

# COUNTY OF YORK

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 14, 2017

**TO:** York County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Neil A. Morgan, County Administrator

**SUBJECT:** HEARTSafe Initiative



The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board of Supervisors with background information regarding a regional initiative called HEARTSafe. Over recent months, various entities within the greater Williamsburg area began discussions about our area becoming a HEARTSafe Community. HEARTSafe is an American Heart Association Program that is designed to promote survival from sudden out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. It is a general concept focused upon strengthening the “chain of survival” as described by the American Heart Association; it recognizes and stimulates efforts by individual communities to improve their system for preventing sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) from becoming irreversible death.

In the basic HEARTSafe model, a set of minimum criteria is established to achieve HEARTSafe status. These criteria incorporate various goals that support the “chain of survival,” such as widespread CPR instruction, public access defibrillators, and aggressive resuscitation protocols for first responders and area hospitals. Communities apply to become designated as a HEARTSafe Community.

The first HEARTSafe program began in Massachusetts in 2002. Programs now exist in all or parts of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia, as well as numerous US college campuses; they also have spread internationally to Ireland, New Zealand, and Taiwan.

Around 2005 York County and James City County were recipients of a Williamsburg Community Health Foundation Grant that resulted in a widespread placement of public access automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) throughout various public/local government facilities. Since then we have seen an increased emphasis on the life-saving capabilities of AEDs, and we are now routinely seeing them in many other public venues such as schools, churches, businesses, first responder vehicles, etc. Further, there has been ongoing emphasis in the community about the important benefit of healthy lifestyles and individuals trained in CPR. In fact, there is technology available to help the average citizen provide CPR and other assistance when a cardiac arrest occurs. CPR and its application have been made much less complicated with “hands only” CPR instruction which can be obtained through a phone app or on various websites.

Recognizing the importance of being a healthy community, along with the opportunity to be recognized for the current level of capability and care when cardiac events occur, a number of entities have collaborated to seek HEARTSafe designation from the American Heart Association. Among the entities involved are Sentara Williamsburg Regional Medical Center, Riverside Doctors' Hospital, Peninsulas EMS Council, Williamsburg Community Heart Foundation, Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber Foundation (through which the HEARTSafe application will be submitted), the College of William and Mary, as well as the first responder communities represented predominantly by the Fire/EMS agencies of James City County, York County, the City of Poquoson, and the City of Williamsburg. An Oversight Committee has been established with representatives from most of these groups. As the initiative moves forward, other entities or organizations may be added.

The specific initiative was originally designated as HEARTSafe Williamsburg, but with the regional nature of the project, it is currently being referred to as HEARTSafe Greater Williamsburg. Additionally, the Greater Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce Foundation Board will serve as the fiscal agent (on behalf of all of the participating localities, businesses, and organizations) for the HEARTSafe designation and for grant considerations.

I bring this to you as a matter of information since you may soon begin to hear more about it. Once it is further developed, the group is expected to make a presentation to you, and we will coordinate that at the appropriate time. At this point, there has not been any local government monetary support requested or anticipated. There likely will be some ongoing coordination and collaboration with our Fire/EMS forces and the programs, as well as the technology they rely on, but this is clearly part of our mission anyway.

Both staff and I believe this is a positive initiative that will help our region continue to be a healthy community and one which, through further outreach, technology advances, and awareness, will certainly contribute to lives saved. We hope that you find this brief informative; and should you have any questions prior to the future formal presentation, please feel free to contact me or Chief Kopczynski.

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pc: Stephen P. Kopczynski, Fire Chief/Director