

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SPECIAL MEETING
DECEMBER 17, 2004

The Lassen County Board of Supervisors convenes in Regular Session on Friday, December 17, 2004 at 9:11 a.m. Present: Supervisors Robert Pyle, Jim Chapman, Lloyd Keefer, and Brian Dahle; County Counsel John Ketelsen, County Administrative Officer (CAO) Bill Bixby and County Clerk Theresa Nagel. Supervisor Hanson is absent. Following the flag salute, the invocation is offered by Supervisor Keefer.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITEMS DISCUSSED IN CLOSED SESSION

Vice-Chairman Keefer announces that no closed session was held.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice-Chairman Keefer asks for public comment and no comments are received.

STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION

County Counsel John Ketelsen provides background information on the events that led to a Declaration of Emergency regarding ambulance services and reviews the county ordinance relating to a declaration of emergency.

It is moved by Supervisor Pyle, seconded by Supervisor Chapman and carried to adopt Resolution No. 04-078, ratifying declaration of local emergency by Assistant Emergency Services Director and the County Health Officer's grant of exemption to Regional Emergency Medical Service Authority (REMSA) as an interim provider of ambulance services.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Supervisor Pyle provides a background of events that have occurred relating to ambulance services. South Lassen Ambulance informed the EMCC they are unable to man enough ambulances to cover the county without a subsidy, therefore REMSA was brought in under an emergency. He thanks REMSA for coming in, and Chip Jackson and Bill Bixby for the work they have done during this emergency situation. Word has now been received that South Lassen Ambulance along with Mt. Lifeflight can put five ambulances in service. He feels there has been some lack of communication, some of which was accidental but some intentional. He does not condone intentional lack of communication. States it is very important to have a 24/7 ambulance in Westwood, and

anyone who goes against him on this he will take out. States there are lots of local jobs at stake and he would like to see them restored. States the structure and attitude of South Lassen and Mt. Lifelight are different today. Yesterday it (South Lassen) wouldn't work - today it will work. He does not think that REMSA would put a 24/7 ambulance in Westwood - face it that won't happen. Feels if South Lassen disappears Westwood would not have medical care and he will fight that. He states those that don't want to work with others, help the community, etc. - get the hell out of town. He wants to be sure the agenda for next Tuesday is set up correctly to give him the ability to do what he wants to do.

County Counsel John Ketelsen responds the agenda provides for either approving a contract with REMSA or negotiate another contract. This contract will only have a duration of covering the emergency or until someone qualifies with Norcal to operate.

CAO Bixby states the Board of Supervisors do not have the final word - Norcal does.

County Counsel John Ketelsen states all the Board is doing at this time is giving their blessing on who operates during the emergency.

Susanville Fire Chief Stu Ratner states residents need the best service possible. He states the City was very happy with the actions taken by the County to assure uninterrupted ambulance service. He notes the persons serving on the EMCC are very qualified, professional people and the decision they made was based on information they received from Lassen Ambulance and South Lassen Ambulance. He notes the service from these two providers had dwindled down - states this is not a personality issue, it is just facts. He states that South Lassen provided a letter indicating a subsidy of \$13,000 per ambulance, per month would be needed to continue operation. He states the City was very happy the County took action to get REMSA in to provide continued service. He states miraculously, now South Lassen has the money to operate five ambulances without a subsidy. Now the providers that created the emergency are getting support from a board member. He feels the EMCC wasted their time. He states the RFP process will be a waste of time if the Board changes their mind in regard to the emergency provider. He states that he takes his responsibility as a member of the EMCC very seriously and now they seem to be getting blamed for people losing their jobs. The provider who created the problems is now being considered for getting the service area back.

Banner Lassen Hospital Administrator Dave Anderson states that reimbursements in health care costs are declining and the only way to handle that is to increase volume or reduce services - consolidation to spread costs over a larger area. He provides several

examples of agencies that have closed and consolidated services with other agencies in order to remain viable. He acknowledges the fine job that county staff performed in rapidly and effectively responding to this emergency. REMSA immediately responded with uninterrupted service. He recommends establishing criteria for the interim service including consideration of a provider's track record of performance, depth of resources available, and possibly requiring a performance bond.

Mt. Lifelight owner Dave Reger apologizes to everyone for not paying more attention to the ground ambulance service. He states that he sat down with Supervisor Pyle and Mr. Pyle was big enough to ask what can we do to solve this problem. Mr. Reger states it is an economic problem of cash flow that has caused problems. He had not sat down with South Lassen Ambulance Administrator Greg Wallace until after his discussions with Mr. Pyle. He states when Mr. Wallace wrote his letter regarding a need for subsidy he had not had any conversation with him about what financial help Mt. Lifelight could provide. He states the call volume in Janesville and Westwood is not large enough to be economically viable. Westwood is contributing \$45,000 a year as a subsidy to have an ambulance stationed there. He provides an example of how a provider could operate with a positive cash flow, but it would leave Westwood "twisting in the wind". He states that Mr. Pyle is not the villain in this matter.

