

Richland County Joint Ambulance Committee:
Strategic Planning for EMS Subcommittee
December 8, 2022
Minutes

Present: Brian McGraw, Sharon Schmitz, Mary Rognholt, Jerome Durst, Gordon Palmer, Darin Gudgeon.
Not Present: N/A

1. Meeting was called to order at 14:00.
2. Notification of the meeting had been made and the agenda was posted.
3. Committee attendance was as noted above, with a quorum. Also in attendance was Dan Williams, EMS Rural Coordinator for Wisconsin Division of Public Health.
4. A motion was made by Schmitz to approve the agenda. It was seconded by Palmer. The agenda was approved.
5. A motion was made by Schmitz to approve the previous Subcommittee meeting minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Rognholt. The motion carried.
6. For election of Subcommittee Chair, Schmitz nominated McGraw, seconded by Rognholt. Durst made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for McGraw, seconded by Rognholt. McGraw is elected Subcommittee Chair.
7. For election of Subcommittee Vice Chair, Schmitz nominated Palmer, seconded by Durst. Durst made a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot for Palmer, seconded by Schmitz. Palmer is elected Subcommittee Vice Chair.
8. In discussion with Williams regarding the business plan, the primary guidance being sought was whether the County should continue to provide ambulance service or the current Service should transition into a district. As of two years ago, the State allows for ambulance services to become districts under the same provision as fire departments. This provision requires more than two entities forming a coverage area beyond a single entity's tax area. However, Williams advised there was no advantage in transitioning to a District. At this point in time, he stated, County-run services have a great advantage. It was recognized the Joint Ambulance Committee has representatives of each municipality being provided coverage; these municipalities would be eligible to create a district. If the County continues to provide the Service, it was preferable to continue with the JAC as oversight but there is a need to make it less of a financial burden to the municipalities. Williams informed the Subcommittee the County can choose to tax for the Service and exceed the levy limit for the EMS budget under certain parameters. Previously, the Dept of Revenue had mandated a County to provide service to the entire county, however it has not been recognized as not needing to be county-wide. Williams stated a County can choose to tax all County residences whether covered by the service or not; a municipality can choose to pay for another service if they prefer. This has been challenged and held up in court. Williams stated administrative fees such as corp counsel and insurance can be included as a line item in the budget, and included in the County levy. Gudgeon stated the current oversight by the municipalities has established accountability. Williams agreed this committee structure is preferable for oversight and accountability. The JAC is a Committee recognized by the County, with members paid a stipend as any member of another committee. Currently, the County covers incidental costs such as having a County Attorney for Corp Counsel, maintaining the accounts receivable/payable, and overseeing the accounting and audits. Part of the Business Plan is to show the ability for the Service to be self-sustaining for both the

operations and building maintenance. At this time, the primary reliance the Service has on the County is in HR and Accounting, as well as in the provision of benefits.

It was noted there are many struggling services; a strong County-run Service would be able to support smaller services that are struggling. At this time, there are seven ambulance services with 13 total ambulances covering the County. Williams stated the system of EMS is in a state of crisis. There are many services around the State with an average age of the members being 70 years old. Many licensed EMTs across the State are expected to allow their licenses to lapse rather than renew their license June 2023. It is expected each license renewal will show a greater percentage of expiring licenses moving forward. This lack of qualified candidates is being reflected in wages across the State. Eighteen months ago, an EMT starting wage was \$15-\$17/hour. At the time of this meeting, EMT starting wage is \$24/hour. A paramedic starting wage is \$30/hour. There are concerns about the sustainability of these wages, however, there are efforts being made in the State budget that may provide some support for EMS.

Williams spoke about a State-wide survey conducted in 2022. Of 424 transporting services, 300 responded. Of these responses, 46% stated they were unable to provide a full crew daily. There are 18 documented cases of someone calling for an ambulance but the ambulance was so slow in coming, the patients were forced to find other means of transport. He recognized the payer mix is often an obstacle in revenue, as Subcommittee members acknowledged had been an impact for the Service. Williams stated the Service being under the County creates further stability in the changing environment. He stated there is evidence suggesting a state-wide shift to more and more county-run ambulance services. As part of the County, Services can provide better resources, access larger employment bases, offer better benefits, and create stronger infrastructure.

The Business Plan requires an explanation of the options considered and supporting documentation. The document must be readily defensible and impartial. The inclusion of statistics from the recent study Williams referenced will be helpful in explaining the current situation. The Plan needs to reflect the Service not costing the County financially as well as reflect the ability to use tax levy exemptions for having the Service. It is expected, with some guidance, the document should be able to be completed in-house without the need to pay for a consultant. Data will be included to show budget projections. Currently, the Service is fiscally responsible with the JAC and County oversight. However, due to these, it is not as nimble as a District may be. Williams cautioned the field is very dynamic at this time, so the outlook may be different in six months as wages continue to change. He stated he would attempt to be available for future meetings to answer questions. It was noted if a District was formed, it would still qualify to be tax-exempt. It was also recognized a separate wage scale could be established with an evaluation and reclassification by Carlson-Dettman; the Service would have to pay for this.

9. Schmitz made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Durst. The meeting was adjourned at 15:45.