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CITY COUNCIL

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October 4, 2016

Board of Supervisors
San Joaquin County
44 N. San Joaquin Street
Stockton, CA 95202


Honorable Supervisors:

On Easter morning in the City of Tracy, there was a significant delay of an ambulance response and the Tracy Fire Department paramedics being dispatched to a skilled nursing facility. Initially the 9-1-1 call came in the patient being "short of breath," which under the current policy (Policy 3202) does not require a response from paramedics in the South County Fire Authority. After nearly 10 minutes without a response from American Medical Response (AMR), a second 9-1-1 call was received stating the patient transitioned from being "short of breath" to "not breathing" which under the policy does provide for a response from fire paramedics to render medical services.

Following that incident, the Tracy City Manager and the Tracy Fire Chief met with the San Joaquin County Emergency Medical Services Agency (SJC EMS Agency) Administrator and the San Joaquin County Health Services Care Director. At the meeting, the Easter morning incident and concerns with the policy (Policy 3202) that prevented the Fire Department paramedics from initially responding to the incident were discussed. The County representatives committed to reviewing City staff's concerns. Within 45 days, a new draft Policy 3202 was issued that further restricted the Tracy Fire Department paramedics' ability to respond to medical emergencies. After two additional meetings with the County Administrator, SJC EMS Agency and the Health Services Care Director, County Staff continues to be adamant that the Tracy Fire Department will not be allowed to respond to all medical emergencies within the City of Tracy's jurisdiction.

The Tracy City Council, on behalf of the Tracy community, provides the Fire Department with the resources and the direction to provide first responder paramedic services to the community to increase service levels and to augment the county contract ambulance service by providing a quicker response and a second paramedic on emergencies. The SJC EMS Agency has stated that they do not recognize the increased service levels and that the City of Tracy resources are dispatched as if paramedics are not assigned to the fire engines. Paramedics on fire engines in the City of Tracy have been credited with saving numerous lives and the County's failure to recognize and utilize the fire based paramedic first responder services has shown to have a negative impact on public safety within the Tracy community. The City of Tracy believes the county protocols should be the floor and not the ceiling for determining service levels.

Since the Easter morning incident, there have been several additional medical emergencies that have occurred within the City of Tracy in which the Fire Department paramedics were not

Think Inside the Triangle™ 

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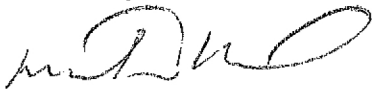
dispatched. The contract ambulance service within San Joaquin is overtaxed and is only able to meet their response time goals between 85 and 90 percent of the time. This is an unacceptable standard for Tracy, given we have highly skilled, certified Advanced Life Support personnel that can reach the scene of an emergency within 6 minutes, 90 percent of the time. The City of Tracy is also confident that the County EMS Agency is misapplying and even amending national dispatch protocols in a manner that has been detrimental to the Tracy community. The City of Tracy Fire Department paramedic services is the safety-net for long ambulance response times. The under-categorized dispatch determinants and the County's reluctance to allow the City to use the safety-net are unacceptable and will not be tolerated by this Council or the public.

Before there is another medical emergency that results in the Tracy Fire Department not being dispatched, we urge the Board of Supervisors to take immediate action to allow Tracy Fire Department paramedics to be dispatched to all medical emergencies within its jurisdiction. From a public policy perspective, we are asking to be able to provide services at a level our residents expect and pay for through their local tax dollars. Given we have been working at this with the County for more than 6 months, and with the likelihood of additional medical emergencies within that timeframe, the policy needs to be fixed immediately.

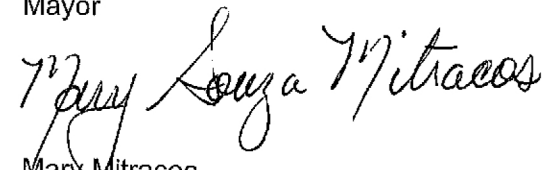
^{we} I have attached a staff report from the City Council's recent workshop that addressed this issue. The staff report goes into detail about the City's frustration with the policy development process, what appears to be the pre-determined outcome, and the weaknesses in the County EMS Agency's arguments concerning their reluctance to make the needed changes to the policy.

We look forward to hearing back from the Board within the near future. This is an extremely important issue that requires immediate attention.

Sincerely,



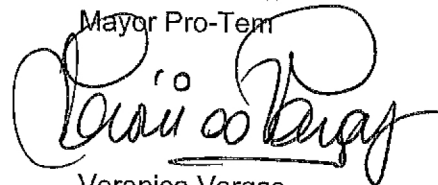
Michael Maciel
Mayor



Mary Mitracos
Council Member



Robert Rickman
Mayor Pro-Tem



Veronica Vargas
Council Member



Nancy Young
Council Member

Attachment