

Board of Commissioners Meeting
August 5, 2015

Present: Commissioner Steve McClure
Commissioner Mark D. Davidson
Commissioner Jack Howard

Chairman Davidson opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m. with all three Commissioners present.

Public Comments

Advanced Life Support (ALS) Service Provider Request

Shelley Burgess, Administrative Officer, brought the ALS service provider request to the Commissioners for consideration. The Commissioners received a staff report from J.B. Brock, Emergency Manager that states that the Ambulance Advisory Committee has recommended approval of Med Transport Inc. The committee consists of local ambulance services (La Grande, Elgin and Union) and at large members of the community. The committee has identified the proposed ground inter-hospital medical transport services as an unmet need in the community that will not compete with the mission and purview of exiting Union County ambulance services. He explained in his staff report that this is Union County's first application to operate this type of service. All parties, including Grande Ronde Hospital have indicated this is a need in the community. Inter-hospital ground transfers are less expensive to end users than inter-hospital air ambulance transfers. Shelley explained that all of the licensing for the services is done through the State. The service provider would have to receive approval from the Commissioners before he can apply for a license from the State.

Chris Arvidson explained that there are about 560 transfers coming from Grande Ronde Hospital each year. The majority of those are being done by life flight which is a large cost to insurance and the patient. He is trying to provide a service for ground transport. La Grande Fire transports 6-8 transfers out of about 50 a month. Grande Ronde Hospital has the majority of the transports that are available out of Union, Baker, Umatilla and Wallowa counties that he is hoping to eventually also provide services for.

Commissioner McClure asked Chris what his cost structure is compared to life flight and who would make the decision on if life flight or his transport services would be used to transport a patient. Chris stated that it will be determined by the acting physician at the hospital. They would make the decision on stability of the patient. If a patient needs to be to a facility within a certain time frame or are not stable enough for ground transport the hospital will call an air ambulance service. Commissioner McClure asked what kind of services his ambulance will provide in route. Chris stated that it is a typical ambulance with Advanced Life Support. He will have an attendant which will be an RN or a paramedic to monitor the patient.

Bruce Weimer, City of La Grande Fire Chief, 1806 Cove Avenue, La Grande, stated that there is a hole in the service locally with the hospital and their need to move patients from hospitals to home care or to other care systems. He stated that the La Grande Fire

Department and Ambulance is an emergent service. They have to follow specific guidelines in which patients they can transport. They are committed to Union County. They have five firefighters on duty each shift and staff two ambulances. When there is another call they have to call people in to handle that call. Their policy has been to use off duty employees to take the transfers. His employees have families and he has difficulties getting workers to do ground transports. They depend on the transfers to help with their revenue stream. The City wants to take every transfer that they can. He has talked to the hospital about different things so they can take more transfers. They are looking at ways to entice their employees to want to take those transfers on a regular basis. He explained that this plan has taken him by surprise. He first heard about it when a presentation was made a month ago at the Ambulance Advisory Committee meeting. He is trying to get information that he needs to support or come out in opposition to this proposal. He is not aware of there being 50 transfers a month coming from Grande Ronde Hospital. He stated they are receiving less than 8 calls a month for patient transfers. If there are that many transfers they do not know about it but maybe they could increase their staffing to accommodate that many transfers.

Commissioner Davidson asked how many calls are receiving a month. Bruce stated about an average of 2-3 a month. Commissioner Davidson asked if that is really going to impact their budget that much. Bruce explained that the patient reimbursement that the City receives amounts to about \$800,000 a year. That is all of the patients that they treat and transport. The cost of the fire department is \$2 million. The City tax payers are subsidizing the ambulance service for the county. The majority of the patients that they transport are from La Grande or Island City but they will run out to Elgin and pick up a patient they will bill that patient and the reimbursement they receive does not cover the cost of getting that patient. Two or three of the transfers a month could be essential to their operations. If there are 50 a month coming out of the hospital than that would really affect their bottom line. He would like more time to look at the possible affect.

