

Item 25-0740: Fire Department Shared Services and Operating Agreement: 2025 Mid-Year Report

Safety and Licensing Committee

Wed, Jul 23, 2025 5:30PM

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 13:45

Let's go to information items and start with 25-0740, which is the fire department shared services and operating agreement 2025 mid-year report, and Gold Cross is with us tonight. Is it Nick?

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 13:58

Yes.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 13:58

Yes. Welcome, Nick.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 13:59

Thank you. Well, thanks for having me back. I thought maybe everybody that was here today was here for me, but I guess not. Yeah, so this is the kind of the third iteration of this report. So, Gold Cross Ambulance has been working or operating in the city of Appleton, really, since the 70s, and one of Mayor Woodford's directives to myself and Chief Hansen when he took office a few years ago, was to put into place a more formalized agreement to memorialize the relationship that we have with the City of Appleton. And we entered into a three-year agreement in October of 2023, and part of that three-year agreement is that we want to make sure that we are good communicators and good stewards of information to the safety and licensing committee. So, we're here on a biannual basis to provide information, answer questions, give an update on the current state of that agreements, and just give you some information. So, this is that third iteration that you've seen of this report. So, I know many of you either seen this, or I know some are new to the council as well may have not seen this, but we try to break down the sections that are outlined within the agreement and work that's being done.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 15:09

So, to get into it, so I work very closely with Division Chief Homman, who is the division chief of EMS, on really all things. He works really closely with a lot of my team members as well to help provide the best possible pre hospital health care to the citizens of Appleton, and a few ways that we do that is support through training and education. So, we've done various collaborative training and education. One thing that we did in the last six months was a department wide training with the city of Appleton Fire Department on our whole blood administration program. So that was a new program we instituted in December. We felt it was very important that we get some education out into the community, not only the Appleton Fire Department, but around our region as well, to establish kind of the guidelines and principles behind this new program for us. So that was conducted with the Appleton Fire Department.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 16:00

We continue to invite them to our quarterly ThedaCare trauma education. So, the team at ThedaCare comes to Gold Cross on a quarterly basis. We open that up to our first responder and fire department partners to participate in that as well. And then Division Chief Homman did some ride-along time with me about, you know, three, four months ago, just to talk about the paramedic engine initiative—those changes—show our paramedics kind of the standards of care that we put together. That was really a collaborative process, which I appreciated, worked very closely with the fire department leadership, Chief Hansen, Division Chief Homman, Dr

Rose is who their medical director is, and just making sure there was good cohesiveness, so that when they did go live in July, that there wasn't any gaps in understanding, there was good transfer of care guidelines in place. And so far, we're, you know, 23 days in, and I haven't gotten a complaint yet. So that's usually a very good sign. So usually that's that's—I usually hear the bad stuff. But we're working together to on a 30-day evaluation program that comes from gold cross to see how is it working? How can we support them differently? How can we make sure things are running a little bit smoother? So that will be some information we'll have in future reports as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 17:13

Moving on to dispatch and response time goals. So, you'll notice that the dispatch—or the response time reporting is a little different this year than last year. Last year we just kind of lumped all emergency and non-emergency calls together. This year we decided to break them down by their emergency medical dispatch code. So, when somebody calls 911, the dispatcher on the other end will go through a series of questions and give us the preferred response mode of recommended response mode. So sometimes that is lights and sirens, and sometimes that is not lights and sirens. So really that's just a breakdown. Obviously, response times are a little bit slower when we're not running lights and sirens and much quicker when we are running lights and sirens. So A Adam is the lowest acuity call that we can encounter, and then E Edward is your highest acuity call. So, as you get down in the alphabet there, that's when you want to see lower numbers in the first five six columns there, and higher percentages as you go up to the right. So specifically in that E Edward category, we really only had one month where there was a miss—very small subsection of the population that we actually—or of the call volume that actually is in that E Edward category there. So, it was probably a miss of one in the entire year so far.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 18:27

But one thing that I'll be really working on with Chief Hansen and discussing, as we develop more goals, more shared goals, is there's a there's a gap of reporting in this methodology. There's about 15 to 20% of calls that are not coded, that are either come from third party callers, they're actually not direct, talking directly to the patient. Maybe the police department is calling us and there's not a code associated with it, or we go to the jail quite a bit as well. Those are not coded. So, there's a there's a good percentage of calls that are not coded that would—I'd like to see added into this mix, just so we have good continuity in reporting as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 19:05

