

SARATOGA COUNTY FIRE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 30, 2021
7:00 pm (virtual)

City/Town Representatives: Present: Bill Crawford - *Ballston*, Aaron Dyer - *Charlton*, Robert Williams - *Greenfield*, Art Hunsinger - *Halfmoon*, Pete Shaw - *Malta*, David Houston – *Providence*, Brian Myers - *Saratoga*, Tom Rinaldi – *Stillwater*, Don Baldwin – *Waterford*, Bill Morgan – *Wilton*

Excused: Kevin Barkley Jr. - *Galway*

Absent: Patrick Champagne - *Clifton Park*, Graham Champagne – *Corinth*, Alex Rockwell – *Edinburg*, Billy Winslow – *Hadley*, Matt Dunn - *C/O Mechanicville*, Kevin Krogh - *Milton*, John Smith Jr. - *South Glens Falls*, Tom Wood – *Northumberland*, Joseph Dolan - *C/O Saratoga Springs*

Present: Fire Coordinator Ed Tremblay, Dr. Mike McEvoy

The virtual meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm and roll call was taken.

Bill Crawford made a motion to accept the July minutes second by Tom Rinaldi, unanimous.

Commissioner Zeilman information

- No information to report

Fire Coordinator Tremblay

- State Classes
 - **Firefighter 2** – August 31st @ FTC – 20 registered
 - **Fire Officer Development – Leadership and Supervision** – 15 hours – September 8, 13, 15, 20 and 22, 2021
 - **Fire Police** – September 13 @ Public Safety Building
 - **Fire Officer Development – Firefighter Health and Safety** – 12 hours – September 29, October 4, 6 and 13, 2021
 - **Truck Company Operations** – September 30, October 2, 5, 9, 14, 19, 23 and 26, 2021 @ Maple Avenue Fire
 - **Fire Officer Development – Company Training and Community Risk Reduction** – 12 hours October 25, 27, November 1 and 3, 2021
 - **Fire Officer Development – Emergency Response and Planning** – November 8, 10 and 15, 2021
 - **Fire Officer Development – Fireground Strategies and Tactics for First Arriving Companies** – December 1, 6, 8, 13 and 15, 2021

- I'm working on confirming VROL class – 1 location – October 25 and 27 for classes for 60 then 3 locations for skills.
- I received the proposed minor contract for repairs needed on the burn building. Once that is signed and insurance is provided, we can get those repairs made.
- I'm still trying to get prices on the pump repairs. No one seems to have the chips needed so no prices have come in. We may need to purchase a brand new one.
- Buildings and Grounds cleaned the pigeons/residue out of the burn building, but now they are back in there again. We may have to try something else.
- The FD connection has been replaced on the burn building.
- We will be removing the old propane control panels and other system equipment.
- The training tank trailer was moved to the back of the storage building.
- We are removing the old training pits and piping (square and round) closer to the propane prop and the area will be backfilled for placement of the new burn building.
- Pete – Will the Fire Training Center position we are working on getting, be contracted personnel or county employees? Ed – They will be three per diem employees per our HR Department and will be scheduled as needed.

Director Gordon information

- No information

Mike McEvoy

- COVID update - On August 23rd, the Food and Drug Administration gave full approval to the Pfizer COVID vaccine for people age 16 and older. The 12-15 year-old approval remains on emergency use authorization (EUA) and we are continuing to give that vaccine, working through the schools themselves. We anticipate at the end of September that we'll get approval for the Pfizer vaccine to be administered to people five years and older and will probably administer those through the schools or Public Health. Third doses are in limbo at this point. Around the same time as the Pfizer got it's full approval, we began a soft launch of third doses to certain people. Under Federal as well as the State guidelines, this is a fairly limited group that includes: someone that is actively being treated for cancer, people that have had an organ transplant and are currently taking immune suppression drugs, people who have had stem cell transplants, people with HIV and others with immune deficiencies, those that are on high doses of steroids (such as people with very severe arthritis), people being treated for other kinds of cancer using immune suppressant drugs. For that group, we are giving third doses to them, using the same vaccine they had previously, whether it be Moderna or Pfizer. We are not sure for those that received the Johnson and Johnson - we should be getting more information in the next few months. We expect by September 20, that the White House will release information for who else they intend to offer third doses to. I think, based on what we are hearing the last couple of days, is that's going to be limited and will include only health care workers and first responders, in addition to immune suppressed folks. We are not anticipating at this point, for them to open that up to larger populations, but they may include some elderly nursing home residence. It doesn't

