

From: [Glenn Steckman](#)
To: [Bryant Hammond](#)
Subject: FW: FW: Questions about proposed ambulance service
Date: Wednesday, November 29, 2023 8:42:29 AM

From: Adam Lust <adamlust@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2023 7:11 PM
To: Mark Johnson <MJohnson@nomealaska.org>; Doug Johnson <DJohnson@nomealaska.org>; Adam Martinson <AMartinson@nomealaska.org>; Scot Henderson <SHenderson@nomealaska.org>; Meghan Topkok <MTopkok@nomealaska.org>; Cameron Piscoya <CPiscoya@nomealaska.org>
Cc: Glenn Steckman <GSteckman@nomealaska.org>; John Handeland <JHandeland@nomealaska.org>
Subject: Fwd: FW: Questions about proposed ambulance service

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

Dear City Council,

For those that don't know me, I think government can be a force for good and that good governance leads to growing and vibrant communities. In that vein, when I hear about potential changes to services in the community I want to fully understand and grasp those issues and troubleshoot unforeseen ramifications and other second order effects that may not be apparent at first glance. And that's why I reached out to NSHC asking for some very basic information on the proposed ambulance service. That correspondence is below.

On its face, to think that our local hospital management, (which has been advocating to run ambulance service for several years now) does not have a good idea of what their cost structure would look like or what sort of revenue they could potentially generate is pure gaslighting.

This is especially perplexing to me because if NSHC does take over the cost will not remain secret for long. So why not be straight up front with members of the community during the decision-making process?

We should all take the stance that a non-profit health organization with an annual budget of over 200 million dollars that won't even disclose the cost of services beforehand to help guide the decision-making process shouldn't be taken as a serious contender at all. Their take it or leave it stance should set off alarms.

Nomeites expect services to be on point, but also accessible and affordable for everyone who lives here. That's why when formulating public policy, it's important for the City Council to ensure protections for those in minority groups. In this instance I have a great deal of concern about the financial ramifications for families who do not have Blue Cross Blue Shield (the only in network insurance accepted by the hospital) or have IHS, Medicaid or Medicare as payers of last resort.

(Think local families, teachers, tourists, cruise ship passengers, seasonal contract workers, etc.)

The hospital appears to be banking on the public sentiment that something must be done, this new proposal is something, therefore we should do it. NSHC wants carte blanche when establishing an ambulance service. I interpret this to mean NSHC will take over as long as NSHC is in total control and no questions are asked. NSHC will take no responsibility for costs, or cost containment controls, or entertain the idea of a simple cap on out of pocket expenses for those who are not insured in-network or covered by IHS, Medicaid or Medicare. That's a very strange position to take for a group whose CEO says their primary concern is addressing delays in response times. Taking the pragmatist's approach, if a sensible cap on out of pocket expenses sealed the deal, what is a small hit on revenue when weighed against people dying while waiting on an ambulance?

I'm always up for a sidebar conversation and can think of a few potentially viable alternatives to the NSHC proposal. But they're not ripe for open discussion in an email like this until we know some real numbers to weigh the pros and cons against. Nomites deserve to make an informed decision on something this important.

All the best,

Adam Lust
907-304-2526

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Angie Gorn** <agorn@nshcorp.org>
Date: Tue, Nov 21, 2023 at 1:04 PM
Subject: RE: FW: Questions about proposed ambulance service
To: Adam Lust <adamlust@gmail.com>

Hello Adam,

I am sorry. We are willing to help and take it over, but we won't have specific billing charges to share with the public. If the public wants to keep the program with the City, then the City will do what they feel is best.

Thank you!

Angie

-----Original Message-----

From: Adam Lust <adamlust@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 12:45 PM
To: Angie Gorn <agorn@NSHCORP.ORG>

Subject: Re: FW: Questions about proposed ambulance service

WARNING: This email originated outside of NSHC. EXERCISE CAUTION when opening attachments or clicking links unless you recognize the sender and that the contents are safe.

Angie,

What a fantastically politically correct answer with nearly zero responsive answers.

I thought these were all fairly basic and thoughtful questions for anyone wanting to fully grasp the concept being proposed. Taking a we don't know, but we'll figure it out, and charge accordingly, is very cavalier. It's in the public's interest to understand and better know these details. And with most interesting things, answers are usually complex.

Do you want to take another bite at these questions? I would really like to know specifically about billing codes and their respective charges.

Adam

On Tue, Nov 21, 2023 at 12:15 PM Angie Gorn <agorn@nshcorp.org <mailto:agorn@nshcorp.org> > > wrote:

Good Afternoon Adam,

NSHC has proposed to the City that we could administer emergency ground ambulance services if it would be helpful, due to the concerns raised about delayed response time.

To answer your question about staffing and line item budget, NSHC will staff the program as we staff all programs, with qualified staff and enough of them. I do not have a budget to share with you at this time. The positions and starting pay are posted on our vacancy list.

As for operating at a loss....NSHC never intends to operate anything at a loss, but not all service lines are break even here. However, it sounds like the city currently operates at a loss even though NSHC provides in-kind support now as well as some financial assistance. If NSHC operates the program, all expenses will be incurred by NSHC and the program may not break-even. What is most important is the need for an urgent response that is not happening; this is NSHC's main priority at this time.

As for any price, billing, or balance billing questions, my response is this: NSHC will bill using best practices using Medicare guidelines.

Thank you for reaching out Adam,

Angie

-----Original Message-----

From: Adam Lust <adamlust@gmail.com> <<mailto:adamlust@gmail.com>> >

Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 10:16 AM

To: Angie Gorn <agorn@NSHCORP.ORG> <<mailto:agorn@NSHCORP.ORG>> >

Subject: Questions about proposed ambulance service

WARNING: This email originated outside of NSHC. EXERCISE CAUTION when opening attachments or clicking links unless you recognize the sender and that the contents are safe.

Hi Angie,

I'm very interested in the discussions between Norton Sound Health Corporation and the City of Nome over the possibility of providing ambulance services.

I'm trying to keep an open mind, just not so open my brain falls out. I'm struggling to fathom how this will work out financially without increasing the costs of ambulance service many times over.

Please feel free to forward these questions to whoever is the most appropriate to respond.

Based on the staffing proposals I read in The Nome Nugget, what are the anticipated yearly costs going to be to operate the ambulance service? Or maybe phrased a bit differently, if I were looking at NSHC's proposed operating budget for next year, what would the line item for ambulance service in Nome be.

Does NSHC intend to run this service at a loss?

Does the NSHC cost estimator have billing codes for ambulance services already online? If so, can I have a list of the potential codes that might be billed.

Could you provide some hypothetical examples of what be billed under certain scenarios. Say, an unresponsive individual laying on Front Street needing routine transport versus a critically ill heart attack patient.

Re: billing codes, how often would these prices be reviewed. Would they be attached to any sort of cost index to keep pricing under control?

For those with insurance that are not in-network and do not have IHS or Medicaid as a payer of last resort, would NSHC consider not balance billing on those charges?

The other information I'm looking for, such as the average number of calls for service over the past 5 years I can obtain from the City.

Adam