

Johnson County Rural Health Care District

Minutes

Special Meeting

April 25, 2022

A special meeting of the Johnson County Rural Health Care District was held at the County Planning Office at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, April 25, 2022. Present were Marilyn Connolly, Scott McBride, Marie Miller, Mark Haines, Jim Hicks, Aaron Palmer, Cindy Barlow, Francine Russell, Dave Harness, Kate Harness and Karri White. A quorum was present. The meeting began at 4:03 p.m. The meeting was called to order by President Marilyn Connolly.

Marilyn Connolly stated the special meeting is being held to have a public hearing to amend the budget so funds may be transferred to purchase proposed property from County Fire District #1.

I. Transfer Funds

Jim Hicks made a motion to transfer \$83,000 from Capital Improvement Reserves to Board Expense FYE 2022 budget. Seconded by Mark Haines. Marilyn asked for discussion.

Public Comment:

Cindy Barlow questioned why the Board would purchase property with plans for a building when Jim Hicks was quoted in the paper projecting a \$300,000 budget shortfall. She asked if there were building plans or a timeline to build a building and if the \$83,000 land purchase was a part of the \$300,000 deficit and what the future costs will be. Marilyn said they are taking baby steps and the first step is to purchase land and there are very basic building plans. Jim Hicks said you cannot build without land and there is no reason to look into building until there is funding. Cindy asked if the board had looked into what it would cost to support a system like this. Jim stated the Board passed a motion to investigate costs, but nothing has been reported issued. Marilyn said this meeting is to move funds to purchase the land which has already been approved. The next step is to see what the building would look like and what the costs would be. There is a lot of work to be done.

Dave Harness stated Buffalo EMS continues to have serious concerns regarding the proposed purchase of land at the County Fire location on North Bypass. We have repeatedly expressed these at meeting about this proposal, but this has been overlooked by the majority of the Board. This despite an earlier pledge by the Board to consult with Buffalo EMS on future property purchase, has not been honored. Buffalo EMS is not opposed to the concept of a new designated facility to house ambulances in Buffalo. However, Buffalo EMS has significant concerns regarding the proposed location without a feasibility and traffic study. The location is on an extremely heavy traffic entry and exit way and are concerned that EMTs are likely to encounter significant delays in reaching the ambulance and therefore in reaching patients compared to a more central location. It is irresponsible for the RHCD Board to push this through without due diligence in establishing if this is an appropriate location. Secondly, the time of this purchase is

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questionable give the significant downturn in revenues. Buffalo EMS has already made significant cuts and savings and is continually requested to do so by RHCD Board and yet this same Board continues to press for an \$83,000 expenditure on land purchase when it is not critical at this time. Investing in land and building detracts from investment in necessary and reliable equipment, preserving existing, preserving existing crew, attracting new personnel and has a negative effect on morale for best possible patient care. Buffalo EMS believes that the actions of some board members will result in a deterioration from the current level of proven service and patient care. Furthermore, it is hard to interpret this push for a designated barn as anything other than the Board's intent to attract an alternative to Buffalo EMS. This is underscored, for example, by the repeated approaches to other entities to take on the service despite the independent nationally accredited audit by SafeTech Solutions. This audit commended the current service as a model of good practice for operating EMS in rural America but has been disregarded by RHCD Board. We request the board rethink the building of a new building especially at this time and at least do some more studies on the location and revenue available. Mark Haines said we are not building a building; we are purchasing land. With the agreement we have with the Fire District it is just an investment right now. They will buy it back from us if we decide not to build.

Francine Russell questioned an \$83,000 investment in land the EMTs and Buffalo EMS say is not a good location. Why purchase land in a bad location and tie up the money? It is frustrating to say it over and over and feel like the board does not acknowledge that those who are going to have to use it has serious concerns about it. That makes no sense.

Mark Haines stated if we build a building or the next board builds a building, the EMTs will not have to travel down. The EMTs will be there 24/7. We are going to have living quarters in the building. Our goal is the EMTs are going to be housed there.

Dave Harness does not think the board has investigated what it would cost to have two paramedics and two EMTs sitting there and waiting for calls to happen. He projects salaries would be higher than the entire current budget. For a town this size it is not financially feasible to have that many people sitting waiting for calls to come. The system we have right now, the EMTs will not be sitting at the building. They have other jobs they can leave. That is the model we have built, and it works. We have three ambulances and seven EMTs out right now and had two other calls earlier today. Scott McBride questioned if the decision was made by the Board to have that concept. Mark said it was written down as a goal, just an idea we discussed.

Marie stated she has friends in Basin and Greybull and asked them about their service. They said they have two Paramedics on call but if they have another call, the second call has to wait until they get back. That is not an efficient, effective service as far as I am concerned. When SafeTech said that we have a model service, why would we want to screw that up? I don't understand that at all. My family has used this service over the years multiple times. It is an excellent, efficient service that are compassionate and quick response. Why would we want to screw that up especially when we do not have the funds to pay Paramedics full time sitting at the barn.

