

Additions to January 7, 2015 Regular Meeting of Council Agenda

7.8 - (ADDITIONAL ITEM)	Councillor Bossert	Letter of Support Regarding Ambulance Service in Rural Alberta
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AGENDA ITEM: 7.8	Letter of Support Regarding Ambulance Service in Rural Alberta
Department:	Fire Department
Presented by:	Councillor Bossert
Support Staff:	Tom Thomson

BACKGROUND:

In meetings with Council during the level of service review for the Fire Service, the department expressed concern regarding EMS response in our community. The specific concern is in regards to our local EMS service which is controlled by Alberta Health Services leaving our community on transfer calls which results in a shortage of EMS personnel in our local community.

As a result, the Fire Service is being called more frequently to attend medical emergencies, in which the Fire Service is assisting EMS staff with patient care, or are arriving first on scene and performing medical assistance until EMS units arrive on scene.

A letter was sent to Alberta Health Services' Mr. Lyle McKellor Executive Director of Operations for the Central Zone Region which addressed these concerns. Mr. McKellor and his associate Mr. Scott Holsworth met with the Fire Service and Mr. Marco Schoeninger (CAO Brazeau County) to discuss this issue. During the meeting a proposal was presented to Alberta Health Services to perhaps relieve some of the strain on our local EMS by providing a type of EMS quick response unit that could respond to medical emergencies but would not transport individuals to the hospital.

During times in which this unit was not responding to an emergency, it would be used to provide assistance to individuals in our community who may require medical assistance, but do not need to go to the hospital, a medical clinic, or the emergency room. This unit could be used to provide assistance to seniors who have health issues, patients who have just left the hospital, individuals who may require assistance with medications, or who are suffering from chronic diseases, illnesses, or are recovering addicts.

Following this initial meeting with Alberta Health Services it was agreed that this idea may have some merit and could possibly qualify for a pilot project. Unfortunately, shortly after this meeting, the Fire Service was informed that a service delivery review was being undertaken by Alberta Health Services and any further discussions regarding this project shall be discontinued indefinitely.

As a result of this response from Alberta Health Services, Brazeau County Council have drafted a letter addressed to Minister Stephen Mandel Minister of Health strongly urging him to allow talks to continue regarding this situation and the possibility of a pilot project for this area.

Brazeau County Council is asking the Town of Drayton Valley to support this initiative by signing this letter as a show of support.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Fire Service is recommending that Town Council support this initiative by signing this letter urging Minister Mandel to allow talks to continue regarding EMS response in our community.

Please refer to the attached letter.

MOTION:

I move that Council approve submitting a joint letter of support (with Brazeau County and the Village of Breton) to the Minister of Health regarding EMS response in our community and the possibility of a pilot project.

Brazeau County

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January 7th, 2015

Honourable Stephen Mandel
Minister of Health
208 Legislature Building
10800-97th Ave
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Attention: Minister Mandel
Re: Ambulance Service in Rural Alberta

Dear Minister Mandel;

I am writing this letter on behalf of the elected officials and citizens of Brazeau County, Town of Drayton Valley, and the Village of Breton to express concern regarding the EMS ambulance service within our area. Specifically, I would like to address the issue of local EMS ambulances not being available for quick response due to the fact that they are out of our community on transfers to other communities. During the past year, the local Fire Service has responded to 24 calls in which our local EMS was requiring our assistance or not on scene. The local members of our department are more than willing to assist EMS whenever necessary but concern arises when our members are arriving on scene first and do not have the training or equipment to do advanced life support activities necessary.

We have shared our concerns regarding this issue with Mr. Lyle McKellar (Executive Director) and Mr. Scott Holsworth (Director) of Operations for the Central Zone region. During our meeting with these gentlemen, both parties shared information which was very informative and positive. During our discussions with Mr. McKellar and Mr. Holsworth, a proposal was presented by Brazeau County Administration to perhaps relieve some of the strain on our local EMS service by providing a type of quick response medical unit equipped with emergency medical equipment and trained personnel to respond to any medical emergency and perform basic or advanced life support to individuals in our community. This unit would not transport individuals to the hospital, but would rather be used to treat individuals on scene until an ambulance arrived to take over care of the individual(s). This would solve a lot of concerns we have regarding EMS services not being available when needed. But, the question has to be asked, what would this unit do when not responding to an emergency?

During the time in which this unit is not responding to an emergency, these trained individuals could be used to provide assistance to individuals in the community who may require medical help. Though it may not be an emergency, does not require hospital care, or require a trip to the local clinic, this unit could provide assistance in such situations as checking on seniors who have health issues, checking up on patients who have just left the hospital, working with individuals who may require help with medications or who are suffering from chronic disease, illness, or are recovering addicts. I feel that given the right training, these individuals could easily assist in the care of individuals at home who would otherwise take up valuable time, resources and space in our local clinics and hospitals.

Honourable Stephen Mandel

Page 2

January 7, 2015

Following this initial meeting, Mr. McKellar and Mr. Holsworth were going to share our discussions and ideas with other members of Alberta Health Services and discuss the possibilities of this new potential initiative with the hopes of running a pilot program here in our area. Unfortunately, soon after our meeting with these two gentlemen took place, we were notified by Mr. McKellar that they had been directed to suspend any further talks about potential new initiatives in communities as they were currently undertaking a service delivery review and added further that they did not have any clear knowledge as to the length of time this process would take.

Unfortunately, Mr. Minister, we do not have time to wait for a service review. We have some serious concerns about EMS delivery in our community and are offering a potential solution to the problem. We respectfully request that you allow this process to continue and permit these two individuals to continue on with this process so that we do not have a tragic event occur in our community.

Please don't misunderstand our issue, we do not have an issue with the company that is providing EMS service in our community nor do we hold any grudge or hard feelings against any of the EMS staff providing the service. What we are concerned with is the fact that they are being pulled away from our community on transfers and are not available 24/7 as they should be leaving the Fire Service to pick up the slack.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Should you or your colleagues require any further information regarding this situation, we would be more than willing to discuss this with you or your staff.

Respectfully,

Shirley Mahan
Acting Reeve
Brazeau County

Glenn McLean
Mayor
Town of Drayton Valley

Darren Aldous
Mayor
Village of Breton

/TT

cc: Honourable Diana McQueen – Minister of Municipal Affairs
Council Members - Brazeau County/Town of Drayton Valley/Village of Breton
Marco Schoeninger – CAO Brazeau County
Manny Deol – Town Manager – Town of Drayton Valley
Terry Molenkamp – CAO Village of Breton
Tom Thomson – Fire Chief DV/BC Fire Services

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