Commissioner McClure asked if there are 50 transfers a month who is providing that service. Bruce stated that life flight is doing them by air. Commissioner McClure asked what the price difference is for the patient to go by air than by ground. Bruce stated that it costs \$40,000 to fly to Boise and it is \$3,000-\$5,000 to go to Boise by ground. Commissioner McClure stated that is a large difference in cost. Bruce explained that they receive about 40% of what they bill. Bruce stated that another piece that needs to be considered is that a lot of the patients that they transport are FireMed members. That should be figured into any reimbursement that a competing ambulance service would have. Commissioner McClure asked when he pays his FireMed insurance does the City get a portion of that. Bruce stated that they do get a portion of that amount.

Commissioner Davidson asked Bruce if the transfer trips covering the costs for the trip. Bruce explained that they are not covering the costs. They receive less than half of the cost of that trip. Commissioner Davidson asked if increasing the transfers really would benefit the City if they are not paying for themselves. Bruce stated that any additional revenue is a benefit to the bottom line. Commissioner Davidson stated it is not if the costs

increase to provide the service. Bruce explained that is why he would like more time to look at those costs and see if it would be beneficial to their program.

Commissioner Howard stated that he is concerned about how much time he needs to get more information. Bruce stated that he needs a month.

Bruce asked the Chief from Baker City to join him because he feels his service will also be impacted by this new transport service.

Mark John, Baker City Fire Chief, stated that this has just come to his attention as well so he is looking forward to see how they can address similar issues should a provider be interested in coming to Baker County. He encouraged the Commissioners to get more information and recognize that they are a service provider and not a for profit entity. His sole role is to provide a service to the community.

Commissioner McClure asked Bruce if he participated in the discussions at the Ambulance Advisory Committee. Bruce stated that he did not. The first he heard of it was when one of his medics that attended the meeting told him about the transport service.

Margaret Mead, 57744 Foothill Road, La Grande, asked if this service comes in how would those that have the FireMed insurance be affected financially. Chris Arvidson stated that he can waive the cost to the patient if the County is concerned about the cost to the patient after insurance. The insurance payments would cover the cost of his service.

Chris explained that he sent out letters to the ASA in April and there were two Ambulance Committee Meetings about his business. Brian Frei from Grande Ronde Hospital was at those meetings and confirmed that there is a need. He told Chris that they have a potential of 50 transfers a month with the majority of those eligible for ground transport.

Chris stated that he has spent a lot of money so far on this business knowing that the County can still say no. He would rather that the Commissioners not wait 30 days because of the money he has into the business. He is waiting for an approval to start. He explained that when he talked to the hospital they told him that if they need a transport and he was able to take that transport they would call him again. If he took the next transport he would continue to get called.

Commissioner Howard asked out of the fifty transfers each month how many of those are Medicare eligible. Chris stated that it is his understanding that 60-70% are medicare eligible.

Commissioner McClure asked where Chris received the number of fifty transfers a month. Chris explained that he received that number from Brian Frei from Grande Ronde Hospital. Brian asked Chris what he would do if he was out on a ground transport and they have another transport that needs done. Chris stated that he would add more staff. Brian then told him that would be wise.

Robert Tibbets, 107 Aries Lane, La Grande, City of La Grande Fire Department, explained that this came out of the blue for the La Grande Fire Department. They had heard there was work being done and have been trying to see what they can do to impact the problem but have not implemented any changes yet. He stated that there is a 60 day clause in the Ambulance Services Contract that suggests that there should be 60 day notice for any changes. He explained that he is late to the game and did not attend the first Ambulance Advisory meeting so he is unaware of the business model that was looked at. They have had challenges when it comes to transfers. He would like to have a work session between the County, Hospital and their services to better explain their challenges. He talked to Brian Frei at Grande Ronde Hospital and the perception is that the City does not take transfers. Commissioner McClure asked if Brian from Grande Ronde Hospital gave him a number of how many transfers that are needed by the hospital. Robert stated that he did not ask that question. Robert asked Brian if something has changed within the Organization as to why they do not contact the City for transfers. Brian explained that it is up to the house supervisor and it is Roberts understanding that a portion of those supervisors believe that because of past challenges for the City to staff transfers it hasn't been beneficial to them to contact the City to coordinate the transfer. He would like time to work with the hospital to try and change the situation.

