

**JO DAVIESS COUNTY BOARD SPECIAL MEETING  
PUBLIC HEARING  
SPECIAL SERVICE AREA #6  
SEPTEMBER 10, 2015**

CONTINUED FROM AUGUST 13, 2015

- 1) Call to order: Chairperson of the Jo Daviess County Board, Ron Smith, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015 at the Jo Daviess County Courthouse, large courtroom 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 330 N. Bench St., Galena, Illinois.
- 2) Roll call was answered as follows: Present-Merri Berlage, William Bingham, Robert Heuerman, Randy Jobgen, Steve McIntyre, John O'Boyle, Steve Rutz, Ron Smith, Terry Stoffregen, Martin Werner, RJ Winkelhake and Don Zillig. Present: 12. Absent-Brandon Behlke, Gerald Bennett, Richard Dittmar, Dan Hughes and Brad Petersburg. Absent: 5. A quorum was established.
- 3) The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson Ron Smith.
- 4) The invocation and thought for the day were given by Merri Berlage.
- 5) Citizens' comments: There were no citizens' comments at this time.
- 6) Summary of proposal to establish Jo Daviess County Special Service Area #6: Jack Zane, basic EMT and treasurer of the Galena Area Emergency Medical Service District summarized the current operating budget of the Galena Area Emergency Medical Service District. He said the minimum dollars needed to cover the Capital Reserve Fund contributions and a possible 20% payroll expense increase of \$21,732.00 would total \$126,128.00. Based on the 2013 equalized assessed valuation, a .035 rate would generate \$134,012.00. His handout of the Capital Reserve Fund had examples for calculating the approximate increase to each tax bill if the Special Service Area #6 was established at a rate of .035.
- 7) Chairperson Ron Smith opened the Public Hearing at this time. Smith submitted written correspondence he received from interested persons objecting to any issue in the creation of Special Service Area #6. Correspondence from Michael Duffy, Ed Fromkin, William Schwarz, Steven Douglas, John Rife, Bob Wehrle and James Crossley was read at this time.

George Petitgout and Diane Lorento spoke in support of the Special Service Area #6 in the nature of 911 emergency ambulance services. They both felt the marginal increase in property taxes was a bargain for a public service for the health and safety of the public.

Tom Winter, EMS Coordinator of the Galena Area Emergency Medical Service District said the district responds to approximately 630 calls per year.

Jim Crossley asked why some parcels in Guilford Township were not covered by this proposed Special Service Area #6. Tom Winter explained that they are already covered by another Special Service Area. Crossley asked if this SSA #6 was being enlarged over the present area of the Galena Area Emergency Medical Service District. Tom Winter said it covers that same area with no additions.

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Jim Crossley also commented on a recent car accident near his home. He noticed that there were fire trucks, ambulances and sheriff's deputies that responded to the accident. He said from his vantage point it looked like there was duplication of services. Tom Winter explained that in some rural areas fire departments come out as first responders. They initiate care and then the Emergency Medical Service District comes in and completes the care and transport the patient. Tom also explained if it is a vehicle accident you see a county officer there to take a report if someone is injured in a traffic accident. A fire truck would be present if it is a vehicle accident to control a fire or the possibility of a fire. Tom also stated that in smaller populated areas such as Jo Daviess County there is a separation of fire protection and ambulance service as opposed to large cities where they are together.

Jim Crossley asked what efforts are made if the patient does not pay the bill. Jack Zane said they submit three billings to the patient and after that it is turned over to a collection agency. Jack also said they will work with the patient if there is a financial hardship.

Jim Crossley said that he now understands the procedures but thinks there needs to be more voice from the people in the proposed district.

State's Attorney John Hay said there is no option to establish a Special Service Area by referendum.

Ron explained that the other Special Service Areas in the County cover smaller areas and are at higher rates. This Special Service Area #6 is larger and is asking to be established at a rate of .035.

