

## MINUTES OF THE MINNEOTA CITY COUNCIL MEETING

PURSUANT TO CALL AND DUE NOTICE THEREOF, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MINNEOTA, COUNTY OF LYON, STATE OF MINNESOTA, MET IN SPECIAL SESSION IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2018 AT 6:30 P.M.

**COUNCIL PRESENT:** Mayor John Rolbiecki  
Council Member Travis Gillund  
Council Member Tim Koppien  
Council Member Amber Rodas  
Council Member Jerry Teigland

**STAFF PRESENT:** Shirley Teigland

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Katie Boettger, Matt Boettger, Jerry Bottelberghe, Emily Coequyt, Cory Crowley, Dan DeSmet, John Engels, Royal Hettling, Byron Higgin, Jody Isaackson, Deb Johnson, Ellen Longtin, Jared Longtin, Brad Minnehan, David Moriarty, Jim Pesch, Cari Poach, Bob Polejewski, Jeanette Sharp, Jeff Sussner, Jessica Swedzinski, Kevin Swedzinski, Laura Swedzinski, Tammy VanOverbeke, Janelle Verschelde, Terry Winter, John Winters

### **ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor John Rolbiecki called the regular monthly meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

### **ITEM 2: ADOPT AGENDA**

Koppien motioned, seconded by Gillund to adopt the agenda as presented. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **ITEM 3: AMBULANCE SERVICE**

Mayor John Rolbiecki opened the meeting by thanking everyone for coming to the meeting and said that the meeting will be run in a similar fashion as the last meeting that was held to discuss the ambulance service and I will summarize the status of the current service, explain what has taken place since the last meeting and discuss the direction the Council is thinking of taking. The meeting will then be opened for additional discussion, questions and comments.

Mayor Rolbiecki explained that a committee had been formed and is comprised of representatives from the Cities of Ghent, Minneota and Taunton, each Township located in the PSA, Fire Departments from Ghent, Minneota and Taunton and 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Units serving Ghent and Taunton. The Committee along with Tammy VanOverbeke, Lyon County Emergency Manager and Ann Jenson, SW Minnesota EMS Executive Director met with representatives from North to review 4 options and each option's projected costs as presented by Rick Wagner, North Memorial Outstate Manager. The 1<sup>st</sup> Option is North covering 24/7, 365 days a year on-site calls with an estimated subsidy of \$414,000. Prior to summarizing the remaining options Mayor Rolbiecki also clarified that the current annual subsidy paid to North is \$17,771. The 2<sup>nd</sup> option is a 12-hour on-site and 12-hour off-site call service with a cost of \$217,000. Option #3 is the City of Minneota staffing and operating the ambulance service. Option #4 has the City forfeiting the license back to the State with the Primary Service Area being divided up and assigned to neighboring ambulance services by the EMSR Board. The Committee also recommended exploring an additional option that would combine the Minneota and Marshall PSA Licenses. With Option #5 the Committee also discussed 8, 10 and 12 hour coverage by North and each plan's corresponding costs that ranged from \$100,000 to \$140,000. At this point the EMSR Board has not indicated whether they would approve such an arrangement. After reviewing all the options and costs

the Committee's unanimous recommendation to the City Council will be to forfeit the license back to the State and not renew the contract with North Memorial in January. At that point the EMSR Board will divide the Primary Service Area and reassign all areas to neighboring ambulance services. The City will also seek to establish a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Crew in Minneota to supplement the ambulance service. I want to stress that at this point no final decision has been made and the Council has scheduled this public hearing to inform every one of what the Committee's recommendations to the City Council will be. The Council will make the final decision at the next regular council meeting October 8<sup>th</sup> but the Council would like to get feedback from the public and make you aware of what the recommendation will be before a final decision is made.

