



**January 7, 2021**

**San Juan Island Emergency Medical Services**

**Request for Proposal – Contractor**

**Sponsoring Agency:** San Juan Island Emergency Medical Services (“SJIEMS,” “San Juan Island EMS,” “the agency”)

**Contact:** Nathan Butler, Interim EMS Administrator. Deadline is February 21, 2021.

**Project Description:**

San Juan Island EMS would like to bring on a contractor with extensive experience in emergency medical services to review the agency’s operations and make recommendations for improvement. Experience in rural EMS systems and hybrid professional/volunteer organizations is strongly preferable. The contractor may be used where suitable to assist in training and implementation of specific measures over the course of the project but will not have any supervisory or management responsibilities.

**1. Project Goals**

San Juan Island EMS has undergone several management changes in the last two years, as well moving to a 24-7 in-station staffing model. It continues to rely heavily on a volunteer core of EMTs trained in-house. The District is currently undergoing integration talks with the local fire district to move SJIEMS out from under San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1 to San Juan County Fire Protection District No. 3 (San Juan Island Fire and Rescue).

The agency’s response model has not been evaluated and assessed in years, and currently the agency is under civilian management while it determines a path forward. The goal of this project is primarily to ensure that operations continue to be as good as they can be and find ways to improve.

**Scope of Work**

The contractor will review the Agency’s response model and make suggestions with respect to:

- Marine response
- Covering hard to reach zones

- Working with the hospital, dispatch, sheriff, fire, airlift services, and other partners more effectively
- Developing fleet and asset needs over the long term
- Adapting facilities to meet evolving response and safety needs
- Consistency in patient treatment and protocols
- Effective functioning of operations
- Review safety procedures
- Opportunities for Interagency cooperation across the county and region
- Communications equipment and procedures
- Developing personnel
- Use of the Incident Command System and joint scene response with fire and law
- Provide advice and consultation to staff on ops issues (but not direction or management)

In areas where the contractor has expertise, they may be asked to assist in providing training and assistance on implementation of measures during the length of the project. At no time will the contractor actually assist with operations, and an active first responder credential is not necessary.

San Juan Island EMS anticipates that to accomplish this review it will require at least the following, totaling a minimum of 175 – 230 hours:

- Spend time in the station with staff and volunteers; go on calls as an observer (50 – 75+ hours)
- Interview all staff and volunteers (20 additional hours beyond the above)
- Review and analyze station, fleet, and supplies (20 hours)
- Review documents such as job descriptions, capital improvement plan, budgets, union contracts, licensing information Board meeting minutes, etc. (20 - 30 hours)
- Evaluate systems tools such as Spillman CAD, ESO, and Aladtec (10 hours)
- Compile a report (30 - 50 hours)
- Meet regularly with the executive to provide continuous comment and get feedback (20 hours)
- File report to the executive and the Board and answer questions (5 hours)

This is not to be a review of individual employees, and individual employees should not be named in the report. This is intended to be a “system review” specifically of operations and how the agency functions operationally – where the agency excels, and where the agency can improve with the resources it has

### **3. Target Deliverable Schedule**

This project is intended to last up to six months, but a specific length should be included in the proposal. It may be extended upon mutual consent.

### **4. Existing Issues**

A short survey of some general issues follows.

#### *Finances*

SJIEMS is the primary Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider for San Juan Island, as well as a cluster of smaller islands around its periphery. It is governed by San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1 (SJCPHD#1), which operates two levies, one of which funds SJIEMS.

In 2020, the SJIEMS levy was at \$1,550,000, with a rate of \$0.41 per \$1,000 in assessed value (maximum rate is \$0.50). Approximately 75% of call volume is in the Town of Friday Harbor, which generates about 30% of SJIEMS property tax revenue.

Billing is not the agency's primary revenue source, so while the decline in calls during 2020 (due to COVID-19, see below) puts some stress on finances it is not critical. SJIEMS participates in the GEMT program, a subsidy program for Medicaid patients, which has seen a significant decline in revenue. The agency generates around \$250,000 per year in service fees, plus GEMT funding of around \$100,000 per year.

The District's levy will need renewed in 2022, as the current levy expires on Dec 31, 2022. Renewal at \$0.50 will generate an additional estimated \$300-400,000. The Agency has about 2 million in cash, investments, and reserves, with about \$350,000 committed to a new ambulance to be delivered in 2021. It is a critical mission objective to ensure that the levy is successfully renewed so that SJIEMS can continue to provide service.

From the perspective of this contract, that means ensuring that the public continues to receive excellent value for what they spend.

It also means that the agency has sufficient money to invest in capital needs but should do so in a careful and systematic way. SJIEMS does have a capital improvement plan passed in fall 2020, and this evaluation should help make sure that plan is adequate, suggesting revisions where it may not be.

#### *Response*

SJIEMS has four full-time EMTs for BLS response, and four paramedics. SJIEMS has a capable office staff, and an outreach and Community Paramedicine program (with an additional EMT). The agency's Community Paramedicine program has an average of 30-40 patients at any given time.

A small Critical Access Hospital was built in Friday Harbor in 2015. Prior to that time, emergency care involved a paramedic providing care until a family practice physician could meet the ambulance at the old medical center. Now, with Board Certified Emergency Medicine physicians available within five minutes of most patients, the District is working to evaluate how to optimize its response model.

