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**Engineer Professional Advisory Committee (EPAC)**

***EPAC General Meeting Minutes***

*August 13th, 2020*

1. **Welcome/Call to Order (EPAC Chair, CDR Samantha Spindel)**
* Meeting called to order at 1500 EST
1. **Roll Call (Executive Secretary, LCDR Michael Simpson)**
* Officers or Alternate emailed LCDR Simpson to confirm attendance

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| **Subcommittee** | **Name** | **Alternate** | **Attendance****(Yes, No, Excused, Alternate)** |
| **EPAC Chair** | CDR Samantha Spindel | LCDR Michael Simpson | Yes |
| **Executive Secretary** | LCDR Michael Simpson | LCDR Timothy Martin | Yes |
| **Chief Engineer**  | RADM Edward Dieser | N/A | Yes |
|  |
| Awards | CDR John Kathol | CDR Michael Termont | Yes |
| CDR Matthew Mergenthaler | LCDR Travis Sorum | Yes |
| Career Development | LCDR Omobogie Amadasu | LCDR Joshua Sims | Yes |
| CAPT Eric Hanssen | CDR Leo Gumapas | Excused |
| Events | LCDR Derrick Buck | LCDR Timothy Martin | Yes |
| LCDR Michael Gifford | CDR Jeremy "Bret" Nickels | Yes |
| Information | CAPT Josh Simms | LT Drew Katherine | Yes |
| LCDR Garrett Chun | LT Adam Ramos | Yes |
| Public Health Engineering Practice | CDR Leo Gumapas | CDR Andrew Yang | Yes |
| CDR James Coburn | LCDR Hanniebey Wiyor  | Alternate |
| Readiness | CDR Frank Chua | CDR Shane Deckert | Alternate |
| CDR Sean Bush | CDR Mark Hench | Yes |
| Recruitment and Retention | LCDR Praveen KC | CDR William Fraser | Yes |
| LCDR Fred Kelly | LCDR Kenneth Chen | Yes |
| Rules | CDR Deb Cox | CDR Stacey Yonce | Yes |
| LCDR Matt Palo | LT Christian Parra | Yes |
| Strategic Planning for Engineering | CAPT David Harvey | LT Melissa De Vera | Alternate |
| CDR Sam Russell | CDR David Gwisdalla | Yes |
| ***\* When a member is not available, the Alternate can serve as the voting proxy.*** ***\*\*See Appendix A for more information about each member, including hyperlinks to email addresses*** |
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| **EPAC Liaisons** |
| **CCWIAB** | CAPT Varsha Savalia | CDR Theresa Grant | Yes |
| **COA** | CDR Brad Cunningham | CDR Nikhil Thakur | Yes |
| **JOAG** | LT Colin Tack | LT Jaison Eapen | Yes |
| **SAME** | CDR Steve Sauer | LT Kevin Remley | No |

