

Richland County Joint Ambulance Committee
March 21, 2018
Minutes

Present: Jacob Lundgren, Brian McGraw, Ryan Keller, Gordon Palmer, Bob Holets, Darin Gudgeon

1. Meeting was called to order at 1901.
2. Notification of the meeting had been made and the agenda was posted.
3. Committee attendance was as noted above, with all members present.
4. A motion was made by Holets to approve the agenda as posted. McGraw made a motion to second it. The agenda was approved.
5. Gudgeon asked for nominations for a member to chair the subcommittee. Keller nominated Palmer, seconded by Holets. McGraw moved that nominations be closed and a unanimous ballot be cast for Palmer, seconded by Holets. Motion carried. Palmer is elected as the Subcommittee Chair. Nominations were opened for Vice-Chair. Holets nominated Keller, seconded by Lundgren. McGraw moved that nominations be closed and a unanimous ballot be cast for Keller, seconded by Lundgren. Motion carried. Keller is elected as the Subcommittee Vice-Chair.
6. Palmer began discussion on the direction of the ambulance service and what it would mean to create a district or to continue as a County-run service. It was recognized that if a district was to be formed, a business manager would need to be hired to maintain records, accounting, etc, that is currently done by other County staff such as the Clerk's office. It was also noted that the Service is currently only paying the Director's position for 14 hours per week regardless of the number of hours worked for the ambulance. With the contract with County, there is also the clause that the County would cover any operating losses should such occur. The County would be able to levy a tax to pay for the Service whereas the other municipal bodies currently would not. It was recognized that only five counties in the State are running ambulance services with a few other counties overseeing EMS but not directly running the services within the territory. Should the Service become a district, there would likely be more costs that the Service currently sees. McGraw stated that Platteville has found a way to pay for their ambulance service by placing a bill in with the tax bills. This is an assessed fee, not a tax bill, and is approved by the City Council to assess it. The amount is determined per capita and is seen as assessing a fee for service. So the municipality would be able to take their determined share and through an algorithm, transfer the fee to the households without levying a tax. He believed they had used the water/sewer bills to apportion it fairly. So the service gives the bill to the municipality, and the municipality divvies it up as they deem appropriate. The question by the end of the meeting

was if the resident chose not to pay, what recourse would the municipality have, other than suing for the amount. There was discussion regarding purchasing the current ambulances and equipment from the County and how that may work. Gudgeon also discussed that despite the oversight of the Service, there would generally be only two grants available to the Service, as there are on average only two grants generally available for EMS: the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) through FEMA and the Funding Assistance Program (FAP) established by the State. There was discussion regarding the Ambulance Service being on a recent Fire Board meeting agenda. No one was sure how it was placed on the agenda, but it was recognized that the item was tabled for two years by a majority vote. There was also discussion about partnering with the Richland Hospital and potentially scheduling a meeting with them in the future to discuss their needs from the Service with them.

There was discussion about how the committee structure could look in the future, whether by County or District. It was hypothesized that the committee could be smaller with an annual/semi-annual stakeholder's meeting. It was also discussed how representation would be determined, if one per municipality including City and County or in reflection in some way of population.

There was discussion on per call versus per capita, with recognition that some would be paying more annually with a per capita funding system. It was again explained that EMS cannot be placed on the tax roll as fire or garbage pick-up can. Some area services are receiving funding through taxes due to their affiliation with Fire and the ability to assess the tax by equalized property value, however even if this Service was joined with the Richland Center Fire Department, the municipalities would not be able to raise that tax without decreasing another due to the levy limits.

Palmer stated that he supported staying with the County at this time based on the current information available, however he recognized that the County would be able to potentially vote to get out of the ambulance service if they chose, as it is not a required service for them to run. It was identified that in order to determine the best direction to move, the numbers would need to be run to determine which was most cost-effective and beneficial to the community and Service. It was recognized that, as has been identified throughout the history of the Joint Ambulance Committee, the sticking point is funding the service. Once that is stabilized, it will help give direction in the decision making process.

If the County assessed the fee, there would need to be an agreement with each other service with 911 coverage in the county in order to have the county-wide tax.

Gudgeon will send the information for the Wisconsin Department of Revenue contact person that he had spoken with previously. He will also be sending out the contact information for Josh Kowalke, the Wisconsin EMS Association Board President and Service Director for Reedsburg Area Ambulance Service to assist in identifying costs of a district. McGraw will look into the State Statutes and communicate with the WI DOR representative with any questions.

At the end of the meeting, the following were identified as items to work on in order to determine what it would cost for the service as it is right now to be run as a district:

- Someone will need to determine what it would cost for a building. Palmer will look into a few options to get an estimate cost to work with.

- A position such as a Business Manager would need to be created to handle the HR, payroll, and accounting needs. It was estimated to be an approximate 30hr/wk position with the pay to be determined by the County's recent wage study, as it looked at the current market value for similar positions.
- Several types of insurance and benefits would need to be looked into, such as health insurance for four employees and the State Retirement program.
- The Director's role would become a full-time position.
- Other needs were identified such as building insurance and maintenance.

It was recognized that these costs could change based on growth but they would be calculated based on the cost of the service as it is now.

7. The next meeting is scheduled for April 18th at 7pm. Holets made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Keller. The meeting was adjourned at 20:48.