The Committee and all cities, townships, 1<sup>st</sup> responder crews and emergency services within the area are very supportive and committed to establishing a 1<sup>st</sup> responder unit. We have a number of volunteers in line, ready to go and arrangements have been made, costs have been agreed upon and all EMS training can take place in Minneota. The Council has approved a preliminary budget and there is a substantial increase of approximately 44% for emergency services in preparation of establishing a 1<sup>st</sup> responder unit should the Council decide to move in that direction as recommended by the Committee. We have an agreement with neighboring ambulance services, 1<sup>st</sup> responder units and fire departments for assistance during a transition period to help with coverage and additional training as needed should the Council move in this direction. This concludes my portion of updating you on the current position of the City with regard to the ambulance service and I invite any Committee members who are present to add comments or clarify what has been presented. At this time, members of the public are also invited to make comments or ask additional questions.

Jerry Bottelberghe asked if the City does give up the license will they be able to get the license back. Mayor Rolbieck responded by saying that we have been told that it is very unlikely that the license would come back even if we were able to staff an ambulance squad. I should also note that when the Committee reviewed the current contract it was noticed that the intention in 2007 was for the City to merge our license with Marshall's PSA, the City would pay the annual subsidy and the minimum service North would be required to provide is best-effort coverage. The EMSR Board did not approve this plan and the 2007 contract was never updated. Mr. Bottelberghe also asked how many areas of service would be created when the PSA is divided. Mr. Rolbiecki stated that the EMSR Board will be responsible to divide the service area but we know that Minneota will probably fall within Marshall's PSA. Will the townships have anything to say about which service they will be covered by? Each entity will have a say in the process, it will be a collective decision based on response times and the EMSR Board will also base their final decision on what is best for the patient.

Tammy VanOverbeke asked how many people have signed up to become 1<sup>st</sup> responders and how soon can they be trained. Administrator Teigland stated that 19 people have called and expressed interest and if this is the direction the Council wishes to go in I can get the training classes scheduled. 1<sup>st</sup> Responder training will take approximately 40 hours. Mayor Rolbiecki clarified that the Council at this point has not made a final decision and once that happens specifics will be put into place. What we have looked at is that if there is a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder crew, there will be a director in place to handle such things as staffing, schedules and other tasks that will need to be done. Tammy VanOverbeke also asked if the 1<sup>st</sup> Responders would be City employees. Mayor Rolbiecki responded by saying that all these things are still to be determined but more than likely they would be employees of the City similar to the Fire Department and would be considered a municipal entity. With the ability to have training take place in Minneota it will be very helpful in getting staff trained and ready to go by the beginning of January. There are a number of things that need to be put into place if this is the direction the Council takes but I don't believe that the training will be an issue.

Jeanette Sharp asked whether the ambulance goes back to North and if so what vehicle would be available for the City to use. Mayor Rolbiecki explained that when the contract was signed in 2007 the City signed over the assets to North and should the contract be terminated those assets can be bought back for a dollar but the contract is fairly ambiguous as to what the City would get. John Engels explained that the contract states that the City will either get the ambulance back or something

equivalent. Mr. Engels also stated that the contract is not drafted very well but it is the City's position that the ambulance should be returned and how this all is sorted out remains to be seen. Royal Hettling also asked if this would include the equipment in the vehicle. Yes, that certainly is the City's position but again, the contract is not particularly well drafted so we will see how it ultimately sorts out.

Katie Boetgger asked if there is someone locally that does the 1<sup>st</sup> Responder training or is it through North. Mayor Rolbiecki confirmed that North does not provide any training and training will be done through Ridgewater College Emergency Medical Services. The question was asked what happens to the current EMT's. Mayor Rolbiecki responded by saying that they are employees of North and I would say that it is up to North to say whether they can be on the 1<sup>st</sup> Responder crew. Jessica Swedzinski asked the Mayor to clarify if he meant that employees of North couldn't continue working for North and be allowed to outsource. Discussion continued with current North employees stating that they didn't think that being on a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder unit while a North employee has been specifically addressed by North management. Emily Coequyt asked if the City had Field Training Officer Policies in place to help the newly trained responders. Administrator Teigland answered by saying that Ann Jenson, Executive Director SW Minnesota EMS, will be actively involved in setting policies, assisting with establishing the 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Unit and help in whatever way she can to ensure that all things are done correctly.

