

Chickasaw County Ambulance Council

July 26, 2022

Meeting Minutes

260 E Prospect St

New Hampton, IA 50659

Meeting called to order by Chairman Mark Mueterthies at 5:30 pm

Ambulance Council members present: Amy Laures, David Geerts, Matthew Kuhn, Jim Ashley, Samantha Johnson, James Mitchell, Mark Mueterthies, Bobby Schwickerath, and Randy Taylor

Guests: Jeff Bernatz, Jacob Hackman, Kayme Hackman, Doreen Cook, Jim Cook, Doug Kleiss, Sheriton Dettmer, Travis Suckow, Jason Byrne, Mark Knoll, Josh Caster, Megan Baltes, Jennifer Monteith, Karen McGrath, Brian Laures, Bob Fenske, Dawn Heying, Abe Karels, Garrett Raum, Terry Johnson, Karen Clemens, David Laudner, Corey Larson (by phone).

Motion by Amy Laures, seconded by Randy Taylor to approve the agenda. All Ayes. Motion Carried

Motion by David Geerts, seconded by Bobby Schwickerath to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2022 Chickasaw County Ambulance Council meeting. All Ayes. Motion Carried

No claims presented at this meeting.

Matt Kuhn requested to hear from the cities that were on the fence and have met with their city councils since the last CCAC meeting. Amy Laures advised that Alta Vista is out. Samantha Johnson advised that Nashua is out. Jim Ashley advised that if those two cities are out, Bassett is too.

Matt Kuhn explained to the CCAC that he has been working with Corey Larson (Iowa Falls EMS) to run numbers based on different number of participants. Matt Kuhn also advised that the Chickasaw County Board of Supervisors did pass a motion to move forward with the cities that were still in and reduce the budget by amount owed by the cities that were out.

David Laudner addressed the CCAC on the current draft of the 28E agreement that the only additions were paragraphs 19 and 31. Paragraph 19 references general indemnification for the cities was pulled out and restricted to only instances where the city was in breach and that cross references in paragraph 31. This change was at the request of a couple of city attorneys. The current draft is an individual 28E with their expected contribution for 2023 broke down by quarters.

Matt Kuhn discussed the budget that he and Corey Larson created. Scenario 1 includes an EMS Director and 4 FT Paramedics, scenario 2 includes an EMS Director and 5 FT Paramedics. Corey Larson based this budget on the way it is done in Iowa Falls. Iowa Falls EMS does not do a straight salary, the is an up time pay and a down time pay. Scenario 1 budget would be \$884,728.00 and Scenario 2 budget would be \$935,615.00.

Matt Kuhn advised that the BOS discussed this at their regular meeting and thought the budget would be higher than the \$1.2M that has been discussed. Matt Kuhn advised that with the use of APRA dollars he does not believe that to be true.

Matt Kuhn advised that he attended the Nashua city council meeting and told them that the county will be moving forward with the draft 28E and will not be putting an ambulance in Nashua right away.

Sheriton Dettmer questioned if the \$935,615.00 included ambulance replacement, otherwise that seems high for just 5 people. Matt Kuhn advised that this was mostly for salary and operation. Bobby Schwickerath pointed out that only \$20,000 is budgeted for capital equipment. Samantha Johnson also pointed out that this budget does not reflect the part time employees either.

Samantha Johnson advised that at the Nashua city council meeting, Matt Kuhn advised them that if a rig was stationed in Nashua then the budget could increase to \$1.5M. Matt Kuhn replied that he received the numbers from Corey Larson just before the Nashua city council meeting and did not have a lot of time to review them. After more review, Matt Kuhn does not believe that will be necessary.

Megan Baltes addressed the CCAC that if they take out Alta Vista, Bassett, and Nashua that take the budget to \$1,029,000 and could still cover costs. Jenny Monteith added that does not include revenue either. Matt Kuhn agreed. Corey Larson believes that our expenses would be half of what we are budgeting because we are not including revenue.

Doreen Cook asked James Mitchell how Fredericksburg was voting, James Mitchell advised that he has not voted yet, that Matt Kuhn has asked for a response only from the cities that were on the fence so far. James Mitchell went on to say that Fredericksburg had already voted in favor as long as the numbers don't change, Doreen Cook does not remember that from their city council meeting.

Jim Ashley requested to know where the county's share is coming from, if it comes from Rural Basic ok, but if it comes from General Basic then he is being triple taxed. Matt Kuhn advised that there has not been a decision made on that, but he is on board with their 40% coming out of Rural Basic or Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) as stated in the current 28E. Anything over the 40% would then need to come out of General Basic or General Supplemental.

