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Board of County Commissioners

Leon County, Florida

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Agenda Item Executive Summary

Tuesday, October 13, 2009

<p>Title: Approval of Participation in the Big Bend Regional Health Information Organization</p>
<p>Staff: Parwez Alam, County Administrator Vincent S. Long, Deputy County Administrator Tom Quillin, Chief, Emergency Medical Services</p>

Issue Briefing:

This item seeks Board approval to participate in the Big Bend Regional Health Information Organization (BBRHIO).

Fiscal Impact:

This item has a potential fiscal impact to the County. If participation is approved, the implementation fees are estimated to be \$20,000 with an estimated annual fee of \$24,000. Funding would be available in the FY 09/10 EMS budget.

Staff Recommendation:

- Option #1: Approve the participation in the Big Bend Regional Health Information Organization; direct the County Attorney's Office to develop a contract, and authorize the County Administrator to execute such contract.
- Option #2: Direct the County Attorney's Office to bring back an agenda item if the issues cannot be resolved.

Report and Discussion

Background:

The Big Bend Regional Health Information Organization (BBRHIO) has requested that the County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division participate in the health information exchange and provide EMS patient care records to the system.

Analysis:

The BBRHIO is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that operates the region's health information exchange. The BBRHIO is the largest of the ten regional health information organizations in Florida. Health information exchanges facilitate the exchange and sharing of health information between medical providers; assuring that all available information regarding a patient is available and accessible for their continued treatment and care. In 2005, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Health Information Network (FHIN) Grants Program. The BBRHIO was a recipient of a FHIN grant, which was used to develop the community health information exchange in this region.

The BBRHIO has requested that the EMS Division participate in the health information exchange and provide EMS patient care records to the system. In addition to supplying electronic health information, the EMS Division would have access to the health information of EMS patients supplied to the BBRHIO by other participating healthcare providers. The EMS Division would utilize this information to assist in obtaining appropriate demographic information for billing purposes, and as a part of the EMS quality assurance program. There is a cost associated with participation in the BBRHIO. Estimates provided by BBRHIO for the implementation fee is \$20,000 and the on-going fee is estimated to be \$2,000 per month, for a total of \$24,000 per year. These expenses are not currently included in the FY 2009/10 EMS budget.

Staff is fully supportive and appreciates the value in participating in the BBRHIO; however, the County Attorney's Office has raised concerns about the risks involved with providing the health information of EMS patients to outside organizations; as control of this protected information is shifted from the County to another organization. Further, the County Attorney's Office has conducted an initial review of the documents related to participation in the BBRHIO and has identified several potential issues and indicated that significant additional review would be required (Attachment #1).

If the Board approves moving forward with participation in the BBRHIO, the County Attorney's Office will work with BBRHIO to develop a contract that resolves these issues and allows the County to participate in the health information network. If the issues cannot be resolved, the County Attorney will bring back an agenda item to the Board for its consideration.

Options:

1. Approve the participation in the Big Bend Regional Health Information Organization; direct the County Attorney's Office to develop a contract; and, authorize the County Administrator to execute such contract.
2. Direct the County Attorney's Office to bring back an agenda item if the issues cannot be resolved.
3. Do not approve participation in the Big Bend Regional Health Information Organization.
4. Board Direction.

Recommendation:

Options #1 and #2.

Attachment:

1. September 17, 2009 Memorandum from County Attorney

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