



**RICHMOND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 15, 2023**

**Present:** Weet Baldwin, Chairman  
Julia Hammond, Vice Chairperson  
Kirk Roberts, Treasurer  
Marilyn West, Secretary  
Carlos Hopkins, Director  
Joey Trapani, Director  
Sheila White, Director

**Absent:** Katherine Jordan, Director  
Lincoln Saunders, Director  
Drew Walker, Director

**Counsel:** Jonathan Joseph, Esq., Christian & Barton

**Guests:** Jeff Gray, Senior Policy Advisor to the CAO, City of Richmond

**Staff:** Chip Decker, Chief Executive Officer  
Joseph Ornato, M.D., Operational Medical Director  
Terone Green, Chief Administrative Officer  
Wayne Harbour, Chief Operating Officer  
Angel Dove, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Wanda Thomas, Director of Reimbursement  
Laura Bickham, Senior Executive Assistant and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Directors

## I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Weet Baldwin called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion:** To approve the May 16, 2023 meeting minutes.

**Made By:** Marilyn West

**Seconded:** Julia Hammond

**Discussion:** None

**Motion Passed:** The votes were recorded as follows:

**Ayes:**

Marilyn West  
Julia Hammond  
Weet Baldwin  
Kirk Roberts  
Carlos Hopkins  
Joey Trapani

**Nays:**

None

## III. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Remote Participation and All-Virtual Meetings Policy

**Motion:** To adopt the Remote Participation and All-Virtual Meetings Policy as presented.

**Made By:** Julia Hammond

**Seconded:** Marilyn West

**Discussion:** Chip Decker reported counsel had updated the Board's current Remote Participation in Meetings policy to comply with current laws. The policy will take effect on January 1, 2024. Last year, the Virginia General Assembly Session resulted in changes to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) rules governing remote participation. Essentially, Board members may join meetings remotely 25% of the time or two meetings, whichever is fewer. Board meetings are calculated separately from Committee meetings. Jon Joseph noted the policy permits all-virtual meetings.

**Motion Passed:** The votes were recorded as follows:

**Ayes:**

Julia Hammond  
Marilyn West  
Weet Baldwin  
Kirk Roberts  
Carlos Hopkins  
Joey Trapani

**Nays:**

None

## B. Changes to the Employee Handbook

**Motion:** To accept the proposed changes to the Richmond Ambulance Authority Employee Handbook as presented subject to adding an appendix to provide supplementary information such as definitions and acronyms referenced in the Handbook.

**Made By:** Marilyn West

**Seconded:** Julia Hammond

**Discussion:** Weet Baldwin reported the Personnel Committee met last week at which time, proposed changes to the Employee Handbook were reviewed. Committee feedback was vetted and staff made additional changes reflected in the version distributed at today's meeting. He advised the current version includes all changes made by RAA's legal counsel and incorporates the suggestions made by the Personnel Committee. Marilyn West recalled her request for definitions and acronym meanings to be provided, to which Angel Dove referred her to Page 3 of the Handbook. Marilyn West clarified she was suggesting a separate page be added to the Handbook with this supplementary information. Jon Joseph advised the Board could move forward with a vote since the changes requested at today's meeting were not substantial.

**Motion Passed:** The votes were recorded as follows:

**Ayes:**

Marilyn West  
Julia Hammond  
Weet Baldwin  
Kirk Roberts  
Carlos Hopkins  
Joey Trapani

**Nays:**

None

## IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

**A. Operations and Clinical:** Weet Baldwin reported the following:

- 1) The Committee met on August 10<sup>th</sup>. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, the City's Public Safety leadership team will meet with The Robert Bobb Group, who the City is retaining to assist with implementation of the recommendations cited in the consultants' report. He commented how RAA has already implemented several recommendations, adding he would be interested to learn the outcome of the meeting on August 29<sup>th</sup>.
- 2) RAA implemented new response time targets on June 1<sup>st</sup> and is seeing improvements with increased staffing and the introduction of the ALS response car ("chase car"). For the first time since the pandemic, RAA hit the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in response time compliance, commenting this was a tremendous accomplishment. He commended the hard work of RAA's field providers and Communications Center staff.
- 3) Since implementing the \$200-assessment fee, staff is not experiencing much pushback from patients. RAA's fee is the same as Chesterfield County. Some insurance companies are paying the fee.
- 4) On June 28<sup>th</sup>, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced they will be terminating the ET3 payment model. It seems the federal government was not realizing the return they had anticipated, so ET3 will end on December 31, 2023.
- 5) Dr. Ornato provided the Committee with an update on the drone delivery project.

