



City of Lawton

911/Ambulance Committee

Lawton City Hall
212 SW 9th Street
Lawton, Oklahoma
73501-3944

Minutes

Friday, November 21, 2025

10:00 AM

Lawton City Hall
City Council Conference Room

Recommending Body

"Official action can only be taken on items listed on the agenda. As a recommending body, the Committee may review and discuss agenda items, propose and enact floor amendments, and then choose to make a recommendation to the City Council or provide direction to the City Manager. The Committee may also defer items for further review, refer matters to the City Attorney, or send items to standing committees, boards, commissions, or authorities for additional study. In some cases, items may be postponed to a later date or removed from the agenda entirely."

Meeting Called to Order

Statement of Compliance with Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, 25 O.S. 301-314

Confirmation was made that the meeting complies with the **Open Meetings Act**.

Roll Call

Present:

Randy Warren, Chairman
Allan Hampton, Ward 5 Councilman
Lane Hooton, Ward 1 Councilman
George Gill, Ward 4 Councilman
Sonny Puletasi, CCMH EMS Director
Bruce Crowell, Kirks EMS Director
Jared Williams, Chief of Fire Operations

Absent:

Clint Langford, Emergency Management Director

Also Present:

Kobe Humble, Deputy City Clerk
Jari Askins, Interim City Attorney
Kirby Brown, Ward 3 Councilman-elect
Kim McConnell, The Lawton Constitution
Matina Davis, Citizen

Introduction of Guests

Chairman Warren introduced the guests present: Ms. Matina Davis, Lawton Citizen; Ms. Kim McConnell of the *Lawton Constitution*; Councilman-elect Kirby Brown; and Interim City Attorney Jari Askins.

Business Items

1. Discuss the possible legal ramifications of the City of Lawton having an ambulance service and take any action deemed necessary.

Chairman Warren explained that, after substantial research, it appeared the City had been heading down an unintended and potentially problematic path.

He explained that in Oklahoma, a fire department either has a transport license or it does not. Without a transport license, a fire department may only transport a patient in an emergency **with authorization from medical control**, and only in a **fire apparatus**—such as a ladder truck or other firefighting vehicle. A transport license, however, is issued only to an actual ambulance service, and holders must meet all requirements and respond to all calls according to dispatch rotation. If the fire department held such a license, it would be required to participate fully in the rotation with Comanche County and Kirk's.

Chairman Warren invited Interim City Attorney Jari Askins to elaborate. Askins stated that she agreed with the Chairman Warren's interpretation and noted that she had spoken with the author of the Senate bill. The author confirmed that the statute was intended to operate as the Chairman Warren described, though there was some flexibility in emergency situations—specifically, that medical control could authorize a non-ambulance entity such as police or fire to transport if an ambulance was unavailable or a delay would endanger the patient.

Chairman Warren added that a major concern is that the fire department cannot maintain or operate any vehicle that resembles an ambulance without assuming the legal requirements and liabilities of a licensed transport service. Askins noted that inconsistencies or exceptions may open the City to significant liability, recounting example cases where well-intentioned emergency transport without proper authorization led to lawsuits.

Chairman Warren reiterated that the fire department may still transport patients **in a fire apparatus** with approval from online medical control, and that this satisfies the statute. He concluded that this item required no committee action, as the matter must ultimately be decided by the Council. Obtaining a transport license would require the City to function as a full ambulance service, with citywide coverage, equipment, staffing, and cost estimates ranging from \$4–6 million to start up.

2. Discuss the path forward for achieving the best emergency response to medical issues within the City of Lawton and take any action deemed necessary.

Chairman Warren provided a draft mission statement, emphasizing that the overall mission remained unchanged: determining the best 911 medical response system for Lawton and, ideally, the surrounding region as well. He asked members to bring forward ideas and issues for discussion at the next meeting.

