

# Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council

## General Meeting Minutes

**June 27, 1992**

Called to order at 1000 hours by President Peter McCabe.

**Attendance:** see Attachment #1.

A quorum was established.

### President's Report

January Board meeting did much to move PSARC ahead:

- Each of the Directors will be asked to handle primary area of responsibility
- Small cadre of search managers identified from each area of state to serve as Mission Coordinators
- The Proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PEMA is on hold (see below)
- Irv Lichtenstein has investigated a statewide pager system to support the planned new operational role of PSARC (see below)
- Training Committee: is still not off the ground.

### Secretary's Report

Minutes distributed to attendees; minutes had also been mailed to all PSARC member teams.

Minutes corrections discussion, Jim Howley: some differences between minutes and other PSARC publications; June 1991 assignments hadn't been done; listing of members in minutes missing Jim Howley from the list of members of the Training Committee, also missing the assignment of Training Committee to collect copies of training standards from other states.

Bruce Barton: minutes not clear as far as responsibilities of Standards Committee vs. Training Committee. Peter McCabe, reading from "May 1991 Council Committees" handout (Goals: 1. Review established training standards and accreditations for various levels of personnel in professional volunteer ground SAR units based in Pennsylvania and neighboring states. 2. Summarize these standards for presentation at the June 29 Statewide meeting. Members: Scott brothers, SAVES team; Mariann Holnaider, SMRT; Jim Howley, Thornhurst SAR; Bruce Trego, Mifflin County SAR.), also found seen in January "SAR Communications Net"; Peter McCabe: Standards Committee is supposed to investigate/develop team standards, whereas Training Committee is responsible for investigating individual standards.

Minutes accepted as corrected by adding Jim Howley to Training Committee and adding Committee assignment to obtain other standards, by unanimous vote.

### Treasurer's Report

See attachment #2. SMRT team check just received, so have 22 paid members as of now.

Irv: point of order: have to vote on teams before becoming members; noted and accepted (see below)

Disbursements: two checks went for radio communications and Peter for postage and office supplies.

Treasurer's report accepted by unanimous vote.

## Membership Committee

(Special order of business to allow new teams to vote on issues at this meeting.)

New applicants since last meeting:

Endless Mountains SAR

Mon Valley Dive Team

Upper Delaware Nordic Patrol

West Branch SAR

(Mid-Atlantic voted in last June, according to memory of those present)

Motion to accept all; seconded. Discussion: informal discussion by those present suggested that each team is active.

Motion passed unanimously.

## Old Business

Relationship of PSARC with PEMA: as described in materials mailed to all PSARC member teams, the Federal Emergency Management Agency initiative has prompted the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) to become more active in urban search and rescue and consequently in other types of search and rescue (i.e., wilderness). Therefore, PSARC is working on a plan to help actively coordinate SAR in Pennsylvania, in coordination with PEMA. The goal would be to, via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), set up a system as follows. If a call for assistance comes in to PEMA, then a PSARC Mission Coordinator, who understands SAR, would then obtain more information and dispatch appropriate SAR resources to the scene. This would be similar to the system in Colorado, where the Colorado SAR Board performs this service in a way analogous to what PSARC would do.

Discussion related to this:

Peter McCabe: most of the PSARC MC's would be Department of Environmental Resources (DER) State Park or Forest Superintendents with lots of SAR experience. PEMA would provide on-scene personnel. This would allow PEMA to reallocate resources. Peter McCabe is asking Ken Boyles, and the other two Directors, to concern themselves with standards in general (teams and individuals), related to this plan. By this plan, the independent county-based SAR programs will have the opportunity to become active in the family of regional and statewide SAR teams throughout the state. This will improve marketing for volunteer SAR. Some teams may not want to be part of this larger assemblage of programs; this, of course, is an option. However, standards are coming, and statewide coordination is going to happen; whatever comes, we want to make sure that PSARC is part of it. And, by being a step or two ahead, we hope to guide the state in procedures in which our collaborative experience is great. We have strength that the state cannot begin to have as far as technical experience. However, it's going to be a long, controversial, argumentative process. That's OK. Our end goal is to improve SAR service to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and to provide better service to the teams.