- 6) He requested to move the November Board meeting date to avoid scheduling conflicts due to the Thanksgiving holiday. There were no objections.

**B. Finance:** Kirk Roberts reported the following:

- 1) He recently contacted Chip Decker to inquire about the impact RAA may be seeing having recently increased service rates. Due to the short period of time that has lapsed since implementation, it is too soon to report on the impact.
- 2) The FY2023 audit process is underway. The Finance staff continue to work on closing the books for FY2023. The Finance Committee is scheduled to meet on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

**C. Personnel:** Julia Hammond reported the following:

- 1) The Committee met on August 10<sup>th</sup> and she noted the motion passed earlier regarding the proposed changes to RAA's Employee Handbook.
- 2) The Committee discussed the performance evaluation process for Chip Decker. Similar systems structured like RAA were contacted for comparison purposes and it was determined the Board's process is nearly identical to theirs. Interestingly, RAA was requested to share any changes made. Currently, the Board receives a blank evaluation form along with Chip Decker's completed self-evaluation. Some members commented a self-evaluation does not necessarily provide everything needed to appropriately evaluate Chip Decker's performance, while others found it to be distracting to receive his perception.

Moving forward with this year's process, the Board will receive the blank form for completion earlier. Chip Decker will not be providing a self-evaluation, rather a "year in review" summary instead, similar to what is contained in an annual report. Currently, the Board receives the daily Word on the Streets (WOTS) and a monthly newsletter and may also consider topics covered in Board and Committee meetings. The current form will be used for this year's evaluation, however, the process will be changed as noted above.

Marilyn West recalled the current form was to be distributed to the Personnel Committee in order to provide their feedback. Due to the timing, the current form will be used this year, however, the process will change. Laura Bickham confirmed she will send out the current form to the Committee members so they may provide their feedback to Julia Hammond.

**Note:** Sheila White arrived to the meeting during Julia Hammond's report. Julia Hammond provided Sheila White with a meeting overview, noting the discussion and subsequent motion made regarding the proposed changes to the Employee Handbook.

## V. STAFF REPORTS

**Chief Executive Officer's Report:** Chip Decker reported the following:

- 1) He provided a Board membership update. Reappointment applications for Marilyn West, Julia Hammond and Kirk Roberts as well as the appointment application for

Mark Hickman were considered at Council's Public Safety Committee meeting on July 25<sup>th</sup>. Committee approval was recommended and the applications are scheduled for Council consideration at their meeting on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Mark Hickman would fill the vacancy left by Matt Conrad's resignation in April. Mark Hickman is the Senior Director of State Government Relations for VCU. The next set of reappointment applications are due to the Clerk's Office by September 15<sup>th</sup> and will include Weet Baldwin, Carlos Hopkins and Drew Walker. Pursuant to Council's current meeting schedule, consideration of these three reappointments may take place at the Public Safety Committee meeting scheduled on September 26<sup>th</sup> or possibly October 25<sup>th</sup>.

- 2) No financial reports were included in today's meeting packet due to the timing of RAA's FY2023 outside audit. Both June and July month-end reports, along with the FY2023 fourth quarter financials, will be provided to the Board in September following review by the Finance Committee on September 5<sup>th</sup>.
- 3) He introduced Jeff Gray, Senior Policy Advisor to Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Richmond. The Public Safety Chiefs continue to meet monthly, and Chip Decker noted Weet Baldwin had mentioned the meeting scheduled for August 29<sup>th</sup> with The Robert Bobb Group. Jeff Gray added the City is calling on the Police Chief, the Fire Chief and the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Finance & Administration to help leverage the scale to determine what the focus area(s) should be. Chip Decker advised two sub-committees were formed; one is the Active Shooter Sub-Committee and the other is the Co-location Subcommittee.
- 4) A multi-jurisdictional active shooter training exercise (Operation Guardian Ram 2023) led by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) was held on August 2<sup>nd</sup> on VCU's campus. There were some key points raised which included interoperability amongst the participating agencies. He noted this was the first major exercise since the pandemic, adding it was a great opportunity to get back on track with these critical drills. In October, the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) will conduct a full-scale exercise at Chesterfield County Airport. RAA's role will be EMS transport unit participation (for receiving victims and patients during a disaster in the U.S. or abroad). During periods of high casualties, soldiers are flown back to the U.S. and are transported to local area hospitals.
- 5) In an effort to revitalize their membership, Richmond Volunteer Rescue Squad (RVRS) has approached RAA seeking an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for RAA's support when they are unable to fully staff a unit and cannot provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) care. RVRS contacts RAA's Communications Center when they have a unit marked up and available to respond to calls. RAA then adds the unit into the system and they are used as if they were a RAA unit. RVRS then bills for the calls they run, making the money for that call. At RVRS' request, a meeting has been scheduled for this week to further discuss their request. Weet Baldwin requested an update be provided to the Operations & Clinical Committee. Sheila White inquired as to the type of insurance they carry, to which Weet Baldwin responded they likely follow the Virginia Office of EMS' insurance requirements. Chip Decker stated it was his understanding RVRS had entered into an MOU with the City and that Richmond Fire & Emergency Services ("RFD") pays them \$30,000 annually out of the Four-for-Life funding RFD receives from the State's Office of EMS (OEMS receives funding allocated from the Four-for-Life program annually). RAA does not receive any funding. The MOU does not contain

