

La Crosse to go ahead with plan to get into ambulance business

By SAMANTHA MARCUS / La Crosse Tribune

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The ambulance business in La Crosse may soon get more competitive, bringing to a head a public-private battle over who should provide emergency services in the region.

Top elected city and county officials said Tuesday they will simultaneously introduce legislation to create a municipally-run emergency medical service. But "it has a long way to go," La Crosse County Board Chairman Steve Doyle said. "What it really means is that the negotiators for the city and county appear to have a meeting of the minds at this point," he said. "Neither the City Council or County Board has actually agreed on anything."

A deal by the city and county likely would create a tug-of-war for business with Tri-State Ambulance, which is owned by Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center and has vowed not to cede any ground to the city.

"Tri-State will not exit the ambulance business in the city of La Crosse, even if the city enters it," Tri-State officials said in a written comment. "We will compete in a manner that does not compromise the quality of Tri-State's service."

More than a year of mediation has resulted in a proposal that both city and county representatives have agreed on but that Tri-State "still has shown reluctance" to sign on to, La Crosse Mayor Mark Johnsrud said.

Tri-State Director Matt Zavadsky said his company was not made aware an agreement was reached.

"Quite frankly, we don't know what the tentative agreement is," he said. "We only know what we've talked about with the county. We don't know what the county has talked about with the city."

Zavadsky said Tri-State hasn't sat at the table with the city for at least six months.

Madison Attorney Howard Bellman, who was brought on more than a year ago to mediate the dispute, said Tuesday he hasn't been a part of the talks for several months.

Johnsrud acknowledged city negotiators haven't had any direct conversations with Tri-State officials in months and instead the county has acted as a go-between.

"Mediation is, I believe, suspended at least — if not over," Doyle said, adding that in the next couple days the city and county will decide how to go public with details of the proposal.

Johnsrud described it as "enhanced emergency medical services" but declined further comment, except to say "it's more than ambulance service."

Doyle called it a "positive development, not just just for city residents, but countywide."

Tri-State has argued all along that the existing system functions exceptionally well and fragmentation would threaten the quality and affordability of service.

The average charge to a patient for care is about \$462, Zavadsky said.

"If something changes in that regional services delivery model, and if, for example, the center is taken out of the donut, the clinical, operational and financial performance of the system will suffer," Zavadsky said.

In 2007, Tri-State's net income was \$77,000 on \$4.2 million in operating revenues, according to its Web site. Zavadsky said less than 50 percent of what Tri-State bills its customers ever gets collected.

"There's a huge difference between what you actually bill and what you bring in the door," Zavadsky said. "This is a very difficult business."

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2Hoots wrote on Jul 30, 2008 2:37 PM:

- 1) What will happen to EMD?
- 2) Will a city-run service provide mutual aid to other EMS services?
- 3) Will a city-run service still request mutual aid from TriState?
- 4) How well can two city-run ambulances hold up for those days when TriState has had 7 or 8 ambulances running their butts off in the city?
- 5) Will TriStates availability for the rest of their coverage area be compromised?
- 6) Will the city offer the same assurances / guarantees that TriState offers?
- 7) How/why did the city FD get involved in EMS in the first place?
- 8) Will a city-run ambulance affect the ISO rating of the city? (believe it or not, ISO ratings are HUGE savings for homeowners/business insurance premiums)

Is the city answering these questions???? "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 2:27 PM:

" rt2spk-

Re: "Tri-State has lost numerous "seasoned" veterans in the last two years because of Matt's iron hand. Their care is no different than that of a "basic" system at this time. There is a very small cadre of personell at TS that are worth it."

How are they in any way shape or form a "basic" system? Of the 48 paramedics currently employed 16, a full third have the experience and knowledge to become Critical Care Paramedics.

While you are correct there have been several new employees hired at Tri-State, you assumption that they come without paramedic experience only shows your ignorance.

It is better to be silent and thought a fool, than open your mouth and prove it to the world... "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 2:02 PM:

" From WXOW website:

"Before anything is proposed Doyle says he wants to see some kind of public input."

I hope he reads the comments here. The only people for FD ambulance is the ones who obviously work for them. "

new world order wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:59 PM:

" I never thought I would say this, but I feel I have to. I moved here from the Baltimore/Washington D.C. area over 19 years ago. I loved La Crosse. Now that I have a good job here and own a home in the city, things have gotten worse every year. I'm convinced it's because of who we have as our local elected officials. My taxes on my house are too high. If they go up to finance something like this ambulance proposal, I would consider moving back east. Tri-State's service and performance is not broken, so don't try and fix it, especially at the public's expense! "

funmom wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:52 PM:

" One last comment - TSA is not paid for by tax dollars, the new city service would be paid for by tax dollars. Raising taxes is bad enough, to raise them now when we are basically in a recession, for a service that is not needed is down right irresponsible. "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:50 PM:

" As we speak the Mayor is running an Ad for a new secretary. \$21.09 per hour. Almost \$44,000 per year for that position. I would like all of you to post in the Lacrosse job market that are, or know someone who is making \$44,000 as a secretary. Other government jobs do not count! How do expect them to pick this service up and do it cost effectively? What can we expect then? Kirch to be Head of Planning/Inspection/Ambulance Service? How about just calling him Czar? "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:47 PM:

" rt2spk -

you type faster than you think...is that how you respond to all calls too :-P

haha sorry couldn't resist. "

rt2spk wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:46 PM:

" If you are referring to my rendition of nutz thank you very much for noticing; but that was intentional. As for my spelling of personell with 2 LLs. sorry I kind of type faster than I think (fire away at that response) "

funmom wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:45 PM:

" Why on earth would this small of a city need two different ambulance services? The system they have now works well, so why change it? Also, how do you decide which service goes on which calls? What happens when there is a dispute over who should take the call? Should the patients just suffer then? Or is going to be a 1st come, 1st served race to the call? "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:41 PM:

" City jobs would be filled by former Tri-State employees? Run the numbers in the increase of pay/benefits cost alone! Wake up. These people can't even collect Child support and fines! "

medic wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:38 PM:

" back to the war zone with you possom, why are you here and not lending a hand to your friend in the knife and gun country you left behind? Sounds like they are in much more need of your experience and knowledge than our area full of farmers holding pitchforks. no one is be-rating the FD, they do well. Why put yourself back into the dark ages of EMS playing catch up with a new system to get back to the place we are today? Come full circle and then realize a mistake was made? "

insider wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:36 PM:

" La Crosse taxpayers hold onto your wallets!! The current 90-100 firefighters will turn into 125 or more in order to run this new ambulance service and not to mention all the new equipment etc...all at the same time when you look around and see more crime and criminals lowering the safety of La Crosse. If any council member votes for this remember on election day and send them packing! "

antieverthing wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:33 PM:

" I had one Tri State experience. They were amazing in quality and professionalism. If I am offered a choice, I choose Tri State. There is no way the city will ever catch up to this company and thier experience "

Jenifr wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:32 PM:

" rt2spk, I have to say after reading your posts, I can't hardly wait to see your fire department ambulance in service. You're abrasive and abusive attitude will serve you well in the public. And your inability to spell will serve you well in court. Should't take long with employees like that to shut down the city run ambulance in a short time!! "

medic1368 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:30 PM:

" Continued.....

three medics have 30 years, another 2 or 3 at 20 years and 8 more with 12 to 15 years. I will not belittle the FF because I work with those guys on a daily basis and respect what they do and they have backed me hope on thousands of calls. But if the FD takes over, they will not and cannot hire the experience that there is at TSA. So rt2spk, you better hope that the ambulance that responds to your 911 call better be TSA, because even though you have belittled me and my partners, I will still give you all 15 years of my experience. "

medic wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:30 PM:

" What about people in nursing homes, people needing interfacility transports, hospice transports and etc, that 'are not 911 calls'. Who is going to handle that? Will Cleveland allow his people to handle such a non-heroic call? Or will they ask a neighboring ambulance service to handle such trivial tasks? How many ambulances are they planning to staff 24/7? It had better be more than 2 covering this city or then we will really have a discussion of response times. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:28 PM:

" possom133 -

your friend chooses to work there and you chose to working in a "war zone". Way to brag about it though. One could argue that me flying in a helicopter to do my job is just as dangerous lately as the likelihood of being shot in Milwaukee... "

medic1368 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:22 PM:

" Alright, sitting here rading the comment,s some worth mentioning some just plain WRONG. I have worked for TSA for 15 years, I am still there. Yes we have new medics, to accomodate the 2 new trucks that we have added to our fleet to cover the county more efficiently. I do the scheduling and on each and every truck there is a seasoned medic with a new medic. Never do two new people work together. WE have 29 medics with greater than 5 years and half of those have greater than 10 years. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:21 PM:

" rt2spk -

funny I was one of the Gold Cross medics for a short period of time. It wasn't Gundersen that wanted us out it was Skemp that wanted more control of Tri-State. It didn't work out for them, but none of us ex- Gold Cross medics are bitter about it. "

InformedCitizen wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:19 PM:

" badshot,

if you truly want to better the city of LaCrosse I would hope that you can endure a few negative reactions from the blogosphere and stick to your ideals. address the facts and the issue at hand and don't react so strongly to someone telling you to go away.

Everyone has the right to speak, if someone is wrong or uninformed provide them with information, especially our elected officials. We must stand up for Tri-state. They have provided excellent care for all the years I have lived in Lacrosse and we all deserve that excellent care. Say no to the city ambulance and say it loud "

rt2spk wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:16 PM:

" Gundersen is crying because the same thing is happening to them to which they did to Gold Cross. The big bully has been kicked in the nutz and is standing on the corner crying now. If they are so concerned about patient care; they should be assisting in getting these people trained. If not; I see St Francis has a big shiny new ER now, I bet is just waiting for people... "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:16 PM:

" rt2spk -

great a bunch of newbie medics treating La Crosse patients. Maybe you can do the training in-house too... "

rt2spk wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:15 PM:

" Also; I cannot count all the times I have heard lately by Tristate people "when I get into the rig in the morning, i don't know who the person is I am working with." This is due to the large turnover of personell at Tristate in the last two years, and it continues today. As for GL "medically trained" people on the other end of the line of EMD... That is laughable... These are not "medically" trained people. Some may have basic training; but they are trained to use "flip charts" to talk through a situation. "

possom133 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:15 PM:

" Hey bearcat25 Ever been shot at while trying to preform your job, my lazy friend has been shot in the line of duty,try that for non-aggressive. Or put your vast knowledge to the test and try working in a war zone, I have! "

rt2spk wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:14 PM:

