

Richland County Joint Ambulance Committee

August 24, 2022

Minutes

Present: Brian McGraw, Sharon Schmitz, James Lingel, Verlin Coy, Jerome Durst, Gordon Palmer, Doug Duhr, Terrance Jindrick, Darin Gudgeon Via Zoom: Kerry Severson, Mary Rognholt, Marc Couey, and Jean Nicks.

Not Present: Julie Fleming, Todd Coppernoll, Glen Niemeyer, Tim Willis.

1. Meeting was called to order at 18:59.
2. Notification of the meeting had been made, and the agenda was posted.
3. Committee attendance was as noted above, with 12 members present.
4. A motion was made by Schmitz to approve the agenda as posted. Palmer seconded it. Motion Carried; the agenda was approved.
5. A motion was made by Schmitz and seconded by Palmer to approve the minutes of the previous two meetings as presented. Motion carried; the minutes were approved.
6. There were no comments from the public.
7. There were no comments from the EMT delegation.
8. Mike Kaufman of the local Pine Valley Repeaters Amateur Radio Club was available for questions and conversation regarding the possible erection of a radio tower at the new building. The Club had contacted the City Zoning Department and was informed that the application must be completed by the land owner. Gudgeon stated he spoke with the County Administrator regarding the potential project. Administrator Langreck stated an MOU needed to be in place between the County and the Club prior to a decision on the tower. The proposed tower would establish potential for redundancies in emergency communications. At this time, there was no communication between the club and the surrounding property owners. The Committee requested the Club speak with the neighbors regarding the potential project. Kaufman stated the tower had not yet been purchased.
9. A. Gudgeon reviewed financial report for July. The month started with a balance of \$305,684.26. There were \$32,152.34 in revenue and \$49,562.98 in expenditures, leaving an end balance of \$288,273.62. The revenue for the month was below average due to Cvikota falling behind in billing; they are expected to be caught up shortly, which should be reflected in future monthly revenues.
B. As noted above, Cvikota had experienced staffing changes and their main coder faced some health issues, so billing fell behind. Numbers reflected were those billed as of the report date. The Billing Report showed 570 calls billed by Cvikota for January through July, with 229 billed at the ALS level, 244 as BLS, 5 as ALS2, and 92 for On-Scene Care. Total charges equaled \$438,776.95. Total payments received were \$190,263.08, with allowances (write-offs) at \$156,870.20.
C. Call volume continues to be comparable to 2021. From May 1 through July 31, there were 335 calls with 4% transported emergent to the hospital.
D. As of the project meeting Monday, the building is officially considered behind schedule and will not be able to be occupied on September 1. A specific project timeline has been requested with the expectation that September 9 be the project completion date. There is a late completion penalty fee in the signed contract. There was also a sample from the building that is believed to potentially contain asbestos. The sample has been taken and delivered to the lab. It is not expected to impact

the timeline of the project. The internet and phone system are now installed and activated, and much of the move has begun already.

10. As previously discussed, an alternate resolution had been submitted to the Finance and Personnel Committee for consideration regarding a business plan and future operations to show no tax levy dollars. This presented resolution was accepted and adopted by the County Board as submitted.
11. 2022 is the last remaining year of the current MOU. The MOU for services in 2023 through 2025 was provided to municipalities to consider, sign, and return. The amount per call remained at \$170. The call average is based on the average of the most recent four years. This MOU was approved by Corp Counsel. There was discussion regarding potential correlation between highway miles and call volume but such data was not available at this time.
12. The Committee had previously discussed the need for competitive wages. An attempt was made to convince the Finance and Personnel Committee to approve the 2023 Ambulance Budget as the JAC had approved, however the proposed wage increases were removed. Another attempt will be made at the next Finance and Personnel Committee meeting the first week of September, however this appeal will be made to reclassify Service staff as healthcare rather than courthouse employees. This change is expected to increase the wages to be competitive with the local market. It was recognized that the classification was misassigned when the wage study was done, likely based simply on location of the department offices. However, staff administer medications, can administer IVs and EKGs, and numerous other skills that clearly show staff are healthcare providers. The reclassification would be \$6,400 less than in the proposed budget.

If this effort to reclassify staff is unsuccessful, McGraw recommended the JAC to petition the County Board upon their review of the proposed budgets to amend and allow for the wage increase as was approved by the JAC. Palmer stated the municipalities represented by the JAC are ultimately establishing the Service budget; they are the ones investing in the Service and ultimately responsible for ensuring ambulance coverage within their municipal boundaries. These participating municipalities have already approved these wages. Couey informed the Committee how a change to one department's wages can impact morale in other departments, so there is often hesitation to accept one department's wage increases. Couey encouraged members to attend the Finance and Personnel Committee and County Board meetings when these items are on the agenda. McGraw stated the investment in the new facility may be wasted if the wages do not stay competitive and the Service can't recruit or retain staff.

A motion was made that, in the event the job reclassification to healthcare worker fails, the Committee calls for the preparation and submission to the County Board an amendment to the County Budget that includes a competitive wage and benefits package for EMS personnel. Motion made by Schmitz, seconded by Rognholt. In discussion, Severson recommended the inclusion of other position wages in comparison. Voice vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

13. The next meeting is scheduled for November 30. Schmitz made a motion to adjourn the meeting; motion seconded by Duhr. The motion carried; the meeting was adjourned at 20:13.