Chief Williams asked about Oklahoma City's model, noting that their fire department provides medical transport without participating in the traditional rotation. He confirmed that Oklahoma City holds a license issued by the State Department of Health. Members agreed that obtaining clarification from Oklahoma City on how they legally operate would be helpful.

It was clarified that this was not intended for routine transport, but rather for major, catastrophic events—essentially mass-casualty situations.

The committee discussed dispatch coding protocols, which determine whether fire responds, and how certain calls (such as lift assists) may require fire apparatus even when medical acuity is low. Fire representatives explained that engines respond because they have more personnel for safe lifting, reducing both medical and workers' compensation liability.

A question was raised about the historical development of fire-based EMS in Lawton. Chief Williams explained that beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, as fire-related calls decreased and medical calls increased nationwide, fire departments—including Lawton—became involved in EMS. Lawton Fire eventually became licensed as an EMRA (Emergency Medical Response Agency), which is essentially a non-transporting ambulance service. Public expectations and emergency medical statutes have evolved accordingly.

Discussion turned to liability and how emergency response exposes the City to potential litigation. The fire department outlined its requirements: operating under a medical director, following medical protocols, and maintaining liability insurance. They emphasized that negligence—rather than the nature of the agency—typically determines legal exposure.

Members asked about workload distribution between fire and ambulance services. The fire department stated that approximately 70–75% of dispatched calls are medical in nature, though some are reclassified when crews arrive on scene. Actual fire incidents constitute roughly 20–30% of responses.

Conversation shifted to growth in the county and the increasing number of calls outside city limits. Ambulance service representatives described efforts to address this, including stationing units in Elgin and contracting for coverage in surrounding counties.

They noted that interfacility transfers—especially to Oklahoma City, Wichita Falls, or Tulsa—remove ambulances from local service for extended periods.

Councilmembers raised concerns about cost and future funding models, emphasizing the importance of fiscal responsibility. Chairman Warren reiterated that any long-term plan must include not only service improvements but also sustainable funding methods.

The discussion returned to catastrophic events. Ambulance service representatives explained that during mass-casualty incidents, available ambulances would be insufficient to handle all patients, and that outside resources could take an hour or more to arrive. Fire apparatus could assist with limited transport, but no agency can afford to staff daily for rare high-severity incidents. Planning—not daily staffing—is the key.

Councilmembers discussed whether Fort Sill should be included in future meetings. Members agreed that Fort Sill's current limitations and operational model should be considered and that their involvement could be valuable.

Later discussion addressed ambulance availability. Between the two private ambulance services, approximately 11–12 ambulances are staffed and operational, with five to six routinely operating in Lawton. Chairman Warren pointed out that this number exceeds what national standards typically recommend for a city of Lawton's size.

Chief Williams clarified that the fire department already owns two ambulances, monitors, stretchers, and other required equipment. No additional capital investment would be needed for limited transport capability. Staffing needs would not change, as existing personnel on Rescue units and ladder companies would operate ambulances only under extraordinary circumstances. Over the past year, they noted, such transport would have occurred **only once**.

Committee members discussed transfer protocols, ambulance availability, and how private services prioritize emergency calls to avoid leaving the city uncovered.

As the meeting closed, Chairman Warren thanked everyone for their participation and asked members to bring ideas and proposals to the next meeting so that a long-term, proactive plan—both operational and financial—could be developed.

Adjournment

The City of Lawton encourages participation from all of its citizens. If participation at any public meeting is not possible due to a disability, notification to the City Clerk at (580) 581-3305 at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting is encouraged to make the necessary accommodations. The City may waive the 48 hour rule if interpreters for the deaf (signing) is not the necessary accommodation."

Motion by George Gill, Second by Allan Hampton, to Adjourn. AYE: Randy Warren, Allan Hampton, Lane Hooton, George Gill, Sonny Puletasi, Bruce Crowell, Jared Williams. NAY: None. Motion .

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:01 A.M.