

SPECIAL SESSION RUSH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SEPTEMBER 15, 2017

The Rush County Board of Commissioners met in special session Friday, September 15, 2017 with Commissioners Paul Wilkinson and Mark Bacon, Jodi Harr, Auditor, and Leigh Morning, County Attorney, in attendance. Commissioner Bruce Levi was not present.

Paul Wilkinson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

The topic of discussion for this meeting is to discuss future EMS services in Rush County.

Commissioner Wilkinson opened by stating that Rush County has the finest volunteer and professional EMS services in the State of Indiana. We are not looking to cut services but ways to provide services within our current financial budget. Commissioner Bacon added the commissioners want to be able to fund the best services possible to all county residents within the budget situation we are in.

Currently EMS services subsidized by the county are Carthage Fire Department, Raleigh Fire Department, Anderson Township Fire Department and Rush Memorial Hospital. Rushville City Fire Department provides EMS and ambulance transport but is not subsidized by the county. Posey Township, Walker Township and Glenwood also provide non-transporting EMS services without any subsidy from the county. The commissioners offered much appreciation to each of these departments.

Each department was asked to give a brief description of the services their department offer.

Nick White, Anderson Twp. Volunteer Fire Department

- They staff one EMT on Station from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. daily.
- Two years ago they updated their ambulance and are still paying for it.
- They cover the southern part of the county.

Jeremy Green, Captain Carthage Vol Fire Department

- They have two ambulances.
- They cover the northwest part of the county.
- They currently have a contract with Raleigh Fire Department to pay Raleigh for the coverage provided when Carthage does not have anyone to cover.
- Efforts are underway to recruit more EMT's and volunteers.

Jason Cain, Raleigh Fire Department

- They have two ambulances and twelve EMT's
- They cover the northern part of the county and help cover Carthage.
- At one time they were the back-up service for Rush Memorial Hospital.

Denny Corn, RMH Board Member

- They have three ambulances.

- They provide paramedic services to the entire county.
- They have paid staff available twenty four hours a day for 365 days a year.

Members of the Rushville City Council were asked if they wanted to speak regarding the Rushville City Fire Department. They commented they were attending for observation only.

Commissioner Wilkinson then asked for public comment.

Jean Ann Harcourt from Milroy spoke with a heavy heart at the thought that rural ambulance services in Rush County might be closed. She has personally experienced life-saving services provided by Anderson Twp. Ambulance Service, Rush Memorial staff and the helicopter services offered at Rush Memorial Hospital. She asked the commissioners to honor the budgets that have been approved by the county council for 2018.

Honorable Bob Jackman commented as a citizen of Milroy. The town of Milroy working hard to promote economic development. New businesses are opening in Milroy. They are working hard to bring additional money into Milroy. He acknowledges that this is a tough job for the commissioners.

Bill Ward, Chairman of the Anderson Twp. Advisory Board commented that he has been involved in EMS within Rush County since its inception. There have been problems within the EMS system in the past and they have always been solved. Anderson Twp. Vol Fire Department is a very professional organization.

Jim Wainwright, Rush County Citizen, noted from personal experience that all EMS services in Rush County are important. It is also a selling point for economic development.

Steve McCorkle speaking as a Rush County Citizen asked the commissioners how they stay unbiased on this issue since they are the county managers and also serve on the Rush Memorial Hospital board. Commissioner Wilkinson responded that question is the reason for having this meeting today. The commissioners want to hear all sides of this important service.

Denny Corn noted that Rush Memorial provides excellent services.

Jeremy Green, resident of Carthage, noted that none of the county fire departments provide these services for profit. Their members are volunteer. He has a great deal of respect for Rush Memorial EMS staff and feels that the county needs both paid and volunteer services. He then asked why the commissioners cannot give some of the money given to Rush Memorial Hospital to the volunteer services.

Jason Cain from Raleigh encouraged the commissioners to do their own research on the value of paramedic services. He has found research that says time is a more important factor to patient outcome rather than advanced care.