James Mitchell confirmed that the revenue does include interfacility transfers. The budget that Corey Larson prepared states an average revenue per call to be \$750.

Samantha Johnson stated that the budget revenue includes Alta Vista, Bassett, and Nashua so that will go down since those cities have pulled out of the proposed 28E.

James Mitchell expressed that there are too many factors right now to make a decision.

Megan Baltes asked about dispatching services. Matt Kuhn advised that the fee that is paid on your cell phone bill pays for emergency dispatching services. The fees that New Hampton and Nashua pay/paid for their Police Departments is for administrative and NCIC services.

If a city opts out of the drafted 28E and does not provide their own ambulance service, the county does not have an obligation to respond to that city. Randy Taylor would like to see a fee imposed for responding to a city not included in the proposed 28E agreement. Matt Kuhn believes they are talking about a transport agreement. If a city is unable to provide EMS service for whatever reason the service with the transport agreement would respond and could assess a fee to the city that could not provide that service. This fee would be a flat rate. Doreen Cook told the CCAC that they cannot do that with Medicare, she was advised this fee would be to the city not the patient.

Corey Larson (by phone) explained the budget he created was staffing two ambulances 24/7 and operational expenses for a third ambulance but not the staff. The staff cost for the third rig was addressed in a separate column at roughly \$82,000.

James Mitchell asked Corey Larson how many part time employees were figured into the budget he created for Chickasaw County; Corey Larson advised there was not set number of part time employees used but however many it would take to fill the schedule.

Matt Kuhn advised that he had discussed adding \$140,000 for capital large purchases. Corey Larson advised that Iowa Falls EMS takes the surplus from revenue/expenses and the franchise fee that Iowa Falls charges and puts those funds in the Local Options Sales Tax account and that is where capital improvements are paid from, including replacing ambulances. That is why there is no depreciation in the EMS budget, all departments go to the LOST account for capital expenses.

James Mitchell and Matt Kuhn wanted to know how long it would take before we would see any revenue, Corey Larson advised with the six-month lead time that we could get established with Medicare/Medicaid/Wellmark and by the third month after starting responses could potentially begin to see revenue. That is if enrollment goes smoothly. Corey Larson recommended having the billing agency assist in this.

Brian Lares asked how much the billing agency charges. Corey Larson advised that he talked to the billing agency that Iowa Falls EMS uses and based on the call volume for Chickasaw County they would charge 8%. That 8% is only applied to the money received, not the billing amount. Brian Lares asked if the billing agency does the small claim process. Corey Larson advised their billing agency does the initial billing, any follow-up with insurance companies, continue to bill the patient for whatever amount of time you choose, and then when it is decided that a claim will not be paid it will be written off. Their billing agency does not do any collections. Corey Larson went on to talk about the Iowa Offset Program where you file that bill with the State of Iowa and anytime that patient is to receive a tax refund, the money owed would be paid before they receive that check.

Jeff Bernatz pointed out that the budget that Corey Larson created was for 2 fully staffed ALS ambulances 24/7, another model that was discussed at CCAC meetings was 1 fully staffed ALS ambulance 24/7 and 1 scheduled on-call staffed ambulance 24/7. Jeff Bernatz questioned with the current EMS crisis are we going to be able to find 5

paramedics to staff the 2 fully staffed ALS ambulances 24/7. When we started this process, we were looking for 1 fully staffed ALS ambulance 24/7 and we have our volunteers now that want to run the back-up rig, why are we not looking at the model. Matt Kuhn agreed and advised that these numbers were just put together with maximum potential and could definitely be ran again with a single fully staffed ALS ambulance 24/7 and a scheduled volunteer back-up rig.

James Mitchell believes his council will still be for it because ultimately staying together is the best thing, but if there is not a light at the end of the tunnel where we trip the \$750,000 and stop getting billed then they are looking at over \$100,000 for five years.

Matt Kuhn advised that he has not discussed this with the BOS, but if we slim this model down you could cut the budget, but if the budget remains at the \$1.2M you're going to hit the \$750,000 trigger a lot faster. Jim Ashley suggested taking \$250,000 of ARPA funds and put it in the ambulance account in case a motor were to blow-up there would be money to replace it, or if it is not needed pull it back out before the ARPA deadline and spend it someplace else.

Jim Ashley would like to cut the budget to \$600,000. Right now, there is loss of \$322,000 so if there was a budget of \$600,000 then there would be a gain of \$300,000 the first year.

