

AI Summary: Columbia Cnty EMS - Part IV: EMS Special Meeting a Bust - An Insult - Nothing Accomplished

Columbia County, Florida's emergency ambulance service is in crisis, and a special meeting of the County Commission (dubbed "the County 5") on June 10 failed to produce a workable solution. The meeting was intended to inform commissioners about EMS options—particularly how to fund improvements—ahead of a June 18 decision. Instead, there was a chaotic, undisciplined session that accomplished nothing.

The central problem: The county's contracted ambulance provider, **AmeriPro**, is failing to meet response times despite a \$1.6 million taxpayer-funded contract. Commissioners openly acknowledged the service is inadequate, yet could not agree on a remedy.

A motion with no plan: Commissioner Ford pushed to set aside money to purchase two or three new ambulances—without any staffing plan or strategy for how this would integrate with AmeriPro's contract. Fire Chief Jeff Crawford warned the commission that staff could not build a plan until the board committed to a direction.

Disagreement over timing and risk: Commissioner Hollingsworth urged caution, noting AmeriPro had two weeks to add ambulances and meet performance standards, and warned that buying equipment for a private company could be a "double dip" and might invite a lawsuit from the previously rejected (local) bidder. Commissioner Parnell agreed AmeriPro is failing and suggested, in hindsight, the county should have supported its prior local provider.

Procedural dysfunction: The meeting violated the commission's own 2017 rules of decorum. Commissioners interrupted, over-talked, and made a motion that sat for roughly 20 minutes with no second—until the County Manager and clerk had to clarify there was no valid motion on the floor. Even County Manager David Kraus lost track amid the cross-talk.

Underlying governance failure: The episode is emblematic of a long-dysfunctional board that ignores its own rules and a prior County Attorney memo (2018) urging procedural discipline. With lives potentially at stake—Ford repeatedly asked how many people must die without ambulance service—the commission adjourned having resolved nothing, leaving a follow-up meeting (Thursday, 5:30 pm) as the next chance to act.