

TONOPAH TOWN BOARD
PUBLIC WORKSHOP MINUTES
NOVEMBER 16, 2017
Tonopah Convention Center
301 Brougner Avenue, Tonopah, NV 89049

Tonopah Town Board Chairman Duane Downing called the public workshop to order on November 16, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. Also present were Vice-Chairman Don Kaminski, Clerk Jerry Elliston, and Board Members Roni Link and Mike Sain. Thirty-four others were in attendance. Chairman Duane Downing led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Public Comment

Jay Silas, President of Tonopah Speedway, stated that they did not have the help from the Tonopah ambulance service this year like in prior years and that they had more help from Esmeralda. He added that he is hoping for solutions.

2. Discussion and deliberation regarding emergency services in the Town of Tonopah.

Chairman Duane Downing stated that the workshop was scheduled the week before in order to discuss what is going on with the local ambulance service. He added that he has done some research since then and has found that there is not a lot the Town of Tonopah can do. He emphasized that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is provided through Nye County and therefore is a County issue. Chairman Downing pointed out that Tonopah has not been without service as the County paid a staffed ambulance through REMSA for two weeks. He noted that he is not sure what will happen after those two weeks as it is Nye County, not the Town, who is in charge of the ambulance services.

Chairman Downing asked Assistant County Manager Lorina Dellinger to answer some questions. He pointed out that the Town was blindsided by this. EMS Volunteer Dawn Gudmunson stated that she has been asking for help for a long time. She pointed out that two EMS staff members are gone which is why she sent the e-mail the week before. She added that EMS Director Vance Payne had contacted her to find out when the last day would be that there would be enough volunteers to run the ambulance service. Ms. Gudmunson stressed that the scheduling has been a problem for a long time and that they usually could not even schedule more than a day or two in advance due to the lack of volunteers. Vice-Chairman Don Kaminski asked why the ambulance is run by volunteers when it is a service that is under Nye County. Ms. Gudmunson clarified that EMS employee Mike Klein is a training officer who has been utilized as an EMT because they did not have enough people. She stressed that EMS is a Nye County service, but volunteers do the runs.

Don Kaminski asked if REMSA was providing its own staff which Lorina Dellinger confirmed. Ms. Dellinger explained that Nye County was notified of the lack of volunteers on November 7th and came to an agreement with REMSA on Monday, November 13th. She added that this was within the authority of the County Manager and within the budget. She pointed out that REMSA brought their own staff and ambulances as they are not familiar with Nye County protocols or licensed on the County

ambulances. She emphasized that the first priority was to get a guaranteed service while the team is down.

Don Kaminski noted that he saw an e-mail chain that was telling another ambulance service that they are no longer needed and to turn their equipment in. Ms. Dellinger stated that she is not aware of that e-mail. Dawn Gudmunson clarified that EMS Director Vance Payne had e-mailed Flying ICU to turn in all Nye County equipment and to not respond to any Nye County calls. Vice-Chairman Kaminski asked why anyone would turn away another service that is here to help. Ms. Dellinger explained that this is only for the period between November 13th and 27th as the County did not work in any integration into the contract with REMSA. Chairman Downing pointed out that Flying ICU has been helping with calls to supplement the ambulance. Ms. Gudmunson added that they can provide a higher level of care and have been very helpful. Clerk Jerry Elliston asked how many crews REMSA is providing. Ms. Dellinger clarified that there are two paramedics on one crew. She stressed that these were unforeseen circumstances and that the County wanted to make sure there is a service. Mr. Elliston asked why Nye County would not want to have a secondary team. Ms. Dellinger emphasized that this is only a temporary solution. Chairman Downing asked what the plan was going forward. Ms. Dellinger answered that the County is working on a plan and is putting classes on as soon as possible. She added that the long-term goal is to be sustainable with what the Northern Nye County Hospital District is working on. Mr. Downing inquired whether the County has considered hiring a full-time staff member. He added that he has seen the numbers and thinks it is doable. Ms. Dellinger noted that this cannot be sustained on the budget to have a staff member for all communities. Mr. Downing stressed that he is only interested in Tonopah.

