



Lawrence County
EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, January 7, 2025 | **Time:** 5:30-6:22 p.m.

PRESENT: County Executive David Morgan. **Commissioners:** Dave Ray, Will Burnett, Tammy Wisdom, Phillip Heatherly, Travis Cauwels, Shane Eaton, Delano Benefield, Barry Luffman, and Denny Gillespie. **County Attorney** Charlie Holt, **EMS Director** Michelle Ayers, **Assistant EMS Director** Kane Watkins, **County Fire Coordinator** Tyler McDow, **County EMA Director** Shelton Barnett, Alan Modisett, and other county residents.

ROLL CALL: Chairman David Morgan, Vice-chair Shane Eaton, Will Burnett, and Barry Luffman.

Executive Morgan called the meeting to order.

EMS UPDATE

Ayers reviewed the Lawrence County EMS 2024 overview report (available in the committee folder). She suggested a 5% increase in rates across all billing codes.

Executive Morgan noted that the Purchasing Committee had approved a new billing company.

Ayers expressed hope for higher reimbursement rates.

Watkins mentioned that when Marshall County switched from AMB to EMS MC billing, they experienced a 26% increase in revenue.

Ayers reported that EMS is fully staffed and preparing for icy weather conditions.

Executive Morgan brought up a phone call from Danial Barnett, who was transported to Maury Regional but had wanted to go to Nashville.

Watkins explained that several factors are considered when deciding where to transport patients. If a patient's condition requires being taken to the nearest facility, they will prioritize that option.

Executive Morgan inquired about the number of transports originating from the ER at night.

Watkins responded that while they didn't have exact numbers available, there has been a noticeable increase.

Executive Morgan recalled that during the 2024–2025 budget discussions, it was decided to revisit the possibility of adding a 12- or 24-hour crew in mid-year (February).

Commissioner Burnett asked how often other counties assist Lawrence County.

Watkins replied that mutual aid is requested at least 2–3 times per week. He noted that Lawrence County provides more assistance to Giles County due to their staffing issues. He also explained that the base recommendation of one ambulance for every 10,000 people is outdated, as it was established 10–15 years ago and does not account for the current call volume.

Commissioner Burnett asked about the 6% increase in operational costs.

Watkins stated that he had discussed the matter with Brandi, who determined the figure based on inflation and other factors.

Commissioner Burnett suggested raising the rates to 6% instead of 5% to better cover the increased operational costs.

Move to Increase EMS Rates by 6%.

Motion: Burnett, **Second:** Eaton.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 4/0.

Watkins noted that we are getting a bid packet for a collection agency once the new billing company starts getting things moving.

EMA UPDATE

Barnett explained that they are actively exploring various grant opportunities. He noted that only one gas station in the area currently has an emergency generator. He also mentioned that the ambulance acquired last year has been successfully integrated into operations. Additionally, the hazard mitigation plan will be updated, as federal funding can be withheld if the plan is not current. He concluded with an update on the incoming winter weather.

Executive Morgan explained that we had a plan for warming centers last year but nobody came so we have no current plan in place.

Barnett encouraged anyone interested in using their facility as a warming center to contact him, ensuring that liability would not fall on them.

COUNTY FIRE UPDATE

McDow reviewed the 2024 call numbers, reporting 2,729 responses, which averages close to 7.5 calls per day. He noted that the hurricane response is not included in these numbers.

He shared that the Comptroller compliance report was positive, with 100% of departments submitting their reports on time. McDow commended the chiefs for their efforts.

Regarding the SAFER grant, he explained that although they made it through the entire application process, the grant was ultimately denied because they ran out of available funds. However, we plan to reapply, as the cost to do so is only \$100.

He also addressed ongoing issues with radio communication failures, noting that while fixing the system is very expensive, efforts are underway to resolve the problems with the current setup.

Barnett explained that repairing the current 1980 radio system would cost \$2.5 million per tower. However, the state has towers that could potentially be used, which would be a more cost-effective option and provide mutual aid frequency capabilities.

McDow concluded by stating that they are working to repair the existing system and coordinating with TDOT for storm prep.

Executive Morgan explained that at the conception of this committee I proposed and envisioned four commissioners with backgrounds in the EMS world and four representatives currently working in our EMS departments to serve on the committee. Commissioner Eaton recommended reappointing Tyler McDow and Shelton Barnett. I also suggest adding Jay Moore as a committee member.

Move to Recommend Appointing Tyler McDow, Shelton Barnett, and Jay Moore, as voting members of the Emergency Services Committee to the Full Commission.

Motion: Luffman, **Second:** Burnett.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously, 4/0.

McDow discussed his concerns on whether the commission wants them on the EMS Committee.

Executive Morgan brought up several county boards that are made up of commissioners and non-commissioners and didn't see why this board should be treated any differently.

Move to adjourn.

Motion: Eaton, **Second:** Burnett.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously 4/0.

Minutes Submitted By: Christian Tyree