Corey Crowley also confirmed that both Ghent and Taunton 1<sup>st</sup> Responder teams are willing to provide coverage, training if needed and other set up to help the City should the Council decide to establish a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Unit. Mayor Rolbiecki also stated that no final decision has been made yet so it's difficult to respond to questions about very specific policies or plans. Keep in mind that there will still be an ambulance service that will service the area it just might not come from Minneota. The surrounding ambulances will still need to provide this service and crews may come from Marshall, Canby, Cottonwood or Ivanhoe but no one will be left without ambulance service.

Katie Boetgger asked what it will cost the City to run a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder unit. Mayor Rolbiecki responded that is yet to be determined. What we have estimated in the preliminary budget is about 44% higher. What it will cost is still a big question mark but some of it will depend on what kind of a rig we get and what equipment is there, if it's obsolete or we need other equipment we may go through that anticipated cost fairly rapidly. Ms. Boetgger asked if the Council knew how much the classes would cost. Administrator Teigland confirmed that the training and textbooks would cost \$475 per person. Cory Crowley stated that there is also a rebate from the State to cover a portion of the cost. Mr. Crowley also said that purchasing radios and pagers could be a large part of the startup cost. Ms. Boetgger asked if the City is paying for the training would there be additional requirements such as a contract stating that responders would commit to being on the squad for a period of years in an effort to keep people committed. Mayor Rolbiecki said that again, these are some of the details that we haven't discussed in great detail, but yes, that issue will be discussed.

Discussion continued about response time and how outlying townships might be affected. Mayor Rolbiecki said that having a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Unit would be bridging the gap between the response time to the townships and to the City because the ambulance would be coming from Marshall. Emily Coequyt said that if there is a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Unit in town I don't see the care diminishing because it is essentially the same service we are receiving right now. The ALS rig will still be coming for every call and if the City has a 1<sup>st</sup> Responder group the times when it may take a little longer for the ambulance to get here the City will have someone on-site. The concern is for the townships that will be switched to other services. They will then have BLS service and not ALS service. Cory Crowley said that Emily has brought up a good point and the Committee members discussed this when going through all the options, yet I and the entire Committee will strongly urge the Council to move on our recommendation knowing that the City also won't be able to get that kind of funding from the other cities or townships. Mayor Rolbiecki acknowledged that he has shared numbers that are obviously very staggering but I don't know if everyone realizes what it necessarily means. For instance the cheapest option the Committee considered is to run a substation in Minneota to provide 8 hours of coverage and this will still have to be subsidized by \$100,000 per year. Our current subsidy is just over \$17,000 so the difference is \$83,000. The City of Minneota's entire levy is \$500,000 and the \$83,000 would be added directly to the levy.

The increase is substantial and it will have a direct impact on everyone's property tax. Jerry Teigland stated that the cost could be a 16% levy increase for the ambulance alone. Mayor Robliecki added that the Committee took into consideration what we were actually getting for the financial cost, not just to the City but what would also extend to the townships and the cities of Ghent and Taunton. The cost is too enormous to bear and put on the taxpayers and this is really the end result of the recommendation from the Committee. Jeff Sussner also mentioned that even if the City went with the substation option the City would still need 1<sup>st</sup> responders because the plan coverage is only 8 hours. Mayor Rolbiecki said this too was a good point and acknowledged that there will be additional costs with that option as well. Byron Higgin asked if these costs could still be added to the next budget. Mayor Rolbiecki stated that yes the costs for the 1<sup>st</sup> responder plan is currently in the preliminary budget.

At this point, Mayor Rolbiecki asked if there were any more comments. If not I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Koppien motioned, seconded by Teigland, to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 p.m. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

*The next scheduled Regular Council Meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.*

ATTEST:

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Shirley Teigland, City Administrator

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John Rolbiecki, Mayor

Council Approved October 8, 2018