

March 12, 2014

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

A Public Safety Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, March 12, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Room, County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas

Committee Members Present: Carr, McKenzie, K. Harrison. Adams, Sandlin, Meyers

Others Present: County Judge Bob Clinard, JP's Anglin, Hernandez, Moehring, Fire Marshal Marc Trollinger

Media: Tom Sissom

JP Carr called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Public Comments

None

Discussion – Options for 2015 Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

JP Carr stated we are here to discuss funding and possibilities for funding to have EMS service in the rural areas of the county.

JP K. Harrison stated that he has been working to bring the rural fire departments and the smaller ambulance providers that operate in the county and the smaller cities that might be interested in forming their own service, into the discussion. He stated that the county's role would be to help with some of the startup costs and then step back and let the other entities run the service, and that he believes that they can create a better model. He said that it might take some capital outlay for the county to get it going, but that he believes that it will reduce our costs.

Mark Finocchio Beaver Lake Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief stated that he and others have begun working on a fire protection district. He said that such districts have the authority to have a millage assessed on property in the district to pay for emergency medical services, and that the department hopes to partner with other departments in the area east of Rogers for ambulance service. Mark stated that establishing a fire protection district is going to take some time and it is going to have to go for a vote. He added that if approved they could begin operating in 2016. He stated that the preliminary cost estimates for operating an ambulance service with the Fire Department would require \$1.2 million annually.

Lengthy discussion was held on the Beaver Lake Volunteer Fire Department establishing a fire protection district.

JP Carr stated that we cover the entire county for \$1.2 million, and he liked the way that they were going, but that he was not sure if it is the best way for the county to go.

JP Meyers suggested that a \$5 fee per vehicle license be imposed to raise money for ambulance services. He said that the county could cut its budget, excluding salaries and major capital equipment, and that for each 1% percent cut, \$225,000 would be generated.

Lengthy discussion was held on other options that included a special sales tax or millage dedicated for emergency medical services.

Theresa Pockrus of Gentry stated that she might favor a sales tax if it were restricted to capital expenditures related to ambulance service and included a sunset provision.

After further discussion, the committee agreed that they wanted more information from the volunteer fire departments and private ambulance providers, and no action was taken.

Other Business

None

After motion and second meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.