



## BERTIE COUNTY

106 DUNDEE STREET  
POST OFFICE BOX 530  
WINDSOR, NORTH CAROLINA  
27983  
(252) 794-5300  
FAX: (252) 794-5327  
WWW.CO.BERTIE.NC.US

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS J. WALLACE PERRY, Chairman

CHARLES L. SMITH, Vice-Chairman  
RICK HARRELL  
JOHN TRENT  
RONALD "RON" WESSON

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**  
SCOTT SAUER, County Manager  
SARAH SEREDNI, Clerk to the Board

December 12, 2013

Contact: County Manager Scott Sauer  
Telephone: (252) 794-6112  
Email: [scott.sauer@bertie.nc.gov](mailto:scott.sauer@bertie.nc.gov)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### BERTIE COUNTY TO SEEK FINANCIAL RELIEF AGAINST FIRST MED UNDER LEGAL CLAIM OF UNFAIR & DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES; LOOKS AHEAD AFTER FIRSTMED'S ABRUPT EXIT

*Coastline Care, Inc. (operating as First Med EMS) files for Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The Board of Commissioners approved a \$1.2 million budget amendment to maintain County operated EMS Paramedic system through June 30, 2014. Board will examine Washington County's operating model, and takes first steps including the purchase of five emergency vehicles.*

WINDSOR, NC – The Bertie County Board of Commissioners met today at 10:00 a.m. to receive an update on the EMS paramedic transition, and to hear a presentation from a potential service provider. The Board was also asked to consider various administrative items including budget amendments related to the EMS transition.

The Board of Commissioners also learned that Coastline Care, Inc., operating in Bertie County as First Med EMS, officially filed Chapter 7 bankruptcy documents in Wilmington, NC on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

County Manager Scott Sauer praised the leadership of Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper, and commended the Board for its support as Bertie County activated a rapid response team approach to maintaining the continuity of services for the EMS Paramedic program.

The Board discussed various financial projections, and voted unanimously to approve a budget amendment that would make approximately \$1.2 million available to continue emergency ambulance services through June 2014.

The Board of Commissioners also established a schedule of fees, and approved contracting for billing and collections with EMS Consultants of LaGrange, Georgia. The company offered Bertie County a 5.5% service fee on monthly net collections, and will also provide six (6) mobile computers, all software, and technical support services as early as December 16<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Ron Wesson encouraged his fellow Board members "to continue to look at all available service delivery options for Bertie County as we work through this transitional process."

Bertie County will also purchase five (5) late model ambulances from MedEx Medical Transport Service, Inc. of Ahoskie, NC for a lump sum of \$45,000.

Lastly, Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper and County Manager Scott Sauer recommended that the Board approve the establishment of temporary staff positions using a job description model from Washington County, NC.

Earlier this week, Bertie County was granted a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) in Superior Court. In the complaint, Bertie County sought action on First Med's contract performance bond of \$310,000 annually for a five-year contract. The complaint was signed by County Manager Scott Sauer.

Bertie County is also seeking financial relief from First Med under several legal claims including unfair and deceptive trade practices, as a result of First Med's misrepresentation of its financial status. Copies of First Med's financial statements were attached to the official complaint filed by Assistant County Attorney Jonathan Huddleston.

The Board is looking at all possible legal actions that can be taken relative to the recent bankruptcy filing.

Bertie County officials received information on December 7, 2013 that First Med EMS was shutting down operations in several states including Ohio, Kentucky, and Virginia. At an Emergency Meeting called by Chairman J. Wallace Perry on December 9<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Commissioners learned of First Med's effort to cease operations in Bertie County by Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup>.

The Board of Commissioners then authorized a County State of Emergency effective December 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00pm.

The emergency declaration empowered the Emergency Services Director Mitch Cooper to seek State resources, and mutual aid with the assistance of the North Carolina Office of Emergency Management. County Manager Sauer was directed to extend immediate offers of employment to First Med's former employees on a temporary basis.

First Med EMS had been operating in Bertie County since October 1, 2013. After a lengthy request for proposal process, First Med EMS was chosen to fulfill a 5-year contract with the County for EMS Paramedic services.

Questions and interview requests may be directed to County Manager Scott Sauer by phone at (252) 794-6112 or by email at [scott.sauer@bertie.nc.gov](mailto:scott.sauer@bertie.nc.gov).

###