Martha Ann Ackroyd-Geary: spoke in support of this plan, and agrees to serve as focal point for developing the plan. She will try to do many things by computer and electronic mail.

Ken Boyles: turf battles and ego battles, as when we first started PSARC, now will be showing up. For example, several dog teams have started up and become operational in three months now that FEMA Urban SAR grants are available. Same may happen with wilderness SAR teams. Note that we are talking about establishing Mission Coordinators, not Incident Commanders; the MC's would not command field resources, only dispatch resources to the scene. Also, related to Peter McCabe's comments, only about three of the eleven MC's are from DER.

Peter: Six of the eleven are from DER.

Ken: See what I mean? Turf battles already. (General laughter.)

Tom Hirschak: I'd like to make sure that regional meetings are more than social meetings.

Ron Wisbith: Trying to make PSARC more operational will be difficult, but we must persevere.

Peter McCabe: Eastern and Western Regions have turf battles that may soon spill out into public warfare. We must work to prevent such things.

## Regional Reports

Western Region, Lee Lyons: we meet every other month. At the meeting on 22 February at Childrens' Hospital, SMRT talked on their capabilities are. Next meeting not scheduled. Last year, we had a picnic in July in Somerset; we may do so again.

Central Region, Roy Keiser: Our Region has a real problem. I can't get people to come to meetings, despite postcards and letters.

Eastern Region, Irv Lichtenstein: A meeting report was mailed, in "From the Chief," to all memb

Communications Committee: preface by Peter McCabe: The June 1991 PSARC approved application for license on three frequencies; in December 1991, wanted to proceed ASAP; on follow-up with Bruce in early spring, had applications at coordinator's in Rhode Island for review, application completed and went into FCC; on review by others on communications committee without Bruce's input, thought that one or more parts of application might be inappropriate, so asked FCC to hold processing, and Peter discussed this with Bruce. Steve Houck and Joe Thrash (co-chairman of committee) both reviewed these concerns; Mike Sawyer, other committee member, hasn't been involved in this discussion. Bruce is upset with this. Bruce: this is essentially correct; however, he had been doing most of the work by himself. Peter: suggest that Bruce and Steve get together "off-line" and discuss this; notes that there has always been four members on committee. Will ask Lee Lyons and Tom Hirschak to sit in on this meeting.

## Mission Critique

Irv Lichtenstein, GPSAR: have had three recent missions. Had some problems locating other SAR resources. One one mission, the subject entered an unsecured building that had been searched before, and was found asleep there.

Mariann Holnaider, SMRT: recent seven-hour rescue in Con cave, east of Pittsburgh, questionable loss of consciousness, no hypothermia, bilateral acetabular fracture, fracture/dislocation of the right ankle. Well-coordinated interjurisdictional operation, with SMRT team, National Cave Rescue Commission, etc. Incident Commander at entrance was the local ambulance service commander. Had to use a SKED for part of evacuation, because Stokes too big.

STRIKE K-9 SAR: Two recent searches for suicides, in Northumberland County; problem: maps are old (1947) and don't show many strip mines; recommendations are to contact USGS for latest topographic maps (usually photorevised every 10 years or so), and contact Department of Environmental Resources for maps, and to call DER or PEMA 800 numbers, and to contact the mining agencies for updated maps showing the mines.

General Discussion: Recent search for a lost ice skater, where some where nearby teams were upset that they weren't called. State Police called Pittsburgh barracks, who referred them to STATCOM for PSARC assistance; at the time, STATCOM had no way of knowing where individual teams are. STATCOM called Lee Lyons several times to try to sort out the problem. STATCOM now has information on where teams are. GPSAR was called in, but wasn't able to reach the nearby WEST team, even through he called Lancaster County communications. Irv called Thornhurst and tried to contact WEST only after approval by state police, State Police turned down other resources suggested by GPSAR.

The scene was about 2 hours drive for GPSAR, slightly more for Thornhurst. Coventry Canine SAR was only about an hour away, and were upset they weren't called, as was WEST. Could make point the we

as PSARC didn't deploy resources in the area that could have responded. Keith Conover and others: this is an excellent argument for the proposed Mission Coordinator system.

