

AT A WORK SESSION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF JAMES CITY, VIRGINIA, HELD ON THE 28TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2004, AT 4:00 P.M. IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER BOARD ROOM, 101 MOUNTS BAY ROAD, JAMES CITY COUNTY, VIRGINIA.

A. ROLL CALL

Bruce C. Goodson, Chairman, Roberts District
Michael J. Brown, Vice Chairman, Powhatan District
Jay T. Harrison, Sr., Berkeley District
John J. McGlennon, Jamestown District
M. Anderson Bradshaw, Stonehouse District

Sanford B. Wanner, County Administrator
Leo P. Rogers, County Attorney

B. BOARD DISCUSSIONS

1. Trunked Radio System

Mr. Richard M. Miller, Fire Chief, provided an overview of the activities and action related to the trunked radio system project with York County.

Mr. Brown inquired how the transition from the old radio system to the new radio system will work.

Mr. Miller stated that it will occur through a cut-over plan which will involve a temporary installation in the County's system because York County cannot go live without the County being in the loop.

Chief Miller stated that actual cut over to the radio system will begin in the next 30 days, with the Schools first, next the County Administrative vehicles, followed by James City Service Authority, Fire, and then Police. The dual operating period, when both the old and new radio systems will be operating, will be about two weeks.

Mr. Brown inquired if a two week period would involve two radios for officers.

Chief Miller stated that day shifts will be on the new system and evening shifts on the old system and will phase in the evening shift.

Mr. Bradshaw inquired if there has been anything that will impact the cost of the system.

Chief Miller stated that construction costs associated with the 911 Center may increase as a result of significant increased concrete and steel costs in the last six to nine months.

Chief Miller stated that the York County building is ahead of the James City County 911 Center and the County is using the same architect and building design as York which should result in cost savings for both Counties as a result of the York County project.

2. Advanced Life Support/Basic Life Support Fee Report

Mr. Richard M. Miller, Fire Chief, introduced Diane Vick and Gary Matthews of Diversified Ambulance Billing who provided consulting services on the revenue recovery program and billing for ambulance services.

Chief Miller provided an overview of the cost the County incurs to provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) service, why revenue recovery is being used by other localities, how revenue recovery programs are structured, and proposed recovery for FY06.

Mr. Brown inquired if the costs to provide the service in the County are in line with adjacent localities.

Chief Miller stated that the County has a higher per-capita-call for providing advanced life support than Fairfax.

Mr. Goodson inquired if the County has computed the amount of money generated by the E911 fee.

Chief Miller stated that amount was backed out because that revenue has to be directly applied to that service.

Mr. Bradshaw requested a chart that details the break out for the cost of delivering EMS service in James City County.

Mr. Brown inquired what type of response the County got during its focus groups.

Chief Miller stated that while citizens were not initially receptive to the cost recovery for service, acceptance was generated after the costs associated with providing the service was explained.

Mr. McGlennon inquired how long regional localities have been participating in cost recovery for its services.

Ms. Vick stated that some jurisdictions have been participating since the 70s.

Mr. Bradshaw inquired how many localities contract out for EMS service.

Ms. Vick stated that other jurisdictions contract out the actual equipment and paramedics, but provides the transportation side of it.

Chief Miller stated that some localities contract out the ambulance transportation when the volunteers are not available to perform the transportation.

Mr. Brown inquired what would be the normal expectation for revenue recovery as a percentage of the cost.

Ms. Vick stated that generally 70 to 72 percent of transport should be recovered.

Mr. Bradshaw inquired if there is a breakdown of the demographics of the individuals using the service.

Chief Miller stated that the County does not track that type of information, however collection of that information is being considered.

Mr. Bradshaw inquired how many calls are for residents and non-residents.

Mr. Goodson inquired how many calls occur on the Interstate or near tourist attractions.

Mr. McGlennon inquired how the insurance industry determines what is an appropriate reimbursement level for emergency service.

Ms. Vick stated that the Federal Government sets out guidelines for a base allowable fee for medical services and insurance agencies build from there, and from the track history of insurance reimbursements there is an idea of what will be reimbursed by insurance for EMS revenue recovery costs.

The Board, staff, and Ms. Vick discussed the various fees, deductibles, and reimbursement levels of insurance agencies.

Mr. Brown expressed interest in further information on how the “sliding scale” benefit in place in the County would apply to the cost recovery plan.

Mr. Brown inquired how many service users would pay for the service directly from their personal account.

Ms. Vick stated that typically 5 percent will directly pay for the service.

Mr. Harrison inquired if the sliding scale applies only to County residents.

Chief Miller stated that he would recommend it be applied to County residents only.

Ms. Vick stated that payment arrangements would be worked out with individuals who need assistance.

Mr. Brown inquired how the “EMS Passport”, a subscription service, would be set up for collection.

