

**CENTRAL LANE AMBULANCE TRANSPORT SYSTEM
JOINT ELECTED OFFICIALS TASK FORCE**

Meeting Summary

August 10, 2009

**Eugene Emergency Services Training Center – 1705 W 2nd Avenue
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Elected Officials Present:

Lane County Commissioner Rob Handy

Eugene City Councilor Andrea Ortiz

Springfield City Councilor Dave Ralston

Eugene Staff Present:

Randy Groves, Denise Giard, Karen Brack, Joe Zaludek, Larry Hill, Joann Eppli

Springfield Staff Present:

Dennis Murphy, Bart Noll, Jana Sorenson

Lane Rural Staff Present:

Dale Borland, Chris Heppel

1. Welcome

- Randy Groves convened the seventh meeting of the Ambulance Transport System (ATS) Joint Elected Officials (JEO) Task Force. He then completed a roll call of the elected officials. He added that Commissioner Rob Handy will need to leave early, and Springfield Councilor Hillary Wylie will not be able to attend today's meeting.
- Additionally, Dale Borland reported that neither Board President Larry vonMoos nor Director Kevin King will be able to attend today's meeting.

2. Future ATS JEO Task Force Meetings

- The ATS JEO Task Force decided to cancel the meeting scheduled for Monday, August 24, 2009.
- There was a group discussion on whether or not to hold a Task Force meeting on August 31st. Due to conflicting schedules, the Task Force decided not to meet on August 31, 2009 either, and agreed to Randy Groves' proposal that staff draft an outline for the public forums process and send the information electronically to elected officials for review and input.

3. Future JEO Meetings

- Randy Groves said that the Fire Chiefs do not believe the Task Force will have time to hold public forums and be ready to make recommendations to the full JEO group by September 14, 2009. The ATS JEO Task Force decided to look for a date later in the year to present recommendations to the full JEO group.

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- Councilor Dave Ralston said that as a result of discussions at the last meeting, he already erased September 14th from his calendar as a potential date for presenting Task Force recommendations to the full JEO group.
- The ATS JEO Task Force decided to target October for reporting back to the full JEO group (before Thanksgiving).

4. Meeting Summary Approval

- Task Force members who were present approved the July 27, 2009 Meeting Summary.
- Randy Groves noted that there was not a quorum at today's meeting to receive approval of the July 27th meeting summary. Therefore, Task Force members who were present approved release of the meeting summary, with the caveat that if any elected officials not present at today's meeting come forward with additional edits, the July 27th meeting summary will be corrected and re-issued accordingly.
- Commissioner Rob Handy acknowledged the high quality of Jo Eppli's ATS JEO Task Force meeting summaries. Randy Groves agreed, and added that Jo is an asset to the organization.

5. Items for Discussion

ATS JEO Task Force Next Steps Continued / Public Forums / Deliverables

- As a continuation from the last Task Force meeting, Randy Groves said the next step is to narrow the list of strategies to carry forward for the public forums, and then to the full JEO group. He stated that the three Fire Chiefs propose reducing the list to between three and five strategies to take out for public comment, and then further reducing the list to between one and two Task Force recommendations to take back to the full JEO.
- Commissioner Rob Handy said that conceptually, the numbers are good, but asked if there is a significant enough difference between the options to make a difference. He added that it will be a challenge getting the public involved, and getting them to understand that their input matters.
- Dennis Murphy said that based on core services discussions elected officials have stated that they do not want to see service levels reduced. In order to maintain current service levels, there will need to be tax support or a heavy focus on maintaining service in some alternative way. He said the Task Force needs to lay out how we get to the point of not relying on tax support, and suggested developing a matrix of other ways to raise money.
- Councilor Dave Ralston said he is concerned that most of the options are short-term, and he would like to see more permanent long-term options on the table. Murphy said deliberations on the merger/consolidation piece, plus other alternatives may possibly result in a new non-tax way to offset the cost of delivering services. Randy Groves said some of the options are revenue-generating concepts that will make the situation better, but recognized that they by themselves would not solve the entire funding issue. At the same time, the financial situation will continue to get worse even if the economy gets better, as costs continue to rise and potential revenue continues to decrease. In fact, Medicare reimbursements will be reduced by another 10-20 percent (urban/rural) effective January 1, 2010, making the problems even worse.

