



**RICHMOND AMBULANCE AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 18, 2021  
\*ANNUAL MEETING\***

**Present:** Matt Conrad, Chairman  
Weet Baldwin, Vice Chairman  
Richard Bennett, Treasurer  
Julia Hammond, Secretary  
Kristen Larson, Director  
Beth Matish, Director  
Brandon Mencini, Director  
Kirk Roberts, Director  
Lincoln Saunders, Director  
Sheila White, Director

**Absent:** Carlos Hopkins, Director

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

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

## **I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Matt Conrad called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Chip Decker announced RAA now had a full Board (11 members) and welcomed everyone to the Board's Annual Meeting. He noted the attendance of the Board's three newest members: Brandon Mencini, Sheila White and Kirk Roberts. All three members introduced themselves to the Board. Following, the rest of the Board and staff introduced themselves as well.

Chip Decker announced Carlos Hopkins will deploy for federal active duty in the Middle East. Currently, he is in Texas and it is hoped he is able to join today's meeting remotely.

## **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 16, 2021**

**Motion:** To approve the February 16, 2021 meeting minutes.

**Made By:** Weet Baldwin

**Seconded:** Julia Hammond

**Discussion:** None

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

**Ayes:**

Weet Baldwin  
Julia Hammond  
Matt Conrad  
Richard Bennett  
Beth Matish  
Kristen Larson  
Brandon Mencini  
Kirk Roberts  
Lincoln Saunders  
Sheila White

**Nays:**

None

## **III. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Fiscal Year 2022 Budget – Final Adoption**

**Motion:** To adopt the Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget for the Richmond Ambulance Authority as presented.

**Made By:** Richard Bennett

**Seconded:** Beth Matish

**Discussion:** Chip Decker reported City Council is expected to vote to adopt the Fiscal Year 2022 budget at its meeting on May 24<sup>th</sup>. He provided some key points to RAA's budget, which include the following: switching to leasing versus purchasing vehicles, reducing the weekly work shift of field providers, adjusting the wages of some of RAA's lowest paid employees and the \$1 million subsidy cut by City Administration.

Fortunately, the additional \$900,000 proposed cuts by Council are no longer being considered. Matt Conrad explained RAA has historically funded capital purchases, adding that while leasing vehicles offers some benefits, there are tradeoffs. Chip Decker concurred, explaining that leasing vehicles will now require RAA to be mindful of the imposed mileage cap. He also explained the advantage of purchasing vehicles includes the flexibility to keep an ambulance in service longer than originally planned while another vehicle may be in the repair shop for an extended period of time. The FY2022 budget includes seven vehicles to be leased. The first year or two, leasing vehicles will generate savings over purchasing, however, this will not be the case in the out years. Right now, interest rates are favorable. The savings from leasing vehicles now frees up money needed to fund reduced work hours for field staff. Chip Decker stressed the critical need for RAA to remain focused on the recruitment of paramedics and EMTs and maintaining competitiveness in the marketplace.

He reiterated the challenge of leasing vehicles will be in the out years, commenting it is highly unlikely RAA will generate any increased revenue from its major payers (Medicare and Medicaid). This budget still allows for wage adjustments and managing a work-life balance while maintaining an effective ambulance rotation. Matt Conrad concurred, noting that leasing vehicles is a philosophical change for RAA and does have potential repercussions. He added it will allow RAA to align its capital purchase process with the City. Lincoln Saunders responded leasing would not be unique to RAA and explained the City uses debt financing to pay for its public safety vehicles. He advised the City needs to address the high turnover rate, adding that in a year, adjustments, sacrifices and prioritizations will need to be made. Lincoln Saunders extended his appreciation to Chip Decker for working with City Administration on the subsidy reduction and finding other ways to continue with RAA's recruitment, retention and compensation priorities. Kristen Larson commented another big change this year is having the collaboration between City Administration and RAA, adding how RAA's budget is included in the City's budget. She explained many times before, Chip Decker would learn things impacting RAA after the fact and it is satisfying to see the Acting Chief Administrative Officer has committed to working with RAA. Lincoln Saunders explained contributions made by the City are characterized as charitable, which should not be the case with RAA. He expressed his hope to have more flexibility with general funding next year to better support RAA.

Matt Conrad explained RAA is an authority and not a City agency. He explained RAA was created back in 1991 to address the disparity and inequity that existed regarding the delivery and quality of EMS care throughout the City. At that time, service delivery measures were put in place along with the necessary enabling legislation for the provisions of EMS in the City of Richmond. Matt Conrad confirmed the first and final draft versions of the budget were presented and reviewed by the Finance Committee prior to distribution to the Board for adoption.

Weet Baldwin expressed his disappointment with the City's \$1 million cut to RAA. He stressed his passion for EMS, noting he has over 30 years of experience in healthcare, public safety and emergency management. Weet Baldwin expressed his appreciation to the RAA team and emphasized this Board is well aware of how precious such a high-performance EMS system like RAA is and how precious are the people RAA serves. He

expressed his understanding of having to lease vehicles this budget year, supports the budget as presented, but opposes the cuts that were made by City Administration.

