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Emergency Medical and Ambulance
Advisory Board Meeting
December 12, 2007

Draft Meeting Notes

In attendance: Butch **Hinchey**, Al **Saab**, Randy **VanderHeiden**, Jack **Louws**, Gary **Baar**, Lynn **Trzyrha**, Dean **Whitney**, Dave **Ralston**, Rob **Wilson**, Rich **Kittinger**, Scott **Hall**, Carl **Weimer**, Marvin **Wayne**, Floyd **Roorda**, Marianne **Caldwell**, Rick **Kowsky**, Bob **Busch**, Duncan **McLane**, Jerry **Martin**, Roger **Christensen**, Pete **Kremen**, Dewey **Desler**, and Tawni **Helms**

Introductions: Pete welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves and the District or affiliation they were representing.

Handouts: Dewey briefly reviewed the agenda and documents that were handed out including minutes from the last advisory board meeting 6/13/07, proposed 2008 budget and draft agreements. Dewey also stated that there were a couple of ad hoc meetings that proved to be productive. The information shared today was reviewed and developed at the ad hoc meetings.

Budget Review: The budget review primarily focused on Medic I. Revenues are about 83% through October and expected to be close to 100% at year end. Expenditures are a little low. Dewey asked for verification from the Medic One managers that the expenditures were accurate. Randy verified that they were about 5% under. User fee revenues are also about 3% under.

Dewey went on to say that many people attending this meeting worked hard on the EMS plan and as we look at the 2008 budget we can see some variances. We're ahead of schedule with revenues. We're spending more money due to cost inflation and staffing issues. We also must anticipate training for a 5th medic unit; those costs are not in the 2008 proposed budget.

At this time Dewey asked if anyone had any questions.

How much would it cost if we spent according to the plan?

Dewey referred to the handouts that included a cost comparison between the plan and the proposed 2008 budget.

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Randy V. stated there will be some initial planning/testing for EMS captain position to staff the chase car. They are developing the process right now.

Lynn T. asked if this budget reflected the EMS plan.

Randy V. stated that the 2008 EMS Plan budget includes a .5 unit which is for a supervisory chase car. Part of the staffing costs will include three additional staff to operate 24/7. This creates a backfill situation for training. The training program is anticipated to be 4/1/08.

Dewey stated that the plan assumptions are based on a 6 year plan. Changes in the budget are reflected in higher wages, costlier technology improvements, training of paramedics and higher equipment costs.

Bottom line is that the budget is roughly \$750K over in expenditures and \$450K over in revenues. County EMS fund sales tax revenue is also higher than projected. It's likely that trend will not hold.

Should we be vigilant? Yes
Is the sky falling? No

Roger C. stated that the budget preparation reflects worse case scenarios. The budget projections are based on overestimates rather than underestimates.

Dewey suggested that when the group meets in the spring we will see the actual 2007 numbers.

Contract Discussion: The City and Fire District 14 have worked out a billing agreement for occasions when their volunteers provide BLS transport. Fire District 14 decided not to contract with a third party billing agency as it would not yield enough volume. The contract allows for \$75 + mileage for all call outs. This covers their payment to the volunteers. Fire District 14 doesn't have to deal with billing to Medicare, etc. City of Bellingham bills those calls and collects whatever may be reimbursed. Because it is essential that the billable calls are written correctly to allow for appropriate reimbursement, the City of Bellingham is providing training for Fire District 14 on billing procedures. This service is offered to all Districts. There has been some interest expressed by a few Districts.

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2008 Medic I Budget: Dewey reminded the group that the actual revenues and the expenditures will all show up on the budget vs. actual report and this will continue to be a transparent process.

Randy V. reviewed the 2008 budget. He reviewed the highlights of expenditures and revenues. Some of the increases in equipment costs include the purchase of new cardiac monitors being replaced. Currently, none of the old manufacturers are making what they want. There is a new manufacturer that will be making cardiac monitors that collect the appropriate data. They will be compatible with other districts units.

Other equipment charges include the replacement of 1 ambulance every year rather than the Plan proposal to re-chassis an ambulance every other year.

Butch H. asked who owns the equipment.

Dewey responded that under the contract it is 50% City and 50% County.

Butch said that another factor urging us to look at a 5th medic unit is the 2010 Olympic gear up. Two years will pass quickly and the money needs to be budgeted preferably sooner than later.

Butch also inquired about the chase car paramedic and whether that position would be a supervisor position.

Randy stated that the chase car paramedic would be a captain and supervisor.

Roger said that this individual would be the contact point for coordinating all county wide resources.

Dewey asked for clarification - not just supervisory but operational as well? Yes.

Roger asked what is the magic number to launch the 5th unit? (call volume)

Butch asked - If there is a vacant space on a medic unit then do we get a person from Fire and Medic I pays for them?

Roger responded that instead of deciding which Fire calls should be billed to Medic I they will bill all calls to Fire and then pull out Medic I charges. It will be much cleaner. Economy of scale strategies allows us to save staff by trading staff. In the past, it

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has been an accounting nightmare when deciding which fund to bill. Next year everyone will be paid out of fire and billed as Medic I when it occurs.

