

**Brianda Negrete** *Public Comment*

**From:** Lenzi, Chelsea  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 10:40 AM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Public Comment - 4/4 Ambulance Contract

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**From:** Tanja Heitman <heitman@countyofsb.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 10:38 AM  
**To:** Lenzi, Chelsea <clenzi@countyofsb.org>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Ambulance Contract

Public Comment for ambulance item.

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**From:** Patric Lausch <docrescue@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 30, 2023 4:12:37 AM  
**To:** Tanja Heitman <heitman@countyofsb.org>  
**Cc:** Supervisor Das Williams <SupervisorWilliams@countyofsb.org>; Laura Capps <lcapps@countyofsb.org>; marianne@independent.com <marianne@independent.com>  
**Subject:** Ambulance Contract

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To the Honorable Supervisor Williams, the Honorable Supervisor Capps, Ms. Heitman

I am writing to you to address the ambulance contract issue that will be voted on next week.

A little about myself. I am a Santa Barbara native, who until 2002 lived in Santa Barbara full time. I still do, technically live in Santa Barbara, however I work around the world in Emergency Response, both as an EMS physician, a medic, and a firefighter/rescue specialist. I do consulting worldwide for various fire and rescue agencies and I know how most of the world's fire, rescue and EMS services work in great detail. Additionally, in Santa Barbara, I have worked as a Paramedic for AMR and while I was a student, as an EMT at UCSB's paramedic rescue, and in the LA area as a professional firefighter/paramedic (while living in SB), so I have many years of first hand experience with the local issues.

To make things clear and transparent, I have no affiliation with any involved party. I am not being compensated to lobby for or against any particular decision. My interest is simply my own. My family still lives in town, and when I am home with my kids, we depend on high quality EMS in the event of an unforeseen emergency, just as everyone else living or traveling through Santa Barbara County does. I

would also like to stress that I have the most respect and admiration for our fire departments who have demonstrated their capabilities to protect our lives and properties during fire season.

In my HONEST opinion, the local fire departments are INCAPABLE of properly providing EMS care to the public, as is the case for most fire based EMS systems. I am no fan of AMR in any way, however the profile of AMR is 100% EMS and while EMS calls comprise over 70-80% of municipal fire departments' call volumes, EMS is always treated as a 2nd class division of the Fire Department. The ONLY exception to this in the US, is Seattle, where becoming a King County Paramedic is considered a great honor and comes with significant monetary compensation, making it a career goal for Seattle Fire Department firefighters who from that point on focus on EMS work at the Fire Department. Locally, however, in the few Fire Department run ambulances in Santa Barbara County, my experience has been very disappointing. The level of skill competence and advanced skill proficiency deteriorate if not used regularly. Local Fire Agency paramedics do not utilize their EMS skills as often as employees of AMR. Additionally, the Fire Department's plan of creating an Ambulance corps, who are not firefighters, but second class employees of the Fire Department who only work on ambulances will not help in retaining highly experienced career paramedics, as many of these ambulance corps paramedics, who will not be paid equivalently to the Fire Dept paramedics, and will not have the same benefits, will create an environment where they will be eager to move on to firefighter positions where their advanced EMS skills will rapidly deteriorate.

Another common problem with such 2 tier operations, where there is an ambulance corps disguised as the Fire Department to the general public, is that resources and revenues are not reinvested into EMS operations, they are instead often used to subsidize more expensive operations such as air ops, SAR teams, or wildland strike crews. This again has a detrimental effect on EMS skill competency, equipment reliability and personnel retention.

The best solution for Santa Barbara County would be the Austin-Travis County model, where a municipal 3rd service is created to run the EMS system with a pay grade and benefits package similar to those of the Fire Department firefighters and the police/Sheriff departments. This attracts top quality medical personnel and creates a constructive career opportunity and is easily funded by the reimbursement from ambulance transports. This would be ideally what County residents deserve, as it would put Emergency Medical Services under the direction of those who specialize in EMS without having to give concessions to the fire departments' needs.

While I understand the politics behind this, and I understand that it is definitely an ego issue from certain Fire Department upper management, in the absence of creating an independent EMS Agency Paramedic Service, AMR is a far better option right now than the Fire Department's plans.

The issue is very complex and highly politicized, however the fundamental issues remain the potential to retain highly skilled paramedics in the County. This issue was clearly visible in the 2018 Montecito mud slides when a significant number of emergency personnel working in the South County could not commute to work from down South and we were left with overworked and exhausted emergency personnel.

I would highly recommend, in the absence of creating a municipal 3rd service, that living wages and better benefits and working conditions be part of the AMR Contract. What is not being mentioned in

the Fire Departments' cringeworthy PR campaign is that AMR actually subsidizes Montecitio, Carpinteria-Summerland and the County Fire Department's paramedic services.

Should you have any questions or would like specific examples or more detailed explanations, please feel free to contact me, I am sure you are all very busy and I'm trying to be as concise as possible.

Additionally, if anyone is ever interested in visiting EMS agencies that have got it right, I would happily help in arranging visits. To see a similar system to that which the County proposes, San Bernardino runs such "2nd class" Fire Department Ambulance operations. The advantage they have is that there is a larger population to recruit paramedics from, however even they have problems retaining skilled medics, which with Santa Barbara's cost of living, would be even more of a challenge locally.

Please don't let the Fire Department's PR campaign influence a critical decision such as this one, especially because your own lives can also potentially depend on the quality of paramedic services in the County. While there are much better options than AMR on a global scale, the veneer of a Fire Department running a 2nd class ambulance service is not it. The shine of the veneer will deteriorate very rapidly and then you will be left with a sub-par EMS safety net when lives depend on it most.

Sincerely

Dr. Patric Lausch