

## **Supervisors approve locally run EMS agency**

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WOODLAND — Yolo County will withdraw from the 10-county emergency medical services agency it has been a part of for 37 years and create its own local EMS agency within the next six months.

County supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to make the change following the recommendation of Yolo County fire chiefs and city managers, several of whom testified that a local EMS agency will provide more efficient, effective and expedient services to county residents.

The new EMS agency will operate as a division of the county Health Department. County health director Jill Cook said American Medical Response will continue as the county's ambulance provider for at least the next six months and possibly afterward, pending a competitive bidding process. The county will contract with Solano County to provide oversight and administration of the Yolo agency.

Since 1975, Yolo County has been a member of the Sierra-Sacramento Valley Emergency Medical Services Agency, which started out as a five-county agency but later grew to 10 counties stretching to the Oregon border.

The sheer size of the agency has hampered efforts to improve the delivery of emergency medical services in Yolo County, said UC Davis Fire Chief Nathan Trauernicht.

"Addressing specific local needs has been difficult as part of a 10-county agency," he told supervisors.

Trauernicht chaired a committee of area fire chiefs and local officials who recommended the change to the board. Other members included Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation Fire Chief Gary Fredericksen, West Sacramento Fire Chief Al Terrell, Winters City Manager John Donlevy, Yolo County Health Director Cook and Esparto Fire Chief Barry Burns, who represented the Yolo County Fire Chiefs Association.

Trauernicht told supervisors that all Yolo County fire chiefs, including those from the 10 small volunteer departments throughout the county, supported the move to a local EMS agency.

Donlevy, speaking on behalf of city managers throughout the county, as well as the city of Winters itself, said the recommendation was not about the Sierra-Sacramento Valley EMS agency but about Yolo County.

"(It's) about local control," Donlevy said.

Supervisors agreed.

"We're doing this to improve outcomes for Yolo residents," said Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis. "It's not to rearrange the deck chairs. We're doing this because it's the right thing to do for our county."

Noting that area fire chiefs "have grown frustrated with the existing system," Supervisor Jim Provenza said, "It is essential that we go to a model that will give Yolo County control of its own destiny."

The change to a locally run EMS agency is of concern to local EMTs and paramedics, several of whom asked supervisors to include them in the process going forward, both in the development of local protocols and in personnel issues.

"Our concerns are patient care as well as the current work force in Yolo County," said EMT and county resident Rebecca Ayers.

Saylor also urged that local workers be included going forward, saying, “these are good people and they have a lot to offer.”

Cook said if the county were to switch ambulance providers, use of local workers could be stipulated in the contract.

In addition to approving the creation of a local EMS agency, supervisors authorized the county administrator to formally notify the Sierra-Sacramento Valley EMS agency of Yolo County’s withdrawal from that joint powers authority. In addition to a six-month notification, the county also will be required to pay the JPA approximately \$359,900 to withdraw — a cost supervisors appeared to believe was worth the expected improvement in local services.

“Yes there (will be) costs we have to incur,” said Supervisor Mike McGowan. “(But) we can and should and need to improve delivery of services and the best way to do that is to follow these recommended actions.”