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

<u>Ayes:</u>	<u>Nays:</u>
Richard Bennett	None
Beth Matish	
Matt Conrad	
Weet Baldwin	
Julia Hammond	
Kristen Larson	
Brandon Mencini	
Kirk Roberts	
Lincoln Saunders	
Sheila White	

## **B. Changes to the Employee Handbook**

**Motion:** To accept the proposed changes to the Richmond Ambulance Authority Employee Handbook as presented.

**Made By:** Julia Hammond

**Seconded:** Weet Baldwin

**Discussion:** Chip Decker reported that due to recent additions and changes in employment laws as well as RAA benefits and policies, proposed revisions to the Employee Handbook were made. The Handbook was reviewed and includes proposed changes received by both outside counsel and ADP (as part of RAA's Comprehensive Services Plan). The redlined version provided to the Board was reviewed by the Personnel Committee and Board approval is recommended. Julia Hammond confirmed the Committee had a thorough discussion and feels RAA's proposed changes are in line with what other entities have in place.

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

<u>Ayes:</u>	<u>Nays:</u>
Julia Hammond	None
Weet Baldwin	
Matt Conrad	
Richard Bennett	
Beth Matish	
Kristen Larson	
Brandon Mencini	
Kirk Roberts	
Lincoln Saunders	
Sheila White	

### C. Tiered System Response and Changes to the All ALS System Policy

**Motion:** To approve the integration of BLS ambulances into a tiered system response and to adopt the proposed changes to the Richmond Ambulance Authority All ALS System Policy as presented.

**Made By:** Weet Baldwin

**Seconded:** Julia Hammond

**Discussion:** Chip Decker explained that back when RAA was created, it was believed the most efficient way to run the operation was with an all-Paramedic system. Many systems have long done away with it. Instead, the approach is having the right training in place to assure the right skillset is matched with the right call at the right time. He advised this approach is not unique, adding the area counties have employed this type of tiered system. Lower acuity calls would most appropriately be handled by EMT's, leaving RAA Paramedics to handle more critical calls for service. Chip Decker confirmed the proposed changes to a system response were reviewed and approved by RAA's Operational Medical Director, Joseph Ornato. This proposal requires approved changes to a Board policy adopted in 1994. Following, RAA will need to obtain Council approval prior to moving forward.

Beth Matish noted the discussion paper included in today's meeting packet referenced this initiative as a "pilot," commenting pilots typically indicate there's a time frame to evaluate the success. Richard Bennett concurred. Chip Decker responded management had been working on this proposed change for quite some time. Originally, it was thought to be rolled out as a pilot, however, it was later determined more buy-in was needed and it should not necessarily be called a pilot. He confirmed no changes will be made that may lower the expectation the public should continue to have nor will a level of care be delivered that is not aligned with a caller's medical complaint. Should RAA receive Board approval and subsequent Council approval, it will then be implemented. Kristen Larson offered her support to assist with RAA's needs from Council. She suggested having written intent of the proposed change emphasizing the quality of care will remain unchanged.

Brandon Mencini asked how RAA determines the success of this change, and Chip Decker explained management should be able to see from the ALS Unit Hour Utilization (UHU) and determine the impact having reduced ALS response to specific call types. Sheila White inquired as to whether RAA would realize any net savings and Chip Decker answered the savings will be in personnel costs. He commented it is difficult to quantify until RAA is back to full field staffing. Joseph Ornato expressed his full support of the direction RAA management is proposing, adding that RAA uses the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED) standards, which are the highest in the industry. He stated tiered response allows ALS provider skills to increase. Matt Conrad added it can also be a morale boost. Kirk Robert expressed his support of the change.

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

<u>Ayes:</u>	<u>Nays:</u>
Weet Baldwin	None
Julia Hammond	
Matt Conrad	
Richard Bennett	
Beth Matish	
Kristen Larson	
Brandon Mencini	
Kirk Roberts	
Lincoln Saunders	
Sheila White	

**Note:** At Matt Conrad's request, the motion recorded above was amended by Weet Baldwin to include the request for management to report back to the Board following implementation.

#### **D. Benefits Brokerage and Consulting Services Procurement**

**Motion:** To approve the evaluation criteria for the issuance of the Benefits and Insurance Brokerage and Consulting Services Request for Proposal.

**Made By:** Richard Bennett

**Seconded:** Lincoln Saunders

**Discussion:** Chip Decker explained RAA engages the services of a benefits broker to assist with obtaining the best coverage and costs for employee benefit programs to include health, dental, vision, life, short and long term disability. It is now time to go back out to bid to secure these services. Prior to the issuance of the RFP, Board approval of the evaluation criteria provided on page B9 is requested. In addition, a member of the Board is requested to serve on the Selection Committee, at which time, Julia Hammond volunteered. Matt Conrad asked Lincoln Saunders how RAA's point criteria aligned with the City's scoring system of RFP's and Lincoln Saunders responded the processes were similar.