Randy Taylor asked reiterated that the numbers are not changing so why is Bassett out, Jim Ashley replied that they are not clear out. If Nashua had a rig, they wouldn't be out either.

Megan Baltes asked James Mitchell what would it take for Fredericksburg to commit, James Mitchell wants to take these new budgets, one with 2 FT ALS 24/7 and one with 1 FT ALS 24/7 plus a scheduled volunteer backup rig, back to his council for review and make a decision based on that.

Corey Larson explained what the cost would be to staff the third ambulance. The budget would reflect 2 EMTs on-call 24/7 running approximately 50 calls averaging 2 hours per call. On-call wage would be \$4.50/hr, response wage would be \$15.00/hr. Budget total would be \$81,615.78 for crew only.

Megan Baltes asked Corey Larson if he would be willing to work the numbers for the single fully staffed ALS ambulance 24/7 and a scheduled volunteer 24/7 ambulance, he agreed to help.

Mark Knoll does not believe this county has enough volunteers to run the back-up ambulance. Mark Knoll also does not like having all the ambulances in New Hampton because the intersection of York and 300th St is a half hour away. Bridget Edson believes that having crew quarters will open us up to more volunteers. A lot of paramedics will side gig and take shifts in other towns.

Randy Taylor believes the Director needs to be a working paramedic. Corey Larson agreed.

Corey Larson advised that in Iowa Falls they have 4 FT paramedics including him and with the other part timers they staff two ALS ambulances 24/7.

Randy Taylor asked what the starting pay is for a paramedic in Iowa Falls, Corey Larson advised that a straight out of school non-critical care paramedic would start at between \$55,000-\$58,000 if they only worked their scheduled hours. With overtime their paramedics make \$62,000.

Jimmy Mitchell pointed out that if the outlying towns would get a rig in their town, then they need to be in service at least 75% of the time. These towns need to build up their EMS and prove that they can maintain. Jenny Monteith reminded everyone that the county never said that there will never be a rig in the outlying towns but financially it needs to maintain.

Matt Kuhn explained that all the 28E agreements would be independent and one city backing out would not make any city's price go up, James Mitchell expressed concern with that model the pot does not fill up as fast (referencing the \$750,000 cap before waived payments).

David Laudner repeated a statement made a few meetings ago that if the current provider can run the service for under \$300,000 then the county probably could too. With a few cities out and that lost revenue, maybe the budget needs to come down. David Laudner fully believes that the county eventually wants to put rigs in outlying towns but what happens in a few years when those crews begin to retire or burnout and there is not enough staff to maintain being in service, then the county is responsible for that cost. As an attorney that makes him nervous. It all comes down to trust, everyone's heart is in the right place and we need to do what is best for everyone.

Brian Laures would like to see certain benchmarks to be achieved by the outlying cities and if that is not maintained the rig will need to be removed.

Samantha Johnson advised the CCAC that if a rig is not placed in Nashua, regardless of how it is done, then Nashua is out of the proposed 28E. Dawn Heying asked Samantha Johnson if Nashua is ready to provide EMS service to the constituents of Nashua on January 1 (2023), Samantha Johnson quoted one of the Nashua city council members from their last city council meeting, "If we are not then we will do what we have been doing and throw people in the car and we go to the hospital". Jeff Bernatz asked if that is what they are providing for their citizens? Rick Sinnwell and Josh Caster asked what else can we do when we are waiting for 30-40 minutes for an ambulance. Samantha Johnson advised that they have had police officers want to put people in their cars and take them to the hospital. Jeff Bernatz advised that he understood what they were saying but is very concerned that is what they are planning on and telling them to do. Rick Sinnwell advised the CCAC that there are twelve EMTs that want to serve in Nashua, nurses that want to take the classes. Samantha Johnson advised that only half of those people will do it if it is owned by the county.

Megan Baltes reminded everyone that all cities were supposed to come to this meeting with a decision if they are in or out of the proposed 28E. Three of the cities have advised that they were out so the remaining cities need to decide if they are in or out. Megan Baltes would like the adjusted numbers as soon as possible based on Corey (Larson's) schedule.

James Mitchell would like to see new numbers for four FT paramedics staffing one FT ALS rig 24/7 and a back-up on-call rig. Samantha Johnson also suggested to subtract roughly 100 calls for the three towns that are out. Matt Kuhn would like these numbers as soon as possible to be able to take back the city council and then the CCAC.

