

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DIALOGUE RE-OPENED BETWEEN SILOAM SPRINGS AND DELAWARE COUNTY REGARDING EMS

Siloam Springs, Arkansas-- City Administrator David Cameron, Fire Chief Jimmy Harris and Lieutenant Stan Shelley invited community leaders from Delaware County to City Hall Wednesday to discuss options for returning ambulance service to Delaware County.

Cameron noted that it had been a year since the last time the group had been together in a room to discuss their options.

"The City's interest has never been in asking for the money all up front," Cameron said. "We're here in good faith to show that we're still willing to provide service, but we need to see a plan."

Delaware County Commissioner Dave Kendrick said that he and Delaware County Sheriff Jay Blackfox had been exploring funding options, but had been repeatedly disappointed in their efforts. He said a sales tax option didn't seem likely to be approved, and that while he would like to see a charge for the service added to a utility bill, such as a cell phone bill, that option might not be feasible either.

Cameron said there are approximately 13 counties across Oklahoma that are currently without EMS service, and encouraged the Delaware County leaders to get in touch with them to try to form a lobby for the state legislature. He said he would be willing to help the group and lobby some on their behalf. He pointed out that while each of the mostly rural counties had little power on their own, together they represented a fair number of voters.

"You may be the county that gets it done and fixes things long term," Cameron said.

Kendrick agreed with Cameron.

"We're going to have to load up, go to Oklahoma City and say, 'You're going to have to listen,'" Kendrick said. "We need some help."

Cameron told the group that if they could find the funding, Siloam Springs would be willing to begin running the ambulance service again immediately, as long as they saw a good faith effort being put forth.

"If you pass a sales tax on a Tuesday, it would take us a few days to readjust, but we could be back up and running by that Friday, even without money in the bank," Cameron said. "That would show us you're making an effort."

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