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Sedgwick County

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Legislation Text

File #: 18-617, **Version:** 1

A resolution under Chapter 17 of the Sedgwick County Code regarding the use of Air Ambulance Services within the County.

Recommended Action: Take such action as the Board deems necessary.

Background: Private air ambulance companies utilizing rotor aircraft operated pursuant to a contract with Sedgwick County since approximately 1998. Between 2000 and sometime in the mid-2010s, helicopters were often utilized to respond to emergency calls, in coordination with Emergency Communications and Emergency Medical Services. The contracts with then-existing air carriers were allowed to lapse earlier this decade, and have not been renewed since that time; simultaneously, ground-based services for EMS have significantly expanded. At present, there is one air ambulance service operating helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft located within the County, and another ambulance business has indicated an intention to relocate similar equipment and services from Newton, Kansas to Wichita, Kansas. Currently, there are protocols established by the Sedgwick County Medical Society governing those situations where private air ambulances will be summoned to respond to a casualty event if deemed medically-necessary, and those protocols are observed by the County Medical Director, and followed by the Director of Emergency Communications and Director of Emergency Medical Services.

Upon inquiry from a Commissioner as to why helicopter ambulance services are no longer utilized as they were in the past, research into the subject was undertaken. While there is no formal prohibition against the use of these services within Sedgwick County, due to the vastly-expanded ground-based ambulance services provided by EMS, the need for use of aircraft appears to be less than a decade ago. However, in the interests of using all available tools at the County's disposal, this resolution has been drafted to perform a number of functions:

1. To express a policy preference from the Board of County Commissioners that such air ambulance services be utilized, if medically-necessary
2. To codify the medical protocols already established by the Sedgwick County Medical Society regarding the use of such services
3. To formalize the relationship between the County and these air ambulance services by requiring them to be licensed by the State of Kansas, operating in conjunction with EMS and Emergency Communications, and to indemnify and hold the County harmless in the event of any mishaps that might occur when on an emergency call.

Furthermore, this Resolution replaces the requirement that air ambulance services be licensed by the Director of Sedgwick County EMS, and permits them to operate on a license from the State of Kansas, provided the carrier has CAMTS accreditation.

Analysis: The Resolution achieves the ends regarding the use of such air ambulance services, while not substituting for the medical judgment of the Sedgwick County Medical Director or the protocols put in place by the Sedgwick County Medical Society.

Alternatives: If the Resolution is not adopted, the existing protocols remain in place and unchanged regarding the use of such air ambulance services.

Financial Considerations: It serves to provide indemnification of the County for any issues that might arise when these air ambulances respond to a call. The proposal is intended to make certain that the providers be properly licensed and follow all protocols deemed medically-necessary by the Medical Society and implemented by the Medical Director, while not increasing costs to the County or EMS.

While this could result in fewer billable transports by EMS, Finance does not estimate significant impact to revenues.

Legal Considerations: The County is empowered to enact this resolution pursuant to K.S.A. 19-101a, K.S.A. 65-6131 and its police powers for the protection, safety, welfare and comfort of its citizens. A simple majority is required.

Policy Considerations: The Resolution furthers the interests of utilizing all necessary means of transporting patients to local hospitals efficiently and rapidly.

Outside Attendees: It is anticipated that officials from local air ambulance companies will attend and respond to questions.

Multimedia Presentation: None.