

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Klickitat County Emergency Medical Services District No. 1**

November 30, 2022 – 3:00 p.m.

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## **REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

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A regular meeting of the Klickitat County Emergency Medical Services District No. 1 (KCEMSD1) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, November 30, 2022, at 3:00 pm at the White Salmon Fire Station at 119 NE Church Ave in White Salmon, Washington with Zoom option. Charles Virts was the presiding officer. A quorum was present including, Director Tony Gilmer, Director Leslie Hiebert, Director Heiko Stopsack, and Director JJ McCray. All Directors noted they were able to hear and be heard over Zoom conferencing.

Also present, Erika Cooper, Finance Administrator. Nate Herbeck, Acting Chief of EMS, Karen Williams, Katharina Larson, and Suzie Gilmer, EMS Services. Jeff King, Klickitat County Director of Emergency Management and EMS Ex-Officio. William Harryman, EMS Chief was absent. Members of the public present, Connie Pond and Larry Hoctor, KVH Board Commissioners. Robb Kimmes, Skyline CEO. Dr. Paul Pennington, Ricky Knowles, Jonathan Blake, and Juliet Pouillon, Skyline Board Commissioners.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Director Virts called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA & CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE**

Director Gilmer made a motion to approve the agenda as written. The motion was seconded by Director McCray. The motion carried unanimously.

Director Virts continued by requesting disclosure from the Directors of any conflict of interest with items on the agenda. Director Gilmer stated his disclaimer of potential conflict.

### **BUSINESS FROM AUDIENCE**

None noted.

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

None noted.

### **CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Director Gilmer moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from October 27, 2022, and Special Meeting Minutes from November 10, 2022. Also, to approve; October Accounts Payable in the amount of \$108,444.28, Electronic Transfers in the amount of \$135,638.98, Bad Debt in the amount of \$25,617.43, and Charity Care in the amount of \$0. The motion was seconded by Director Stopsack. The motion carried unanimously.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

### **Financial Report**

Erika reviewed the October financials. The district received \$272k in revenue, \$955 from Life Flight and \$102 in Timber Tax. She said our contractuals and bad debt were under budget because our revenue was lower than budgeted. Payroll taxes were lower because many employees have already hit their L&I deductions for the year. Benefits was over because the PERS retirement rate changed in September. We have a year and a half cash on hand. Erika and Director Hiebert discussed the reconciliation of AR.

### **Chief of EMS Operations Report**

COVID: We're not seeing an increase in COVID.

IFT Policy: We recently took three transfers in a row from KVH and back-to-back transfers out of Skyline taking us out of service for a total of 12 hours having all our units on the road. Due to our policy of not taking two rigs out of district at the same time, we didn't miss any 911 calls. We were able to minimize our level zeros and maintain staffing.

Staffing: Nate said the Chief hired two additional part time EMTs. He is going to be offering two paramedics part time positions. We are adequately staffed for the first time in a long time. Director Stopsack wanted to verify the adequately staffed comment, he said we are adequately staffed for our three units, correct? Nate concurred. We are adequately staffed for our current three units.

Run Report: November to date, we have 190 calls with 26 transfer requests. We are eight calls ahead of last year.

Vehicles: Goldendale's spare vehicle was used on a Life Flight contract call. The vehicle was running hot. It was towed to Dallesport and then to the dealership for repair. It was a hose that feeds the heating unit for the box. It is back in service now.

Meetings: Nate said that Chief Harryman met with the County Commissioners to discuss mental health transports. The Chief felt it was a productive meeting.

2023 Ambulance Purchase: Nate said Chief Harryman made a correction to the interlocal agreement and resubmitted it for approval.

### **Vehicle Report**

The vehicle report was provided.

### **Data/Run Report**

The run report was provided.

## CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **KCIFA Report** – Director King attended the KCIFA meeting. He said nothing was mentioned outside of the continuing addressing agenda item.
- **Union Local Report** – No update currently
- **Fourth Car** – Director Virts said the fourth car has been an ongoing issue ever since he’s been affiliated with the district. He said it has never been a full-time thing, it’s always been part time through the hospitals. When the EMS District was formed, the fourth car was eliminated right away because there was insufficient funding to take care of the need that it would require to operate the unit.

Robb Kimmes said part of selling the 2018 levy was adding the fourth ambulance. Ricky Knowles said their concerns started over the summer with the new transfer policy. He said there are two ways to approach the issue. One is to add capacity by adding a crew or another ambulance, the other would be to restrict the transfer policy. The approach the board took to limit the transfer window may be a natural response, but he feels it could have been negotiated. Ricky Knowles said the EMS board promised the community a fourth ambulance with the levy lift. He said their board became concerned because that wasn’t the path the board took. He says now they have patients that might miss a transfer that are in their hospital. It’s those very patients who are paying more taxes with the understanding that those taxes would have gone to another ambulance that could’ve transferred them. He would like to understand the EMS board’s position since it’s been a topic for three or four years. If funds are available and the levy increased under that premise, what is the hesitation? Why wouldn’t that have been a better outcome than the transfer situation. Director Stopsack said the fourth car has been a topic of discussion in strategic planning for the last six months. It is on our radar, and we are working on it within our timeframe. Director Virts said the district had Kayla Wehr, the previous Finance Manager, do an analysis on the fourth car project. Kayla said it was not financially feasible. Director Virts said it’s been on our radar as far back as when Director Hiebert was our Operations Chief. Director Virts said he believes we addressed the fourth car issue as much as we can financially at the present. He said we feel we’ve honored our commitment to the community, and we will continue to honor that commitment. The finances just aren’t there. Ever since the district was created, we’ve been financially in the hole. We’ve always had to struggle with finances. We don’t have enough money to buy replacement units. We were running ambulances that were falling apart every time they went down the road and it has taken us until now to get our fleet up to speed.

Ricky Knowles said the promise to the community was a fourth ambulance not a financial analysis. He said he asked the board to understand the community’s perspective to what

they were promised. Further, he thought the district had an obligation to show why they couldn't provide the fourth car considering it was one element of the levy increase. Director Virts said the analysis was done quite some time ago, prior to the levy. Director Virts said Chief Harryman has addressed the fourth car issue as the district went from not having one at all to operating a part time unit. We are always looking to improve on that, but it needs to be financially feasible. We have a limited budget. We are trying our best to provide all the services we can to the community and our primary goal is the emergency services. He said as far as he knew, the district has not failed to provide an emergent transfer at any time.

Larry Hctor said the taxpayers were led to believe they were being charged for a fourth car but it's not being provided. Nate said there is a fourth car. It's not a full time fourth car. Nate said the fourth car was only one of the elements we were trying to fulfill with the levy increase. There were five or six items on the levy as well. We are trying our best to make everything happen with what we have in the budget. The fourth car isn't staffed 100%, its on a volunteer basis. Up until last month, we have not been fully staffed to run the three cars we already have. If we can't find enough employees to staff three cars, we're not going to be able to staff four cars either. Larry asked where the fourth car was located. Nate said we have an extra car at all three stations if we must use it. We had 18 calls yesterday, and three transfers. Without having that fourth car available, it would've made it extremely difficult but with it we are able to get the transfers out, plus still stay as fully staffed as we can because nobody was ever in quarters at the same time because it was so busy. The fourth car is being staffed more now because the staff isn't being mandated every week to work 72- or 96-hour shifts. Ricky inquired why there was a need to change the transfer policy then. Director Stopsack said the transport policy was changed in order to manage our resources to the community. We wanted to ensure that there was a paramedic available in our county for the priority patients (cardiac events, strokes, trauma, i.e.). Director Virts added that the inner facility policy that was adopted when Leslie was Operations Chief and the current version, are almost verbatim. The two primary changes are the hours of operation and the mileage. It's not a brand-new policy. It's a policy that was adopted many years ago but not ever really enforced. We now have a Chief who is dedicated to operating the district, and he made sure it got fully implemented.

