

MINUTES
Lake Crystal Ambulance Commission
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, 5:30 pm October 15, 2024
City Council Chambers
100 E. Robinson St.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 P.M. Members present Betsy Kilmer, Kelly Fleming, Gina Cooper, and Tammy Petterson. Absent: Mike Mauer

Staff members present: City Administrator Angela Grafstrom; Rhonda Ingebritson, Lake Crystal Ambulance Service, Jeanine McDonald, Ambulance Staff Liaison

Staff Reports

Ambulance Director

Ingebritson discussed issues with billing service.

City Administrator

Grafstrom added the city just wrote off \$88,000 in collectables and the new state regulations that will no longer allow ambulances to collect payments from living spouses of deceased patients. This will affect 3rd party billers more directly, but it will affect how they collect for the city. The service is struggling with Expert Billing, and Ingebritson is researching alternate billing companies. Grafstrom also reported the current ambulance house is going to be sold but the city has secured a new apartment in one of the apartments going into Crystal Gardens #7. She ended the report explaining the difference between the public safety funds received for 2024 and those we will be receiving for the ambulance service in 2025. The public safety funds in 2024, did cover ambulance staff LCARC memberships, if they desired one.

The commission was looking for clarification on the Ambulance Commission and its role. This committee was created as an advisory committee to assist the city council by researching, reviewing, and making recommendations to the council regarding the ambulance service. Meetings were set by ordinance as quarterly on the third Tuesday of the month. As the service is facing many new changes and funding challenges, the council wanted more input from both city and rural individuals within the service territory.

Introductions/Review Budget

The committee went around the room and did introductions. Grafstrom provided the preliminary 2025 budget as information and to provide context to discussions. Budgeted revenue for 2025 includes a one time payout from the state in the amount of \$104,000 to help offset operating costs. Grafstrom again reiterated the issues with the current billing company which include the inability to get billing out on time and a failure to notify the city of the issue.

Simplifying the Pay Scale

Currently the city has 2 pay scales; one for EMTs and one for EMRs. Each scale has multiple categories and types of pay. The city attorney had concerns about the pay scales and

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department of labor standards. As they are currently below minimum wage, emphasis is placed on the fact that they are being paid for their volunteer on-call hours. For the next meeting Ingebritson and Grafstrom will provide figures and a simplifying fact sheet. Grafstrom would like to see either a grade/step pay like other employees, or a simplified scale paid as work hours and on-call hours for EMR and for EMT.

Future of the Service

Staffing

Staffing is up, but a revolving door. To have a consistent steady personnel coverage would require paid personnel. By relying on volunteers, we are at the mercy of the hours that they can provide which still leaves major gaps in coverage hours.

Volunteering's changed from volunteering a few hours a month to volunteering the number of hours equivalent to a part time job. Yearly responses have increased significantly over the years, from approximately 200 calls to 500-600 calls per year. The City of Jackson has recently gone to paid staff, but they have several ambulances and a hospital which use them for medical transfers. The hours etc. have created increased mental strain for EMS personnel.

Second Ambulance

Ingebritson would like a second ambulance and to do transfers. The current issues are the cost and that we cannot get enough staffing for one ambulance. Grafstrom has concerns that we will be primarily doing overnight mental health transfers from like Thief River Falls to St. Peter, then by the time we pay for the ambulance, the staffing, an overnight, meals, and travel expenses are we really making a profit by adding transfers. Something to look at in the future.

Comments and Observations

Ingebritson discussed the usage of the ambulance Decontamination room and that there is no lock on the door. Causing members to not utilize the shower as they could. It was recommended that a slide lock be installed on the inside of the door so it could be utilized.

Adjournment:

There being no further business of the Lake Crystal Ambulance Commission adjourned the regular meeting of October 15, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.

Meeting Chair

Angela Grafstrom, City Administrator