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BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL
Special Meeting – Ambulance Contract
August 1, 2012

The Bartholomew County Council met for a Special Meeting on August 1, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. in the County Council Chambers of the Governmental Office Building, 440 Third Street, Columbus, Indiana. Members present were: President Bill Lentz, Pro-Tem Jorge Morales, Rob Kittle, Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence, Ryan Lauer and Larry Fisher. Auditor Barbara J. Hackman and County Council Attorney Rod McGillivray were also in attendance. Member Chris Ogle was absent.

Council President Bill Lentz called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The purpose of this meeting was to gather information regarding the Contract for ambulance service in Bartholomew County and the City of Columbus. He introduced Mayor Kristen Brown.

Mayor Brown presented a PowerPoint presentation. She wanted to update the County on where the City was in regards to their decision. Discussions had begun five (5) months ago with CRH & Commissioner Kleinhenz. The City has been working on appropriate requirements for levels of ambulance service within the City of Columbus. They delivered Requests-For-Proposals on June 8th to CRH, Rural-Metro, Seals, TransCare and Prompt. Columbus Fire Department also worked on a proposal.

On June 19th the Board of Works started a series of public discussions. They heard proposals on June 26th at a Special Board of Works Meeting. It has been open for

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discussion at every meeting since then. The City Board of Works meets every Tuesday. The Emergency Ambulance Service Board has met four (4) times. The message she is trying to convey is that they have had a lot of time and discussions with CRH, CFD and the three (3) private providers that responded.

For clarification, Mayor Brown stated that Emergency Medical Services is defined as pre-hospital and medical services. It is local government's statutory requirement to be responsible for those services; whether as provider or contracting with a provider. Once the patient is transported to the nearest hospital, the responsibility shifts to that hospital.

Mayor Brown also read the statute that neither allows the County to authorize or select ambulance service in the City without the consent of the City nor vice versa regarding the County area.

Mayor Brown then discussed the number of City firefighters that had medical training. She stated that CRH has four (4) Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances on duty. CFD responds on all life threat dispatches. Due to the number and placement, they can respond and start treatment usually prior to the arrival of the ambulance. In addition, a possible heart can require more than two (2) people to effectively handle treatment.

Mayor Brown stated that they surveyed forty-two (42) other municipalities of similar size. Twenty-two (22) of the forty-two (42) provide ambulance service directly through their fire department. Another five (5) provide it through a county wide EMS department. Ten (10) communities have out sourced it to a private ambulance service

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while five (5) have out sourced to their local hospital. None of the fifteen (15) out sourced municipalities pay a subsidy. Through their research, they were able to ascertain an average of 1 ALS ambulance per every 15,000 citizens. Bartholomew County is currently at an average of 1 ALS ambulance per every 20,000 citizens.

At the end of this year, the City and County will have paid CRH a combined \$5.9 million. The City's goal is to meet and exceed National Standards for response times and quality of care. They have modeled out where they would need to place ambulances to meet or exceed an on time response of nine (9) minutes or less. This required an ambulance in Station 1, Station 2 and Station 5. By doing this, every household and business within the City of Columbus is within the 9 minute standard. They did not do anything with respect to the County response times.

The transport volumes number within the City should read 3,000 not 3,750. The County number was correct. The split is two-thirds (2/3) City and one-third (1/3) County.

The Request-For-Proposals stated three (3) dedicated ALS ambulances for a City contract and four (4) dedicated ALS ambulances for a County wide contract. They requested mutual aid back-up plans, proof of ability to meet response times, that there be quarterly reviews, that the fire department would be actively involved in staffing decisions including hiring and firing decisions, and to have the crews under the direct supervision of the "House Captain" of the fire station. They also have to be under the

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medical control and supervision of CRH. They also requested an outline of their fees and billing processes.

Mayor Brown asked for any questions prior to reviewing the individual proposals. County Councilman Rob Kittle questioned the slide with the incorrect transport numbers. She clarified that the transports in the City were 3,000 not the 3,750 as shown.

President Lentz apologized to the audience for the projector not being visible by everyone and not having enough handouts.

County Councilman Ryan Lauer had attended the City budget hearing during the ambulance discussion and believes there was a recommendation by the fire department as to the number of ambulances. Mayor Brown stated that for a City wide service they need three (3) dedicated ALS ambulances. For a County wide service they believe four (4) dedicated ALS ambulances would be required.

Roger Johnson of the Emergency Ambulance Service Board stated that there will be times when the ambulance service runs out of ambulances. The important thing is that they have a backup plan in place.

