



Fire Department

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EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES BOARD

Date: April 21, 2023

Time: 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: City-County Building, Room 326, 316 N Park Ave.

Agenda

Roll Call: See attached roster.

Public Comment on matters within the EMSB jurisdiction not on the agenda

- None noted

Consent Items:

- 04/26/22 meeting minutes provided on the website.
 - Motion to accept minutes as written by Tim Burton, second by Rebecca Dockter. Passed unanimously.

Scheduled Matters: Materials provided on the Board website.

[Emergency Medical Services Board - City of Helena, MT \(helenamt.gov\)](http://helenamt.gov)

Presentation of Ambulance Company Report

Mr. Webster provided a review of the calendar year 2022 ambulance report. St. Peters Health Ambulance was founded due to failing mortuary services. It was added to the ER service and has grown to 60+ members strong. The ambulance operations are overseen by the Chief Nursing Officer, Kari Koehler. David Webster is the Director and Chris Grow is Manager. Dr. Jared Phelps is assigned by the Medical Provider Board to oversee the Emergency Room operations. The ambulance operates with a mix of staff levels throughout 6 shifts.

The 2022 year began with 6 complete departures and 10 new team members. Currently, they have a 9% turnover rate compared to the national average of 11%. SPH maintains high Paramedic standards. They have improved upon their new hire program and field training program to include skills coaching and mentoring. Requirements for completion of the program increased from 120 hours to 480 hours due to the lack of hands-on experience of the applicant pool. This tripled the burden on the 8 Field Training Officers (FTO). To assist the FTO group in training, coaching, and mentoring an 80-page resource book was created.

Station and fleet information were reviewed. It was noted that Eagle Ambulance abruptly closed in Oct 2022 and SPH has picked up some peak time staffing for that area resulting in approximately 1.8 calls p

er day. A temporary agreement has been put in place with MT City fire and a unit is being staffed from that fire house.

In 2022, 321 hours of student training was provided. Outreach education was provided mostly in a hybrid setting. 2023 is likely to be more hands on and in person. Primary benefactors of these hours were Helena College, local EMT programs and a few Paramedics clinical hours.

They currently have 34% non-billable calls, where no transport occurs. They are moving to a new tracking software, Epic, for data capturing. It can take into account nursing home calls, flight teams, return to nursing home and staging calls to improve reporting accuracy. Currently, there is about a 3% rate of units not available.

They have improved their quality assurance and quality improvement process and are very proud of the outcome. Evaluation was based on peer review only; this left several gaps. SPH Paramedics Bill Ramsey and Nick Burkland worked with DPHHS to the new Continuous Quality Improvement system within ImageTrend, the hospitals patient care reporting system, so 100% of reports can be audited.

Special programs include a Community Paramedic program, TeleEMS and SAMHSA EMS Training grant. Community Paramedic is a national movement being driven by state and local levels as they recognize gaps in service. Patient access, comfortability and satisfaction are at 80% in Montana CP programs. This is state data that equates to 7-8 calls per day. Referrals mainly come from case managers at hospitals and facilities. EMS referrals are not as frequent, parameters are set for EMS referrals to ensure we are not neglecting patients.

The goal of the TeleEMS program is to start wide then bring it in as able. Avon, Elliston, Wolf Creek and other outlying areas are first. This program provides quick assessment and determination of need. This program has been piloted throughout the country and been very successful.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant was awarded in July 2022 but SPH was not able to deploy until Oct 2022. The bulk of funds and effort will be in 2023. It will provide support for First Responder recruitment and education.

Questions from the Board:

Q: When is the current contract set to expire?

A: 5/1/2027

Q: Did Lincoln and Augusta ever create their own ambulance district?

A: No, they are representative of their own response area.

Additional comments: Lincoln and Augusta need to be included in these discussions. Each have their own ambulances, partnered with Lincoln fire. SPAS do not have responsibility to Augusta and minimal to Lincoln. SPH is Lincoln's backup, if no other options are available, and will occasionally rendezvous

with them at the bottom of the pass upon request. This does pose difficulty when it comes to reimbursement as only one entity can charge for the trip.

- It was stated that these entities were notified of this meeting.

Q: Why are these entities not reflected in the incident response numbers?

A: Lincoln has covered their area very well, so we have had minimal responses. SPH will adjust to capture these responses going forward.

- The County thanked SPH for stepping up and provided necessary, time sensitive blood draws for legal requirements when Eagle Ambulance closed abruptly. This appreciation was echoed by the City.

Q: Where do the bulk of SPH hiring pool come from?

A: EMTs typically come from local fire departments and colleges. Paramedics are much harder to find and usually come from around the country. Currently, nationwide, there are approximately 43,000 vacant Paramedic positions. That number is expected to jump to 89,000 by the end of 2027.

Q: The contract has a requirement for Paramedic level care. Is SPH expecting to have a Paramedic deficit before 2027?

A: Yes, a deficit is expected, probably in the current year.

Additional comments: It was noted that a mid-year check-in would be in order to further discuss and consider an MOU to address the problem.

- A thank you was given to Mr. Webster for a well written and informative report.

Presentation of Bylaw Update

Mr. Nicho Hash presented the draft bylaws. This draft represents some language updates to the current 2013 bylaws. The main intent was to put into writing what everyone understood to be the norm, to create consistency for future Board meetings and member expectations. Sought to clarify the revolving attorney relationship and to specify the mode and method for taking and keeping minutes.

