

Bayfield County Clerk

Lynn M. Divine, County Clerk

Jeran Delaine *Deputy Clerk* Erin Tibbits *Clerk II*



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BAYFIELD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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RE: July 22 & 23 Public Information Sessions on Bayfield County Emergency Medical Services

Please be advised that two public informational meetings will be held on **Wednesday, July 22 and Thursday, July 23 from 6 to 8 p.m.** The Wednesday meeting will be held **IN-PERSON ONLY** in the theater at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, 29270 Co Hwy G, Ashland, WI. The Thursday meeting will be **VIRTUAL ONLY**. Supervisors and the public will be able to participate in the Thursday meeting remotely via the internet link or phone number below.

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/240044121655888?p=20fwO3rprLmxzXJoSq>

Meeting ID: 240 044 121 655 888

Passcode: Sc3iE2qZ

[Need help?](#) | [System reference](#)

Dial in by phone

[+1 715-318-2087,,54084578#](#) United States, Eau Claire

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 540 845 78#

Please contact Bayfield County at 715-373-6181 or 715-373-6100 if you have access questions prior to the meetings. If you have connection issues during the Thursday meeting, please email kelly.westlund@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov.

NOTICE OF POSSIBLE QUORUM AND PARTICIPATION INFORMATION

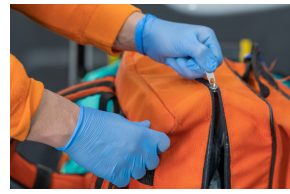
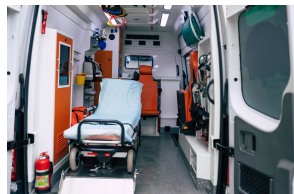
A quorum of the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors and/or one or more County committees may be present at these meetings. The presence of a quorum is for the purpose of observing, gathering information, and participating as members of the public. No County Board or committee business will be conducted, and no formal action will be taken by the County Board or any County committee at these meetings.

Any person wishing to attend who, because of a disability, requires special accommodations, should contact the County Clerk's office at 715-373-6100, at least 24 hours before the scheduled meeting time, so appropriate arrangements can be made.



EMS SYSTEM PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION

JOIN BAYFIELD COUNTY AND
LEARN ABOUT ISSUES
SURROUNDING EMS



Your Support Makes All The Difference

Ashland Fire Department (AFD) and Essentia Health EMS have submitted proposals for a Countywide EMS response team to supplement and support local EMS services.

HOW TO JOIN US



In-Person Forum

 Wednesday, July 22, 2026

 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

 Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center – Theater

Virtual Forum

 Thursday, July 23, 2026

 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

 Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/240044121655888?p=20fwO3rprLmxzXJoSq>

BENEFITS

- ✓ Learn about the two selected proposals
- ✓ Understand the challenges EMS is facing today
- ✓ See how options impact service delivery
- ✓ Share your input to help guide the County Board's direction and decisions

Learn More Here!



Send questions or comments to: EMS@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov



Bayfield County EMS Service Proposals

A Guide for Public Review and Input

The Bayfield County Board is seeking public input on two preferred proposals to improve EMS service across the county. This guide summarizes the proposals, explains the review process, and outlines how residents can learn more about the issue and participate in the decision-making process.

A Message from the EMS Project Team, Meagan Quaderer & Bryan Ziemann

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Bayfield County's ongoing effort to strengthen emergency medical services (EMS) for our communities.

First and foremost, we recognize the dedication of the first responders who serve our communities every day. Across Bayfield County, these individuals answer calls at all hours, often balancing EMS responsibilities with full-time jobs and family commitments. Their commitment has helped sustain emergency medical services in our communities for decades, and our goal is to ensure they can continue serving without bearing an ever-increasing burden.

Bayfield County is experiencing challenges that are affecting EMS systems everywhere, including increasing call volumes, workforce shortages, and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining volunteers. These trends are not unique to Bayfield County.

Over the past four years, Bayfield County has worked closely with local EMS agencies, municipal leaders, healthcare partners, first responders, and outside experts to better understand these challenges and identify potential solutions. The goal is to develop a countywide support system that strengthens and helps reduce the strain on local agencies to ensure residents and visitors receive timely, high-quality emergency medical care.

Following a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, the Bayfield County Board has identified two proposals for further consideration. Before moving forward, the Board has asked for additional public input to help identify questions, concerns, and implementation considerations.

