

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Homeland Security Commission**



Muriel  
Bowser  
Mayor

**HOMELAND SECURITY COMMISSION**  
**QUARTERLY MEETING**  
**Tuesday, July 20, 2021**  
**3:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.**  
**Virtual Webex Meeting**

**Commission Member Attendees:** Brad Belzak, Ed Pearson, Phil McNamara, Wendy Villatoro

**HSEMA Attendees:** Jason Rubinstein, Emile Smith

*Meeting starts at approximately 3:45 pm. No members of the public are present.*

Brad: Good Afternoon. Today is July 20 and we are commencing the meeting. Welcome, everyone. We are very excited to be back.

Today, our goal is to select subtopics for our 2021 report. Today, do we want to keep this meeting open?

*Commissioners unanimously decide to keep meeting open.*

Last meeting, we decided to pursue fusion centers as this year's topic and agreed that the following year we would focus on resiliency. Director Rodriguez gave us details of what would benefit HSEMA in our study. Now we need to decide if we are going to look inside or outside of DC? We could look nationally where fusion centers are housed in emergency management agencies. We could also establish best practices based on an internal review of DC.

Do we want to stay external, or have an internal focus? We are not a full fledge think tank. We do have access to interns and fusion center staff potentially.

One point Director R. provided was that we are seeing more national disasters, crime, and broadscale issues. He is concerned from an emergency management perspective. He wants his team to reach a higher-level playing field in the emergency management space. Looking at the 7 or 8 counterpart fusion centers may be useful in this regard.

Ed: Do you recall if San Francisco was one of the fusion centers?

Brad: We didn't get the list, but he does have it.

Ed: I did a tour of that fusion center and it was pretty impressive. I have a contact if we want to look at that one.

Phil: Can I get a sense of what we are looking for? Are we looking for governance structure, workforce, FTE count, budget, number of products they push out, or how those other center customers rate them? What does HSEMA need us to evaluate/compare? What are we asking these fusion centers?

Brad: The Director has emphasized all-hazards.

Wendy: One thing I remember was that he specifically asked, “how can fusion centers that focus on a law enforcement mission expand broader to include emergency management and an all-hazards mission”. From what I heard; I think they are still identifying what they need.

Ed: I agree with that assessment.

Brad: That’s spot on. He’s been trying to push his team. The mass care innovations piece he said was helpful. We interviewed 8 counterparts for that study. Trainings, innovations, and staffing were all priorities. Wendy, what was that point you made last week?

Wendy: I said we just want to make sure we don’t reinvent the wheel. There is already a lot out there.

Jason (Brings up Brian’s point from previous meeting).

Brad: Going forward, we can bring up 7-10 baseline questions and reach out to several stakeholders. Do we want to go national or stay internal?

Phil: Let’s take a step back and remember why we pivoted mass care to a national review. It was because we had a plan together and then covid hit and we felt it would be difficult to go to DC agencies on the front line and ask them a bunch of internal questions to mass care. Our entire work plan was based on internal assessment, prior to covid. I looked at the statute that governs HSC. It says we shall: 1) Gather and evaluate information on the status of homeland security in DC (implies internal); 2) Measure gaps in preparedness; 3) Review homeland security priorities in consultation with public and private entities.

So, I don’t have a strong opinion - if the Director wants us to look nationwide, I think that’s something we should include in our study.

Wendy: If we are really going to do a gap assessment, we won’t know how to fill gaps without a national look. Some combination of internal and external may be necessary.

Ed: I agree. I think the route Wendy is suggesting is most conducive. National best practices and an internal look is probably the most comprehensive review to identify the gaps. The top fusions centers that are willing to allow us to discuss their strengths and weaknesses is a part of it. An internal look is also a critical piece.

Brad: Wendy and Ed, that is very logical. Gap assessments can be arduous. If we do this, we need some guard rails, and delineate those from what we didn’t look at. Internal and external combination is a strong report. Cyber was strong, but it did not look at other states. I’m in favor of doing both for this report. My guess is there are 8 or so fusion centers in an emergency management agency, nation-wide. Maybe we interview 4 or 5 of them? Then we get some intern and research support to break out key themes and key areas to identify gaps and needs.

Ed: I would be fine taking the lead on the internal part of this.

Phil: I agree, a combination of internal and external is the strongest approach. We need to identify the parties, and hone-in on what we want to know from them. Perhaps we give them a summary ahead of the meeting to clarify what we are looking for. I'm happy to help establish those items.

Wendy: I identified five different areas: Knowledge management, technology, architecture, business process, personnel/training. These could be some starting areas to investigate.

Phil: Wendy, to your point, there is no harm in asking the fusion centers about all these topics. And then, when we get to the internal part, we can hone-in on one or two of those, as needed.

Wendy: Certain information may not be available, like technology.

Brad: That's true. Some of the innovation and technology, data mapping, and other pieces are hopefully open source. Phil, do you want to take lead on creating questions around the subject areas Wendy identified?

Phil: Sure.

Brad: Great. So, we will look for 5-8 interviews. Ed if you can take the lead with Jason to set up internal meetings in DC. Jason you can help guide us, maybe ask Clint.

Jason: Sure.

Brad: So, we will aim to get our interviews knocked out over the next couple months. When does the government shut down for a bit?

Emile: Well, we don't shut down, but the last three weeks in December can get pretty slow.

Brad: Great. We will put together a schedule. I will work with Jason and Emile. Wendy, you will send out the buckets for the topics, and Phil will flesh out specifics. Joanna and Brian are not here, but we will relay the information and make sure they are comfortable.

Ed: True. With Brian on the internal side, I'm happy to jump into the external side as needed.

Brad: I think we have our marching order. We are going to do a hybrid approach, both internal and external. We are going to create some guard rails. We are going to aim for a 15-page (max) report. We want this report short, and action based. We will aim to meet again and wrap up these questions in the next 2-3 weeks.

*No members of the public are present.*

*Adjourn.*