

City Council Minutes
Special Meeting
March 21, 2025 ~ 5:00PM
City Hall, Delta Junction, Alaska



CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / PRAYER

Mayor Igor Zarembo called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Council members present: Mayor Igor ZAREMBA, Deputy Mayor Mary LEITH,
Travis RIESNER, Lance STRICKLIN, Michael PRESTEGARD, Stormie MITCHELL

Council present via Zoom: Pete HALLGREN

City staff present: City Administrator Lori Roberts, Finance Officer Kaylee Reierson,
Library Director Tiki Levinson, City Clerk Pat White

Public present: Approximately 35 people, including 19 on Zoom, were in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chris Morley questioned why the EMS agreement between Rural Alaska Emergency Services (RAES), Delta Medical Transport (DMT), and the City was not in the agenda packets.

Roberts reported the Open Meetings Act requires meeting notices provide place, time, location, and topic. The draft agreement was still in the attorney's hands (given to Council members only). Should the introduction pass, the document would become public and be disbursed thereafter. Roberts said the second reading and adoption would follow with a minimum of five days to prepare for the public hearing.

Morley said he disagreed with:

- The *Term of Agreement* (Section 3b), requiring a 90-day written notice to terminate for cause by any party instead of any party canceling within 90 days for any reason.
- Only five days to pass the ordinance to finalize the agreement.
- Cutting the City's financial liability. RAES will pay \$15,000/month, more if they raise \$180,000, but the City will be responsible for the full one million. It opens the City up for another million-dollar lawsuit.
- The EMS service needs to focus locally, not stretch its borders to "build an empire."

Julia Phelan thanked the Council for shouldering the burden to stabilize EMS for the whole community, for extending the DMT contract for the next year, and commitment to develop a long-term plan that lasts 15 or 20 years. She encouraged public input via RAES' website (emsalaska.org) or email (ruralalaskaems@gmail.com).

NEW BUSINESS

Introduction and First Reading of Ordinance 2025-06, An Ordinance Approving an Agreement with Rural Alaska Emergency Services and Delta Medical Transport for Emergency Medical Services

[Introduction and first reading of Ordinance 2025-05 failed during a special meeting on March 10, 2025. The contract was revised (Ordinance 2025-06) and reintroduced to avoid a lapse in EMS coverage.]

Motion: Hallgren moved to introduce Ordinance 2025-06 and hold the first reading; Stricklin seconded.

Hallgren said he appreciated the extra time to review the contact (not passing Ordinance 2025-05) and reported:

- The City can fund services for the upcoming year, which will allow time to research a sustainable solution. Most importantly, there would not be a lapse in coverage and all input from the public is still on the table. Revenue to fund the projected cost for EMS (\$1,024,850) would come from community donations collected by RAES (\$180,000-\$470,000), landfill (\$300,000), and Supplemental Emergency Medical Transport (approximately \$150,000). Presuming DMT continues billing for transport services, would they collect the reimbursement, or would it count toward the million-dollar operation?

- Referencing *Term of Agreement* (3b), he said he preferred to keep the clause about terminating "for cause by any party on ninety (90) days written notice."

- He questioned whether the City's insurance broker (Hale & Associates) reviewed the agreement to ensure the City is covered for any liability under the current policy.

Prestegard said he had concerns about funding.

Mitchell said she had issues about contracting with two entities, doubling the possibility of lawsuits from either DMT or RAES. She needed more time to review the agreement, especially because the new budget cycle has not started, and the last two audits are still outstanding.

Zaremba reported:

- RAES guarantees \$15,000/month for 12 months, with a goal to reach \$39,000/month (\$180,000 to \$470,000/year). The plan is to operate the ambulance service for the next 12 months (through March 31, 2026).
- The agreement addresses both the clause about terminating (#3a - *Term of Agreement* on page 2) and protecting all parties from lawsuits (#11 - *Indemnification* on page 4).

Mitchell reported there are a lot of muddy words that leave the agreement open to interpretations. She asked, “If we obligate ourselves to this kind of money, where are we going to come up with money for a sustainable City-owned ambulance service?”

Leith said the community must continue to be committed.

Stricklin said people will not donate until a plan is in place.

Discussion followed regarding options on how to run the ambulance operation (City-owned, non-profit, contracted), repeating the million-dollar lawsuit (Allvest), whether RAES will be successful in securing sufficient funds (#10c – *City’s Representations* on page 4), and setting March 28, 2025 for the second reading, public hearing, and possible adoption.

Motion passed on a roll call with five in favor (Leith, Hallgren, Riesner, Stricklin, Zaremba) and two opposed (Prestegard, Mitchell).

ADJOURNMENT – 5:36pm

Pat White, City Clerk

CITY
SEAL

Igor Zaremba, Mayor

Approved: April 1, 2025