

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Greene County Emergency
Medical Services Board
July 24, 2019**

The special meeting of the Greene County Emergency Medical Services Board was held in the Commissioners' Room of the Greene County Courthouse on July 24, 2019 at 9:30 a.m. Present were Ed Michael, Brad Norton, David Doane, Troy Gaither and Mike Hasler. Also present were the Board's Attorney Marvin Abshire, Commissioner Nathan Abrams, Dr. Michael Gamble, MD, a Gallery of EMT'S and Paramedics from the Greene County Ambulance Service, (hereafter called "the Gallery") and Sabrina Stockrahm. Absent was Joe Huntington.

The meeting was called to order by President Ed Michael.

President Ed Michael read a prepared opening statement, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein as reference.

The first item of business was to discuss specifications for Request for Quote (RFQ), for a private ambulance service.

David Doane believes the Service can get by with 4 ambulances, plus Rescue (E-4, Linton). If the county does privatize, Ed Michael noted that he does not believe the county would pay for Rescue. Troy Gaither added that consideration needs to be given to the increased number of transfers from the Greene County Hospital when determining the number of ambulances needed.

When discussing the possibility of employee leasing, ambulance employees expressed concern that some employees may not meet the requirements from being absorbed by a private ambulance service and then could be out of a job and not able to collect unemployment.

Mike Hasler stated that he is against privatization of the Greene County Ambulance Service and does not believe it would be beneficial to the county. He understands that money is an issue, but he doesn't want it to cost lives. He also stated that he believes four ambulances are not enough.

Nathan Abrams and Ed Michael both addressed the interpretation of the online State Board of Accounts Report indicating a county surplus of \$16,000,000.00 in various county funds. Simply put, the levy requires that these funds are restricted for certain uses and the Council cannot use those funds for anything else. Nathan Abrams indicated that he believes he knows there are accounts where interest income can be used for raises and he further indicated that he has conveyed this to the County Council.

The Commissioners made it clear that they are not wanting to eliminate the Greene County Ambulance Service. Commissioners are looking at privatizing quotes because they have an obligation to provide the service to the county. The subject of privatization came up after it was reported that numerous Ambulance Service employees were leaving their jobs for more competitive wages and the Commissioners were concerned what they would do if the remaining Ambulance Service employees walked out if they do not get the raises they are requesting. The Commissioners are not looking at privatization as a cost-cutting solution. Nathan Abrams emphasized that the money is controlled by the Council, not the Commissioners. The Gallery of Greene County Ambulance Service employees stated they want to make it clear that their request for raises is not an ultimatum and that job security is important to them.

Troy Gaither expressed his belief that a private service would not be good for the Greene County Hospital and is concerned that a private service may be obligated to transfer patients to another facility outside of the county. He thinks the county would lose oversight, training, and protocols by privatization. He also believes the EMS Board needs a quote for six trucks and basically the same service it is providing currently.

After much discussion, there was a consensus that the following should be included in the initial drafting of RFQ for private ambulance service:

- Six fully staffed ambulances for 24-hour shifts
- Dispatch would continue to go through the Greene County Sheriff's Department
- Housing would be provided if the fire departments are willing. Private company would be asked to pay their own rent for housing as part of their subsidy.
- Private company should lease existing Greene County ambulances which includes a specific maintenance schedule on the ambulances at their expense
- Contractual guarantees and penalties for any violations are in place
- Requirement of 30-minute response time
- Initial one-year contract
- Oversight, training, and protocols remain the same

The next item of business was discussion of cost cutting strategies for the existing Ambulance Service. Greene County Ambulance Service has in the past been self-funding, but it fell short this year. The Ambulance Service now has a \$135,000.00 deficit. Collection issues with Medicare and Medicaid are causing a large decline in revenue. David Doane provided Run Status Reports showing that runs have decreased. The reason the transports were so high in 2018 were due to dialysis runs. Many people are providing self-transport and the closing of two nursing homes in the county are attributing to the decrease in runs.

Ed Michael noted that in 2018, the county paid \$569,439.00 for health insurance for EMS employees. The county is self-insured up to 60,000.00 per employee a year. Currently, the Ambulance Service reimburses the county \$120,000.00 for health insurance for their employees. Brad Norton commented that he believes this should be changed since other county departments do not fund their health insurance.


Mike Hasler questioned if the current Ambulance service billing company is aggressive enough in collecting revenues. David Doane reported the Ambulance Service has contacted the billing company and the billing company owner doesn't know why the money isn't flowing. Troy Gaither suggested it might be beneficial to have a financial chart audit to review what should be charted in order to collect more from runs and track services being provided. Troy Gaither further suggested contacting another medical billing service to see if they could guarantee more revenue. The current billing company for the Ambulance service receives 4.5% of monies collected. The Board also discussed raising rates.

The Board reviewed the Ambulance Service proposed budget and discussed the possibility of discontinuing the \$140,000.00 per year contract with Linton Rescue (E4) and use that money for raises. This action would require shift changes and coverage changes. If the county would reimburse the \$120,000.00 per year for health insurance, the two combined changes would more than cover raises. Ed Michael believes Linton Rescue has been our safety net and they do more runs than required of them. The Gallery isn't sure that discontinuing the contract with Linton is the best option.

The Gallery questioned the Board to see if there is any action they can take to keep the Ambulance Service from being privatized. The Board stressed their support of the Ambulance Service and the Board's stance against privatization. The Gallery will prepare a written statement and Board Member Brad Norton agreed to read the statement to the County Council at the July 29, 2019 meeting.

There being no further business, Mike Hasler made a motion and was seconded by Troy Gaither to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVED this 17th day of September, 2019.



Marvin R. Abshire, Secretary

The Board of Commissioners has the responsibility to provide an ambulance service for the residents of Greene County. The funding for this ambulance service must be approved by the Greene County Council. To the best of my knowledge, there is no written rule about what this service should look like. It's The Board of Commissioners opinion that a public service gives the best service to the public that it serves, however, there are times that it may be necessary to employ a private service. A private service is in business to make a profit and, therefore, must be busy moving patients while a public service is in business to serve its patrons and can more afford to stand by for emergencies. Public services are usually subsidized by the tax payers to various degrees. A private service that cannot make a profit by moving enough patients will also need to be subsidized or will need to move ambulances to other service areas leaving fewer available for emergencies and transfers. Both types of services must have adequately trained and compassionate employees to care for the patients they carry.

It is not the desire of the Greene County Board of Commissioners or this Ambulance Board to engage a private ambulance service instead of our current County owned service. Due to circumstances beyond our control and the possible action or inaction of the County Council we feel it is our obligation to do our due diligence and investigate the possible engagement of a private ambulance company in order to maintain service if the need arises.

The purpose of this meeting today is to seek information and ideas from the Ambulance board for putting together an RFQ, through a discussion of the facts and the perceived needs of our ambulance service. We will also discuss some possible cost cutting ideas due to a falling revenue cycle