

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

Meeting Summary

October 26, 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 Councilors Dave Ralston and Hillary Wylie

Lane Rural Fire/Rescue Board President Larry von Moos

Eugene Staff Present:

Randy Groves, Denise Giard, Joe Zaludek, Larry Hill, Julie Lindsey, Glen Potter, Joann Eppli

IAFF Local 851 Representatives Present:

Scott Olmos

Springfield Staff Present:

Dennis Murphy, Brian Evanoff, Bart Noll

IAFF Local 1395 Representatives Present:

Kevin Gray

Lane Rural Staff Present:

Dale Borland, Bill Bass

LCOG Staff Present:

Byron Vanderpool, Paula Taylor

Rural Metro Ambulance Staff Present:

Brandt Enright, Melissa Gray, Sandra Bishop

1. Welcome

- Randy Groves convened the ninth meeting of the Ambulance Transport System (ATS) Joint Elected Officials (JEO) Task Force. He then completed a roll call of the elected officials.
- Eugene Councilor Andrea Ortiz reported that Councilor Mike Clark will not be attending today's meeting.
- Lane Rural Fire/Rescue Board President Larry von Moos reported that Director Kevin King will not be attending today's meeting.

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2. Future ATS JEO Task Force Meetings

- The next ATS JEO Task Force meeting is scheduled for:
 - Monday, November 9, 2009 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Fire Conference Room. Randy Groves said that the purpose of this meeting will be to finalize the draft report to the full JEO Group. He also said that this could potentially be the last ATS JEO Task Force meeting.

3. Future JEO Meetings

- The next JEO meeting is scheduled for:
 - Monday, December 7, 2009 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Eugene Public Library in the Bascom/Tykeson Room. (Note: the length of this meeting has been extended by one half-hour.) The ATS JEO Task Force recommendations will be presented, as well as an update on the Eugene/Springfield Merger Initiative.
- Councilor Dave Ralston stated that he has missed three Housing Policy Board meetings due to scheduling conflicts with regularly scheduled JEO meetings.

4. Meeting Summary Approval

- The Task Force unanimously approved the October 5, 2009 Meeting Summary.

5. Items for Discussion

Eugene/Springfield Merger Initiative Update

- Randy Groves called attention to the December 7, 2009 JEO meeting, where the Task Force will present recommendations back to the full JEO Group. He added that the Fire Chiefs will also provide a report on the Eugene/Springfield Merger Initiative. He reminded the Task Force that these two are separate, but closely connected items.

Public Forum Results – Continued

- Randy Groves reported that he and Dennis Murphy will make a presentation to the Springfield Chamber of Commerce tomorrow morning, where they will talk more about the merger, as well as provide a summary of the ATS JEO Task Force's work. He said that this brings the total of public forums to 12. The information that was circulated at the public forums and at the meeting with the Eugene Chamber will be provided to the Springfield Chamber. The Fire Chiefs will also ask members of the Springfield Chamber to complete the Ambulance Service Funding survey, and then this information will be added-in and send back out to the Task Force.

Finalize Preparation of Task Force Recommendations to Full JEO Group

- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said she would like to see a statement from the unions showing which options they support. Dennis Murphy added that it will be important to include statements from all four unions (IAFF Local 851, IAFF Local 1395, AFSCME Local 1724 and SEIU Local 503).

Draft Document for Report Back to Full JEO Group

- Randy Groves asked Glen Potter to distribute copies of the draft report. Randy emphasized that this is only a draft of the report, and was created to provide a framework

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for discussion. The final version of this report, after Task Force Members' edits, is what will go to the full JEO Group.

