

Mr. Mayor,

We, as members of the Volunteer Fire Department, reach out to you today to express our severe disappointment with the “latest rendition” of a 28E agreement to establish the Agency for Fire and EMS Service that was presented during the Task Force meeting on Wednesday, July 28, 2024.

After more than five years, the only thing that has been consistent is the City’s continued back door dealings, lack of transparency, and non-negotiating attitude to all of this! During the previous Task Force meeting held on Wednesday, May 22, everyone apparently was agreeable to moving forward. The City expressed to meeting attendees that they were under the understanding that the 28E agreement was essentially “ready to go” with just a few minor items to be “adjusted.” Then to the total surprise to all of us, the 28E agreement was revised entirely, without the knowledge, support, or TRANSPARENCY given to the very individuals who have worked very hard to get this 28E agreement to the place it is now, slicing the EMS part of our service from the agreement. The meeting on May 22 was initiated by City Manager Geertz because of comments Attorney Tharp had made in an email and a community member who had approached a council member insinuating there were individuals who felt the City was renegeing on the agreement to proceed. To ensure “everyone was on the same page,” the meeting was held to discuss the comments and pursue an amenable path forward. You can imagine our surprise when the Task Force was presented with an entirely new 28E agreement removing EMS services from the agreement, considering this certainly was NOT what was discussed in May. And definitely does provide the appearance of “renegeing” on the agreement, considering the lack of any prior explanation, discussion, or input provided regarding the changes. This once again is compromising the level of confidence we have that the City is playing fairly, and is above board with all parties involved. We hope that this decision to revise the 28E agreement and remove EMS services from the agreement entirely was not something you approved, or that City Council is aware of, as it would again suggest that decisions are being made not including or circumventing experts involved, as well as their partners.

We have now gone through four Mayors, four City Managers, and pretty much a complete turnover of the Council. Everyone telling us different stories.....

Mr. Mayor, we have a meeting next Tuesday night and would appreciate an explanation at the very least. Who orchestrated this change in the 28E agreement? Who thought everyone would be OK to proceed with drastic changes of this nature, without at the very least, asking for thoughts from the members of the Task Force? What is the reasoning behind this? We seek to understand and do not want to feel like we’ve just been stabbed in the back, yet again, by the very people who look us in the eyes and tell us they intend to work together to make this happen.

Executive Board, West Liberty and Rural Fire & EMS Department