Susanville Nursing Home Administrator Chuck Williams expresses his concern regarding the return trip for nursing home residents when they are taken to the hospital. He states that Lassen Ambulance would return the patients during the day, but not evenings and nights. REMSA has been great and has guaranteed return trips for patients. Return trips have been an ongoing issue until REMSA came to town. Discussion is held between Supervisor Pyle and CAO Bixby on what needs to go into an RFP in order to provide this service. Mr. Bixby states there may be an ability to provide this return service without using a paramedic or EMT. Dave Reger states for years the nursing home had a vehicle that provided non-emergency trips. He notes the expense of staffing an ambulance at night is the problem.

Police Chief Chris Gallagher notes that public safety officials and emergency personnel are on the EMCC to help. He notes that in EMCC meetings, both Dave Reger and Greg Wallace were present and not once did either of them step up with any ideas on how to help. He would like to see stability and he is hearing lots of people saying it is good to see REMSA here. He encourages the board members to keep the stability we now have.

Ron Jarrell states he has had a lot of experience with ambulance issues when he was Sheriff. He states a key issue is emergency medical care for constituents and he hopes

the Board does not miss the opportunity to establish a set of rules for service along with sanctions.

Supervisor Chapman thanks all those present who serve the residents. He states we are here to serve the public's interest and it is not acceptable to deceive the public for someone's own interest. There is a distrust in place and it has caused a lack of communication. He states jockeying for position for your own company, at the expense of the public, is not acceptable. He speaks of the lack of statistical ambulance information from the past which has caused a problem in regard to the RFP process. He states that dispatching is another issue that needs to be addressed, noting that Lassen Ambulance insisted on their own dispatch. He gives examples of past delays in response and not responding at all. What he has heard from many constituents is they do not care who "shows up" but they want their ambulance subscription memberships honored. He states one issue is the ability to perform - not just saying they can perform. He states all the information received from Lassen Ambulance, South Lassen and Mt. Lifelight has caused questions and financial ability needs to be demonstrated by South Lassen. Also the true relationships between these three providers has been unclear and non-communication between them is a matter of concern. We have to take very seriously the professional relationship of sending REMSA home and then maybe having to call them back if Dave Reger cannot finance the services from South Lassen. Also need to figure out what is happening with Norcal and what are we getting from them for the amount we pay. He notes that Dave Reger was Chairman of the Grand Jury and therefore familiar with the open meeting laws. He is concerned over separate communications by Mr. Reger with individual board members. Dave Reger responds his communications with other board members (except Mr. Pyle) was to get information, not to get support. Mr. Chapman understands but notes we all must keep in mind conversations with multiple board members could easily lead to unintended violations.

Mr. Reger notes his letter did not say he can support South Lassen Ambulance forever, but he can provide help through June 30, 2005 to preserve the local options. He also notes he has paid the outstanding dues to Norcal for South Lassen so they can submit a response to the RFP. He addresses the legality of the Life Support Subscriber Program safety net and explains how it works. He does not want to be in the ground ambulance business but wants to be involved in a functional EMS System in Lassen County. He states that Brad Reger is opening a Family Nurse Practitioner Program up north and will not be involved with local ambulance service.

Supervisor Dahle wants the public to know this has been an issue all eight years he has been on the Board - there has been lots of attempts to manipulate the system and he does not like this - it is wrong. States the bottom line is people need to be served and

he will do whatever it takes to get the public served. He appreciates the hard work that staff have provided and the backup plan they put in place.

Supervisor Pyle respects Stu Ratner so much and all those serving on the EMCC. He states that Mr. Ratner and all members of the EMCC should not be put-off by his bringing this matter to the Board. He agrees with the need for stability but disagrees that sending REMSA home during this emergency period would preclude them from having a good chance at receiving consideration under the RFP. He states it is not a violation of the open meeting law for someone to call board members to express their concerns/ opinions.

Supervisor Chapman states it is wrong to solicit a board member's stance and that is the direction that his conversation with Mr. Reger was heading before he ended it.

County Counsel John Ketelsen states he has drafted a memo on serial meetings and will expand it to cover this particular situation with distribution to the board members next week.

Supervisor Keefer sees multiple options - must maintain the integrity of the RFP process. He likes Mr. Anderson's points regarding performance criteria and this needs to be addressed for the interim contract and in the RFP process. He notes the subscription service is a big issue for many of his constituents.

Supervisor Keefer asks what is on the agenda for Tuesday and CAO Bixby reads the agenda item relating to ambulance services. County Counsel John Ketelsen provides information on what can be discussed and considered on Tuesday. (Supervisor Dahle departs at 11:27 a.m.)

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

ATTEST:
SUPERVISORS

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF

THERESA NAGEL, CLERK OF THE BOARD