Commissioner McClure stated that the County has an Ambulance Advisory Committee and the City knows this. He then hears the Chief say that he found this out incidentally. Commissioner McClure asked why there wasn't more participation from the City at the Advisory Committee level. He asked why these arguments or discussions made to the Committee so they could be taken into consideration in this decision process. Chief Weimer stated that there is not a City member on the Committee. Commissioner McClure asked if there was not La Grande representation on that Committee. Chief Weimer stated that there is not one from the City of La Grande Fire Department on the Committee. Commissioner McClure stated that as a member of the Committee or not they should be aware of what that Committee is discussing. Chris Arvidson stated that there was an email that was sent out to the Advisory Committee that had the proposal attached.

Tyson Botts, City of La Grande Fire Department, explained that he attended the meeting and the first meeting he brought in a Basic Life Support proposal and the next meeting he changed it to an Advanced Life Support proposal. Tyson stated that at that meeting he explained about the transfers that are done each month and the need for service.

Commissioner Howard stated that he shares Commissioner McClure's concerns. Commissioner Davidson stated that they all share the concern as to why it has gotten this far in the process before this information is coming out.

Robert Tibbets stated that he cannot express how big of scope this is. This is a service to the community and it does affect their ability to do some things at the Fire Department. There have been some missed opportunities on their part that they are trying to address. He doesn't feel that waiting 30 days will put Chris out of business.

Commissioner McClure stated that he appreciates what Robert is saying but he wants to know why the City wasn't dealing with this issue until a competitor came to do the work to cause the City to deal with it. If the City knew the problem existed why wasn't it addressed earlier. Why was the consideration of the issue not there before the competition can forward. Robert stated that they have staffed the issue before. Commissioner McClure stated that it was apparently not to the satisfaction of the hospital. Robert explained that the hospital is a big piece in this scenario and if they are not calling the City it makes it difficult to know there is a problem.

Commissioner Davidson explained that he understands both sides to the situation. It is understandable what the staffing issues are for the agency and from the hospitals perspective and the service is not able to be provided it is natural to stop contacting that agency for services. He explained that private enterprise comes along and sees an opportunity and wants to fill it. There has been a gap in engagement by the Agency in the Advisory Committee. He is not convinced given the cost structure that these are really profitable for the Agency. It isn't a simple situation. His thought would be given the input the Commissioners received today he doesn't see a great deal of harm in postponing this decision to the September Commission meeting to review the situation more.

Commissioner McClure stated that he agrees but he feels the discussion should be at the Ambulance Advisory Committee. Commissioner Howard stated that he feels that 30 days is enough time to look at the situation more in depth.

Commissioner McClure moved to remand this issue back to the Ambulance Advisory Committee for further review. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Cooperative Assistance Agreement

Shelley Burgess brought a Cooperative Assistance Agreement to the Commissioners for consideration. She explained that this lays the framework to cooperate with other counties in the event of an emergency. This is an agreement that Union County has participated in for several years. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of the Cooperative Assistance Agreement as presented. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Department of Corrections Budget

Travis Miller, Director of Community Corrections, brought the 2015-2017 Community Corrections Biennial Plan to the Commissioners for consideration. He explained that Union County Community Corrections received more funds than anticipated this year. He explained that he will increase the 1145 funds by \$15,000. He will increase the transition services to help with transitional housing. He used some of the additional funding to fund another P.O. position. He will not fill that position right away but he would like to have the funds set aside to hire when he is ready to do so. He will use the rest of the funds to increase the sex offender services. Commissioner McClure asked if Oregon is trying to cut the prison bed usage by increasing the funding to probation. Travis stated that they are. It is cheaper for them to supervise the offenders than house them in prison. Commissioner

McClure asked if it made sense to open up the minimum security area in the Jail. Commissioner McClure stated that if the funds that are used to send prisoners to other facilities may be able to be used to remodel that area. Travis stated that he would like to talk to the Sheriff about that possibility. It would give him another sanction to hand out to the offenders.