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- Commissioner Rob Handy said that he agrees with Councilor Ralston, that the Task Force has to really clearly articulate what the mix and match options are in this process, and what is being done in the short-term to get us through implementing the permanent, more long-term solutions.
- Randy Groves said he believes the Task Force needs to lay out the different options, show the problem and how the problem is going to continue to grow. He stated that the outcome of the national healthcare agenda will have an impact, with a potential of continuing the balancing of the federal budget on the backs of local providers. He said that a piece of that is incumbent upon the Fire Chiefs and staffs to articulate as clearly and as simply as possible, so that elected officials and members of the public have a good understanding of the problem.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said that to her, the public forums are the most critical piece of the conversation. She said it is important for her that this part is done right, and to show what intermediate steps can be taken. She stated that since the study came out, it has really overshadowed the ambulance transport situation in the media, and she has been hearing from her constituency that the study results are giving the perception that this is the answer to all the problems in the world. Councilor Ortiz confirmed that she was referring to the merger (ESCI cooperative services) study. Regarding the public forums, she believes it will be important that a forum be held for each area in Eugene (e.g., West Eugene, East Eugene, etc.), and suggested having the public forums in the fire stations. Randy Groves said that it would not be possible to hold all the public forums at fire stations due to the physical limitations of some facilities. Councilor Ortiz also acknowledged that increasing the number of public forums will make it more time intensive, however, she believes it is extremely important to reach out and make an effort to address the concerns of all members of our diverse community. She again suggested holding the public forums at fire stations, and said it will also be important to make sure City Councilors are present at the public forums that occur in their ward, as they will be making policy decisions that affect the public's health and well being.
- Commissioner Rob Handy noted that one of the goals is to move quickly, and said he would like to see the public forums completed before the holidays (Thanksgiving). He suggested using a similar schedule to Congressman DeFazio's Town Hall meetings: Congressman DeFazio visits multiple locations for one hour each, in two days. Commissioner Handy said the public forums could be scheduled back-to-back-to-back, and that he liked the idea of holding the public forums at fire stations where possible. He asked, after all, how many people get a chance to get to go to their fire station?
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz suggested using the upcoming Eugene Celebration as a forum for gathering public input. She said there will be a City booth in the non-paid area of the celebration, where members of the public could get information and take a survey, and the Task Force could reach a lot of different people. Randy Groves said he likes the idea of a condensed schedule, and that it will help to develop synergy around the topic of ambulance service. He said the Task Force needs to use a communication model that works with the media, and keeps public communications moving forward.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz then shared her recent experience with the Eugene Police Department for National Night Out. She said the City Councilors toured the city in a

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special van, and were able to get out to five different neighborhoods. She believes it is a good way to reach the community.

