

Berks County Fire Service Working Group Meeting Minutes

September 28, 2010

ATTENDANCE

ZONE 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Schegan (46)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Yenser (21)	
ZONE 2	Chuck Snyder (50)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eric Schrack (41)	Ken Quell (37)
ZONE 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lester Feick (27)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Martin (47)	
ZONE 4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scot Landis (67)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bruce Longenecker (79)	Mark Hostetter (85)
ZONE 5/6	Matt Gehman (22)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chris Schaeffer (20)	
	Mike DeTurck (25)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chris Stevens (17)	
ZONE 7	Michael Moyer (RFD)	Ron Wentzel (RFD)	
BERKS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Gottschall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Wanner	
BERKS COUNTY FIREMAN'S ASSOCIATION	Dick Trostle		
BERKS COUNTY FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leon Grim		
BERKS COUNTY FIRE POLICE ASSOCIATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Englebach		
OTHERS:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Christian Leinbach – Berks County Commissioner, Maintenance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gary Smith – Radio	

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Chris Stevens at 1815 hours in the Berks County Department of Emergency Services Conference room, located in the Direct Link Building, Bernville Road, Leesport, PA. The minutes of the August meeting were approved as posted with no additions or corrections.

DISCUSSION

Support Your Fire Company: Commissioner Leinbach came to the meeting to garner additional support for the program's special event at the Fairgrounds Square Mall on Friday, 10/22/10 from 9am-9pm. While there still has not been an overwhelming response from fire companies in regards to attending and displaying apparatus and/or providing demonstrations, the Commissioner's main focus was coming to some type of agreement on a "membership" strategy. The Commissioner reinforced to the body that the focus is to seek volunteers from the community to join a specific fire company and provide some type of service, whether that be as an active firefighter or in other support roles (financial, fundraising, specific trade work i.e. electrical, plumbing, etc). The Commissioner was seeking approval from the Working Group to allow any member of

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the public to join any fire company in Berks County as an "associate member"; discussion ensued, specifically regarding fire companies who A) do not currently have an "associate membership" status, and B) would have to amend their by-laws to create such a membership status (which could take several months). Ultimately, the Working Group representatives in attendance were not willing to support the "associate member" idea for their zones with many feeling it would be grossly overstepping their authority. While Commissioner Leinbach is still requesting that the each fire company in Berks County create this membership category, a compromise was reached: anyone in attendance on 10/22 who is interested in volunteering for a fire company will provide basic information at a DES-maintained booth inside the mall along with a \$10 donation. The information will be forwarded, along with the donation, to the appropriate fire company for follow-up. The Commissioner also added a clause that only persons 21 years or older would be included so as to not interfere with existing individual fire company by-laws, specifically those with social quarters.

Working Group Recognized: Chairman Stevens advised Commissioner Leinbach that all seven fire zones in Berks County have now officially endorsed the Berks County Fire Service Working Group, and that a mission statement - in draft format - was created for approval by each zone. Additionally, Chairman Stevens and Zone 4 representative Scot Landis advised the Commissioner that the Working Group would be creating a more formal presentation for a County Commissioner's meeting in the near future. Commissioner Leinbach was very receptive to this idea, and stated that - with the proper advance notice - he would see that members of the press would be in attendance for this presentation.

Run Cards/Box Alarms: Craig Wanner provided Working Group members with an updated list of the Fire and EMS agencies that have submitted their cards as of September 30, 2010. The following fire companies have still failed to submit cards to DES: 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35, 38, 40, 41, 44, 49, 54, 55, 61, 77, 79. Additionally, the following municipalities have still not submitted Fire Change Authorizations for run cards: Bally Borough, Bernville Borough, Brecknock Township, Caernarvon Township, Centre Township, District Township, Douglass Township, Heidelberg Township, Jefferson Township, Kenhorst Borough, Lenhartsville Borough, Lower Heidelberg Township, Maiden creek Township, Muhlenburg Township, New Morgan Borough, North Heidelberg Township, Oley Township, Penn Township, City of Reading, Robeson Township, Rockland Township, Ruscumbmanor Township, Sinking Spring Borough, South Heidelberg Township, Spring Township, Tilden Township, Tulpehocken Township, Wernersville Borough, Port Clinton Borough. It is important to note that without the municipality's completed Fire Authorization form in the hands of DES, run cards from any fire companies serving said municipality will NOT be loaded into the new box/card system.

