

**Special Meeting Ely City Council – City Hall, Council Chambers
December 13, 2023 – Minutes**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Omerza called the meeting to order at 5:30pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Council members A.Forsman, Kess, Debeltz, Callen, Campbell, Bisbee, and Mayor Omerza

ABSENT: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Forsman explained that an emergency Ambulance Joint Powers Meeting was called on Monday December 11th, 2023, also scheduled as a special council meeting, to consider providing early subsidy payment to the Ely Area Ambulance Service to make current payroll and to continue operation. At the Joint Powers Meeting after lengthy discussion a motion was made to provide two months' worth of operating losses totaling approximately \$52,000 early from the funds that the communities had budgeted for in 2024. The expectation is that during this two-month time frame the service will work with the Ely Bloomenson Community Hospital(EBCH) to determine a viable solution for continued operation and will transfer the license back to the hospital. Under the current operational losses, the funds budgeted for 2024 will only sustain the current model of operation until March of 2024. EBCH is currently having a study done that will be completed in early January that may outline some options moving forward.

Kess explained that to continue down the current path could be defined as "insanity" and the study should find some models or solutions that will be sustainable.

Debeltz asked Langowski if IRRR funds would be available to help the operational deficits.

Langowski said operational grants are not currently available from the IRRR.

Forsman explained that the majority of the issue is due to inadequate reimbursements for Medicare and Medicaid patients and also explained that if someone calls the ambulance but refuses a ride to the Hospital the service receives no payment. Rural areas continue to struggle due to poor reimbursements and the actual mileage reimbursement is only \$0.26 per loaded mile. This results in mileage only being collected one way to the hospital for transport.

Mayor Omerza attended the legislative task force meeting on EMS earlier in the day and testified to the need of sustainable funding for ambulance service. All area services were at the hearing and have similar issues.

Campbell stressed the importance of the ambulance including that she had just had a medical emergency requiring her transport to the Virginia Hospital and the service was excellent. Mayor Omerza reinforced the fact that no one is saying we do not need an ambulance and we will do whatever necessary to make it work. She further pressed for residents and Councilors alike to contact our Federal Senator's concerning this issue.

Forsman further explained that the current operating model would require a subsidy of nearly \$200,000 from the City of Ely representing 12% of the current property tax levy and would have also required an additional 6% levy increase to continue the current model. The proposed levy for 2024 would have needed to be a 10-12% increase as compared to the 2.94% approved.

Forsman/Kess moved to approve providing funding to the Elay Area Ambulance Joint Powers totaling \$32,090 for two months of operating subsidy and \$5,928 for the 2024 building operation budget. Motion Carried Unanimously

ADJOURN:

Mayor Omerza adjourned the council meeting at 5:47pm without objection.

Harold R Langowski
Clerk/Treasurer