



**RIVER FALLS CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP REGARDING  
EMS Proposal  
January 28, 2020, 5 p.m.  
Training Room, City Hall, 222 Lewis Street, River Falls, WI 54022**

**City Council Members Present:** Mayor Dan Toland, Todd Bjerstedt, Sean Downing, Chris Gagne, Scott Morrissette, Diane Odeen, Michael Page, Hal Watson

**City Council Members Absent: City Staff Present:** City Administrator Scot Simpson; Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud; Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Assistant to the City Administrator Brandt Johnson; Finance Director Sarah Karlsson; Human Resources Director Karen Bergstrom; Police Chief Gordon Young; Development Services Director Amy Peterson; Operations Director Mike Stifter; Communications Manager Mary Zimmermann; Fire Chief Scott Nelson; EMS Interim Coordinator Katy Frey

**Others:** Kevin Miller; Susan Long; Helen Strike; Carole Mottaz; Diana Smith; Maureen Ash; others

The workshop was called to order at 5:02 p.m. Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud provided an introduction. A request for proposals was issued in October 2019 and due December 2019. In the proposal, the City included a set of requirements. One requirement was ensuring that current EMTs retain their jobs. Another was continuing to provide service to our current service area.

Four firms were interested with two firms returning a proposal. Of those two, one proposal was not responsive nor complete. The City is considering the proposal from Allina. We will need to negotiate the final terms/conditions. They are the City's current service partner, and they provide the City's Medical Director. They were invited to the January EMS Board meeting. Township representatives also attended the meeting as they are interested in having EMS service. Stroud introduced Susan Long, Vice President of Operations and EMS Chief for Allina.

Long provided a presentation which covered the company's values, the size of the organization, their accreditation, current service area, leadership, and operational proposal.

Stroud talked about integration with the two counties and the benefits provided with that opportunity. He said the hourly wage for staff would be higher, and staff would work less hours. Charges to patients would remain roughly the same depending on the service provided.

Aldersperson Watson asked if the proposal included the purchase of the current City trucks. He also asked about the purchase of other assets. Long said they would lease them from the City. Stroud said the proposal did not include the ambulance house.

Aldersperson Gagne asked about building a garage onsite. Long said that would not happen in the short term.

Alderspersons Odeen and Watson asked if any community had not renewed contracts with Allina. Long said no, they all have continued.

Gagne asked if staff would be based in River Falls. Long said yes, the service would be established here. There was discussion about if staff would be expected to respond to calls in Minnesota. Long said only in rare instances in which an ambulance was coming back to Wisconsin from the Twin Cities or in a mutual aid situation. She said they may be able to bring Minnesota trucks here if the staff is busy.

Gagne asked about transfers. Stroud said there are 500 transfers now. It is additional business. Gagne asked if Allina has a long-term plan here to grow. Helen Strike, from Allina, said they have a commitment to River Falls. There are a number of specialists that come here. They will meet community needs as they are able.

Alderson Morrissette asked about a future scenario with contract renewal and prices going up. Long said the goal is to stay. She suggested councilors speak with their other partners about it. Healthcare is expensive.

Alderson Downing asked about Allina sharing oversight of the service with City staff. Watson asked if the City would continue to have an EMS Advisory Board. City Administrator Simpson said that would be a policy question for the Council. He has asked Stroud to provide a model. The Council has a number of options. He thinks the City may have a group. He talked about performance measures and having a place for grievances.

EMS Advisory Board Chair Carole Mottaz encouraged Council to continue with an advisory board in some fashion. She said the Town Chairs like the idea and having an official in their corner.

Simpson talked about communicating with peers and different models. There are not many like ours.

Watson asked the funds going forward. Simpson said the City is in excellent shape.

Kevin Miller, Deputy Chief and Director of Operations and Business Development for Allina, talked about the buyback clause in contracts. In the contract, assets need to go back to the cities. We want cities to have a service.

Alderson Bjerstedt asked about the timeline. Simpson talked about an agreement on proceeding in full. We need Council to agree on bulleted items. Simpson talked about coming back with a contract to approve.

Morrissette talked about looking forward to advisory board oversight. He asked that at minimum an annual "State of the City" report be provided from Allina staff.

Stroud said there is an EMS Board meeting next week. They would finalize a resolution to bring before the Council. He talked about different aspects they need to finalize including the budget and the Prescott contract. River Falls would be their first Wisconsin partner, so they have so they need to get a license. This will take several months.

Gagne asked about lead time for townships. Stroud said he is looking at June for having that information.

Alderson Downing asked about open records requests. Miller said information can be given except what is HIPPA protected. Gagne would like to see patients who request their records getting their request on the spot.

Watson thought it was a great presentation and appreciated Allina staff being here. He asked if investigations have been made into partnerships with counties.

Simpson said staff hasn't spent a significant amount of time doing that. He said there is no viability with counties on significant partnerships. They are in their traditional lanes. He thinks it is not a good use of time. He talked about keeping the City service. We could do something other than contracting with Allina if the Council wished to do so.

Mottaz talked about how each jurisdiction has its own needs. If the City had unlimited resources, it would not be a problem. She talked about the service from a historical perspective and talked about her involvement. The top priority is patient care. She talked about more regulations and demands and not being able to maintain what we have while also being fiscally responsible. There is no better offer than Allina. Mottaz thanked everyone for their support.

The Mayor responded by saying he couldn't have said it better. He has asked all kinds of questions and has had many discussions about the EMS Service.

Watson asked if the paramedics do other types of care when they are not in the vehicle. Long talked about patient outreach and how they are always looking into this.

Gagne asked about the contract with Allina. Stroud talked about having one master agreement with Allina, but we would work with the City Attorney. Simpson said the towns hasn't indicated that they want their own contracts. He talked about mutually beneficial relationships and trying to negotiate on everyone's behalf. The City isn't proposing to charge out the towns a difference in per capita.

Mottaz said the towns were concerned about being left behind. We have built good relationships with them. Morrisette noted cities are not obligated to provide service but towns are.

Stroud noted the time was getting close to the end and said staff feels a partnership with Allina is the best option. His intention is to ask the EMS Board for endorsement to go the Council with a recommendation to transition to Allina. On the February 11 agenda, Council could see a resolution asking for consideration and approval on what you saw tonight.

The workshop adjourned at 6:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk