

Hospital presented with another ambulance option

EMT pitches his company if hospital decides to go private

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The Quincy Valley Medical Center board and administration was presented with another option if it decides to drop its ambulance service.

During a special board meeting on Monday, Dec. 6, Brian Williamson, an EMT with the Quincy Valley Ambulance Service, has formed his own corporation, Protection-1 LLC, and presented the board a proposal to have the company provide ambulance service in the Quincy Valley.

Earlier this fall, the hospital board declared that it is exploring the idea of getting out of the ambulance business in favor of having a private company run the ambulance, because the hospital loses money on the service. American Medical Response, a national ambulance-service company, has expressed an interest in taking over the operation. Williamson said he was providing this proposal as a local option.

ADVERTISEMENT "I don't want to be the hinging point on a decision," Williamson said. "I'm not interested in doing this if you're not divesting the service."

Williamson said his company would essentially maintain a status quo operation, retaining the current employees of the ambulance service and its current level of service. The company would lease the hospital's fleet of ambulances and add a 2003 Ford E450 Braun ambulance to the service.

He said the service may look at re-locating to another facility in Quincy that would provide more space and comfort than what is provided at the hospital's ambulance station.

Hospital board member Anthony Gonzalez asked if Williamson would ask for continued financial support from the City of Quincy and Grant County Fire District No. 3. The entities provide \$208,000 to the hospital to support its ambulance service.

"There is no way to operate without their support," Williamson said.

Board member Darrell VanDyke asked Williamson if he thought he could make money running the service.

Williamson said there is room for profit, but not much.

"There isn't very much of a margin," he said.

Administrator Mehdi Merred said the decision to support a private service will be up to the city and fire district.

"In this process, the city and fire district will ultimately decide," Merred said. "They will need to see financial stability and a longterm outlook for the company."

He and the board asked Williamson if he could present the board with a detailed business plan and financial report. Williamson said he would have the information to the board by the end of the month.

The board also approved a contract with Computer Programs and Systems Inc., of Mobile, Ala., to spend \$1.3 million for an electronic medical records system that is being mandated by the federal government. The hospital district secured a two-year loan, which is currently at 3.6 percent interest, for \$1.5 million from Washington Trust Bank to pay for the system. The government will then reimburse the hospital for up to 100 percent of its expenses to install the system. There are about \$200,000 in hardware expenses the hospital will have to pay for, which may not be reimbursed. Once the system is installed there is a monthly fee of about \$13,000.

The system should help healthcare providers access patients' medical records more easily, providing more convenience and continuity of care for patients, Merred said.

The board also approved a contract to purchase the Friends Church property north of the hospital for \$425,000. The hospital district now owns the whole city block. The church building, which will be vacated in January, was acquired for future use and expansion of the hospital facility, Merred said.

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