

# **Commissioners & County Council**

## **Joint Meeting Minutes**

April 9, 2024

4:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.p.

Pineview Government Center

Commissioner Meeting Room, Suite 104

Al Knable called the meeting to order and led the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

**Present:** Commissioners – Full quorum

Council – Full Quorum (Tony Toran-virtual)

**Also Present:** Attorney, Rick Fox; Attorney, Steve Langdon; Recorder, Lois Endris; Treasurer, Steve Burks; Auditor, Diana Topping and Sheriff, Steve Bush

### **Public:**

Chris Pellman, Navilleton Road, Floyd County, expressed his concern that, as a firefighter, having three people on a firetruck is extremely important as a fire department, firefighter and the public. They are completely ineffective if only one person shows up on the firetruck.

Diana Mayfield, Floyds Knobs, asked the Boards, as representatives of the taxpayers, to slow down and look at all the possibilities and make decisions that are for the betterment of the community and not self-serving. They need to serve the entire county and not just the hill. She had a gentleman tell her that all the boards are transparent but she disagrees. They are as transparent as a black garbage bag. She stated the meetings seem to be scheduled when the public can't be there.

Sheriff, Steve Bush, asked the Boards to keep in mind to look at EMS Service for the whole county. The Commissioners have made a decision. They all need to respect the process. He stated that dispatch will need to dispatch somebody on June 1.

Darrell Mills, New Albany Township and President of the New Albany Township Board, thanked Highlander Fire, Georgetown Township Fire, Tri-County and New Albany City Fire Departments for helping through these times. He stated New Albany Township Fire is not in the situation to run their own ambulance service. He thinks it should be a county-wide fire department ambulance service that will service New Albany Township residents as well as anyone else.

Tim Harbison, Edwardsville Galena Road, stated Ameripro has a price tag of \$1.5 million and no one could tell for sure how that will be funded. New Chapel is not an option. He said two of the Council members and two of the Commissioners seem to doubt the funding that members of their own Council put forward, but has not seen any of the data that backs up their doubts or why the professional firefighters and Highlander Fire District could not deliver the service that they offered. He would like to see the data that backs up their doubts.

Chief Bill Banta, Georgetown Township Fire District Chief, he supports the legal process that was inspired by the Commissioners through their recommendation to accept the contract with

Ameripro, looking at least one year contract. They need to give themselves a little breathing room and sign the contract on Monday and start Tuesday resolving the issue permanently.

**New Business:**

1.) EMS

Al Knable stated the majority of the Commissioners put forward a plan to negotiate with Ameripro for coverage of the entire county. New Chapel was taken off the table because they could not show financial solvency. There was another proposal from Highlander Fire Protection District for EMS service but they will not cover the whole county. They will cover the hill. The original quote was for three years with AmeriPro. They will not go below two years.

Danny Short said there has been a lot of discussions and ideas for funding of EMS. Everything they had on paper showed, at least 75% of funding available.

Jason Sharp stated there is \$600,000.00 available to where the Commissioners had set aside for broadband. He said if they have to choose between broadband or emergency services he would choose emergency services.

John Schellenberger said the originally set aside one million dollars and through the years they have given up \$400,000.00. He is against using the \$600,000.00 for EMS. There are still a lot of areas without broadband.

Al Knable said he would rather have areas not covered by broadband than not covered by ambulances.

The sources of funding were:

CARES Act \$1.1 Million

Riverboat \$125,000.00

Recorder \$350,000.00

Legacy Foundation \$400,000.00 or lump sum

Broadband \$600,000.00

Budgeted \$220,000.00

Rainy Day up to \$2.8 million

Al Knable said he heard mentioned an EMS LIT tax.

Denise Konkle said they have no say on the Legacy Foundation except for the lump sum.

Danny Short said he sees no greater legacy for the betterment of the county than public safety.

Treasurer, Steve Burks, said his understanding is the Legacy Board grants money off of the interest.

Jim Freiburger said he continues to suggest looking at employee benefit study. He sees the potential savings of pension of \$282,000.00 and healthcare employee contributions of \$528,000.00.

There is a Joint Meeting scheduled on Tuesday, April 23 at 4:00. The benefit study will be reviewed.

Denise Konkle would like to have Baker Tilly look at the Rainy Day funds suggestion.

County Attorney, Rick Fox, reviewed the Ordinance or the Charter of the Highlander Fire District in regards to EMS Services. In his opinion, the ordinance does not authorize EMS services. The Commissioners have the statutory authority to authorize, franchise or contract for emergency medical services. The ordinance lists the purposes of which the fire district was established. It was established for fire extinguishing all fires, identification and elimination of all potential and actual sources of fire hazards, and other purposes or functions related to fire protection and fire prevention. Nothing was said about emergency services. Under the statute, fire services and emergency services are two separate entities. The ordinance says once fully functioning, commencing on January 1, 2024, it will be the purpose and function of Highlander Fire to effectively exert jurisdiction over and govern fire services throughout the district. There is no authorization for the purchase of emergency services equipment. He stated, statutorily, the Commissioners are responsible for how emergency services are played out. According to the ordinance, Highlander fire is providing emergency services outside the ordinance. John Schellenberger asked about the ordinances for Georgetown Fire and New Albany Township Fire Districts. Mr. Fox stated he hasn't reviewed them. If they do not have EMS listed the Commissioners have the authority to amend all of the fire districts to include EMS.