Director Stopsack said the message he was getting from the board members was that there has not been a responsible, adequate use of funding that has been promised to the taxpayers regarding the fourth car. Director Stopsack said he felt having a fourth car was putting the cart before the horse. First, we have not been fully staffed until recently. The reason for that is the employees have been underpaid and they do not have the benefits that other agencies are able to enjoy. We have some staff that have stuck it out and have been with the district for a very long time because they believe in it. We finally have staff up to where we need to be because we started offering better wages. We don't have adequate

funding to have good stations. We do not have the funding to adequately staff the fourth car and there is no place to put them so until that is addressed, we can't staff your full time fourth car. With the funding we have, even with the levy lift, our fleet has not been dependable for all this time. We've been creative the last month to pick up all the transfers that need to be taken out of the hospitals, using the fourth car, having people stay overtime to help staff them. We've had volunteers that have been on the fourth car and not mandatory but volunteer list who have taken transfers with the Life Flight crew so that we can get these people out of the hospitals where they need to go. The district has been able to do all this even with one of our ambulances breaking down at the hospital in Portland. We had another employee come in to take a car to go pick up that crew and bring them back. Of all the needs that have been thrown at us in Klickitat County in this month alone, we have met all of them. We have taken emergent transfers after hours whether it was taking children to Randall's, patients that had respiratory problems or trauma patients, we have covered all those transfers. We have not let the hours slow us down and have not refused to take any of those. We are doing it at the most effective cost to the Klickitat County taxpayers because we are not staffing it full time.

Larry questioned what the district's cash balance and profit margin were. Erika said the district's operating revenue for this year was \$2.8 million, out of that our expenses were \$2.1 million. She said with the resources we have we can't afford to get another ambulance, another station, or staff to properly run all of it if we could even find people to fill the positions. Larry said we were told part of the funding would go towards the fourth ambulance and it's going elsewhere or being used for later time. Larry asked if we had a timeframe of when we'd have staff for a fourth ambulance. Director Virts said we do not it's in strategic planning, were just putting down the foundation for it in order for it to happen. Director Stopsack asked them to recognize that we are facing the same staffing issues that the healthcare industry is and the same supply issues. We are working diligently to make it happen for the county.

Director Virts said we redrafted the policy and sent it out to the hospitals hoping to hear from them but the only person who came was Dr. Smith and other than that we didn't hear anything from the hospitals. He said he wasn't trying to give them any grief but wanted to express we are an open book and want to provide the services to the community that the community wants. We are doing the best job we can with the finances we have. We are fortunate enough to have a fifty-cent levy now instead of a thirty-two cent levy that helps a lot. We're fortunate that our call volume is up because that helps to increase our finances.

Dr. Pennington said he admired what the district was trying to achieve in a rural area with the difficulties in hiring people who have the skills you need. He said he believed everyone from the hospitals were coming there with a great deal of respect for the district. He said he doesn't know what the exact finances of a fourth full time ambulance with full time crew

would be but that is a big lift. He said that would be a thirty three percent increase over what the district is trying to do now because you already have three stations with three full time ambulances. He said what put it on their radar was not how many ambulances there are but what the definition of urgent was and the fact that we might end up with some very sick patients in our emergency room or in our hospital and not be able to get them transported. He didn't understand why that change was made in an inner hospital agreement. Having a fiduciary responsibility to the hospital and the community, his concern is we might have a disaster because of a disagreement over what is urgent and what is not urgent or what is emergent and what is not emergent. Sooner or later, he said we're going to make a mistake, and most of the time we'll get away with it but occasionally we won't. He said he didn't want to say the fourth car isn't a good argument to have, he said he was sad it led to this other change in the agreement and that the hospital didn't have any knowledge that it was happening until it was done. He said we need to work together a little more collaboratively, thinking primarily about the patients.