Jeremy McGrath confronted Samantha Johnson about the alleged call that took Chickasaw Ambulance Service 45 minutes to respond and if she had any proof. Samantha Johnson advised that it was in the CAD system at the Sheriff's Office. Jeremy McGrath asked why she did not have physical evidence present when talking about it and that it is defamation of character and it needs to stop.

Corey Larson advised that he will remove \$189,000 buy in for the three cities that are out and 120 calls for service in the new numbers. Corey Larson asked if the Nashua Ambulance will only cover city limits and the county ambulance will cover everything else, Samantha Johnson would like Matt Kuhn to ask the BOS if the trustees of the surrounding townships could choose which ambulance they want to cover them. David Laudner advised that each township has the right to tax for EMS and enter into any contract they wish.

Corey Larson would like to know if when the ambulance service that the three cities that are out is not available, will the county owned ambulance cover that area and how will the transport agreements be setup, Matt Kuhn advised that if they are out that will be up to them.

Randy Taylor would like to see a fee established if the county owned ambulance has to respond to one of the three cities that are out of the proposed 28E agreement. There is a difference in backing up an ambulance crew and covering their territory because they can't.

Matt Kuhn would like to see those cities that agree with the proposed 28E have their signature pages turned into the Auditor's office on August 2, 2022 by 4:00p.m.

Samantha Johnson questioned if for those cities that are agreeing with the proposed 28E agreement then they are opting out of the current 28E agreement as of January 1, 2023, Matt Kuhn advises that they would have to give notice in writing to the CCAC Chairman that they would like to opt out and follow the provisions of the current 28E. However, if all parties of the current 28E give notice of termination then it is dissolved at that point. David Laudner confirmed that the CCAC can only be disbanded one of two ways; 1. If the budget exceeds the cap explained in the 28E, 2. As amended by the parties of the agreement. If the parties agree that they want to disband January 1, 2023 they can do so. The vote will be by the 5 voting members, majority rules.

Samantha Johnson wanted confirmation that there will not be a county owned ambulance in Nashua, because that would cause the budget to reach \$1.5M. Matt Kuhn asked Corey Larson his opinion on that, Corey Larson thought that number was high. Corey Larson believes the budget would be under \$1M even with the third staffed ambulance in Nashua, Samantha Johnson stated that it would not be staffed.

Samantha Johnson advised the CCAC that if the BOS put an ambulance in Nashua that they would be in for the proposed 28E, if they do not put a truck in Nashua then they are out. Megan Baltes asked if that was with the current numbers because at the last meeting Nashua wanted a rig and the price lowered, Samantha Johnson advised that was her mistake and should have stated is "or" instead of "and" because the dollar amount was not the big issue it was the rig being in Nashua.

David Laudner asked Samantha Johnson if a rig was placed in Nashua what parameters do you want on it. Samantha Johnson advised that it needs to be a functioning rig, Nashua will choose the level of care based on the how they staff it. The rig would be in service 3-5 nights a week and be able to cover more are than just Nashua.

Jason Byrne advised that Samantha Johnson stated at the BOS meeting that Nashua had four people that wanted to run ambulance and that is what they based their decision on. Samantha Johnson advised that the mayor was having people sign up on forms and she received that information 5 minutes before their meeting. Thirteen people had filled out those forms on-line, eight more people that filled out a paper form, and Samantha Johnson know 3 more people that said they would. Samantha Johnson stated again that half of the people that want to run ambulance will not do it if the ambulance is county owned.

Matt Kuhn expressed concern with a specific 28E for a rig in Nashua because of the understanding that if one of the New Hampton rigs is down then the third rig (Nashua) would come to New Hampton to keep two rigs in New Hampton at all times. This would breach the Nashua specific 28E.

Samantha Johnson advised that if there is going to be any grey area then it is not going to work. David Laudner confirmed that Nashua wants it specified exactly what hours its going to be there and how it's going to be staffed. Samantha Johnson replied, I guess so.

Megan Baltes requests to just move forward with the cities that are in agreement with the proposed 28E.

David Laudner confirmed that Matt Kuhn is asking the cities that are in to approve the proposed 28E on Monday night at their city council meetings and bring the signed agreement to the Auditor's office on Tuesday, August 2, 2022 by 4:00 p.m.

Motion by Randy Taylor, seconded by James Mitchell to adjourn. All Ayes. Motion carried

Mark Mueterthies, Chairman
Chickasaw County Ambulance Council

Jeff Bernatz, Secretary
Chickasaw County Ambulance Council