

City to buy ambulance to supplement service

Winter Park's fire and rescue personnel are pleased to know they'll finally get a rescue vehicle equipped to provide emergency medical treatment on-site or while transporting patients to a hospital.

The city has decided to purchase an ambulance and last week awarded the bid to Aero Products, Inc., for a \$50,000 Wheeled Coach ambulance equipped for providing emergency medical treatment while transporting patients to the hospital.

The decision to buy the vehicle was prompted by complaints from paramedics about the city's inadequate rescue equipment and the need to adapt to changes in the range of services provided by paramedics. A \$20,000 donation from Winter Park resident Philip Crosby made the purchase of the vehicle possible.

Crosby's offer came after Police Chief Ray Beary told Crosby of the city's need for a newer, more functional rescue vehicle.

The fire department's rescue capabilities have been limited because of vehicles which were not originally designed for on-site emergency treatment and transport. The city's two existing rescue vehicles are actually pumpers which were modified by former chief Mike Molthrop to serve as rescue units. Space limitations on the pumper-rescue units make it difficult, if not impossible, to carry all the equipment which the most up-to-date paramedic services require.

Recently, paramedics had to work on a heart attack victim outside the truck because there was not enough room in the compartment of the rescue-pumper. It was raining and, as a result, an electronic heart monitor was damaged and drugs and instruments were ruined.

Another reason the ambulance is needed for transport is the increasing frequency with which Rural Metro units are not available when time is of the essence.

There have been several instances each month when patients have had to wait 15-30

minutes for a Rural Metro unit to arrive at the scene.

Rural Metro is contracted by the Orange County Department of Emergency Medical Services to provide all emergency transport from the scenes of accidents or serious illness to the hospital. City Manager David Harden said in a memo to the city commission that, although Rural Metro has more units assigned to Orange County than its contract with the county requires, it has been difficult to meet every emergency situation immediately, due to the rapid growth of the area.

Two concerns which cause paramedics to wait at the scene for Rural Metro units are:

- If a patient's condition deteriorates en route to the hospital and an endotracheal tube is required to assist in breathing, Winter Park's rescue personnel would not be able to provide it because the paramedic would be unable to properly position himself at the patient's head.

- Transporting heart attack victims in certain circumstances may require three people to attend the patient. The rescue pumper is manned with only three people, leaving no one to drive the truck.

Because of Orange County's contract with Rural Metro, Winter Park's ambulance will only serve as a backup to transport patients when a Rural Metro unit is not available.

The new rescue vehicle will replace the city's squad truck used to carry equipment for extricating victims from vehicle accidents.

The rescue pumpers would still be the response unit for non-emergencies, minor bone fractures, dog bites, lacerations and such.

Assistant Fire Chief Larry Grainger said the new ambulance will improve the city's services as well as morale among Winter Park's rescue personnel. He said Beary should be commended for urging the city to purchase the vehicle, and Crosby should be thanked for the donation.

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