Cindy Barlow asked if the Fire District will sit on the land, does the Board have to expend the money at this time and if they buy it back will they buy it back at a profit? With the lack of reserve funds is it a prudent buy right now What is the timeline for completion of building?

Jim Hicks suggested she read the contract. Marilyn said there is no official timeline on a building as this is in its infancy. Cindy asked Scott McBride directly if it is a prudent purchase. Scott McBride said he was not going to vote yes for the transfer.

Francine said if the future building is justification for buying the land these questions are pertinent to this public hearing. We are not off topic; it is all tied together. You have not done a feasibility study and if down the road you have a building and cannot afford 24/7 EMTs then you are going to end up with land and a building in a location where it is not financially feasible or allow for a quick response.

Marilyn Connolly stated everyone is assuming Dave Harness is going to live forever and the Board needs to be responsible and look at options in the future. We know we have a good service now and we know Dave has spent his whole life developing this service but down the road is that going to be available. It is the Board's duty to look down the road as well as today. There is no question about the quality of service and acknowledge that SafeTech suggested unblending with Buffalo EMS.

Kate Harness corrected the unblending was for clerical services, not contracted ambulance services.

Dave said he is not going to live forever but Buffalo EMS will continue to run after he is no longer alive. The Board contracts with Buffalo EMS, not Dave Harness and there are twenty three of us and Karri White is on top of that ladder.

Cindy stated succession planning is a good business practice with a pro-active approach and it is only reasonable to look at progression planning with the people who are in that division already and then moving forward effectively for the community. As we move forward, I hope this board as being an elected board in Johnson County that you hear community concern. My quick figures show that paying two EMTs 24 hours a day would cost the District over \$500,000. I encourage this board to slow down, do your due diligence before the purchase is made, do a business plan, know what those costs are, that is what smart business does and that is how this board should be operating.

Jim Hicks asked to end public comment and vote on the motion. Marilyn reminded the Board that the majority of the board in Kaycee approved to purchase the property. Scott McBride stated he did not vote to purchase the property, he voted to allow Marilyn sign the closing papers. This motion allows the movement of the funds to purchase the land.

Jim Hicks and Mark Haines voted aye. Scott McBride and Marie Miller voted nay. Due to a tie vote Chairman Marilyn Connolly voted. Marilyn voted aye. Motion approved.

Scott McBride made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:37 p.m. Seconded by Mark Haines. Approved by all. Respectfully submitted by Karri White.

Mandy Conly
President

James Han
Member

Maria Donnell
Secretary

[Signature]
Member

Jim Hob
Treasurer

July 7, 2021

To Those Served by Buffalo EMS:

Buffalo EMS has serious concerns regarding the proposed purchase of land at the County Fire location on North Bypass. We have repeatedly expressed these at Rural Health Care District Board meetings about this proposal, but this has been overlooked by the majority of the Board. This despite an earlier pledge by the Board to consult with Buffalo EMS on future property purchase, has not been honored.

To be clear, Buffalo EMS is not opposed to the concept of a new designated facility to house ambulances in Buffalo.

However, Buffalo EMS has significant concerns regarding the proposed location at North Bypass without at the very least a feasibility and traffic study. The location is on an extremely heavy traffic entry and exit way within Buffalo and we are concerned that EMTs are likely to encounter significant delays in reaching the ambulance and therefore in reaching patients compared to a more central location. It is irresponsible for the RHCD Board to push this through without due diligence in establishing if this is an appropriate location.

Secondly, the timing of this purchase is, at best, questionable given the significant downturn in revenues. Buffalo EMS has already made significant cuts and savings and is continually requested to do so by RHCD Board and yet this same Board continues to press for an \$80,000 expenditure on land purchase when it is not at a critical time. Investing in land and building detracts from investment in necessary and reliable equipment, preserving existing crew, attracting new personnel and has a negative effect on morale for best possible patient care. Buffalo EMS believes that the actions of some board members will result in a deterioration from the current level of proven service and patient care.

Furthermore, it is hard to interpret this push for a designated barn as anything other than the Board's intent to attract an alternative to Buffalo EMS. This is underscored, for example, by the repeated approaches to other entities to take on the service despite the independent nationally accredited audit by SafeTech Solutions. <https://health.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Johnson-County-WY-FINAL.pdf> This audit commended the current service as a model of good practice for operating EMS in rural America but has been disregarded by RHCD Board.

We request Chair Marilyn Connolly and the rest of the RHCD Board to suspend land purchase until there is an upturn in revenues. Should that be disregarded then to conduct a feasibility study to ascertain if this is the optimum location.

Sincerely,

Dave Harness - Director, Buffalo EMS