

Great Divide Ambulance

Board of Directors Meeting

Friday, July 19, 2024 Minutes

3:30pm at 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, Ron Gran, Jack McGregor, Jamie Holly, Jack Iverson, Rob Puls and Tony Lang.

Second Quarter report – The second quarter report was presented. Rob Puls stated that we are right on budget for the year when looking at volume for collections. Equipment supplies are high; however, the IV Infusion Pumps were purchased from this category, and they were paid for by donations. Tony Lang stated that we have had the well worked on twice. There were lots of problems. Advance Water Treatment from Duluth came in and put in a system for approximately \$8,000, and it is working well now. The IV Infusion Pumps are great and working well. Financially we are doing very well with the budget, and this is good news. This is being done with seven employees! Personnel is an issue as there is a lack of employees. We do not offer health insurance, so we are at the bottom of the ranks for job offers. Tony Lang said that the state might be offering first responders the ability to get on state insurance with WPS, but still unsure at this time. More information is needed. The other services in the county have felt the economic effect of the loss of employees. This is observed by the lack of response on calls. Great Divide has always responded, and the community has not felt the hardship of the lack of employees. There is a possibility of hiring drivers for help. There was discussion on the number of hours the employees put in and the stress that is on them.

Great Divide Ambulance update – Jack Iverson questioned if the budget for 2025 is going to be the same as 2024, so that the towns know how to budget properly. Rob Puls suggested to look at a budget without transfers again due to the lack of employees. Jack McGregor stated that if the service considers a competitive package, it will be costly. Rob Puls stated that the service is holding the budget for this year. Jack Iverson mentioned that the towns are receiving extra money in Shared Revenue which should be going to the ambulance. It is a little that can help.

Event at Telemark on Labor Day Weekend – Rob Puls stated there is an event at Telemark on Labor Day weekend with 1,200 to 1,500 competitors and then 2.8 people per competitor. That's 4,000 to 6,000 people at this event. They did not request ambulance service but called the service to inform them of the event, because that is what the Town of Cable's Special Event Policy requires. They said they have bike control, but bike control cannot transport, doesn't have drugs, and cannot place airways. This is taking place on a busy holiday weekend. Namakagon has a Special Event Policy that requires ambulance service if the event is over 300 people. There is no requirement for the Town of Cable. Jamie Holly questioned why this would

be a liability for the Town of Cable and not the sponsor of the event. Rob Puls replied that it becomes the town liability because it is happening in their jurisdiction. This is a large exposure. Jack McGregor stated the ambulance may not be able to fulfill their responsibility to the residents because of the amount of people in town. There is precedence set for a lawsuit against a town when an injury occurs, and ambulance service is not available. The town can be sued for no response or delayed response if the incident is within the township. Jack McGregor suggested sending a letter to the sponsor stating that EMS is having a difficult time providing services to our residents, and this event is beyond our capabilities. There was discussion about if a liability waiver was needed. Tony Lang explained that when the service is contracted for an event, another crew is scheduled to fulfill that contract, but when there is no contract, the service only has 2 crews available. Rob Puls added that the sponsor has to pay for an ambulance to be on standby. If we use our ambulance crew, then we forfeit transfers and revenue. Jack Iverson asked if someone could inquire with an attorney if there is liability. The service does retain an attorney. Jamie Holly met with Ben Poppe who explained that there is a member from Sawyer County and Bayfield County on their board. Jamie Holly wondered if a member could include an elected official from a township. Tony Lang noted that the Hungry Bear Event that was covered in Namakagon changed hands, and this year there were no maps provided and no communication on the course. The people had to call for service if needed and there was some confusion about the ambulance providing a sweep. This ended up being a sketchy event to cover this year. Jack McGregor stated that the town would like a memo from the service of what happened so the town can address the issues next year. Jamie Holly will look into requiring service in the Special Event Policy for the Town of Cable. Jack McGregor mentioned the impact of Short-Term Rentals bringing in people to the area and the coverage that is being required.

Future sustainable planning for the service – Jack McGregor researched and surveyed over 19 ambulances in the State of WI and in northern IL for information. He did not find solutions, just information. Most of the reasonable sized communities in IL with full-time ambulance services are combining the Fire Dept. and EMS. They comply with the fair labor standards act, and employees work about 50 - 60-hour work weeks with 24/7 service. In Northern IL an ambulance service in a small community has full-time paramedics/ firefighters that start at \$78,300 in the first year, not including benefits. Most services offer health insurance at 85/15 and pay additionally for training and specialty services. Benefits also include PTO, pensions and a 457 deferred compensation plan. Many have work separation agreements that allow for reimbursement of training and equipment, but if an employee quits before the end of the agreement, then they would have to pay back those costs. Most departments are part of the union, so they have in place 5-year plans for scheduled increases. These were city and town ambulance services. He also looked at private ambulances. The wage for entry level is \$23/hr. This was services in IL. In WI, the wage for entry level paramedic/firefighter employees averages \$49,300. The mid-range level was \$52,300, and the high range was \$62,000. The top wage was over \$83,000 after x number of years. This is just wages, no benefits. All are getting

state pension and health insurance with work weeks from 50 to 60 hours. All departments are losing employment due to a loss of interest. That is an economic problem. Roy Bloom suggested putting together figures to offer 85/15 health insurance to the employees. This was done previously, but the agent needed 75% participation, and the ambulance didn't have it. It will be looked into. The board agreed to reach out to Chanz Green to meet with the board on the issue of sustainability.

No Closed Session.

Roy Bloom adjourned the meeting at 2:46pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Bjork
Great Divide Ambulance Business Manager