Chief Miller stated that an introduction letter, application, and return envelope is distributed to residents and they have the opportunity to subscribe annually to the service.

Ms. Vick stated that following Federal Regulations, the “EMS Passport” fee must be paid in full upfront, and stated that new residents can register during the open enrollment period which lasts two months.

The Board, staff, and Ms. Vick discussed enrollments, demographics of individuals who subscribe, and the per-household benefit of the “EMS Passport” for all members of the household.

Mr. Bradshaw requested information on other jurisdictions that have reimbursed its volunteer rescue squads for revenue lost as a result of the “EMS Passport” and the long-term effect of the program on volunteer squads.

Chief Miller stated that volunteers do not stop volunteering because of funding issues, and stated that other jurisdictions have reimbursed volunteer rescue squads for revenue lost.

Mr. Brown inquired if the Medicaid and Medicare co-payments can be made on a sliding scale.

Ms. Vick stated that a user demonstrates an ability to pay, and if they cannot pay then the sliding scale is applied.

The Board and Ms. Vick discussed the sliding scale and how the scale is applied to user’s bills.

Mr. Brown requested specific examples of what the financial impacts will be on the recommendations of the EMS cost recovery program.

Chief Miller stated that the hospital may make a change in its monitoring equipment and it may not be compatible with the emergency equipment used by the rescue squad. This would result in increased costs for emergency services.

The Board and Ms. Vick discussed the billings for emergency transportation service and how it has been standardized.

Mr. Wanner stated that the revenue recovery for Emergency Medical Services has been included, for planning purposes, as part of the FY06 Budget.

Mr. McGlennon inquired what a reasonable rate of recovery is expected.

Chief Miller stated that for planning purposes, \$1.2 million has been included in the FY06 Budget.

The Board, staff, and Ms. Vick discussed Medicare and Medicaid insurance reimbursement rates for various levels of life support services, national fee schedules for ambulance reimbursement rates, Federal guidelines for collection of ambulance services, hospital and County EMS staff in gathering information for the insurance claims, and administrative costs for a cost recovery service

Mr. McGlennon expressed long-term concerns with the proposal and if the County can depend upon this revenue as the population grows.

Mr. Goodson commented that the County is behind nationally in this initiative.

Ms. Vick concurred with Mr. Goodson.

Mr. Goodson inquired about EMS services provided to other localities and if the revenue recovery would apply to services offered there.

Chief Miller stated that service delivered to any patient would be billed for that service. York County is under a Mutual Aid Agreement with the County and service offered there would be billed accordingly.

Mr. Bradshaw stated that he is still skeptical about the proposal and its impacts on insurance rates.

Mr. Wanner recommended the Board discuss this item at its December budget retreat.

3. Information Resources Management Update

Mr. Thomas R. Pennington, Director of Information Resources Management, provided an overview of the activities of the Department of Information Resources Management during the past year and the fiber network prospects through 2010.

Mr. Brown inquired when the Cox Communications contract ends with the County.

Mr. Pennington stated that it ends in 2010.

Mr. Goodson inquired why the communication towers in the County cannot be used as a wireless backup system for the network communications.

Mr. Pennington stated that staff is reviewing it, and at \$25,000 for a single line communication will not result in the same backup service as through fiber.

Mr. Brown suggested that a wireless backup in place by December 2009 would be valuable to the County for network communications negotiations with Cox in 2010.

Mr. Pennington stated that the County's existing fiber system will act as an acceptable backup plan.

Mr. Brown inquired if it would be less expensive to lay fiber lines directly to the site.

Mr. Pennington stated that due to topography and costs associated with drilling through an interstate, the round-about way to connect the Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail is cost effective.

Mr. Goodson inquired about connecting the Thomas Nelson Community College to the County's communications network.

Mr. Pennington stated that there are a lot of factors in connecting with the Campus, such a proposal would be subject to a lot of conversation regarding the benefit of the connection, and it would add a lot of traffic to the internet connection and would slow service further.

Mr. Goodson inquired if the Cox quoted cost for fiber would apply to connecting potential school sites into the fiber network.

Mr. Pennington stated that the cost would apply to those sites.

Mr. Goodson inquired if the City of Williamsburg would connect into Matthew Whaley Elementary School, and if there is an opportunity for the County to interconnect with the City.

Mr. John E. McDonald, Manager of Financial and Management Services, stated that an opportunity exists and negotiations would have to be made to determine who pays connection costs and service fees.

Mr. Wanner commended Mr. Pennington for his vision of the County's fiber network and moving the County forward in its connectivity.

Mr. Pennington provided an overview on the complications associated with connecting Board member's homes into the County's network system, and what would be required to overcome those complications.

Mr. Pennington stated that by the end of the year the County should be able to connect to the Board member's homes.

C. RECESS

At 6:15 p.m. the Board took a break until 7 p.m.

Sanford B. Wanner
Clerk to the Board

092804bsws.min