**MINUTES**

**Meramec Local Emergency Planning District  
12:30 p.m.   
Wednesday, March 15, 2023  
MRPC Office  
4 Industrial Drive, St. James, MO 65559**

**CALL TO ORDER:**Jeff Breen called the March 15, 2023 meeting of the Meramec Local Emergency Planning District to order at

12:35 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Members participating in-person were Jeff Breen, Kim Sallin, Ron Smith and Wendy Squires.

Members participating via Zoom were Kraig Bone, Jeff Arnold and Chuck Fisher.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Honor Evans, Brad Nash, Kendra Mobray, Clyde Zelch, Doug Drewel, Steve Vogt, Ron Hoffman, Richard Bray, Margaret Biolsi, Joshua Pearson, Ron Jones, Doris Coffman and John Lucas.

**STAFF & GUESTS PRESENT:**

Tammy Snodgrass and Linda Carroll with MRPC. Guests participating in person were Mark Burchfield and Steve Runnels National Weather Service Springfield; Chris Finch, Phelps County Sheriff Department, Deborah Hobson, Ip. Salem; Sara Allen, Missouri Emergency Response Commission (MERC); Chelsea Smith, Osage County Health Department; and Valerie Wilder and Tyler Rowden, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Guests participating via Zoom were Sharon Kennedy, EPA; Lisa Jobe (MERC) and Floyd Haworth, Washington County.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**Wendy Squires made a motion to approve the agenda. Jeff Arnold seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Approval of MINUTES:**

Wendy Squires made a motion to approve the minutes. Jeff Arnold seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Tammy Snodgrass presented the financial report ending Feb. 28, 2023. With 66% of the year expired, the percentage of revenues is at 63%. She did note that the Commodity Flow Study funds have not been received and that TIER II revenue has been down about $5,000 for each of the last two years. Tammy said administration costs are at 90%, so TIER II and plan activities have been suspended until after the beginning of the new fiscal year. . Due to the reorganization and formation of the MLEPD, Tammy said two new expenses will be D&O (Directors and Officers) Insurance and audit expenses. There will be no audit this year and audits will be completed every two years. Kraig Bone commented that the decrease in TIER II funds received by the district needs to be addressed or many activities will need to be scaled back. He said the district cannot continue to operate in the red.

Wendy Squires made a motion to approve the February financials as presented. Scott John seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**NOAA DISCUSSION ON DROUGHT/FIRE HAZMAT CONNECTION:**

Steve Runnels with the National Weather Service (NWS) in Springfield provided a presentation on how drought and fire affect the actions of hazmat responders. Mark Burchfield, NWS, passed out a handout on services the NWS can provide to the hazmat community.

Mr. Runnels talked about how the weather impacts people and how that affects what LEPDs have to do. He also mentioned that the number of billion-dollar disasters are increasing across the nation.

He said climate is what you expect, weather is what you get. The cycle of weather changes every three to five days in the spring and every five to eight days in the summer. When this cycle gets stagnant, that’s where the challenge comes in, he said. When the stagnant weather drags out, then you start talking about drought, but it takes a long time before you realize you’re in a drought. Mr. Runnels said the NWS separates the climate into normal, above normal and below normal. Statistically each category is about 33% and the challenge is how to communicate when that 33% changes.

Mr. Runnels mentioned persistent patterns and effects on forecast. If a system is coming out of a northwest flow, then the weather is typically cool and dry, while systems coming out of a southwest flow are typically warm and wet.

Mr. Runnels said from a hazmat perspective, there is a direct correlation between droughts and fires. When there is below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures you get dry fuels, which ignite easily from the smallest spark. He said the best the NWS can do is to provide the forecast out to next week or next month. When there is an event, the NWS has resources to provide support to hazmat responders, as shown on the handout.

He explained that the relationship between drought and fire is complex. The timing, intensity and frequency of drought events impact fuel flammability and fire behavior. Rapidly drying fuels after a wet spring can feed larger fires and a prolonged drought can limit fires as the availability of fuels is reduced due to lack of precipitation.

Mr. Runnel closed is presentation by discussing the relationship between the NWS and emergency responders and how the NWS could provide valuable information during hazmat events.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Status of Integrating Pulaski County as Recommend by MERC

Sara Allen, MERC, provided an update on the status of integrating Pulaski County into the MLEPD. Ms. Allen stated that if the MLEPD voted to bring in Pulaski County they would be receiving that organization’s current fund balance of $1,426.85. She said they receive $2,100 annually in CEPF funds. The organization is currently not active.

Tammy said she had sent emails to the Pulaski County EMD and to Chief Fowler, inviting them to meetings to discuss a possible merger but added that she never got a response from either of them. She said she also contacted the county’s Presiding Commissioner who said he’s leaving it up to the EMD. Ms. Allen said she had been in contact with Chief Fowler earlier today and reported that he told her it was a good idea and he would support whatever MERC and MLEPD decides. He said he’s tired to keep it going but can’t get support from the community and can’t keep it compliant.

Wendy Squires asked how bringing in Pulaski County would affect our deficit. Ms. Allen replied that the county brings in enough money to support itself. Wendy also asked how that would affect the workload for the district. Tammy said that there would be some extra work initially as the bylaws would have to be changed and a list of responders would have to be developed for Pulaski County. There would also be some extra work involved with entering the county’s TIER II data.

