

CUMBERLAND COUNTY POLICY COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 16, 2000, 11:00AM

Members Present: Chairman Jeannette Council
Commissioner Talmage Baggett
Commissioner Breeden Blackwell
Others: James Martin, County Manager
Juanita Pilgrim, Deputy County Manager
Amy Cannon, Asst. County Manager
Grainger Barrett, County Attorney
Bob Stanger, County Engineer
Marsha Fogle, Clerk to the Board

1. Approval of Minutes: October 19, 2000

MOTION: Commissioner Blackwell moved to approve.
SECOND: Commissioner Baggett
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

3. Discussion/consideration of ambulance franchise applications;

- a. Mid South Medical Transport – Terry Heuser
- b. FAYNET (Fayetteville Non-emergency Transport) – Authur & Andrea Hooper

Mr. Walt Rose, Associate Administrator of Cape Fear Valley Health System, Inc. told the Committee that the Emergency Services Department answered 5200 non-emergency calls last year. He said that number is steadily growing each year. He noted the Emergency Services Department is in the process of changing the way they handled non-emergency calls, as follows:

1. they will provide vehicles/staff to respond to non-emergency calls from 7:00AM to 7:00PM, Monday through Saturday;
2. they will shift FTE's (full time equivalents) from EMS to cover this service while still providing service for emergency calls;
3. they will begin this new process in January, 2001.

This process will provide more efficiency in the way they handle calls. He noted that paramedics are not needed for non-emergency calls. He said they could institute this change without adding more people or ambulances. Mr. Rose also noted the hospital's following concerns about approving the franchise ordinances:

1. who will monitor quality, responsiveness and maintenance;
2. will the private franchisee's transport non-paying patients (everyone should have to do their fair share in servicing patients who cannot afford to pay)

Mr. Rose said the Hospital has been working on the issue of non-emergency transportation for awhile. He said the new process will be more efficient while still providing a high quality service to non-emergency transports.

In response to a question, Mr. Rose said the Emergency Services Department answers about 39,000 call a year. About 30,000 of these calls require an ambulance.

Commissioner Baggett inquired if there was a way to assure that the private transporters will take the "next name on the list" regardless of their ability to pay. He said we need a system in place to prevent "cherry picking".

James Martin, County Manager, indicated that while he did not believe it would be the intent of the private transporters to "cherry pick", it could well happen and there is at this time no mechanism in place to prevent it.

Grainger Barrett, County Attorney, said that one of the applicants indicated willingness to enter into an agreement that will address the "cherry picking" issue.

Commissioner Baggett inquired as to how much money the hospital loses annually on the ambulance service. Mr. Rose replied about \$4.6 million. He said they run 19 ambulances and 6 quick response vehicles and have about 100 employees.

Commissioner Blackwell said he would only be supportive of approving a franchise if the franchisees agree to sign an agreement that they will pick up the "next person" on the list, and that the county institute a "probationary" period in which we can monitor the quality of the service, etc. Commissioner Blackwell said there is definitely a need for non-emergency transport. He suggested that the hospital could monitor the quality of service, etc. provided by the private transporter. Wally Ainsworth, Director, Emergency Medical Services of CFVHS, said at this point there is no system in place to determine if someone is picked up. If the hospital monitored the private non-emergency transporters through an agreement, it could be perceived that "the fox is watching the henhouse".

Andrea Hooper, FAYNET Franchise applicant, indicated there is a need for non-emergency transport. She said non-emergency patients are waiting for hours to be transported to kidney dialysis and other treatment facilities. She noted she would be providing a service that is not being effectively addressed by the Cumberland County Emergency Services Department. She said if the Cumberland County Emergency Services Department has the equipment and manpower, she is perplexed as to why they have not been providing the service. In addition, she said as far as "cherry picking", she did not think it was legal to inquire whether or not a patient could pay. She said in most cases these patients have some type of insurance, i.e. Medicare.

Wally Ainsworth said that at this time the Emergency Services Department is not utilizing their manpower and equipment efficiently in addressing non-emergency transports.

Commissioner Jeannette Council inquired when the new policy will be put in place at the hospital. Mr. Rose said they would be ready to implement this new policy January 2, 2001. Ms. Andrea Hooper said it would take her 30 days to implement their non-emergency transport service. Mr. Terry Heuser of Mid South Medical Transport said he could implement his service immediately. He currently provides this service in other counties (Wake and Johnston). Mr. Heuser said his service is available 24 hours a day and there would be no discrimination based on ability to pay. He said he can provide ambulance transportation and also wheel chair van services.

Commissioner Baggett inquired if all non-emergency transport cases were stretcher bound. The response was no, there are some wheel-chair cases.

Wally Anisworth noted that the non-emergency calls would not go through the 911 number but would be dispatched through life link.

In response to a question, Walt Rose, CFVHS, said the hospital recommends denial of the ambulance franchise requests.

Grainger Barrett, County Attorney, noted that if the recommendation of the Policy Committee is to deny the ambulance franchise requests, they must support their action with specific reasons sufficient to explain why we are making this decision. Mr. Barrett said he did not think an appropriate reason would be that we have no one to monitor the quality and responsiveness of the franchise applicants.

