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Forks squad must pay up

Suburban EMS owed \$27,000 but will get \$10,000 to start.

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By **JD MALONE**
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FORKS TWP. | The Forks Township Emergency Squad is behind \$27,000 on payments to Suburban EMS, and it took a late negotiation in front of the board of supervisors Thursday to assure that the two ambulance companies don't part ways.

Suburban EMS agreed to help Forks get back on its feet after the company shut down due to an embezzlement scandal. Suburban covers advanced life support calls for Forks, while Forks EMS handles basic life support calls.

But Bill Kiefer, Forks' squad president of the board of directors, admits Forks hasn't paid Suburban for its services. The parties agreed Thursday that Forks EMS will make a \$10,000 lump payment and a 60-day period where the ambulance company must show it can keep up its payments to Suburban.

"We used the money we received to continue our operations," Kiefer said. "And maybe that was wrong. I'll admit to that."

Suburban Executive Director Barry Albertson threatened to sever the billing agreement -- which would also break the subscription agreement residents might have paid for -- unless Forks EMS finds some money.

"It behooves us all to figure out another way," Albertson told the board.

After Kiefer offered the \$10,000 payment, he asked the township to match his payment. Supervisors Chairman David Howell and supervisors Robert Egolf and Bonnie Nicholas did not support Kiefer's idea.

Egolf said he doesn't think Forks EMS can keep up its end of the bargain.

"What magic wand is somebody going to wave that will make that happen?" Egolf asked.

Keifer agreed that the squad needs to prove that it can keep up its financial obligations.

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