MERCED COUNTY OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES
BIG FIVE MEETING MINUTES
March 13, 2025 @ 9:00 AM

Big Five Designees

Health Department Tim Williams	**County Fire Chief** Vacant	**Municipal Fire Chief** Paul Tualla
	County Sheriff Vern Warnke	**Chief of Police** Steve Stanfield

Attendees

Paul Tualla, Los Banos Fire
Marvin Dillsaver, Merced PD
Kristynn Sullivan, Merced County Public Health
Richard Martin, Gustine City Fire
Aaron Rosenberg, Merced County SO
William Novetzke, Atwater PD
Chou Her, UC Merced
Rich McEachin, Atwater PD
Tim Williams, MC Public Health Dept/EMS
Tom England, Merced City Fire

John Ramirez, Livingston PD
Joe Perez, Merced PD
Corey Gibson, Merced County Sheriff's Office
Christina Nishihama, Merced County OES
George Quick, Merced County Fire *Did not sign in
Mark Pimentel, Merced County Fire/CalFIRE *Did not sign in
Steve Stanfield, Merced PD *Did not sign in

1. **Welcome and Introductions**
   All introduced themselves to those who were present. Stanfield was introduced as the new Chief of Police in the Big Five Designee seat.

2. **Review Meeting Minutes – October 15, 2024**
   Motion to Approve: A. Rosenberg   Seconded Motion: P. Tualla
   Motion unanimously carried.

3. **Ongoing Project Updates**

   SHSGP FY21 - <u>Performance Ending Date 5/31/24</u> ($353,846) - <u>Approved</u>

   A. FEMA required minimum distribution $106,157 (30%)
   - 7.5% Cyber Security - $26,600
   - 5% Soft Targets / Crowded Places - $17,700
   - 5% Emerging Threats - $17,700
   - 5% Information Sharing- $17,700
   - 7.5% Combating Domestic Extremism - $26,600

   B. Projects Approved:
   1. XMD Maintenance - $73,581- Completed
   2. Everbridge Emergency Notification (Emerging Threats) - $24,400 – Completed
   3. *County Cyber Security-VPN (Cyber Security) - $26,600 – Completed ($10,037 final cost/ $16,563 remaining, NP)*
   4. Metal Detectors (S.O.) (Soft Targets)- $26,600 – Completed

5. Merced City Fire Fotokite Drone (Info sharing & Combat Extremism) - $45,000 – Completed *($44,838 final cost, $162 remaining, NP)*
6. ICS 300/400 Training - $6,000 – Completed
7. *Public Safety Communications, CAL FIRE ECC PSAP Installation - $43,944 – Ongoing (POP extension request 3/31/26, pending approval)*
8. Emergency Operations Plans/Updates - $71,721– Completed
9. Perimeter, Public Safety Platform - $20,000 – Completed
10. Hazmat Suits (4)- $16,000 – Completed *($15,916 final cost/$84 remaining)*

- Nishihama reviewed the slides, beginning with HSGP FY 21. She reported that the Fotokite Drone project is complete, while the Public Safety Communications project remains pending. A performance extension request through March 31, 2026, has been submitted but has not yet been approved. As Amaral was absent, no further updates were available on the project.

SHSGP FY22 - <u>Performance Ending Date 5/31/25</u> ($346,225) – Approved
A. FEMA required minimum distribution $103,868 (30%)
  - No Minimum - Cyber Security - $26,600
  - 3% Soft Targets/Crowded Places - $17,700
  - 3% Information Sharing - $13,700
  - 3% Combating Domestic Extremism - $21,600
  - 3% Enhancing Community Preparedness and Resilience - $24,400

B. Projects Approved:
  1. XMD Maintenance - $80,244- Completed
  2. Everbridge Emergency Notification (Information Sharing & Combat Extremism) - $24,400-Completed
  3. County Cyber Security Training (Cyber Security)- $26,600 – Completed *($25,254 final cost/ $1,346 remaining, NP)*
  4. County EOC Access Cards (Soft Targets/Crowded Places) - $17,700- Completed
  5. Emergency Operation Plans/Updates (Enhancing Community Preparedness and Resilience)- $35,300 - Completed
  6. *ICS Training - $6,000 - Ongoing*
  7. Perimeter, Public Safety Platform, contract- $20,000 - Completed
  8. Dos Palos PD-Mobile Radios (15) – $32,563- Completed
  9. Merced County Fire-Technical Rescue Team REMS Equipment - $35,253 - Completed
  10. Gustine Fire-Mobile Radios (3) - $17,080 - Completed

11. *Gustine PD-License Plate Reader Cameras (3) - $22,450 – Ongoing (POP extension requested to extend 5/31/26, pending approval)*
12. Microsoft Surface Pros (2) - $4,298 – Completed
13. *EOP Tabletop Exercise - $10,000 – Ongoing*
14. Gustine Flashlights & Batteries - $ 5,112 – Completed
15. *Gustine PD Tango Tango App - $6,990 - Ongoing*
16. Interoperable Communications - $2,235 – Unobligated

- Nishihama reported that the ICS Training conducted last week is complete, with only the invoice pending for project closure. The Gustine PD License Plate Reader project is facing challenges in obtaining Caltrans permits; as a result, a request has been made to extend the period of performance through May 31, 2026. Chief Chavez was not present to provide further details. The EOP Tabletop Exercise was held on February 28th, and the invoice for this project is expected by April 1st. The Gustine PD Tango Tango project was approved via email on January 30th, though no updates were provided. Nishihama also noted that $2,235 remains in the Interoperable Communications funding stream.

SHSGP FY23-Performance Ending Date 5/31/26 ($346,225) – Approved

A. FEMA required minimum distribution $121,179 (35%)
  - No Minimum Cyber Security
  - 3% Soft Targets/Crowded Places - $10,387
  - 3% Information Sharing - $10,387
  - 3% Combating Domestic Extremism - $10,387
  - 3% Community Preparedness and Resilience - $10,387
  - 3% Election Security-$10,387

B. Projects Approved:

1. *XMD Maintenance - $100,000– Ongoing*
2. Everbridge Emergency Notification (Enhancing Community Preparedness and Resilience) - $24,400- Completed
3. *ICS 300/400 Training - $6,000– Ongoing*
4. *REMS-UTV- (Combating Domestic Extremism)- $50,000– Ongoing*
5. MX908 Handheld Mass Spectrometer (Soft Targets/Crowded Places & Enhancing Info and Intelligence Sharing) - $110,000 – Completed
6. *KnowBe4 Cybersecurity (Cybersecurity)- $12,000– Ongoing*
7. *Perimeter, Public Safety Platform- $20,000– Ongoing*
8. Interoperable Communications - $23,825 - Unobligated

- Nishihama provided an update on the outstanding projects for FY 23. The XMD Maintenance project is ongoing, while the ICS 300/400 courses are planned for FY 25 and FY 26. According to George Quick, the REMS UTV is expected to be delivered this week. The KnowBe4 Cybersecurity project is anticipated to close in October 2025, and the Perimeter Public Safety Platform remains pending. Additionally, $23,825 remains in the Interoperable Communications funding stream.

SHSGP FY24-Performance Ending Date 5/31/27 ($315,459) Initial Application Pending

A. FEMA required minimum distribution $110,410 (35%)
- No Minimum Cyber Security
- No Minimum Soft Targets/Crowded Places
- No Minimum Information Sharing
- No Minimum Combating Domestic Extremism
- No Minimum Community Preparedness and Resilience
- 3% Election Security - $9,463

