

October 26, 2023

Good Evening,

I understand that the Pliocene Ridge Community Services District Board will hold a Special Meeting on Sunday October 29th. The issue is a discussion of Ambulance Services to the PRCSD communities of Alleghany and Pike City. This email is an attempt on my part to provide background and understanding of the issues at hand.

There is a complicated background for EMS & Ambulance Service to the Ridge. It all began back in 1995 when the Sierra County Board of Supervisors (BOS) designated the Downieville Fire Protection District (DFPD) as the agency responsible for providing ambulance services to western Sierra County. Subsequently, Sierra County requested that an ambulance be placed in Alleghany and also provided \$75,000 for DFPD to purchase a new ambulance for DFPD. An older ambulance was placed in Alleghany and it was staffed by an EMT and a firefighter driver. Over time that agreement was not renewed and the formality of BOS operational support for ambulance services in western Sierra County waned due to concerns for liability. Also, there has been inconsistent EMT availability required for staffing the ambulance. The BOS has supported putting \$20,000 annually in an ambulance replacement fund maintained by the BOS until there is a need for DFPD to replace an ambulance. The cost of a new ambulance is about \$250,000. DFPD continued to support the availability of an ambulance in Alleghany by paying for the ambulance, its insurance, maintenance and medical supplies through 2023 in exchange for ambulance billings that are collected. In the last 5 years, PRCSD has had an average of less than 5 ambulance calls per year. Additionally, there is not always an EMT available to staff the ambulance as required by State Law and Nor-Cal EMS. While DFPD takes on the responsibility for providing ambulance response to the Ridge, the response time can be up to an hour. Alleghany and Pike Fire Departments do respond to all medical calls and typically call Sierra Nevada Advanced Life Support ambulance to respond as well. The patient is transported by PRCSD to an intercept point and transferred to the Sierra Nevada ambulance. The Sierra Nevada Hospital Ambulance is called to respond whether or not the Alleghany Ambulance is available. Only the ambulance that transports the patient to the hospital can be paid. That obviously impacts the ability of the DFPD to be paid for the costs of operating the Ridge ambulance. The reasons for ALS intercepts include that in some cases the patient's condition is serious enough to warrant a higher level of care and in other cases it is easier and quicker to transfer the patient so that the response staff is not out of the area as long. In yet other circumstances it may be the personal choice or comfort level of the responder. So, we are left with the BOS not wanting to support operational costs of ambulance services to western Sierra County due to liability exposure; there is no conditional directive from the County for the DFPD to provide ambulance services; DFPD does not have the funding to support unpaid costs of operating an ambulance in a District that did not support a western Sierra County tax measure to pay for a Paramedic; the PRCSD is not able to provide any operational financial support; and the PRCSD does not have a clause within its Charter to provide Ambulance Services. Additionally, inconsistent operational staffing of the ambulance, incomplete medical reports and limited utilization are factors of note. Special Districts are not allowed to perform services or spend District funds in a different District unless there is some agreement between the Districts to share the costs. Therefore, a Memorandum of Understanding and Mutual Aid needs to be renegotiated to meet the mutual needs of adjacent Special Districts. Nor-Cal EMS is the State designated Local EMS Agency

controlling where ambulances can be located and who will operate them in our region. Nor-Cal EMS has authorized a waiver of ambulance placement on the Ridge until such time that an agreement between DFPD & PRCSD can be negotiated. That waiver expires October 31st. Absent an extension of the Nor-Cal EMS waiver or a newly negotiated MOU between PRCSD & DFPD, the Ambulance #7145 will be out of service.

I attended the September meeting of the PRCSD Board and presented a Draft MOU continuing the Ambulance in Alleghany but it was not approved pending further review and discussion by both PRCSD and Nor-Cal EMS. Meanwhile, there has been an effort to change the Ambulance Vehicle designation to an EMS Response Vehicle as well as a Utility Vehicle which would allow EMS response whether or not there is EMT staffing available on the Ridge. That would allow the EMS Response Vehicle to be used as a Utility Vehicle to interface with an ALS Ambulance whether from Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital or DFPD ALS Ambulance. Nor-Cal EMS would perhaps support such a plan. A revised proposed MOU along with a document noting what equipment required for an EMS Response Vehicle is attached for your review and discussion in addition to a copy of the Nor-Cal EMS Policy for use of an EMS Utility Vehicle.

As noted, the current extension for an ambulance agreement for Pliocene Ridge Community Services District expires 10/31/23. PRCSD had cancelled their October meeting but has now scheduled a Special Meeting on Oct. 29th.

We did address this issue at the Downieville Fire Protection District Commission meeting on October 18th. We did support a motion to terminate the Ambulance portion of the MOU in favor of PRCSD responding with an EMS Non-Transport vehicle or Utility Vehicle. We will likely proceed to surplus their current ambulance to the PRCSD to then be used as an EMS response vehicle. It seems the most reasonable solution to their intermittent staffing issues as well as the ability to have some sort of EMS response while awaiting ALS response which appears to be a consistent need. We will continue to provide ALS Ambulance responses to the PRCSD when requested. The Incident Commander on scene determines whether the ALS response should come from Downieville Ambulance, Dignity Sierra Nevada Memorial in Grass Valley or an Air Ambulance, based on availability, response time and criticality. This is all predicated on PRCSD Board Approval and DFPD Commission Approval as well as Nor-Cal EMS review.

Thanks for your consideration.

Frank

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