Ms. Allen said the MERC will be creating the HazMat Plan for MLEPD this year, which includes entering the TIER II data. Kraig Bone requested a written guarantee that MERC would be writing the plan and entering the TIER II data. He also had some concerns about why the police chief didn’t attempt to meet with this group if he supports joining. Ms. Allen said MERC will put them in an LEPD but would prefer to bring them in to MLEPD because they border our district.

Ms. Allen said her goal is to make sure all plans are compliant and then LEPDs would just need to review annually. Tammy said she’s more agreeable to bringing in Pulaski County if they are willing to join. Entering the TIER IIs is time consuming but with MERC handling that and the plan this year, she said it would alleviate a lot of work for her. With MERC writing the plan, she is comfortable with taking in Pulaski County.

Tammy said there should be some extra grant funds available this summer and if the MLEPD gets some extra funding for planning, those funds could be used for the doing outreach in Pulaski County into MLEPD.

The shortage in TIER II funds was also brought up and Ms. Allen reported there is an active investigation into why there was a shortage the last two years. Tammy reported that TIER II funds usually come in around $20,000 to $22,000 with the exception of the last two years.

Kraig reiterated his early comment about needing guarantees as the group has been told so many things over the past few years.

A roll call vote was taken for bringing in Pulaski County. Results were as follows:

Ron Smith – no Kim Sallin – no Kraig Bone - no

Wendy Squires – no Jeff Arnold – no

Jeff Breen – no Scott John – no

Ron Smith said he feels there is a bit of a disconnect between the district and MERC, especially with all of the recent changes in leadership. He added that he feels there is a need for more communication between LEPDs and MERC.

Chelsea Smith asked how communication is handled as it appears that some are just hearing this for the first time. Ms. Allen said information is sent to the chairs who then forward that information on to members. She added that any member can request to be on her mailing list.

Tammy added that she has know about the issue for at least the last six months and that Ms. Allen had been consistent in her communications. Ms. Allen said she was operating under the assumption that this group had already accepted Pulaski County. She said she had been given different information and has found that not everybody is where she was told they were.

Jeff Breen said the first verbiage that came out was that this group was taking them, then it changed. With the lack of funding and not knowing where the TIER II shortage went, and no communication with Pulaski County members, it makes it difficult to accept them into our group. He added that perhaps MERC could have helped facilitate conversations between Pulaski County an MLEPD.

Report on Trainings

Tammy reported that all counties were awarded classes and have been notified. If classes haven’t been scheduled yet, organizations should contact Lisa Jobe to get those classes scheduled.

Review and Discussion of PAM Exercise

Tammy asked the group if they were in favor of using the PAM Exercise that was held in October as the group’s hazmat exercise.

Wendy Squires made a motion use the PAM exercise as the MELP’s hazmat exercise and to do a mini-tabletop exercise in June. Kim Sallin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Report on March 3, 2023 MERC Meeting

Tammy informed the group that the new director of MERC assured her he’s working on determining where the shortfall in TIER II funds went. She also mentioned the 7-State HazMat Conference that will be held June 7-9 in Independence, MO. Money was built into the budget but with the budget already at 90%, she asked members if they still wanted her, or a board member, to attend. She added they are good conferences.

Wendy Squires made a motion to send a staff member to the 7-State Conference. Scot John seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Lisa Jobe added that there is free training before and after the conference and you don’t have to be registered for the conference to attend those trainings.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Review of MERC Application and Approval of Proposed Expenditures

Ron Smith reported that additional grant funds of up to $100,000 have become available but the application is due Friday and funds must be expended within six weeks. He presented a proposal from Rolla Fire for equipment for the HazMat team which serves every county. Ron said the fire department has partnered with the city of Rolla, who will cash flow the money.

The proposal calls for the purchase of the following equipment:

* One hydraulic spreader, $13,753
* One hydraulic cutter, $12,164
* LED battery operated lights, $2,790.40
* One thermal imager, $9,150
* Two positive pressure fans for confined areas, $12,080

Total equipment cost for the above is $49,937.

The funds would also be used to purchase booms and pads for 35 additional fire departments in the seven-county region in the amount of $46,313. Shipping costs would be $3,750. This would be a total grant request of $100,000.

Kim Sallin made a motion to approve the submission of the above grant request and equipment/supply purchases. Wendy Squires seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Ron Smith and Jeff Breen abstained.

Tammy reported that another round of funding would be opening July 1. The following are some suggestions for requests:

* Funds for planning activities.
* A couple of more exercises to get more counties involved.
* A comprehensive/in-depth hazard analysis for the region’s hazmat plan.
* Updating the commodity flow study.

She said she would bring a proposal to the June meeting.

**REPORT FROM MERC REPRESENTATIVE**

Sara informed the group the newsletter will be going out the end of the week. Anyone wanting to receive the newsletter should reach out to her. She added that the 22-23 CEPF application will be released after the June commission meeting and will be due the end of August.

**REPORT FROM SEMA REPRESENTATIVE**

No report was given.

**REPORT FROM MDNR REPRESENTATIVE**

No report was given but if anyone wanted a copy of the incident report, they should let Tammy know.

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPCOMING MEETING**

The next meeting will be June 21

**ADJOURNMENT:**Ron Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jeff Arnold seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

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Kraig Bone, Chairman Date

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Attest Date