Next section there's on communications. So, this is a big one we've been working on quite a bit. We are seeing some improvements. So, if you look at that table right there, what we really want to see an improvement in is the direct contact. So, when they're trying to contact gold cross, they're making contact with the responding ambulance that's arriving to the scene. Working cohesively with them, we've been able to install updated radios in all of our ambulances that will monitor AFD main at all times. One thing that is a little bit of a difficulty and a challenge in this process is it's just a small subset of the total calls that we run with the city of Appleton where they're actually reaching out to us. So, on a monthly basis, you're talking anywhere between five to 10 times they're actually trying to reach out to us with a total of, you know, close to 500 total calls. It's a very small percentage of time. So, it's been a difficult training piece, because you're trying to get them to do something that isn't happening on every single call, but we continue to work that. We've been able to bridge the gap in the direct contact ways. If you look those two lines there, the orange line being the overall contact, the blue line being the direct contact, we're getting much more success with the direct contact, which is what you want to see. Obviously, some room improvement for improvement. Our goal is 90% there in the overall contact, and we're getting closer, but certainly some work to be done there.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 20:26

Medical Director, so Dr. Rose and Dr. Bope. Dr. Rose is the Appleton fire department medical director, and Dr. Bope is the gold cross Medical Director. They worked very well as the protocol development took place for the paramedic engine initiative with the Appleton Fire Department. And then they also exchange emails, phone calls on a monthly basis make sure there's not—no concerns that have been brought forward, any charts that need review and quality reviews, things like that, that need to take place. So, they collaborate on a monthly basis as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 20:59

Moving in just to the overall operational report. So, on that table there you have the year one average, and then a breakdown month to month, moving down. So, we're right on average, really, for the emergency. So, the emergency is anytime we go lights and sirens through the 911 dispatch center. The non-emergency is the non-lights and sirens. So, you're right around 50/50. 50% of the time we're going lights and sirens. 50% of the time are going non-lights and sirens.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 21:31

And then moving to the private calls, that includes nursing home calls, private calls made directly to Gold Cross, initially transfers from one hospital to another, and so that gets you to your monthly total. There's the breakdown of that table.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 21:45

A few things we've done, coverage wise this year to kind of expand and continue to provide better coverage for the city of Appleton, our medic one ambulance, which is a roving ambulance, so they pick up an ambulance at our headquarters in Menasha, and then they backfill into the busy portions of our service area, which is typically the City of Appleton. They went from eight hours day, five days a week, to 12 hours a day, seven days a week.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 22:12

And then our medic Four, same concept there, they're our roving unit. Pick up the ambulance in Menasha, and are typically back filled in the city of Appleton, depending on when where the call volume is coming in. We expanded that to 24-hour coverage, seven days a week, versus 12 hours coverage. So, continue to grow and expand our level of coverage as the demand is growing in the Fox Valley here.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 22:33

One other thing we've instituted—and we're one of only two EMS providers in the state to be able to—with a whole blood initiative. So, we actually are able to give lifesaving whole blood to traumatic patients in the field. So, we can actually hang blood and get them that lifesaving nutrient right in the back of the ambulance, where in the past, they'd have to wait till they get to the trauma center to be able to do that. And when you have somebody who's hemorrhaging and losing blood, the stuff we have in the ambulance in the ambulance in the past, which is normal saline, which is kind of what you get if you're sick or dehydrated, doesn't have what is necessary to oxygenate the cells within the body. So that whole blood allows us to do that. We've had some excellent, excellent outcomes. We've had over 20 deployments as a system, five of them being in the city of Appleton, and actually our first whole blood deployment was in the city of Appleton.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 23:21

So, it's been something that's been a great enhancement to our ability to provide patient care to citizens in the City of Appleton. But also, it's a regional resource. We've done intercepts with outlying ambulance services who are coming in from Fremont, Black Creek, Seymour, who are coming in, and it really is a regional service. You know, Gold Cross is tied very closely to the regional health care systems, ThedaCare and Ascension. They're our

owners, so they really drive our quality of care. And one of their, you know, directives, when we went in into this whole blood program, they want—really wanted to make sure that this was something that we extended into the region, not just in the gold cross service area.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 24:00