Commissioner McClure moved approval of the Biennial Plan as presented. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Intergovernmental Agreement

Travis Miller brought Intergovernmental Agreement #5136 to the Commissioners for consideration. He explained that this IGA would allow them to receive funds from the State for the biennium. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of the Intergovernmental Agreement as presented. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Consent Agenda

The July 9, 16 and 23 claims journals fiscal year 14-15; and July 9, 16 and 23 claims journals fiscal year 15-16; and July 8, 15 and 22 Public Works claims journal fiscal year 14-15; and July 15 and 22 Public Works claims journal fiscal year 15-16; and the May 27 & 28 Board of Commissioner budget minutes; and May 27 Solid Waste budget meeting minutes; and May 28 Salary Compensation Committee meeting minutes; and June 3 4-H & Extension budget meeting minutes; and June 3 Board of Commissioners minutes were approved as presented on the consent agenda.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehab Grant Sponsorship

Shelley Burgess brought a Community Development Block Grant Sponsorship request to the Commissioners for consideration. She explained that Community Connections of Northeast Oregon runs a housing rehab program. The program is run in several counties. Because the grant has to have a government sponsor each of the counties that has the program takes a turn in rotation to sponsor the grant that funds the project. It is Union County's turn to sponsor the grant. Commissioner McClure stated that the loans are near \$3 million. When the loans are repaid the funds go back into this program. The Commissioners agreed to sponsor the grant and a hearing will be set for the Commissioners to get more information.

Appointment to the Union County Fair Board

Court Order 2015-25, In the Matter of Appointment to the Union County Fair Association Board of Directors, was presented for consideration. This Court Order would appoint Katie Fox, Scott Hoadley, and Toinette Huston to the Union County Fair Association Board of Directors. **Commissioner Howard moved approval of Court Order 2015-25 as presented. Commissioner McClure seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Appointment to the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District

Court Order 2015-24, In the Matter of Appointment to the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District Board of Directors, was presented for consideration. This Court

Order will appoint Delmer Hanson to the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District Board of Directors with a term expiring December 31, 2016. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of Court Order 2015-24 to appoint Delmer Hanson to NEOEDD. Commissioner Davidson seconded. Roll Call: Commissioner Howard, abstain; Commissioner McClure, yes; Commissioner Davidson, yes. Motion carried.**

Senior Center Lease Renewal

Shelley Burgess brought a Lease Renewal between Community Connections of Northeast Oregon Senior Center and Union County to the Commissioners for consideration. She explained that this is a fifteen year lease. Legal counsel suggested updates in regards to insurance. Commissioner McClure stated that the rent has been used to maintain the building. **Commissioner McClure moved approval of the senior center lease renewal as presented. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

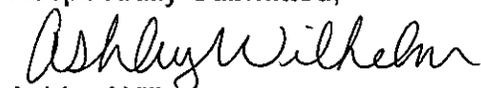
Bank Account Authorization

Shelley Burgess brought a bank account authorization to the Commissioners for consideration. She explained that in order for a bank account to be opened in Union County's name the Commissioners need to authorize the action. This account is for the Sheriff's office. They need to open a separate account to be used for any monetary evidence that has been seized. This account will only be utilized for evidence under the signature authority of the Sheriff and the staff that are tasked with the evidence authorities. **Commissioner McClure moved to authorize the Sheriff's office to open an account for evidence purposes. Commissioner Howard seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ashley Wilhelm
Sr. Dept. Specialist II