

Joint Kent-Queen Anne's Task Force

January 15, 2016

Members Present: Margo Bailey, Foster Beach, Jack Brosius, Wayne Darrell, Commissioner Ronald Fithian, Paul Hanley, Shelley Herman, Greg Holsey, Greg Roby, and Greg Todd

Member Absent: Commissioner Mark Anderson, Mayor Chris Cerino, Commissioner William Short, Ken Fry, Mark Glass and Joe Holt

Also in attendance: Bernadette Bowman, Director, Tourism Development; Virginia Gregg, Emergency Planner, Kent County Office of Emergency Services; Scott Haas, Chief, Queen Anne's County Emergency Medical Services; William Hildebrand, Upper Shore Liaison Officer, Maryland Emergency Management Association; Greg Kimmel, Chester River Packet, Co.; Kristin McMenamin, Region IV Coordinator, State of Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Lieutenant Mark A. Meil; Queen Anne's County Office of the Sheriff; Bob Rager, Community Liaison, State Highway Administration; and Jerry Roderick, Director of Public Safety, Washington College, on behalf of Joe Holt.

At 9:00 a.m. the meeting convened. Commissioner Fithian gave opening remarks.

On motion by Mr. Darrell and seconded by Mr. Brosius the minutes from the August 17, 2015, meeting were approved.

Commissioner Fithian introduced Mr. Darrell and Mr. Haas. Mr. Darrell gave an overview of the closure of the Sassafras River Bridge. Mr. Darrell shared that the Office of Emergency Services met with the emergency response community and developed an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for the closure. During the closure there were no major incidents. The Chester River Bridge closure will require emergency services to make changes to Kent County's and Queen Anne's County's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) server in an effort to dispatch the appropriate personnel in the event of an emergency. Mr. Darrell and Mr. Haas met with both Sheriff Offices, State Police, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), State Highway Administration (SHA) and several other law enforcement agencies to talk about issues and detour routes. The traffic patterns will change at Route 544 in Crumpton and Routes 290/291 in Kent County. The Queen Anne's County Sheriff's Department and the State Police will be staffing the northern part of Queen Anne's County more heavily during the closure.

Mr. Darrell and Mr. Haas also met with the Chestertown Volunteer Fire Department, Kent-Queen Anne's Rescue Squad, Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), and University of Maryland Shore Regional Health at Chestertown. The biggest issue is that most of the volunteers live on the Queen Anne's side of the bridge. Chestertown Volunteer Fire Company is making arrangements to house six to eight volunteers to stay over-night during the closure. Mr. Darrell suggested that discussions should occur with SHA to discuss possible reimbursement or grants to help with the cost of housing and meals for volunteers. Ms. Bailey suggested that Chestertown

Volunteer Fire Co. coordinate with Washington College dining services to assist with meals for the volunteers. Mr. Roderick will look into this. Hospital transport destinations should remain the same. Mr. Darrell has spoken with MIEMSS and will speak with State Police Aviation to discuss the availability of a helicopter during the closure. DNR will also have boats available on both sides of the Chester River to transport emergency personnel.

Ms. Bowman requested to be added to the Task Force along with Laney Soloman, Tourism Manager, Queen Anne's County Tourism Office. The Task Force agreed.

Currently, the bridge is scheduled to close on July 18 through August 14, 2016. SHA is already preparing the bridge for the work that will be performed during the closure. Mr. Hanley requested that the closure dates be moved to the last few days in July. July is one of the busiest months for businesses in Chestertown. Mr. Roby and Mr. Holsey will discuss the dates and report back. Commissioner Fithian stated that it is difficult to find dates that would suit everyone.

Ms. Bowman and Mr. Kimmel have been working on the tourism aspect of the closure and to make "lemons into lemonade." Mr. Kimmel has plans with Rolph's Wharf to shuttle individuals into Chestertown on the Chester River Packet, offering coupons and incentives for people to visit Chestertown during the closure.

Ted Newcomen requested that speed cameras be installed on both sides of the bridge. Ms. Herman stated that speed cameras can only be posted in a school zone. Ms. Bailey also stated that a speed study was conducted on the Chester River Bridge and there were no major issues reported. Excess speed did not appear to be a problem.

On motion by Mr. Beach, seconded by Commissioner Fithian the Task Force agreed to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m. The Joint Kent-Queen Anne's Task Force agreed to meet again on February 19, 2016, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Respectfully submitted,



April E. Bitter, Deputy Clerk

Approved: 
Ronald H. Fithian, Member
The County Commissioners
Of Kent County, Maryland