Next, you'll see our 2025 Mission Lifeline award. So, this is—we do a couple things to benchmark our quality as an organization. And the first thing we do is the mission lifeline's mission. So that's an American Heart Association benchmarking. So, they have certain criteria that they tell us is the industry best practice for both stroke and heart attack. We submit our data, and they give us a grade at the end of the year. So, this is for 2025; we're at the gold Mission Lifeline, with target heart attack honor roll and stroke honor roll. So, we're one of only eight providers in the state to achieve this level. And where this is the fourth consecutive year we've been able to achieve the gold standard. So, quality of care is also just as important as those response times that you guys see in this report as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 24:46

Breakdown of just call types. A few things that we'll be working on is stroke. Our on-scene time for stroke patients—we want that to be under 15 minutes so they can get to a CT capable facility and get treatment so little opportunity there. Working with the city of Appleton. Our STEMI numbers have gotten better for this year. As far as our door to EKG time, I anticipate that to improve, as well, as we continue to, you know, leverage the talents of the Appleton fire department and their paramedics and their ability to have a cardiac monitor on scene, apply those [unclear] prior to our arrival.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 25:21

Trauma patients—we're under that 10-minute window in the city of Appleton this year which is fantastic. That means we're getting those patients off the scene quickly in the back of the ambulance and going to definitive care at a trauma center.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 25:34

One thing you'll notice as a little different this year is how we're going to be begin reporting our cardiac arrest survivors. So, the other benchmarking tool that we use that go cross is the cares registry. So that is a registry that sponsored by Emory University. So, providers—EMS providers and hospitals around this, around the country submit their cardiac arrest data, and then they—we can benchmark ourselves against both national and state percentages and outcomes.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 26:07

And the one category that we are going to start benchmarking ourselves again internally as well as the City of Appleton is the Utstein criteria. So that looks at cardiac arrest patients—so patients whose hearts have stopped, but we actually have an opportunity to make an impact on. So those aren't the patients—so in the past, we used to report all cardiac arrest. So that could have been somebody who was in cardiac arrest for 15 to 20 minutes, nobody was around them, nobody provided bystander CPR, there wasn't an AED deployed. So by the time we get there, the odds of us actually having a positive outcome or slim to none. Where this benchmark looks at, calls that we arrive on scene, there's been good bystander CPR, and we encounter what's called a shockable rhythm. So that tells us that what we do in the next five to 10 minutes will actually make an impact on the potential outcome or potential survivability of that patient. So those are the patients that we really want to focus on, be on our game, making sure we're doing what we need to do to have a good outcome.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 27:03

Patients that we encounter on the opposite side of that spectrum—you know, typically, if you get on scene, they've been down for quite a period of time, they're in a non-shockable rhythm. There's a very low probability that they're going to have a positive outcome. So that's why we switch to this benchmarking. If you look in Appleton, we're right around 50% year to date, compared to Wisconsin's at 40.8 and nationally at 33.4. So, we're significantly higher nationally and higher on the Wisconsin side of things as well.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 27:30

Moving on to just some other organization improvements and collaboration. We've been supporting Appleton. Obviously, part of the agreement is to support the exchange of products and consumable goods that are utilized on patients when we respond together. We transitioned to supporting their oxygen tank exchange. In the past everyone actually had their own—it's called the cascade system, which isn't the safest way to refill oxygen tanks. It's really better you have a professional company come in and do that. Gold Cross is sponsoring that now for the city of Appleton so that they can start exchanging mini tanks versus those large tanks.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 28:08

We've done some joint celebrations as teams together to recognize the camaraderie, the teamwork, what it takes to have good, positive outcomes. It really takes the entire team to have good outcomes, especially on critical patients. So, we've been trying to recognize those a little bit more often.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 28:23