any performance measures. RVRS is a stand-alone, EMS agency. While RAA dispatches for them, they are liable to OEMS directly. Sheila White stated she was trying to assess if taking on any potential, additional risk with RVRS was prudent. Kirk Roberts commented if RAA is to provide a higher level of care to RVRS, RAA should bill and get paid for that care. Chip Decker responded RAA may be able to bill for "ALS intercept," however RAA may see less money as opposed to handling the transport directly.

- 6) He introduced Wanda Thomas, RAA's Director of Reimbursement.
- 7) He noted Weet Baldwin's request earlier to move the November meeting date providing the Board has no objections, to which there were none. Marilyn West asked if a Board meeting date gets changed does the public get notified, to which Chip Decker responded affirmatively. She then asked if the public is given the opportunity to attend RAA Board meetings, to which Laura Bickham responded they do, adding RAA complies with Virginia FOIA.
- 8) RAA's Annual Employee Appreciation Celebration will take place on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Invitations will follow shortly.
- 9) Chip Decker will be out of town from September 19<sup>th</sup> through September 22<sup>nd</sup> attending the EMS World Expo in New Orleans.

**VI. OPERATIONAL MEDICAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** Joseph Ornato reported the following:

- 1) VCU continues its quest to help supplement EMS resources with the drone delivery of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and naloxone to bystanders witnessing a cardiac arrest. Dr. Monique Starks, a cardiologist with Duke University Hospital, and Dr. Joseph Ornato decided to collaborate on the next phase of exploration of the drone delivery project. Together, they participated in an American Heart Association (AHA) grant funding opportunity for \$20 million over a four-year period for research centers focused on improving cardiovascular health in rural communities. The University of Washington volunteered to serve as a center for project coordination. Drs. Ornato and Starks were contacted to explore drone delivery of AED's and naloxone in rural/suburban areas. Due to the population density in rural areas, it was proposed to also include suburban areas. This will allow for a reasonable number of cases to test. The grant was awarded, and the two sites identified for testing are Forsyth County, North Carolina and James City County, Virginia.

Currently, Richmond uses drones for surveillance purposes. Current Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations differentiate five levels of certification for drone operations. The majority of funding will go towards equipment purchases. The class of drone required is much larger and heavier (suitable to carry an AED). He expressed his interest in expanding the project into the urban setting. Urban population and density are much larger, with higher numbers of cardiac arrests reported due to overdoses. Using six drones stationed strategically across Richmond, an AED or naloxone can be delivered within two minutes. Any other means of a comparable response is up to 400 times more expensive. The next step is for Virginia and North Carolina to jointly apply for the National Institute of Health (NIH) grant funding to test the concept in urban areas. To apply, the FAA requires a specialized drone already be in place. The Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation (VIPIC) has experience with this type of innovation and will be

providing a grant opportunity of \$100,000. To purchase a drone of the required caliber will cost \$50,000 and an additional \$20,000 to house it. The NIH requires FAA approval for the delivery of medical products. He expressed his optimism having been chosen by the AHA to test the project in the rural/suburban setting and stated it should increase the chance of a successful grant application with the NIH for testing in the urban setting. Weet Baldwin congratulated Joseph Ornato.

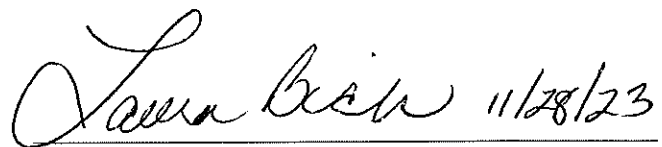
#### **VII. NEXT MEETING DATES**

Weet Baldwin noted the dates of the upcoming meetings and advised more information would follow regarding the rescheduling of the November meeting date:

- A. November 21, 2023
- B. February 20, 2024

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Weet Baldwin adjourned the August 15, 2023 Board of Directors meeting at 8:55 a.m.

 11/28/23

Laura Bickham, Assistant Secretary