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City Council sticks with Rural/Metro ambulance  
 Brian Sharp Staff writer

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- [Read Mayor Robert Duffy's letter to City Council.](#)
- [Read the original legislation for Monroe Ambulance.](#)

### Rural/Metro

**History:** An Arizona-based corporation in Rochester since 1994, when it purchased National Ambulance (founded in 1952).  
**Employees:** 232 paramedics, emergency medical technicians and supervisors locally.  
**Ambulances:** 35.  
**Yearly service calls:** 60,000.

### Monroe Ambulance

**History:** Local, woman-owned business founded in 1975.  
**Employees:** 140 paramedics, emergency medical technicians and supervisors locally.  
**Ambulances:** 30.  
**Yearly service calls:** 28,000.



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CARLOS ORTIZ staff photographer

Monroe Ambulance's Luis Aponte of Rochester, left, and James Capparelli of Greece do an equipment check. Monroe's top executive said the company would consider legal options now that the city has picked Rural/Metro.

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**STORYCHAT:** [Post Comment](#)

(November 21, 2007) — On an 8-to-1 vote Tuesday night, City Council reversed a proposal to switch the city's preferred ambulance service to Monroe and kept the contract with Rural/Metro instead.

The decision — on a roll call vote in a standing-room-only City Council chamber — returns the contract for at least three years to the Arizona-based company.

Monroe Ambulance, meanwhile, which the administration said won the open bidding process back in June, will consider legal options, said Eileen Coyle, the company's president and chief executive.

"Tonight may not be the end," Coyle said before the vote.

The ambulance contract — valued at \$15 million to \$20 million — determines which ambulance company gets called when city residents call 911. Rural/Metro Medical Service (previously National Ambulance) has been that company for the past 19 years.

Mayor Robert Duffy had recommended the switch to Monroe, saying the local, woman-owned business offered faster response times, newer vehicles and equipment and a computer-aided dispatch system linked to the city's 911 center.

But City Councilman Dana Miller, who led the 41/2-month review, said council found no evidence to support some of the selection criteria, and "no substantial difference" in the highlighted areas. Further, he said, an administration claim that Rural/Metro violated its prior contract by not providing the computer hook-up with dispatch was found to be untrue.

Miller said City Council — all but City Council President Lois Giess, who voted for Monroe — picked Rural/Metro because it was a known commodity with experience in the city, was accredited, employs a more diverse staff and more city residents, and has a union, showing a commitment to fair labor-management relations.

Many of those items were not part of the city's original request for proposals, however.

Duffy told Miller and his colleagues they had created "a chilling effect" and "irreparable harm" to the open bidding process. The administration has alleged Rural/Metro amended its proposal during the council review, though company officials and council members insist all Rural/Metro did was clarify.

"It is not about individuals. It is not about any one company over another. It's about process," Duffy said. "This process here (Monroe) won. They won it fairly. They won it equitably."

Duffy had relied on the unanimous recommendation of a panel of City Hall's top public safety, finance and legal experts. After the vote, he also questioned the decision to override those officials, whom council otherwise relies on for advice.

"We are turning our back on these experts for reasons I don't know," Duffy said.

The mayor still has veto power, though that is likely irrelevant seeing as City Council could override a veto with a two-thirds majority.

For the employees of both companies, at least there is a resolution.



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Luis Aponte, 39, has been a paramedic for 19 years, first with National Ambulance and then Rural/Metro, serving as union president before moving to Monroe in January.

"It's been difficult because, you know, it's like I'm pulling for both sides," Aponte said before the vote.

"I think we will go forward."

Aponte said he thought Rural/Metro underestimated Monroe.

The city's current contract with Rural/Metro runs through March 2008.

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**STORYCHAT**

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How about the larger ramifications of the decision by City Council to go against the RFP (Request for proposal) process? As Mayor Duffy stated, the RFP process is in place to make sure that vendor's who are interested in a contract with the City have a fair chance. What happened with the determination on the awarding of the City ambulance contract has major ramifications to the way business is conducted in the future. Does RFP now stand for "Rochester's Fake Process"? How about when the city decides the next paving contract? The City Council should be ashamed at their performance.

emsgrayhair

Posted: Wed Nov 21, 2007 7:33 am

Correct me if I'm wrong, but at the time the bidding was closed did Rural/Metro meet the criteria regarding vehicle age and mileage? They moved a new fleet of ambulances here a few weeks ago... perhaps to help swing the vote. And let's not forget the childish threat of, "If you don't vote for us we're taking our ambulance business and going home." It's just appalling that the city council seemed to push the vote off just long enough for Rural/Metro to get themselves up to the bid standards.

medic350

Posted: Wed Nov 21, 2007 7:32 am

I thought the unions only wanted to do business with local companies. Remember all the crap they gave Walgreens.

fortyknot

Posted: Wed Nov 21, 2007 7:31 am

To the employees of Rural Metro I offer hearty congratulations. The weight of not knowing if you would have a job has been lifted from your shoulders. Your union and administration have waged an effective campaign to maintain your employ by the city. I sincerely hope that your parent company is able to stay in business long enough for you to carry out the awarded contract.

However I am deeply concerned that this vote had more to do with City Council telling the Mayor that they run the city and not him. Mayor Duffy should be encouraged to veto their decision, even if it would be a futile gesture.

I hope that Monroe does not file legal action against the city, seeking compensation for the full monetary value of the contract, as it seems they would have an excellent case. This potential monetary loss to the city coffers would take away from other services the city provides, such as increased police protection.

PlainDealer

Posted: Wed Nov 21, 2007 6:50 am

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Ok and if Monroe had recieved the contract then putting 200+ people out of jobs would have helped the economy right. Please we all still have jobs you over at Monroe and me at Rural Metro. What good will it do the Mayor to override the decision. The city council would still have to vote again and it was an 8 to 1 vote. Monroe is not ready for the contract yet they dont have the personel or enough ambulances to cover all the call volumes in the area they would have been forced to take over. Im not trying to say that in a couple more years they might not be ready but they are just not there yet.

shorty82378

Posted: Wed Nov 21, 2007 6:29 am

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I believe that City Council should make decisions that support the local Rochester economy. Monroe Ambulance should have been selected and Mayor Duffy should override their decision.

And..supporting local business should be an issue in the next election for city council!

dancdxb

Posted: Wed Nov 21, 2007 5:56 am

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