1. **Chief Professional Officer (CPO) Remarks/Update** **(RADM Edward Dieser)**
* Hold comments until closing to prevent interfering with Subcommittee Reports and Presentation
1. **EPAC Chair Remarks (EPAC Chair, CDR Samantha Spindel)**
* RADM Dieser and CDR Spindel are still discussing mid-year EPAC Reports. Feedback and suggestions for consideration are forthcoming
* Certificates for Virtual Category Day were sent out last month. Please contact LCDR Fred Kelly if you have any questions.
1. **Awards Subcommittee Discussion (CDR Matthew Mergenthaler, Vice Chair)**
2. **Awards Review Board (February Cycle-Villforth, Lynch, Burgess, ELIT, SAME Awards)**
* Complete for 2020
* All awardees were notified by RADM Dieser at the end of July. Award Ceremony pending COVID-19.
* Awardees:
	+ RADM John C. Villforth Leadership Award-CAPT David Harvey (IHS)
	+ RADM Ian K. Burgess Outstanding Young PHS Engineer Award (Corps)-LCDR Timothy Martin (FDA)
	+ Roger H. Lynch Outstanding Young PHS Engineer Award (Civilian)-Ms. Caitlin Caldwell (IHS)
	+ Robert C. Williams ELIT Award (PEER Reviewed)-LCDR Michael Shahan/Dr. William Randolph Reed (CDC)
	+ Robert C. Williams ELIT Award (OPEN Category)-LCDR Hanniebey Wiyor (FDA)
	+ SAME Hollis Medal-CDR Brad Cunningham (FDA)
	+ SAME Green Medal-LT Chaolong Qi (NIOSH)
* SAME Cumming Plaque-California Area Indian Health Service Sanitation Facilities Construction Emergency Response and Recovery Team (IHS)
1. **Strategic Initiatives Team (Lead: LCDR Travis Sorum –** **travis.sorum@ihs.gov****)**
* Nomination Forms and Summary documents have been drafted for the EOY, EROY, and Michael’s Awards.
* Next Step: Submit to EPAC Chair/CPO for Review (August)
1. **SOP Initiative (Lead: LCDR Abbas Bandukwala –** **Abbas.Bandukwala@fda.hhs.gov****)**
* Updated draft SOP has been complete
* Next Step: Submit to EPAC Chair/CPO for Review (August)
1. **Career Development Subcommittee Discussion (LCDR** **Omobogie Amadasu, Chair)**
* Hosted Monthly Conference Call last week
	+ Adjusted the work plan, focus on outreach message on new promotion policies
	+ PE Civil review books available, Free contract tracing training through John Hopkins – shipping cost potentially covered via EPAC (great example of utilizing EPAC funds)
1. **CPO Fact Sheet (Lead: LCDR Omobogie Amadasu –** **omobogie.amadasu@ihs.gov****)**
* Currently in development, awaiting feedback from CPO
* May be tabled as a result of OSG potentially distributing information
1. **Biomedical Initiative (Lead: LCDR Thomas Peter –** **Thomas.Peter@fda.hhs.gov****)**
* Scope creep. Will meet with team lead and review objectives
1. **Honor the late CAPT (ret) Gladys Rodriguez (Lead: Chair)**
	* Comments received, will finalize and post to EPAC website
2. **Mentoring Program (Lead: Vice Chair)**
	* Mid-year check-in with Mentors/Mentees & mid-year reporting request out this week
	* Development of database
3. **Online Engineering Masters Programs Survey (Lead: LCDR Tyrrell Lang –** **Tyrrell.Lang@ihs.gov****)**
* In search of Survey Monkey account to release survey
* R&R and Readiness also have Surveys and potential Survey Monkey accounts to utilize
1. **Events Subcommittee Discussion (LCDR Derrick Buck, Chair)**
2. **Chief Engineer’s Quarterly Meeting (Lead: LT Drew Katherine –** **Drew.Katherine@fda.hhs.gov** **)**
* Next one is scheduled virtually for September 24, 2020
* Senior Officer Panel + Quarterly Town Hall. Be on the lookout for a save-the-date.
1. **AMSUS Annual Meeting (Lead: LCDR Michael Simpson –** **michael.simpson@fda.hhs.gov****)**
* Gaylord Nation Resort and Convention Center, MD, Dec. 6-10, 2020
* Now offering hybrid (in person/online) participation. Registration opens September 15th.
* Co-Leads: LCDR Michael Tollon, LCDR Hanniebey Wiyor
1. **E-Week (Lead: LT David Sullivan,** **David.Sullivan@fda.hhs.gov****)**
* Location will be at NPS HQ in Washington DC in February 2021
* Multiple opportunities available – contact derrick.buck@ihs.gov or michael\_Gifford@nps.gov
1. **COF Symposium (Lead: LCDR Fred Kelly –** **fred.kelly@nih.gov****)**
* Soliciting for abstracts later this year
* Co-Lead: LCDR Matthew Palo, Lead-on-Deck: LCDR Michael Gifford
1. **SAME – JETC (Lead: CDR Benjamin Marnell –** **benjamin\_marnell@nps.gov****)**
* Oregon Convention Center, OR, May 18-21, 2021
1. **Information Subcommittee Discussion (CAPT Joshua Simms, Chair)**
2. **Content Management (Lead: CDR Jim Kohler –** **Kohler.James@epa.gov****)**
* All updates to the website made: new SAME awardees listed, minor updates, vacancy announcements
* Assembled a group comprised of officers from various agencies to beta test a new HHS platform.
* Please check your subcommittee webpage and email us to let us know if it is up-to-date or not
* Submit update requests to EPAC-POSTINGS@LIST.NIH.GOV
* No new Anonymous Feedback submissions since previous meeting
1. **Newsletter (Lead: CDR Jason Peterson –** **Jason.Peterson@cms.hhs.gov****)**
* Fall Newsletter articles due August 31
* One article has been received, need more!
1. **APAN SharePoint Site for EPAC (Lead: Vice Chair)**
* OSG has requested to discontinue use of Google Drive
* The EPAC APAN SharePoint site is set up as an alternate site
* If you need to utilize a repository, please contact lead
1. **Public Health Engineering Practice Subcommittee Discussion (CDR Leo Gumapas, Chair)**
2. **Deployer and OPDIV Skill and Needs Workgroup (Lead:** **LCDR Michael Wandersee –** **michael\_wandersee@fws.gov** **)**
* Collaborating with Career Development and Readiness Subcommittee to develop a prototype by October EPAC Meeting
* Developing a database and standard operating procedure
* Presentation after Subcommittee Reports