Mayor Brown stated that Brown County has two (2) dedicated ambulances for a population of around 15,000 and they know that they run out routinely.

Mayor Brown reviewed the proposal by Rural/Metro. They are the largest ambulance service provider in the state and the second largest in the nation, behind AMR. Rural/Metro has over one hundred twenty-five (125) ambulances in service in the state. Thirty-two (32) of those are currently in front line 911 service. She is familiar with

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Rural/Metro through the City of Greenwood. Greenwood is similarly sized to Columbus and they have three (3) dedicated ALS ambulances for Greenwood. Their proposal allows for changes to the number of units based on one hundred and fifty days of service. The number of units would, with the fire departments approval, be adjusted up or down based on the run data gathered in that time. If they are approved, she would suggest making it the Board of Works rather than the fire department. Their backup plan would include their own convalescent ambulances and mutual aid agreements/contracts with other providers. They are a \$0 subsidy proposal. They are asking for a five (5) year contract, though this is negotiable.

Mayor Brown proceeded to the TransCare proposal. They have one hundred and seventy-five (175) employees and thirty (30) ambulances within the State of Indiana. They are currently operating four non-emergent ambulances in Columbus. They are frontline 911 providers in Clay and Vigo Counties, so they are a little less established than Rural/Metro. They are a \$0 subsidy proposal. She believes that if the City is dictating how many units, where they are placed and their personnel are directly supervised by the fire department officers; that is all that they can hold them accountable for. They can't necessarily hold them accountable for response times too if they are not achievable under those circumstances. Their proposal also calls for a five (5) year contract and it is negotiable.

Mayor Brown proceeded to the proposal from Seals Ambulance. They have three hundred (300) employees and fifty (50) ambulances in the state. They also have four (4)

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ambulances operating non-emergent within Columbus. They are frontline 911 providers for Franklin, Vernon Township of Hancock County and Tipton County. The Mayor of Franklin has had no issues with Seals as a provider. Franklin is looking heavily at Rural/Metro at the end of Seals contract, however.

Deputy Chief Kutsko had made several calls to the communities that these providers serve. He has found that no one has been diving into the ambulance issue as much as Columbus has been. When calling the references, he tried to find as many people as he could to get answers from. Basically he found that there have not been very many bad reports. Vigo County had no complaints. He did receive a very good reference from the Deputy Chief of Greenwood EMS for Rural/Metro. He also spoke with Richmond Fire Department that is pursuing the 911 business themselves; they had no major issues. He spoke with the Manager with Community South who works with these providers and again, he had no major concerns. The Anderson Fire Department had no issues that they were aware of.

Susan Fye, member of the Board of Works, looked into litigations against these companies and didn't see any.

County Councilperson Pence asked if all the providers have compatible radio equipment. It was stated that they believe it would simply require a programming change of their existing equipment.

County Councilman Jorge Morales asked if they would also be following the same processes and procedures that CRH has. It was stated that they had to use CRH

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protocols and that the hospital had to accept them as a provider. It is accepted that it is CRH's area and that the majority of personnel would be transported to CRH and the provider would be under CRH's protocols.

County Attorney Grant Tucker asked what would happen if the hospital (CRH) didn't accept the provider to operate under their protocols?

Mayor Brown doesn't believe our hospital would do that. Dr. May has met with all the potential providers and it is a green light so far.

Councilman Morales asked what if the provider wasn't willing to accept CRH's protocols. Mayor Brown said that is a requirement for the proposal. She returned to the Seals proposal.

Seals proposal calls for a subsidy of three hundred thirty-five thousand dollars (\$335,000) for three (3) ambulances in the City or one hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000) for four (4) ambulances for City and County. The reason for the reduction is due to the addition of eighteen hundred (1,800) transports from the County for one (1) additional ambulance. They also proposed TAC shifts where the number of ambulances would vary and the subsidy would reduce accordingly.

Mayor Brown discussed the Columbus Fire Department proposal. There would be a net loss of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) a year to the City. The City Council is balking at the initial startup costs. Her opinion is this is a cash flow issue. The backup would be a provider that is currently in the area. She believes this proposal is pretty much off the table due to lack of support from the City Council.

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The CRH proposal for three (3) dedicated ambulances in the City is for a subsidy of five hundred thirty-five thousand dollars (\$535,000) the first year with three percent (3%) increases annually. For four (4) dedicated ambulances City and County the subsidy would be five hundred ninety-three thousand seven hundred fifty dollars (\$593,750) for the first year with three percent (3%) annual increases thereafter. There is an alternate proposal that had been presented to the Commissioners and the Board of Works. She had misread the alternate proposal.

