

**EMS System Oversight Committee Meeting**  
**April 15, 2008**  
**AHEC Conference Center**

**Members/Liaisons Present:** Faye Barefoot, Tom Czaplinski, Duane Holder, Jack Cote, Juan March, M.D., Jimmy Garris, Kyle Willis, Chuck Owens Owens, David Lusk, Ted Delbridge, MD,

**Staff Present:** JoAnne Burgdorff, Noel Lee, Scott Elliott Elliott, Melonie Bryan, Janis Gallagher, Phil Dickerson

**Absent:** Jack White

**Open:** Chairman David Lusk called the meeting to order. David asked the people speaking to please state their names.

**Approval of Agenda:** Juan March, MD made the motion to approve the agenda, Jack Cote seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous. Agenda was approved.

Purpose of the meeting is to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners in regards to the Fitch Study.

Questions were referred to Fitch and Associates for tonight. Some questions were received late.

**Mitch Babb :** Opened floor for questions.

**Jimmy Garris:**

- When I look through the study I broke it down into 4 categories: my observations, my questions, my conclusions, and then I focused on the recommendations which may change by the end of this meeting. First let me share an observation, I think when we have an opportunity to focus on the positive we should and as I read through the report I saw several positive statements; one being on page 34. It states "County is achieving performance at the high end of the optimization with its current resources and constraints." This is a positive statement about our current operation and I think all persons involved should be so informed and also be told how much the county appreciates their commitment and dedication.
- One of the questions I have is relative to "average response time". Since I have been involved with this business I was under the impression that the squads were doing a good job with average response time because we had said we wanted an response time of under 10 minutes and the numbers we have been given are showing that the squads are operating on an average of less than 10 minutes is being done but in your report you said we are using an obsolete method of calculating response time and we should be using the "fractile" method which would change the response time from 9:49 to up to 14-16 minutes and that bothered me. My conclusion is that we are changing this goal and all the positive work that the squads have been doing to achieve this goal has been nullified when we changed the method of calculating. My question is when did the

method of accounting change from the “average response time” to the “fractile” method?

**Mitch Babb:** For years the EMS and fire service industry have looked at the two methods. There is still debate between using the “average response time” versus the “fractile” method. The trend has been more toward measuring the performance time than measuring the overall average response time in looking at performance being when you call and when someone arrives there. Average time does not factor in cancelled calls.

**Juan March, MD** – When you look at Farmville, 90% of their calls are within one mile of the town making the average response time of 8-9 minutes as compared to Eastern Pines or Pactolus whose calls are not concentrated in one area and they have an “average response time” of 12 minutes. Using the “fractile” method the response times are probably 20 minutes because they have a large area to cover. In terms of getting a better understanding of that concept, do we need another truck in Eastern Pines to decrease the overall response time. It would clearly help but it goes back to putting another unit at the station would not help as much as putting another one 4 or 5 miles from that other station. It is not that the means is better but it gives additional information. It is the standard deviation concept. You understand what the mean is but how much of the calls are around the mean or how much are at the outskirts.

**Mitch Babb:** One of the ways is when we speak of having an urban, suburban and rural area. One of the areas to look at is demand overlay not necessarily population or population size. You are looking at demand not necessarily population and the rule of thumb is 2 calls per month within a 2 square mile area and you also include ½ mile around that area, you begin to define what should be an urban, suburban and rural response time. This is building on what Dr. March was saying. Farmville could fall into an urban response time.

**Jimmy Garris:** Page 3 and 31. Page 3 statement: “The Pitt County Emergency Management Office provided contact information for eight non-profit emergency services agencies, the City of Greenville, County EMS operations, and five for-profit non-emergency service agencies that were active system participants at the initiation of the study. ....with six ultimately returned.” Is that the kind of cooperation you had in gathering information from the entities in the county? I would have hoped that everyone would have responded because this an effort that we all have to work together on.

Page 34 states "County is achieving performance at the high end of the optimization with its current resources and constraints." This is a positive statement about our current operation and I think all persons involved should be informed and also be told how much the county appreciates their commitment and dedication.

**Tom Czaplijski:** I looked at that also, and wondered if that affected your confidence of the data and recommendations that came out of that.

**Mitch Babb:** No, in arriving at the emergency and non-emergency calculations we used projections based on national trends.

**Tom Czaplijski:** In looking at national data, are you confident that Pitt County would be the same as what you would find nationally?