And then, specifically on the Gold Cross side, we started training and educating our own staff members in house. We will be applying for our own DHS Training Center permits. That will be—towards the end of the month we should be able to wrap that up and get that in place for EMR and EMT initial training. And then we have a partnership with Fox Valley Technical College for initial paramedic training. So, we trained seven paramedics in house last year. They went through almost a full year of rigorous training and education. All seven passed their national registry boards and are on the streets now. So, we have another class of seven starting in September, and that is really our way is to continue to wrap up—ramp up Paramedic Services for the city, for the region, and create our own and cultivate our own talent. Because obviously, there's a there's a shortage around the country, around the state right now, of qualified paramedics. So about really four years ago, we started these initial training program to get more people involved in this profession and then elevate them up to now the paramedic level, going into our second cohort this year. That about wraps it up. Happy to take questions, recommendations for future iterations of this reports, but that's what I had for you.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 29:35

Okay, thanks, Nick. Appreciate the report. I know you didn't read the conclusion, but I think that's a pretty good piece of this report, because as I look at it, you know, I'm glad to hear that we're off to a good start working with AFD, and ultimately this is improved and enhanced services for the citizens of Appleton. And that's basically what the conclusion is saying is, you know, we're—you know, since we've drafted this more formal agreement, service levels are improving. Obviously, AFD's enhance their service. And you know, the partnerships working. So, all right, good. Division Chief of EMS Homman or Chief Hansen, do you want to add anything? As...which one do you have? District seven? Go ahead.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 30:24

Yeah, I would agree with the executive director Romanesko's report. We have seen a decline in response times. We have seen an increase in collaboration. We are—we saw a great partnership and alliance when we built our patient care protocols or patient care guidelines, treatment guidelines. So, all good things. We're heading in the right direction. The one thing that we've asked, and this comes to no surprise to Nick I'm sure, is that we would

like more paramedics on the ambulance. So that's something that we've been given asking for. They're working as hard as they can to fulfill that requirement, but it takes some time. So.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 31:14

Yeah, okay. Nick, do you want to comment on that?

Nick Romanesko (Gold Cross Representative) 31:17

No, he's right. I mean, it takes a year to stand up a paramedic program. That's only seven. You know, that's—I don't know if you follow anything that's going around the state, but there's some issues around the state to just—and other fire departments, other EMS providers. It's a struggle. But certainly, to Chief's point, he's—the city of Appleton has been very clear with gold cross on some expectations, and we're working very diligently to try to meet those.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 31:21

Thank you. And I know that was important to former Alder Siebers too to have that in place. So, thanks. Anything from your perspective?

Unknown Speaker 31:49

Absolutely, I can just reiterate what Executive Director Romanesko is speaking to, that we continue to collaborate towards good quality patient care, and as we move forward with paramedic engines, we're looking at how we as a department can make a greater impact for our patients as we're looking at that quality assurance data. We're looking at our cares data, we're looking at the other initiatives for stroke and trauma that Nick spoke to. So, we can say, how do we fit in that piece of—you know, that piece the puzzle to have that quality care up front so our scene times can be reduced and our patient outcomes can be better overall. So, from my eyes, I feel the collaboration has been very good, and look forward to what the future brings to continue that relationship.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 32:30

Good, good. Thanks. Okay. Questions from committee members? One question that I had before we go to Alder Fenton and Alder Firkus is, congrats on the recognition from the American Heart Association. Are there different levels of achievement and recognition? I'm just curious. I'm just curious. I'm just curious.

Nick Romanesko (Gold Cross Representative) 32:47

Silver, Bronze, or no recognition. Yeah.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 32:47

Okay.

Nick Romanesko (Gold Cross Representative) 32:47

So gold is the highest you can get.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 32:48

Oh, that's what I was wondering. Is there—okay. Okay, good. Question, Alder Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 32:50

So, my question was just what percentage of your calls have a paramedic on board?

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Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 32:56

100%

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 32:58

Okay. Okay.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 32:58

100% of calls in the city of Appleton receive at least one paramedic. Oftentimes two. We have a [unclear] now, but almost every time two.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 33:06

Right, I was gonna say we've got one on every Fire on AFD call. So, I guess I was asking what percentage of gold cross calls are staffed by paramedic?

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 33:16

Yep, 100%.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 33:17

Okay.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 33:17

Okay. Anything else?

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 33:19

That's it.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 33:19

Okay? Alder Firkus? You're good? Okay, all right. Thank you very much. See you in six months.

Nick Romenesko (Gold Cross Representative) 33:25

Probably sooner than that. I think—

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 33:28

Okay, okay, yeah, end of the year? Okay, great, thanks.