1. **Article Publication and Review (Lead: Chair and Vice Chair)**
	* If you need assistance with peer reviewed or non-peer reviewed article, then PHEP/Publication Review Work Group is happy to help
		+ Email CDR James Coburn - james.coburn@fda.hhs.gov for article to be reviewed
		+ Reviews are to be completed within 14 calendar days
2. **Readiness Subcommittee Discussion (CDR Sean Bush, Vice Chair)**
3. **Deployment Readiness Support (Lead: LCDR Michael Tollon –** **Michael.Tollon@fda.hhs.gov****)**
* Survey questions for Readiness Survey updated and will be sent out to EPAC Chair by 8/20.
1. **Readiness Training and Education: Training Curriculum (Lead: LCDR Steven Tidwell –** **steven\_tidwell@nps.gov****)**
* No update
1. **Information Management (Lead: CDR Tara Bizjak -** **Tara.Gooen@fda.hhs.gov****)**
* COVID19 Deployment Narratives
	+ Received **18 stories** to date and will review for 508 compliance
	+ Anticipate posting narratives by 8/20.
1. **Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee Discussion (LCDR Fred Kelly, Chair)**
2. **Connectors (Lead: LCDR Melissa De Vera –** **Melissa.DeVera@ihs.gov****)**
* Due to no new information on current applicants from CCHQ, R&R is currently on standby mode
1. **Recruitment Training & Tracking (Lead: LCDR Jonathan Ireland –** **Jonathan.Ireland@ihs.gov** **)**
	* Developing a survey to collect information for an Engineer Category Recruitment Presentation
2. **R&R SOP (Lead: Chair)**
	* Reviewed by Rules Committee. Comments have been addressed
3. **Appointment Support Coordination (Lead: CDR Chris Fehrman –** **Christopher.Fehrman@ihs.gov****)**
	* CCHQ sent out an email on 08/11/2020 stating the COSTEP window will remain open through September 30, 2020
4. **Rules Subcommittee Discussion (CDR Deb Cox, Chair)**
5. **Voting Member Selection (Lead: CDR Deb Cox –** **Cox.Deborah@epa.gov****)**
* Proposal for new EPAC Voting Members to serve from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2023 has been sent to current voting members.
	+ Votes are due by August 24th but we already have a majority with the following incoming Voting Members

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Voting Member** | **Agency** | **Duty Station** |
| CDR Gregory Ault | IHS | Billings  | MT |
| CDR Tara Gooen Bizjak | FDA | Silver Spring | MD |
| CDR Stacey Yonce | EPA | Washington | DC |
| LCDR Melissa de Vera | IHS | Bemidji | MN |
| LCDR Michael Simpson | FDA | Silver Spring | MD |
| LCDR Travis Sorum | IHS | Ukiah | CA |
| LT Bryan Wimer | CDC | Morgantown | WV |

* Now is the time for Voting Members to think about running for Chair-Elect in 2021, Chair in 2022
	+ Hope is to send an email out by end of September
1. **Rules SOP (Lead: CDR Deb Cox –** **Cox.Deborah@epa.gov****)**
* Rules SOP is posted on EPAC website – <https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/engineer/documents/EPAC_Rules_Subcommittee_SOP_July_2020.pdf>
* Great job to all Subcommittees submitting SOPs for format review.
* Look forward to SOPs being finalized and posted on Subcommittees websites
1. **Strategic Planning for Engineering Subcommittee Discussion (CDR Samuel Russell, Chair)**
* CDR Russell will begin work planning and mapping the process of updating the Engineer category strategic plan
* This will include more volunteers to support this effort, but will require input over workplan from the CPO
* Steps to be taken over the next month:
	+ Meet with CPO and CAPT Jennifer Mosser (Lead for previous Strategic Plan)
	+ Draft Workplan and set milestone targets
	+ Assess resource needs for volunteers for report during September EPAC meeting
1. **General Discussion/Questions**