Administrative Manager Chris Mulkerns noted that she and Utility Manager Joe Westerlund have been talking about this matter, as well as with Ms. Dellinger. She pointed out that the Town could help out financially up to a certain amount the way the Town Board has agreed to pay expenses for the Senior Center and Central Nevada Museum (both Nye County entities). The County would have to provide the Town with invoices to be reimbursed by the Town. She added that this can be done within the Town budget.

Jerry Elliston stressed that the Tonopah ambulance service does over 400 runs a year, more than any other entity.

Chris Mulkerns showed an overview of revenues and expenses for Nye County EMS (see backup) and noted that while they are currently in the black, it will not be sustainable going forward. She pointed out that the only paid EMS employee is Mike Klein. She stressed that there is not enough money in the current budget to pay another employee.

Board Member and EMS volunteer Roni Link stressed that Tonopah is not the only community that lacks volunteers. She pointed out that they had 41 people sign up for classes in January and February after Ms. Gudmunson's plea for help. She explained that usually only a third passes the classes. Ms. Gudmunson added that 24 people have seen

the training schedule and have signed up for the classes. She noted that volunteers can be drivers which requires different training, only about one day; EMR's can help on scene but cannot be on the ambulance; EMT's can help on scene and in the ambulance. Volunteers need to pass a drug screening, background check, and DMV check. She pointed out that it usually takes about 3.5 months to go through the class, then about a month for paperwork, then they need to go on runs with experienced volunteers before they can go on runs alone. She emphasized that they are probably nine months away until they can utilize the new volunteers.

Duane Downing stated that he supports having paid staff. He stressed that volunteers are great, but thinks they are overworked and not everyone has supportive employers. Lorina Dellinger noted that having a paid position is an excellent solution if Nye County and the Town of Tonopah can collaborate on the funding. Mr. Downing said that he would appreciate the County working with the Town on having a paid position.

Utility Manager Joe Westerlund asked whether there was a backup plan to continue the contract with REMSA after November 27th if the situation is still the same. Ms. Dellinger stressed that the County does not want to wait until the last minute and is trying to set up a timeline with the volunteers and REMSA. She added that it might be a possibility to have an EMT work with the volunteers. Board Member Roni Link asked if the agreement is extendable which Ms. Dellinger confirmed.

Clerk Jerry Elliston thanked Ms. Dellinger for attending the meeting and answering questions. He stated that he is frustrated that Nye County did not talk to anybody until the last minute and that there was no communication with the community.

Vice-Chairman Don Kaminski asked if REMSA was the only entity that was willing to help. Ms. Dellinger clarified that Nye County reached out to them as they know the area. Mr. Kaminski asked why Flying ICU was not involved and who made the decision to contact REMSA. Ms. Dellinger stated that she was not sure who did, but that she assumes it was Vance Payne. Mr. Kaminski pointed out that he is afraid volunteers will be driven out because they are told they are not needed.

Mr. Kaminski asked Ms. Gudmunson what volunteers are being paid for ambulance runs. Ms. Gudmunson clarified that volunteers get a stipend of \$20 per run with an additional \$10 bonus if the run is over 20 miles. Volunteers generally receive \$30 for a 6-hour run. She added that she does not see how one paid staff member would help the situation. Mr. Kaminski stressed that if Tonopah had a hospital, this would not be a problem. Mr. Elliston asked who pays the stipend. Ms. Gudmunson clarified that it is paid by Nye County and that the volunteers have to pay taxes on this. She added that it is very difficult to volunteer when you have a full-time job. Most small business employers cannot allow their employees to go on such long runs, even if it is required to allow it by NRS. Lorina Dellinger stressed that Nye County has been working with the volunteers on a solution and that she is confident that they feel okay with the temporary solution, but that a long-term one is needed.

Tonopah resident Horace Carlyle stated that the lack of volunteers was announced to the community over a year ago by EMS Director Vance Payne and Commissioner Lorinda Wichman. He added that the Town supported the creation of the Northern Nye County Hospital District and gave up a portion of their tax revenue for it. He pointed out that the District is currently negotiating with REMSA/Renown. He asked how the Town can collaborate with Nye County and the Hospital District to fund emergency services. He suggested an additional property tax like for the Water District as a long-term solution. He noted that there needs to be solution for the meantime. Mr. Carlyle proposed the Town Board and staff to meet with Vance Payne to work on a more effective solution. He stressed that the long-distance transportation has to be eliminated and that there will have to be more flights. He pointed out that REMSA will be able to assess who has to be transported. He added that as there is not an emergency room in Tonopah, it has to be prioritized who gets transported.