appear at this point, that they are willing to open third doses to everyone. We have been doing surveys with Fire and EMS to get an idea who may want the third dose once they become eligible for it. We are willing to set that up in places like the Northway Pain Clinic, special PODS, Public Health or whatever we need so folks that want it will be able to get it. I think worldwide, the battle is slipping, especially in places where vaccination is less than optimal. The Delta variant has become the primary variant in the U.S., including here in NY and Saratoga County. The Delta variant is much more infectious than the COVID that we have seen previously and causes more significant illness in younger people. When you look at the Delta variant now, the primary group that is being hospitalized is the 16-18 year-old population and tend to get pretty sick with it. We are pushing vaccination with that group. You probably have seen some of the fatality data and our county has a very low rate of deaths since COVID started. I think the reason in our county, you probably have seen some of the fatality data and our county has a very low rate of deaths since COVID started. This is probably because we went aggressively to the older population in the very beginning. The group that is 65 and older, way over 90% of those folks have been vaccinated, so the death rate is very low. The effectiveness of the vaccines that were given, Moderna and Pfizer, initially thought to be 95% effective and the Johnson and Johnson 88%, has dropped considerably to roughly 60% against the Delta variant. What it does do, is keep people from getting seriously ill or being hospitalized. People still are catching COVID that were vaccinated, but they are not ending up very very sick, so the vaccination is doing what is supposed to do, which is preventing people from dying and preventing people from going into the hospital. It looks like we are going to live with this virus circulating for a year or two. What other boosters will be necessary is hard to say. It looks like when you get a third dose of Pfizer or Moderna, that it can significantly increase your immunity against the Delta variant. This is why we want to target first responders and health care workers out on the front line. I'm hoping to get some clarification from the Food and Drug Administration sometime around the middle of September and will have a better idea on how to proceed with that. If you know of someone that had an organ transplant or actively under treatment for cancer, Public Health is currently vaccinating those folks. They are putting that information on their Facebook page or if you go to vaccinefinder.org you can see other places where the vaccine is available. There was a shortage of the Johnson and Johnson for a while, so pretty much the only people in the County that had it were EMS, but at this point, it is back in supply. I don't think we will be having issues getting any of the vaccines going forward as we found sources to boost the County inventory. You probably saw the advisory that I sent out on IaR. It is basically saying that Saratoga County, Albany and Schenectady areas, have a high infectious rate which means that the Delta variant is circulating. We are not having the issues that they are having down south and in the mid-west, because we have a much higher vaccination rate so our hospitals are not over loaded. We are not having issues with taking care of people that are sick. I think for that reason, if you are fully vaccinated, whether you wear a mask out in public or not, is your personal choice. It's recommended in place where there is a high rate of circulation, you consider wearing a mask indoors when you are around other people. None of the Counties around here felt strongly enough to put something like that into policy. It is a recommendation and I think it's probably going to stay like that going forward. The big fight right now is employers mandating that people get the vaccine. I don't know exactly where that's going, but it is something that has happened in all the hospitals locally. The State is requiring it for nursing home staff and many businesses are requiring it. It's hard to say where that is going to go at this point. I don't see it

being something that the government can easily shove down everybody's throat, so it all depends on where you work at this point. That's where we are with the recommendations.