SJIEMS has an average of 1200 calls per year. Call volume is down about 10% for 2020 over 2019 due to COVID-19, historically the agency has seen 10-20% increases each year.

Response times are sound. The agency's average monthly chute time is 2:05 – 2:20 depending on the month. Average scene time is about 30 minutes, with an average response time consistently under nine minutes. In town, response times are around seven minutes. SJIEMS historically has had volunteers or medics who reach the scene before the ambulance, but it is the ambulance that is being tracked.

Each month, between 10 – 30 runs will go directly to an air transport service to the mainland, the remainder either are not transported, or are taken to PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center in Friday Harbor. SJIEMS tracks response times by zone and meets or exceed all state standards. The agency would like to improve response times in the North and south ends of the islands, since the agency only has one station in Friday Harbor, but that may be impractical. The agency stores one ambulance in a fire station on the north side of the island.

Our medics respond out of sprint rigs, which gives them flexibility in the event of concurrent calls to shift scenes to where they are most needed. Medics fill twelve, 24-hour “on call” shifts, where they can respond from home. This allows a significant amount of double coverage at any given time, allowing SJIEMS to provide a very high level of ALS care. The agency is considering moving to in-station staffing for medics (as SJIEMS does with full-time EMTs), which should improve response times but will eliminate double coverage. It may increase staffing challenges as medic PTO can’t be taken by simply dropping double coverage.

One ongoing issue is how the agency engages with and use volunteer EMTs. Historically the agency did not have 24/7 station staffing, so volunteers played a more critical role. Now that SJIEMS does, the agency still can’t get by without them – particularly due to the strain caused by COVID-19 – but volunteers have some struggle knowing how they fit into the response model. During COVID-19 the agency moved to a shifting model for volunteers rather than response in personal vehicles. The agency now permits both, but engagement has declined since the start of COVID-19.

More generally, volunteer engagement has struggled over the last several years, and is one of the reasons the agency moved to 24/7 staffing. SJIEMS needs to find ways to engage and use volunteers in meaningful and productive ways.

Due to the high volume of tourists to the county in the summer, SJIEMS will see significantly higher call volume in the summer, and that affects how the agency organizes itself year-round – the agency needs to be able to handle a July call volume each year, knowing that December volume will be significantly less.

SJIEMS has great response times and excellent staff. Nevertheless, improving service is always key.

### *Integration of EMS and Fire*

In 2019, San Juan Island Fire and Rescue acquired a BLS-Aid (non-transport) license and actively responds to calls with SJIEMS. Most of their EMTs were trained by us in the past, and now that they are in a separate agency, SJIEMS and the Fire District have struggled some in learning how to respond together.

There is a layer of conflict resulting for a challenging merger process that began in 2018. A one-year Citizen’s Advisory Group (CAG) reviewed the possibility integration and ultimately recommended that it proceed. Conflict over implementation has generated significant friction, as has the amount of time elapsed.

Deciding on how and whether to integrate with the Fire District is a key issue, but beyond the scope of this contract. More important for the purposes of this proposal is collaboration with the Fire District and developing the agency’s response model in relationship to key partners such as the Fire District.

### *Marine Response*

San Juan Island Fire and Rescue and the San Juan County Sheriff’s office have operated a boat which is used for the transport of patients when needed, as for example when airlift is not possible due to weather. Interagency conflict has led the Sheriff’s office to cancel the contract effective January 2021.

SJIEMS does cover islands not physically connected to San Juan Island such as Henry, Stuart, and Johns Island, all of which it is obligated to serve. Further, the state has refused to grant a Marine Ambulance certification. San Juan Island Fire and Rescue recently annexed this territory into their own district as well, so they are likewise now obligated to respond to these areas as well.

The ability to transport patients to the mainland without using air transport has also been an insurance issue, as insurance has not wanted to pay for airlift transports. This led to Kaiser Permanente leaving the county in 2019.

The Navy and Coast Guard can be utilized for very technical response challenges, as can Airlift Northwest's rotary service.

Resolving how the agency serves marine response areas within the district and the islands beyond San Juan is an ongoing issue, as is the issue of transport to the mainland that does not involve airlift.

## **5. Budget Constraints**

Different people may approach this project differently. The estimated cost for the project is between \$10,000 and \$40,000. This should include any travel expenses, though some of the work can be done remotely.

## **6. Evaluation Metrics**

The Agency will evaluate bidders and proposals based primarily on the following criteria:

- Previous experience and past performance history
- Cost efficiency for value
- Experience and technical expertise
- Timeliness
- References and/or past project history
- Interpersonal skills
- The attractiveness of the proposal

Contractors may propose different options with varying costs.

The decision for this hire is up to the EMS Administrator but will likely include staff and/or some Board members as a part of a two-step review process. Those contractors whose proposals are chosen to advance will be given a chance to make a verbal presentation of the project.

## **8. Submission Requirements**

The Agency would like any interested applicants to contact the office at the information atop this request and invited to ask as many questions as desired.

Proposal should be submitted by email. It need not meet any formal criteria except that it explains what the contractor plans to do to approach the project and find solutions.

Proposals should be received by the District before February 21, 2021. Contractors who are interested in submitting a proposal should inform Interim EMS Administrator Nathan Butler at [nbutler@sanjuanems.org](mailto:nbutler@sanjuanems.org) . Questions are welcome, 360-378-5152 ext 202.