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Forks picks primary EMS

Decision to go with Suburban leaves competing service in a lurch.

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Forks Township supervisors named Suburban Emergency Medical Services as the lone provider for advanced life support in the township, limiting Forks EMS to only basic life support services.

After more than a two hour discussion Thursday, four supervisors voted for Suburban with Supervisor Robert Egolf absent.

The action could mean that Forks EMS, which has strived for the past 15 months to be a viable provider of ambulance services, will have to determine how it can survive.

William Keifer Jr., Forks EMS president, organization, said he was disappointed in the vote, noting that he believed Suburban would give Forks 30 days to work out an agreement.

He had submitted to Supervisor Chairman David Howell petitions signed by 111 residents urging that Forks EMS be supported.

The two ambulance services have been working under agreements since Forks EMS reopened in April 2007 by which Forks would do the billing for all services and forward payments to Suburban when an advanced life support squad responded with Forks to a call from 911 dispatchers.

Barry Albertson of Suburban said even though Forks payments are up to date and the \$30,000 debt owed Suburban is down to \$13,000, his board is concerned that the only way to get timely payments is to come before the supervisors.

He said his board would not support a new agreement because it believes Forks EMS is pocketing insurance reimbursements.

At this point, he said, Suburban has a fiduciary responsibility to the 70,000 residents it serves in 16 communities and it could not allow its money to be held up.

Now Suburban will bill the insurance carriers directly for services. Forks will be able to bill for services it provides.

Supervisor Howell criticized the press for not looking further into the Forks EMS finances, saying it was much more in debt than the monthly billing situation.

Morris Metz, a former township supervisor, was critical of the supervisors' action, saying that Forks EMS should be taken care of by its township, morally and financially. He said the township should use some of the funds it sets aside from developers to help out the emergency service.