Jack L. asked if the direct charges include administrative costs.

Roger C. responded that the administrative overhead is billed through another interfund transfer line item not attached to these wages. The new method of charging operational wages will be much cleaner.

Dewey reminded everyone that we are interested in getting feedback on the data we collect. We want it to be understandable. He asked the group to work with us and we will continue to improve.

Randy V. reviewed the paramedic training costs. Bellingham Technical College (BTC) was costing approximately \$65k per student. Prior to 2007 it was only \$40k per student. Bellingham attempted to negotiate different training schedules to modify and reduce staffing costs, they also tried to negotiate on behalf of bachelor degreed paramedics who were being required to take more credits because their transcripts didn't transfer. They were unable to reach agreement. WWU became a viable option because the University is interested in developing more certificated programs and could offer more scheduling flexibility. This will amount to cost savings in the paramedic training.

Randy also reported that liability insurance was purchased for Whatcom Medic One.

Dewey stated that Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham agreed to find insurance where both parties were insured as well as the districts. It's an affordable risk management solution for now.

Jack Louws made a motion to recommend approval by the Whatcom County and City of Bellingham Councils to approve the 2008 budget as presented.

Carl Weimer seconded the motion

Dewey asked all in favor? The motion carried unanimously.

Jack went on to say that he appreciated everyone's efforts and their hard work. He thanked the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County and everyone involved with the work.

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Interlocal between What-Comm Dispatch and Fire Districts: Rob shared the interlocal agreement. It has been reviewed by the City and all the signatures should be obtained soon.

Dewey stated that the necessity for the agreement is to allow for dispatch billing to take place in a business like manner. Dewey thanked Rob for his efforts and said this was great progress.

QA Summary: Jerry Martin began by saying the Continuing Quality Improvement Committee was tasked with forming a proposal for a committee design for quality control for BLS services. Jerry reviewed the proposal with the group.

Dr. Marvin thanked Jerry and the committee for submitting the proposal. He stated that it is a great first step. He said Whatcom County will be provided with great results from their efforts. He recommended the following:

Take out to the umbrella agency (EMS Council) for approval and blessing.
End goal to implement the proof of concept then seek funding for primary QA coordinator.
We need to make sure we do it consistently in one voice.

Butch asked for clarity.

Dr. Marvin said this was a visionary plan. Eventually we will need a coordinator to ensure quality.

Dewey said as we expand providers we are concerned with consistent standards of quality for BLS.

Dr. Marvin is also concerned about increasing the capacity of other providers.

Jerry agreed to continue to take on some of the tasks outlined in the summary. He will come prepared to report identified issues at the next meeting.

Butch stated that his biggest concern is that the budget is not enough to spread around. Jerry Martin said they are building the foundation to train QA people in each district. Essentially creating a trainer of trainers program.

Dewey moved on to the subject of the 5th Medic Unit. He stated that there were brief discussions at the two previous ad hoc budget discussions. Dewey said as the Whatcom County representative he would take the lead in the discussion of the 5th

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Unit with other reps from the ad hoc mtgs. Dewey proposed a small group perform the following:

- Look at the Plan

- Develop basic principles

- Determine timing, budget, tasks and develop draft legal instruments.

- Lay out a draft plan by the next meeting in late spring.

The question was raised about where are we now with Bellingham and Ferndale and the 5th medic unit?

Dewey said he hasn't been in the room for those discussions. He knows the Plan discussions but we are nowhere near having a detailed discussion of the 5th medic implementation or considering alternative options.

Dewey proposed a more formal process that engages more folks in the discussion. We do have some principles but there are differences of opinion. Will it be easy? No. Can we do it? Yes. This is a group of people working together on core care services in Whatcom County. We must be constructive and efficient. We have a plan that was adopted by every elected official. If there are challenges, we must step back and resolve. We're still on schedule.

We need to discuss now and develop a plan. Growth is a huge factor. Call loads will increase and it is timely for the 5th unit discussion.

Marvin asked what is the most efficient. If we provincialize a 5th unit we risk losing the opportunity to integrate the learning for new and experienced. Integration of personnel with the current system whoever is operating the 5th unit.

Chief Barr stated that Medic 3 gets integrated exposure if they do a call in town.

Marvin responded yes and no because it is a rotational system. Advise only.

Dewey said that provincialism has a negative connotation. The plan is for a unified system which doesn't have to operate under one agency.

Marvin again said it's the personnel and training.

Dewey said we need to build an agenda discussion for the 5th Unit in mid January. The EMS Advisory Board will review and then forward to the Council by Spring.

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Dewey reminded the group that the plan is fragile and is not built with a lot of extra. We saw the lines crossing in a few years and developed a 6 year plan. Tax revenue is decreasing; that's the reality.

Dewey said by 2012 we'll have to go back and figure out something new. It was the short term solution that was passed. We want to maintain a very transparent process.

Meeting adjourned.