Tom Winter explained that the state mandates that every township and municipality in the state provide ambulance service. It is not an option. Tom said with the current funding of \$6.00 per resident it does not touch many places in the county that are at risk such as the chemical plant, Eagle Ridge Inn or the DeSoto House Hotel. Tom explained that no revenue is being generated by part-time residents, businesses or anyone who doesn't declare this to be their main residency according to the census. He feels establishing a Special Service Area equalizes the cost across the board for all properties in the district and not just the ones that are deemed primary residencies.

RJ Winkelhake asked how much money is currently in reserves. Jack explained that they try to put any revenue above costs into reserves. He said they currently have \$61,000.00 in a CD and \$70,000.00 in a checking account in which \$33,000.00 is earmarked for a six month cash flow. He said that there would be enough to put a down payment on a new ambulance but the remainder would have to be borrowed. The goal would be to put aside money every year so when the time comes to purchase a new ambulance it could be paid for entirely without borrowing money. Jack said that should ensure a better price for the vehicle.

RJ also stressed that the small increases in personnel wages would go to the EMTs and people that respond to the calls and it would not be used to increase individual salaries. Jack said that was correct.

Ron Smith reminded everyone the SSA must present their budget to the Jo Daviess County Board annually and explain their costs. Ron also stated no matter what the budgets states, if the rate is set at .035, the board cannot increase the rate without going through the public hearing process again.

Steve McIntyre asked what the fixed budget would be if there would happen to be no calls at all. Jack Zane said it would be approximately \$80,000.00 per year and that excludes vehicle maintenance and

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other incidentals. Steve said since there can be such a fluctuation in calls it would be very hard to create a budget with so many unknowns.

Steve Rutz asked since the majority of objections are coming from the Galena Territory residents would it be possible for that area of Guilford Township to be eliminated from the district and have them provide service on their own? RJ Winkelhake stated that Guilford Township is in favor of the Special Service Area and most of the Galena Territory is located within Guilford Township. RJ stated that he has asked some of the same questions and it would be a disaster for Guilford Township to try to provide their own ambulance service. State's Attorney John Hay said that it is an option but logistically and practically it would be a nightmare. Tom Winter said in such cases the township or municipality would more than likely contract with a private service and the rise in cost would be prohibitive.

George Petitgout said that compared to the \$6.00 per person being charged by the township at this present time, his taxes would go from \$12.00 to \$20.00. He said 67% of his property taxes go the school district. He said the establishment of the Special Service Area will be a very minimal addition to his property taxes.

John O'Boyle said from personal experience he appreciates and wants the best personnel and most up to date equipment when a situation arises when ambulance service is needed for emergency medical care.

Merri Berlage said she belongs to the Elizabeth Special Service Area and pays a rate of .10. She said she has used the service three times and it is a comfort knowing there is someone there to help. She feels paying a small amount per year gives peace of mind knowing they are available when you need them.

(8) Closing of the Public Hearing: Ron Smith closed the public hearing at 8:07 p.m.

(9) New Business: Adoption of an Ordinance establishing Special Service Area #6.

An ordinance creating Special Service Area #6 for ambulance service at a rate of .035 was approved following a motion made by Randy Jobgen and seconded by Steve McIntyre.

The motion carried by roll call vote: Ayes-Merri Berlage, Robert Heuerman, Randy Jobgen, Steve McIntyre, John O'Boyle, Steve Rutz, Ron Smith, Terry Stoffregen, Martin Werner, RJ Winkelhake and Don Zillig. Ayes: 11. Nays: 0. Abstain-William Bingham. Abstain: 1. Absent-Brandon Behlke, Gerald Bennett, Richard Dittmar, Dan Hughes and Brad Petersburg. Absent: 5.

(10) Citizens' comments: Ron Smith thanked everyone for attending the public hearing and expressing their comments and concerns.

(11) Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was made by Steve McIntyre and seconded by Steve Rutz. The motion to adjourn carried by voice vote. Chairperson Smith adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.