

Bryan council reverses first decision, gives ambulance service to fire dept.

By JUDIE PORTER
Battalion Reporter

The Bryan City Council Monday reversed an earlier decision to permit a private ambulance company and voted instead to let the Bryan Fire Department operate the city's emergency medical service.

The council had originally decided March 19 to permit one of three private companies to provide the service.

During the public hearing Monday several private citizens urged the council to reconsider letting the fire department take over the service rather than a private company.

"I think we need stability in our services in the city," Daniel Hernandez, a former council member said. "I feel the council should reconsider its stance and let the fire department take over the service to help provide more stability to the community."

Hernandez said that by having the service in the department people could complain and know something would be done. But private companies "have us over a barrel" because citizens can't really complain about their service.

Another citizen, Leland Carlson said, "Emergency service can best be provided by the fire department."

Ernest Wentreck was also pulling for the fire department. Wentreck said the ambulance service is basically an economic situation. He felt the city could best be served by the firemen because of the facilities they have available. Wentreck has a son who is a firefighter.

Dr. John Hall, a member of the Brazos Valley Medical Society, also spoke favorably for having the service through the fire department.

Hall said the medical society had listened to patients needing the service and that the least number of complaints had come from the College Station ambulance service.

College Station runs its ambulance service through its fire department.

partment.

Tom Borski, a member of the board of trustees for the Bryan Independent School District, said he thought the council had made the right decision to stick with a private company.

"We have a good ambulance service right now, but it does not have adequate funding," Borski said.

David Turk of the Bryan Fire Department said, "We have the facilities, the men, and are there 24 hours." Turk said he thought running the service was just a matter of cost effectiveness. He said the council should look at the resources now available and see what would be needed.

After private individuals were allowed their opinions, the council heard from the three private companies seeking the permit.

Gary Williams, who wished to start Texas Ambulance Company in Bryan, said he thought his membership plan would work well in this city.

Bill Thornal, who runs the present service in the city, said he would like to contract the city for two years 24,000 a month. The additional money would help offset the non-collectables that are troubling his Medical Transport Service.

Thornal's permit application is for both emergency medical service and transporting service. The city's decision to go with the fire department will not affect his application for transferring patients from one city to another.

Dale Owens, president of Capitol Ambulance Company of Austin, said that his people had made every effort to meet the present requirements in a fair, honest and true way.

Owens felt his company could operate three ambulances at the lowest cost possible without giving up the quality of service. Owens said the only real problem facing his company was finding a location.

Councilman Joe Hanover reported that the College Station Fire Department's ambulance service

grossed about \$90,000 in 1978 but only netted about \$75,000. Their collectable rate is approximately 60 percent, while Thornal's rate of collection has been around 50 percent.

Mayor Richard Smith was out-of-town, so Councilman Henry Seale acted as mayor pro tem. Because

the mayor couldn't vote, Seale didn't either. This allowed the vote to "still be balanced politically," Seale said.

Smith and Seale had opposing stands concerning the issue.

Councilman John Mobley made a motion that Thornal be allowed to

retain the service, but it was defeated two to three.

Mobley then made a second motion that the council reconsider their earlier decision and vote to transfer the EMS to the fire department.

That motion passed, three to two.

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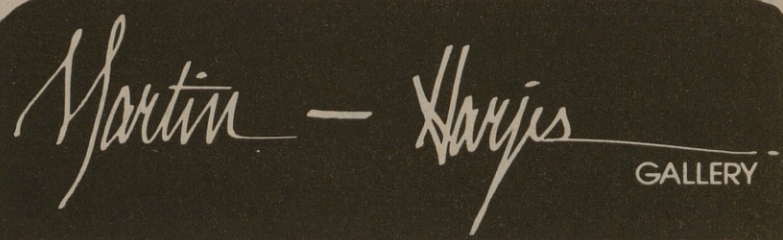
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