

Item 24-0589: Fire Department Shared Service Agreement - Gold Cross Ambulance Safety and Licensing Committee

Wed, May 08, 2024, 5:30PM

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 30:15

That will bring us to information items 24-0589 Fire Department shared service agreement, Gold Cross ambulance.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 30:23

Thank you, Chair. About six months ago, we signed a service agreement with Gold Cross to provide transport services for the city of Appleton. It was a first agreement in over 35 years. So part of that agreement was to do check-ins every six months with some of the metrics that we established within that agreement. So I'd like to pass it off to Executive Director and Nick Romenesko to provide an update. And for everyone on the committee, there was an attachment to the agenda that has a lot of the information that Nick will be reviewing.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 30:59

Welcome, Nick.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 31:00

Yeah, thanks for having me. Appreciate it. I know some new faces on this committee this year so it's maybe a bit of a learning curve. But like Jeremy said, we've been servicing the city of Appleton for over 35 years. And really, the goal of this arrangement was to kind of memorialize the relationship between Gold Cross and the city of Appleton and specifically the Appleton Fire Department.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 31:21

So support and training wise, we continue to collaborate and work on various training topics. The city of Appleton fire department had a grant that allowed them to send some of their firefighters back to paramedic school, and we were able to support—I think all of them did right along time with gold cross ambulance and supported that training education process for them as they navigated their way through paramedic school. So it's about 500 hours that they spend on our ambulances and learning and training, collaborating and working with our paramedics and EMTs.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 31:21

So within the agreements, really the process for reporting, as I exchanged information on a monthly basis with the city of Appleton fire departments, there's opportunity to go back and forth if there's discrepancies or concerns. And we've been fully transparent with all of our data sharing. So anything that they've been requesting of us we've been providing, and they've done the same in return. They've been able to provide some response, some data. I've worked—we've been working really well with their new battalion chief Hommen, not only the response time data exchange but also some of the quality data and some of the training opportunities with him for to partner with Gold Cross in the city of Appleton.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 32:31

We're also in the process of expanding our training center right now. So we're adding about just over 1000 square feet of training education space. And this is something we view as a sharing space with not only the Appleton Fire Department, but also all the other municipalities that Gold Cross works with on a daily basis. So this will have a human patient simulator mannequin and lab in it that can simulate real life scenarios as real as

we can get them. We actually have a loading dock for an ambulance so they actually will back in and be able to load up that human patient simulator, simulate transport and exchange of care. And then also it expands our lecture hall so where we can have guest speakers come in.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 33:14

So on an annual basis, we have quarterly trauma reviews with the ThedaCare trauma team. We have Heart and Vascular Institute; they come in and do a cardiology training and education. And then we have private partnerships with the Neuroscience group that do neuro and stroke talk. So this is something again, we'll be extending out to the Appleton fire department as well as other agency partners to help collaborate, work together, provide education within the community, and help really improve the knowledge base of all the responders in the community.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 33:45

And then if you go on to the next section, it's discussing dispatch and response time goals. So we've been working very diligently on our operational plan within the city of Appleton, and we've been seeing that work well within the numbers. So our goal is eight minutes and 59 seconds on an emergency call. As of the first six months of this contract, we're at eight minutes and 30 seconds, so about 29 seconds below the standard. Emergency we're—non-emergency we're also tracking, but it is not a nationally recognized benchmark, but it's at 11:39. Our emergency percentage (the percentage of the time are underneath that eight minutes and 59 seconds) is 93.80 seconds in the six-month average. And we're at 72.37 non-emergency.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 34:34

So again, something we're looking at. You'll see this report out a little bit differently. Me and chief Hanson kind of had a discussion on this particular piece of it, and we're going to break it down a little bit more fine detail on the A, B, C and D and E emergency medical dispatching codes. So you'll have a little bit more data on this and in future iterations of this report, but so far, overall, the data is looking really well, and the response times are where we were want them to be. But it's certainly something we look at and evaluate on a monthly basis with that exchange of data with the Appleton fire department as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 35:08

Communications-wise, this was another area that we were looking to improve as a result of this agreement. We actually added—now we have two-person coverage in our dispatch center around the clock, which is something new for us. We just started that this year. So we have more ears on the radios to make sure that we're not missing any communication with the Appleton Fire Department as well as all the other agency partners that we work with. So more staff is available to help monitor that and make sure we're not missing any communications.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 35:38

We've also added 24/7 Operations Manager coverage. So similar to in the fire service, they have command vehicles that are available to respond to large scale incidents, we have a very similar vehicle that is able to help on difficult calls, advanced calls. It's a it's a advanced trained paramedics, so they have a different skill set as well on this rapid response vehicle. But that's been something we added as of February of this year. So another service line addition to how we service the city of Appleton.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 36:08

Local medical director—so Dr. Rose and Dr. Westfall. They exchange emails and correspondences at least on a monthly basis, if not more. We've had in person meetings as well when necessary, but really just an exchange back and forth in email has been seemed to go well. No major issues, no clinical concerns with the Appleton fire department and vice versa, none that had been brought to the table by Dr. Rose as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 36:32