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

<u>Ayes:</u>	<u>Nays:</u>
Richard Bennett	None
Lincoln Saunders	
Matt Conrad	
Weet Baldwin	
Julia Hammond	
Beth Matish	
Kristen Larson	
Brandon Mencini	
Kirk Roberts	
Sheila White	

#### IV. ANNUAL MEETING

##### A. Election of Officers

**Motion:** To elect Matt Conrad to serve as Chairman of the RAA Board of Directors.

**Made By:** Richard Bennett

**Seconded:** Kristen Larson

**Discussion:** Chip Decker announced the May meeting serves as the Board's Annual Meeting, at which time, the Election of Officers is held. He explained all four Officers are eligible to continuing serving in their current office, should they wish to do so. Richard Bennett nominated Matt Conrad to the office of Chairman. Matt Conrad accepted the nomination and expressed his willingness to serve for one more year.

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

**Ayes:**

Richard Bennett  
Kristen Larson  
Matt Conrad  
Weet Baldwin  
Julia Hammond  
Beth Matish  
Brandon Mencini  
Kirk Roberts  
Lincoln Saunders  
Sheila White

**Nays:**

None

**Motion:** To reelect the remaining current slate of officers by acclamation.

**Made By:** Kristen Larson

**Seconded:** Beth Matish

**Discussion:** Beth Matish expressed her support of Weet Baldwin to continue to serve as Vice Chairman. Matt Conrad concurred and nominated Weet Baldwin. Weet Baldwin accepted the nomination.

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

**Ayes:**

Kristen Larson  
Beth Matish  
Matt Conrad  
Weet Baldwin  
Richard Bennett  
Julia Hammond  
Brandon Mencini  
Kirk Roberts  
Lincoln Saunders  
Sheila White

**Nays:**

None

## **B. Committee Membership**

Matt Conrad recalled the Operations and Clinical Committees had recently been combined into one, noting the Committee is chaired by Weet Baldwin. The Finance Committee is chaired by Richard Bennett and Julia Hammond chairs the Personnel Committee. Richard Bennett suggested newly appointed members have the opportunity to understand each Committee's work in order to better determine which Committee they may wish to join. Matt Conrad agreed. He then requested Laura Bickham solicit the interest from the Board regarding serving or continuing to serve on the various committees.

## **V. SENIOR MANAGEMENT / STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. Chief Executive Officer Report:** Chip Decker reported the following:

- 1) This week is National EMS Week. All week long, both RAA and the area hospitals recognize frontline workers, providing meals, giveaways, t-shirts, etc. He noted this year's EMS Week gift distributed around the table to the Board which will be given out to all staff members throughout the week. Once again, RAA had to postpone its annual employee appreciation celebration this year, however, a date for next year's event has already been set – May 21, 2022.
- 2) He welcomed Michael Dixon to RAA's senior leadership team and introduced him to the Board. Michael Dixon joined RAA in late February.
- 3) He congratulated Joseph Ornato for recently winning the 2020 Governor's EMS Award in the category, "*Physician for Outstanding Contribution to EMS.*" Joseph Ornato was recognized for his work on the federal pilot program for the delivery of naloxone via drone to bystanders on scene of an overdose.

### **VI. OPERATIONAL MEDICAL DIRECTOR:** Joseph Ornato reported the following:

He reminded the Board of the Phase I funding VCU received from the National Institute of Health (NIH) for the drone delivery project of the opiate analgesic, naloxone. Phase I is now almost complete. Seven of RAA's System Status Controllers have been successfully trained in the FAA-approved commercial drone course. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the country saw a spike in overdose cases resulting in 82,000 deaths. The NIH has set aside significant grant funding in support of innovative ways to lessen the carnage and address this epidemic. Joseph Ornato stated the most cost-effective way is via drone delivery, noting it is 300 times less expensive (using two drones) and can deliver naloxone within two minutes. Currently, VCU is working on a program that will also include drone delivery of a Stop the Bleed® kit, an EpiPen® and an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED). The goal is to successfully deliver something into the hands of a lay person to assist with saving a life. VCU has identified a Richmond-based company, UAS Associates, LLC, to partner in this project. UAS is led by a former United Airlines Captain and drone expert. Matt Conrad thanked Joseph Ornato for the update. Chip Decker commented that sadly, RAA had administered its highest number of doses of naloxone (108 doses) in March.



**VII. NEXT MEETING DATES**

The upcoming meeting dates are as follows:

- A. August 17, 2021
- B. November 16, 2021

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** To adjourn the May 18, 2021 meeting of the RAA Board of Directors.

**Made By:** Richard Bennett

**Seconded:** Weet Baldwin

**Discussion:** None

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

**Ayes:**  
Richard Bennett  
Weet Baldwin  
Matt Conrad  
Julia Hammond  
Kristen Larson  
Beth Matish  
Brandon Mencini  
Kirk Roberts  
Lincoln Saunders  
Sheila White

**Nays:**  
None

 - 08/17/21

**Laura Bickham, Assistant Secretary**