- Councilor Dave Ralston said that two public forums should be sufficient for Springfield, and that he would like the public forums to be completed in September, and make Task Force recommendations to the full JEO in October. Randy Groves noted that our financial situation is continuing to decline.
- Commissioner Rob Handy said he would like the public forums coordinated across Lane County, and the full schedule of forums published in the newspaper. This will allow individual members of the public to choose which date and location works best with their schedule, and have a whole list of options to choose from. As another mechanism for communication, Randy Groves said he will also ask the department's webmaster to prepare information in that forum for the website, directing people to the schedule in the newspaper. The Task Force, Fire Chiefs and staffs agreed to set the goal of completing all public forums in one week.
- Randy Groves said that the Task Force now needs to identify and prioritize which strategies to flush out. He noted that the option of full privatization was discarded early on by the Task Force.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said she asked the City's Attorney what he thought about this process, and what can be done within cross-jurisdictional agreements and/or a Metro Plan amendment. Going back to the merger discussion, Randy Groves said that the ESCI cooperative services study was only looking at the cities of Eugene and Springfield. He and Dennis Murphy have scheduled a meeting with the two City Managers to talk about what next steps will look like, and to put together a plan of how it would work. He added that there is a possible outcome of a series of Intergovernmental Agreements on how to bring functions between the two departments together.
- Councilor Dave Ralston stated that the talk of mergers is peripheral, and that it is important not to downplay the urgency of the situation. He reiterated that any solution that will help for only two or three years brings us back to the same problem. He believes it is critical to cut to the chase, and look for new revenue sources. He said the Task Force still has to address where the income is going to come from, considering both a merger and non-merger scenario. He emphasized that communication to the public needs to provide examples (e.g., cents per thousand), include any relevant information, ball park figures, and clearly identify the temporary fixes.
- Randy Groves stated that the end result will more than likely be a combination of solutions. He said one of the overall goals is to increase efficiencies and improve how we deliver the service. Randy added that service effectiveness improvements go beyond the ambulance transport system. He also noted that there are two distinct things going on at once, and the public is currently more familiar with the merger.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz offered to draft an op-ed article from the elected officials. Commissioner Rob Handy noted that the Task Force previously talked about issuing a series of op-ed articles. Councilor Dave Ralston called-out the need to educate the public on this issue. Councilor Ortiz said she would like to initiate a more global conversation, and impress upon the community to look at this issue globally. Councilor Ralston said it

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will be important to show that the elected officials are united. Councilor Ortiz then asked Lane Rural if they would like to be a part of the op-ed piece, to which Dale Borland replied yes. Randy Groves added that at Lane Fire Defense Board meetings, other ASA providers constantly bring up their interest in becoming involved in the process. He has emphasized the need to reach-consensus within Central Lane County before involving others. He noted that the LCOG study brought forward other jurisdictions that are interested in joining the Task Force and creating a countywide solution. Dale Borland added that South Lane and Oakridge have also expressed an interest in joining what Central Lane is doing. Randy Groves said that departments everywhere are experiencing the same problems as we are in this area, which provides opportunities to work across geopolitical lines. Councilor Andrea Ortiz said it pains her that we cannot provide basic services. Randy Groves offered that Glen Potter draft the op-ed article. Councilor Ortiz said that she will create a draft and send it to others by Friday. Councilor Ralston suggested that staff create the first draft, and then elected officials weigh-in. Commissioner Handy suggested that Councilor Ortiz draft a bullet-point list. Councilor Ortiz said the Task Force needs to get something out there, such as a letter to the editor or an op-ed piece on what the Task Force is doing. Randy Groves said he believes this is particularly important, especially as we approach the public forums. Commissioner Handy said he believes it is also important to keep Lane Rural involved, considering there may be boundary changes and possible urban/rural split rates.

- Dennis Murphy noted that each elected official has a different emphasis and different talents, and said it would be helpful to Springfield to show a synthesized voice of the collective elected officials. He said he believes the Task Force foresees that there will be a synthesis of solutions, and in that synthesis, he asked if elected officials believe it is important as we move towards finding solutions for staff to focus on maximizing other sources and go to the taxpayers with what is left over. Councilor Dave Ralston replied that he expects staff to pursue all other revenue source options to the fullest extent. He foresees providing ambulance service to get more and more expensive every year, and said that we need a real solution that the public can count on without being “nickel and dimed” to death. Councilor Ortiz said that she also has the expectation that staff seek every efficiency possible so that when the Task Force goes to the taxpayers, we can show that we have done our due diligence. As an example, Commissioner Handy said the River Road Park District recently went out for a levy, and in a bad economy, ran an impeccable and successful campaign. He said they were very clear that they are doing everything else they can do, and clearly showed where the gap is. He stated that he believes if fire and ambulance folks cannot pass this, no one can. He added that a new great idea may be introduced at the public forums that can help us get where we want to go. Councilor Ortiz said that she believes it is important that elected officials have the answers to the questions the public is going to ask. She added that some people believe there are chunks of money hidden away.
- Randy Groves proposed that staff draft an outline for the public forums process and send the information electronically to elected officials for review and input. He said that staff will also look for dates and locations, including fire stations and community centers. Dale Borland offered use of the Lane Rural Fire Station, and suggested looking into using

