



## **Sonoma County EMS Workgroup Meeting Minutes**

June 4, 2018 – 9:30-11:00 AM

Sonoma County Water Agency Redwood Conference Rooms  
404 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa CA 95403

*Project Goal:* To create a safe, effective system that delivers high-quality field care medicine that is responsive to the community needs of Sonoma County as supported by qualified, committed and accountable EMS caregivers.

*Goal for this meeting:* To continue to resolve ways that identified issues will be addressed in the revised EMS Ordinance

### Meeting Minutes

Facilitator Chris Thomas opened the meeting with introductions around the room and on the phone call-in line.

Chris asked for any corrections to the previous meeting's minutes. Steve Suter (SRFD) asked about the creation of legal language for the ordinance, and the process for that work. Chris expressed that the intent was to come to agreement on the concepts with the stakeholders, then have the legal language crafted by County Counsel, and then share the results with the stakeholder group in draft for input. Steve Herzberg, BBFPD, EMCC District 5 representative) stated the issue some had in the earlier ordinance writing process was the lack of stakeholder participation in the actual writing of the document; stakeholders could only see the finished version. Steve H. felt a compromise would be others with ordinance writing experience be involved with County Counsel and CVEMSA when the writing was happening.

Chris asked for interested individuals to participate in such a group to be inserted in the above process. Steve Herzberg, Kurt Henke (Cal Chiefs) Mark Heine (Windsor/Rincon Valley FPDs) Dean Anderson (AMR) and Nicole Henriksen (AMR) indicated a desire to participate. James Salvante (CVEMSA) was identified as County staff to coordinate group and the expectation is that individual schedule conflicts will not prevent the group from meeting so that work can proceed on this.

Moving to the issue of the extension, David Caley (CLSD) indicated 4 month extension to the EOA may not be enough time to get the work done; but asked what is the timeframe needed to accomplish all goals?

Bryan Cleaver, (CVEMSA) pointed out that ideally the RFP should be ready to release approximately one year before the end of the EOA agreement and that EMS needs to get other work done but if there is need to prioritize this to get things done in time allowed, we can do it. The major remaining unknown impact on the process seems to be the consolidation of fire agencies. If we build an EOA agreement that would be able to accommodate mergers and other changes that might happen over the term, perhaps some of

these time issues would be resolved. Steve H. stated an email was sent last week to the legislators stating that the county has given every reason to EMSA for an extension, answer not acceptable and the issue needs to be solved in a different way, rather than reapplying to the State. Although still hoping to get a year, if the State does not give us 1 year, we can still take the year. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors gave support, as did State Senator Mark McGuire.

Kurt Henke suggested County Counsel write a letter asking EMSA for a regulatory justification for limiting the extension to 4 months when the request was for one year.

Chris Thomas pointed out the homework from the previous meeting was to come up with details of what needs to happen in order to provide more support for pressing the case for the 12 month extension. Steve H. mentioned that an email had been sent reflecting a discussion among some of the stakeholders since the last meeting. The conclusion of that group was it would be better to continue working forward on the substantive issues in the EMS system work and simply ask the Board of Supervisors and the Legislative delegation to have CA EMSA approve the 12 month extension.

Chris did not see the email and reminded everyone that the reason we discussed getting more detail was to give the Board and the Legislative delegation more ammunition. (This was the status that was communicated to the Supervisors after the last stakeholder meeting so where their expectations would like be as well.) He said that he comes from the perspective of staff producing as complete work as possible to assist the elected decision makers and we really haven't given those elected decision makers much to indicate why a year is necessary. What else needs to be addressed besides the impacts and issues already on the table? If we have identified what we need to work through then perhaps we should continue before asking for additional help in getting the 12 month extension until we have a clearer picture of how long it will take. Especially since there may be different options available to address some of the issues with differing time implications for the process. Chris pointed out that he will not remain with the project longer than December 2018 but will assist in transition to someone else should there be a need to continue beyond that point.

The will of the stakeholder group was to request the assistance of the elected decision makers now and turn our efforts back to the progress on remaining issues. Chris will see that this is communicated to the Board.

*Discussion moved to the boundaries of the EOA*

James Salvante (CVEMSA) explained the map provided as a handout. The document was part of the previous RFP and represents the EOA in the current form as awarded after the 2008 competitive process. The map shows the areas as compliance zones for urban, rural, semi-rural. Political boundaries are indicated as well. Kurt Henke pointed out over time areas may change jurisdictions, and that the EOA area is subject to change through annexations and consolidations of public agencies on the border. Is it still going to provide a sustainable EOA for revenue? Kurt stated the County LEMSA can divide the EOA area up for public providers, and that should be acknowledged in the ordinance.

Dean Anderson made the point that flexibility and boundary changes could go either way, to incorporate other areas into the EOA if a public provider in that area can no longer provide service. Dean advised the group there is already language in the current EOA contract to that effect.

Steve Herzberg felt one or two areas may provide more income than others, and shorter contract periods should be considered in order to accommodate changes in districts.

EOA boundaries should not be etched in stone.

