

Well,...I wasn't going to weigh in on this subject although I've found the discussion interesting and informative from some. I've been dealing with this issue since 2010 from both sides of the coin, city and county and I'll share with you my views, which of course may not necessarily be the views of any of the city council or the rest of the county commission. While my numbers in this first section may be a bit off since I collected them, they should still be reasonably close for comparison, so let's get some numbers out on the table based on research I've been doing on this subject going back a ways.

1. Staffing Costs

- i. County Staffing Cost
- ii. County EMS/PM 42K Total Staff 89
 - 1. Budget Break Down
 - a. 7.1 personnel,
 - b. operating \$880K,
 - c. capital, \$673K
 - d. totals 8.6 million
 - 2. Cost per employee \$96.6K
- iii. City EMS/PM 39K Total Staff 58
 - 1. Budget Break Down
 - a. 5.3 million personnel,
 - b. 2.1 operating (because they place capital purchases in operating),
 - c. totals 7.4 million
 - 2. Cost per employee \$127.6K

My take away on this subject? This shows that Palm Coast residents pay \$31K more per employee than the county pays for individuals with identical training, although I could put together an argument that says the county provides even more training with Life Flight Medics and Swift Water Rescue to name just two but the reality is both departments have highly dedicated, well trained and caring people there to save a life. There's more.

- a. Here's another interesting nugget. Palm Coast crews arrived first 28.5% (Which means the county got there first 71.5% of the time I guess, but this statistic is basically meaningless). They arrived within a minute of the county 22.2% (before or after wasn't stated in the data I reviewed), and behind the county rescue 1.7% of the time.
- b. Almost half the calls cancel an ambulance or a fire engine.
- c. (So almost 4000 of the at that time reported 8,252 calls are cancelled at the git go)

In my opinion, these kinds of numbers are used to try and justify a fire budget that exceeds 7 million/year, but handles roughly 6 fires per year. Statistically, you would conclude that each fire costs the city over 1 million to put out. The real work as we all know is in the emergency services area of BLS (Basic Life Support) and ALS (Advanced Life Support).

I wanted to get you some facts, not my facts, but facts presented to us when I was back on City Council regarding the 2010 Fire State Location Study. Hopefully, my formatting will hold up after uploading to Flaglerlive's website. Before we start, let me say that we have fantastic emergency services personnel at the city and county level. The questions basically are two.

1)should the city take on transport responsibilities or not, and if not, and

2)is there a way to save money by not sending out expensive fire engines costing 700K to 1 million on each call out?

The answer to the second question is yes, there is a way, but the county commission doesn't need to be part of that discussion. That is a decision for the city council. As to transport, the city has been touting they will make 1 million dollars per year if the county would just give up transport within the city and therefore it makes financial sense for them to take on this function.

Rubbish.

That sounds to me like "I want the city's thumb on anything going on in the city even if it costs the tax payer a bunch extra to do it".

That's what happened with law enforcement in the city. We wanted a higher level of service above and beyond what the sheriff was providing within the city, and struck a deal at that time that went something like 21 additional deputies for 2.7 million,...I really don't remember the exact numbers but that's reasonably on the dart board of the cost. If was that or start our own police department and that cost was considerably more. Considerably.

Something to keep in mind here. If the city were to take over transport, it would, or at least should operate as an Enterprise Fund, self supporting, self run and sustainable. Can't be done for reasons I'll go into in a moment. What follows is information provided us when I was on city council at one of the workshops, and the data came directly from the 2010 Fire State Location Study.

On Page 62 is a discussion called "Estimated Revenues from EMS Transport". On Page 67 is a chart the should yank anybody up real short if they were to propose the City taking on transport. Remember, this is basically another "Enterprise Fund". The City already loses money on two of their other enterprise funds, the Palm Harbor Golf Course, and The Palm Coast Tennis Center, but their losses pale compared to what EMS transport within the city would lose.

The reason is collections are never at 100% of what is billed.

The collection numbers (also called the billing recovery rate) for Flagler is 52%, St. Johns is 65%, and Duval County is 57%. Now we can have some fun here just to see how much money the citizens of Palm Coast would lose per year based on these numbers and data from the 2010 study discussing "revenues" on page 67. It looks exactly like what I'm providing below, except where the 2010 study used numbers of 50%, 60% and 70% "revenues under various collection rates", I got the actual data from Duval, St. Johns and Flagler, and used those collection rates in my calculations. I then placed the data in a table for easy understanding and comparison.

Revenues		Estimated Revenue	Comments
2009 Est. EMS Related Calls for service	5100		Total Calls Minus Cancelled calls
No Transports	587		Some calls don't need transport

Transports	4513		Billing will be based on this number
Avg. Billing Rate	\$448.43		Billing rate used back in the 2010 study. Probably higher now
Sub-total		\$2,023,764.59	This is what you would hope to collect back to offset your costs
Billing Charge Deduct	\$18/bill	(\$81,234.00)	Already a deduct from what you hope to collect
Net Possible Recovery		\$1,942,530.59	What you could possibly hope to collect at a 100% collection rate (which doesn't exist except in a fictional theoretical alternate universe)
Real World Recovery based on Real World Collection Rates	Rate	Amount typically recovered after incurring a "net possible recovery"	Comments (or how much can a Palm Coast Tax payer expect to lose per year)
Flagler	%52	\$1,010,115.91	Lose almost 1 million (0.93) having spent 1.94 million
Duval	%65	\$1,262,644.88	Lose almost 0.7 million (0.68) having spent 1.94 million
St. Johns	%57	\$1,107,242.44	Lose well over ¾ of a million (0.84) having spent 1.94 million

What is my take away? Using Flagler numbers, I see another Enterprise fund that loses almost 1 million/year for the citizens of Palm Coast. How is this a deal? The county provides our service knowing up front we'll lose money every year. It's one of those 25 or so services we discuss at budget time every year and as you can see from the opening discussion, we take those costs very seriously, and provide a very quality service at a much lower cost than is provided by the city. The city is a great operation, make no mistake. But I would argue the quality of the service between the two is very strong, but not necessarily \$31K per employee more. Others have been going around using the "Amount typically recovered after incurring a cost" numbers, but stating, "if we take over transport, we'll make over a million per year"! Whoowho! They neglect to say that to get there they spent over 2 million first and will operate at a loss as explained under "Comments (or how much can a Palm Coast Tax payer expect to lose per year)".

FOREVER.

I would add that the report, also on page 67 agrees with this analysis when it states, "An important consideration in evaluating EMS revenues is the billing recovery rate (the amount actually paid as a percentage of billed amounts). The project team typically observes recovery rates around 50%".

NFPA, the National Fire Protection Association uses (for municipalities) a turn out in 1 minute, 4 minutes or less for arrival at a fire. For BLS (basic life support), a turnout of 1 minute, and 4 minutes or less for the arrival of BLS. For ALS (advanced life support), it's a turnout of 1 minute, and ALS started within 7 minutes.

At the county level, we meet that 8-minute mark for ALS. In fact, we beat it.

If a fire department does it, Fire Department ALS recommends an 8-minute window. If there is a problem, it would be that based on our population, the layout of the roads, and possibly some fire stations located in the wrong place, it is tough for the City to meet the 5-minute standard especially when trying to maneuver big trucks through Palm Coast traffic. That is no reflection on the quality of the city troops. They are doing the best they can under the kind of adverse conditions just mentioned but it has to be even tougher with those big fire trucks and with wear and tear, cost more. The solution? One to consider is using smaller, less expensive trucks, and again, that is not a decision the county needs to be involved in. That's it. Hope this helps the discussion.

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Flagler County Board of County Commissioners