***Questions specific to LCDR Wandersee’s presentation on Certifiable Skills***

* Great database, how will this be able to be maintained without encountering PII concerns?
	+ Currently using PHS Numbers
	+ Have to login through HHS credentials, would be a disadvantage for non-HHS employees such as NPS or EPA
	+ Eliminate SERNO and have another dummy key for each officer
	+ Utilize CCHQ SharePoint site
* How will officers be able to view skills and confirm everything is correct?
	+ Plan is to have this used within CCMIS so there is a custom view to see all necessary information and provide documentation for updating database accordingly
	+ Plan is currently to provide results within 2-3 days with current information be on a local address and preventing PII
	+ Will have forms on website to complete and demonstrate Certifiable Skill – if no Certification available, a narrative may be necessary to demonstrate capability

***EPAC Funds***

* Example is forthcoming via a proposal from Events Subcommittees for Flags, Flag Poles to be able to have successful displays for future events
* Textbooks are a great example but covering items such as exam fees may be too much for EPAC funds
* Have a nice amount money to spend and are open to options!

***Awards Distribution***

* Do we know when the awards will be distributed?
	+ Given uncertainty due to COVID, we are unaware of the next event we can physically give the award to the awardees.
1. **Commissioned Corps Women’s Issues Advisory Board Update (CAPT Varsha Savalia)**
* Previous meetings have been cancelled due to COVID
* CCWIAB is working on Reported COVID-19 Deployment Challenges among Female Officers and Recommendations Memo.
	+ Challenges: COVID-19 testing, social distancing, support upon returning home, deployment lag time, under-utilization, unique caregiving responsibilities, medical waivers contacted for deployment, billeting and TDY location safety, and redeployment immediate after returning home.
* CAPT Savalia’ s term ends at the end of the year and anyone interested please contact her
1. **Commissioned Officer’s Association Update (CDR Brad Cunningham)**
* The Nothing substantive to report this month
1. **Junior Officers Advisory Group Update (LT Colin Tack)**
* JOAG Virtual Award Presentation is Friday August 14, 1300 – 1400 EDT
	+ At least one Engineer is on the list!
* Congratulations to LCDR Michael Wandersee for being selected as JOAG VM and JOAG/EPAC Liaison for 2020-2022 term!
* Did you miss the JOAG Deployment Preparation Webinar on Wednesday, July 8, 2020?
	+ You can watch a recording of the webinar here: [https://community.max.gov/display/HHS/Deployment+Webinar](https://community.max.gov/display/HHS/Deployment%2BWebinar)
* Two upcoming Meet & Greet Events
	+ Wednesday August 26, 2020 1300 – 1400 MT; Phoenix, AZ
	+ Thursday September 3, 2020 1300 – 1400 MT; Tuba City, AZ
1. **Society of American Military Engineers Update (CDR Steve Sauer)**
* Nothing substantive to report this month
1. **Closing Remarks (RADM Edward Dieser)**
* Thanks to all Sub-Committees for their commendable progress on the completion of SOPs. I also commend the Subcommittees for their enhanced collaboration on initiatives and efforts.
* I will be asking EPAC to take on new initiatives in the remainder of 2020 and 2021. As an example previously discussed, the Biomedical Initiative began as an effort to clear identify relevant certifications for Biomedical Engineers. The project was initially started by engineers assigned to FDA, though I requested EPAC to transition/collaborate on the effort and expand it to the development of potential career tracks for biomedical engineers. In addition to a biomedical career track guidance document, similar career tracks would benefit other engineering disciplines within the PHS.
	+ The career track must be consistent with and leverage the work of other projects, as an example the EPAC database presented by LCDR Wandersee and CDR Gumapas
	+ CPO could use these tools to modify, improve and enhance documents for promotion such as Benchmarks
* The preference remains to present the 202o Awards in person. SAME events, AMSUS and PHS Engineer E-week remain options. CPO will work with EPAC to determine a course of action by 15 December 2020.
* Please review the request for feedback and include:
	+ Comments or concerns from the last Town Hall (or Town Halls in general)
	+ General concerns regarding the operation of the PHS
	+ The plan for the feedback is to consolidate PHS-wide concerns from all categories, and to obtain responses from OASH and OSG. As such, responses will take some time.
1. **Closing Remarks and Adjourn (CDR Samantha Spindel)**
* Voting Members: Please provide recommendations for spending EPAC funds
* Voting Members – consider applying for EPAC Chair-Elect
* Please submit COVID-19 narratives to epacreadiness@gmail.com!



