



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN SHORTAGES

Room 412 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI

September 20, 2016
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the September 20, 2016 meeting of the Study Committee on Volunteer Firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician Shortages. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Nass called the committee to order. The roll was called and a quorum was determined to be present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Steve Nass, Chair; Rep. Jesse Kremer, Vice Chair; Sen. Janet Bewley; Rep. Debra Kolste; and Public Members John Eich, J. Timothy Hillebrand, Gregory Michalek, David Seager, Jr., Dana Sechler, James Small, and Jay Tousey.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Public Members Jodie Olson, Jeff Rickaby, Jody Stoker, and Gene Wright.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Margit Kelley, Senior Staff Attorney, and Andrea Brauer, Staff Attorney.

APPEARANCES: Gerald Derr, Chair, Town of Bristol, Dane County, and President, Northeast Dane Fire Unit; Kenneth Monroe, President, Village of Bloomfield; Kathy Overman, Treasurer, Town of Spider Lake; Timothy Bantes, Fire Chief, Town of Grand Chute Fire Department; Barry Kuenkel, Fire Chief, Cumberland Fire District; Nathaniel Melby, Fire Chief, Town of Campbell Fire Department; Michael Fraley, EMS Coordinator, Portage County EMS; and Larry Ullmer, Director, County Rescue Services, Inc.

Approval of the Minutes from the Committee's August 30, 2016 Meeting

The committee members unanimously approved the minutes of the August 30, 2016 meeting.

Presentation by Legislative Council Committee Staff

Memo No. 1, *Options for Legislation Regarding Training Requirements* (September 9, 2016)

Ms. Kelley and Ms. Brauer described the options for legislation regarding training requirements that have been presented to the committee through testimony, committee discussion, and other correspondence with committee staff, which were summarized in Memo No. 1, *Options for Legislation Regarding Training Requirements*, dated September 9, 2016. [A link to the Memo is available on the committee's website at: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/study/2016/1498>.]

Ms. Kelley and Ms. Brauer briefly described the processes under current law for development of training curricula and the standards for obtaining licensure and renewals, as they relate to the ideas collected in the Memo.

Discussion of Options for Legislation

Based on committee discussion and general consensus, Chair Nass directed that the following topics would remain open for further consideration and discussion by the committee:

- Eliminating the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) certification requirement for EMS personnel.
- Submitting recommendations to NREMT.
- Creating an Intravenous Technician (IV-TECH) level of emergency medical technician (EMT) or creating an IV specialist endorsement within the EMT-basic licensure level.
- Creating a community paramedicine specialist endorsement within the various EMT licensure levels.
- Promoting or requiring the offering of leadership training for volunteer fire and EMS departments.
- Extending the licensure period for emergency medical services (EMS) personnel from two years to three or four years.
- Authorizing a prior EMS license holder to obtain a new license through completion of a bridge or refresher course.
- Directing the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) to maximize the amount of firefighter and EMS training offered online.
- Recommending to WTCS that in rural areas the highest number of course hours that is practical be offered on site at local fire departments and EMS providers.

- Recommending WTCS district colleges improve coordination and communications with local fire departments and EMS providers about course offerings.
- Prohibiting WTCS district colleges from requiring more than a specified number (possibly six) of class participant registrations for firefighter and EMS training.
- Specifying that within a certain period (possibly 14 days) before a firefighter or EMS class is scheduled to begin, a person who resides within a district cannot displace a person who is registered for a course but resides in a different district from the one in which the course is given.

Based on committee discussion and general consensus, Chair Nass determined that the following topics would not remain open for consideration:

- Limiting the number of training hours that may be required for EMS training.
- Directing the Department of Health Services (DHS) and WTCS to assess and reconsider the number of required hours for EMS personnel training to teach strictly to required competencies and scopes of practice.
- Recommending to WTCS that firefighting courses be structured to allow local technical colleges to choose from a selection of courses within specific categories of requirements to tailor for local needs.
- Recommending that WTCS tailor the EMS personnel training to teach students how to take the NREMT written exam.
- Eliminating the requirement that first-aid personnel and first responders obtain automated defibrillation (AED) training.
- Creating a leadership specialist endorsement for firefighters and EMS personnel.
- Extending the time period during which EMS personnel may renew a lapsed license from two years to three or four years.
- Requiring WTCS to standardize the availability of firefighter and EMS course offerings in order to be offered at a known, regular schedule at each technical college.
- Requiring WTCS district colleges to notify fire departments and EMS providers, or DSPS and DHS, when training will be offered.

