

**WEAKLEY COUNTY, TENNESSEE  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, April 28, 2026 – 9:00 A.M. – Weakley County Sheriff's Department**

**Public Safety Committee Members Present:** Commissioners Jack Vincent, Wade Cook, Bobby Dunlap, David Hawks, Joey Mahlhorn, David Moore and James Washburn

**Public Safety Committee Members Absent:** Commissioners David Bell and James Roy Pope

**I. CALL TO ORDER – APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chairperson Vincent called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and called for the consideration of the minutes from the meeting which was held on January 5, 2026. Commissioner Mehlhorn made the motion to approve, and with a second by Commissioner Hawks the motion passed unanimously.

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No application was made for public comment.

**III. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Election of Committee Vice-Chair:** Chairperson Vincent called for a recommendation for Public Safety Vice-Chair. Commissioner Hawks made a motion for Commissioner Washburn to serve as the new Vice-Chair for the Public Safety Committee. With no other recommendations and a second from Commissioner Mehlhorn, Commissioner Washburn was unanimously appointed as Vice-Chair of Public Safety.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**Discussion and Presentation of Ambulance Bids:** Chairperson Vincent advised the presentations would be done in alphabetical order. Each presenter had 10 minutes to present to the public safety committee then discussion would be opened for committee members to ask questions.

**AMR**

Chairperson Vincent recognized Kent Martin, Senior Program Director for AirEvac LifeTeam and Global Medical Response (GMR/AMR), and Jeff Davis, Director of Flight Operations. Martin detailed the extensive history of GMR in Weakley County, noting that AirEvac 31 has been a local asset since 2003 through a partnership with the county's rescue and ambulance services. GMR is the largest ground and air provider globally, with 34,000 clinicians across 50 states. Martin outlined the company's strengths in safety culture and established ground operations in nearby Henry County, while acknowledging industry-wide challenges such as employee turnover and payer mix. If AMR were selected, they would aim for a seamless transition by retaining current employees and offering to lease the existing ambulance building and equipment.

Commissioner Hawks questioned the providers on their contingency plans for equipment failures or staffing shortages, such as a flu outbreak affecting EMTs. Jeff Davis responded that GMR could utilize backup ambulances and augment ground staffing with air paramedics or assets from Henry County,

though he clarified that they would not pull local assets away to cover other areas without a mutual agreement. Commissioner Moore inquired about personnel qualifications, to which Davis clarified that their minimum standard for an Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit is an Advanced EMT (AEMT), and they frequently fund additional training for employees to reach paramedic status. Commissioner Washburn asked about dispatching and bid dependencies; Davis confirmed their bid is not dependent on leasing the existing facilities and that they would integrate with the local 911 dispatch for emergencies. Mayor Hutcherson also questioned the company regarding average response times, to which Davis noted that while times vary by community, they successfully meet a 10-minute response standard in Henry County.

### **Baptist**

Chairperson Vincent recognized Tony Anteau, President of Baptist Priority Ambulance, who introduced his leadership team, including the Director of Operations and the Vice President. Anteau framed the proposal as a comprehensive "system" built on four pillars: people, fleet, infrastructure/technology, and clinical excellence. He highlighted Baptist's extensive footprint as the largest provider in Tennessee, noting that their nearby operations in Obion and Carroll Counties provide a unique advantage by offering eight existing ALS ambulances that can support Weakley County during system overloads.

Anteau detailed the specific technology included in their proposal, such as First Watch, a real-time dashboard that tracks response times and vehicle locations 24 hours a day. He expressed a preference for meeting with county stakeholders monthly rather than quarterly to review "heat maps" that use zip code data to predict call patterns and optimize vehicle positioning. On the clinical side, he noted that their medical director is Dr. Joe Holly, who also serves as the State EMS Board Medical Director. Clinical highlights included the provision of automated Lucas CPR devices, four-wheel-drive ambulances for inclement weather, and a "tele-health" feature allowing paramedics to connect patients directly with nurse practitioners via rugged tablets to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits.

Commissioner Washburn questioned the timeline and transition plan. Anteau explained while the proposal listed a September 1 operational date to align with the expiration of the current contract, they could transition sooner if requested.

### **Southern Paramedics**

Chairperson Vincent recognized Allen "Bubba" Usrey, from Southern Paramedic, who emphasized the company's "homegrown" approach to EMS. Usrey detailed Southern's strategy for combating the rural paramedic shortage by recruiting directly from high schools and operating an Arkansas-approved training site that moves students from EMR to Paramedic status in a seven-month program. He highlighted the company's commitment to high standards, noting their accreditation by CAAS (Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services) and their use of advanced protocols, such as IV Tylenol and TxA for pain and bleeding control. To ensure accountability and transparency, Usrey noted that Southern utilizes body cameras on personnel and provides GPS tracking to local dispatchers so they can always monitor truck locations.

