.
Dan Romeo	Leg.
Joe Frateschi	Counsel