Presentation by Local Government Officials

Gerald Derr, Chair, Town of Bristol, Dane County, and President, Northeast Dane Fire Unit

Kenneth Monroe, President, Village of Bloomfield, Walworth County

Kathy Overman, Treasurer, Town of Spider Lake, Sawyer County

The committee heard a presentation by a panel of local government officials, who each spoke separately about the provision of fire protection and EMS in the community, affiliations

the community had made to improve the delivery of those services, and the efforts undertaken to recruit and retain firefighters and EMS personnel.

In response to questions from Chair Nass, Ms. Overman stated that the local service providers have good communication with the local technical college, and the technical college is responsive in providing training at the community fire stations and EMS providers. She further stated that her county had a strong volunteer fire and EMS association that also included members of local law enforcement, the forest service, the dive rescue team, and others, who meet monthly to cooperatively plan for training needs, equipment needs, equipment recertification, bulk supply purchases, and service capabilities. Ms. Overman also stated that in her very rural area, the community relies heavily on first responders to respond quickly with basic care, and to guide other responders to remote incident locations.

In response to questions, Mr. Monroe stated that the merger of his village with the local town and city fire and rescue departments started by looking at the North Shore Fire Department contracts and used a formula based on each community's population and other factors to determine their roles and obligations. Mr. Derr stated that his town's participation in their fire district was long-standing, with an overall administrative cost-saving for the communities, although the costs had increased when the district switched from an entirely volunteer service to a combination of paid and volunteer personnel.

Presentation by Wisconsin Fire Chiefs

Timothy Bantes, Fire Chief, Town of Grand Chute Fire Department, Outagamie County

Barry Kuenkel, Fire Chief, Cumberland Fire District, Barron County

Nathaniel Melby, Fire Chief, Town of Campbell Fire Department, La Crosse County

Fire Chiefs Bantes, Melby, and Kuenkel presented on how each of their fire departments or districts are structured, how the structure was developed, how community ties have been developed and harnessed to provide services, and what steps have been taken to improve recruitment and retention of personnel.

The Fire Chiefs presented a number of suggestions for the committee, including using alternate response vehicle staffing, mobile integrated health care, high school courses, and tax incentives for service. The speakers also made other suggestions such as utilizing service districts that have independent taxing authority, creating legal protections from employment discrimination for training time, and promoting the use of service awards.

Presentation by Wisconsin EMS Providers

Michael Fraley, EMS Coordinator, Portage County EMS

Larry Ullmer, Director, County Rescue Services, Inc., City of Green Bay, Brown County

Mr. Fraley described the countywide EMS that operates in Portage County, including the relationships with the municipalities in the county and the independent EMS association, the funding structure between the municipalities and the county, and the "skills labs" that are offered throughout the year. Mr. Fraley commented that lack of leadership skills in a department can detrimentally affect a volunteer's decision to continue service. He suggested that the

committee consider expanding the scope of the EMS training financial assistance program to include first responders and promoting the use of retirement programs for volunteers.

Mr. Ullmer briefly described the pooled resources that are used to deliver EMS in Brown County. Mr. Ullmer made a number of suggestions for the committee to consider, such as merging the database of credentialed EMS personnel with the local tax base to find potential volunteers, using temporary credentialing, permitting flexible staffing, sharing staff between organizations, using a "paramedic on demand" staffing option, hosting an email listserv for management issues, using deferred tuition payments for volunteer training, and using geographic-based credentialing.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Committee members discussed funding issues for volunteer departments, such as the costs to obtain EMS training, the contrast between EMS funding and fire and police protection funding, and how adequate funding could be determined. Chair Nass noted that while EMS and other local spending items are important, the state's biennial budget process can more appropriately address funding amounts and mechanisms than the committee.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Plans for Future Meetings

Chair Nass has scheduled the next meeting of the Study Committee for Tuesday, October 18, 2016.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

MSK:jal