And then on May 16, Dr. Rose, Dr. Westfall, who is Gold Cross's medical director, and Dr. Aarons who was Oshkosh fire department's medical director actually having a joint training at the Neenah police department to address violent patients. So with some of the issues that have been brought up both in Colorado and in Minnesota with restraining of patients and having to treat them properly, and we've been working really well with the Appleton police department as well on some processes and procedures on recei—restraining patients to make sure we're doing it safely and still able to treat that patient. So that's a kind of a regional education that these three medical directors are putting together to help make sure that we all stay on the same page and get these patients to the hospital safely.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 37:16

And then, finally, just operational plans and general metrics and reports. So we've added an additional station on Ballard Road and Evergreen Drive. We have an ambulance out of that—the Theda Care Clinic, the urgent care clinic that's off of Ballard and Evergreen. So we have a station up there now, which really has helped reduce response times on the northeast side of the city of Appleton.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 37:39

Again, we've added that 24/7 paramedic rapid response vehicle. That serves as not only a command vehicle but also as the EMS branch director in the event there's a large-scale MCI or incident. So we have somebody available for that that is not on a non-transporting ambulance. Because the difficulty we have, or historically have had when we have a large-scale incident, is that role has been taken on by somebody who was on a transporting ambulances. As soon as they take on that role, that ambulance is no longer available to transport patients from a large-scale event. So that is a non-transporting ambulance or non-transporting resource that allows us to do that work.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 38:17

And then they also have an advanced skill set. So they can do what's called rapid sequence intubation. So in the event that there is a respiratory patient that is not able to protect their airway or a traumatic patient that is not able to protect their airway, they can actually do a very similar procedure that you would see in an OR of an anesthesiologist. So very advanced procedure, but they've gone through a ton of training and education preparation in order to do this. We've been able to do it twice, since May 1. So not that that's a good thing, but good thing that we're able to provide that care.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 38:51

And then going down to the patient care metrics. In the first six months, there's been 44 stroke activations. So during the evaluation process, we identified that this individual has likely stroke-like symptoms and activated the stroke team at the neuro centers within the area. That does have some over-triage. So there's other medical conditions that can mimic what's happening with a stroke. Bell's Palsy is a very common one that you'll hear that mimics the sign of strokes. So that is—that falls into that bucket.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 39:22

On scene time for stroke patients is at 15:49. So this is a little bit above what we wanted to see at 15 minutes. So this is obviously something that we'll be working very closely with Appleton fire department on. They can really help us reduce those scene times by creating some efficiencies and making sure we all stay on the same timeline because there's not much definitive care you can do in the back of an ambulance or in somebody's house. They really need to get to a neuro center to get a scan done and then determine treatment pathway from there. So efficiency is really important. We'll be working with the Appleton Fire Department on that.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 39:54

Number of STEMI activations was nine. Over-triage STEMI activations was three. So this is fairly common, especially when you look at an EKG, there's a lot of nuances, and we try to shade towards activating a STEMI activation versus not activating. Yes, go ahead.

Alderperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 40:11

Can you explain—define the acronym for us—for we non-medical folks?

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 40:17

So, a STEMI is a ST Elevated Myocardial Infarction. So it's a heart attack that we can see on the EKG monitors. So there are heart attacks that you can't see. They're called non-STEMIs, and they're heart attacks you can see. So those are ones that we activate the entire team in the hospital. So instead of going right to the ER, they actually go to a catheterization lab and receive definitive care. So the process for that is pretty robust and pretty intricate. So when we do it, we want to make sure we do it accurately. That's why we track the over-triaging of it.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 40:50

ET patient and EKG time. So that is another opportunity for kind of some patient care and collaboration. So we've had some ideas exchanged back and forth on how we can reduce the time from the time we arrive on scene to the time we do an EKG evaluation. So this is quite a bit higher than what we've seen in other areas. But certainly, we have some good, I think, creative ideas that we've already discussed on how to reduce this overall time there.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 41:16

On scene time for your STEMI patients is 21:13, which is a good scene time. Not necessarily anything concerning there.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 41:24

Total number of trauma patients. So trauma patients—obviously, this doesn't include the trip, slips, and falls that you're gonna see that are minor injuries. These are these are true trauma patients that require treatment at a trauma center. So ThedaCare Neenah's our level two Trauma Center. You've had 11 of them. Our goal scene time is 10 minutes for that. We're at 11 minutes. And as a as a—that's a really tough scene time to meet, when you have a lot of things that need to get done. But again, another thing that we can work on efficiency-wise with the fire department.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 41:56

Total number of cardiac arrests was 57, and the total number of survivors was two. When we look at cardiac arrest survivor percentage, we only look at those that we actually transport to the hospital. So that 57 number also includes those that are dead upon arrival or ones that are non-resuscitate-able. So of those that were transported to the hospital and had a really a chance of survival, over 11 point, I think 11%. The nation's national average is 10%. So just above national average there. So.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 42:32

Overall, I think it's been working well. Collaboration between us and the Appleton fire department has improved quite a bit. We're happy with where we're at within the agreement. Certainly some areas to work on and some plans in place in order to do that. But first six months have gone well. So with that, I'll take any questions.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 42:49

Alder Siebers?

