

Cromwell Fire District

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FIRE DISTRICT OFFICE
WATER DIVISION

FIRE DEPARTMENT
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting

Tuesday, August 31, 2021

5:30 PM

Coles Road Firehouse
105 Coles Road
Cromwell, CT

A Special Board of Commissioners' Meeting was held on Tuesday, August 31, 2021, at 5:30 PM, at the Coles Road Firehouse, 105 Coles Road, Cromwell, CT to consider and act upon Special Fire District business.

Commissioners Lee Brow, Jason Hinners, Mertie Terry, Charles Epstein, David Colligan, Allan Spotts, Robert Donohue and Robert McIntyre. Commissioner Roger Rukowicz was absent. Also attending were: Executive Director Julius Neto, Fire Chief Jason Balletto and Assistant Fire Chief Jason Brade.

- I. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM, by President Brow.
- II. Approval of Agenda. A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Colligan and unanimously approved to accept the Agenda as submitted.
- III. Public Comment. There were no public comments to report.
- IV. New Business
 - A. Fire Chief Presentation on Possible New Vendor for EMS Billing
 1. Shared Response Health Systems, LLC, Killingworth, CT. The Chief met with Assistant Chief Brade and the Executive Director and reviewed the information they received from Shared Response Health Systems. They invited Ms. Sandra Castlevetro to come in and give a presentation. She is the owner of Shared Response Health Systems in Killingworth, CT. She has a background in physician billing. They have been in business for 30 years. She discussed and distributed copies of their proposal for billing services. A copy is attached to the minutes on file in the Fire District Office. She brought with her Nicholas Presto who is the company's in-house counsel to assist with questions anyone might have.

One of SRHS's clients is Middlesex Hospital paramedics who have been clients since 2004. Shared Response has their bundle billing agreements. They also have the majority of Middlesex County BLSA agreements for Middlesex Hospital and all

emergency services. Ms. Castlevetro briefly described the services they provide to their clients:

- Medical coding, billing and consulting services to the medical providers throughout CT.
- Submission to the Office of Inspector General in terms of compliance.
- Follow up on Accounts Receivable in 30 days. Nothing ages out over 45 days unless something needs to be appealed.
- Keep the lines of communication open with all parties.
- Credentialing and enrollment. The clients need to be enrolled in Medicare/Medicaid every 5 years. SRHS will take care of that for the District.
- Consulting and educational resources.
- Regarding EMS, the District is not a hospital or a doctor's office. Therefore, diagnoses are not coded by Cromwell EMS. Anything they are dispatched to are signs and symptoms. They are not allowed as a pre-hospital provider to code a diagnosis. If the claim gets denied, SRHS will appeal on Cromwell's behalf.
- Insure the District is paid within the State Statute of 45 days. They make sure nothing ages out.
- Assist with all 3rd party insurance paperwork. They make sure they are always compliant with Medicare/Medicaid. They provide information for DPH rate application and the Certificate of Operation for OEMS.
- Offer a minimum of two in-services to work with staff and help them understand the importance of signature requirements and completion of charts.
- Security and Protection of firewall. They use Zykecell, Security Gateway. There is a dual authenticity to get into the system. They also have a bit vendor and point protection and security on every workstation.
- Ms. Castlevetro distributed some samples of forms that are sent out to patients.
- Forms for patients to complete if they feel they need to apply for a hardship. They try to duplicate what the hospital does but not be as stringent.
- Dedicated billers who handle the outgoing of claims as well as dedicated accounts receivable people. The Office Manager handles collection issues and financial hardships.
- The Chief distributed a list of charges from SRHS depending on type of response and equipment needed.
- They are an ESO billing partner, and their billing software is ESO.
- Direct connect with Middlesex Hospital. They are online with the Epic program so insurance information comes to SRHS directly. It is important that signatures are obtained.
- Ms. Castlevetro had distributed a sample of a bundle bill agreement for review. There was a form attached requesting insurance information from the patient. She explained the forms that were distributed and reviewed.
- Legal requests for any third party. They have protocol on what is acceptable to receive.
- They work very hard to make sure the client gets their money and handle everything for the client. Any documentation or correspondence received should be forwarded to SRHS.

A timeline was discussed if the District were to choose SRHS. SRHS can do a turnover within 30 days, but potentially it could take up to 90 days. SRHS contracts

typically are for 12 mos. There is an automatic renewal for 2 yrs. Clients can cancel at any time with a 90-day cancellation policy.

Ms. Castlevetro provided a list of clients who can provide references. SRHS's annual fee is 7 ½ %. They provide a billing credit for a Middlesex Paramedic because SRHS bills for the paramedic and that would be double dipping. Patient privacy is also very important.

Ms. Castlevetro completed her presentation at approximately 6:15 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Hinner and unanimously approved to have a 15 min. recess before the next presenter is scheduled.

2. Certified Ambulance Group, Inc., Rocky Hill, CT. Chief Balletto introduced Mark Gentile, who is the owner of Certified Ambulance Group, Inc., from Rocky Hill, CT. Mr. Gentile gave his credentials to the group. He has been a firefighter/paramedic for over 30 years. He has been a Deputy Fire Chief for the Rocky Hill Fire Department for the last seven years. He joined that Department in 1998. His father was the Director of EMS for the State of CT and started Certified Ambulance Group. He is a licensed drone pilot. He is also a hockey referee and feels that is his most important asset when dealing with people. He has a degree in Public Safety Administration and is completing his Master's in Emergency Management.