" Second: Tri-State has lost numerous "seasoned" veterans in the last two years because of Matt's iron hand. Their care is no different than that of a "basic" system at this time. There is a very small cadre of personell at TS that are worth it. "

rt2spk wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:13 PM:

" Lets get one thing strait... The FF's will not be "forced" to take on the duties of going to medic school... They have enough that "want" to do it. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:11 PM:

" possom133 - your "friend" works for the most messed up, unagressive paramedic service in the state. They don't even do Cardic pacing which is an EMT-Intermediate skill. "

InformedCitizen wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:11 PM:

" There has been a clear message sent by public opinion that a new ambulance is neither warranted nor desired. If the city officials can't see this then it must be made abundantly clear. Go to the city website, find out what district you are in and call your represntative. Inundate them with calls and emails about this issue. This affects all of us and we should provide the attention this issue deserves! "

possom133 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:08 PM:

" Hey medic this is nothing more than play so I think I will go back to work now and leave you children to your simple little time. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:07 PM:

" Ugh, again with the why don't I leave town point. La Crosse, such a welcoming place. If only if it didn't have all those non-party line towing, disloyal people wanting something better, like me. We should really get rid of those people. Huh, I bet the city council could do it. "

InformedCitizen wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:05 PM:

" The formation of the new ambulance service would dilute the lacrosse paramedics exposure to critical patients and would correspondingly diminish all paramedics ability to provide excellant care. Another ambulance service would damage the skills of all paramedics and put citizens health in danger "

medic wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:05 PM:

" Inform someone that is worthless? Adults are speaking here possom, run along and play now. "

InformedCitizen wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:04 PM:

" Tri-State and Gunderson oppose the creation of a new ambulance service, not necessarily the tentative agreement between the county and the City. The Agreement likely furthers the creation of the new ambulance, therefore they do not need specifics of the agreement to be against it. "

possom133 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:02 PM:

" Now dfib, You have informed us of all your knowledge so the next REAL step is getthat recall petition going!!!!!! OR just sit there and keep telling us how smart you are???"

Melon Head wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:00 PM:

" RE: Medic
LOL, those symptoms are already being seen at all the council meetings. Is it to late? Do we amputate? "

possom133 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:58 PM:

" Hey medick, I have a "worthless freind who is a paramedic for the FD in milwaukee. Please tell him of your vast knowledge of how FD EMS services operate. "

medic wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:52 PM:

" This is more than a joke, if I was a city resident I would move to Shelby, Onalaska, Holmen, someplace covered by seasoned people. The FD is going to get medics to start up that have been rejected by TSA, Winona, Sparta, etc while they send their people to school. Those are who I want coming to

my side when I need it???? Your elected officials are suffering from a massive case of rectalcranial inversion, this can be a very serious matter if not dealt with quickly and efficiently, I have seen it lead to the following symptoms: knee jerk reactions, poor planning, self gratification through the suffering of working class. "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:48 PM:

" Continued:

The FD bragging that they're first to the call, is nauseating. They're basically saying they operate with no regard for the safety of the citizens of La Crosse in order to make a political point.

Further, it's the design of the system that the FD (acting as first responders) arrive first. This is the role they have taken on. The very fact that it does work relieves strain on the system. If for some reason Tri-State becomes overloaded with calls, you will still have trained responders coming to your house.

Now if the FD takes over the ambulance will they still function as first responders? If not who will be at your house until the FD ambulance arrives.

Once again we are back to degrading a service that in it's current form functions very well. "

whatever1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:47 PM:

" Dear Badshot1

An educated individual would not make such comments as, You know in some places communities have a choice in health care. With two large healthcare facilities in a town of this size, La Crosse is truly blessed, and known for, superior healthcare. If you dont like your options, you can always leave. Patients taken by ambulance go to either Franciscan Skemp or Gundersennot just Gundersen. In this day and age when the economy is in such bad shape, the idea of the city taking over something that works is downright dumb. If anything, this should go to referendum and then see where it falls. "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:41 PM:

" badshot1:

In reference to the quicker response:

Roughly 60% on the time the FD arrives before Tri-State, however the average time difference is only 1-2 minutes. Often that 1-2 minutes is the caused by Tri-State responding non-emergent as per the Emergency medical dispatcher. This means a medically trained dispatcher has ascertained the call does not require a "hot" response. Emergency vehicles responding "hot" are close to 1000 times more likely to injure or kill someone as a EMD mistake. And the indiscriminate use of "hot" responses is only going to kill a bystander some day. Not a matter of if, but when. "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:35 PM:

" Can we improve care:

Absolutely! If you have been following this issue for a while there have several proposals that have been shot down by our simple minded Mayor.