As of this time, no cards submitted to DES have been transferred into the new system, however Craig noted that DES has been working on entering the CAD "pointers". DES

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has committed that a number of the companies with submitted cards will be transitioned over to the new system by 11/1/2010.

Eric Schrack questioned DES as to whether there would ever be the capability for an authorized person to update their run cards live, and the response was a firm "no".

Chris Stevens questioned DES as to the interface capabilities of On-Scene Xplorer with the new CAD, and Brian Gottschall replied that nothing had been investigated, as there would be costs to make this interface possible. Scot Landis committed to providing Brian with a point of contact with the On-Scene Xplorer representative to investigate what specifically would be needed to allow users of this program to interface with the new CAD.

Brian Gottschall also provided two examples to the Working Group of situations where properties that lie outside of a given municipality are paying taxes to said municipality, and are technically part of said municipality even if their property clearly is located in another municipality (specifically, the Hess gas station that sits along Route 61 in Tilden Township where the property owner pays its taxes to Hamburg Borough). Brian said that there are multiple situations just like this countywide, with his point being that the new CAD system will only be as good as the tax information provided on (in many cases) deeds that are well over 100 years old.

Text Paging & Mass Notification: Several training sessions were held by DES for individual company administrators through September, with a few additional sessions being offered in October (see the Berks DES website for dates and times). The legacy Emergin server is still in use, however the hundreds to thousands of individual users have been grouped by company (for those companies that have made the changeover). The Emergin server will continue to be used until the new CAD is in service, and interfaces with the new text server.

A question was raised as to why many members were receiving two weather alerts for the same event, and Brian explained that one text comes from the Mt. Holly weather office, and a second one comes from State College.

Zone All Call Tones: Zones 1 and 2 have already voted to authorize any chief officer within their respective zone use of the all-call tone. Zones 5/6 voted to authorize only the Zone President and Vice-President. Zone 3 met and is recommending authorization for the Zone President and any chief officer in their zone. Zone 4 has not made a determination yet. Scot Landis stated that rather than decide on who should be authorized to use the all-call tones, the zones should determine circumstances for why anyone other than DES would need to use these tones. Chairman Stevens asked that all representatives take this back to their zone for discussion.

High-Band Pagers: At the request of Bob Martin, Gary Smith from RMI spent some time in the Womelsdorf area investigating possible pager reception issues. Womelsdorf

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Fire Company has sent approximately 20 of their pagers back to Motorola to date; Rehrersburg has sent approximately one-half dozen, as did Mt. Aetna and Robesonia. The companies in this portion of the county were receiving partial dispatches, or drops in signal mid-dispatch, and believed the problem to lie in propagation. Most of the pagers returned from the factory post-repair have been functioning normally. Gary also believes that some of the issues could in fact be due to inadequate signal in that portion of Berks County - issues that Gary states were known from the beginning of the project. Gary offered two possible sites for an additional set of equipment to be installed, both just over the county line in Lebanon. Brian Gottschall stated that many of the existing paging tower sites are already scheduled to move to future county-owned tower sites in coordination with deployment of the new radio system.

Radio Project Funding: As of this time, 6 of the 11 companies in Zone 1 have voted to support any and all opportunities to offset the costs of the new radio project. Zone 4 is also expressing interest, however they are speaking with someone within their zone as well. Zones 5/6 have voted to support any and all opportunities as well. Zones 2, 3, and 7 have not voted as of this time but will be doing so in the near future.

Incident Management Team: Bruce Longenecker relayed to the group that after a barn fire in Zone 4 last week, it was realized that larger incidents can sometimes be overwhelming from a command aspect. Bruce questioned the group as to whether there may be a need to establish an Incident Management Response Team similar to surrounding counties. Scot Landis relayed that the East Central Terrorism Task Force has an IMT in place that can be requested through DES. Additionally, there are a number of credentialed and experienced personnel within the county that may be available for assistance in specialized areas (i.e. agricultural incidents, technical rescue, etc.). Scot further stated that within the East Central IMT there are people who can bring a "process" to the event but may not have intimate knowledge of Berks County fire departments (i.e. people knowledgeable in rural water movement but unaware of tanker sizes). It was recommended by Chairman Stevens that each representative go back to their zone and solicit feedback. Brian Gottschall added that in these situations EMA can be contacted as well.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2050 hours. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 30, 2010 at 1815 hours in the conference room of Berks DES at Direct Link.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chris Stevens, BFSWG Chairman