Question of whether some teams were not called in for mutual aid because "they weren't qualified." Keith made point that there is no requirement that SAR Council teams call in any other teams, and that there are differences in qualifications (types of expertise, even if not addressing levels of expertise) and that it is entirely legitimate, at least according to the present rules, for one team to regard another as unqualified for a particular task. There is no requirement that any PSARC team call in another, even if the other team is nearby, or even if closer to the scene. Bruce Barton, NESAR: still need workman's compensation for injuries on missions. Roy Keiser, STRIKE K-9: who is in charge of search and rescue in Pennsylvania? (General laughter.) To be discussed informally over lunch.

Keith: recent rural/wilderness lost person search in Elizabeth Township near Pittsburgh, and no PSARC search and rescue teams involved; we need to get our act together, establish standards for teams and individuals, and start advertising ourselves. That's the best way to save lives.

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There was a lunch-time informal discussion on general problems in search and rescue, focusing on the lack of clear definition of authority for search and rescue in Pennsylvania.

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## **Old Business**

Report of Communications Committee after special lunch-time meeting, Tom Houck: will let application go through, and on receipt of license will file for modification to remove base station from license. May need base station to support mobile repeater license. Joe Thrash (SCSAR) and Bruce are co-chairmen, Mike Sawyer (SMRG)

Pre-Plan Committee: Larry Kerns, Jim Lipko (DER/Forests), Gary Mechtel (SMRG). Currently have preplans with DER and ASRC. No motions.

Bylaws Committee: Andy Appel (WEST), Kevin Parkes (SMRG, but leaving area), Keith Conover (AMRG). Inactive. No motions.

Training Committee: plans and membership as outlined above.

Informal discussion on committee meetings and regional meetings.

Suggestion: an extra statewide meeting in early September

Standards Committee: never really activated.

For now, will fold those individuals into Training Committee.

## **New Business**

PSARC Forms Committee, Keith Conover (AMRG): Response very positive. Only detailed critiques from Gene Harrison (AMRG) and Joe Thrash (SCSAR), so they have been appointed to the committee by Chairman Keith Conover, with approval of President Peter McCabe.

Nominating Committee: Tom Hirschak's Director position expires this fall; Irv to chair Nominating Committee, two others to be appointed by President in near future: responsible for nominating person to fill Tom's Director position. No other officers up for election this fall, as now have two-year terms for officers

ICS Standard: Keith Conover (AMRG) discussed the following proposed policy. By the consensus of those present, he will send it out for a mail vote. (Ballot attached.)

- Whenever two or more Pennsylvania Search and Rescue Council member teams are participating in an operation, they shall use the Incident Command System.
- Each operation shall have a single Incident Commander. For a Unified Command Structure, the Incident Commander acts as the parliamentary Chair of the assembled Agency Representatives.
- The Incident Commander should be chosen based on competence and ability to command the particular search and rescue operation. The Incident Commander need not be a member or officer of an agency holding jurisdiction; however, the Incident Commander shall be responsible to the governmental agency or agencies holding jurisdiction (Responsible Agencies) through their Agency Representatives.
- If only a single Responsible Agency claims jurisdiction for a search and rescue operation, that Responsible Agency's senior representative present should appoint an Incident Commander.
- If multiple agencies claim jurisdiction for a search and rescue operation, representatives (one from each agency claiming jurisdiction) shall meet and vote to select an Incident Commander. Each agency shall have one vote. Voting shall follow the rules of a mass meeting as specified in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, current edition.

**Ad-hoc Committee on Statewide Paging, Irv Lichtenstein (GPSAR):** appointed by the President since the last statewide meeting, to look into statewide paging for Mission Coordinators: would have to go to 4-5 different carriers, with 4-5 different phone numbers. Lee Lyons: Bell Atlantic might be able to provide coverage with one number. No one provider for digital paging across state. Skytel covers only major metropolitan areas. Two 150 MHz frequencies are available across the state and may be available to set up our own paging system. Will investigate further.

Adjourned at 2:22 PM.