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The Express-Times

Forks EMS set to return all subscription money

"It is our intent to repay the residents," said Bill Keifer, president of the Forks EMS board.
Saturday, November 08, 2008

By TONY NAUROTH
The Express-Times

FORKS TWP. | Forks EMS officials said Friday they will return subscription money already paid to them by township residents for emergency services.

Bill Keifer, president of the Forks EMS board of directors, said Friday the money will be refunded by Friday because the company is shutting down.

"It is our intent to repay the residents," he said. "It's the residents who have supported us."

The status of subscription money came up at a Thursday night township meeting when Supervisor Erik Chuss said a Forks EMS board member told him the group would not return the money. Chuss characterized that position as "unethical." He did not want to reveal the name of that board member Friday.

Michael Keifer, Forks EMS operations director and Bill Keifer's son, bristled at that remark.

"I haven't talked to him since the Oct. 16 meeting," Michael Keifer said of Chuss on Friday morning. "Now he's calling me unethical?"

Oct. 16 was the night supervisors named Suburban EMS the sole emergency provider for the township.

On Thursday supervisors voted unanimously to steer funds from a \$20,000 pot usually donated to Forks EMS into the hands of Suburban EMS to cover residents who have already paid Forks EMS but who might not get their money back.

It was a difficult vote because the board had no numbers to work with, and Chuss said Forks EMS has refused to release a list of those who have already paid the 2008-09 subscription.

Bill Keifer said he was offended by the charge that he and his son -- the only ones left at Forks EMS since all employees had to be laid off -- would destroy, shred or burn records, which township solicitor Karl Kline suggested might happen if supervisors sued Forks EMS for the list.

Michael Keifer sat behind a desk Friday at the shuttered Forks EMS building on Sullivan Trail. A stack of 57 subscription payments that haven't been opened since the Oct. 16 cutoff was in front of him.

All of the envelopes had "Return to sender" written on them with arrows pointing to the address labels of residents who had sent them in.

"They'll all be returned by the end of next week," Bill Keifer said. "We can't keep anything. That would be against the law."

Another 150 subscriptions are being verified before the checks are returned, Michael Keifer said.

Asked if Forks EMS would provide the subscription list to the township, Bill Keifer said, "I don't think they need it. We're taking care of it."

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