Donna Miller, introduced herself. She noted that she used to be the owner of Lifeguard International, known as Flying ICU. She explained that she sold the company and it is therefore under different ownership. Ms. Miller stated that when the hospital closed, Flying ICU made the decision to stay in Tonopah to help the community. She added that they allowed their paramedics to respond to calls in Tonopah. They helped on the ground and by flying patients out. She stressed that they have made a lot of suggestions to Nye County over the years about possible solutions, but were repeatedly turned down. Ms. Miller emphasized that they even presented a plan when they heard the ambulance service would not be able to run, but they were turned down again. She explained that the long-term plan was to cooperate with the volunteers or even hire volunteers and train them. They would continue to maintain a paramedic in Tonopah and could respond to advance level care calls. Ms. Miller explained that they have been in contact with Sunrise Hospital in Las Vegas to take patients from Tonopah faster so the crew can turn around faster. There is also a nurse line available to call. Ms. Miller emphasized that this is not a cheap proposition as they have to have staff, housing, etc., but it is also not as expensive as said earlier. She added that the proposal includes a multitude of partners.

Roni Link thanked Ms. Miller and her team for supporting the community. She stressed that their crews are awesome and are not thanked enough. The audience applauded. Ms. Link stressed that the community needs an emergency room. She asked Ms. Miller if her proposal would encompass that. Ms. Miller agreed that it is an ER that is needed and noted that they might be able to facilitate that.

Duane Downing asked Ms. Miller if Nye County did not ask for their help. Ms. Miller clarified that she heard about the challenges from Fire Chief Elliott, not from EMS Director Vance Payne. She added that they used to have a mutual aid agreement with Nye County, but that was withdrawn by the County. She noted that they still have a mutual aid agreement with Esmeralda County. Mr. Downing stated that he wishes he could help with this but stressed that the Town has no say in this matter. He suggested Ms. Miller attend a Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting to voice her concerns. Jerry Elliston asked Ms. Miller how many times she has done so already. Ms. Miller noted that she has

attended and spoke at BOCC meetings many times. She stressed that their goal was to help the community and stay out of the politics. She added that they are able to provide more help than before due to the new ownership. Roni Link explained that she is also a member of the Hospital District Board and stressed that this Board is working in conjunction with Nye County and REMSA on a solution. She emphasized that it is a challenging situation. Ms. Miller suggested the County putting out a Request for Proposal (RFP) so that organizations can turn in their proposals.

Utility Manager Joe Westerlund asked Ms. Miller whether their plane is currently in Tonopah. Ms. Miller clarified that the plane has not been in Tonopah for about a year, but that they have a paramedic in Town so that the paramedic can take care of the patient while the plane is being dispatched. It takes about an hour and a half for the plane to arrive in Tonopah. Carl Bottorf, Chief Nurse with Flying ICU, stated that he is disappointed about what Nye County has done. He added that he believes Nye County is a County with planners who do not have a plan. He pointed out that the numbers speak for themselves. Mr. Bottorf clarified that their paramedics work directly with the volunteers in Town. He emphasized that when the volunteers were understaffed, he has given his paramedics permission to go on the ambulance ride to Bishop or Hawthorne with them. Mr. Bottorf stated that he is returning the County radio equipment because they have demanded it back. He added that they will have to figure out how to move forward and continue to help and honor their mutual aid agreements. Ms. Miller noted that they had developed a plan with the Nye County volunteers and Esmeralda County so that Flying ICU was only called when an advance level of care was needed. Roni Link pointed out that Flying ICU has a "QRV" which is a quick response vehicle. She explained that there have been a lot of times where the QRV has come to their calls and has helped out.

Duane Downing asked Assistant County Manager Lorina Dellinger to look into whether there was any reason why Flying ICU was not included in negotiating solutions and why EMS staff would say they do not need them.

Mr. Bottorf noted that he is curious to know how much the County is paying REMSA. Ms. Dellinger pointed out that Mr. Bottorf can request a copy of the contract. She added that the contract is not to exceed \$50,000.