- Dennis Murphy said he will present a summary version of this draft report to the Springfield Council at today's Work Session. Dennis stated that the summary being provided to the Springfield Council is a 20,000 foot level report on the work of the ATS JEO Task Force (including today's meeting), as well as the results of the public forums. Dennis said that he will also advise the Springfield Council that the Task Force is working on a comprehensive draft report, which will be submitted to elected officials prior to December 7th. He added that Springfield staff are developing a plan for the 2010 FireMed Campaign.
- Referencing the draft report, Councilor Dave Ralston noted that it is presumptuous to show that all three jurisdictions will get General Fund support as necessary. He emphasized that Springfield approved temporary General Fund support for this year as a one-time thing.
- Glen Potter joined Task Force members at the table, and walked Task Force members through the draft report. He then asked elected officials to review the draft report, and send him edits. Randy Groves stated that the Task Force needs to submit a report back to the full JEO Group. He said that this draft report was created as a starting point, and that some of the assumptions listed in the draft were based on what staff have been hearing elected officials say. He also emphasized that the document was only a draft.
- Councilor Dave Ralston said that the draft report merely alludes to the merger, and noted that he is lukewarm to the district concept because of the potential loss of governing ability.
- Randy Groves explained that a district could be one of the outcomes of a merger, but it is not the only possible outcome. He said the departments will first use an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) model to begin a two-plus year journey and a series of IGAs to consolidate functional areas of each department if given the direction to proceed. He stated that this is an opportunity for both departments to realize economies of scale and eliminate redundancies. Randy noted that while forming a new district has potential for closing some of the financial gap, it will not fix Lane Rural's issues. Councilor Ralston confirmed that the merger is a temporary strategy to solving the Ambulance Transport Fund (ATF) deficit. Dennis Murphy stated that both issues will be addressed at the JEO meeting on December 7th. He added that fire departments across the country are having similar problems. He said that the report details what each option would look like if implemented, and asked elected officials to consider empowering City Managers to approve a phased process with regular progress reports. Dennis stated that the Fire Chiefs are asking for permission to move forward with more collaborative efforts, such as the 3-Battalion system, to achieve greater efficiencies. He emphasized that the Fire Chiefs are asking for elected officials' approval to move forward on a phased process with regular progress reports, or not. Dennis clarified that approval to move forward does not mean that elected officials are committing to forming a fire district.
- Councilor Hillary Wylie said it would be better to state in the report that the Task Force supports further consideration of a merger, and suggested to proceed slowly.

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- Regarding the 3-Battalion system, Randy Groves pointed out that initially, there was a level of discomfort, and retrospectively, most people now say that it was a good decision to implement. He added that the departments cannot stay in limbo and keep position vacancies open forever, and at some point will need to move forward with either merging the two departments or filling critical vacancies as two separate departments.
- Dennis Murphy stated that after the first of the year, if there is no decision to move forward, he will no longer support a merger, because it will do damage to the fire departments. Once again he emphasized that the Fire Chiefs are asking for elected officials to encourage City Managers to approve moving forward incrementally towards a merger, and check in regularly.
- Councilor Hillary Wylie confirmed that the Fire Chiefs are asking for permission to go ahead and move slowly forward. Dennis Murphy added that the Fire Chiefs need direction from elected officials.
- Randy Groves reported that position vacancies (e.g., Training Chief and Fire Marshal) in Eugene are creating challenges.
- Councilor Dave Ralston stated that he is in support of the merger, and to be clear, he is referring to the merger with another district as the point he is uncomfortable with.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz confirmed that the draft report is not going to other council members until the Task Force members have finalized it. Randy Groves asked Glen Potter to send the draft report (including revisions from today's meeting) to Jo Eppli to send electronically to the Task Force for review and edits.
- Randy Groves stated that the goal is to send the report to the full JEO Group on the day before Thanksgiving to give time for review in preparation for the December 7th JEO meeting.
- Councilor Dave Ralston said that he wants to make sure that it is stated in the report that the merger is a temporary short-term fix to the ATF deficit.
- Randy Groves said that whether or not the district concept provides short or long-term relief to the fund is dependent upon whether or not the deficit would be made up in the tax base.
- Dennis Murphy noted that a taxing authority is not going to fix the ambulance problem by itself, and that fees for service and FireMed would continue to be a part of the funding structure.
- Referring to the draft report, Commissioner Rob Handy said that he is interested in further exploration of annexation to an existing district. Additionally, he believes it is a great idea to look at expansion of the FireMed Program. Randy Groves explained that FireMed is a voluntary subscription service that was created as a consortium between Springfield and Eugene and emphasized that participation is voluntary. Commissioner Handy said he would like to see what FireMed on steroids looks like, as well as what the projected impacts might be. Randy Groves said that FireMed on steroids would be a shift from "help yourself and cover your family" to "we need your help". Randy cautioned that the expansion of FireMed could be part of the solution, not a single solution, and noted that it would still be a voluntary program that could vary from year-to-year in the amount of revenue it produces. Commissioner Handy said that he believes it is important

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to show the public that we are doing everything else we can first. Referring to the special district, Commissioner Handy reported on a county-wide Public Safety Task Force that is looking at broader public safety needs. He asked ATS JEO Task Force members to think about working with the Public Safety Task Force to look at solutions in a comprehensive way. He added that he is interested in exploring a county-wide health district, and noted that other Lane County Commissioners are interested in looking at solutions to public health issues.