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 42:53

I don't know. I guess maybe I'll ask the chief. Now you take numbers too. You record data too, right? And there's your data agree with Gold Cross's data?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 43:11

Yes, it's, it's within seconds.

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 43:14

Okay, good. Good. Thank you.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 43:19

Alder Croatt.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 43:21

Thank you, Chair. Alder Siebers touched on a little bit of what I want to touch on. But first of all, I want to thank Mr. Romenesko for coming before the committee and providing an update. We asked for this update when we signed the agreement back over six months ago or whenever it was. Also want to thank them for the service enhancements and changes that they've made since this started. It sounds like a number of key improvements and service additions, including I've seen the vehicle running around Appleton, the new vehicle. Thank you for that.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 43:53

And then to my question for Chief Hansen. Alder Siebers touched on are the numbers the same, but I'm wondering if you're if the fire department's position on how this is working fine [...] with how Gold Cross says everything is working. I'm hearing a lot of good things from Mr. Romenesko, and I'm hoping that the Appleton Fire Department's position is similar.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 44:17

Yes, it is. I believe what Executive Director Romenesko has presented is accurate. The one area that I don't think he emphasized enough was radio communications. So part of the agreement also required Gold Cross to work on a AFD fire main, that's our 800 megahertz radio channel. That has been a long-standing concern that we've had, and I'll say we're moving in the right direction. We're not—it's not perfect, but tell me when communication is. So we are—we're moving in the right direction with that.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 44:52

Okay, thank you for that. Are there any areas of concern for AFD or issues that need to be of special attention.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 45:02

The one that we brought up back when we signed it was the number of paramedics that are on the ambulances. And I know Gold Cross is working on becoming a pilot—or excuse me, a, a, what do they call it? A satellite—thank you—satellite site this this coming fall to do an in-house paramedic program and in partnership with Fox Valley Tech. So hopefully that bolsters our numbers. So we're, we're hoping to get two paramedics on every ALS call. That would be the C, Ds, and Es. So. So over time, we'll monitor that, and you know, us moving to paramedic engine companies next July, so a little over a year from now, that will also help that second paramedic on scene.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 45:45

Okay, thank you, chief. That's exactly what I was looking for was commentary on that.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 45:49

Anyone else on committee?

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 45:54

I'll just follow up on, I guess, the question about paramedics. Was there a deadline, chief, for that to occur, I guess, as part of the agreement? Is there a refresher for us, or as you've mentioned, they're working towards it. That's great. But was there some sort of deadline? Are we on schedule for that?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 46:14

There was no deadline in the contract. The language within the contract states one paramedic on an ambulance for all ALS calls. Now, we are going to be working over the next few months on determining how we how we determine when that ALS unit shows up, because they field both two EMT staffed ambulances and dual ALS ambulances and one paramedic, one EMT ambulances. So we were just going to have to dig through and figure out how to how to validate the response times for the ALS calls, but we can work through that.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 46:54

Okay, thank you.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 46:57

Yes, go ahead, Alder Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 46:58

Thank you, Chair. Um, question for either chief or Mr. Romenesko. One. So in looking at the metrics, the only place where we really didn't approach goal was the At patient EKG time. So can you be a little bit more specific, either of you, about the steps that are going to be taken to reduce that one?

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 47:22

Yeah. So I can speak to that a little bit. Some of that is, there's nuance in an assessment, right? My stomach hurts, my back hurts, those types of things. So sometimes, it can take us a while to fully determine exactly what treatment pathway or assessment pathway we need to go down. So that's a contributing factor. So when you have a handful, and you only have nine STEMIs, and you have a handful that were kind of like that, that didn't have clear, you know, chest pain or shortness of breath, that can affect the times.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 47:51

But you know, one area that we've talked about is, you know, Gold Cross has cardiac monitors right now. Appleton fire department does not have cardiac monitors. But it's—there's a simple process that we could look at which would include us, purchasing cardiac cables for the Appleton fire department, them doing some training, applying that EKG monitoring device and us plugging it when we get there. So those are some of the things we've talked about and identified as opportunities, but that's when you look at a sample set size of 9, a couple of those outliers are really going to drive up those numbers.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 48:24

Chief Hansen, do you have anything to add?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 48:26

Yeah, I completely agree with that. We've talked through those options. And additionally, when we get our cardiac monitors on our fire trucks, that can speed it up as well. So yeah, we're moving in the right direction.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 48:40

Thank you both.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 48:41

Mr. Romenesko, we've got lots of data on strokes and infarctions—infarctions. Is there any data here that's reflecting response times to overdoses, and you know, how well we're doing with sort of that segment of healthcare responding to drug overdoses in the care of we...?

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 49:01

Yeah, it's something we track. It's not something that was outlined in the agreement as is a benchmark or metric to report out on, but I'm happy to include that in future.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 49:10

I think I think we'd like to see that is included as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 49:12

Yeah.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 49:13

Pretty important for us. Anything else from the committee? All right. Well, thank you so much for that report. Really appreciate the in-depth reporting back. All right.