Roni Link pointed out that when Flying ICU responds to a call along with the volunteers, they do not get paid. Donna Miller clarified that they offered Nye County the opportunity to charge the patients the higher level of care. Flying ICU does not charge Nye County for their services.

Mathew Kirkland stated that he is the Esmeralda County DEM (Department of Emergency Management) Coordinator, but is also a concerned citizen of Tonopah. He noted that Flying ICU has been outstanding in this community and has saved lives. He added that he believes EMS Director Vance Payne has an issue with Flying ICU. He stressed that he does not understand why a free service is turned down. Mr. Kirkland

suggested the Town get on the BOCC agenda and request to be told why Flying ICU is being turned down by the EMS Director. He emphasized that Flying ICU supported the community without asking for anything, but they have been thrown under the bus. Mr. Kirkland questioned how REMSA was contracted without going out to bid, even in an emergency situation. He pointed out that Flying ICU has a contract with Esmeralda County and that they will continue using them. Mr. Kirkland emphasized that he as the DEM Coordinator was never notified by Nye County that the ambulance service in Tonopah was crashing. He added that they later heard that Esmeralda County would be called as the secondary ambulance. He pointed out that Goldfield only has a crew of 4 to 6 people. Mr. Kirkland stated that he is disappointed that Nye County did not contact Esmeralda County to seek a solution. Roni Link explained that Nye County has mutual aid agreements with Goldfield, Round Mountain, and Silver Peak. If additional help is needed, they contact these entities. Ms. Link stressed that if Goldfield is the secondary ambulance, it takes an additional 30 minutes to have a response. Don Kaminski asked if Esmeralda County has an agreement with Flying ICU which Mr. Kirkland confirmed. Mr. Kirkland clarified that Flying ICU does not get paid for their aid. He added that he thinks there is a group of people in Nye County that does not like Flying ICU. Mr. Kirkland asked why the Hospital District money is not used to open an emergency room. Ms. Link clarified that a lot of negotiations have taken place before the Hospital District Board was formed. Mr. Kirkland stressed that this needs to be a group effort with all entities involved. He pointed out that the Tonopah Fire Department has spent a lot of money to set up the rescue truck to help, but they cannot use it because it is not licensed. He noted that Mr. Payne said a year ago that they were going to license it, but it still has not happened. Jerry Elliston asked Mr. Kirkland if Nye County contacted him when they became aware of the situation. Mr. Kirkland clarified that the Sheriff who is in charge was not contacted.

Don Kaminski asked Ms. Miller if they are licensed to operate in Tonopah if they had the support of the Town which Ms. Miller confirmed. Mr. Kaminski stated that he heard only Nye County can authorize another ambulance service to run in the County. Ms. Miller stressed that they have a state license to practice. Mr. Elliston asked how long it would take Flying ICU to get an ambulance to Tonopah. Mr. Bottorf stated that it would take them about 3.5 hours and they could do it for less than \$50,000.

Horace Carlyle pointed out that public comment during BOCC meetings will only be transcribed if the person asks to be included in the minutes. He added that more public participation is needed so the complaints are public record forever.

Tonopah resident Cindy Kaminski stressed that there is a problem and a certain name that keeps coming up. She added that there was an incident when someone had to fight with EMS personnel to be flown out by Flying ICU because they had a membership but staff wanted them to be flown with REMSA. She stated that the public needs to ask why Nye County keeps pushing for REMSA and a part-time clinic when Tonopah really needs an emergency room.

Tonopah resident Kirk Greber stated that he is disturbed that Nye County has not considered Flying ICU and that he feels that something shady is going on. He added that he has lived in Tonopah for 33 years and usually does not like the political arena. He pointed out that he does not have a good feeling about what is going on.

Chairman Duane Downing emphasized that the Town Board looks out for the welfare of the Town and that they will attempt to put an item on the BOCC agenda. He noted that if the Town Board gets answers, they will make them public.