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the Santa Clara Fire Station as well. Councilor Andrea Ortiz provided dates for upcoming River Road/Santa Clara neighborhood meetings. Randy Groves mentioned that he is planning to coordinate with the City's Neighborhood Program Manager to see how we can coordinate with neighborhood groups. Councilor Ortiz said that some neighborhood groups often have joint meetings. Randy Groves re-stated that staff will prepare a draft of what the issues are, how all the pieces fit together, look at dates and locations to get a good representation of the communities, and send the information electronically to elected officials for review and input. Upon Randy Groves' suggestion, the ATS JEO Task Force decided to target October for reporting back to the full JEO group (before Thanksgiving).

- Councilor Dave Ralston noted the importance of getting good coverage, and by giving the public numerous options to provide input, maybe some community members from Eugene will attend public forums in Springfield, and vice versa.
- Councilor Dave Ralston emphasized that when the longer-term solutions get enacted, he hopes the \$1,600 ambulance transport fee will disappear or at least be significantly reduced. Councilor Andrea Ortiz said it would be good to show a comparison. Randy Groves stated that this piece has been talked about, but emphasized the need to retain some fee for service to discourage system abuse.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said she heard years ago that in other municipalities they were allowed to leave patients at the scene (e.g., if someone had overdosed), and asked if it is standard practice to leave this type of patient at the scene. Randy Groves replied that in the cases of a diabetic disorder, we frequently treat and release the patient, and added that Denise and Dennis can speak to the issues of Medicare and Medicaid. Denise Giard said that Medicare does not cover this type of call for service. Dale Borland and Chris Heppel said the treat and release situation is most commonly used with diabetic patients. Dennis Murphy stated that this is another good reason for keeping FireMed as a low-cost alternative option at \$52 per year. With FireMed, there are no pre-qualifications. Dennis noted that the vast majority of fire services do not offer FireMed. On the other hand, he said it is critical that we maximize insurance reimbursements. He believes the key to success is to keep access up and deliver services to better match patients' needs. He said he also believes that RiverBend's success is based on three elements: improved access; lower overall costs of healthcare; and improved quality of care. This is essentially healthcare reform. He said that the departments have a history of doing two out of the three. Dennis added that the public looks at the \$52 cost of a FireMed membership, and considers it another barrier to access. He stated that the \$1,600 ambulance transport fee must also be looked at.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz stated that she believes there is a lack of personal accountability, and that this is a critical part that is missing with programs. She said that people have to own their own health, and we need to help encourage people to be accountable. She also stated that 100 percent access needs to be better defined, and it does not mean that everything up to this point is going to be erased and that we get to start over again. Randy Groves added that a lack of personal accountability is what drives a growing percentage of street-level calls, and this is seen on a daily basis by police, fire and all responders. Councilor Ortiz announced that she is now working with the 100% Access

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Coalition. Dennis Murphy said he believes that his and Councilor Ortiz's paths will cross on work being done to educate the public on access and the appropriate use of 9-1-1 services. He said that the system needs to be reconstructed.

