

de la Guerra, Sheila

Public Comment

A-1

From: Sanders, Mike <Mike.Sanders@gmr.net>
Sent: Monday, June 19, 2023 12:56 PM
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Good afternoon,

Please see the attached public comment, item A-1 on the 6/20/23 agenda; File 23-00565.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sanders

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VIA EMAIL ONLY

June 19, 2023

Board of Supervisors
County of Santa Barbara
105 E Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Santa Barbara County Permit Driven EMS System

Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors –

On behalf of American Medical Response (“AMR”), I would once again like to thank you for the opportunity to serve the citizens and visitors of Santa Barbara County for the last 5 decades. Although the ambulance Request for Procurement (“RFP”) seemed to be a fair and equitable process of which we had a 317-point advantage against the Fire Department, we were blindsided and disappointed when the decision was made on April 4, 2023 to disregard the RFP and, against the recommendation of the Public Health Department, explore a “permit driven” ambulance system. Contrary to representations, it is not a “non-exclusive” system.

As Public Health explained in the April 4th Board meeting, the decision to enter into a “permit driven” system is an extremely risky one for the citizens of this County. It creates instability for providers and our local hospitals, places rural areas and other areas with lower call volume at risk, and establishes a novel, untested method for running an ambulance system that is contrary to the applicable state law found in the EMS Act. Unlike an exclusive contract, the proposed permit-driven methodology does not guarantee an applicant in each of the proposed three permits to be submitted, which should especially concern our hospital partners. It also does not contractually guarantee a specific number of ambulances in the system, which is also of concern if there is only one applicant awarded for a permit. Furthermore, over the life of the contract AMR has reimbursed EMS system stakeholders substantial amounts for services rendered, e.g., first responder fees, quality oversight fees, and the like to enhance the system and improve patient care. These funds will be unavailable pursuant to this novel permit-driven system. Our RFP also included a number of innovative investments into both the EMS system and the community that were recognized by the expert review panel, outscoring the Fire Department in how we intend to give back to the system. As you are aware, AMR does not rely on taxpayers to subsidize ambulance transports.

The proposed ordinance your Board will consider at the June 20, 2023 meeting appears to be the first major step the County will follow to carry out the direction your Board gave in the April 4th meeting. Although the proposed ordinance appears focused on revising the County’s ambulance permitting process, its actual purpose appears to be to usurp or limit the authority the County’s local emergency medical services agency (“LEMSA”), which is currently the County Public Health Department. The ordinance on its face—particularly proposed Section 5-20(B)—gives your Board considerably more authority than California’s EMS Act authorizes. The ordinance grants your Board to supervise the LEMSAs and decide the terms of conditions of ambulance service—including those matters that would be

subject to LEMSA medical control—which is contrary to California law. The County’s designated LEMSA must have the exclusive and *unsupervised* authority to decide the conditions under which ambulance service is allowed.

To add to these concerns, we understand the County will look to move the local LEMSA from Public Health to the control of the Fire Department. This would effectively put the losing bidder in charge of any potential ambulance ordinance permit holder (under the proposed ambulance ordinance). This would constitute an improper delegation of authority contrary to what the EMS Act allows. To add to that, it would be equivalent to AMR hiring someone to monitor our contractual performance, approve any exemption requests we submit, and investigate any potential error in treating a patient.

Finally, this decision especially does not make sense when the current system provided by AMR has been **significantly stable** throughout the life of its contracts. Santa Barbara County has some of the best cardiac arrest save rates in the nation, and AMR’s paramedics and EMTs are a direct result of that.

On behalf of AMR and our employees, AMR objects to the ordinance as drafted, and we implore you to abandon an ambulance ordinance update and to strongly reconsider the decision to go into a permit-driven system. There was a clear winner of the RFP for a reason, and it was a decision made by unbiased experts in EMS and local business leaders who studied each proposal and scored it appropriately.



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