



BAKER CITY, OREGON

P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814-0650
541-523-6541 Voice/TDD
www.bakercity.com

MAYOR

Kerry McQuisten

COUNCILORS

Shane Alderson

Johnny Waggoner Sr.

Joanna Dixon

Jason Spriet

Dean Guyer

Kenyon Damschen

CITY MANAGER

Jonathan Cannon

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Prepared By: Jonathan Cannon City Manager
Presentation and Discussion Points

Mayor and City Council.

I appreciate the opportunity tonight to present information related to the status of ambulance services in Baker City.

City Council; I would like to start with something tonight that is disappointing and concerning to me. The funding of ambulance service is a long standing issue in Baker County. The first document I have seen mention the issue is the 1991 Ambulance Service Area Plan. Coming forward, Baker City and Baker County went round and round on this issue in 2016, 17, 18, and 19. In 2021 I picked up the issue and have pushed it as hard as anyone towards a resolution. I am doing this because I have to for the financial solvency of the city. It cannot be kicked down the road any longer.

I appreciate those who I have spoken with on the phone or by email. Most have been respectful and kind. I appreciate the passion and concern people have. Here are the two things which disappoint me.

We can have differences of opinions, but debates should be won on facts and not blatant fabrications. We can debate ambulance services till the cows come home and we will likely all have a slightly different opinion on the matter. We are best served when those debates are rooted in facts and accurate information.

City Council; You hired me to manage the city. I have brought up a problem that has been going on for some time. I have brought it out into the open so you can deal with it. Talented and knowledgeable individuals have looked at this. For example, when I brought this issue to Mr. Kent Bailey, a man with 40 years of municipal auditing experience. He was in disbelief and I think without putting words in his mouth jumped into this issue believing he could work out a solution. After diving into the numbers and looking at this in more ways than I can conceive, Kent has come to agree with me on this issue. Jennifer Spencer has reviewed this issue inside and out, Chief Sean Lee has argued with me that there must be something we are missing. I recognize you have been given information from multiple sources. I am telling you that you have a manager and management staff who have argued, debated, and ripped this thing apart in more ways than I can describe. The best I can offer you tonight is solid information and a good recommendation. You will then have to make the decision of what to do and accept the ramifications of the decision.

Numbers; Multiple ways to skin this cat.

RFP Response; At your work session on May 11, 2022, I received instructions from Council related to the RFP response that you wanted me to prepare. I have worked diligently to complete the task. Before you tonight is a Draft copy of the RFP. I want to reiterate this is a draft. It is 90% ready, but still requires

some work. As par of our discussion tonight I will be requesting City Council schedule a work session and then a special called meeting to approve the submission. I want to make sure city council is satisfied with the document and that it accurately presents the desires of the Council.

I suspect that I will have records requests for this draft document before I leave tonight. I will have Dallas upload this draft document tomorrow morning to the website where we have been uploading ambulance documents for the public.

The document is generally formatted to include an introduction That applies to the whole of the RFP Response.

- The cover page and introduction meet the requirements set forth in the application page of the RFP.
- The document includes two scenarios. Scenario one, is roughly what it would take to continue providing ambulance service as the city has over the last couple of years.
- Scenario 2 is an effort to come as close into compliance with the RFP as possible.
- At the end of each scenario is a list of exceptions we will need that will be required from the Baker ASA, RFP, and ordinance adopting the ASA.

What is left?

- Final review of the documents for compliance and exceptions to the RFP.
- Final review in work session by city council.
- Final selection of numbers

1. **Ambulance Service will not cease.** On October 1, 2022, ambulance service will continue forward. Baker County is working to select a new provider. So long as the County does their state mandated job, the ambulances will respond throughout the Baker ASA which includes Baker City. If someone calls 911, an ambulance will respond. Baker County has released a request for proposals and is scheduled to select a new provider in the near future. I am saddened to hear from so many who have called me fearful and concerned that ambulance service will no longer exist in this County. Baker County is working to make sure that does not happen. I am confident they can do this.
2. **The Fire Department will still exist.** The Fire Department is not going away. It will still exist and it will still have adequate staff to respond to fire calls. The department will still be able to perform life saving rescues in structure fires. Baker City responds to approximately 300 fire calls annually. The target staffing model is designed to handle the anticipated call volume. It is similar to other cities of similar or slightly larger populations and was explored as a staffing model in 2016. The other cities we have looked at actually run more calls than we are projected to run. 300 calls per year is less than 1 call per day. Most of our calls are what we refer to as smells and bells. In other words, someone smells smoke and our department responds to check it out or an alarm is going off and the department responds again to check it out. We average approximately 14 structure fires a year which vary from small to large.

3. **Insurance Rates are not going to skyrocket.** Our initial discussions with the officials providing ISO ratings to fire departments in the state indicate that we are not likely going to see a change to our ISO ratings. ISO ratings are in part what insurance companies use to determine fire risk for Baker City residents. We do not anticipate that our ISO rating will change at all. This will be confirmed in the near future as Baker City is up for review. The change to a fire response focus will be part of that review.
4. **County has an RFP. This will produce a long-term solution for this 31-year-old problem.** The unsustainable nature of funding this service for me first shows up in a 1991 ASA document produced by Baker County. It mentions the need to establish a sustainable funding source for the Ambulance Service. This issue has been kicked down the road for many years and cannot be pushed further down the road. The best we can do today is to encourage the county to complete their process which will establish a long-term solution to this immediate problem.
5. **Life flight will still provide lifesaving air transport.** Many of our citizens use Life Flight. Life Flight is a private ambulance company which in our area provides air ambulance transportation. They do a fantastic job and save many lives. As far as I am aware there is no change planned by Baker County to eliminate this vital service.
6. **The City has made cuts in its budget to fund ambulance.** I had a conversation with the newspaper about a month ago. I was asked if the city has had to cut other departments in order to fund ambulance service. My response was something like this. The city has not made extensive and obvious cuts to its budget directly attributable to ambulance. What the city has done over the years, is as expenses continue to increase, the city is forced to trim its budget. This means skipping projects which need to be completed, foregoing necessary maintenance and upgrades on facilities. The fire department needs a roof, replacement fire trucks, SCBA bottles, and more. The police need important technology updates. Finance needs modernized software and a new cash register. The entire city needed new data servers and up-to-date software licenses. City Hall needs to repair and fix its foundation and install fire escapes. The list goes on. Projects and equipment like mentioned have been either perpetually postponed or simply ignored because funding is not available. Projects, equipment, vehicles, and more have been trimmed year after year out of the budget until we arrive at a point where it is difficult to continue to trim further. The paper reported there have ben no cuts, but the reality is that the city has trimmed the budget every year to maintain this service.
7. **County is working on our notification about inability to take calls.**
8. **Recommendation:** Carrier of last resort and county comes and speaks to us. If they select another carrier then the county will take responsibility for the entire payment. We add a fee to our customers for half the cost