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Story originally printed in the La Crosse Tribune or online at www.lacrossetribune.com

Published - Saturday, July 07, 2007

Tri-State asking to change mediation plans

By DAN SPRINGER | La Crosse Tribune

The Tri-State Ambulance board wants to scrap upcoming sessions with a mediator that were intended to spur talks between city and ambulance officials about possible changes to the county's emergency medical services system.

Tri-State Board President Jim Klock said in a letter to county leaders Thursday the board wants to replace Tuesday's "pre-mediation mediation" with an open discussion among all the parties.

La Crosse County organized the Tuesday session with representatives from the city, county, Tri-State and the city's two hospitals to help guide early discussions on the La Crosse

Fire Department possibly providing ambulance service in the city.

La Crosse Mayor Mark Johnsrud in May requested mediation sessions to discuss potential changes in the EMS system, which could include a city ambulance service.

Tri-State claims a city ambulance would hurt the quality of emergency medical services provided to the rest of La Crosse County.

Klock wrote in his letter to County Board Chairman Steve Doyle and County Administrator Steve O'Malley that "discussing possible enhancements would yield a much better outcome than independently briefing a (mediator)."

All discussions should be held in the open, Klock added, "to facilitate transparency and allow those impacted to have input into the recommendations."

Johnsrud said Friday he still considers mediation with someone knowledgeable about EMS to be the best route. Holding private mediation sessions, he added, would not hamper receiving public input.

"This is only the first step to enhancing the system. With any determination we can enhance the system, legislation would go before the city council so public hearings would be held and there would be time for a lot of public input," Johnsrud said.

O'Malley and Doyle were unavailable for comment Friday afternoon.

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