1. A regional EMS oversight committee. This would become a governing agency for all EMS issues in the area and would include community leader representation for all communities involved, not the city.
2. FD participating in home health visits. This could include administering flu shots to home-bound people or doing regular health checks. Both of which would benefit the city by providing revenue without the expense of ambulances, additional paramedic equipment, or expensive training. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:35 PM:

" FD also resonds lights and sirens to all request even if it is not a true emergency via dispatch info, puting unnecessary danger to the general public. What people don't realize is that less than 5% of 911 calls truly require emergent transport to make a difference. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:31 PM:

" badshot -

Other cities have tired, and it has gone miserably. Cases in point - Marshfield Fire and Eau Claire Fire. The city has said multiple times its main motivator is revenue. The FD does NOT respond that much quicker, and when they plan to do EMS they only plan to cover the city with TWO ambulances. TSA provides 6-7 for the county, 3 in the city minimum unless atleast 3 simultaneous calls. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:27 PM:

" Yes, we should be talking about what's the real effect with this. Revenue is a strong motivator. The city may not be seeking out a money making operation, they could be trying to find work for staff to do. However, we need to ask the same questions from both sides of the negotiating table. Will a

city run system be better? I've read (can't remember where now) that the FD gets to the scene much quicker. Faster presence on it's own has to be a good thing. Does anyone know of other communities that have done this in the past? We should be looking at what is best for the community. Is the city the best to decide that? Is Gundersen best to decide that? "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:25 PM:

" Why does Gundersen oppose:

Well I suppose you could argue some self preservation since Tri-State Ambulance is a wholly owned subsidiary. However Tri-State does not contribute to the GL treasury. They show no preference which hospital and bring GL no additional business. You could also argue self-preservation in the sense they might not be looking forward to patients brought in by less experienced providers. One would assume the excellent care that the Tri-State paramedics provide makes less work for hospital ER staff. Lastly maybe Gundersen is taking a role of community health responsibility in proposing that patient care will suffer. This seems to have been their stance since day one. Amazingly the FD has never offered or talked about the care you will receive under their proposed plan, just the \$\$ they will make. "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:21 PM:

" Continued:

However now they have over a hundred fire fighters sitting on a daily basis with no fires to fight. This presents a target for penny pinchers especially in an economy facing a recession. By securing the ambulance service in the city of La Crosse the FD guarantees future FD jobs and budget. If anyone threatens budget or personnel cut the FD will be the first to point out you may not get an ambulance. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:20 PM:

" So because I question things and don't automatically follow the party line, because I take time to think about an issue I am called disloyal? Pardon me for having an opinion. Because someone says I work for the city because I state my opinion. I have to defined myself? What are we in third grade? You're a nincompoop head, so there, I've not been reduced to your level. At this point I'm quitting. "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:20 PM:

" Badshot asked good questions.

Why does the city want in: Proposed is a revenue making. Realistically it has been shown this is not the case and you must assume however foolish the city pushers are they realize this. More likely the city and fire department have come to realize how overstuffed and over budget they are. This realization comes at a time the fire department is putting themselves out of business because they are very good at what they do. Fire prevention has been effective to a point that fire departments aren't needed nearly as often. We should thank them for a job well done. "

Jenifr wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:13 PM:

" Let's clarify something. There is no "city dispatch center." There is only one dispatch center in the county and that is La Crosse County Emergency Dispatch Center. All calls for emergencies, including fire, ems, police and sheriff's department are all sent out of that center. So even if city starts an ambulance, La Crosse EDC will handle those calls. Thanks. "

Melon Head wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:12 PM:

" Can you smellllllllllll, what the Johnsruds cookin !!!!!
I wonder how long after he loses his kingship that he will be a honcho at LHI???
I still say that his dealings at the castle need to be investigated by an outside or Federal agency.
No person before him has whored out this city so much in such a short period of time. This will take decades to correct. "

Mythoughtsare wrote on Jul 30, 2008 12:08 PM:

" badshot1...i have to say it. Why bite the hand that feeds you? Or even advertise it if you are going to? I think you need to apply at skemp. They may need someone unloyal. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:52 AM:

" anon- that is correct.

my word - I try not to bash firefighters. As far as I know they do a good job at doing just that. My point is people that get in something to do one job and then are forced to do another will NOT do a good job and our citizens do not deserve anything less than the best patient care. "

Anon writer wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:49 AM:

" Bearcat: I didn't say anything about the overall EMS program. What I said was this...if a city resident calls 911 and requests an ambulance, I'm guessing the dispatch center is not going to ask "Would you prefer TSA or FD?" There will be no choice in the matter. City dispatch will send FD, not TSA. "

my word wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:48 AM:

" IM STILL,

COME ON GET FACTS STRAIGHT , THERE WOULD BE ENOUGH FF TO FILL THE SPOTS, ITS NOT A QUESTION OF SERVICE ITS THE LOSS OF FIREFIGHTER SERVICE AND WHEN HAS GOVERNMENT TAKEN OVER A PROGRAM AND SAVED \$\$\$ PLEASE DONT BASH THE FF , THEY ARE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE AND WHE AND IF THIS HAPPENS SOME STAND TO LOSE THERE JOBS IF PERSONEL WOULD COME FROM TRI-STATE , PLUS IF TRI-STATE LOSSES ENOUGH PERSONEL MAYBE THEY WOULD FOLD (JUST MAYBE THATS THE PLAN BY THE CHIEF) "

Im Still Jackson wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:46 AM:

" I have transfered the very begining of this blog that started under a different header
"City wants to start ambulance service"
last night and was so wonderfully BURRIED in archieves passing the more local news links where most articles end up. "

Im Still Jackson wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:40 AM:

" Im Still Jackson
wrote on Jul 29, 2008 11:39 PM:

" Bearcat25: The scary thing is that since the city will offer service Im afraid the poor and homeless wont have a choice in service for Tri State could refuse if theres a city option available. Also since its a city service connected to other city services ones privacy may be compromised more so with the city service than the private service of TRI State along with patient confidentiality. ie the city service will already be an onscene link for the cops before they get there where as tri state has more 3rd party privacy obligations. " "

Im Still Jackson wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:39 AM:

" bearcat25
wrote on Jul 29, 2008 11:12 PM:

" What a joke...the City will run with firefighter trained medics who don't even want to be on the ambulance and will provide exceptionally poor medical care, ones things for sure if I ever need an ambulance everyone I know will know to contact Tri State for my care. " "

Im Still Jackson wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:38 AM:

" " This is a really really BAD BAD IDEA!The liability to the city and its insurance carrier far out weighs the revenue earned.
"In 2007, Tri-State's net income was \$77,000 on \$4.2 million in operating revenues, according to its Web site. Zavadsky said less than 50 percent of what Tri-State bills its customers ever gets collected".
The city wants another slushfund disguised as an operating budget and then will also get in the collections business as well.If this becomes a reality its just another area the city should not be involved in. They already are moonlighting as developers and landlord tenants now. BAD BAD AND WORSE is how this is gonna end((((((MARK)))))) my words! " "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:38 AM:

" badshot - let me answer your questions as my opinion because they are fair questions.

1. The city wants in for revenue. This has been stated by city leaders.
2. GLMC does not want to city in the business due to concerns of patient care, availability of resources, and potential revenue lose.
3. No, nothing will be improved. You will get a bill for the ambulance when you use it as you do now AND you will pay for it with taxes. Medical protocols will be dumbed down, and there have been several presentations showing it will not make money, with the city having no real presentation on how it will, even in the long run. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:26 AM:

" anon writer - you do have a choice to contact Tri-State directly or refuse service from FD. Saying you don't have a choice is just letting goverment take your freedom over.

EMS is ALOT more than 911. Nursing home returns, interfacility transfers, public assists, detox runs, flight crew transports when unable to fly. Fire departments historically do not do this either. This one won't either if you don't believe me look into Marshfield Fire. "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:21 AM:

" my word - the problem is I have not heard that the FD has inquired about TSA medics. Will they hire part-time or casual staff to supplement when needed? I would say no other Fire Dept. does. What will the protocols be like? Will they RSI? Will they do the things that Tri-State does? My assumption is no and we have not been told otherwise. "

Anon writer wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:18 AM:

" RE: Willie at 10:15 AM:

The city doesn't need to pass an ordinance requiring city residents use the FD Ambulance service. When the 911 call comes into the city dispatch center, they will automatically dispatch the FD ambulance. You will not have a choice. "

my word wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:11 AM:

" hey bearcat,

i think the firefighters would be fine , plus chief wants to hire tri-state to save \$\$ on schooling. la crosse sure has been short changed when it comes to chief and thats too bad , good thing he has an asst chief to keep him afloat. BOTTOM LINE IS JOB SECURITY !!!!!, BUT THE FD DOES A GREAT JOB AS FIREFIGHTERS AND I WANT THAT TO BE LEFT IN TACT , they never used to have a asst chief , is that so the chief can go to all his conventions and set up his next job , hope so "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 11:10 AM:

" Rather than trying to contribute to this community in a positive manner, you think I should "go back to the larger metro area you are familiar with"?

BTW, for all the other readers: Discussions like these are one of the reasons I hesitated posting here for so long. It took me a few months before I decided to chime in.

Can we talk about the real issues with this proposal?

Why does the city want to get into this business?

Why does GL not want the city in this business?

Can we improve care in the long run by doing something different now?

If everyone in La Crosse feel like I should just shut up or leave, then you deserve what ever you get out of this. "

my word wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:54 AM:

1. heard city wants to hire tri-state personel to fill ambulances , does that mean 20 firefighters get laid off?
2. if they dont hire does that mean wthey are overstaffed now as a fire dept. ?
3. city plans to hire outside agency to do the billing for ambulance (what the heck is that) pay someone else your profits.
4. please everyone call your alderperson and say NO to this city ambulance.
5. and please someone step up and run for mayor that has some sence, oh and when the mayor is ousted , please take this so called fire chief with, or send him back to marshfield, the ONLY reason he was hired is to get the ambulance and we have a great service now so LEAVE IT ALONE !!!!!!! "

my word wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:53 AM:

" leave tri-state have the ambulance!!!! the firefighters would do a good job but out lying areas would suffer, plus what if your house was on fire and the ambulance was on a call and then fire response would suffer and maybe cost a life or more property damage. i am sure the city will not hire 20 more to fill the empty slots made by running the ambulance. things to consider

to be continued "

bearcat25 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:53 AM:

" I work as a Flight paramedic where the new Fire chief came from, but I am a resident of La Crosse. Its intersting talking to people in Marshfield they all have told me we in La Crosse are making a grave mistake...its unfortuante that its not "us" thats wants it it's "them". You want to see bad patient care? Staff an ambulance with firefighters fresh out of paramedic school who are only there cause they were forced to go being low man in the department. Scary medicine. "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:41 AM:

" Oh yeah Badshot1- The Public Works Board, who is comprised basically of all City heirarchy and Department Heads, was contractually left with making sure mandates were to be followed in a Riverside building project. They still have not filed properly with the City Clerk many of those mandates. But the most 'amusing?' one was when they had tow Committees retroactively approve the outside of the building, after it was up and completed. "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:30 AM:

" Information of important votes are continually laid on elected officials desks just before the vote, or not at all. Information is 'left out' of info packets sent to Councilmen, or sent to arrive late? Our Mayor contracts a quorum of Councilmen to meet one at a time in his office. Leaving out those on the invitation list that he know he cannot garner their vote. But still nonetheless a quorum? "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:29 AM:

" Badshot1- I will take your word as 'gospel'. Welcome to our community. In our community just over 50k we have two providers of health care. More than ample, for most. "Read it"? I just had to do a Freedom of information request to obtain a contract from the Par/Rec Director about a lease. Our meetings are closed too much of the time, and can be reflected again by a 3 year plus scrutiny and audit of one of those renters of City land. Special and regular Meeting times, and Agendas have been historically void on our City Web site and when posted after the 24hr Wi requirement. "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:29 AM:

" I'm curious what call the city thinks it's going to make money on...

Hauling drunks off 3rd St? Calls to the subsidized housing apts downtown or the ones off Winneshiek Rd?

Medicare pays very little, Medical Assistance even less.

It's easiest to make money in EMS by providing interfacility transports. i.e. No cardio-thoracic or in-patient renal dialysis surgeon at Franciscan-Skemp so off to the Mayo Clinic you go. I can't imagine either the FD or the city wanting one of it's ambulances committed out of town for several hours.

A fire run service is going to loose money and the entire community will suffer on the behalf of a few.

When this turns out to be a losing deal the mayor and chief should make up the difference out of their own pockets and/or retirement fund. "

Willie wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:15 AM:

" My prediction for city ambulance: To compete the city will pass an ordinance that requires city residents to use FD ambulance. That will cause Tri-State to operate in the red, driving them out of business. That in turn will cause the city to contract out services (if they even can legally) and charge non-residents more for services. Once the city realizes it isn't as lucrative as they thought, they will charge even more than Tri-state. Eventually the city will discontinue the service after the city liability insurance is inundated with lawsuits from non-residents for inadequate care. That is how things roll around here, badshot. "

Willie wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:14 AM:

" Badshot, if you don't think we have real choices on hospitals here, maybe you should go back to the larger metro area you are familiar with. It is unrealistic to expect a choice of more than two hospitals in a more rural area like this. I for one am happy we have two. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:09 AM:

" From Franciscan skemp website:

"Based on our Christian heritage..."

"We respect the dignity, diversity and the God-given worth of every human being."

It's a choice for some people I suppose. Not a choice for me. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:03 AM:

" Willie: yep choices are good, I support you in your freedom to have two. I just wish there were more than two options. I meant real choices. I come from a community where there were more hospitals than I could count. Not that I can count that high, but anyway..."

Myturn: Yeah I know what you mean. Where I came from (just moved to La Crosse (explains my short history)) council meetings were open AND the public was allowed to speak. I went to my first council meeting last month and was disappointed. I am trying really hard not to become apathetic. "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:01 AM:

" Badshot- YOU! in fact mentioned 'health care'. What is Mayo backed St Francis, a Pickle Factory? "

Willie wrote on Jul 30, 2008 10:00 AM:

" Good point badshot1, I will take you up on the offer. I CHOOSE Gundersen over St Francis (I have used both). I will CHOOSE Tri-State over the LaCrosse FD because I know the capabilities of both first hand. You are so right, some people do have a choice. Once the city takes over I bet the city residents will be forced to the city ambulance service (wait and see they will pass some kind of ordinance). So much for choice. "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:58 AM:

" Sorry I was not fair with my last 9:50AM post in one respect. It is hard to attend meetings when, THEY HAVE ALL BEEN 'CLOSED DOOR' TO THE PUBLIC!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! For goodness sake, wake up! "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:58 AM:

" No, I don't work for the city, in fact I work for GL. Of course my opinoins are my own. I hope people just take them as that no matter who I work for. BTW, thanks for the personal accusation without taking about my points. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:54 AM:

" Anyone know what Gundersen's official position is on why they oppose the agreement? Thing I find funny is that they oppose it even though they admit they've not read it. I'm sure the city council isn't the best organization but why are so many people going along with Gundersen when they oppose something they've not even read? "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:53 AM:

" 'Badshot' surfaces out of the blue, without any real history on this site, on this subject, and infuses Gund/Luth. As he is unquestionably shaking the right as not to notice the left. Do you think he is, or has been sent, by one of the City/County Boyz? Duh! "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:50 AM:

" I find it interesting that Council/County Board members phones sit idle during these times, some citizens are not even represented, meetings are virtually and continually void of taxpayers. These people count on apathy, no follow through, and short memories/amnesia. Yet those of you that fit this profile continue to shake that stick on a computer. Call the Mayor, Call Steve Doyle, Call your Councilman (if you have one), and attend a meeting. Get out of your recliner. It's your money, and right. "

badshot1 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:47 AM:

" Wow, the name Gundersen is like god around here. Keep on drinking the cool aid folks. You know in some places communities have a choice in health care. Just wanted to let you know. "

antieverything wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:38 AM:

" Oreilley may be on to something. Since Tri State only collects on 50% of the total billed, I can see people either 1. doing the same to the city service or 2. Requesting Tstate and defaulting. In either instance the city is OUT OF THERE HEADS. They have no business in this business. "