- In the 2022 meeting it was determined that recorded meetings were preferred with the recordings being housed by the City of Helena under the authority of the Fire Chief as Chairperson.

Comments from the Board: none noted.

- A motion was made by Mr. Bragg to accept the bylaw changes as written and presented, second received by Mr. Burton.

Public comment –

- Mr. Webster requested that the Board consider a revision to the composition of the Board to include a City of East Helena representative and a representative of the contracted vendor, currently SPH.
- Mr. Burton acknowledged the request for consideration but noted that the designation of the Board was included as part of the inter-local agreement and would need to be addressed there.
- Mr. Campbell noted that the rural fire council does have representation on the Board, they were simply unable to attend today.

- Mr. Burton is not averse to adding City of East Helena representation and feels it is an appropriate discussion for the future, but not pertinent to the bylaws.
- Mr. Baltz reiterated that membership is established by the Inter-local agreement which is also authorized in statute by both a City Ordinance and County Resolution.

Public comment: none noted.

Vote – Motion passes unanimously.

A thank you was extended by the Board to Mr. Hash for his work on the revisions.

Final public comment

- Mr. Webster request the Board consider an amendment to the contract, Para 2.1 Performance, to reflect current dispatch levels of BLS red, ALS red, ALS yellow.
- Mr. Burton asked if there is a time frame or crunch as to when this will be needed. Mr. Webster stated there is not but that the contract language is not representative of how services are performed.
- Chief Campbell and Mr. Webster can work to provide an MOU of amendment to clarify.
- Mr. Webster stated that the contract requires notice of rate changes. He provided a document (attached) showing what reimbursement rates are for Medicare and Medicaid as well as SPH charges. He wished to point out that regardless of how much they charge, they are paid these rates. Labor and supply costs have gone up 24% on average. Rates have jumped to \$580, per truck, per day on avg now compared to \$248 prior. This is going to impact neighboring providers and the outlook is dismal. In 2022, St Peters Health is soluble, but the future is unknown. They would like to request the Board consider taxation to subsidize the ambulance district vendor.
- Mr. Burton asked the attorneys to determine solubility and ability to consider this request.
- Chief Campbell asked what percentage of use is private insurance?
 - 18% non-payers or alternate insurance.
- Ms. McCoy noted the financial situation of St Peters ambulance and that they have already begun contracting staff to provide Paramedic coverage. The current 911 reimbursement supports 1.5 trucks.
- The DPHHS report “EMS Crisis on the Horizon” was mentioned and referenced that ambulance services are not included as an essential service.
- Mr. Burton believes we need to have a meeting sooner than next year and would like to discuss the authority with which the Board operates. He will make the City CFO available to St Peters Health Finance team to discuss the outlook.
- It was stated that there are concerns for the additional closures of Lincoln and Augusta ambulances.
- How is the SPH Ambulance program being impacted? Are services being reduced?
 - Not currently. Fuel costs are a major issue.
- Will the proposed legislation that is currently being supported by the Rural Fire Council and State Chiefs Assoc. increase reimbursements?
 - That does not apply to municipalities or hospital-owned providers.
- Mr. Baltz stated that the County would like much more information on the financial hardships of SPH and noted that the Contract specifically states in section 3.1 that “The Board shall have no

responsibility for payment of any costs incurred by the Ambulance Company pursuant to the terms of this agreement.”

- We want a quality service, but this is a very fundamental change that needs significant additional conversation. Time needs to be given to it.
- The City and County legal counsel in attendance agreed that they could be prepared for another conversation in 3 months.
- Date of next meeting: TBD in July by the City Manager’s Office - 10:30a to 12:00p

Final public comment: hearing none the meeting was adjourned at 1157.

Emergency Medical Services Board Roster

VOTING BOARD MEMBERS

City County Bldg Rom 326

Friday, April 21, 2023

Name	Organization	Title	In Attendance
Tim Burton	City of Helena	City Manager	Yes
Jon Campbell	City of Helena	Fire Chief	Yes
Leo Dutton	L&C County	Sheriff	No
Brad Bragg	Proxy for L&C County Sheriff Dutton		Yes
Roger Baltz	L&C County	Chief Administrative Officer	Yes
Clint Loss	Rural Fire Council	Council Vice President	No
Andy Coil	St. Peter's Hospital	Independent Physician	Yes

Legal Counsel: Alternate years

Rebecca Dockter	City of Helena (serving 2023)	City Attorney	Yes
Kevin Downs	L&C County (served 2022)	County Attorney	Yes

Additional Attendees

Name	Organization	Title	In Attendance
Tom Rolfe	L&C County	Commissioner	Yes
Mike Chambers	City of Helena	Assistant Fire Chief (Alternate)	Yes
Stephanie Crook	City of Helena	Fire Dept, Admin Coord	Yes
Nicho Hash	L&C County	Asst County Attorney	Yes
Dave Webster	St. Peter's Hospital	Ambulance Manager	Yes
Anne McCoy	St. Peter's Hospital	ED Manager	Yes
Kari Koehler	St. Peter's Hospital	Chief Nursing Officer	Yes
Frank Dahlquist	West Valley VFD	Fire Chief	Yes