

09/22/2014

To the Commissioners of Iron County:

Alma Adams  
Dale Brinkerhoff  
David Miller

We would like to first thank you for your service to the citizens of Iron County. We write this letter in response to the notice that was given to the employees of the ambulance last Thursday that a Request for Proposal (RFP) would be opening up for the area that is now serviced by the Emergency Services division of the Iron County Sheriff's Office. As employees and as citizens of Iron County, we have some concerns and issues that we would like to make known regarding this matter.

This agency currently gives the highest quality of care in the state. We have stretched the resources we have been allotted and made them go further. We purchased a refurbished ambulance in order to also purchase two new rescue units to replace older, more unreliable vehicles, all for the cost of one brand new ambulance. After coming under the control of the sheriff's department, response times are down, quality of care is up, and morale is up. I believe the safety of the citizens of Iron County is improved. We are working hard to clean up this agency and make it more solvent for the future. These changes take time and effort and we are doing our best to make them as quickly and efficiently as possible. We believe that we provide a service to the smaller communities that cannot be matched by a private company. It would not be financially viable for them to have medical personnel staffed, waiting in Beryl, in New Harmony, or even in Parowan, for a call when these smaller communities have such a small call volume. It would not profit them. So by getting rid of the public run ambulance, you are short changing the outlying areas of this county. Such companies would provide services to Cedar City but what about Summit, Modena, Brian Head or Kanarraville, and all the places in between?

We believe that the transfer of the ambulance service to a private company could have the potential to cause economic harm to Iron County. The ambulance service employs anywhere from 70-

90 people at a time in Iron County, making this one of the largest divisions in said county. When the county pays these individuals, that money is then used to buy goods and services here in this county, thus bringing in money for local businesses. The amount of money spent from the employees of this agency accounts for hundreds of thousands of dollars into the local economy. If a private service is brought into the county, wages will be dropped because the company has to make a profit. Much of those profits will not be spent in this community but rather where ever the company is based. These 70-90 employees, most of who are paid on a per call basis, are working here because we like to serve the community, but we also work here in order to provide for our families. I don't know if putting 70-90 people out of work would be what is in the best interest for Iron County in the economic situation we are facing currently.

If this company is going to come in and take over emergency medical services to make money within the Cedar City area, why would you be doing all of the negotiation and not be including the Cedar City Council and Mayor Wilson? Why aren't all of the city councils in the county involved in this decision? It affects all of the cities and all of the citizens within this county.

One of the companies that are anticipated to apply for this service is the one that currently does our billing and is responsible for arranging our collections. Does that not pose a serious conflict of interest? You propose that we sell this service because as a commission you feel that we are insolvent, so because they are failing to fulfill their obligations, arranged through contract, we lose on our end and then they get to come in and take over this service, knowing exactly what it takes to turn a profit. They have the ability to sink this ship so they can come in and take its place. That seems questionable. Why are we not doing this billing ourselves? We have a full-time employee who works for this agency already. Why is she not being trained to handle the billing side of things? Why are we not using the same collection agency that collects for the auditor or county clerk's office, which provides this service at a much cheaper rate than our current collections agency? We waste thousands of dollars every year paying someone else to do a job that we should be able to do within our own county agency and you

are already paying an individual to perform this function, but who lacks the training to do so.

You have given raises to human resources personnel and legal personnel because they have so many people to manage, will you retract that raise if the agency gets sold and they have close to 90 less employees to manage?

This decision affects everyone in this county. So why have they not had the opportunity to weigh-in and give public voice to this issue? Why has the community not been asked how they feel about having to support those that have been tasked with the responsibility of their health and safety? This choice, from a public perspective, is being made hastily, and without much consideration for what your constituents want, but rather what makes your job easier as commissioners. You do have a very difficult job, but you were elected to represent the people of Iron County even if it is hard. We believe that this is a choice that will change our county forever, and once we go down the path to privatization of the EMS system in Iron County; there will be no resurrecting the ambulance service as we know it now.

There have also been reports of buyer's remorse, if you will, in areas where they turned their EMS system over to a private company. The public loses the power to influence change, and big business takes over. Currently, if the county, or city, have a concern for how the service functions, it will be addressed because we all work together. If private business is involved they will do whatever they feel is best for their company and only their company and reeling them in after you are disappointed in the product you purchased would cost much more in court battles and legal fees, than it would have cost to have kept the former system in place. Once this agency is gone, it is gone forever, there is no going back. This is a HUGE decision you are making on behalf of your constituents, a decision that we as citizens ask that you allow us to give input. We would ask that you hold a public meeting and allow the community to voice their concerns and you earnestly listen, absorb, and if deemed appropriate, apply what the people have to say.

In the end, it is the citizens' money you are using to help support the enterprise fund of the

ambulance. So they should have a say. There are other options that need to be explored in fixing this problem before selling out. We have ideas. Options have been discussed; however no input has been requested from us on ways to improve the operations of this agency in making them more fiscally responsible. We deserve a chance to be heard.

We have great ideas that need to be heard and shared with the Commission. Please speak with those who have ideas to help fix the problems. Communicate with the cities that will be affected by this and involve them in this process. We are in this position financially because of mistakes made on everyone's part, mistakes that span over a period of greater than ten years. It takes more than two years to set up a solvent system and climb out of such a hole. Please take this into consideration as well; progress has been made! Thank You.

Signed,

Representatives of the Iron County Sheriff's Department Division of EMS