- As far as quarantine goes, you are probably aware that we've had some infections that have been in Fire Departments and Ambulance Corps. Some people that were vaccinated have still gotten COVID. If there is anyone who shows signs of COVID; having flu like symptoms, high fever, sore throat and a nasal illness initially, that those people get tested so we can figure out if they have COVID or not. Even if you've been vaccinated, you should get tested. If someone tests positive, whether they've been vaccinated or not, they are quarantined for 10 days just to protect everybody else. People that have been exposed, an exposure is being with someone that has been within six feet of a person who had signs and symptoms of COVID and later tests positive, within 48 hours prior to when that person who had close contact with them, will be quarantined if they are unvaccinated. If they are vaccinated, they are just told to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days. That has happened in five of our ambulance squads and 10 of our fire departments where someone has come down with COVID infection, which is trying to stop the spread amongst the responders.
- We are having an extreme problem in EMS throughout the county, state and country as a whole, trying to find personnel to work in our ambulance agencies, like the volunteer problem we are having in our fire departments. As a consequence of that, you are hearing our agencies being called to mutual aid out of the county a lot more than it has ever happened in the past. We used to do four for five out of the county for EMS a week and now we are doing four or five a day now. That's all due to staffing and personnel shortages. We are doing some trial things, the Town of Clifton Park is working with Wilton, Malta and Clifton Park EMS and the County labor group that helps restaurants and businesses in the County find workers. We are doing some experimental stuff with them to see what we can do about boosting the pool of EMT's and Paramedics; we aren't going to be on a sinking ship going forward. More to come on that and we will be working with the Recruitment and Retention group that Art will be heading up with the County.
- We have plans to start an EMT class for military Veterans in the Fall at the Public Safety Building. We are a little bit behind on the planning for that so once we I hear more about that, I will let you know.
- There are EMT classes starting in September at REMO in the Town of Colonie that still has vacancies.
- The County will run a special course at the Public Safety Building starting in January, an original and a refresher class. More information to come.
- If you have any questions you can call me during the day.

Chairman Shaw

- I have nothing additional to add to the Personnel and Fire Training Center Committee information.

Vice Chairman Rinaldi

- no information to bring forward

Committee Reports

- Hazmat – Bill Morgan
 - Arvin Hart was called to a small industrial incident, but it was handled by their own staff. Momentive, Saratoga and the volunteer teams all participated in setting up a FAST team for decon in case they needed them to remove the hazard.
 - We supported the Whitney and the Travers at the track.
 - We are going to set up a time for programming HazMat pagers.
 - We are looking to get an inventory on the Consortium HazMat truck that was donated by Momentive Silicones, that is now in service and has headquarters in Albany County. We have not seen an inventory yet, but Chief Dunn is working with Gerry Morigerato from Momentive on the equipment list.
Pete – Is that vehicle going to be permanently housed in Albany County or is that going to rotate like other hazmat equipment? Bill M. – I believe it's going to be maintained and housed by Albany County. It seems to be the easiest circle of the three.

- Mutual Aid
 - no information to bring forward

- Personnel
 - No additional information other than already referenced by Ed.

- Fire Training Center - Bill Crawford
 - There are several pallets and hay near the burn tower.
 - The pigeons are back and I understand Ed is working on that.

- Legislative – Tom Rinaldi
 - The Recruitment and Retention Task Force was signed by the Governor.
 - The LOSAP amendment was signed by the Governor which updates the law from using a percentage of the total number of calls dispatched to the total number of calls dispatched to an individual to create a more equitable and efficient system. If you have a LOSAP plan, I suggest you talk to your administrator and look for those changes that you can make.
 - The changes to VFBL are part of the issues of united concern and have not yet been sent to the Governor for signature
 - Everyone knows that the EMS cost recovery did not make it out of the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee and will give grass root effort for 2022. They are trying to get more Assembly to sign onto that Legislation.
 - Another on the Issues of United Concern – The Family and Firefighter Protection Act. This bill prohibits the sale of mattresses and upholstered furniture that contain potentially added identified flame retardant chemicals, which are carcinogenic. This has not been sent to the Governor for signature yet, but the chemical companies are mounting a massive effort to try

and head this off. Certain other states in the United States have similar legislation.