* Please continue to maintain your readiness
	+ APFT Waiver expires in September
	+ Vaccinations are not automatically waived
* Thank you to all who have deployed!
* COSTEP applications are open until September 30, 2020 for Summer 2021
* Want to thank CDR Cox for her leadership with the Voting Member process and improving the process to address previous concerns about process in the past – fabulous job in not only recruiting diverse candidates but also gaining buy-in from previous Chairs and current voting members to lead to an improved selection process for new voting members. EPAC is in good hands under CDR Cox’s leadership for next year!
* For those that were not selected for EPAC Voting Membership this year, please consider reapplying next year
* **CDR Cox will be taking on the reins as a result of CDR Spindel going on maternity leave in the next few weeks – RADM Dieser thanked her for her amazing efforts and congratulated her on the upcoming addition to the family!**

**Next EPAC Meeting**

**2nd Thursday of the Month**

September 10th, 2020

1500 – 1600 EST

**Webex**: [**Start the meeting**\*](https://fda1.webex.com/fda1/j.php?MTID=m1ce91e7c5ae9bedeb962c2fb23d8ecf0)

*\*Click on URL and have system call you.*

***OR Call In***

**Call-In Number**: 210-795-0506

**Meeting Access Code:** 904 995 269

**APPENDIX A**

**2020 EPAC VOTING MEMBER FULL ROSTER**

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| --- |
| **Chief Engineer** |
| **Term** | **Name** | **Rank** | **Agency** | **EPAC Role** | **Location** |
| 2018-2021 | Dieser, Edward | RADM | CDC | Ex-Officio | Atlanta, GA |
| **EPAC Voting Members** |
| **Term** | **Name** | **Rank** | **Agency** | **EPAC Role** | **Location** |
| 2018-2020 | Spindel, Samantha | CDR | FDA | EPAC Chair | Beltsville, MD |
| 2018-2020 | Buck, Derrick | LCDR | IHS | Events, Chair | Tempe, AZ |
| 2018-2020 | Simms, Joshua | CAPT | FDA | Information, Chair | Silver Spring, MD |
| 2018-2020 | Harvey, David | CAPT | IHS | Strategic Planning for Engineering, Chair | Rockville, MD |
| 2018-2020 | Gumapas, Leo | CDR | NIH | Public Health Engineering Practice, Chair | Bethesda, MD |
| 2018-2020 | Palo, Matthew | LCDR | CDC | Rules, Vice Chair | Jamaica, NY |
| 2019-2021 | Hanssen, Eric | CAPT | NIH | Career Development, Vice Chair | Hamilton, MT |
| 2019-2021 | Amadasu, Omobogie | LCDR | IHS | Career Development, Chair | Rockville, MD |
| 2019-2021 | Bush, Sean | CDR | IHS | Readiness, Vice Chair | Escondido, CA |
| 2019-2021 | Praveen, KC | LCDR | EPA | Recruitment and Retention, Chair | Washington, DC |
| 2019-2021 | Cox, Deborah | CDR | EPA | Rules, Chair | Atlanta, GA |
| 2019-2021 | Russell, Sam | CDR | EPA | Strategic Planning for Engineering, Vice Chair | Washington, DC |
| 2020-2022 | Kathol, John | CDR | IHS | Awards, Chair | Tempe, AZ |
| 2020-2022 | Mergenthaler, Matthew | CDR | IHS | Awards, Vice Chair | Sacramento, CA |
| 2020-2022 | Gifford, Michael | LCDR | NPS | Events, Vice Chair | Washington, DC |
| 2020-2022 | Chun, Garrett | LCDR | NPS | Information, Vice Chair | Portal, CA |
| 2020-2022 | Coburn, James | CDR | FDA | Public Health Engineering Practice, Vice Chair | Silver Spring, MD |
| 2020-2022 | Chua, Frank | CDR | IHS | Readiness, Chair | Sacramento, CA |
| 2020-2022 | Kelly, Fred | LCDR | NIH | Recruitment and Retention, Vice Chair | Bethesda, MD |
| **Ex-Officio Volunteers** |
| 2020 | Simpson, Michael | LCDR | FDA | Executive Secretary | Silver Spring, MD |
| 2020-2021 | Cunningham, Bradley | CDR | FDA | COA Liaison | Silver Spring, MD |
| 2019-2020 | Savalia, Varsha | CAPT | FDA | CCWIAB Liaison | San Antonio, TX |
| 2019-2020 | Tack, Colin | LT | FDA | JOAG Liaison | Jamaica, NY |
| 2019-2020 | Sauer, Steve | CDR | IHS | SAME Liaison | Spokane, WA |

\*Clicking on the Voting Member name will open their email address