

Walworth County Fire/EMS Study Committee
September 25, 2018 Meeting Minutes
County Board Room 114, Walworth County Government Center
100 W. Walworth Street, Elkhorn, Wisconsin

Roll call was conducted and no quorum was established. Chair Dale Wilson, Vice Chair John Peters (arrived at 1:27 p.m.) and Denise Pieroni were present. Bruce Vander Veen, Dave Nelson, Lowell Hagen and James Weiss were absent.

Others present: Dr. Steven Andrews-Aurora Health Care; Dr. James MacNeal-Mercy Health; Walworth County Administrator David Bretl; Ashley Vickers, Mercy Walworth; Rebecca LeMire, Village of Darien Administrator; Sean Marquis, Mercy Health

[Recorder's Note: Although no quorum was established, members present discussed various agenda items in no particular order and no actions were taken. Discussion began at 1:11 p.m.]

Unfinished Business

- The County's potential role in Advanced Life Support Services (ALS)
- Follow-up on speakers for consolidation of dispatch

New Business

- Potential use for Fire/EMS Study Committee funds
- Additions, deletions or edits to Committee Recommendations document
- Topics for next meeting

Wilson stated as there was not a quorum present, discussion could take place but no actions. Discussion followed regarding the County's potential role in Advanced Life Support (ALS) services. MacNeal said ALS is necessary. While there are private providers in Walworth County, they do not have contracts that require them to be at 911 emergencies. The County needs to be able to guarantee an ALS response when required. The private ambulances are not subsidized to provide ALS care; they are based here for the opportunity of revenue. He believes money needs to be directed towards making a decent ALS response. Pieroni directed the committee to the refinements she made to Dr. Andrews changes, which were distributed at the meeting. She referred to III.I (formerly III.H) regarding encouraging regionalization of the EMS services, possibly including a partnership with the County, to ensure ALS ambulances are available. Andrews agreed with Pieroni's refinements and MacNeal's comments, but added some areas need help with even basic calls and multiple pages. He believes regionalization would be a move forward for the County. Pieroni added in the case of the County needing to support a major incident, there could be a possible surcharge for departments that do not show up for calls. MacNeal said it can be difficult for volunteer services to get calls covered during the day and some agencies in the County are in danger of shutdown by the State EMS office. When this occurs, other departments are left to cover for the shutdown agency, resulting in shortages elsewhere. He said a countywide ALS system could work but we need agreement from the other departments. Wilson inquired if the county would have a role in staffing EMS, or just with the cooperation and regionalization of the current resources. MacNeal said it is an issue of increasing ALS resources. Regionalization of BLS services is possible. Unless we subsidize private providers, we can't have a regionalization effort with them. He noted an ALS ambulance costs around \$500,000 a year. The County doesn't own the necessary ALS equipment and cannot regionalize until we get those resources. Bretl inquired how many ALS rigs would be required for the County if we were to move forward. MacNeal stated that a minimum of two ALS rigs could work, but if we did the intercept model, the necessary amount could change. The departments and municipalities currently transporting patients for revenue would be unhappy with the decrease in revenue. There would need to be departmental responsibility to transport BLS calls so ALS calls could be handled by the ALS ambulance. MacNeal explained how intercept services generally operate: there is usually a paramedic in their own vehicle that will show up when an ambulance is needed and they will

join the BLS crew. Once they are on board the ambulance, it is upgraded to the paramedic level of service and the patient can be treated and billed at that level. Andrews said there are many factors that would affect how many ALS ambulances would be required, but given the current demand of calls, he believes the County would need two or three at a minimum. Wilson inquired as to the percentage of ALS calls currently in the County. Andrews said ALS calls make up approximately 10-15% of total calls. Bretl commented that the intercept model would possibly be more feasible and cost-effective and take away less revenue. Wilson said this is a possible ALS solution but there would still need to be regionalization in order to fix BLS coverage issues, because a paramedic cannot intercept if no ambulance responds to the call. MacNeal said if the County wanted to set this up as a service with the potential to generate revenue, they would need to also do non-emergency transports between institutions to make up for revenue, as well. The issue is how to build and subsidize a county system. The County could work with private ambulance providers and give them the necessary requirements and, in exchange for that, Walworth County would pay the private provider a subsidy. The cost of this could potentially be less than starting a County-run squad. Bretl inquired how municipalities working with private providers operate and Pieroni explained the Village of Darien has a contract and the fees paid to them are based on estimated figures for cost and revenue. MacNeal said we would need to come up with criteria for who would respond to which areas. The county needs to be able to work with the Fire Chiefs and then also assist them at the county level. Peters said the problem is not ALS, although he agreed that three ALS ambulances would fill a gap. Staffing is the biggest problem and we need to fix that. The way we have solved a lack of BLS coverage in the past was using private ambulances. In the past, the issues were generally with EMS, but now there are starting to be staffing issues with fire as well. Discussion ensued regarding staffing issues and call volume. Wilson noted there seemed to be a general consensus among the members present and suggested members come to the next meeting ready to offer a recommendation for what the County's role in addressing the staffing and coverage issues needs to be. Bretl added this Committee needs to move forward, especially with the idea of regionalization, and how the County can make that work. Discussion continued regarding possible solutions. Bretl suggested a program that would allow departments to opt-in. Village of Darien Administrator Rebecca LeMire noted there are some municipalities that are not interested in working as a group. Peters said those municipalities need to realize there is a cost involved. Discussion ensued regarding possible models and the responsibility of municipalities versus the County to provide services and pay for them. Bretl described how the County library tax system works and said we could propose a similar concept. He suggested this Committee prepare three possible models that could be sent to Chiefs for input.

Public comment – Sean Marquis, Mercy Health said it is important to remember the people involved in the daily operations. He agreed with the idea of regionalization. Marquis added it may be beneficial to separate fire and EMS from each other somewhat, as burnout is more of an issue for those who are doing both fire and EMS. He added it would be an issue to rely too heavily on an intercept because it does not address the need for departments to have the staff available to transport. He agreed the County needs more ALS services. He concluded by saying it is important to remember patients don't care where help is coming from.

Wilson requested each committee member organize their ideas and submit them to Emily in Administration prior to the October meeting.

Next meeting date and time: The next meeting was confirmed for Tuesday October 23, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. in County Board Room 114 at the Walworth County Government Center.

The meeting ended at 3:18 p.m.