

Minutes
Harris County Council of Fire Chiefs
Meeting held October 1, 2020

In Attendance

Fire Departments

Antioch – Richard McKinney
Cataula – Bill Czukor
Ellerslie – Brad Holloway
Hamilton – Ben Hood
Hopewell – Roger Duke
Northwest Harris – Curt Pechloff

Pine Mountain – Thomas Scott
Pine Mountain Valley – Jack McClung
Shiloh – Nick Terry
Waverly Hall – Alex Lawski
West Point – Mitt Smith
Secretary – Andy Kober

Visitors

Bobby Hood – Antioch FD
Monty Davis – HC 911/ EMA
Adrian Shubert – Training Committee
Becky Langston – HC BOC
Chad Dallas – HC EMS

Kelly Pechloff – Northwest Harris FD
Mike Cardwell – HC911/EMA
Justin King – PMFD
Bucky Searcy – HC EMS
Anthony Spann - SEMS

Called to order at 1930 hours

- 3) Minutes unanimously approved
- 4) Treasurer's Report – No expenditures reported, balance of \$20,299.91.
- 5) Anthony Spann of SEMS Fire Protection offered overview of what company can provide to Harris County fire departments. Services included hose testing, pump testing, aerial apparatus service but not testing, ground ladder testing. Distributed information to fire chiefs. Hood reported on using SEMS for hose testing.
- 6) A) Training
Shubert reported 13 people attended orientation class for basic firefighting class. Class will be meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays along with one Saturday per month. Bus Extrication class set for Saturday, Nov. 14. Class accepting two to three people per department.

B) Shubert reported on issues involving people using training center without notice being provided. Also noted that some equipment had been removed from training center. Traffic cones are allowed to be removed but other equipment cannot be removed without first obtaining permission. Said form had to be completed and submitted before building or any training equipment is used. Lawski noted that each fire chief or designee had key to training center. Scott reported that training center SCBA system had been tested and passed for Grade E air. Certification paper had been received. Inquired about frequency of

testing and McClung suggested yearly.

Scott recommended holding class on operating training center SCBA refilling system. McClung noted some people leaving pressure relief valve on 4,500 psi though some departments using 2216 cylinders. Approved by consensus to leave pressure relief valve at zero to reduce unnecessary wear on valve.

C) Communications

Complaints surfaced that some departments are receiving “call cleared” texts before receiving alarm texts. Cardwell said this was likely a carrier issue but would check on it.

D) Wheels of Fire II

Czukur noted participation well above anticipated with over 100 motorcycles and 10 other vehicles. Reported event began at Antioch main station with stops in Hamilton for snacks, Shiloh and Waverly Hall for baked goods. Expressed appreciation to Pine Mountain FD for having ladder at Country Store overlook and Lynn Chambers for donation of engraved cups.

Announced event will next be held on Sept. 25, 2021. Also said additional help might be needed at Cataula VFW Post.

7) Old Business

Scott, as spokesman of the group tasked with making a recommendation regarding a section of Hwy. 315 between Mountain Hill Road, Fortson Road and I-185, as to whether the residents should be served by Antioch or Cataula as primary department. Factoring into the discussion is Antioch keeping a firetruck in the Mountain Hill EMS station necessitating EMS keeping an ambulance outside and unsecure.

Scott said the committee, which included Lawski and Terry, gathered information, met with EMS Director Bucky Searcy, along with other stakeholders, and recommended the area be served by Cataula FD as primary fire department. Scott referenced a letter from the late Danny Bridges, county manager at the time, that stated when Cataula FD station #2 was operational and recognized by state officials, Antioch’s fire truck would be removed from the EMS station. That would have Cataula FD as the nearest fire department to the area in question.

Searcy reported that because the reserve ambulance kept at Mountain Hill EMS station must be kept outside and unsecure, the drug box and some tools have to be removed and kept in the station, that reserve ambulance is not immediately available. He called for Antioch’s firetruck to be removed and that bay returned to EMS to house the reserve ambulance. Searcy noted that when Antioch was allowed to place the firetruck in the second bay, EMS was not using that bay. He said it is needed now.

Scott said that if Antioch’s firetruck was moved out of the EMS station and into one of Antioch’s other stations, Cataula would be closest to the disputed area.

Lawski noted the situation has existed for 20 years and the current county manager wanted the Council of Fire Chiefs to make a recommendation.

McKinney complained the recommendation allowed one department to build a station in another department's area and then push them out.

McClung reminded those present of Bridges' letter that when Cataula station 2 was open and certified, Antioch's fire truck would be removed from the EMS station.

McKinney reported that Antioch has a better ISO rating than Cataula and that residents of the disputed area would pay higher fire insurance premiums.

McKinney also said the Mountain Hill EMS station was constructed using fire grant funds, but that was immediately disputed by Searcy who reported money came from the county's general fund.

McKinney then said he would not remove Antioch's fire truck from the EMS station until told to do so by county officials.

McClung said the issue was not about serving the community, but about potential donations.

Czukur reported Cataula had served the area when there were no housing developments in the area.

McKinney said he would call for the county to add a bay to the Mountain Hill EMS station for Antioch's firetruck.

After that, McKinney gathered his papers and left the meeting accompanied by Bobby Hood.

Searcy noted that EMS rents space in both Pine Mountain and Waverly Hall fire stations and shares utility costs. He said that Antioch has never paid EMS or the county for using Mountain Hill EMS station.

After more discussion, Scott motioned to recommend Cataula cover Hwy. 315 from Mountain Hill Road and Fortson Road to I-185 and the coverage maps be changed to reflect that. In making the motion, he noted that Antioch had a single firetruck in the EMS station, while Cataula had a brush truck, engine, heavy rescue and more at Cataula station 2. The motion was seconded by Pechloff and unanimously approved by the Council of Fire Chiefs.

The recommendation will be presented to County Manager Randy Dowling and the Harris County Commission.

Scott said there was the potential for future issues involving service areas and was for the commissioners to back the Council of Fire Chiefs. He said that came from the committee noting other areas of potential conflict.

Searcy thanked Hamilton FD for allowing use of their station for the recently completed EMTB class. He reported that eight people completed the class and the first three that took the National Registry exam and had passed. He pledged to ascertain if an EMTA class could be scheduled in the county.

8) New Business

Pechloff requested to spend NWHFD's \$10,000 equipment funds on gear lockers for the new fire station. Smith motioned approval. Second by Czukor. Approved unanimously.

Scott reported the Consolidated Fleet Services was scheduling ladder and aerial testing in Pine Mountain and other departments were invited to participate.

Lawski provided update on building for training center. Seeking recommendations on concrete work.

9) Round Robin

Antioch - No report

Cataula – Butt sale scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 7. Tickets are now available at \$40 each.

Ellerslie – Brad Holloway designated as new assistant chief.

Hamilton – Expressed appreciation to Cataula for hosting VFIS class. Internet service problems at Hamilton station rectified.

Hopewell – No report

Northwest Harris – Three people that completed support firefighter class now in basic firefighting class. Two people who completed EMS's EMTB class are already working in EMS field. Noted passing of former fire chief Ron Rollins and visitation arrangements.

Pine Mountain – Also offered appreciation to Cataula for VFIS class, had four people in class. Noted having attended ventilation class at Shiloh.

Pine Mountain Valley – No report

Shiloh – No report

West Point – No report