

June 18, 2018

Ambulance/Hospital / County Discussion

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a special session on June 18, 2018 in the Lincoln County Courthouse, Libby, Montana. Present were Commissioner Bennett, Commissioner Peck and Deputy Clerk and Recorder Chris Nelson.

1:30 PM Present were Jay Maloney (CPMC ER), Michelle Boltz (CPMC Hospitalist), Penny Kyes (LVA), Jeff Holder (LVA), Craig Schultz (LVA), Bruce Whitfield (CPMC), Ben Kibbey (Western News), John P Thornton (CPMC ED), Brian Zimmerman (Libby City Council), Pat Shira (Troy Ambulance), Roger Gilligan (Troy Ambulance), and Brent Teske (EMA). Commissioner Bennett said his intent with the meeting was to sit down with everyone and see if they could find solutions moving forward. Bruce Whitfield stated he was hoping they could come together in the same way they did when Western Montana Mental Health closed. A major issue is that the hospital needs patients transported to other facilities but with a major decrease in volunteers the Libby Volunteer Ambulance (LVA) does not have the staff. In previous years, LVA had 40 members and is now down to 16. Commissioner Bennett asked if it was the requesting hospital that wants the transport. Dr. Maloney said that it is usually a hardship issue of the patient not being able to get to the other facility. Craig Schultz said that ½ the calls they get the ambulance isn't even needed. Dr. Maloney asked if it would be possible to come up with an intermediate member who could be paid and who would only do transports. Bruce said that Bonners Ferry used a hybrid volunteer and pay system but they had to get an addition mill to help fund it. Commissioner Bennett said he had heard of what Bonners Ferry had done but it is difficult to mix volunteer and paid personnel. Jeff wondered why it is that we can't keep more patients here. Every time the hospital must send patients to Kalispell it losses thousands of dollars and it would make more economic sense to get more specialists and keep that money here. Michelle Boltz said it isn't possible or financially feasible to get specialist here as they make ½ of what they could be making. Dr. Maloney said that other hospital's specialists are also not willing to consult on a patient without seeing that patient in person. The group discussed the possibility of sending a mill levy increase to the voters. Commissioner Bennett said the community had been receptive to supporting mill levy increases for the ambulance in the past. Craig asked what that money would go to; paid drivers, EMT's, medics? Commissioner Peck said that is a viable question and one that should be thoroughly discussed and researched before anything is brought to the voters. He added he had dealt with the same issue in Flathead County and he doesn't see how it's possible to get around this without some type of paid personnel. Commissioner Bennett asked the group if they are willing and committed to sitting down and figuring this issue out. He added that if this isn't figured out now it will just go until it completely breaks down. Commissioner Peck said it would be worthwhile to bring someone in who can look at the issues and come up with solutions without any bias. Commissioner Bennett said he would be willing to pay out of his economic development money to have a facilitator come in and help solve this issue. The commissioners agreed they would discuss the mediator and be in contact with the rest of the group.

Meeting Adjourned 3:00 PM

LINCOLN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jerry Bennett, Chairman

ATTEST: _____
Chris Nelson, Deputy Clerk and Recorder