

Great Divide Ambulance  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Friday, March 4, 2022  
10am at the Great Divide Ambulance Station  
43555 US Highway 63, Cable, WI 54821

Roy Bloom called the meeting to order at 10am. In attendance were Roy Bloom, Jack McGregor, Jack Iverson, Kyle Weber, Laura Bjork, Rob Puls and Bobbi McCauley.

**2021 End Year Report** – The yearly run report and financial report were presented. Laura Bjork thanked the Town of Drummond and the Town of Cable for supporting the ambulance through the R2R Grant monies. We were able to apply for an Infrastructure Grant and received \$48,900.65! Also, thanks went out to those who supported the ambulance service through the Kathy Rasmussen Memorial and the Steve Byrd Memorial. Sincere sympathies were offered to their families. Also, thanks went out to all the people who donated funds throughout the year. With a decline in the number of ambulance calls for 2021, there was also a decline in patient income. There was an increase in fuel expenses due to traveling longer distances for transfers. Ambulance repairs are high due to old vehicles. Improvements were completed to the new ambulance station and we were able to move in this past year. The old station sold rather quickly. Thanks to the Town of Drummond for sponsoring a loan to be able to make the improvements at the new station. The service welcomed Natalie Susienka, and just recently Paul Popelka. The service lost 11 employees throughout the 2021 year. The service switched billing companies this year and it has been a good change, but costly. The equipment supplies were not as much as expected because we were able to spread the cost over three years.

**Employee Handbook review and possible updates** – The employee handbook changes were presented. Changes included updating contacts, table of contents and page numbers, adding retirement fund and QSEHRA to benefits and changes in Employment Classifications to Regular, Full-Time and Regular, Part Time and changes in PTO. MOTION made by Jack McGregor to approve the changes contingent upon approval from HR. MOTION seconded Jack Iverson and carried.

**Update on the activities with the ambulance service** – Rob Puls reported that business is currently picking up a bit (hospitals are opening up a little). We couldn't transport locally; hence we had to work with longer mileage for vehicles that are already high in mileage. The backlog in getting equipment seems to be opening up. We put an order in for two new ambulances because the wait time was so long. A new ambulance may come early in August, but possibly both will, and we need them, however there is a problem with affording to purchase both of them. The Dodge vehicle is in Duluth now waiting a transmission. We lost 11 employees and picked up 2 employees. The loss was due to various reasons. The EMS Association has been used for advertising but nothing came from that. We are running an ad on ZipRecruiter

currently to see if there is any response. There are others offering \$5,000 sign on bonuses and other benefits. Everyone is looking for people. MN claims 60% of EMTs are not active. The whole system is strained, but hopefully will get better. Right now, the pandemic is hitting children. That is what we are seeing. Staffing is an issue for everyone. We took a paramedic crew off per week. It is working and we are saving money from doing this cut. We had budgeted to put cameras in the trucks for liability reasons. They are backordered. There was discussion on the EMS Committee through Bayfield County for ambulance service.

**Update on current status with new billing company** – A spreadsheet was presented that showed a monthly breakdown of patient income received, total amount of billed invoices, amount of invoices and billing department charges for the 2021 year. Laura Bjork stated that the charges have increased as expected, and this is the first time in a long time that the ambulance service is able to balance patient billing because of the accuracy in the billing department. There still is an issue with an address change in the VA Department, which affects the billing department, however it is being worked on and hopefully will get fixed soon.

**Update on new station** – There were some issues with the boiler, and a new one needed to be purchased for \$7,200. Other than that, the station is functioning well.

**Loss of personnel and region wide shortages** – This was discussed under the update on the ambulance service.

**Update on Governor Evers EMS initiative** – The FAP fund was increased from \$2.2 million to \$10.2 million for the fiscal year 2023 by Governor Evers. There is also other Federal grant monies available as well. Rob Puls and Laura Bjork will continue to look into applying for such grants.

**Status of ambulance fleet; discussion on purchasing new ambulance** – Rob Puls stated that two ambulances have been ordered with the information that they would not be delivered until 2023. However, there is one ambulance and possibly both coming in August. The board discussed how to pay for the ambulance considering that neither ambulance was in the 2022 budget. There was discussion on applying for grants, relying on more patient income than what was already budgeted, township support and financing (loan). The board was in agreement to take the bill from the first ambulance out of contingency or grants funds, and then if the second one comes, it would need to be financed by a loan.

**Discussion on numerous Birkie events impacting the service** – Kyle Weber reported that the Town of Cable has not approved anything yet, however the Plan Commission is discussing this currently. Rob Puls stated that he had input with the Plan Commission for the event fees. His input included the fact that these events are pulling from the 911 care in the community rather than contracting coverage. Some do contract for coverage, but not many. Kyle Weber stated

that the purpose of the events form is to allow the town to know what is happening, and obtain certificates of insurance and require medical care. There will be many upcoming events in the community, especially considering the events at Telemark.

**Discussion on advertising for employment** – On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, we signed up with ZipRecruiter for one month, which cost \$770.31. We have received one call so far.

Roy Bloom adjourned at 12:32pm.