

**GRANDVIEW CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
OCTOBER 15, 2007**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Norm Childress called the study session to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Present were: Mayor Norm Childress and Councilmembers Bill Flory, Pam Horner, Jan McDonald, Robert Morales and Joan Souders. Councilmember Javier Rodriguez was absent.

Staff present were: City Administrator Scott D. Staples, City Attorney Jack Maxwell, Fire Chief Pat Mason, Public Works Director Cus Arteaga and Deputy City Clerk/Treasurer Elizabeth Alba.

2. AMBULANCE SERVICE ALTERNATIVES

Ambulance Report Review

Fire Chief Mason began the discussion by addressing the following items in the report from Prosser Memorial Hospital's (PMH) CEO Jim Tavary:

Call Data – In his report, Mr. Tavary noted that Grandview Unit 21 accounted for 1/3 of PMH's annual operating budget and Unit 21 ran a total of 848 calls of which 640 were City related. Based upon these numbers, the City would be responsible for 75% of 33% of PMH's budget. The report explained that PMH was expecting a \$407,000 shortfall in 2007 and that the City's pro-rata share would be equivalent to \$134,000, which did not equate to 75% of 33%. In his report, Mr. Tavary used a 13-month time frame for call statistics in comparison to a 12-month financial time frame.

According to data received from YCFD #5, PMH ambulance was dispatched to a total of 3,371 calls from 5/1/06 through 4/30/07. Of those calls, Unit 21 was dispatched to 1,729. Utilizing YCFD #5 call statistics, Chief Mason's review of call records requested from YCFD #5 from 5/1/2006 through 4/30/2007 equaled 524 (524 of 3,371 equaled 15.54%). He determined that the City was only involved in 15–16% of the total budget and expenses attributed to the operation of the PMH ambulance service in city limits.

Interlocal Agreement for Ambulance Services – According to PMH's attorney, Bradley Berg, an interlocal agreement could be entered into between the Prosser Hospital District and the City as both entities have the authority to provide ambulance service. Chief Mason pointed out that the City may have statutory authority, but did not have authority through the Department of Health to provide an ambulance service licensed for trauma care as PMH currently holds the franchise for providing ambulance service to this response area.

Ambulance Operating Information and Options

Fire Chief Mason provided the following ambulance operating information and options. Currently, the City's coverage for ambulance service was provided primarily by PMH. PMH operates three ambulances: Ambulance 11 housed in Prosser and staffed 24/7 by two EMT-I, a paramedic (60% of the time) was capable of providing Advanced Life Support (ALS). Ambulance 21 housed in Grandview and staffed 24/7 by a paramedic and an EMT (EMT allowed to go home at night and respond to the station as calls arise). Ambulance 31 housed in Prosser primarily operates in the Tri-Cities providing patient transfers during the day. When PMH ambulances were unavailable, the Sunnyside Fire Department would be dispatched and respond in most instances with an ALS crew.

Fire Chief Mason explained that ambulance services were regulated through the Washington State Department of Health (WSDOH). Ambulance services could be licensed to provide care and transport for medical patients only or trauma verified to provide care and transport to all patients. The number of ambulance services allowed to operate in a given response area as a trauma verified service was regulated by "Min – Max Numbers" determined by the WSDOH in cooperation with the South Central Region EMS and Trauma Council. He confirmed with WSDOH and South Central Region Council that at this time there were no options available to start another ambulance service or for another established ambulance to take over coverage of the City. PMH has been assigned the local response area and until PMH decides to withdraw their service then they meet the Min – Max Numbers for this area.

Fire Chief Mason pointed out the following options if PMH ambulance ceased providing service:

- If service was ceased prior to a new service provider being established, Sunnyside Fire Department agreed to provide interim coverage.
- If the time frame to establish a new permanent service provider was prolonged and Sunnyside Fire Department exceeded their ability to provide service, the South Central Region would allow the City to operate a Basic Life Support (BLS) service utilizing the City's rescue vehicle and Fire Department personnel. Sunnyside Fire Department would provide mutual aid if the nature of the call warranted ALS service.
- The WSDOH would put the uncovered response area out for bid and award the successful bidder the rights to operate the ambulance service for this area.

Fire Chief Mason addressed the following provider options that could be available:

Contracting with Sunnyside Fire Department to provide ALS service – Sunnyside Fire Department submitted cost estimates to provide an ambulance and paramedics to the City at an annual cost of approximately \$302,000. The City would provide dormitory facilities, a bay for the ambulance and an additional person for calls.

Pro – Provide one full-time ALS ambulance for 911 calls in the City backed up by personnel and equipment from the Sunnyside Fire Department.

Con – A large amount of money invested on an annual basis for another department's personnel and equipment. Fire station expansion would be required to accommodate dorm rooms and an additional bay for the ambulance.

Establishing ambulance service within the City's Fire Department – The following service levels were identified which were dependent upon funding:

1. Provide one BLS ambulance staffed with volunteers that would rendezvous with an ALS service provider when needed. Start up costs would be approximately \$117,000 with an annual cost of approximately \$70,000.

Pro – Least expensive way to provide service.

Con – Unpredictable response levels due to working with volunteers. Provide level of care below what was currently offered. Fire station expansion would be required to accommodate an additional bay for the ambulance.

2. Provide one ALS ambulance staffed with full-time paramedic and supplemented with volunteer at an annual cost of approximately \$352,000.

Pro – Provide one full-time ALS ambulance for 911 calls in the City and additional personnel to assist with daily activities at the station.

Con – Dependent upon volunteer to meet the needs of additional personnel to operate the ambulance on a call. Fire station expansion would be required to accommodate dorm rooms and an additional bay for the ambulance.

3. Provide two full-time ALS ambulances staffed with full-time paramedics and EMT-I's at an annual cost of approximately \$1,084,000.

Pro – Provide two full-time ALS ambulances for 911 calls in the City, as well as transfers. Provides on-duty staff at most times to start initial attack on fires while waiting for more responders to arrive. Provide additional personnel to assist with daily activities at the station.

Con – Most expensive option. Could lead to decline in the moral of the volunteers. Fire station expansion would be required to accommodate dorm rooms and additional bays for the ambulances.

Following discussion, Mayor Childress cautioned Council about agreeing to enter into a one-year financial agreement with Prosser Hospital noting that the hospital could continue to request funding if the ambulance service remains in a deficit.

Mayor Childress expressed concern that the City of Mabton and neighboring Yakima County, who also use the ambulance service, have not yet been contacted by Prosser Hospital about paying a share of the ambulance budget deficit.

City Administrator Staples recommended that the City meet with the City of Mabton, Yakima County Fire District #5 and Yakima County Commissioners to inform the entities of the possible ramifications should Prosser Hospital pull ambulance service back to the boundaries of Benton County. He added that the City was not yet in a crisis mode in regards to ambulance service, but encouraged Council to be proactive in talking with Mabton and Yakima County.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The study session adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Mayor Norm Childress

Elizabeth Alba, Deputy City Clerk/Treasurer