B. SHSGP FY24 - <u>Performance Ending Date 5/31/27</u> ($315,459) Initial Application Pending

1. XMD Maintenance - $75,000
2. Everbridge Emergency Notification (Enhancing Info and Intelligence Sharing & Combating Domestic Extremism)- $24,400
3. Perimeter, Public Safety Platform (Enhancing Community Preparedness and Resilience)- $22,500
4. Bomb Squad Suit-Merced PD (Soft Targets/Crowded Places) - $45,018
5. Bitdefender Endpoint Security (Enhance Cybersecurity) - $12,251
6. Akamai DNS Threat Protection (Enhance Election Security) - $10,000
7. ICS Training - $6,000
8. Interoperable Communications (Unobligated) - $120,000

- Nishihama stated that FY 24 has not yet been approved but is hopeful for an update next month. She noted that once approval is granted, she will notify everyone via email, instructing them to begin processing their FY 24 MOUs with their local councils to ensure reimbursement from Merced County for that fiscal year.

SHSGP FY25-Performance Ending Date 5/31/28 ($315,459) – Submitted Advanced Application

A. FEMA required minimum distribution $100,410 (35%)
- No Minimum Information and Intelligence Sharing
- No Minimum Soft Targets/Crowded Places
- No Minimum Cyber Security

- No Minimum Community Preparedness and Resilience
- No Minimum Combating Domestic Extremism
- 3% Election Security - $9,463

B. SHSGP FY25 - <u>Performance Ending Date 5/31/28</u> ($315,459) – Submitted Advanced Application

1. XMD Maintenance - $75,000
2. Los Banos PD - Cellebrite Investigative Digital Intelligence (Enhancing Info and Intelligence Sharing) $74,256
3. Everbridge Emergency Notification (Soft Targets/Crowded Places & Combating Domestic Extremism)- $24,400
4. Perimeter, Public Safety Platform (Enhancing Community Preparedness and Resilience)- $22,500
5. County VPN (Enhance Cybersecurity) - $ 10,000
6. AuthX (MFA-Multi-Factor Authentication) (Enhance Election Security) - $34,500
7. ICS Training - $6,000
8. Interoperable Communications (Unobligated) - $68,803

- Nishihama informed the group that the FY 2025 advanced application was submitted on February 20th. She reviewed the projects included in the application and noted that the Cellebrite Investigative Digital Intelligence project was added from the HSGP Proposals to fulfil a required investment justification and meet the 35% Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities (LEPTA) requirement.

  A new project, AuthX, was added under the elections investment justification. This multifactor authentication software enhances cybersecurity by requiring users to authenticate with a badge, password, or passcode, as passwords alone are no longer sufficient against evolving cyber threats. Originally intended for elections, the project was expanded into a countywide initiative to secure the entire network.

  Nishihama also noted that the FY 2025 HSGP funding will not be approved until Spring 2026.

  Nishihama addressed circulating reports regarding federal funding, stating that no changes have been made to the Homeland Security Grant Program at this time, and everything remains status quo. However, she noted that the future of funding remains uncertain in the coming years, but she will keep everyone updated if anything changes.

4. Proposed Projects/Vote

- Nishihama reported that available funding includes $2,235 from FY 22 and $23,825 from FY 23. Additionally, once FY 24 is approved, $120,000 will be available. She

noted that four projects are currently in the queue for potential funding across these fiscal years. She displayed a slide listing the queued projects:

1. **Merced City Police Department** – Portable X-ray Machine ($69,252, submitted for FY 24)
2. **Los Banos Police Department** – Cellebrite Investigative Digital Intelligence ($74,256, submitted for FY 25)
3. **Merced County OES** – Surface Pro ($2,000, *awaiting actual quote*)
4. **Merced City Police Department** – Tango Tango application ($12,585)
5. **Merced County Public Works** – Five Apple iPads with cases and 18 Apple iPhones with cases ($3,393)

Nishihama then called for a motion to allocate funding as follows:

- **FY 2022:** Merced County OES – Surface Pro ($2,000, *awaiting actual quote*)
- **FY 2023:** Merced City Police Department – Tango Tango application ($12,585)
  - Merced County Public Works – Five Apple iPads with cases and 18 Apple iPhones with cases ($3,393)
- **FY 2024:** Merced City Police Department – Portable X-ray Machine ($69,252), contingent on project approval.