- Councilor Dave Ralston stated that Lane County tries to do too much at once and they overwhelm people. He said they really need to focus, and he believes it is important not to include too many things. Commissioner Handy said that there are 82 taxing entities in Lane County, and Commissioners are looking at ways to consolidate and bring things under one umbrella.
- Councilor Hillary Wylie asked if the original report included maps that show the boundaries of each district. Randy Groves referred to the map on the wall, and pointed to the various contract district areas that Eugene serves. He noted that Eugene had entertained some discussions at the Fire Chief level about potentially reconfiguring the boundaries to have more of an urban/rural split. He added that some conceptual discussions had also included Lane County #1, and they would need to be fully involved in the process should the discussions go to the next level. He stressed that there must be a transition plan for this type of change, and that it would be detrimental to just flip the switch. He added that that Lane Rural has conceptually talked about having an Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit stationed in Veneta, which he recognized would be good for the residents of Lane County #1.
- Councilor Hillary Wylie said she pictures a large fire district with one administration. She believes this will provide really good service and will be the best way to help to support the whole project. Randy Groves added that this structure would provide consistency, and noted that for the future, nothing is out of the question. Councilor Wylie said incremental steps will help to keep at the forefront what a long-range view would look like.
- Randy Groves stated that one of the long-term goals is to look where pieces fit together to form a regionalized system (e.g. Urban Search and Rescue, Life Flight, etc.), which makes sense for service delivery, shrinking the administrative footprint and reducing overhead costs.
- Dennis Murphy provided a few examples of where fire districts have been formed. He said in Beaverton they have created an urban/suburban/rural mix through the formation of Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue (TVF&R); and Orange County, started small by creating an agency-neutral district, and have now merged a total of 26 cities.
- Commissioner Rob Handy said it will be important to balance the vision with what short-term things need to be done. He stated that he has clearly heard that something needs to happen now. He asked staff to flush out what an IGA looks like. He said that it will also be important to communicate the county-wide perspective. He supports taking a few steps towards a merger, receiving a progress report, and then seeing if elected officials are comfortable moving ahead even further. Commissioner Handy stated that another Lane County Commissioner has an interest in serial levies, which forces the involved

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organizations to write down on paper how much it is going to cost and what the public will be getting for it.

- Randy Groves said that Glen Potter will update the draft report with revisions from today's meeting, and Jo Eppli will send it electronically to the Task Force for review and edits. Randy asked that Task Force members send their edits back as soon as possible given the short timeline remaining to complete the work. He noted that the process gets delayed when elected officials are on opposite sides of an issue, and take time coming back together to reach a compromise. He added that we need to allow enough time for this process to happen, hopefully by the next meeting in two weeks.
- Commissioner Rob Handy requested changes to the report be done in legislative format.
- Randy Groves emphasized that the draft report was not trying to put words in the Task Force's mouth, but felt it was important to create a draft document that included everything that has been talked about as a starting point for narrowing the recommended strategies and finalizing the report.

6. Information Share

Lane County Code: Chapter 18

- Randy Groves reported that Lane County Health & Human Services (H&HS) staff have been meeting with local major Ambulance Service Area (ASA) holders, including Eugene, Springfield, Lane Rural, Oakridge, South Lane and Western Lane (Florence), to review and update Chapter 18 to the Lane County Code to modernize it and bring it in line with changes to OAR. The changes being proposed will give the individual ASA holders responsibility for all attended patient transports that occur within their own ASA. He said that the ASA holders have been very pleased with the response from Lane County H&HS. He stated that all involved parties are close to an agreement, with the last piece to be addressed being the section imposed for those who violate the rules. After this has been added, the updated Chapter 18 will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for review, a public hearing, deliberation, and hopefully approval. He added that he anticipates all County ASA holders as well as H&HS staff will be in agreement.
- Dale Borland said that it has been a smooth process.
- Dennis Murphy reminded Task Force members that there has been a vendor working in the system that is operating with a state licensed ambulance, but does not hold a Lane County ASA. This vendor is taking calls between Eugene and Springfield, as well as within the two cities, and has even tried to respond to scene work. This practice is taking revenue away from the regulated system, the approved providers, and ultimately the taxpayers. Dennis noted that this is about maintaining order, not about being anti-private sector or choking the market.
- Randy Groves re-emphasized that the goal of updating the Lane County Code to match the Code with OAR changes so that the system can be managed appropriately, and to give an ASA holder the full responsibility for overseeing Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) attended ambulance transports.
- Councilor Andrea Ortiz said that the change to the Lane County Code is not trying to regulate recumbent wheelchairs, but to better regulate service provided to patients on

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stretchers attended by an EMT or Paramedic. Randy Groves confirmed that this is correct.