**Mitch Babb:** yes.

**Faye Barefoot:** What squads did not respond?.

**Mitch Babb:** Without looking at the list I cannot answer that question. I will get that information for the committee.

**Jimmy Garris:** Throughout the report you refer to “paid staff” versus “volunteers” Give me your definition of a “volunteer”.

**Mitch Babb:** A volunteer is one who is not being paid for their services.

**Jimmy Garris:** I have asked that question of those who know and I have concluded that there are two categories of volunteers: volunteers and paid volunteers. I have asked the question of all of the services what percent of those services are paid for. The answer I got is 90%. Is that consistent with your findings?

**Mitch Babb:** No, not from what we are being told. It is very unclear in terms of the amount of paid staff because there are multiple personnel working at multiple agencies. This will place a demand on the system particularly if there is a major event. A lot of the personnel work fulltime and if there is a major event will be required to work their fulltime job.

**Jimmy Garris** – What is the Quality Management Committee?

**Juan March, MD**– There are three committees in the county that provide oversight to EMS:

- Rescue Association-EMS captains,
- Continuing Education Committee-works with Pitt Community College regarding continuing education requirements, and
- Quality Management Committee-comprised of members of emergency and non-emergency agencies and county staff whose purpose is to review patient issues.

**Jimmy Garris** - Page 16: The report refers to “23 transport capable ambulances”. What is the average life of a vehicle.

**Mitch Babb:** Mileage and preventative maintenance play a factor in the life of an ambulance. You can look at a 5 year life span; approximately 80-120,000 miles. Fitch will provide the county an example of a vehicle replacement plan which will include age, mileage, and per annual maintenance cost.

**David Lusk:** Did you find any agencies that have a vehicle replacement plan?

**Mitch Babb:** What did come out was that there is no uniform vehicle replacement plan throughout the county, it is very difficult sometimes for agencies to replace vehicles.

**Jimmy Garris:** Page 2. Statement is made: "Response times cannot be significantly improved with the investment of \$3.2M without significant operational and deployment changes that are incompatible with the current partial volunteer system. Could you lay out a specific case or cases as to what "operational and deployment changes" would have to occur to improve or maintain current response times with the investment of \$3.2M?

1. What do you consider to be a significant improvement, 10%, 20% etc. response time?

**Mitch Babb:** A significant improvement would be based on demand overlay map and begin to look at where is the true demand within the county. With that you would be able to quantify your question there and to try and give you an answer now would be pure speculative.

2. When you say "without significant operational and deployment changes", what do you mean by this statement?

**Mitch Babb:** How units respond, like I said there was a difference among squads as to when a unit was back in service; when the call was completed at the hospital, when the unit arrived at the hospital, or when the unit was back in their territory, and lack of AVLs. You can do demand overlay maps and determine the true demand.

**Jimmy Garris:** I think I was expecting specifics on recommendations and this report does not give this.

**Mitch Babb:** Fitch can do demand overlay maps and can work with the county on this.

**Jimmy Garris:** Would this be included in the monies already agreed upon or will this be additional?

**Mitch Babb:** I will defer this to one of the partners and we can have this discussion.

**Scott Elliott:** The county can do this type of analysis. We have the ability to do the demand overlay maps in our MIS department.

3. Based on your experience over the last few months at looking at our situation in Pitt, what are your conclusions relative to the practicality and the advisability of the county continuing to manage the EMS function with 9 separate entities. The 8 nonprofits and the county?

**Mitch Babb:** I would like to expand on a statement in the report where it says the "county is functioning at the optimum level for what \$3.2 mil can provide". The important part of that, and what we would like to stress out of that is it is not a comfort statement it is a positive statement that agencies are functioning at a high level. But due to multiple factors, overall costs, the silo entities that exist and lack of coordination with the entities, the system is fractured. Two things, to continue to go down the same avenue and each agency doing their own thing is detrimental to the system; and in terms of the cost, the need for additional dollars to maintain what you currently have is going to be needed for the future. And what I would hope the committee and the Board of County Commissioners would hear is that it is not a comfort statement.

**Jimmy Garris:** In your analysis did you look at the practicality of combining some squads?

**Mitch Babb:** In looking at that I would go back to the demand overlay analysis to determine where demand lies and that would give you a better picture of where the stations need to be located.

