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Monroe Ambulance says it can handle new business of city contract

Brian Sharp  
Staff writer

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(November 3, 2007) — Taking over the city's ambulance contract would nearly triple Monroe Ambulance's business overnight, but company officials said Friday that they have the infrastructure in place to handle the transition.

And while there will be some crossover, Monroe executive director Mark Tornstrom said the company is looking to operate its current service — primarily outside the city in Monroe and Wyoming counties — separately from the city's ambulance calls.

"We're basically looking at running two different companies," said Tornstrom.

Monroe already has upgraded its call center technology, begun beefing up its workforce with 25 new hires and increased its ambulance fleet from 22 to 30, with an additional eight ambulances on order.

The moves were taken in preparation of replacing Rural/Metro as the ambulance service automatically dispatched when city residents call 911.

Mayor Robert Duffy proposed the switch in June, and City Council has been reviewing the proposal ever since. A vote could come as early as Nov. 20.

What's next  
City Council could vote on the matter as soon as Nov. 20.

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"We're still going to try, but I don't know if we're going to make the 20th or not," said City Councilman Dana Miller, who is leading the review.

City Council has been divided on the issue and the Duffy administration wants another opportunity to restate its position, which supports the unanimous recommendation of an internal panel that included then-Fire Chief Floyd Madison and 911 Director John Merklinger.

Miller said the contract decision will be made no later than December.

If awarded the contract, Monroe anticipates hiring at least 90 additional full-time employees to focus on Rochester.

"The only thing that Monroe has to do is add staff," Tornstrom said.

The company has made a commitment to its current staff of about 140 paramedics, emergency medical technicians and supervisors that they will not be forced to work in the city, Tornstrom said.

By contrast, many Rural/Metro staffers do not want to work in the suburbs, officials said — a preference based on the type of calls and pace of work.

Another wrinkle is that Rural/Metro is a union shop, while Monroe is not. Tornstrom said "if (employees) feel they need to have a union, we certainly won't resist that."

However, Monroe has left a less-than-welcoming impression on Service Employees International Union Local 200 United, representing the Rural/Metro workers. SEIU and Monroe have not spoken in months and each party blames the other for walking away from the table.

For its part, Rural/Metro has said it will leave Rochester if the company does not retain the contract it has held for 19 years.

While the market has supported two providers, Monroe officials said they do not plan to surrender any of their current business. The company responds to 28,000 calls a year.

The city contract is estimated at 49,000 annual calls, leaving about 18,000 non-contract calls for Rural/Metro.

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"And while there will be some crossover, Monroe executive director Mark Tornstrom said the company is looking to operate its current service — primarily outside the city in Monroe and Wyoming counties — separately from the city's ambulance calls."

Sounds innocent enough, huh.

But "outside the city" for Monroe encompasses, or will encompass, the following: transporting ambulance service for the fire district of Barnard, the fire district of Greece Ridge; providing backup advanced life support or transporting ambulance service for Churchville, Brockport, Spencerport, Chili, Gates, Greece, Hilton, Hamlin, Scottsville, Irondequoit, West Webster, Union Hill, Penfield, Perinton, Pittsford, East Rochester, Brighton, Henrietta, Rush, Saint Paul, Sea Breeze, Point Pleasant, Section 5 and collegiate sports events, the vast majority of nursing homes in Monroe County, obligations in Orleans and Wyoming counties, and all hospital to hospital transfers and specialized care ambulance units.

Many of these communities and agencies in the county exchange EMS resources already between each other, and more of these agreements will need to be created - hopefully through an influx of qualified but unemployed EMS providers who can strengthen these organizations.

"Inside the city" will include the estimated 208,000 residents, plus all those who happen to be within the city limits for work, entertainment, school, or commuting purposes; mandatory emergency medical services stand bys at Frontier Field, Paetec Park, the War Memorial, and all of the major festivals.

I'm glad to finally hear and we have it in writing publicly that it can all be managed by Monroe Ambulance. They insist it is all possible, and I believe by the ways and means they went about trying to secure the city contract Monroe certainly has the confidence and capabilities to take it all on. If all else fails, we can all blame a crisis in care or any short-comings on Rural Metro Corporation but not it's dedicated local employees.

smoke&mirrors

Posted: Sat Nov 03, 2007 7:26 pm

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If Monroe employees feel they need a union, might I suggest one that is more in touch with the needs of EMS like the International Association of EMTs and Paramedics- rather than the SEIU who it would appear represents mostly janitorial personnel.

The SEIU is scared, because not only might R/M leave, the union might also find they're not welcome by a majority of the staff at Monroe. Guess they'll have to find some other way to extort money for Hillary's campaign.

RCS\_01

Posted: Sat Nov 03, 2007 2:59 pm

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Having been involved in EMS in this City since 1978 I feel there needs to be 2 Commercial Services to adequately provide proper EMS coverage for the City, quite simply the loss of Rural Metro should be considered in the decision making process. I am no longer affiliated with EMS but I am a City resident and have friends at both Monroe and Rural Metro and want a choice as to whom I call. 😊

dbw14611

Posted: Sat Nov 03, 2007 2:59 pm

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Leave it to the Union stooge to make those comments.

If the Union cared , in the most recent contract they should have had an age limit set established on the vehicles your members are forced to work in. Many law enforcement and IAFF unions have vehicle replacement in their contract.

Unions are money makers: The union is worried because it will loose members which equals lost revenue. They blew their chance with Monroe

Unions Protect under performers and hold back hard workers. If you are hiding under the unions dress. I guess you are the first and not the second

That is speculation about only working suburbs versus city. That is an absurd plan. A patient is a patient not mater where they are located and employees will rise up.

I still think that the City should split the City and whomever has the best performance on their side of the river takes all after 1 year. That would truly benefit the residents.

Its the initial excitement of the white shirts leaving that may raise morale for a while. It will drop when its discovered the next batch of inexperienced characters are no better than those they replaced.

Change is good.

emsprovider9

Posted: Sat Nov 03, 2007 11:20 am

"The company has made a commitment to its current staff of about 140 paramedics, emergency medical technicians and supervisors that they will not be forced to work in the city, Tornstrom said."

That's ironic. Monroe is going out of their way to prove how anxious they are to provide this service to the citizens of Rochester, and they've already guaranteed that their employees won't have to work with in the City. The inference is that Monroe's leadership and its employees perceive the City as a less than desirable work environment. I wonder how that would be reflected in the service they provide if they get the contract.

jmsi

Posted: Sat Nov 03, 2007 8:57 am

Let's see, yesterday Tom Coyle says Monroe doesn't know how many people they need because they didn't think RM would close. Today they need 90 employees and they're all set. They're not all set - the people are the most important part of the equation. As a RM paramedic and member of the SEIU I can assure you that the vast majority of my co-workers DO NOT WANT TO WORK FOR MONROE. You always hear, "morale couldn't get any lower." Right now morale at RM is at an all time high, especially since a couple of "white shirts" departed.

bd198056

Posted: Sat Nov 03, 2007 8:03 am

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