

MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL CITIZEN'S FORUM
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF YUMA, ARIZONA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS - YUMA CITY HALL
ONE CITY PLAZA, YUMA, ARIZONA
November 1, 2016
5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Nicholls called the City Council Citizen's Forum to order at 5:31 p.m.

Councilmembers Present: Thomas, Shelton, Knight, Craft, Miller, Wright, and Mayor Nicholls
Councilmembers Absent: None
Staffmembers Present: City Administrator, Gregory K. Wilkinson
Fire Chief, Steve Irr
Various department heads or their representatives
City Attorney, Steven W. Moore
City Clerk, Lynda Bushong

I. There were no speakers scheduled at this time

II. TRANSITIONAL HEALTHCARE PARTNERSHIP

Irr introduced Luz Wiley, Director of Clinical Operations for the Transition Care Services (TCS) team at Yuma Regional Medical Center (YRMC). **Irr** acquainted City Council with the term "community paramedicine" which is used to describe programs aimed at:

- Decreasing the utilization of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) by those who frequently use EMS
- Decreasing readmission rates
- Decreasing the number of Emergency Room (ER) visits by those who do not truly need ER services
- Providing primary care options for those who do not have a primary care physician in the community.

YRMC was seeing a high readmission rates for high-risk patients within 30 days of their release from the hospital. The TCS team was created to follow up with these patients in an attempt to reduce readmission rates. The problem was that almost half of those patients were not returning for their appointments with TCS, and consequently those were frequently being readmitted to the hospital. In response, TCS created a mobile team to treat patients in their own homes. Today the Yuma Fire Department (YFD) launched a pilot program in conjunction with the TCS team to provide community paramedicine to the citizens of Yuma. In the past, when YFD responded to a 911 call their only option was to transport the patient to the ER. Often those who call 911 are not truly in need of emergency care, and in those cases a trip to the ER is costly and not necessarily in their best interest. Now when a TCS patient calls 911, YFD can consult with TCS and the ER doctor to determine whether transporting the patient to the hospital is the most appropriate option.

One limitation of the program is that the TCS team is only available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If a patient calls in the middle of the night when TCS is not available, YFD will still transport them to the ER. It is hoped that in the future there will be a team available around the clock to respond to these calls. The benefit to the patient is significant, not only by reducing the financial burden, but also improving their state of mind and comfort level by allowing them to remain in their home. While this is a small step with a small sampling of patients, there is potential to expand the program to help other frequent 911 users who could benefit from social services or other resources not currently available to YFD. This will reduce the burden on the 911 system and help people get the most appropriate care at a more reasonable cost.

Thomas asked how this program will help with rising healthcare costs. **Irr** explained that this program will allow YFD to help patients get the care that they need rather than being limited to transporting patients by ambulance to the ER, which is the most expensive option in many cases. **Thomas** asked if Rural Metro also participates in this program. **Irr** stated that this is a pilot program, and only the City and YRMC are participating at this time.

Knight asked if the TCS has both a mobile unit and a fixed location. **Irr** confirmed they did. **Knight** asked if YFD would transport patients to the clinic if it was determined that was the best option during their response to a 911 call. **Irr** stated that in that situation the mobile unit would come to their home. **Knight** asked if the patient would be billed for YFD's response if the patient is not transported to the ER. **Irr** opined that it would be unlikely that the patient would receive a bill from YFD, in this case.

Shelton asked if there will be any difference in the way that dispatchers respond to calls under this program. **Irr** stated that if the caller identifies themselves as a TCS patient, the dispatcher will communicate that information to the YFD team. Otherwise, the dispatch response will remain the same. He added that Medicare and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) are now looking at implementing plans called "treat and refer" which would pay EMS agencies for responding to such calls, even if they do not provide transportation to a hospital.

III. ADJOURNMENT/EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Nicholls adjourned the Citizen's Forum at 5:58 p.m. No Executive Session was held.

Lynda L. Bushong, City Clerk

APPROVED:

Douglas J. Nicholls, Mayor