

SOUTH KALAMAZOO COUNTY

FIRE AUTHORITY

Minutes of Special Meeting Held June 7, 2017

The ~~regular~~ **special** meeting of the South Kalamazoo County Fire Authority Board was held at 13123 S. 24th Street, Vicksburg, Michigan on June 7, 2017. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jason Gatlin at 6:01pm.

The following members of the Authority Board were present for all or part of the meeting: Colin Bailey, Todd Carlin, Jason Gatlin, Ken Hovenkamp, Randy Smith and Mike Tomlinson.

Guests in attendance for all or part of the meeting: Chief Tracy McMillan, Administrator Tracy Locey.

Approval of the Agenda

Smith moved, seconded by Carlin to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion carried 6-0.**

Update from the Finance/Planning Committee

Smith provided an overview of the financial concerns of South County EMS (SCEMS) as presented by Wes Schmitt, Chairman of SCEMS at the last regular meeting. The SKCFA committee has researched its options. Life Care reached out and wanted to know what they could do to help. Carlin and Smith attended a meeting with the City of Portage about their Request for Proposal (RFP) they currently are soliciting regarding options for inclusion in the RFP. There is a sense of urgency coming from SCEMS on the Authority's need to act.

The ideal situation would be one in which a service provider would assume the debts of SCEMS, hold the lenders harmless, continue local service levels, and continue the service agreement between SKCFA and SCEMS until March 31, 2020. The ideal arrangement would allow SKCFA the opportunity to develop a long term solution without an interruption in service. Life EMS has provided legal documentation indicating their desire to fulfill the ideal scenario.

Schmitt addressed the Board stating SCEMS and SKCFA have the best interest of the citizens in mind as options are being considered. SCEMS would have preferred to receive a stipend or an infusion of money, but it appears there are other options for the Authority. SCEMS is preparing to take the necessary steps for the business to close. SCEMS continues to desire to work the SKCFA for the best solution for the residents.

Dr. William Fales, Kalamazoo County Medical Control Authority (KCMCA) Director, addressed the Board. KCMCA provides oversight of the EMS responses within the county. Standards are developed and enforced to provide for the best possible medical outcomes. KCMCA does not decide which ambulance providers will service an area; the local jurisdictions make those decisions. Dr. Fales gives credit to the leadership of SCEMS for maintaining a community based ambulance service for all these years. It is becoming increasingly difficult for smaller services to be sustainable. Dr. Fales encourages SKCFA to determine a long term solution.

Mark Meijer and John Pinkster of Life EMS addressed the Board. Life EMS has three decades of service in Kalamazoo County. SCEMS reached out to Life EMS regarding their situation. Life EMS has a desire to fulfill the “ideal” scenario for both SCEMS and SKCFA. Life EMS is committed to working from the Vicksburg location on a 24/7 basis and provide the same or better service. The transition would be controlled and SCEMS would be able to fulfill its obligations. SCEMS and Life EMS are seeking direction from SKCFA to allow Life EMS to serve until the end of the contract.

Steve Frisbie of Life Care addressed the Board. Life Care is a non-profit community based ambulance provider. People are the most important resource. Life Care is also in discussions with SCEMS. Frisbie stated high quality service would be of utmost importance.

Smith stated SCEMS is seeking commitment from SKCFA to assign the agreement to another service provider. Schmitt stated all three ambulance providers they are in discussions with are seeking a commitment from SKCFA before proceeding further with SCEMS. Tomlinson noted promises were made to the residents with regards to the fees for fire service. Hovenkamp inquired if it would be better if SKCFA and the City of Portage had the same service provider. Schmitt stated it is when a second call for service is received and the first vehicle is already involved in another call that response times could increase. Bailey and Carlin feel SKCFA should provide SCEMS some direction. Smith also added no other municipality in Kalamazoo County pays for service. To date only Life EMS has submitted an official offer to assume SCEMS.

Before continuing, citizen comments were received. Lee Philport, SCEMS board member, stated the SKCFA Articles of Incorporation allow for police, fire, and EMS services. SCEMS does not receive any tax dollars. Virginia Mongreig wanted to know if SKCFA had the money to support SCEMS. The answer is no the Authority does not have funding for SCEMS. Mongreig stated she thinks the public assumes SCEMS receives tax dollars. Smith stated SKCFA cannot legally give money to any non-profit unless a contract is in place for specific services. Smith provided an overview of the budget process and it must be presented to the participating municipalities for approval. This must occur with anything involving monies that have not be previously included in the budget. The current contract between SKCFA and SCEMS does not contain a provision for funding. Alicia Crandall wanted to know if all three providers have been given the opportunity to submit bids to SCEMS. She also wanted to know what would happen to the SCEMS employees. TJ Pool stated wait times would increase to 45 minutes if another provider were to be chosen. Smith responded response times would be the same or better. Schmitt stated SCEMS does not have three months to decide on how to proceed. Citizen comments alluded to giving the other two providers an opportunity to submit offers to SCEMS. Chief McMillan supported the citizen consensus. Ulsh would like SKCFA to consider incorporating EMS services in its operations in the future. Ulsh stated Schoolcraft Township donated \$10,000 to SCEMS to help with their operations. Dr. Fales stated all three agencies would assist covering South County if SCEMS suddenly closed, but a solution needs to be sought.

The consensus of the board is to allow one week for the providers to submit their best offers to SCEMS for consideration. A special meeting was scheduled for Thursday, June 15, 2017 at 6:00 pm.

With there being no further business, Gatlin adjourned the meeting at 7:37 pm.

Todd Carlin, Secretary

Recorded and typed by Tracy Locey.