

## MEMO

TO: Mayor and Members of Common Council

FROM: Chief Reynen

DATE: November, 2025

RE: Jefferson County EMS Working Group - Update

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### Background

The Jefferson County EMS Working Group is a countywide initiative designed to strengthen collaboration and sustainability in emergency medical services. Chief Reynen was appointed by former Mayor McFarland to represent the City of Watertown in this work group in September 2024. The group was established following recognition that rising costs, staffing challenges, and inconsistent service models require a coordinated, data-driven approach to EMS delivery. The effort is supported by the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s UniverCity Alliance, which has engaged graduate-level students from programs such as Public Health, Business Analytics, and GIS to assist with data collection, analysis, and implementation planning.

The Working Group has organized its objectives into three strategic categories:

- Operational Consistency and Coordination – assessing options for standardized dispatch systems, consistent medical direction, countywide billing processes, and stabilization of jurisdictional boundaries to improve service reliability and interoperability.
- Funding and Financial Sustainability – determining the true cost of EMS delivery across the county, evaluating potential county-level support mechanisms, standardizing billing rates, and exploring unified contract structures that balance local control with shared efficiency.
- Service Quality and Scalability – ensuring adequate staffing to maintain coverage, identifying opportunities to expand paramedic-level care throughout Jefferson County, and developing strategies for long-term scalability as population growth and service demands evolve.

Initial survey results presented in June 2025 revealed common priorities across all EMS agencies: financial sustainability, equitable service levels, workforce recruitment and retention, and the need for consistent training and operational standards. Agencies reported challenges related to variable contract terms, inconsistent funding formulas, and difficulty maintaining full-time coverage in smaller districts. The Working Group reviewed successful models from other Wisconsin counties—such as Portage, Door, Marquette, and Lafayette—to understand how hybrid or county-supported systems might translate to

Jefferson County. These models demonstrate diverse approaches to balancing autonomy with coordinated countywide support, including shared billing systems, county medical direction, and formula-based funding allocations.

The UniverCity Alliance will continue its partnership through 2026, utilizing student research projects to address specific countywide questions, including the feasibility of Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) implementation, standardized billing, data-driven boundary optimization, and sustainable funding formulas that account for service levels and call demand. The group will also evaluate staffing models and recruitment incentives aimed at strengthening the EMS workforce pipeline. The next major deliverable will be a comprehensive report in late 2026 summarizing findings, data models, and recommendations for county consideration.

## Financial Impact

At present, there is no immediate financial impact to the City of Watertown. The City's participation in this Working Group positions us strategically to anticipate and influence any future county recommendations that could affect local EMS budgets, resource allocation, or contractual obligations. Potential long-term impacts may include revised funding formulas, shared service models, or grant opportunities to support implementation of countywide systems. By remaining engaged, Watertown ensures its interests are represented in discussions that could shape future EMS cost structures and service delivery models.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that the City of Watertown continues its active participation in the Jefferson County EMS Working Group. This engagement provides a voice for Watertown's municipal and operational priorities while helping to build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable EMS system across the county. Ongoing collaboration will allow the City to align its long-term planning efforts with regional strategies, explore shared efficiencies, and ensure that any proposed county-level models reflect both the operational realities and fiscal responsibilities of the communities we serve. Regular updates will continue to be provided as the Working Group progresses through its research, data analysis, and policy development phases. If you have thoughts, or questions please feel free to reach out.