April Ramirez stated that she has been a volunteer with the Tonopah Fire Department for a while and recently her son had to be transported due to an injury. She pointed out that she was billed for Flying ICU being on the ambulance, yet Flying ICU does not receive any of the money from the Nye County billing. Ms. Ramirez stressed that the reason why volunteers for the Fire Department are lost is because they are run off by Vance Payne and Mike Klein. Mr. Downing asked for clarification on the billing. Ms. Ramirez stated that she had to fight to have her son transported on ground and was billed \$7,000 for the transport by Nye County due to the higher level of care provided by Flying ICU.

Fire Chief Robert Elliott stated that Flying ICU has supported the community for many years. He emphasized that they “had our backs” when the hospital closed. He pointed out that Simons Ambulance was briefly in Tonopah, but walked away. Mr. Elliott added that when this happened, EMS paid part-timers to come to Tonopah from Pahrump, etc. to run on the Tonopah ambulance service. He noted that it is his opinion that a lot of the issues are personality issues and some of them are administrative issues. He stated that he has been a volunteer for 34 years and pointed out that they have lost a lot of good people because of the attitude of EMS administration. Roni Link asked what it would take to bring these volunteers back. Chief Elliott suggested Ms. Link talked to the volunteers but speculated that they would probably come back if “that person went away”. He stated that he believes the expenditures presented for EMS are askew because ambulances were paid to come from other entities.

3. Discussion and deliberation regarding garbage collection services in the Town of Tonopah.

Chairman Duane Downing explained that this item was brought up because of the lack of trash service over the last month or two.

Mathew Kirkland stated that he thinks Hoss Disposal needs to go away. Mr. Downing asked him what his solution would be to which Mr. Kirkland replied that he thinks the Town should put the contract out for bid. Chairman Downing clarified that per franchise agreement, Hoss Disposal would have to be put on notice that they are in violation of the agreement and they would have 30 days to rectify the situation. He stressed that they are currently working and picking up trash. Mr. Kirkland emphasized that the trash service has been a problem for years, not just recently. He suggested the Board find out what

other entities might be interested. He added that he is afraid of what will happen if they fix the problem within the 30 days, but then problems start again afterwards.

Clerk Jerry Elliston noted that the Board needs to make sure Hoss Disposal credits everyone when they do not pick up the garbage. Board Member Roni Link pointed out that Hoss Disposal has been telling customers that they will drop them because they complain too much.

Christie Amato explained that the driver John was gone for 25 days and that it was not his fault that Hoss Disposal did not send a replacement. She added that John's current partner is getting CDL-licensed. Ms. Amato stressed that they take pride in their jobs and that she hopes they can continue to do their job. She stated that they have had problems with the garbage truck because it takes a long time to have it fixed when it breaks down. Ms. Link asked if a new truck has been sent to Tonopah which Ms. Amato denied. Chairman Downing pointed out that Hoss Disposal told the Board they would send a new truck. Ms. Amato noted that she does not think the office staff was rude to anybody. Mr. Downing stated that he did a test call and was told that if he wants to complain, they will cut his service off. Ms. Amato pointed out that she hopes they can put a business proposal together if the franchise agreement is terminated.

Chairman Downing pointed out that Town staff is cleaning up where trash was blown.

Chairman Downing noted that an action item will be placed on the agenda for the next week so that the Board can make a decision at that time. Clerk Elliston asked what the process is. Administrative Manager Chris Mulkerns clarified that, at the end of the 30 days, the Board can decide whether Hoss Disposal has cured the problem. If the Board finds they have cured it and then there is a problem again, the process starts all over again.

Chris Mulkerns pointed out that the franchise agreement renews every 5 years and that the Board could decide not to renew it in 2020.

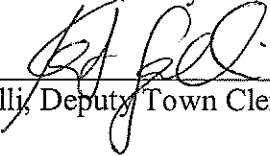
4. Public Comment

None.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Minutes transcribed by:



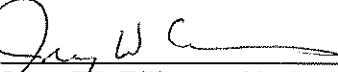
Kat Galli, Deputy Town Clerk

Approved:

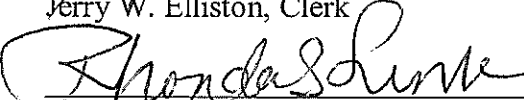
Duane Downing, Chairman



Don Kaminski, Vice-Chairman



Jerry W. Elliston, Clerk



Rhonda S. Link, Member

Michael Sain, Member

