

Stanley County Chairman Dana Iverson called the Tuesday, August 25, 2022 special meeting of the Hughes and Stanley County Boards of County Commissioners to order at 5:30 PM with Hughes County Commissioners Bill M. Abernathy, Connie Hohn, Tom Rounds and Randy Brown present. Stanley County Commissioners Dana Iversen, Sonny Harrowa, and Dennis Booth were also present. Hughes County Manager Kevin Hipple was also present. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA:** Moved by Brown and seconded by Harrowa to approve the agenda. All voted Aye. Motion passed.

**5:30 PUBLIC HEARING: CENTRAL SOUTH DAKOTA AMBULANCE DISTRICT FORMATION**

Time set for 5:30 PM to consider public comment on the formation of the Central South Dakota Ambulance District to encompass the entire boundary of Hughes and Stanley County.

Gary Gritner spoke about his concerns with the district. He felt we would be better served by having the local schools train local kids.

Commissioner Brown spoke on what other entities have done across the state.

Commissioner Abernathy asked Dr. Huber about the training requirements for an emergency responder. Dr. Huber explained those requirements. He also said that an ambulance district may stabilize an unstable situation. Matt Hardwick with AMR also spoke on the training requirements.

Commissioner Booth said the current contract is expiring and spoke on the process to date in getting a new contract in place.

Harrowa said that when an ambulance responds to the country, it is not available in town so they have to have multiple vehicles and shifts to respond.

Hardwick said that funding is difficult. As a private entity, they can't access grants and other funding sources to help. They are trying to train and built their own staff locally so they don't have to bring in staff from out of the area. He stated there are multiple levels of certification and medicine is data driven. The earlier an ambulance service intervenes the better it is for the patient and the higher the cost savings for all. AMR is providing a 7 minute response time locally with world class trained local people who are vested in the community. AMR is on target for well over 1600 calls in 2022 or over 4 calls per day, which a volunteer service just cannot take on.

Ambulances services are statutorily required to take on all calls no matter the service type or ability to pay. AMR is required to take the money justified by Medicare or insurance. Licensed ambulance services are in a similar situation as physicians. When a contract is signed the ambulance company is required to take the reduced rate and cannot balance bill to reclaim lost income.

Dr. Huber said he is currently the medial director and spoke about the challenge of serving central South Dakota with the limited services available. He is very impressed with the quality of the ambulance service we currently have available and he does not want to see that deteriorate.

Mayor Hanson comment that you have to put this in comparison to the police and fire services we offer and the costs of those services. That makes this seem pretty inexpensive.

Sheriff Pat Callahan said an ambulance service is not statutorily required. I you call 911, who do you want to show up, the Sheriff or AMR?

Providing and funding an ambulance service is not a Pierre issue, it is a national issue, according to Hardwick.

Several landowners spoke about their concerns with the shift of cost to Stanley County and the disproportionate share of those costs picked up by the rural residents, especially those with larger farms or ranches. They were also concerned about how the board would be elected for equal representation across the district.

Mayor Steve Harding wanted to stress the levy was indeed controlled by state law.

Pierre City Councilman Todd Johnson explained creating a District allows for unity, a chance to problem solve and gives everyone a chance to participate.

Dave Neuharth, former Stanley County Commissioner, stated these are difficult positions of leadership to be in right now, but this needs to be figured out.

Pierre City Commissioner Vona Johnson spoke about the web site and encouraged people to visit that site for more information.

Mayor Hanson thanked the media for attending and for their efforts to increase the awareness of the issue.

Moved by Rounds and seconded by Booth to adjourn the meeting. All voted Aye. Motion passed.

ATTEST:

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Randy Brown, Chairman  
Hughes County Commission

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Thomas J. Oliva, Finance Officer  
Hughes County, South Dakota