Kat said she appreciated Dr. Pennington's approach to the whole discussion and said we are on the same page as far as wanting to provide the best patient care in this community. She said she felt there were some misunderstandings on emergent vs non-emergent. To illustrate her point, there was a patient with a fractured arm, the fractured arm is not necessarily something that would fall into the emergent category to be transferred in the middle of the night. However, when it was brought to the Paramedics attention that the fractured arm was impinging the nerves in the hand, they decided it couldn't wait until morning. Kat said its clearly laid out that it is at our discretion to decide what falls into the emergent category because in the medical field there is a myriad of exceptions to every rule. We cannot cover them all in one inner facility transfer policy because it would be too long. There are times we've taken transfers in the middle of the night.

Director McCray said she believes Chief Harryman reached out to both hospitals for input prior to implementing the policy and nothing was received. In the agreement it also states if the hospital and paramedic can't come to a decision then Chief Harryman is to be called and make the final decision.

Director Virts wanted to apologize for not responding to the boards letter in a timelier manner. He thanked the board members for their comments and participation in the meeting. He said one of the key points of our levy was to be able to get the employees up to a living wage and we're still working on that. They're not anywhere where they should be, and we recognize that, but we are working to get them there. That is part of where your fifty cents goes.

Director Hiebert said she wanted to speak up since her name was mentioned a few times. She said that she and Dr. Smith provided feedback and talked to the ED physicians and

directors about their concerns. The conversation started when the call volumes increased, ED visits increased, and the resources decreased because there used to be two ambulances in Goldendale. She understands the frustration from the EMS district because they are doing their best to provide services. The frustration from the ED staff is there's more people to be taken care of now and fewer hospital beds to transfer to and limited resources to get them out. She said when she looks at the data, the call volumes have increased, the ED volumes have increased and now the transfer policy has decreased. Our patients are getting out but we're getting them out a different way. Director Hiebert said they want the EMS District to take care of the patients, they know what's going on, they know them so it's the best-case scenario. She doesn't want to call another service provider because that's what they've had to do. She said she's happy they are fully staffed now, and we can start to staff the voluntary on call crew so we can start to utilize that. She said she's excited to see the numbers for November to see if it starting to make a difference. We are all trying and working together. She said Dr. Smith was very straightforward and direct in his position, working in both Eds and the challenge that it creates in those scenarios. Hopefully getting fully staffed we will be able to move in the right direction to have the ability to call in that fourth crew when its needed, where before there just weren't enough employees to fill in. She said we will see over time if it works. Director Hiebert said when we approved the inner facility transfer policy with the changes that were made there was a commitment by the EMS Board that we would continue to look at it and see what we can do to make it happen. She said if we continue to follow through on that commitment its going to take the pressure off all of us. Director Virts said it would not be a stagnant document it would be something that we would review and modify as required.

Robb Kimmes said this was the first time both hospital boards and the EMS board have gotten together and had any kind of discussion. He suggested having scheduled meetings on a yearly basis so we can discuss any issues. Director Virts said his suggestion was a good one and suggested possibly meeting quarterly to give updates and address any issues. He said when Chief Harryman comes back he would mention it to him. He said he was thankful everyone was here today, and he appreciated the heads up that they would be in attendance.

- **Strategic Planning** – No update currently
- **Newsletter** – No update currently

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Response to both hospital boards (Fourth car letter received)** – We have a draft letter and that will be sent out to the board.