6. Information Share

- Commissioner Rob Handy stated that he will have more information at the next Task Force meeting on amendments to Chapter 18 of Lane County's Code (Ambulance Service Areas).
- Referencing the Life Flight helicopter parked outside the conference room on the grassy knoll, Randy Groves said that as a follow-up to what he mentioned at the last Task Force meeting, Life Flight is a key component to the goal of regionalization. While air ambulance is often overlooked, he emphasized that it is an important asset to our communities, and stressed the importance of keeping Life Flight based in the area. At the same time, he said that Life Flight is a nonprofit corporation, and they are struggling to maintain the Eugene air base. He said today is the first day that Life Flight is located here at 2nd and Chambers, relocating from the Eugene Airport. Life Flight needed to physically relocate from the Eugene Airport location by August 12th due to construction of the new Airport Fire Station. Life Flight is currently located here on temporary status, awaiting final processing with Oregon Aviation Department and the Federal Aviation Administration. Both agencies are involved in the process and have been working with Life Flight and the department. He stated that Life Flight is a regional asset, a strong regional partner, and a critical tool for emergency, time dependant inter-facility transports to Portland, as well as critical transports from emergency scenes in rural areas. Randy said that Life Flight will be carrying the full cost of relocation and for the development of a helipad, and that there will be no cost to the City. He stated that one of the additional training benefits to having Life Flight located at 2nd and Chambers is that most of their flight nurses are advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certified instructors, which folds nicely into the Emergency Services Training Center complex, and the regional training concept. He said the flight crews will be stationed at Fire Station 2, and eventually, there will be a permanent landing pad constructed with a target being the end of September.
- Commissioner Rob Handy asked why Life Flight has been struggling with its Eugene air base. Randy Groves replied that it is a combination of starting a new service in an area that has not had air medical, as well as the expense of maintaining a multi-million dollar helicopter, in addition to the pilots, flight nurses, flight paramedics and a full-time mechanic, it is a very expensive service. He added that Life Flight does well in the Portland metro area, because the number of calls is more significant than in our area based on population. Dennis Murphy further explained that Life Flight is experiencing the start-up blues, and that some of their response area was previously served by another provider. He said it takes a couple of years to establish the business, and this area has not grown up with any level of helicopter service at all. Dennis added that Life Flight is a partner in the FireMed Program, and in fact, this year's campaign brought in 11,000 FireMed Plus members, which includes air ambulance service. He said that Life Flight is an important piece to the puzzle. He stated that having air ambulance in our area is not a new concept; there has just not been the regional structure to accommodate this service

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before now. Dennis noted that fog can easily ground a helicopter, and this will be less of an issue at 2nd and Chambers than it was at the Eugene Airport. Randy Groves agreed. He added that FAA fly zones airspace at an airport restricts the type of aircraft, and when it can be flown under low-visibility conditions, and that Life Flight has seasoned pilots, who are able to determine whether or not it is safe to fly in a localized area outside of the airport airspace. He stated that this area probably has a need for air ambulance service with its large and remote rural areas. He added that the area departments and districts were happy to acquire air medical service here locally. Dennis Murphy reported that Life Flight networks with other flight providers, and this piece is built into FireMed membership coverage.

- Building on what Councilor Ortiz and Councilor Ralston said earlier, Dennis Murphy stated that there is a whole platform of back-up initiatives in various developmental stages. He noted that fire departments everywhere are being squeezed. He also said that Springfield sells EMS systems management services and has the potential to do even more in this service area. He said by maximizing all sources of revenue, the departments are able to say they are doing the best they can, and he noted that this was shown in the consultant's report (the ESCI cooperative services study). He said this is a level of effort that the public needs to know about and appreciate. Randy Groves added that it is not just ambulance service, but also contract fire protection, equipment testing, equipment maintenance, supply order and distribution, and other functional areas of our services. He said that the fire departments have done a good job of raising revenue, and are on concurrent tracks in making a difference to shrink the administrative footprint while looking at methods to increase revenue.
- Randy Groves thanked everyone for making time to work on this issue, and for the good discussion today.

7. Additional Issues

- No one brought forward any additional issues to discuss.

8. Meeting Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned.
- Randy Groves asked staff* to holdover to begin preparing the draft outline for the public forums process. (*Staff present: Randy Groves, Denise Giard, Karen Brack, Joe Zaludek, Larry Hill, Dennis Murphy, Bart Noll, Jana Sorenson, Dale Borland, Chris Heppel.)

(Recorded by Joann Eppli)