- Dennis Murphy added that the update will include revisions made to the statewide OAR on what is, and what is not medically necessary transportation. He noted that FireMed defines what is, and what is not medically necessary transportation.
- Randy Groves reported that the last time the Lane County Code was updated was when ASA 8 was added in 2002, and it was only updated to address boundary changes between ASA 4 (Eugene) and newly formed ASA 8 (Lane Rural). He commended Lane County H&HS Director Rob Rockstroh's and Debbie Heeszal's cooperation during this process, as well as Commissioner Rob Handy's supportive efforts.
- Commissioner Rob Handy said that he appreciates the report. In fact, he talked with Debbie Heeszal and other folks at Lane County to make sure that all the necessary people are at the table.
- Commissioner Rob Handy then asked if the unions had been involved in the process. Scott Olmos replied that the unions had not been, but were being apprised of the process and the steps being taken. He added that the unions support the efforts.
- Commissioner Rob Handy then asked if anyone in the private sector should be involved. Randy Groves replied that anyone has the right to make public comment through the formal process, and that all private providers had an opportunity to respond to Eugene's RFP process to contract for handling non-emergency ambulance transports in ASA 4.
- Dennis Murphy noted the vendor he spoke about previously who does not hold a Lane County ASA, will get adequate notice of the proposed changes to the Lane County Code, as well as notification that they have been operating in violation of the law and labor contracts.
- Randy Groves said that the State of Oregon established ASAs for a specific reason, and that is so that no one agency gets to scoop the gravy calls within a given area while ignoring low or no-pay calls. He added that one criterion for establishing an ASA is to ensure that the system remains solvent, and another is to look at it as a total system so that the entire State of Oregon is covered by ambulance service.

Medicare and Medicaid Rates

- Councilor Hillary Wylie reported that she had an opportunity to speak with Congressman Peter DeFazio about the work of this Task Force, as well as Medicare rates at the federal level. She learned that in the Health Care Bill, there is a provision for 17 states (with Oregon being one of them) that do not receive adequate ambulance rates. Councilor Wylie said that since her conversation with Congressman DeFazio, she has been doing some of her own research, and will keep the Task Force informed. She also reported that she has been working on the Medicaid piece, and has a personal contact who is involved in promoting health care for all people.
- Denise Giard reported that the Health Care Bill will bring in slightly better rates than what providers are getting now, but not as much as before. She added that Oregon is approximately 6% below the national rate, because our costs are higher to run the service, which is attributed to the cost of living associated with our geographical location.

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- Dennis Murphy said it is a matter of getting back a tiny bit of what we were getting previously, and therefore, it is necessary to continue federal and state lobbying efforts to increase Medicare and Medicaid payments.

Expanded FireMed

- In response to Commissioner Rob Handy's earlier questions on FireMed, Dennis Murphy reported that program membership is currently at 26%. In comparison, he said that Louisiana has achieved 48% market penetration. He noted that reliability is subject to market forces. For an expanded FireMed campaign, he stated that plans are to reach out to the public with everything we have. He said the campaign is being lead by a full-time volunteer coordinator who has experience in delivery of ambulance memberships. The campaign will use Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and endorsements to communicate the issue; it will ask the public to "help the rescuers help you"; messages will emphasize that this is an important community issue and that the goal is to try and close the financial gap, so that ambulance providers do not have to rely on taxes; there will be requests for endorsements; and there will be a statement from the ATS JEO Task Force encouraging people to join. The campaign will aggressively seek participation by Chambers, credit unions and Costco-type retailers to encourage their members to join. Dennis said that it will sound like a fundraiser.
- Board President Larry von Moos suggested offering an incentive to the public. Dennis Murphy replied that the incentive is access for all people and keeping the price of service low.
- Councilor Dave Ralston asked if everyone had FireMed, would that solve our problem, to which Dennis Murphy replied yes. Councilor Ralston stated that for \$30 per year, the issues could be taken care of. Randy Groves stated that this concept is actually the health service district proposal.

7. Additional Issues

- No one brought forward any additional issues to discuss.

8. Meeting Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned.

(Recorded by Joann Eppli)