

November 9, 2011

Pursuant to adjournment comes now the Starke County Board of Commissioners and meet in special session at 9:00AM in the meeting room, of the Starke County Annex, Knox, Indiana, with two members present, along with the Starke County Council with three members present, and the following proceedings were held to wit:

Joint Meeting of the Starke County Commissioners and Starke County Council

Present – Kathy Norem & Dan Bridegroom, Starke County Commissioners;
Mark Smith, Tony Radkiewicz, and Marvin McLaughlin, Starke County Council.

Also Present – Paul Mathewson, EMS Director; Keith Emigh, EMS Asst. Director; Mary Lynn Ritchie, EMS Clerk; representatives from IU Health Facility-Starke: Linda Satkowski, Dave Hyatt, and Craig Felte; and Marty Lucas, County Attorney.

Council President, Mark Smith called the meeting to order. He advised the issue to be addressed at today's meeting is the county's EMS Department and the IU Health Facility-Starke need to contract for ALS & BLS transfers.

Linda Satkowski, CEO of IU Health-Starke stated the concern of the hospital is the need for the transportation of patients, both to and from the hospital. They have a special concern for the ALS service on the transfer of patients to other health facilities. She advised their concerns included, not only to be done in a timely basis, but they are also concerned about the quality, reliability, and dependability of the services. She added, the hospital is requiring ALS service response time within ten minutes, and BLS service response time within thirty minutes. She advised the hospital has not yet signed a contract for BLS & ALS transport services for next year, but are considering three different proposals. Adding it would be a temporary fix until the county is ready with their ALS service.

Commissioner Norem stated that the county was familiar with the hospital's contracting a company for the ALS transfer, but believed the hospital would continue using the County for their BLS transfers. Without the County providing the BLS transfer service for the hospital, the County could possibly see a reduction of their revenue of at least one hundred thousand dollars.

For the new elected Councilmen, Councilman Smith reviewed the two year history of the county's attempts to establish an ALS service in the county. He advised when the Laporte Hospital took over the operation of Starke Memorial, Dr. Houston of the Laporte facility; saw a need for the county to provide ALS service. Dr. Houston met directly with Nancy Dembowski. The county established a paramedic chase committee, and then was able to get the EMS department, the police departments and fire departments all together in the program and was able to train all the fire departments within the county to have certified first responders.

Smith stated that the 2012 budget of the EMS Department was increased by \$140,000.00 to allow for the implantation of the ALS services in the county. But in order to enable the EMS budget to receive such an increase, every other budget in the county was frozen at their 2011 budget amounts. He advised if the county loses the revenue from the BLS transfers from the hospital, the county would have to reconsider the ALS program. Commissioner Norem added the county would be forced into reconsidering their ALS program. Smith added the 2013 tax levy could also be affected by the decrease of the revenue in 2012.

Ms. Satkowski then noted there are several BLS transfers that are not handled by the county. Keith Emigh advised those transfers were involving transfers to mental hospitals, and the EMTs can't restrain their patients. He felt it should be an issue for the Sheriff's department. He stated the EMS Department has to look at safety first.

Paul Mathewson stated he has been meeting with Mr. Felte on a weekly basis to get the ALS service established. Paul advised, if he needed to, since he is a trained paramedic, he would handle all the ALS transfers. Craig stated he believed the ALS service, to be established in the county, was only going to handle the 911 calls, and not the transfers. He advised it would not be beneficial to the county to fully equip a rig for the ALS transfers. Director Mathewson stated he does have four paramedic certifications pending, of four current employees. Councilman Smith stated the necessary equipment to equip a rig could be financed by the 2012 budget. Director Mathewson also stated it will take sixty days after submitting the permit to certify the county's ALS services with the State.

Councilman opined that it is black and white to him; the county's ALS services are hinging on the hospital's contract, as to what the county will do with the ALS program. He continued, the county can't continue with the ALS service if they lose the BLS transfer revenue. The county was implementing the ALS program because they were asked by the hospital to provide the ALS service.

Satkowski commented they understand that, but they also want quick and dependable service.

Commissioner Norem added the county can't implement the ALS program any sooner than sixty days. They will have sixty days from the submission of the application. Director Mathewson and Clerk Ritchie stated the application is ready to go. It only needs to be approved by the Board of Commissioners. When asked by Councilman Radkiewicz why the hospital can't wait another sixty or ninety days to agree to a contract, Craig inquired in the county could be ready to go by Feb. 1st. Councilman Smith stated the EMS department could order the equipment, but wouldn't be able to pay until after Jan. 1st. Commissioner Bridegroom inquired as to what is the actual date when the hospital needs to decide on the contract and could the hospital wait until March 1st to enter into a contract. Ms. Satkowski responded they want to do it now, but then inquired if the county could submit a time line of the progress of the county, of the ALS program's implementation. Commissioner Norem stated the Commissioners could hold a special meeting to get the approval of the Commissioners, and signatures on the application, but then it will still be an additional sixty days. Councilman Smith asked Director Mathewson if they will be able to do one hundred percent of the ALS transfers for the hospital and stay within the 2012 budget. Smith advised he doesn't want to see the EMS department ask for more money in April. The Director responded that there will be additional revenue following the implementation of the ALS program. But he did note that the 911 service takes priority to the transfers. Commissioner Norem stated they will have to work it out with the hospital in regard to those exceptions.

Ms. Satkowski proposed the hospital could wait until Dec. 1st and then meet again with the county to receive an update of their progress with the implementation.

Councilman Smith asked Director Mathewson and Craig to continue working together to reach an agreement.

A special, additional meeting with the hospital representatives was scheduled for Thursday, December 1st, at 2:00PM, and if an agreement is reached the Commissioners could adopt it at their regular Dec. 5th meeting.

Commissioner Norem advised she will work with Director Mathewson on the application, and Councilman Smith stated if they had any questions in regard to the budget, to contact him.

Commissioner Norem made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Bridegroom. The motion passed with all ayes, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:44AM.

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Dan Bridegroom, President

Kathy Norem, Vice President

ABSENT
Jennifer Davis, Member

Katherine Chaffins, Auditor and Secretary to the Commissioners