CJ wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:34 AM:

" Sounds like a losing business if they only net \$72000 out of \$4.2 million that isn't even 2% WOW.....Good luck to the city..... "

Bill O'reilly wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:33 AM:

" This will totally backfire on you SkidMark. You clearly dont have the citizens behind you on this. I will be sure to tell everyone I know to request Tri-State in lieu of your inexperienced hose boys. What are you going to do when car crash victims start telling La Crosse FD to take a hike and request Tri-State. Did you figure that into your greedy little equation. Tri-State needs to secure a direct phone number or another *11 number as a direct line to skirt SkidMark and the greedy clowncil. Wait until the LaX ambulance horror stories start to get posted on the blogs. "

Willie wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:32 AM:

" I hope the city doesn't think it will use displaced Tri-State crews on its ambulances either. I don't know of any Tri-State paramedics that will do that, especially with the city's residency requirement. Many of them live outside of LaCrosse. I have seen many of these paramedics and EMT's in action, and they are top-notch (read irreplaceable)! "

wiseup wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:30 AM:

" My prediction~ We will need more ambulances when taxpayers see their new property tax increases! "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:23 AM:

" Correction- I stated, "those last years". In fact we contributed near \$14k for 'each' of those last years of retirement. Need I point out the average per capita income in Lacrosse is \$32k?, and 50% of private employees have no employer retirement contribution whatsoever. DO you think Tri-State bestows this level of benefits? Run the numbers!!! "

Willie wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:22 AM:

" If it ain't broke, don't fix it. This is merely an underhanded ploy to undermine the surrounding municipalities and make it more appealing to annexation. They are attempting to drive Tri-State out of business so they can charge non-residents more for the service. Anyone need the jaws for extraction? Maybe we need the jaws to extract SD's head out of...and then the city will charge him for it of course! "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:02 AM:

" Do you think promises have been made to Fire Officials? Do you really think that it is possible our local governments can keep the expenses out of the 'Red'? "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 9:02 AM:

" Let's take another view of this. We are now poised to allow City employees, etc to pick up at least a portion of this local business. Although the people that will pick up this responsibility receive 18.5% matching retirement contribution, better health insurance and far cheaper the DOCs at Gund/Luth, early post retirement 55-65 health insurance coverage worth \$160k and up, and health coverage for possible live-in-pals by signing a flimsy affidavit. Look a recent Lt. in this fire/police world retired at 52. You and I as taxpayers contributed near \$14,000 those last years to his retirement account, based on \$70-80k, and WRS retirement based on equations on a top few earning years. Here are a couple questions that beg to be asked after Tri-State reflected "\$77k in Net Earnings". "

dfib wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:56 AM:

" Well as a La Crosse citizen with my family in mind, I hope Tri-State will provide a private number to call should I ever need an ambulance. I would much prefer my family to be cared for by one of their medics with 10 years of experience than a brand new out of school fire-medic.

Unfortunately this isn't even a duplicate service. Does the fire department have the same high level or experience, tools/protocols, and personnel that Tri-State has? "

random annoying bozo wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:52 AM:

" so is this how 'government run' healthcare starts? "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:41 AM:

" Look, we have now sunk to 45% of our property non-taxable. That is without figuring that we have hundreds of millions woth of property encompassed in TIF Districts. At the same we have a Finance Director who has stated in correspondence to me that they have no 'in house' idea what the Capital Budget (slush fund) is derived from. Nor does he have an itemized list of expenditures paid out, mostly from City business entities like the Public Works Board. The plain fact is they are out of money, which we are not privy to either as taxpayers, and apparently the Finance Director does not have a handle on either. What we do not need is more 27 year TIFs where our property tax coffers are sidestepped to stuff present millionaires already bulging investment portfolios. Hows that 'economic stimulus' going? "

Bill O'reilly wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:35 AM:

" Simple fix folks. Just call 911 and tell the dispatcher you want Tri-State and not the City of LaX clowns to respond. The injured party is still the customer. I will be sure to tell La Crosse where to stick it when they put their greedy untrained paws on me. "

common-cents wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:23 AM:

" What are these council people doing ?. We have more important issues to deal with, and we don't need another layer of broken government. Please vote all these idiots out. "

002 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:22 AM:

"Enhanced emergency medical service" says Johnsrud. What is that? Do they offer in-ride movies? Why would the city and county get into this business?? La Crosse county and city voters better get rid of the current administration or the next thing you know the city and county will be opening up hospitals. "

Myturn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:15 AM:

" You might as live in the 2nd District with no Councilman. Because only a few are privy to what is going on here. These closed door sessions have gone on for far too long. Even now they admit Tri-State has not been spoken with, stating Mediation is, I believe, suspended at least if not over, Doyle states??? Remember this by a Mayor who stated on 3/25/05, "Holding closed meetings is not good government."? And a County Board Chairman who recently fought to pick Committee Chairs rather than the Committees to do so within???? Again the only one not involved seems to be the taxpayers, and the private entity they are rolling over. "

Darwin wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:03 AM:

" City of La Crosse voters... will this be the final nail in Johnsrud's political coffin? I thought the man was a conservative, but certainly not a FISCAL conservative! "

Senior Advocate wrote on Jul 30, 2008 8:02 AM:

" possom133 has it backwards. The object is to keep the city good as he claims it is. Not everyone can run for office. Advocacy takes many forms. The more people discuss and are aware of the issues the better it will be at the polls. The city rulers may have the intelligence but they have not now nor in the recent past the will power to do things right. They want Tri-State out for many reasons, one of course being that this will grow the city government and increase city payroll and benies and do nothing but harm. They are not losers they are manipulators with greed and larceny as their motivations. "

stevegorescrg wrote on Jul 30, 2008 7:34 AM:

" Good for Tri State! The county and city are trying to squeeze them out of their most lucrative market(City of La Crosse) simply because our mayor wants a piece of the action (i.e. \$\$\$)and NOT because Tri State's service is lacking IN ANY WAY. If I were to bet on a competition between a gov't run service and one by a private entity,I'd take the private service every time. Why? Accountability. If Tri State is providing lousy service or at too high a cost, they'll simply fold up. You can't fire a gov't monopoly thus they have no incentive to improve their performance or efficiency. Anyway, who asked Mayor Johnsrud to fix something(city ambulance service) that consumers apparently don't think is broken? "

Jenifr wrote on Jul 30, 2008 7:33 AM:

" Let me first say I don't live in the city of La Crosse. I live in the County of La Crosse. I believe that the County Board need to think about what they are doing. By helping the city, they are risking the service and lives of the citizens who live in the county. If they continue to embrace that thought, then I think it will be time to re-think the location of county facilities within the city of La Crosse. Maybe it's time to move the county bldgs to Onalaska or West Salem? Or maybe it's time to replace the city and county boards both!!! "

possom133 wrote on Jul 30, 2008 7:12 AM:

" To all you know it all whiner if you can do better get on the ballot or please cry about something else or better yet get a HOBBY. There is not one city I have ever been in that is even close to perfect. Maybe you need to get out and travel a bit more and see the real world. Because when you have been around you will see La Crosse is a pretty good city. You would rather have some creep who bankrupt his business and owes back taxes running the city instead? "

jn wrote on Jul 30, 2008 6:52 AM:

" Anything the government gets involved in running usually gets screwed up. Let a private firm run it. "

Vindicator wrote on Jul 30, 2008 6:44 AM:

" What is the primary goal of the City?
Will my taxes be reduced because of this?.....NO.
Will my health care premiums be reduced because of this?.....NO.
Will the emergency response be quicker?.....NO.
Is the present service offered by Tri-state inadequate?.....NO
Is this a duplication of service?.....YES.
You just can't make this stuff up. If it was not so sad it would be funny! They can't see the trees through forest. "

medic wrote on Jul 30, 2008 6:28 AM:

" I give this adventure about 2-3 years before it falls on it's face and the city will fold up it's doors for 911 ambulance services. Why can't the public see a proposed operation plan? Why can't the public vote on this issue that will raise our already high taxes? How many more jobs will this create for the city of LaCrosse? Where are the 'potential' paramedics going to receive their schooling? Are there any in school or completing it right now? It's gonna be a scoop and run show when you call 911 with 100% rookies coming to your rescue in shiny new red ambulances. "

Krusty wrote on Jul 30, 2008 6:04 AM:

" Hey Nestor, what's your stand on this? "

Krusty wrote on Jul 30, 2008 6:02 AM:

" People are going to whine and complain, but when election time roles around everyone complaining will vote for the same old incumbents on the city council and mayor. I just wish Lacrosse was more like PDC and have the courage to recall the majority of its city council. By voting for these idiots you have nobody to blame for this mess but yourselves. "

wisCONsin wrote on Jul 30, 2008 5:19 AM:

" I agree with taxpayer, anything the city administration does, gets screwed up! It's not just the flooded streets, how about the feeble attempt of snow removal last winter, the Bliss Road fiasco that is far from over, the traffic lights that seem never to be synchronized no matter what direction you are going or what time of day, wasting hundreds of gallons of gas a day requiring thousands of cars to stop needlessly because of their incompetent traffic engineer! The list goes on forever, bathrooms in the parks that are either locked or don't work, potholes in the streets you could lose a small car in, garbage in the streets that is equal to the ghettos of Chicago, because of the lack of street sweeping except for the elite few streets that has king marks cronies living on!! IMPEACH king mark and fire ALL the dept heads!!! "

The Real World wrote on Jul 30, 2008 5:00 AM:

" If we ever hear the real reason for this, it is going to be fascinating! I agree with the first two post. "

La Crosse Taxpayer wrote on Jul 30, 2008 4:51 AM:

" You know if lacrosse government gets involved it will get messed up and cost the tax payers big dollars! they'll have to form committees to study the best route to take before an ambulance would be dispatched, (that would take days or weeks) so be sure to call well in advance before needing an ambulance, and hire 20 or 30 people to report to king mark on how things were going with the service!! Let things alone, this city has plenty to screw up and waste taxpayers money on now without adding ambulance service!!! This city cant even get the streets to drain when it rains, why would we want to trust our lives to the MORONS at city hall!! The taxpayers dont want this!!, If you dont want to comply with the wishes of the taxpayers GET OUT OF OFFICE!!!! "

Bornfree wrote on Jul 30, 2008 1:08 AM:

" This shows the ignorance & arrogance that our elected officials have. They will not listen to the people who elected them. King Mark you just put the final nail into the coffin that will bury your re-election hopes & dreams. Good bye & good riddance!! "