

Meeting Minutes: Erie County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board

Date: Friday, March 20, 2026

Location: Erie County Training & Operation Center

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

The meeting was opened with a focus on streamlining future operations. Key procedural changes include:

- **Pre-meeting Distribution:** Documents and information will be sent out in advance to minimize "report out" time and focus on discussion.
- **Mission Statements:** Three draft mission statements were provided to the group to review and "ponder" over the next few weeks.

1. The Erie County Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board is dedicated to the strategic development and oversight of the county's emergency medical services and mutual aid programs. Composed of a diverse assembly of volunteer fire service members, healthcare professionals, and elected officials, the Board serves as a vital advisory body to the County Executive and Legislature. Our mission is to ensure seamless cooperation with state health bureaus to maintain a robust, efficient, and integrated emergency response system for all residents of Erie County.

2. To advise Erie County leadership on the establishment and maintenance of premier emergency medical services. By uniting volunteer first responders, hospital representatives, and public health officers, the Board fosters a collaborative mutual aid network that ensures high-quality medical care and rapid response for every emergency within our community.

3. To provide expert guidance and inter-agency cooperation in the planning and provision of Erie County's emergency medical services, ensuring a resilient and coordinated response for all medical and public health emergencies.

- **Board Structure:** The board is a chartered entity in Erie County. Membership is being refreshed to ensure representation across all disciplines, including **Fire, Emergency Medical Services, Communications, and Healthcare.**
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2. Board Objectives & Status

- **Advisory Role:** It was emphasized that this is an **advisory group, not a policy-setting body**. Recommendations are made to the County Executive and staff.
 - **Public Transparency:** While not strictly subject to Open Meetings Law, the group is a government entity and all discussions are subject to **Freedom of Information Law** requests. After discussion with the County Attorney's Office, we will follow the open meetings law.
 - **Membership Update:** All prospective and returning members must complete an **official application link** (including a resume).
 - <https://www4.erie.gov/form/applying-for-a-board-position>
 - Please send Melissa – Melissa.Calhoun@erie.gov an email when you submit your information to the website. If possible, please have an alternate to attend the meetings if you cannot.
 - **Meeting Frequency:** The goal is to meet more effectively 50% of the meetings you can attend via Webex and 50% of the meetings you should attend in person. Melissa will create a poll to send to everyone to pick the best date/time of the month. Meetings will be bimonthly however if you would like workgroup meetings on the other months we can set that up as well.
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3. Legislative & State Updates (Article 7501)

The board discussed the new **7501 Law**, which charges counties with developing a comprehensive plan to understand their Emergency Medical Services systems and identify pitfalls.

- **Timeline:** Counties will likely have 6 months to submit plans once final state guidance/policy statements are released.
 - **Goal:** To move toward a standardized "system" rather than silos, encouraging cooperation between counties and regional councils.
 - **Essential Service Debate:** It was noted that Emergency Medical Services is still not currently mandated as an "essential service" in New York State, which contributes to coverage gaps in rural areas.
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4. County Operations & Programs

- **Erie County Emergency Medical Services Agency:** Currently employs 34 staff (growing to 40 by May).
 - Operating **four 24/7 Advanced Life Support ambulances** as of March 7.
 - Plan to add a **Basic Life Support ambulance** in April and a **fifth 24/7 Advanced Life Support unit** in May.

- The service operates as a "safety net" (backup) rather than a primary responder for most areas.
 - **Medical Reserve Corps:** Through the Public Health Preparedness Office. Volunteer based group both medical and non-medical volunteers. Assist during emergency response as well as provide community support conducting trainings throughout the community. Looking for volunteers across eight sectors (Medical, Mental Health, Logistics, Spiritual Care, Animal Response, Pharmacy & Fatality Management).
 - **Family Assistance Center Plan:** A draft plan is in development to address gaps in family support following major Mass Casualty Incident events.
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5. City of Buffalo & Dispatch (Ambulance Dispatch and Inspection) Updates

- **Zone Changes:** Dispatch zones are being updated to match current police districts to align with the new **Hexagon Computer-Aided Dispatch system**. This is intended to create a "universal map" across Fire, Police, and Emergency Medical Services.
 - **Buffalo Ambulance Contract:** Discussion regarding the lack of competition in Request for Proposals due to the high cost and difficulty of obtaining operating certificates.
 - **Nurse Navigator Program:**
 - Roughly **34% of calls** in the City of Buffalo are currently being "navigated out" of the 9-1-1 system to alternative care (Ubers, virtual care, clinics).
 - This frees up ambulances but does not yet fully resolve "wall time" or engine company delays for returnable calls.
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6. Training & Education

- **Current Classes:** 75 original Emergency Medical Technician students and 15 refresher students are currently enrolled across various sites (Angola, Tower, Orchard Park, Daemen).
 - **Paramedic Program:** 33 students are currently active in day/night tracks with a graduation target of November.
 - **Upcoming Courses:**
 - **Emergency Medical Services Safety (National Association of Emergency Medical Technician):** March 28
 - **Emergency Medical Services Leadership:** June 6–7
 - **Vital Signs Conference:** November 10–14 in Niagara Falls, NY.
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7. Regional Mass Casualty Incident & Resource Tracking

- **Regional Planning:** An 8-county Mass Casualty Incident planning group has been formed to regionalize response (Level 1–4 activations) so that dispatch centers can move resources without dozens of individual phone calls.
 - **Resource Management:** There is a strong recommendation for the county to begin tracking "real-time" available/staffed resources across all 17 Public Safety Answering Points.
 - **Equipment Regs:** New standards go into effect **April 22**. New vehicle construction standards are "forward-looking" and do not require retrofitting old rigs unless they are sold/re-licensed.
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8. Next Steps

- **Application:** Members to fill out the application link and email Melissa once submitted.
- **Feedback:** Review the three mission statements for discussion at the next meeting.
- **Scheduling:** A questionnaire will be sent out to establish a recurring meeting date and time.
- **Chair Position:** Begin to think of a structure (Chair, Vice President, etc.) for the Advisory Board
- **Sub-Committees:** Think of different types of sub-committees for the Advisory Board

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Calhoun
Special Assistant
Erie County, Emergency Medical Services