



**Clark-Cowlitz Fire Rescue
Board of Fire Commissioners
Clark County Fire District 3
Clark County Fire District 6
Joint Meeting Minutes**

505 NW 179th Street, Ridgefield – Station 151

November 8, 2023

Present for Clark-Cowlitz Fire Rescue (CCFR):

Commissioners Stanley Chunn, David Town, Ken Ayers, Larry Bartel, Jade Bourke.
Chief John Nohr. DVC Ben Peeler.

Present for Clark County Fire District 3 (FD3):

Commissioners Dean Thornberry, Rick Steele and Jon Couture.

Present for Clark County Fire District 6 (FD6):

Commissioners Chris Pfeifer and Brad Lothspeich. Chief Kristan Maurer.

Flag Salute. Introductions.

Chief Nohr initiated discussion on the current EMS District 2 ambulance transport service contract, which is piggybacked on the City of Vancouver's (CoV) contract. The bid process is to open soon with a new contract starting in 2025.

CCFR DVC Peeler provided information on the contract for the commissioners. Some questions may not be answered at this time due to confidentiality issues with the upcoming RFP process. CoV manages the data compilation on AMR operations. The city's contract expires at the end of 2024, which is the last year of a five-year extension. DVC Peeler believes all would agree the current system is not optimal. Citizens and first responders are under-served, response times are too long, and there are too many level zeros. The city's consultant advised a substantial government subsidy would be necessary to maintain the current level of service. When asked what that meant, he advised they are not allowed to talk about it.

EMS District 2 is comprised of unincorporated Clark County and the cities of Battle Ground, Ridgefield, La Center, and Woodland. The fire districts have no voice in EMS District 2; only the member agencies listed. DVC Peeler explained the CoV RFP process.

Currently AMR revenues average about \$500 per transport. Discussion on potential contract subsidy options. A non-cash subsidy might be to increase response times, which results in fire the fire district being on scene for a longer period and less available for other emergencies.

The three fire districts comprise about 33% of the EMS calls in the county. Eight percent for CCFR, 8% for Fire District 3, and 17% for Fire District 6. AMR has been funding the Nurse Navigation Program, which has resulted in fewer call and transports.

AMR staffing challenges are compounded due to the increase in paramedic hiring by the fire agencies. Chief Maurer commented that though FD6 and FD3 don't have either ambulances or transport licenses, according to the Department of Health, any of the districts may transport in an emergency, such as Level Zero or long response time, but only CCFR may bill for services as they have a transport license as well as ambulances. The current contract has given AMR exclusivity, and they are only entity allowed to transport in EMS District 2. This is where changes are desired in the contract.

Commissioner Chunn commented that he has a hard time accepting having the ability to transport, but being handicapped in serving the public by this contract. He would like to see some terms and conditions in the next contract to allow agencies to transport when it best serves the public.

DVC Peeler shared that CCFR will be staffing an ambulance with 2 persons early next year. The unit will operate similar to the other districts squads. Chief Nohr clarified the unit may be an ambulance in appearance, but will be designated a rescue or a squad. Ambulances take people to the hospital and ambulance transports are done by American Medical Response (AMR) by contract in our jurisdictions. CCFR will be placing a unit in service that is transport capable, but until the contract issues are resolved, it is not an ambulance. DVC Peeler stated that AMR has a mutual aid agreement with the City of Camas and North Country EMS (EMS District 1), who do their own transports. CCFR would also like to have a mutual aid agreement with AMR, which would allow for the ability to transport in Level Zero situations, which is now not possible.

Chief Sorenson suggested that all agencies get a transport license as just one agency having a license will not meet everyone's needs.

Chief Maurer agreed and stated that what one district does might negatively affect the other two. She asked the Boards to consider whose responsibility is it to pay the subsidy. Would it be the County, EMS District 2 or the fire agencies? As public entities collecting taxes, it doesn't seem right to use the tax dollars to subsidize a private agency.

Commissioner Steele advised that Vancouver is open for the fire districts to be involved in the discussion. Having a seat at the table and being part of fixing the overall system is needed. Chief Nohr feels it is important to meet with one or more of the County Counselors to explain the situation. They need to understand the fire district's concerns and what their role is in the issue.

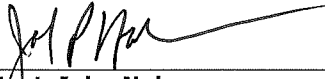
DVC Peeler shared that year to date, there have been 414 Level Zero occurrences in Clark County. There had been discussion on getting fire representation on the EMS District 2 Board, but it didn't move forward. Discussed the CAD geofence, which creates artificial borders that Camas ambulances and North Country EMS will not cross. Neither agency will respond to CCFD6 if AMR is at Level Zero.

Commissioner Chunn recommended each Board appoint a Commissioner to serve on a committee to keep abreast of this process. Chief Nohr suggested the Chiefs reach out to Counselor Marshall to start the conversation. Discussion of how much of a voice the fire districts should have in the process.

If the Commissioners are good with it, Chief Nohr appreciated the suggestion and plan to have one elected representative and one Chief from each agency to form a committee to

make contact and work with the City of Vancouver and the County Council to get a better understanding of where the process is headed.

No further discussion. Meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.



Attest, John Nohr
District Secretary/Fire Chief