It was noted that while shorter terms increase flexibility, they may limit how much investment might be expected from bidders.

Brad Silvestro (Sonoma County Paramedic Association-UEMSW/AMR) made the point the EMS workforce has been providing uninterrupted service with low turnover through multiple long-term contracts based on the stability of a long-term agreement. A series of short term contracts put strain on the workforce due to the decreased sense of job security.

Tim Aboudara, (Santa Rosa Firefighters Local 1401) suggested for consideration, a number of logically-constructed smaller EOAs to offer more opportunity to for local jurisdictions to change providers. He also mentioned that there are ways to improve the current workforce's job security in the RFP process.

CVEMSA staff advised the stakeholders that an increase in the number of EOAs increases workload on LEMSA from the oversight perspective as well as the need to manage multiple RFPs. Additionally multiple independent EOA zones are challenging from a bidder's perspective. Kurt Henke felt it was advisable to maintain a single EOA for one area. Kurt related it was common practice for counties to award an initial five-year contract with extensions for additional five-year periods rather than a single 15-year overall contract

Mike Williams, (The Abaris Group) stated a 1-2 year contract would be expensive.

*Discussion returned to the map and stakeholders were asked about potential changes to the EOA boundaries based on jurisdictional changes happening now or expected to happen. A number of potential mergers and consolidations were mentioned based on Fire Service Study project related actions. Among those possible per Mark Bramfitt (LAFCO Executive Director):*

*Petaluma/Rancho Adobe with inclusion of Cotati, Pengrove.*

*Russian River/Bodega Bay with Monte Rio, Occidental, Freestone, Forestville, and Graton Goldridge and Sebastopol*

*Windsor, Rincon Valley, Mountain VFC area, and Bennett Valley*

*Kenwood with Sonoma Valley Fire Rescue Authority*

Sonoma, Russian River and Bodega Bay representatives indicated that they would seek to provide ambulance services in the consolidated areas they would be involved with and it was presumed that Petaluma would in the area they would be involved with. Mark Heine indicated that with the possible consolidations in Windsor, Rincon Valley, etc. he would be interested in providing ambulance services in those areas. Each of these areas noted above have some territory in the current EOA.

Some of these public ambulance providers have certain rights to provide ambulance services in their jurisdiction since they have been providing that service in their area since the time indicated in law (June 1, 1980). Windsor, Mountain, Rincon Valley departments do not have rights to provide ambulance service although it is a service that the public agency can provide, and up to county to elect to allow that. But existence of a contract, provides a layer of protection to the existing provider. Nothing obligates the county to change an ambulance service provider. They can do it, but there are steps that are required and the proposed

process for changes in ambulance service providers for an area has been discussed earlier with this stakeholder group.

Bryan Cleaver asked the group to think about a 15-year contract divided up into 3-year extension periods. The overall term addresses workforce concerns about security, and accommodates change in jurisdictional boundaries over time through 3-year extensions.

We have defined a process for how zones change, including educating the community about changes in the services and hearing their expressed opinions.

Bryan agreed a single 15-year contract term would be overly long. Other counties have had challenges with a 15-year period, but if it were broken up into 5 three-year periods with those periodic opportunities to consider a change, is there value in that?

Mark Bramfitt spoke about the timeframes inherent in District changes and the LAFCO process. A year from now LAFCO may or may not have an idea about proposed changes in the River area, or Kenwood and Bodega Bay and Occidental. Petaluma and Rancho Adobe may be addressed sooner depending on the needs of the districts, which can change priorities for where consolidations and annexations are on LAFCO's list.

Bryan Cleaver spoke about the challenges and changes so unique in each of these areas where boundary issues could develop. In the Windsor area, for example, there is an HSC 1797.224-eligible provider with a claim to exclusivity. Bryan asked the group if anyone else likes the idea of a 15-year agreement broken up into five 3-year terms. Dean Anderson stated from a provider perspective, he liked the idea. The current longer-term agreements are problematic from a planning perspective, with rates, terms and conditions that are burdensome near the end of the term. Additionally the uncertainty surrounding healthcare reimbursement in the future makes shorter terms attractive. Dean made the point the shorter terms would provide more frequent opportunities to address elements within the agreement outside of boundaries.

Chris pointed out that while the ordinance can indicate that EOA boundaries are subject to change, the discussion of length of EOA agreement term and specific changes in the EOA map are RFP issues. That said, Chris suggested the group continue the discussion next time about terms and elements of that term. Packages of terms for RFP pros and cons. What is the benefit to the delivery of patient care in 3-year vs 5-year terms; what do we get out of it, etc. before returning to the issues for the ordinance. The ordinance related issues we intend to get to next time will include ambulance service provider agreements.

Checking in on future meeting logistics, the room the group has been using is booked through December with the exception of Labor Day, which falls on one of the regular meeting days. The group will continue to meet first and third Mondays monthly; Theresa Lombardi (CVEMSA) has sent out invites to Labor Day. The group will decide about Labor Day's meeting later.

### **Project Website:**

<https://www.coastalvalleysems.org/about-us/committees/sonoma-county-ems-systems-workgroup.html>