

CALHOUN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP
NOVEMBER 19, 2013

PRESENT:

THOMAS FLOWERS, CHAIRMAN
LEE LEE BROWN, VICE-CHAIRMAN
WILLIE T. GRANT
DARRELL MCDUGALD
LEE SHELTON

MANUEL HIRES, BALIFF
MATT FUQUA, ATTORNEY
CARLA A. HAND, CLERK OF CIRCUIT COURT AND COUNTY COMPTROLLER
CARLA PEACOCK, DEPUTY CLERK

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Flowers at 4:00 p.m.

PHILLIP HILL, CALHOUN-LIBERTY HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Hill stated the ambulance contract is an ongoing issue and the Hospital Board is looking for a quick resolution. Mr. Hill said the Hospital Board wants to work with the BOCC and continue the ambulance contract. Mr. Hill stated the Hospital is facing some budget issues with cuts in Medicare and the need to purchase a new ambulance over the next 12-16 months. He stated an ambulance grant that was anticipated was not awarded.

Mr. Hill stated the Hospital has asked for the following additions to the ambulance contract:

- \$35,000 increase in the contract amount
- A contract term of 3 to 4 years

Chairman Flowers inquired about the discussion with Liberty County. Mr. Hill responded Liberty County stated they appreciate the ambulance service, but they don't have funds to pay for the service.

Commissioner McDougald asked if Calhoun County's ambulance service would continue to respond to Liberty County. Mr. Hill stated if Liberty County calls us we will respond.

Chairman Flowers stated Calhoun County is providing mutual aid to the Liberty County ambulance service and Liberty County is not compensating Calhoun County for that aid. Chairman Flowers stated the Calhoun County taxpayers are paying for the aid.

Mr. Hill stated they do bill for some of the calls, but most patients don't have the means to pay. He stated that happens in both counties.

Chairman Flowers stated he was told Liberty County had contributed funds to the Calhoun County ambulance service in the past.

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Mr. Hill stated in 2008 Liberty County contributed approximately \$25,000 to Calhoun-Liberty Hospital for the ambulance service. Mr. Hill stated Liberty County continued the contribution for two to three years and then stopped.

Commissioner McDougald inquired about the increase in the number of calls for ambulance service.

Mr. Hill stated there had been an increase in calls since the hospital took over the ambulance service and he also told the Board his previous report to them at 4,000 calls for last year was incorrect. He stated he revisited the numbers and there were approximately 2,700 billable calls last year. He said there were approximately 1200 to 1300 calls for ambulance service when he took over in 2008. Mr. Hill stated Calhoun County also provides mutual aid to other counties in addition to Liberty County. He stated the issue with Liberty County is when Liberty County transports a patient to Tallahassee or Panama City they are without ambulance service for several hours.

Mr. Hill stated the Hospital was asking for the increase of \$35,000 because of the age of the ambulance fleet and the need to purchase another ambulance. Mr. Hill stated the Hospital applies for grants for ambulances through the EMS Trust Fund, but this past year the Hospital did not receive the grant award. Mr. Hill stated the EMS Trust funds have dwindled.

Chairman Flowers asked Mr. Hill why most counties run their own ambulance service and noted Bay County recently took their ambulance service back over. Mr. Hill stated Bay County would have to answer this question but he did give examples of what several counties expend on ambulance service in excess of revenues generated.

Chairman Flowers pointed out that Gulf County provides mutual aid to Mexico Beach/Bay County and Mexico Beach/Bay County pays Gulf County \$30,000 per year to cover the cost of providing the aid. Chairman Flowers stated Mr. Hill wouldn't be here asking Calhoun County for \$35,000 if Liberty County had paid Calhoun County for the 126 ambulance runs that cost approximately \$34,000.

Mr. Hill agreed with Chairman Flowers, stating the approximate cost for each ambulance run is \$260 and also noted the hospital provides services for the ambulance service that are not paid for by the ambulance service.

Mr. Hill said there were other options. He stated if Calhoun County provided labor for maintenance on the ambulances it would take some of the burden off the Hospital.

Commissioner McDougald stated the Hospital has the ability to bill the Liberty County patients for the ambulance service.

Mr. Hill stated Calhoun County would need to spell out their mutual aid guidelines for Liberty County in the contract with Calhoun-Liberty Hospital.

Chairman Flowers asked how the State of Florida defines mutual aid. Mr. Hill stated the State of Florida will not give a clear answer.

Commissioner Shelton inquired if other counties provide mutual aid to Liberty County.

Mr. Hill stated Gadsden, Franklin and Leon Counties also provide mutual aid to Liberty County, although Calhoun County gets the majority of the calls.

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Mr. Hill stated he had met with the Liberty County Clerk of Court several times and was told Liberty County does not have the funds to pay for the mutual aid.

Mr. Hill stated the Hospital Board does not want to put a strain on Calhoun County, but they want to operate the ambulance service at a high rate of efficiency.

Mr. Hill stated it comes down to aging equipment. He stated he came up with a fair number to upgrade equipment for a 3-4 year contract. Mr. Hill stated the Hospital can't depend on the EMS Trust Fund grant to fund equipment upgrades.

Chairman Flowers stated the Board needed to confer with the County Attorney and would get back in touch with Mr. Hill tomorrow morning.

Mr. Hill agreed and stated if the Board had any questions, to please give him a call.

There being no further business, the Workshop was adjourned at 4:32 p.m. C.T.

ATTEST:



CARLA A. HAND, CLERK



THOMAS FLOWERS, CHAIRMAN