

Richland County Joint Ambulance Committee:  
Strategic Planning for EMS Subcommittee

April 5, 2019

Minutes

Present: Brian McGraw, Ryan Keller, Bob Holets, Darin Gudgeon

Not Present: Gordon Palmer, Justin Lockwood

Prior to the meeting being called to order, the subcommittee members toured the building at 435 W Seminary St.

1. Meeting was called to order at 1925.
2. Notification of the meeting had been made and the agenda was posted.
3. Committee attendance was as noted above, with a quorum.
4. A motion was made by Holets to approve the agenda. It was seconded by McGraw. The agenda was approved.
5. A motion was made by McGraw to approve the previous Subcommittee meeting minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Holets. The motion carried.
6. The building toured prior to the meeting was reviewed and discussed. The location was seen as a positive, as it is only two blocks from the previous garage and has easy access to the highway. While the building as it currently stands would require a lot of work to remodel to fit the ambulances, the possibility of building the bays and having them designed to be drive-through with immediate access onto Seminary street could cost less and be built to suit the Service's needs. The bays could be attached to the current building for access and ease of use. There is currently a 30x60 space that was preapproved for a future build that may allow for construction of the bays and entry onto Seminary Street.  
The building has several spaces for lease, and members recognized this could be seen as an advantage because of the rental income or a disadvantage, as the Service would then be a landlord. Each of the spaces appears to be individually metered for electrical with their own heating/cooling systems.

It was noted that the realtor stated multiple times that the seller is motivated to sell and willing to negotiate the price. It was also recognized that for any of the proposed buildings, there are needs we don't know about yet, such as exact specifications on things like the firewall or exhaust and sleeping quarters.

Gudgeon noted that in comparison with the REC building toured in June 2018, there were pros and cons for both. The REC building would change some paid-on-call staff response times and it would be uncomfortably close to the park and pool where children can be more unpredictable with traffic, however, the REC building is off of the tax roll whereas the building at 435 W Seminary is not and currently has just under \$12,000 in annual taxes to the City of Richland Center. This building, though, may be seen as supporting economic development within the City in provided leased space to businesses. Money collected from those leases could also be used to help pay down the loan faster. Since the building would be a County-Owned building, it may not need to be the Joint Ambulance Committee that oversees the tenants and leasing. As far as location, all in attendance recognized the 435 building to be the better location, and the price is much lower. However, the REC building was recognized to be a sturdier structure and has a backup generator, which could be vital to uninterrupted operation in a power outage. There was question whether there was fiber-optic at the 435 building. Being a landlord was seen to be a big factor, though the idea was proposed that perhaps these units could be sold rather than leased. Parking would also need to be looked into as building the 4-bay garage would eliminate some parking area. There is an agreement with the City in place for the owner of this building to lease the lot from them, so the agreement would need to be reviewed. Overall the 435 building was seen to be a viable option with more research needing to be conducted. Holets pointed out that, unlike the REC building, the 435 building could potentially be sold while the Committee walked through the process. It is not being held for the Ambulance whereas, to the subcommittee's knowledge, the REC building has only been offered to the Ambulance. He also noted that the realtor stated there was a lease being potentially created for the large area which would likely be used as the ambulance office. There was agreement as to the need to understand the Service's income before any offer can be made on any building. McGraw stated that there was a need for a couple years of data to show if the Service could afford such a purchase.

7. The building proposal from JR Ewing was reviewed and discussed. It was recognized to be a less convenient location for paid-on-call members to respond to. Keller noted that it seemed similar to the North Industrial Park, which the City may have space to build and be willing to work out a land purchase for. Gudgeon stated that the original industrial park by Peebles Dr may be a place to look into as well, though it would still present difficulties for the paid-on-call staff. Holets asked if the old Armory owned by the Department of Defense was still in use. Gudgeon stated that he did not believe so but that the purchase of that building would likely have many more hoops to jump through. It was agreed that all available options should be looked into to ensure the right choices have been made. Regarding the JR Ewing proposal, the building was too small and did not have space for the operational needs. It was suggested that someone have a conversation with JR Ewing regarding the building requirements so they could revise the

proposal; however, if the location was seen to be undesirable such a conversation would be unnecessary. Gudgeon stated that if the Service has paid-on-call members, the Highway 14 location would not be feasible. Funding was again discussed, as was the need for more information regarding the potential number of transfers the Service could have.

McGraw suggested that the Committee hire a consultant to analyze whether staffing the Service to consistently provide transfer services for the Richland Hospital would generate additional revenue over and above the additional costs, and if so, how much. Such information would help the committee to understand if purchasing a facility is financially feasible. Such models already exist, so it would only require numbers to be input. McGraw estimated it may cost \$5,000 to hire a consulting firm and that he was aware of and had worked with some out of the Madison area. Gudgeon stated that it was possible Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWWRPC) would have someone for this, as they demographics reports and other programs. Gudgeon stated that he would check with SWWRPC as well as one of the places out of Madison and get an estimate of the cost for this analysis. With the information provided by this consultant as well as the information from the USDA representative to be provided at the May meeting and the end-of-year audited balance, the Committee should be able to make an educated decision regarding the pursuit of a building purchase at this time. Gudgeon stated that he would contact McGraw with the information he gathers from his contacts and McGraw as the Committee Chair can determine if an earlier meeting needs to be called in order to hire the consultant and keep this process moving.

8. Gudgeon asked whether the Subcommittee would support a wage increase for EMS personnel. He proposed a wage increase for full-time, part-time, and paid-on-call. The paid-on-call have not had a wage increase for more than two years. The full-time/part-time had a wage increase in May 2018. The starting pay for the full-time was increased from \$10.91/hr to \$12.73/hr at that time. The average wage in the State is now \$14.62, with starting wages at Paratech in Dane County being \$14.50/hr, TriState in LaCrosse being \$14.78/hr, and Reedsburg being approximately \$14/hr. The wage scale as adopted by the County Board will have to be followed. Gudgeon recommended increasing the wage by at least one, possibly two steps to bring the starting wage from \$12.73 to \$13.02 or \$13.32 respectively. Step 8, the highest step, is \$14.80/hr, and the Committee could bump staff up to the step they preferred whenever they prefer as long the budget can afford it, however Gudgeon estimated that the budget would not currently support anything above \$14/hr. He stated that the EMT position is the lowest paid employee reported in this portion of the wage study, coming in below the wage for food workers or janitorial staff. He estimated that in order to attract any applicants, the wage needed to be over \$13/hr, stating that the starting wage would need to go up at least one step, with two being feasible. Each step has an estimated 30¢ difference between each step. All in attendance agreed a proposal for increasing the full-time/part-time by at least one step and possibly two steps be presented to the Committee.

Gudgeon stated that the paid-on-call staff currently get paid \$20/call hour, which he proposed stay the same but the pay for pager-carrying time be increased from the current rates by 50¢. The current hourly paid-on-call rates are as follows: Primary Crew Monday 8am to Friday 8pm

\$1.50 an hour. Friday 8pm to Monday 8am and Holidays \$3.00 per hour. Backup crew pay is \$1.25 an hour regardless of whether it is weekday, weekend, or holiday. Holets acknowledged that the employees are the Service so the Committee needed to keep the people in order to keep the Service going. Overall, those present stated that they would support Gudgeon presenting a wage increase proposal at the next Joint Ambulance Committee meeting.

9. Holets made a motion to adjourn, seconded by McGraw. The meeting was adjourned at 21:19.