

# **County Agrees to Joint Workshop with Chiefland on ALS Unit**

By Terry Witt  
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Levy County Commissioners Tuesday scheduled a joint workshop with the Chiefland City Commission to discuss allowing the city to operate its own Advanced Life Support medical assistance truck.

The workshop is set for 6 p.m. on June 3 at the Tommy Usher Center off State Road 345 in Chiefland. The public is invited to the workshop. The two commissions will be seated opposite one another at a long table or tables.

Chiefland is requesting a Certificate of Public Convenience and Need from the county commission that would allow Chiefland Fire Rescue to provide Advance Life Support services for the citizens of Chiefland.

The county says the city will also need state approval.

County commissioners turned down the city's original request for an ALS non-transport truck at its Sept. 3, 2013 meeting. The request was part of a letter asking for additional funding for Chiefland Fire Rescue and an additional ambulance.

The commission gave Chiefland \$12,000 of additional funding for Chiefland Fire Rescue instead of the \$35,000 requested and rejected its request for an ALS unit and a second ambulance.

Commission Chairman Ryan Bell said he is aware of the city's desire to operate an ALS unit. "It's been a concern of theirs for quite some time, so at least I want them heard," said Commission Chairman Ryan Bell.

Bell also requested that all five county commissioners and all five city commissioners attend the workshop to ensure they can make decisions. The county will advertise the workshop.

Chiefland Fire Rescue has lobbied for the ALS unit for some time. It says the ALS unit would give paramedic firefighters the ability to administer advance life support medical treatment in emergencies.

The city currently operates basic life support. It doesn't have the county's permission to use drugs and heart support equipment that come with advanced life support.

City firefighters often arrive at emergencies long before county ambulances, but they say basic life support equipment often doesn't allow them to save the lives of the critically ill or injured before an ambulance arrives on scene.

The county is adding an ambulance to its fleet. The seventh ambulance will operate out of Fanning Springs rather than Chiefland.

When Public Safety Director David Knowles first assumed office, county commissioners moved an ambulance out of Chiefland and Williston and placed them at the outskirts of Bronson, which already had ambulance service. They said the idea was to place the two ambulances at a more central location.

Williston and Chiefland, the two largest municipalities in the county, have never gotten those ambulances back.

Knowles is spreading the ambulance fleet around the county. He said the purpose of placing the ambulances at strategic locations around the county is to improve response times. He also has two roving ALS non-transport units like the one Chiefland is requesting.

The county commission is the licensed emergency medical service provider in Levy County and would have to approve an ALS license for Chiefland.

Chiefland built a two-bay ambulance station along Park Avenue when the county operated two ambulances in the city.

The city hasn't changed its view that an ALS unit stationed permanently in Chiefland would save lives in the absence of an ambulance. Chiefland Fire Rescue says response times have become worse due to the lack of a second ambulance in the city.

The county says 44 percent of all calls for the Chiefland ambulance come from Fanning Springs.

They say adding an ambulance to Fanning Springs will lower response times.

Chiefland still wants an ALS unit permanently stationed in Chiefland.

The city is inviting Dr. Christine VanDillen, the county's medical director, and Rickey Stone, training coordinator for the Florida Department of Health to take part in the June 3 workshop.