Mayor Brown knows that the Emergency Ambulance Service Board voted three to two (3-2). However, she was confused as to what level of service that included. The City, in its search for an ambulance provider, is not starting with a requirement for a price of \$0; they are starting with a requirement of four (4) dedicated ALS ambulances. There has been discussion of cutting services to cut costs. She does not feel comfortable having less service than we have currently without a lot more data. CRH is just now able to differentiate between City and County runs. The County Commissioners have never deviated off of the \$0 subsidy. She was aware the Emergency Ambulance Service Board was going to meet again. She questioned if they would be voting again? The Board of Works is slated to make the decision on August 4, 2012. She is unclear as to the level of service that came from the Emergency Ambulance Service Board.

Larry Fisher, speaking as the Chairman of the Emergency Ambulance Service Board, stated he saw no reason to take another vote. A motion was made, dually

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seconded and approved three to two (3-2). The level of service was to be modeled by CRH.

Mr. Jim Bickel, CEO of Columbus Regional Hospital, discussed that they are working to put together a detailed model. The model would include an oversight board that would work on continuing to tweak the model.

Mayor Brown asked if the hospital was willing to lose money.

Mr. Bickel stated their goal is just to break even. As she had pointed out, many hospitals are no longer providing this service as it is not a money making process. The initial subsidy allows them to ramp up the service while working to get the other transport runs to assist in making up that loss.

Councilman Kittle asked if the operational model that Mr. Bickel referred to is a revision to the alternate proposal or in addition to that.

Mr. Bickel said it is part of the alternate proposal with just more operational detail that was given to the City. It will be a process that we need to go through and continue to tweak it as it continues; working together to make sure the cost levels stay down while not sacrificing the level of service.

Councilman Kittle asked if that would have the City and County proponent to which Mr. Bickel stated yes.

Councilman Lauer asked about the current CRH contract with Brown County. He asked about how much that contract was. CRH believes it is about three hundred

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thousand (\$300,000). His follow up question was whether the hospital had considered re-working the price tag for the four (4) ALS ambulances 24/7.

Mr. Bickel stated they have made some slight adjustments after talking with the City and the fire department. That price tag is five-hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for that component for CRH to break even. That includes the flex up and flex down capabilities depending on the run volume.

Councilman Lauer asked what would happen if the run volume showed the need for four (4) dedicated ambulances all the time? Who would make that decision as to how much flexibility the ambulance service could have?

Mr. Bickel stated that in their proposal they recommended an over sight board. They would start with the initial model and let the over sight board weigh in. The City's goal is to meet the National Standards. It is CRH's approach that they can do that as the provider with the ability to flex up or down as needed.

Councilman Morales stated that it is his understanding that the over sight board would be comprised of people that deal with EMS and not of City or County elected officials that are not involved in the day to day operations.

Mr. Bickel agreed.

Councilman Lauer asked if within these revised proposals there would be guaranteed levels of some sort.

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Mr. Bickel said there would be. They are working on laying that all out including what their backup plan would be for any given twenty-four (24) hour time frame. It will also show what the triggers would be to flex up or down.

Councilman Lauer re-stated that the current system has run out of ambulances five times in just the last week. It appears we are hitting the limit every day.

Mr. Bickel stated that yes, but that is not every hour of every day. It is the nature of the business. You will run into that situation with four (4) ambulances dedicated as we are today.

Councilman Lauer wanted to know what the trigger point was for the call up of another unit.

Ed Reuter, Director of Emergency Operations Center, stated that they are running into this with the current system. His main concern is that the backup ambulances do not have the radio communication they need to talk with the dispatch center. Because of this they have to use the phone as the way of reaching the provider. They are getting answering services or placed on hold in trying to call up the backup units. If they had radio communication, they would have instant access to them. They could also provide additional information such as if the run is for a possible suicide.

Councilman Lauer asked Director Reuter if he could see a time that the County system could get by with three (3) dedicated ambulances.

Director Reuter stated that it just all depended. The heat of the day does have more people out and about than the middle of the night, but you could still have a heart

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attack, stroke and an accident and now you are out of ambulances. You just can't predict these things.

Councilman Fisher stated that they had run out of Coroner vehicles the other night.

County Attorney Tucker asked Director Reuter what kind of problems would it cause dispatch, if any, if there were different providers for the City and the County?

Director Reuter stated that if there is good radio communications it would work, but it will be confusing for the dispatchers.

City Councilman Frank Jerome stated he is also on the Emergency Ambulance Service Board. He said that two (2) of them voted against the CRH proposal because they had not seen it. He feels there should be another vote by the Emergency Ambulance Service Board after seeing the final proposal. If the requirement is that there be four (4) at all times then any proposal that is less than that should not be accepted. There must be a consensus between the City and County and that doesn't appear to be working.

