

***Vermont Regional EMS Coordination Study
Executive Meeting Minutes
Regional Stakeholder Meeting
Northshire Rescue, Manchester, VT
District 12
September 26, 2023 at 6:30pm***

Stakeholders Present:

Becker, Daniel (Arlington Rescue)
Camarda, Bill (Bennington Rescue)
Casey, Michael (Northshire Rescue)
Condon, Michael (Pownal Rescue)
Dame, Bambi (State EMS Chief)
Luce, Inge (Northshire Rescue)
McDonough, Mark (Northshire Rescue)
Moran, Will (Director, Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Injury Prevention)
Myrvang, Dee (Northshire Rescue/VDH)
Norris, Mark (Bennington Rescue)

This meeting began at 6:30pm, with opening remarks from Travis Howe, founder and CEO of Emergency Management Matters. A background of the Vermont Regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS) coordination study was given by Mr. Howe, and it was explained that while there would be ample opportunity for open-floor comments, the focus would be on the following objectives, which are listed within the contract.

- Issues related to costs of service, cost effectiveness of various current service models, and cost-effective alternative service models.
- Existing funding models and identify long-term sustainable funding strategies.
- Challenges and opportunities related to local and regional emergency response coordination.
- EMS district structure, authority, duties, and the number of districts.

The following key points, concerns and possible solutions were highlighted by the stakeholders present:

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- There may be too much of a reliance on volunteers in some agencies, with large blocks of time being covered by a couple of people within several districts. This can put a strain on neighboring services. It was further stated that every service is trying to staff at the same level, regardless of call volume and need. This can result in two paramedics in one ambulance, or a paramedic handling lower acuity calls. The idea of having paramedics in fly cars was floated. It was agreed there could be better ways to deploy assets and the workforce.
- It was noted EMS leadership training is lacking and some services are relying on people who may not have the proper experience or education to run a business.
- One obstacle to consolidation of services seems to be pride and a worry of losing control. It was noted that many do not want to lose their identity as a service, and some community members may feel the same way. It was noted that there are models in place within other states, which can allow identities to exist, utilizing DBA's and other organizational tools.
- Cost of readiness was discussed and services present are open to working with EMM to try and pinpoint facts and figures. Bennington Rescue seems to have a good grasp on their costs per call. Issues surrounding reimbursement were discussed, including losses surrounding non-transport calls and a lack of funding from municipalities. Some towns do not contribute to EMS or contribute very little in the way of financial support.
- Regarding personnel, it was mentioned that services should focus on recruiting within the schools. There is a need for more youth.
- It is difficult for services to recruit EMS providers due to an inability to pay better and provide better benefits. It was noted that some providers do not seem to care about benefits, and it is suspected that they need to take the higher paying jobs to provide for their families.

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- There is a belief that better education on EMS' role and needs is needed for municipal leaders.
- It was agreed that it would be helpful if EMS could transport lower acuity patients to non-hospital destinations. Mental health cases provide some of the biggest challenges.
- Districts were discussed with some questioning whether or not they serve the intended purpose. District meetings are largely for sharing information, with little progress made in bringing people and services together. It was noted that perhaps the State EMS Office could act in a facilitation role if agencies wish to speak about how they can better work together or eventually consolidate.
- District Medical Advisors (DMA) were discussed and it was noted that some provide better service than others. There was strong opposition to the DMAs being able to restrict medicine and protocols that are found within the statewide protocols.
- It was recommended by some that any money going to districts would be better utilized by adding to the State EMS staff.
- It was noted that some districts do not spend their education funding allotment.

The meeting ended at approximately 9pm.