We may need to have a campaign of volunteer firefighters and career firefighters to back this bill. The chemical companies that are fighting this and their lobby is very strong.

- The communicable disease plan was signed by the Governor.
- The county wide shared services expansion was signed by the Governor.
- Changing the day of public hearing for the Fire Districts. Previously you had to have a hearing on your proposed budget the third Tuesday of October which is now changed to the third week of October and can be held any day of the week.
- Also signed by the Governor – The Districts may raise the pay for higher District election employees. They can go anywhere from \$70-\$100 depending on the length of time worked, which brings them up to minimum wage. This is an option and allows districts to pay the Election Commissioners more money.
- The bill that increases the defined contribution or defines the benefit plan under the LOSAP program can go from 40 to 50 years. This has been sent for signature, but not signed yet.
- Pending -
 - The rural ambulance service Task Force.
 - Boats in NYS which have enclosed accommodations will need CO detectors.
 - We have until December 31st for these and others. Governor Hochul is building a new staff and will then have to review these.
- Budget – Art
 - A request was put in for the recruitment and tower positions. Ed - \$300,000 was requested in the budget for the recruitment fund and the tower positions.
- Radio information – Art
 - I am waiting to talk to Carl to see how the testing went in Mechanicville.
- Recruitment & Retention information – Art
 - We had a couple of good meetings in Halfmoon and Malta, with new ideas suggested.
 - It was proposed that the budget includes items for and Fire and EMS billboards, posters, trinkets for individual departments (both Fire and EMS) to be handed out at events, radio things, different events take place for departments and surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Wednesday at the meeting in Malta, there were many positive ideas. One of the things offered by the County Administrator was, if we had some ideas that we can do this year, would be allowed to approve up to \$15,000 to use. We talked about different ideas on how to use the money this year, October on.
 - A couple of ideas that came up were billboard advertising in high profile areas in the County with a theme.
 - Another idea was to offer a contest to High Schools in Saratoga County, to come up with ideas for billboards. The students would submit their

suggestion and we would judge what we thought was the best one and that student would receive a minimum scholarship. Schen has done that with the DWI and it always gets a lot of response. This is part of what we are putting together for our next “proposal”. We’ll send that out to everybody after Pete and Supervisor Tollison, who is being really helpful, have reviewed everything.

- Ballston Spa Fire had a lot of positive suggestions from their recent time at the County fair.
- Reminder – Wednesday night is both Fire and EMS promotion throughout the County, using County money.
- After we get these ideas together, we can talk to Ed and Carl to see when we can go to Public Safety with the ideas.
- At our next meeting, in September, we will include Fire and EMS input to put a more definitive plan together.
- This is looking positive from talking to some of the Supervisors and hopefully we can get this in the budget to move forward and do a full campaign for both Fire and EMS.
- Pete – I want to encourage you to go back to your organizations and get ideas.

Old Business

- No additional old business to bring forward

New Business

- No new business to address

Good and Welfare

- Pete – Our Cause and Origin Team is going out several times a day, do we have stats? Ed – Yes, I track the calls and there have been 55 Fire Investigations to date for 2021.
- A notification was sent out for the Annual New York State Fallen Firefighters Memorial at 11:00 am October 5th at the Empire State Plaza. We will be honoring the 45 fallen firefighters that have died this year. I’m not sure if everyone received the notice, so please get the word out.
- The next meeting will be 7:00 pm Monday September 27, at the Fire Training Center.

Aaron Dyer made a motion to close the meeting seconded by Art Hunsinger.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Cook

Saratoga County Office of Emergency Services