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Statement Regarding EMS Investigation

Over the past two weeks, the media and residents have asked very appropriate and responsible questions about an ongoing investigation in our EMS Division. It is paramount that Escambia County is responsive to our residents and media partners, and that we meet your expectations for transparency and high-quality service. However, there have been parts of the investigation released that may not tell the whole story. Unfortunately, our inability to respond directly and openly to all questions at this time has left room for rumors and assumptions to be made.

First, it must be said that Escambia County Emergency Medical Service professionals are just that, professionals. They are capable, qualified and committed to the safety and well-being of Escambia County citizens, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on all holidays. In fact, our EMS team passed an unplanned inspection in July 2018 by the Department of Health. Their compliance unit periodically and randomly inspects licensees for compliance with Section 401, Florida Statutes and Chapter 64J-1, Florida Administrative Code. The purpose of the statewide inspection program is to monitor the quality of patient care delivered by each licensed service and appropriately certified personnel. The areas inspected include personnel records, service records and facilities, BLS and ALS vehicles, and equipment tests, and includes a narrative and inspection for corrective action. **Escambia County EMS passed this inspection without any deficiencies.**

While we are unable to comment about specifics of any ongoing investigation, we can tell you that our own processes through our medical director alerted county leadership to possible training discrepancies and other areas of concern within EMS in 2018. A challenge was finding documentable evidence to bring forward for review. An internal investigation began in January 2019 and then was turned over by the county to the Florida Department of Health with a cover letter from our medical director outlining our concerns, as the scope falls under their jurisdiction and expertise. The assertions and resulting investigation are not tied to any case or external complaint, but the county's due diligence to ensure that our staff are appropriately trained, certified and following best practices.

Once the investigation has concluded, all documents will be available to the public.

It is important to note that several items that have been brought forward in the media about the investigation were addressed in 2018. The current investigation is to assess if these actions were sufficient or if any additional actions are warranted. Two such actions included the resignation of the EMS chief and restructuring of the Public Safety Department to place EMS under the direction of then Fire Chief Rusty Nail as the current Assistant Public Safety Director.

When Public Safety Director Mike Weaver resigned on April 9, Interim County Administrator Amy Lovoy launched an assessment of EMS to include the entire Public Safety Department by an ombudsman with a public safety background, Janice Kilgore. She was quickly on site and is tasked with:

- Assessing the root issues in EMS/Fire that led to the vote of no confidence.
- What is the communication chain for information dissemination both vertically and horizontally within the department?
- What are the cause/causes of the perceived divisiveness and tribalism within the department?
- Is there evidence of retaliation, perceived or real?
- Is the workforce consistently and effectively utilized for their primary missions?
- Is there a climate of favoritism shown by supervisors toward subordinates that negatively impacts the morale of the department?

Kilgore is not only talented and experienced in public safety and large organization management, but she is also highly ethical, and we look forward to her findings.

Escambia County is committed to investigating all allegations brought forward by staff or residents in any department. While it is frustrating for our residents, media and our own staff that the details of this investigation cannot yet be released as it is ongoing, **it is very important to remember that it is premature and simply unfair to judge public safety employees until the investigation is completed by FDOH.**

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Community and Media Relations

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