

Mediation Approval

The city council voted to approve mediation between Franciscan Skemp, Gundersen Lutheran, the city, and Tri-State ambulance, which currently handles ambulance calls in La Crosse and surrounding areas. The city is considering operating its own ambulance service using fire department paramedics. But that would mean fewer calls and less business for Tri-State.

Tuesday two steps were made; all the parties involved had a pre-mediation discussion, while the mediator was present, and now this approval to actually start the mediation process. Also in tonight's meeting, city council amended the original recommendation to include two things:

One- that another council member be a part of the discussions.

The other- because all four parties agree to split the cost of mediation, the city will pay only the first 5,000 dollars of mediation. The rest will be split between the four.

The mediator says everyone involved wants to improve services to the public, but they have different ways of doing it.

"I'm happy because they decided to take the first step and you can't go on to substance without any sense of process so we're going to try to develop the process and then if we can develop the process the process should yield substance," says Howard Bellman, a self-employed mediator.

"Chief Cleveland has a different view I have a different view but that doesn't mean we're not patient centered, we just have different focuses and hopefully through this process we can do things like the community health program and some of the things we want to get done that will involve the fire department in the EMS system without detrimentally effecting our regional healthcare delivery system," says Matt Zavadsky, the director of Tri-State Ambulance.

The fire chief declined comment, because he says they agreed in Tuesday's discussion to only speak through the mediator. The mediator says he expects this to either succeed or fail relatively quickly.

The measure of success will be whether all sides can reach what the mediator called a "collaborative outcome".

In the city council meeting and at the discussion earlier today, all parties are making it clear they want to have community involvement and input before they make any final decisions.



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