Steve Cain from Raleigh stated an example of a call for a situation 1974 resulted in death. The same type of call, at approximately the same location, resulted in the patient living. There was no care available in 1974. He also commented that Raleigh works well with Rush Memorial Hospital EMS and does not want to lose their services.

Scott Barnes asked Cain what reassures the community that someone is available to respond and are you seeing a decrease in the number of volunteers available. Cain responded no. Raleigh service has enough volunteers to make sure that is coverage available at all times. Raleigh fire fighters train with EMT's so they are of assistance as first responders to medical calls. Nick White commented that Anderson Twp. is down in volunteers right now. They are hoping to get another EMT class started soon. Jeremy Green commented that the average number of years of service on the department two years ago was thirteen years. That average is now six years.

Steve McCorkle asked if the departments had more money for training, would they be able to recruit more volunteers. Jeremy Green commented that if the department had the money to pay for a person's training up front, they could get more people. Steve Cain stated many students back out of the class when they realize how much work is involved for it to be a volunteer position. The National Registry test is much harder to pass then the state test in the past. He does not think extra money for training would help. Cain's recommendation is for the county to provide a paramedic in a chase vehicle rather than in an ambulance. The volunteer services already have manpower and ambulances. This is the way Henry County operates their EMS services. The volunteer ambulances would need to be equipped with all advanced equipment with the exception of drugs. McCorkle commented that Rush Memorial Ambulance provides incredibly great services. He also believes that activity within a volunteer department is what keeps the department functional; therefore, without the medical calls they will have a hard time getting volunteer fire fighters.

Nick White commented that other counties in Indiana are envious of the EMS services that Rush County has available. He hates to see our system messed up. If we lose the township ambulance services, the county will never get them back.

County Councilman Marvin Hedrick stated the county council spent two full days going over the county proposed 2018 budgets and to get the best fit for all departments. His vote at the budget meetings was to keep the volunteer services. Hedrick has been around long enough to see the evolution of EMS services in Rush County. He requested the commissioners to not change the services.

Commissioner Bacon asked if Rush Memorial Hospital was the sponsoring hospital for the volunteer services. Ball Memorial Hospital is the sponsor for Raleigh and Carthage. Rush Memorial is for Anderson Twp. Jeremy Green noted that their sponsoring hospital does not receive any money to provide that service.

State Trooper Mike Ooley commented that his experience has shown there is a calming effect on the person needing assistance when they see their neighbor show up to help them. Volunteers will be at the scene quicker.

Honorable Bob Jackman thanked the commissioners again for hosting this meeting. He asked what the next step will be in their decision. Commissioner Wilkinson responded they will look at the budgets submitted by each service and discuss issues or questions with each of the services.

Commissioner Bacon stated he is a firm believer of using our local services. He does not want to lose the service in his part of the county. He appreciates everyone's comments. The council has given their approval for 2018 budgets so the commissioners do not have to be in a hurry to make a decision. He believes EMS territories are an issue. He asked all of the services we are all in this together. Do we need territories? Bacon also noted that Rush County needs new business and we need to retain the businesses we have. EMS service is a big part of this. Steve Cain commented that territories are not an issue with the Raleigh Fire Department. If you are in their area, you are welcome to help them at any time. Jeremy Green asked why Commissioner Bacon asked that question. Bacon replied that is important for everyone to be together and supportive of each other.

Nick White noted that Rush County has a very active Fire Chiefs Association. They work well together to resolve differences and issues.

Commissioner Wilkinson concluded by asking that no department or person be offended when they are ask a question. The commissioners are only seeking information in order to make the best decision.

Mark Bacon moved to adjourn. Paul Wilkinson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

/Paul Wilkinson/
Paul Wilkinson Chairman

/Mark Bacon/
Mark Bacon

/Bruce Levi/
Bruce Levi

ATTEST:

/Jodi Harr/
Jodi Harr, Auditor