**Jefferson County Fire and EMS**

**Board of Directors Special Meeting Minutes**

**June 5th, 2024**

**Meeting called to Order:** 5:34 PM – Board President Rob Galyen

**Pledge of Allegiance lead by:** Director Miller

**Roll Call:** Conducted by Administrative Assistant LeeAnn Patton

**Fire Board Members:** Kim Stout, Rob Galyen, Chris DuPont, Dustin Miller. Ryan Boyle – Via Zoom.

**Fire Members Absent:** No Fire Board members absent.

**Staff Members:** Deputy Chief Lepin, Deputy Chief Kasey Skaar, Deputy Chief Jared Earnest: Via Zoom, Administrative Assistant LeeAnn Patton, Captain Kirk Hagman

**Community Members:** Linda Larson, Rick Allen, Zoom Members included: “MacBook” and “iPhone.”

**Agenda approval/adjustment:**  Chris DuPont would like to add a resolution on the “Old EMS bank account” under “New Business” as item B. Dusty Miller made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Kim Stout seconded the motion. The motion carries with two affirmative votes from board members.

**New Business**

**Tax Anticipation Loan:**

Chief Blake presented the Tax Anticipation loan from the County to the board. He explained that it's intended to bridge the gap until we secure funding, emphasizing that we anticipate receiving billing funding soon since we are approved by Medicare/Medicaid and Pacific Source.

Chief Blake informed the board that the loan from Jefferson County would incur $30,250.00 in interest. Chris inquired whether we could deposit these funds into our LGIP to earn interest, potentially offsetting the loan's interest. Chief Blake will look into this. Chief Blake then mentioned that Jeff Rassmussen requested the loan to be signed and submitted by this Friday (June 7th, 2024). He also mentioned exploring alternative funding options. Medicare and Medicaid have proposed a 0% interest loan following their hack, aiming to expedite funding.

Dusty Miller expressed support for the loan but voiced concern about how we reached this point. He emphasized the need to address the underlying issue of spending exceeding revenue, viewing the loan as a temporary fix. Dusty would like to explore avenues for reducing expenditures to avoid repeating the same financial struggles in the future.

Chief Blake acknowledged Dusty's concerns and highlighted ongoing efforts to improve billing processes. Dusty noted that despite these efforts, we are still four months behind on billing and suggested options such as hiring a second biller or exploring faster billing methods. Chief Blake mentioned recent changes, including bringing Jessica Haury on board for billing demographics and our Billing Officer expediting a Medicare audit for quicker funding.

To address revenue concerns, Chief Blake outlined plans to explore additional income sources like impact fees on county building projects. He assured the board of ongoing efforts to rectify the situation, including ensuring billing continuity during our Billing Officers training leave. Chief Blake expressed a commitment to catching up on billing and stated the understanding on the board's perspective on the matter.

Chief Lepin expressed full confidence in Danielle's ability to catch up on billing. He emphasized the importance of accuracy in billing submissions, noting that any errors could result in delays if rejected and resubmitted.

Regarding operational improvements, Chief Lepin mentioned ongoing efforts to analyze transfer numbers and determine their criticality. He explained plans to potentially reclaim night transfers based on urgency. Additionally, efforts are underway to enhance training for specialized care transfers, aiming to maximize funding opportunities in that area.

Chris Dupont inquired about the possibility of recouping costs for the building through bond funding. Chief Blake responded that he is currently investigating the extent to which we can reimburse ourselves and will provide the board with a detailed report on the potential amount we can recover.

Dusty emphasized the importance of ensuring that we are not using COVID funding for this purpose. Chief Lepin clarified that the COVID funding was allocated for medical supplies.

Chief Skaar expressed concerns about the timeline for acquiring new ambulances. Chief Lepin explained that ambulances typically need replacement approximately every two years.

Rick Allen pointed out that the bond specifies replacement timelines for ambulances, indicating that one ambulance will be replaced at a certain interval and another at a different interval. He highlighted the potential need to allocate $100k annually in capital for ambulance replacements.

Additionally, Rick agreed with the principle that if COVID funding was utilized to purchase an ambulance, we cannot reimburse ourselves for those ambulances using the bond money.

Linda expressed concern that EMS is being unfairly blamed for all the issues, emphasizing that many of the challenges are not solely EMS-related. Her primary worry is the potential for firefighter cuts, and she affirmed her support for them.

Chief Blake acknowledged that the issues extend beyond EMS, attributing some challenges to the consolidation process. He clarified that he discovered certain details late in the process, when dissolution was already on the ballot and unalterable. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of not relying solely on bond repayment to address financial needs, considering various factors like interest rates and insurance fluctuations.

Rob invited any further questions or comments regarding the loan. Dusty then motioned to approve the loan agreement as presented, with Chris Dupont seconding the motion. The motion passed with two affirmative votes by voting members.

**New Business**

**Resolution on the old EMS Bank Account:**

Chris proposed adding the Fire Districts tax ID to the old Jefferson County EMS bank account, a suggestion seconded by Dusty. The motion was approved by two voting members.

**Citizens Input:** No citizens input.

**Additional Comments/Concerns:** No additional comments or concerns.

**Adjourn Meeting:** 6:18 PM

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 Board President Recording Secretary