Following Usrey, Karen James, the Community Liaison Officer, spoke briefly about Southern's philosophy of community integration. She described her role as being a constant presence in the community, attending city council meetings and working directly with local police and fire chiefs to ensure the service acts as a true stakeholder rather than a detached vendor.

Commissioner Hawks inquired about their ability to staff the county from across state lines. They explained that the "EMS compact" allows them to move licensed personnel from Arkansas or Texas to Tennessee seamlessly, and they pledged to keep a minimum of five ambulances physically in Weakley

County to handle mechanical issues or surges in call volume. Commissioner Washburn asked how Southern's computer-aided dispatch (CAD) would integrate with local 911; Usrey explained they prefer "fractal response" tracking over simple averages to provide more accurate performance data. Chairperson Vincent inquired about how well Southern would "play with others," specifically referencing the existing municipal ambulance service in Martin. Usrey responded that EMS is a "small family" and that they would operate with a policy of mutual aid, supporting neighboring services and helping with system overloads without attempting to "take business" from established local entities.

### **Weakley County Ambulance Service**

Chairperson Vincent recognized Mary Andrews, representing the Weakley County Ambulance Service. Andrews opened by emphasizing the service's 42-year history of uninterrupted emergency care in the county and their strong existing partnerships with local law enforcement, Martin Fire, and AirEvac. She detailed their current capabilities, noting they are licensed as a Class A service with seven fully licensed ambulances, four of which are staffed daily (including a dedicated day truck in Martin). Andrews highlighted their advanced clinical equipment, including ventilators, CPR devices, video laryngoscopes for intubation, and power stair chairs. She also addressed the subsidy increase to \$900,000, explaining that it was necessary to combat significant inflation and the soaring cost of new ambulances, which have jumped from \$110,000 to nearly \$300,000 per unit.

Commissioner Washburn questioned the service's recent improvements and the substantial jump in the requested subsidy. Andrews responded that over the last three years, the service has significantly upgraded its equipment and staffing, now ensuring that ventilator-certified medics are available on every shift. Andrews attributed the increase to drastic rise in operational costs for fuel, medical supplies, and vehicle replacement. She maintained that the higher request was a "needed" and realistic figure to maintain high-quality care and continue sending employees to advanced paramedic and critical care training. Commissioner Hawks asked for a breakdown of the fleet's age and ALS (Advanced Life Support) capabilities, to which Andrews clarified that while they have seven units, only three or four stay on the road constantly, with the others serving as backups that can be quickly converted to ALS status. She noted their newest truck is two years old, while the oldest date back to 2016/2017, all of which pass annual state inspections. Commissioner Moore inquired if Weakley County Ambulance provided regular reports to commission. Andrews advised while the service has not provided regular response time reports to the commission in the past, they are fully capable and willing to do so moving forward.

The committee entered a deliberation phase led by Chairperson Vincent, who opened the floor for a motion to recommend a provider to the full commission. Commissioner Hawks suggested taking a "straw vote" to narrow down the four options, leading to an open discussion on the merits of each bid. Commissioner Washburn expressed being torn between the incumbent Weakley County Ambulance Service and AMR, noting AMR's established presence and lower price point, while also expressing hesitancy over the county's "sticker shock" subsidy increase. Commissioner Hawks emphasized the significant financial impact, noting that choosing a \$900,000 bid over the lower \$635,000–\$650,000 bids would cost taxpayers an additional \$1 million over four years. Commissioner Mehlhorn questioned the cost scaling of additional ambulances, prompting Jeff Davis (AMR) and Allen "Bubba" Usrey (Southern) to explain how staffing and equipment costs factor into their specific subsidy requests. Commissioner Cook voiced the difficulty of the decision, noting that while the committee wants a high-quality service, they must remain good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Allen "Bubba" Usrey offered further flexibility, suggesting Southern Paramedic could potentially adjust their subsidy if the county opted for three ambulances instead of four.

Ultimately, citing the need for more time to process the presentations and the significant financial implications, Commissioner Dunlap moved to table the decision until next meeting on May 4, 2026. With a second from Commissioner Moore, the motion to table the discussion until next public safety meeting was passed unanimously.

**VI. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**VII. ADJOURN**

Seeing no other business, Commissioner Cook made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mehlhorn seconded and with that the meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Melinda Parham, Secretary

Public Safety Committee

Approved:



Jack Vincent, Chairperson

Public Safety Committee

Date: 4 May 26