A vote was called, and all Big Five Designees were in favor. With no opposition, the motion passed unanimously.

5. Round Table

- Williams reported ongoing issues with Med-9 Communications, which appear to be worsening. He will submit a request proposal once more information becomes available.
- Tualla announced his plans to retire in July, necessitating a vote to select a new Municipal Fire Chief.
- Pimentel shared that the EOP Tabletop Exercise conducted on February 28th was a success, with over 100 attendees and strong participation from various departments and cities. He emphasized the importance of continuing these exercises. Regarding FEMA funding, Pimentel reiterated Nishihama's concerns, noting that while they will strive to meet requests, flexibility in future funding may be limited due to possible changes.
- Stanfield informed the group about a bike race scheduled for Saturday (3/15/25) in the City of Merced, expecting over 1,000 participants, which will impact hotel availability. He expressed appreciation to Merced County OES for hosting disaster preparedness exercise, highlighting its value in assessing communications and MOUs for emergency response. He also noted that the City of Merced is growing at a rate of 2%-3% annually,

but infrastructure is not keeping pace with the increasing population. He urged everyone to closely monitor the allocation and use of federal funding.

- Rosenberg announced that the Sheriff's Public Relations Coordinator resigned last week. Until a replacement is hired, he is covering the role until one is hired. He also provided an update on the John Latorraca Correctional Facility (JLCC) construction, which remains ongoing with an expected completion in 2027. The main jail is anticipated to be finished by the end of this year, though delays with PG&E have impacted the timeline.

- McEachin inquired why Atwater has no projects on the board, as he has some to submit. Nishihama responded that she would email him the HSGP Proposal Form to facilitate project submissions.

- Gibson shared that the county has funded a $20 million radio project spanning 13 sites. However, technological redundancies have led to the decision to install a new shelter outside the dispatch center, extending the project's completion to the second quarter of 2026. The Sheriff's Office will be expanding its dispatch center, adding four new consoles to bring the total to eight, with the potential to expand to ten stations. Mark Cowart, from Merced County IT, who has overseen the radio project since its inception, is retiring at the end of the month. The Sheriff's Office is petitioning to rehire Cowart part-time to ensure project completion.

  - Stanfield praised the 800 radio system, calling it the best he had worked with due to its seamless operation and ease of use.

  - McEachin also commended the system.

  - Gibson noted that the tower leases cost approximately $1 million annually, with Motorola guaranteeing 95% coverage. Once the system nears completion, the Sheriff's Office will conduct coverage tests across Merced County.

  - Cowart is also exploring ways to improve Med-8 and Med-9 communications.

- Quick reported that two years ago, EMPG grant funds were used to purchase water flow sensors to monitor major creeks. He demonstrated the website displaying water levels for the eight sensors in Merced County. He noted that anyone can create an account to receive email alerts when waterways reach certain levels. Christina will send the website link to the Big Five members.

- Perez advocated for the Portable X-ray Machine, emphasizing its importance for the Bomb Squad. With Merced's growth and large events like the upcoming Luke Bryan concert, having the ability to scan packages on-site would eliminate the current 15-20 minute wait time for a response. Due to uncertainties with federal funding, he stated they would be willing to proceed even if the project is only partially funded.

- Chief Her provided an update on UC Merced's communication project, which is expected to be completed next spring. He also announced that Bobcat Day will take place during the first weekend of April.

6. **Project/Training Updates**
   A. ICS 300 / 400:
      - Finished up FY 22 ICS 300/400 training on March 3-7, 2025, awaiting invoice to complete project.
      - Pending dates for FY 25/26.

7. **Meeting Adjourned at 10:46 AM**
   - Next Meeting: June 12, 2025 @ 9 AM