Dr. Thomas Harris, County Health Officer, member of the EMS Advisory Board and an ER doctor, stated he has some issues with the interpretation of the ordinance. There are major fire functions that include extrication, hazmat, basic first responder and first aid. The concern is they are painting themselves in a box with a very restricted view of what fire can do. He stated whatever choice of action is chosen it has to include Franklin Township and New Albany Township and the funding should be sustainable.

Dale Bagshaw stated Dr. Harris mentioned Floyd County has 80,000 citizens but the County only has to provide service for about half of that because the rest is part of New Albany city.

Brad Striegel stated 301 ambulance providers in the state of Indiana and 148 are fire-based EMS, 39 are private providers. He said obviously the fire department is doing something right and they are in the EMS business. He stated a task force was mentioned but they don't need another layer of bureaucracy in government. Use what they have and task the EMS Advisory Board with more data. Al Knable stated he disagrees. The Advisory Board is very heavy with people with expertise in emergency medicine, fire and transport. They do not have actuaries, lawyers and insurance providers. They need more input from different realms of expertise.

Denise Konkle stated she wants to concentrate on the dollars. That's the role of County Council. They are talking about spending \$3 million over a two year period. She does not see how they can finance without a new LIT tax. She is not opposed to that but thinks they have a new solution. She thinks they could do this for about \$1 million versus \$3 million.

Jason Sharp stated the firefighters that do not do transportation are more than first responders. They provide very critical lifesaving skills to patients. He likes the idea of solving the problem for everyone in the county. He can envision the system in Floyd County that does solve the problem that is very modernized with a lot of modern equipment, maybe even a community paramedic program. He thinks they might have some equipment that's already available through Highlander that can be utilized.

John Schellenberger stated he agrees with Denise Konkle. He stated Connie Moon's comment at the last meeting that last year Highlander Fire had only transported six. On April 1, at 6:10 pm Highlander transported a person and met squad 61 at a church and transferred the patient over. At 9:04pm they had a mutual aid and transported to Clark County. At 10:24pm they transported a patient to Baptist Health East. Highlander does do transport.

Jim Freiburger backs Highlander Fire-based EMS service. He knows it doesn't cover the whole county but they are in talks and options of covering the rest of the county with Ameripro. Looking at the ambulance fee schedules between Highlander Fire District and Ameripro, Ameripro is almost double. He is not in support of raiding Lafayette and Greenville funds out of the Highlander Fire District. This is a county wide expense and needs to come from the county.

Connie Moon is not for fire-based EMS. We are reactive because of things that have happened with local and private companies so emotions are high. She lives in Franklin Township and this is a huge deal. She deserves ambulance service too. Sometimes you get what you pay for.

Tony Toran stated it is hard seeing the private provider option coming together without raising taxes. He is opposed to moving the money that is already appropriated for different projects and raiding the Rainy Day Fund to pay for EMS. He thinks the fire-based EMS option is better. During this process, they have down played the role of firemen and the job they do and the services rendered. They need to keep in mind they risk their lives every day and provide a great service to our community to keep us safe. He stated if any of them were called to where we are or in a position to where we needed medical assistance that they would render that medical assistance and we would be grateful.

Danny Short agrees with Mr. Toran that the firefighters will render aid if they are called on. That's just what these guys do. That's how they're built and he applauds them for that. He would love to see them fund Ameripro and get the task force in high gear. He thinks the task force needs to include everyone mentioned. Members from the Council and Commissioners need to discuss how to pay for this going forward. He thinks they get can the rest of the year paid for and then start working on 2025. They have pushed this off to the last minute again and they can't do it anymore. He doesn't think fire-based is ready to go in 50 days. He got a call from someone with a CAD number that a fire truck showed up with one person on it because the rest was on an ambulance. They will be stretched too thin. They need time to get this right. That can't make a bad decision that the next generation will pay for. He is in favor of signing with Ameripro for two years max and have whatever system they come up with running with training wheels for the last six months to make sure they are good to go when the new system takes over.

Al Knable stated with the options on the table, there is no way to fund any of them without taking money from somewhere. He thinks an EMS LIT tax needs to be part of the discussion because he thinks it solves the whole thing for the whole county for all time. There are disadvantages to throw in the word tax around but there are advantages too. The county will

pick up the tab if insurance doesn't cover the run. He would like to see them get Ameripro in place for two years. Then really purposefully and thoughtfully putting together experts from many different realms. Take some folks from the EMS Advisory Board but also build in the business part of it. They need the actuaries to say which numbers make sense.

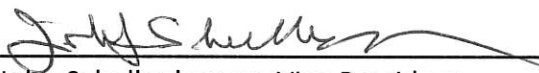
There is another Joint meeting scheduled on Thursday, April 18 at 4:30pm

**Motion to adjourn. Moved by Brad Striegel. Seconded by Dale Bagshaw. Motion passed unanimously.**

Signed on 23 day of April, 2024

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

  
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Al Knable, President

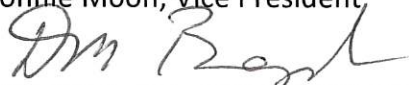
  
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John Schellenberger, Vice President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Sharp, Commissioner

**FLOYD COUNTY COUNCIL**


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Danny Short, President

  
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Connie Moon, Vice President

  
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Dale Bagshaw, member

  
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Jim Freiburger, member

  
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Denise Konkle, member

  
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Brad Striegel, member

  
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Tony Toran, member

  
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Attest, Diana Topping - Auditor