- **Investment Amount** – Erika said that Chief Harryman’s suggestion was \$250k and he wanted to know what Director Hiebert’s opinion was on that. Director Hiebert said for the county investment pool, she suggested putting in everything that you don’t need in the next thirty days which is a huge chunk of money because it only takes a few days to pull it back out and the investments are very secure. Director Virts asked if we wanted to invest \$500k. He said he didn’t have an issue with that, and he agreed with Director Hiebert completely.
- **Administrative Staff increases** – Director Virts said this covers Chief Harryman and Erika. He said both contracts state they are eligible for the same cost of living raises that are granted to the staff covered by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Director Virts said he was under the impression that it was going to be passed a month ago when he was absent, but it didn’t happen. He said we need to decide of what we’re going to do, and the proposal was to honor that commitment. He said there is nothing in either of the employees’ evaluations that indicate there is any reason not to do that. On top of the cost-of-living raise, the union employees also received their normal three percent step increase. He said he would like to see us move forward with that. Director Hiebert said that Erika was able to provide some market data that supports that as well and we did review that in the finance committee. She said she was comfortable with the raises and the 11% is included in the budget. Director Virts said he tried to do his own market analysis, as a model for what we’re doing here but our district is a rare breed. Our Chief and paid employees don’t compare to the volunteer fire districts. We have a Chief who is responsible for 18 employees, three stations and a fleet of cars and his salary isn’t comparable to that of the Rural 7 Fire Chief or Fire District. They manage volunteers and two paid people in each place. He said it was more than appropriate to grant the increase that was discussed.

Director Gilmer made a motion to approve the administrative staff increases retro to contract dates. Director McCray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2023 WFCOA Employer application renewal – The benefit renewal was presented to the board, and it was agreed that Director Virts was authorized to sign it.
- 2023 Meeting Dates, Resolution #2022-07 – It was suggested to change the meeting dates since in the latter half of the year we haven’t been able to get our reports from the County in a timely manner due to staffing shortages. Several different days were proposed as new meeting dates, however, Chief Harryman would prefer to not have Tuesday meetings since that is the day, he does his inventory and is out of his office most of the day. Director Virts has meetings on some Thursdays. Director Gilmer said he didn’t have a preference. Director Virts told Erika to go through the calendar and pick the one that works best for her and bring it back next month.



- Appointing 2023 Investment officers, Resolution #2022-08 – Director Virts asked if anyone had any changes for the document and if not, we would bring it back next month to vote on it.
- Appointing 2023 Directors’ positions, Resolution #2022-09 - Director Virts asked if anyone had any changes or if anyone else wanted to be the Chair. No one came forward. We will bring it back next month to vote on it.
- Appointing 2023 Payroll officers, Resolution #2022-10 - Director Virts asked if anyone had any changes for the document and if not, we would bring it back next month to vote on it.
- Appointing 2023 Auditing officers, Resolution #2022-11– Director Virts asked if anyone had any changes for the document and if not, we would bring it back next month to vote on it.
- Appointing 2023 Public Records officers, Resolution #2022-12– Director Virts asked if anyone had any changes for the document and if not, we would bring it back next month to vote on it.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **Grant Committee (Gilmer)**

No report.

### **Bond Committee (Gilmer)**

No report.

### **Executive Session**

None needed.

### **Good of the Order**

Director Gilmer said he asked at the last meeting for the bylaws to be sent out to each of the directors to review. Director Virts thanked Director Gilmer for bringing that up. He said it hasn’t been done since Director Hiebert was the Operations Manager. Director Virts said he would get those sent out. Director Hiebert said if it’s been that long since it has been reviewed then it would be a good idea to have legal review it as well. Director Stopsack asked how it was reviewed previously. If it had been broken up into chapters and everyone took a part? Director Gilmer said everyone reviewed the entire document and collectively came back to the meeting.

**Future Meeting Dates**

The next regular meeting will be December 22, 2022, at 3:00 pm at White Salmon Fire Station at 119 NE Church Avenue in White Salmon, WA with Zoom option.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board of Directors, Director Stopsack moved that the meeting be adjourned at 5:01 pm. Director McCray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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Chair of the Board of Directors

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Secretary of the Board of Directors