



Lumpkin County, Georgia

Finance Department

Date: August 10, 2016

Agenda Item: Place 4th Ambulance in Service

Item Description: Placing 4th ambulance in service at Mill Creek Fire Station #5

Facts & Historical Information:

At the August work session, the Board of Commissioners discussed an item on the agenda regarding the staffing of fire stations. While the Board chose to not explore setting a minimum staffing policy, they did discuss placing a fourth ambulance in service in the County. It was discussed that this ambulance would be placed at the Mill Creek, Station #5, fire station. The Board discussed the need for additional resources in the County and that this ambulance could be used to keep coverage in the County intact should there be an incident that requires multiple apparatuses to respond. Currently with three ambulances, we rely on mutual aid to provide service should all of the County's resources be working active calls. A proposal was made, and after the meeting, staff was instructed to prepare an analysis for the Board to consider at their next voting meeting. At a minimum it would take 2 positions, or 6 six people) to cover the three shifts that Emergency Services currently works. It would take one paramedic and one EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) per shift to provide an ALS (advance life support) ambulance or two EMT's per shift to provide a BLS (basic life support) ambulance. The dollar amounts associated with each type of service level are outlined below. These are the minimum amounts it would take to minimally staff another ambulance as it provides no coverage for sick, vacation, training, etc. should the regular personnel assigned to this unit need to be away from their assigned post. With minimal staffing in Emergency Services as a whole, it would be difficult to provide coverage for this unit and it could be taken out of service should management be unable to provide staffing for this unit. The cost to cover personnel outages would be dependent upon the type of ambulance placed in service. The annual cost of stocking the ambulance is approximately \$5,000 and the annual average cost of fuel and maintenance is \$10,118. Without a full analysis of the entire department, it would be difficult to demonstrate how placing this unit at Station #5 will provide maximum benefit to the department and the citizens that are served.

Potential Courses Of Action:

1. The Board could choose to place a fourth ALS ambulance in service in 2016. The cost for ALS ambulance service, exclusive of any health insurance would be \$327,120 for minimum staffing. The annual cost of supplies, fuel and maintenance is \$15,118. This is the second best option as it puts an ALS ambulance in service that is capable of dealing with more serious medical emergencies. Having an ALS ambulance in service yields positive patient outcomes. While this option is better than option 2, the county has historically



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been unable to keep paramedic positions filled. Over the past 2 years, Emergency services has had at least two vacancies for paramedics each month. This limits the ability of the department to keep ambulances staffed.

2. The Board could choose to place a fourth ambulance in service in 2016 and staff it as a BLS. The cost for BLS, exclusive of any health insurance would be \$320,030 for minimum staffing. The annual cost of supplies, fuel and maintenance is \$15,118. This is the least favorable of the options presented in the analysis as it provides only basic care. The County's coverage area, coupled with limited medical resources, means that some patients must be transported outside of the County should their medical needs be more than the local hospital can handle (i.e. STEMI, stroke, head trauma). This can mean an ambulance ride in excess of 20-30 minutes. With only two EMT's on this ambulance, the care that can be given is limited. If someone is having a medical emergency that requires advanced life support, a BLS ambulance cannot transport the patient. They must wait for an ALS ambulance to arrive. Patient outcomes could be impacted.

3. The Board could choose to delay placing another ambulance in service until such time as a study and long range plan could be developed for fire service in Lumpkin County. This would ensure that personnel and equipment are placed in strategic locations to meet the overall service demands. Having this plan in place would allow funding mechanisms to be developed such that adding staffing and equipment would not be a drain on fund balance or the annual operating budget. This is the most favorable of the options to achieve long range success in providing fire service to the citizens, and visitors, of Lumpkin County.

Budget Impact:

The amount to place a fourth ambulance in service and staff and operate the ambulance is not included in the 2016 operational budget. This amount is also not included in the proposed 2017 budget. The Board could choose to use the SAFR grant, if awarded, to staff a fourth ambulance in service in 2017. Using the grant, if awarded, for this purpose will only minimally staff the ambulance and only provides operational relief for two years.

Staff Recommendation:

It is the recommendation of staff to retain the services of a consultant to perform a study of fire services in Lumpkin County and to help the Board of Commissioners determine the level of service they wish to provide. Staff would further recommend using this consultant to explore the possibility of using a fire service fee to help fund this service.