

APPROVED MINUTES
WATKINS CITY COUNCIL
THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2023

Mayor Rowan called the special meeting to order at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Chris Rowan, Tootz Tschumperlin, Sue Unterberger, Marc Wirz, Brenda Carlson

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Others: Ambulance Service officers: Chief Jody Bauer, Secretary Heidi Donnay, Assistant Chief Bonnie Holthaus, Treasurer Shawny Kramer, Training Officer Julie Hilsgen. Ambulance Service member Duane Peterson, Deputy Clerk Sarah Jacobsen-Krone, Clerk Deb Kramer

Purpose of the meeting was to meet with ambulance service officers regarding operations.

Mayor Rowan noted the city appreciates everything the volunteer service does but there were some issues that were brought to the council's attention that need to be discussed.

Jody Bauer noted that documentation of calls was not as good as it should be. Jody also noted that over the past couple of years they have been focused on COVID-19 and Blood Borne Pathogens and not as focused on protocol for other things. Jody noted when they do call for Advanced Life Support (ALS) and a chopper they can have the patient to the hospital before the chopper can get there in some cases. Jody did feel the protocols for ALS may need to be reviewed.

When ALS is on a run with them, once they take over care of the patient they should be documenting. Up until ALS gets on scene, the ambulance service should be documenting. If they have two EMT's in the back of the ambulance, one is giving care and the other is documenting, but that may not always be the case. They work on the documentation of the run on their way back to Watkins. Carlson asked about training on documentation. Jody is aware their narratives are lacking. Everything is electronic now and once it's submitted; no changes can be made. Jody noted she has called the state about getting care information from past calls to review what was done.

Wirz noted the hospitals would like to be called when the ambulance is leaving the site with the patient rather than waiting until just a few minutes out to call. The hospital might be able to tell them to go to another facility for treatment if they called ahead sooner. Jody noted they are working to improve that. Sometimes the call location can be within minutes of the nearest hospital and they don't really have time to give a lot of notice.

The Community Paramedic role was explained. If he is on a call with the service, he has control of the scene but the ambulance service does the documentation and narrative. If a call comes in and he is close by, he will respond to the call. If not and they need more advanced support, they call for an intercept.

Council asked what kind of training is required. Jody noted there is a National Registry. By 2036, the state of MN will require every EMT in MN to be nationally registered. Jody thought most of the members were nationally registered. The state requires a 24-hour refresher course every two years.

This is classroom and hands on. The National Registry requires 40 hours of training on various components.

Wirz asked about the medical director position and going forward with Dr. Ho, if that's what is going to happen. The impression was that Dr. Strate was kind of hands off. He felt the next medical director needed to be much more involved so if there are issues, he is overseeing them. The officers noted that Dr. Ho has made it very clear that his rules will be followed.

Carlson asked about the duties of officers and if they have the ability to take measures if a member isn't meeting expectations. Jody noted if someone is not meeting expectations, the board meets and determines where the breakdown is. This is all documented. If the situation can't be resolved easily, it would be brought to the council. Council noted it was very important to document these situations as they would need to see the documentation if necessary.

Carlson asked if they were concerned about operations in the past. Jody noted the concern of patient care was new for her. Jody did note she felt communication among the members may not be as good as it used to be. She is hoping that will improve under Dr. Ho's direction. Jody also noted that some members may be getting burned out. They had over 500 calls in 2022. They take a lot of mutual aid calls from Mayo in Litchfield. Jody thought at least 10% of their calls were mutual aid. The State representative that was out recommended that smaller services re-evaluate their mutual aid agreements. Wirz questioned if the service was getting stretched too thin due to the mutual aid calls. Sometimes they get called to the St. Cloud area and have gotten called to Sauk Rapids. Jody would like to see a change made in auto calling the ambulance for lift assists.

Jody noted Dr. Ho is confident in Meeker County's community paramedic's skill and that he would be an asset to the ambulance service. Dr. Ho has already told the service he will require more communication from them. Meeker County has contract hours with Dr. Ho and the ambulance service would fall under that. Jody noted Dr. Ho is aware of their situation and she didn't think he would take it on if he couldn't get them where they need to be. Jody felt the squad has been very accepting of Dr. Ho coming on as medical director.

Bonnie noted they are getting some calls that they don't see a lot of and are starting to get more training in these areas. Wirz noted that's why the service needs a good relationship with the medical director, so calls can be reviewed with him and ask if there was anything that could have been handled differently.

When paramedics get on board the ambulance, the EMT's on the call are supposed to concede to them. Jody noted if the paramedic calls it and treatment stops, they have to pull over to a safe spot and the paramedic goes back to their vehicle and the Watkins Ambulance has to wait for the coroner, which can sometimes be a couple of hours.

Procedures for calling a helicopter were discussed. Protocols need to be reviewed and updated.

Jody noted the contract is being worked on for Dr. Ho to serve as medical director and he will make sure the service is covered per state statute.

Council agreed that quarterly meetings need to be held with the ambulance officers going forward.

Peterson noted his concern of the new ambulance order being put on hold. The price could increase if on hold too long. Council noted it wasn't the intent to stop it but they had to be sure the service was going to continue to operate with a medical director in place. Carlson noted the council's concerns were addressed and thanked them.

Driving the ambulance was discussed. It was noted the service does have a policy on this. Council noted that should be reviewed and have stricter discipline in place.

The service will continue to work on getting an agreement in place with Dr. Ho for medical director so it's effective by April 10th.

Council thanked the members for their time and service.

MOTION BY WIRZ TO ADJOURN THE MEETING, SECONDED BY CARLSON. MOTION CARRIED.

Adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Submitted by

Deb Kramer
Clerk

ATTEST:

Chris Rowan
Mayor