

February 03, 2009

## **LONG-RANGE PLANNING/MACHINERY & EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Long Range Planning/Machinery & Equipment Committee met Tuesday, February 03, 2009 at 5:30 p.m., in the Quorum Court Meeting Room, Third Floor, County Administration Building, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Moore, Blaty, Harrison, Stephenson

Others Present: Benton County Judge Dave Bisbee, Richard McComas, Marshal Watson.

Media: Scarlett Simms–Morning News; Tabatha Hunter–Daily Record

### **I. Call to Order**

JP Harrison called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

### **II. Public Comments**

None

### **III. Rural Ambulance Service – Presentation**

Department of Emergency Management Director Marshal Watson made a presentation of rural ambulance service in Benton County, and provided a brief prepared for consideration of a county EMS service or a subsidy service. Marshal Watson reported unincorporated areas of the county receive ambulance services from neighboring cities without paying for those services. The brief reviewed potential service options and how to provide service to the county. Marshal Watson reported that Benton County currently has 8 EMS service districts in Benton County, with a total of 1900 calls for service, or 12.7% of the total call volume. He said at this time there is no County subsidy provided for services. Marshal Watson stated there are three options for the county to look at in providing emergency services to Benton County. The first would be a County- based EMS Service, which would be the least favorable of the three because it would need stations, employment, and equipment. He said that another would be to outsource through a private for-profit service, such as AMR, one of the area's largest service contractors. Marshal Watson noted that the option to contract with current providers would be the easiest. Marshal Watson explained each of the solutions and how they would work for the county. JP Moore, asked what upset the status quo and why are we discussing this now. Marshal Watson responded that the City of Springdale had contacted County Judge Gary Black last year requesting reimbursement of \$58,330 for the EMS services provided to Benton County. Marshal Watson explained the EMS District graph provided, stating that revenue received by placing a fee of \$25.00 on every commercial and residential building would bring in about \$507,000. He said another option of paying \$200 per run to the EMS providers would amount to about \$380,000 based on the 2008 call volume. Marshal Watson explained one other option

would be for the county to hold a special election to pass a countywide millage of one-half of a mill, including cities without a service, which would bring in an estimated \$689,000.

Committee Members held discussion concerning facts presented and questioned how monies would be paid back, or if certain cities would be paying double if they already have an ambulance service.

JP Stephenson stated that they need to ask County Attorney George Spence to research and find out if there are any constitutional requirements for the county to provide ambulance service, and he would like to know upon what basis they are going to start providing service. Marshal Watson stated that the previous County Attorney had indicated to him that they were under no legal obligation to provide ambulance service.

JP Moore questioned how to proceed with the proposal. Marshal Watson stated that he would like to get more information from the municipalities.

JP Stephenson stated that he thought any discussion on the issue is premature, and they need to ask County Attorney George Spence what the legal ramifications are for doing it or not doing it, and he would like to have the input of the County Judge at the next meeting and made motion of same, seconded by JP Blaty.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

#### **IV. Old Business**

JP Moore stated that five years ago, the county borrowed money to purchase fire trucks for the rural fire departments, and since 2009 is the end of the five-year period, this issue will be coming before the committee. He said that also, there are seven road graders on a 5-year cycle with a buy-back option coming due this year. He said he did not know how the County Judge wants to handle this. He said this committee also encompasses long range planning and will need to get with the Fire, Road, Sheriff's Departments, and the Assessor to look at what is needed, and the replacement procedure, so there will be adequate funds. He said that in the past, the county has tried to replace a few vehicles each year to keep the fleet updated.

JP Harrison stated that the date of the next Long Range Machinery & Equipment meeting will be announced once he discusses the information from this meeting with the County Judge and County Attorney.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.