They base their program on a partnership. This partnership would be between the Cromwell Fire Department and Certified Ambulance Group. They looked at Cromwell's history. Cromwell has become a wide, diverse community. Everything done with billing is based on demographics which tells Certified Ambulance Group what Cromwell's recovery rate should be. Cromwell is a diverse program with paid staff and volunteers.

The Certified Ambulance Group consists of Emergency Services specialists. They have on staff 3 former directors from EMS services for the State, paramedics and EMT's. They are EMS and Emergency Services professionals helping Emergency Services Professionals. They have the expertise to understand Cromwell's billing concerns.

Certified Ambulance Group was started in 1989. They were the first company to provide electronic patient care reporting, and now that is the standard. They used the predecessor of ESO in 1995, which was mandated in CT in 2007. They were also the first company to operate patient web world that allowed patients to communicate with the company via the world wide web. They are on the forefront of everything.

All of their staff are well trained. They attend any conferences or training related to ambulance billing. Their goal is to maximize the client's money.

He was familiar with Holzworth Pelton. They were one of the best billing companies in CT. That company's program was very similar to Certified Ambulance Group. A few years ago, a large conglomerate company from Pittsburgh (QMC) bought Holzworth Pelton. This also happened with Emergency Management Consulting.

An offer was made to Certified Ambulance Group, but Mr. Gentile had concerns with it and did not sell. He is familiar with QMC, but his company has a little bit more of a national footprint. QMC will get the client their money, but he referred to Cromwell as a "little fish" in a big pond. QMC will not strive to keep Cromwell's revenue high because Cromwell is a little fish. They will not be able to do training because that company has no one left to do training in CT. A Connecticut company will provide that level of dedication, and Certified Ambulance Group has that level of expertise and guidance.

Since the mid 70's CAG has been developing EMS systems. They have many affiliations. They have an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau. The reason for the A+ rating is because of their customer support.

They are a full-service billing company. They bill on 25, 50 and 75 day cycles. This is done to change up the billing cycle from the standard 30, 60, 90 days. They do everything a billing company would do, but their next step beyond that is to obtain insurance information. They have several different ways to obtain insurance information.

They have the Gateway system which is a clearing house for approximately 90% of insurance companies that the Fire Department deals with. They also do data mining to find insurance information. They are part of the HDEHL7 interface network which ESO is a part of. He explained how the process works to upload information. He explained the Gateway system. It includes calls that are prequalifying and electronic submissions.

They do client auditing. They provide forms for people that need to apply for hardship. They will tailor a program to fit the needs of Cromwell including hardship cases. He explained the types of billing they do. He distributed copies of billing information which included the types of billing and pricing. They are in the process of setting up electronic payments. They provide all the reporting that is needed such as aging, credit, charge and specialized reports. All reports can be customized.

Mr. Gentile is always available if needed. CAG has a state-of-the-art billing system. They have a client support website that allows information to be transmitted back and forth. Clients have full access to that program. They provide training and consulting free of charge. They work with other systems.

Their rate is slightly lower than other companies because they recognize when a client is data entering information for them through access to ESO. Certified Ambulance gets the best results. They have an 87% collection rate on soft billing in CT. They are the best low risk opportunity providing the best benefits.

Certified Ambulance Group has built their reputation working specifically with volunteer, municipal and non-profit EMS agencies. They have the history and experience to maximize billing programs. They have set the bar when it comes to billing companies.

Regarding pricing, Mr. Gentile was offering a fee of 5% for just the billing program because Cromwell uses ESO. If they did not, the fee would be 6% for billing and the ESO program.

The Commissioners requested a list of all the clients Certified Ambulance provides services to.

CAG has 25 employees. Most of them are working from home at this time. They have data entry operators, payment entry personnel, auditors and personnel in the office answering phones, etc., sales and marketing personnel and financial personnel.

Regarding security, they have bank level encryption on everything. They also have a disaster management program.

He was asked about a timeline. He stated that once they receive the information they need regarding FEIN numbers, Medicare numbers and submit the information, Medicare will take 60 – 90 days to change the Medicare numbers. All other private insurance carriers can be changed overnight.

- V. Commissioners' Comments. President Brow suggested that the Commissioners take all the information that was given to them at this meeting and review it all at home. They should prepare any questions they might have for the appropriate entity. He wanted to act on this at the next Board meeting. Commissioner Epstein suggested that the Commissioners do their due diligence and contact some of the clients listed by both companies and get some feedback on their performance. The President asked that anyone with questions forward them to President Brow or the Executive Director so that only one person is contacting the company instead of 9 Commissioners. The different components in making this decision is financial, customer service and how the billing group interacts with Cromwell. Commissioners were asked to do their due diligence. There was discussion on the types of questions to be asked.
- VI. Adjournment. There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Epstein, seconded by Commissioner Spotts and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 PM.


Charles R. Epstein, Secretary

Nancy Deegan
Recording Secretary