Commissioner Baggett inquired if the committee could send this issue forward to the Board without a recommendation. The answer was yes.

Commissioner Council inquired if a credit check or criminal records check has been done and if one can be done. None have done at this time; however, those are things that can be done if the franchise ordinances are approved.

In addition, these requirements will be added as part of the application process, once the County Attorney has an opportunity to review the ambulance franchise application.

MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved to recommend denial of the franchise ordinance applications based on the following:

1. the potential negative funding impact on the entire hospital system;
2. non-emergency transport through the Hospital System will maintain accountability of delivery of ambulance service to the public and to the Board of Commissioners in that the Hospital Board of Trustees and Board of Commissioners are accountable and responsive to the public;
3. concern that by allowing these private providers to serve exclusively the segment they propose to serve, will leave unserved or lessen service to the indigent or financially stressed segment of the market who never the less need to continue to be adequately served.

SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell
VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Note: This item will be placed on the December 18, 2000 agenda for action by the Board of Commissioners.

3. Discussion/consideration of Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road Area Sanitary Sewer Project

Bob Stanger, County Engineer, introduced Mr. Tom McNeill, PWC; Buck Henry, Wooten Company, Jackie McLamb, Rural Development, Jimmy Kizer, Moorman, Kizer & Reitzel, Inc.; Jimmy Teal, City of Fayetteville; and Alan Amor, PWC.

Mr. Stanger reviewed the recommendations from the Wooten Company concerning funding options for the Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road Area Sanitary Sewer Project. Mr. McLamb and Mr. Henry also reviewed the options in more detail. The options are as follows:

- a. Community Development Block Grant: one year grant in the range of \$200,000 to \$250,000;
- b. PWC Commission/City of Fayetteville: contribution of \$116,400 toward the project (lift station and force main); county would also contribute same amount;
- c. High Unit Cost Grant – State Clean Water Bond Program: Grant funds available in the amount of \$36 million (one half of these funds earmarked for local governmental units having a MCI bond rating of 75 or greater with the remaining funds earmarked for those having a MCI bond rating less than 75); a major qualifier for grant eligibility is that the combined monthly water/sewer charge must equal or exceed 1.5% of the median household income of the applicant;
- d. Unsewered Community Grant Program – NC Rural Center: Cumberland County is eligible to file under this program, provided a local government unit is formed to actually serve the applicant. Primary prerequisites is that the entity have a population of less than 5,000 and the median household income be less than 90% of the national average (note: there is no population requirement if the area is not incorporated); grants are in given in the amount up to \$3 million or 90% of the project cost, whichever is less;
- e. USDA Rural Development: Cumberland County would be eligible for both a grant and a loan. A bond referendum will be required and the grant amount can be no greater than what is necessary to bring the average monthly charge down to approximately \$28 per month.

Of these five options, the USDA Rural Development Grant Programs offers the most certainty of securing a grant. The Unsewered Communities Grant Program offers the next most likely opportunity for success because there will be somewhat limited competition for these funds.

In summary, the County has three potential grant funding opportunities for this project. All options should be kept open and personal visits made to each agency to assess their program. It is reasonable to project that funding for this project can be secured by the end of calendar year 2001.

Commissioner Blackwell noted that he had visited the Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road area yesterday. He noted the deplorable conditions and sewage running in the streets. He inquired as to the timeframe involved in getting some help to this area. He said this project needs to be on fast forward.

Bob Stanger said the goal is to pursue all avenues available to us for funding this project and to move forward as expeditiously as possible.

MOTION: Commissioner Baggett moved to recommend to the full Board that we pursue all the avenues available to us to fund this project.

SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

4. Review of water/sewer priority needs list

Bob Stanger reviewed the criteria established back in 1996 for prioritizing requests for water/sewer extensions. He noted the process is not flawless and can probably be improved upon. The Committee noted that the Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road project is listed as number 8 on the priority list. Because the problems in the Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road area have been ongoing for years, the members of the Committee indicated they would like to see it moved to number one on the priority list. It was the opinion of the Policy Committee that additional factors should be considered in prioritizing requests such as how long the problem has been ongoing.

Several people from the community attended the meeting and noted the urgency in getting this project started and completed.

MOTION: Commissioner Council moved to make the Kelly Hills/Slocomb Road project number one on our water/sewer priority list.

SECOND: Commissioner Blackwell

VOTE: UNANIMOUS

5. Discussion on developing a policy addressing project funding upon bond referendum approval.

The Policy Committee instructed staff to bring back a proposed policy for their review.

6 Discussion/consideration of a policy regarding recognition of county retirees.

The members of the Policy Committee unanimously approved the following policy regarding recognition of county retirees, to become effective January, 2001:

- Employees retiring with less than 20 years of service will receive a certificate of recognition (mailed to them)
- Employees retiring with 20 or more years of service will receive a plaque and be invited to a commissioners, meeting to receive it.

Commissioner Council asked the Committee to take a look at providing some guidelines for chicken farm operations at our next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned:1:15PM