Councilman Lauer stated that it needs to remain a County wide ambulance service.

Councilman Morales stated that a year ago during budget time he asked if they should be looking at the different contracts that they had. Nobody knows what anybody is doing. He thought it would be a joint decision between the Commissioners and the City. The people who know what is needed are not the ones that are making the decisions. We need to provide the best medical service for the people in the City and the

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County and we should stay out of it and let the professionals determine what is needed. Columbus Regional Hospital is aware of what we need yet no one is listening to them.

Chairman Commissioner Larry Kleinhenz just wanted to make one point. He does not believe that under the current system we are maximizing the services. He stated that by data provided for 2011, we are making thirteen percent (13%) of our ambulance runs from midnight to six a.m. yet we are dedicating twenty-five percent of our resources to that time frame. Twelve hours later from noon until six p.m. we are making thirty-four percent (34%) of our runs; yet again we dedicate twenty-five percent (25%) of our resources. It just doesn't seem to be good business to run it that way. He feels there needs to be a little flexibility with the ambulance service provider to better allocate the resources to better serve the community. We are not utilizing the resources to the best of their ability.

Mayor Brown stated that there is flexibility but they just don't have the good data to make that decision at this time. They need a year's worth of data to fix it so that it works the best it can. She is concerned that the amount of money the hospital has to make up is almost six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) a year and that is about one and a half (1.5) ambulances.

Commissioner Kleinhenz stated that he could not speak for the hospital but was speaking to whoever becomes the provider. If it were him calling the shots, he would want five (5) ambulances between noon and six p.m. and would go to three (3) from midnight to six a.m.

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Councilperson Pence asked if the City was trying to avoid putting money into the budget for this.

Mayor Brown said that they have a three hundred thousand dollar (\$300,000) flexible amount in the City budget.

Councilman Kittle asked the Mayor if the subsidy was taken out of the current model, it was continued for a year and they had those three hundred and sixty-five days to study the data, would they be in a better position for a better evaluation of the system.

Mayor Brown stated that would be up to the people that deal with the EMS. They would like to start out with the ambulances where they have determined they need to be. They will need time to make staffing determinations. She does not feel they are in a position now to make that decision. No matter how they determine this they still have to get past the six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) and she believes it will be a cut in service. She doesn't see the hospital taking a loss and that, in her head, would require a cut in service.

Councilman Lauer asked if it were four (4) ambulances on average, would that meet City requirements.

Mayor Brown stated she did not think she could answer that question.

Deputy Chief Kutsko stated that they have been collecting data from EOC, CRH and their own. He believes that they all need to sit down and agree on what data they are going to compare. Currently, when a dispatch is received, CRH clears the run then they proceed to the truck but EOC starts the clock from the clearing of the run, while the fire

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department gets in their trucks and clears the run as they leave the station. He just feels if they all agree on the data then they will have more clear and concise data to make comparisons.

Director Reuter stated that he had started discussions with Darrell Polley of CRH to that exact point.

Deputy Chief Kutsko stated that if that happens, then they will all be on the same page with a lot better decision making available. To start with though, they need four (4) dedicated ambulances 24/7 until proven otherwise.

Commissioner Lienhoop spoke to the fact that there had been some good points made this evening. He stated that the Emergency Ambulance Service Board has two (2) members from the County, two (2) members from the City and Dr. May from the hospital.

Mike Lovelace interrupted and stated that the Sheriff's Department had a member also to which it was explained that the Sheriff's Department member is a non-voting member. Mr. Lovelace stated that was a conflict of interest.

Commissioner Lienhoop continued his statements that one of the Commissioner's arguments to stay with CRH is the economic impact that they have on the community. There are between fifty (50) and sixty (60) employees within the ambulance service which is conservatively a two million dollar payroll. Initially they felt they were all being driven by the date for the budget process. He proposed that they budget two (2) or three (3) hundred thousand in their budgets and then they did not have to make a quick

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decision. This would allow the budget process to continue. As a member of the Emergency Ambulance Service Board, he is not even sure that they need to meet tomorrow. He understands City Councilman Jerome and is thankful to City Councilman Frank Miller for finding the existence of the Emergency Ambulance Service Board. It may have caused a lot of confusion, but it is needed. He agrees we need an oversight board with very few, if any, elected officials on it. He believes that if the contract with CRH was signed Monday, there would be no drop in quality service. If they need twelve (12) ambulances, then they will fill it and if they only need two (2) at night then they will do it. He knows CRH can run the ambulance business. He is a farmer, not an ambulance or health care person.

Mayor Brown responded to the comment about the jobs. She stated that the same staffing would be needed so those jobs won't go away.

Commissioner Lienhoop stated that one other issue is that CRH's employees are really worried about this and are wondering if they should be putting out resumes to Rural/Metro or TransCare. He will agree with the Mayor's statement, but he does not believe if Rural/Metro did it that we would gain sixty (60) new jobs in the community.

City Councilman Jerome stated that the City Council had placed three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) in the budget (*for next year*) to give the Mayor flexibility to negotiate. He proposed to the Emergency Ambulance Service Board that maybe a one (1) year extension to allow for the collection and review of the data. That is why the money was put in the budget so that better data could be used to make the best decision.

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Chairman Lentz called for any more comments or questions from the audience as this was an informational meeting for everyone.

Mike Lovelace stated that he wonders how the County Council is going to handle the money issue when there are bids for \$0 subsidy. He does agree with Mr. Jerome to extend the current contract for one (1) year and he thinks it should be put on the County rate like the library does now. He thought this meeting was a good thing, bringing everyone together.

Attorney Rod McGillivray stated that it was a legitimate question as to how CRH is going to come up with the savings to eliminate any subsidies but it is a more important question to ask how Rural/Metro is going to do it this year. A simple Google search shows that Rural/Metro is in trouble with the fed's for calling every run an ALS service. There are stories in Ohio, Alabama, New York, Kentucky, Arizona and Georgia. You have to be careful who you get into business with. There are two (2) ways to make up the difference: one (1) is to reduce service and the other is to just charge more, except when it is the fed's that are going to be paying it, you can't charge more.

Mr. Bickel had heard the statement made that CRH's proposal somehow going from three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) is a reduction in service. Their plan is not to reduce service. He is defining service as they need to hit the benchmarks, but he is asking for the ability to flex the ambulances on down time. There will not be an ambulance and a half out of service, they are utilizing the resource in another way. He can guarantee that the private providers are

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going after the bulk of the non-emergent. He needs the help of the community through this oversight committee to make it work. We don't need to be adversarial about it.

Chairman Lentz asked for any more questions. Councilman Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Chairman Lentz called for any final questions as he did not want to cut anyone off.

EOC Director Reuter stated that if these changes happen, dispatch will need time to make a smooth transition to the new procedures. He is not trying to force the time later, but he needs time to accurately make the changes.

Councilperson Pence appreciated the information.

Chairman Lentz thanked the Mayor and the others for attending and providing the information.

Chris West, German Township Trustee, asked for clarification from Mayor Brown regarding the three/one (3/1) ambulances; was that three (3) within City limits only and one (1) for the County or was that four (4) for the County?

Mayor Brown stated that all four (4) would serve the County. They do have an obligation to the people that live in the City for faster response times. They feel strongly that they need to have three (3) stationed within the City.

Councilman Kittle asked if those locations were based on run data.

Mayor Brown stated no, it was on the modeling from the fire department. It is about proximity to households and businesses. They need three (3) for the proximity. They need to be on scene in less than 9 minutes.

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Dan Spartz, CRH, believes the City and County have done a good job of placing the ambulances in strategic locations, but people must realize those numbers are only good if those units are static in the station. If he lives off Flintwood Drive and calls for an ambulance, that sends EMS2 from Station 2; then there is an accident at Lockerbie and 25th and now the next closest ambulance is sent; and then there is a kid that has fallen at Richards Elementary with a broken leg, well now that ambulance may be coming from the Tipton area. Response times from a station and the City designated response time circles are nice, but they only work if the ambulance is on station and can respond to their area. He is glad that Engine 4 can respond with a paramedic and start ALS treatment. But as Director Reuter had stated, a call doesn't mean you are getting the one stationed closest to you as it may be out on another run already.

Mayor Brown stated that is why the fire department looked at volume to see if it needed to supplement.

Chairman Lentz accepted a motion by Councilman Fisher to adjourn and seconded by Councilman Morales. Motion carried 6-0.

The next County Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 14, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. in the County Council Chambers.

BARTHOLOMEW COUNTY COUNCIL

By: _____
Bill Lentz, President

By: _____
Jorge Morales, Pro-Tem

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By: ABSENT
Chris Ogle, Member

By: _____
Rob Kittle, Member

By: _____
Evelyn Strietelmeier Pence, Member

By: _____
Ryan Lauer, Member

By: _____
Larry Fisher, Member

ATTEST: _____
Barbara J. Hackman, Auditor
Bartholomew County