**Duane Holder:** Stakeholders involved in interviews: Were any Pitt County citizens interviewed in the study?

**Mitch Babb:** No.

**Kyle Willis:** Would it be correct to say that with the use of volunteers it brings the system up to \$3.8 M? (\$7 M - \$3.2 M).

**Melonie Bryan:** No, a \$7 M is a fully loaded system, fully funded system at \$80/hr. not the \$41.53.

**Tom Czaplinski:** Page 2 and Page 7: Wide range in terms of the net profit for non-emergency services (\$75,000 - \$243,000). Why is that range so wide?

**Mitch Babb:** Provides information on utilization efficiency based on how efficient you are able to do a transport. It is difficult for a company when non-emergency services is not their core business to operate past a .32 efficiency.

**Jack Cote:** How did you arrive at .32.

**Mitch Babb:** In the IDR (Information Data Request) unit productivity = # of transports by # of unit hours staffing. Performance = # hours staffing by # of transports. Crew of 2 over 40 hours/week.

**Jack Cote:** How many runs at .32 in a week? Mitch Babb responded that he can get this information to the committee.

**Jimmy Garris:** When calculating potential profit, what level of investment did you assume.

**Mitch Babb:** We looked at reimbursement for Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, patient self pay. \$75,000-\$243,000 does not include the cost investment. The net profit would be less.

**Scott Elliott:** Can the committee get more details on how you came up with the \$276,326 net revenue.

**Chuck Owens:** Is this report a draft? You said you would be making another recommendation on a vehicle plan.

**Mitch Babb:** We will not make a recommendation but will supply the county information to develop a vehicle replacement plan.

**Chuck Owens:** Are there any other platforms that the committee shall expect?

**Mitch Babb:** This is the report. We will be making clarifications.

**Chuck Owens:** Do you remember if any agencies in the county are over and under utilized? And if so who are they?

**Mitch Babb:** There was very little feedback returned regarding the utilization hours that were returned to us.

**Mitch Babb:** You can define it further if you do a demand overlay analysis.

**David Lusk:** You said 5 of the 7 units responded. How many actually answered the questions?

**Chuck Owens:** Concerned with soundness and accurateness of the report. In terms of response times, you make no mention in your study of the "Arrive at patient side time". This is a National EMS reporting system. You use "call to 911 to wheel stop at the curb" When NC provided paper PCR that was one of the things that was being used to track.

**Mitch Babb:** Some agencies do not report "arrive patient side time". This may be a standard that Pitt county may want to use.

**David Lusk:** What time can we expect to have a response to the questions?

**Mitch Babb:** I will commit to have the answers by noon, Thursday.

**Chuck Owens:** There are several errors in the report that need to be corrected before a decision is made.

**Ted Delbridge, MD:** Does the \$75/hour include the cost of purchasing ambulances?

**Mitch Babb:** Does not include capital outlay. Just includes the cost of operation.

**Scott Elliott:** Committee does not have to have a recommendation by Thursday for the commissioners.

**Motion:** Faye Barefoot made the motion that the committee have clarification on items and answers to questions before a recommendation is made to the county commissioners. Duane Holder seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

**Discussion:** Jimmy Garris, one of my concerns is I am very interested in your comments regarding the validity of the reports. We have to believe the report is valid. None of the options are valid to me at this time.

**Ted Delbridge, MD:** When faced with reading a paper and there are concerns about the validity or just wanting more information, I think the reader wants to see how you arrived at the data. What the reader wants to see is:

1. Show the data used to arrive at the conclusions.

2. Validity is based on who sent in information – show who sent in data.
3. Assessment regarding the EMS system re: quality of coordination should be in the report, the basis of the recommendations should be in the report.

**Jimmy Garris:** Suggested that the EMS Oversight Committee meet on Thursday and see if the committee can come up with a recommendation, and then reschedule the meeting with the county commissioners at a later date.

**Noel Lee:** We ask that questions be sent to the Emergency Management office and then can be forwarded to the committee and on to Mitch Babb Babb. Submit questions by Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. so Fitch can have a response by Friday.

**Motion:** Jack Cote made the motion to recess the meeting until 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 24, 2008 in the EOC Conference Room in the basement of the Pitt County Office Building. Jimmy Garris seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

Jimmy Garris recommended that the joint meeting with the County Commissioners scheduled for Thursday, April 16 be cancelled.

Tom Czaplinski will call in for conference call for the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Meeting recessed until 3:00 p.m. on April 24, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Bryant, Secretary