



After approving joint resolutions to work together, Sequim city councilors and Clallam County Fire District 3 commissioners look to discuss options with medical agencies like Olympic Medical Center to bring an emergency medical center to Sequim. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash

City, fire district look to bring urgent care to Sequim

By Matthew Nash

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Officials with the City of Sequim and Clallam County Fire District 3 look to partner in bringing an emergency medical facility to Sequim.

Sequim city councilors and fire commissioners passed joint resolutions at their March 12 city council and April 3 fire commission meetings to work together in discussions with medical agencies.

City Manager Charlie Bush said city councilors set a long-term goal in 2016 to bring an emergency medical center here and the fire district's 2016 fire service study set the same goal.

However, the two entities have been discussing options privately with agency representatives like Olympic Medical Center.

“We felt there was commonality there and we wanted to work together,” Bush said.

Fire Chief Ben Andrews said he wants the fire district and city to explore options before any doors might close.

“If we get into the weeds of it and it’s something (a medical provider) can’t do fiscally — OK. We want to have those discussions before they commit,” Andrews said.

The joint resolution states that some of the benefits of an emergency medical center include providing faster emergency care and patient stabilization, improved response times due to emergency medical crews being available, and enhanced economic vitality and quality of life.

Andrews said the idea behind an emergency medical center would include a spot for patients to go for stabilization for incidents ranging from broken bones to heart attacks, and shorten transport time rather than driving to Port Angeles.

“From what we’ve seen the growth is in the east end of the county and not in the west county,” he said.

“The population shift is in the east end but emergency medical services are very Port Angeles-centric. As our demand goes up, it averages about 90 minutes for a medic reporting to a scene, going to the hospital and getting back. Even longer coming from Diamond Point.”

Andrews said with their current level of funding the fire district isn’t able to add new medics but they can explore options like an emergency medical center to shorten response times.

In 2017, the Sequim-area had 7,224 emergency calls with about 86-percent, or 6,187 of those Emergency Medical Service-related, or EMS.

Two years ago, Sequim had 7,336 emergency calls, which had increased annually since 2008 with 5,115 calls.

Andrews said Clallam County's with population growth shifting more east he sees a possibility similar to Harrison Medical Center where major emergency operations were shifted from Bremerton to Silverdale.

"They built a small facility in Silverdale and because the population shifted they're moving an entire campus to Silverdale," he said.

"I don't think that's an unrealistic model to look at here."

Bobby Beeman, OMC spokeswoman, said they weren't aware of the city's and fire district's discussions but OMC CEO Eric Lewis met with Bush last week to learn more.

Bush said in their meeting he learned OMC has a number of expansion projects in Sequim planned and "we will continue to work jointly on those."

They also discussed a longer-term goal to work towards an urgent care center, which would be able to handle some emergency calls, he said.

"It's always worth reviewing ways health care can feasibly be enhanced in Sequim — or anywhere in Clallam County for that matter," Beeman said.

"However, an emergency center comes with incredibly complex regulatory, operational and financial obstacles that will likely be very difficult to overcome."

Beeman confirmed that OMC currently doesn't have plans to bring an emergency medical center to Sequim and there haven't been any recent discussions to do so among staff/commissioners.

However, Lewis is interested in meeting jointly with Bush and Andrews too, she said.

"We're very committed to having these conversations," Bush said.

"We're willing to run the ground with different providers and see through a bunch of options."

Read the city and fire district's joint resolution [here](#).

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Sequim city councilors and Clallam County Fire District 3 commissioners set goals in 2016 to bring an emergency medical center to Sequim at some point. Olympic Medical Center could be a possible partner to bring an urgent care center that offers some emergency services, said Sequim City Manager Charlie Bush. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash

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