

# Negotiations Committee Report

## HOW WE GOT HERE

After reviewing and studying

- the 2012 State Assessment completed in conjunction with the Paramedic Foundation,
- the 2013 Task Force,
- the 2017 Focus Group reports, and
- pages of research on different EMS models in Nebraska and other states for communities our size.

In January of 2018 the County Board made a motion to no longer be the sole provider of a county ambulance service - seeking proposals and assistance from interested stakeholders. All three reports and research suggested forming a partnership amongst the County, City and Hospital, noting that a hospital based service has many components in place as well as the capability of recouping a percentage of employee wages through the Federal government's Medicare program. The Hospital did not feel the timing was right to consider the partnership.

Since January, four groups have presented their proposals for Advanced Life Support services to all county residents. The City based their presentation on their completed 2018 Aurora EMS Study Committee Report, which focused on increasing patient transfers between facilities, and the formation of a City based fire and rescue organization, requiring a proposed budget of \$1,172,692.00.

## LET'S LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Statistics provided to the County Board by the Ambulance Dept. and EMS Billing Co., regarding the number and type of ambulance runs both billable and not-billed indicate:

- 696 average total runs for the years of 2014- 2017,
- 230 average runs not billed (lift assist and standby),
- 466 average billable runs, broken down to
  - 125 average billable patient transfers (This number includes the 35 missed transfers in 2016 per Hospital and Ambulance Dept. information),
  - 341 billable patient rescue runs in Hamilton County per year (EMS Billings last 2 year average is 310 rescue runs), and
- 67.16% of these runs originate inside city limits.

## POTENTIAL SUBSIDIES

In meetings with three of the alternate providers, discussion included:

- Subsidizing all rescue calls in which a patient is transported from anywhere in the city or county to a medical facility, at a flat rate of \$588.00 per run and extending the agreement to 5 years providing a subsidy slightly over \$200,000.00 each year,
- Leaving the city or private company free to pursue a patient transfer business, outside Hamilton County, without county taxpayers subsidizing the transfer business,
- This would provide a tangible number to develop a cost share formula for county-wide rescue service runs, and
- Developing a building, vehicle and equipment (asset transfer) allowance, or credit for the county.

## ASSETS

In early August ambulance staff listed department assets at \$1.1 million. City officials asked what share of the ambulance assets that city tax payers had already paid. Six years of data indicates the city's share of the County's total valuation is 12%.

- \$1.1 million County assets
- \$968,000 paid for by property taxes from outside of city limits (88%),
  - \$387,200 after a 60% depreciation was applied for missing, not working and aging equipment,
  - \$149,839 value of county ambulance building per Insurance listing
- \$537,039 suggested asset value
  - 107,407.80 proposed annual credit to apply towards county subsidy for 5 years.

CITY/COUNTY NEGOTIATIONS

The County initially presented the idea of:

- Adding two City Council members, the City and County Attorneys, and two volunteer firefighters interested in a local solution to mediate a resolution and develop a plan for a county wide service, and
- Supporting the City structuring their service per the Nebraska City model (City Report p.12), which mirrors the recommendation of the 2012 Paramedic Foundation report.

Upon the City's rejection of these suggestions, the County Board referred to the rescue run numbers as a basis for our discussions with the City. The County Board urged the City to consider this type of arrangement regarding a subsidy and asset acquisition and firm up actual numbers, believing these numbers are appropriate, based on the county population and historical rescue needs. City representatives returned 10 days later, and

- Suggested the City could waive a \$17,000 cost for city administration,
- Stated the City Study committee would not budge from their original request for transfer of all assets (vehicles, equipment & building) at no cost, and
  - Require a subsidy of \$301,000 a year from the County and \$301,000 a year from the City,
  - Would wait for the County Board's decision, and
  - If the County did not agree with the City's proposal, the City would consider starting their own City ambulance service.

A comparative analysis of plans shows:

	City Fire Based EMS	Hybrid Neb City/Para Foundation Plan for CIR Approval	County - Current	Nebraska City Model
Supervisor	City Adm. & Director	New Stakeholder Board & Manager	1 Director	2
FTE Paramedic	12	5	10	4 (7 PT)
Average Pay	Not stated	\$47,200 average	\$37,000	
PT EMT / Drivers	12	15	10	20
Average Pay	Not stated	\$250 a week	\$350 a month	
Advanced Life Support	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day Schedule	Not stated	1 @ station/1 Responds	3 @ station/ 1 Responds	
Night Schedule	Not stated	1 @ station/1 Responds	2 Respond	
2nd Call	Not stated	2 Respond	2 Respond	
Transfers	Over 50% Out of County	Aurora Based Only	Aurora Based	County Based Only
Costs	1,200,000	550,000	850,000	
Revenues	570,000	270,000	270,000	
Billable Runs	370 Transfers 360 Rescue	125 Transfers 360 Rescue	125 Transfers 360 Rescue	1250 Billable Runs

ROADBLOCKS

Other hurdles the County Board is working to overcome include:

- Dissatisfaction of employees regarding wages, benefits, and staffing levels,
- Any changes within the established department structures recommended by the State Assessment, Focus Group and Task Force are problematic without the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) approval, and
- Pending cases in the Commission of Industrial Relations filed against the County by the union.

- All department organizational changes (transferring the department to any other entity) be it public or private - must go before the CIR for approval.

### COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEES

- The County Board offered stipends for managerial duties,
- The County Board authorized lump sum payments equal to cost of living adjustments provided other employees,
- The County Board has offered an adjustment to employee's on-call pay, which was rejected by the union, and
- The County Board continues to support the job our highly qualified paramedic staff members perform.

### OUR COMMITMENT TO ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS

The goals of the County Board include:

- Provide high quality Advanced Life Support rescue service with above average response times,
- A long term sustainable rescue hybrid EMS model,
- Reliable transfers for our local hospital, whose transfer patients should always come first,
- Highly-trained medical professionals who are compensated well,
- Efficient utilization of labor and management staff, and
- Improved facilities with decontamination areas and night quarters.

Facing these issues head on, EMS staff choosing other opportunities, and the uncertainty of when the CIR would approve any County proposed changes, the County Board plans to seek CIR approval to develop an organizational structure similar to the Nebraska City and Paramedic Foundation models, expanding coverage by placing a paramedic in Aurora at our facility 24/7.

The County Board will **continue to seek a community solution with the city and rural fire districts** by negotiating for an ALS service that maintains our quality care, offers opportunity to our staff, as well as an exceptional compensation package, and provides an efficient, sustainable and transparent financial plan. In addition, the County Board seeks a model providing appropriate and proportionate funding of a county-wide service based in Aurora.