

Atchison Co Ending Ambulance Service

(KAIR)--Atchison County's ambulance service provider has been notified that the contract for their services will be terminated.

That follows what 2nd District County Commissioner Eric Noll confirms was a decision made behind closed doors September 13th.

In an email to MSC News, Noll says County Counselor Pat Henderson was directed, in Executive Session, “to draw up a letter stating Atchison County's intention to break our contract with Tech [sic] Inc. and to also notify employees as to our intentions as well.”

Noll, and Commission Chairman Bill Pohl, of the 3rd District, were the only Commissioners present at the time, with 1st District Commissioner Jeff Schuele absent.

Noll's email came hours after he sent an earlier email Friday that stated no decision had been reached, a sentiment echoed by Pohl in an email that he sent Friday, following inquiries made by MSC News. In that correspondence, Pohl said “at this Point we are looking at all our options & no decision was made last week.”

Noll says his first answer was based on the Commission not having acted in regular session, and that he “thought the execution of the letter/notification [to the ambulance service regarding the termination] was not happening till next week” and that he was “acting to insure proper channels of notification happened before it was confirmed to the media [and] public.”

Henderson confirms that he has notified Techs Inc. of the contract termination, and maintains that the decision to do so behind closed doors did not violate the Kansas Open Meetings Act. The act states that “all binding action must be publicly taken. Executive sessions may only be used to discuss matters. However, a public body can reach a consensus while in executive session.” Henderson maintains the decision to terminate was decided on a consensus, and not binding action, of the Commission, saying a formal vote is forthcoming.

MSC News has reached out to the Kansas Attorney General's Office for a decision on the matter.

Commissioner Pohl, in an email sent to MSC News Monday, says Henderson, during the closed door meeting, was directed to write a rough draft letter, which would then be reviewed prior to deciding what direction to go, including

consultation with the Atchison County Ambulance Board. Henderson has not yet commented on Pohl's assessment.

As the matter currently stands, the ambulance contract will end January 31st.

Cost savings, and County oversight of the ambulance service, are cited as reasons for the decision.

Techs Inc. has not yet responded to an MSC News request for comment.

Many Signals Communications