This guide is intended to help you participate in that conversation. It provides a brief overview of why the County undertook this process, summarizes the two proposals, explains how they were evaluated, and outlines opportunities for public participation. The full proposals may be viewed here: <https://www.bayfieldcounty.wi.gov/1516/RFP-Responses>

Please review the information, attend one of the upcoming public meetings, and share your thoughts. Your input will help inform the County Board's deliberations as it considers how to strengthen EMS services in the future.

Thank you for your interest, your participation, and your continued support of the emergency responders who serve Bayfield County every day.

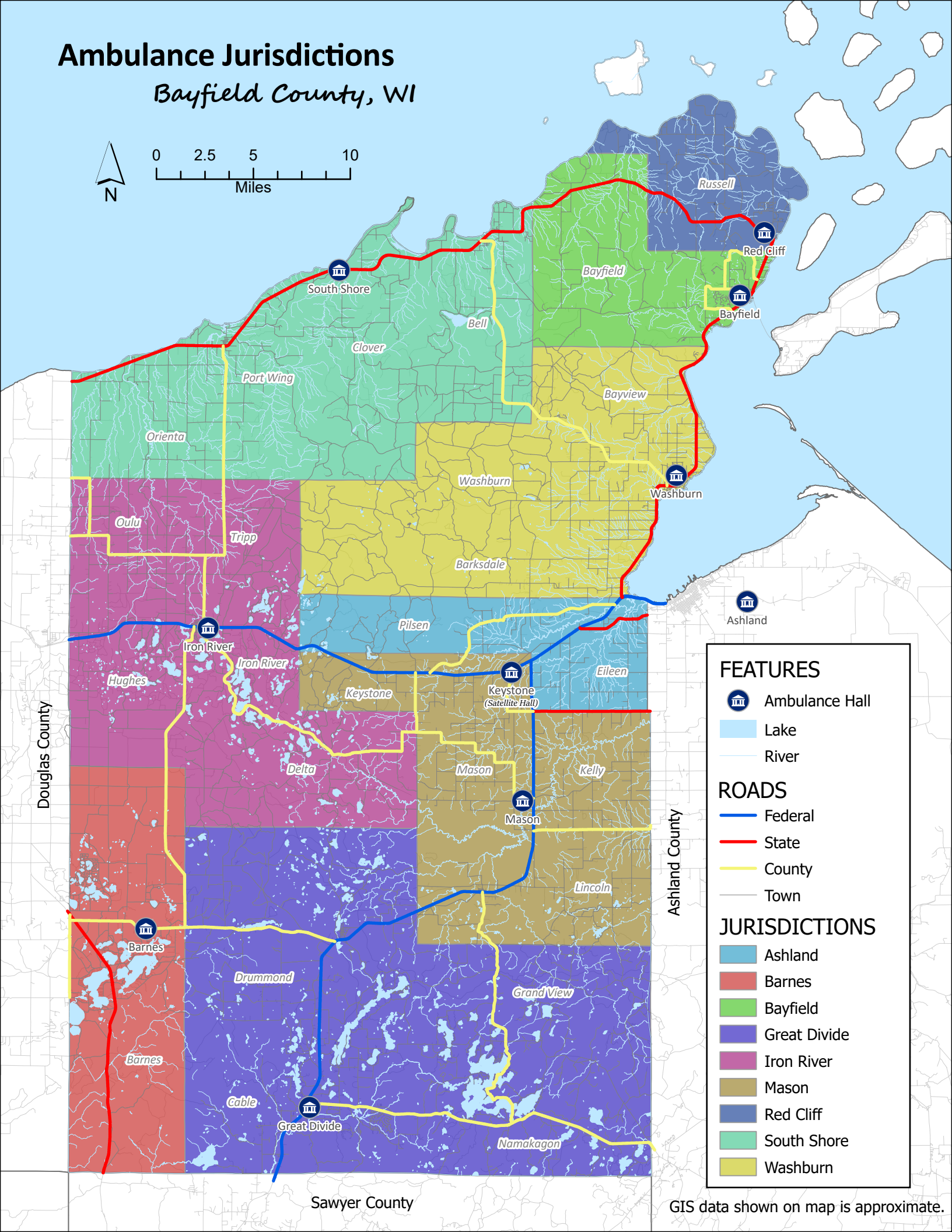
This guide is intended to support informed public discussion. It is not a recommendation.

Ambulance Jurisdictions

Bayfield County, WI



0 2.5 5 10
Miles



FEATURES

 Ambulance Hall

 Lake

 River

ROADS

 Federal

 State

 County

 Town

JURISDICTIONS

 Ashland

 Barnes

 Bayfield

 Great Divide

 Iron River

 Mason

 Red Cliff

 South Shore

 Washburn

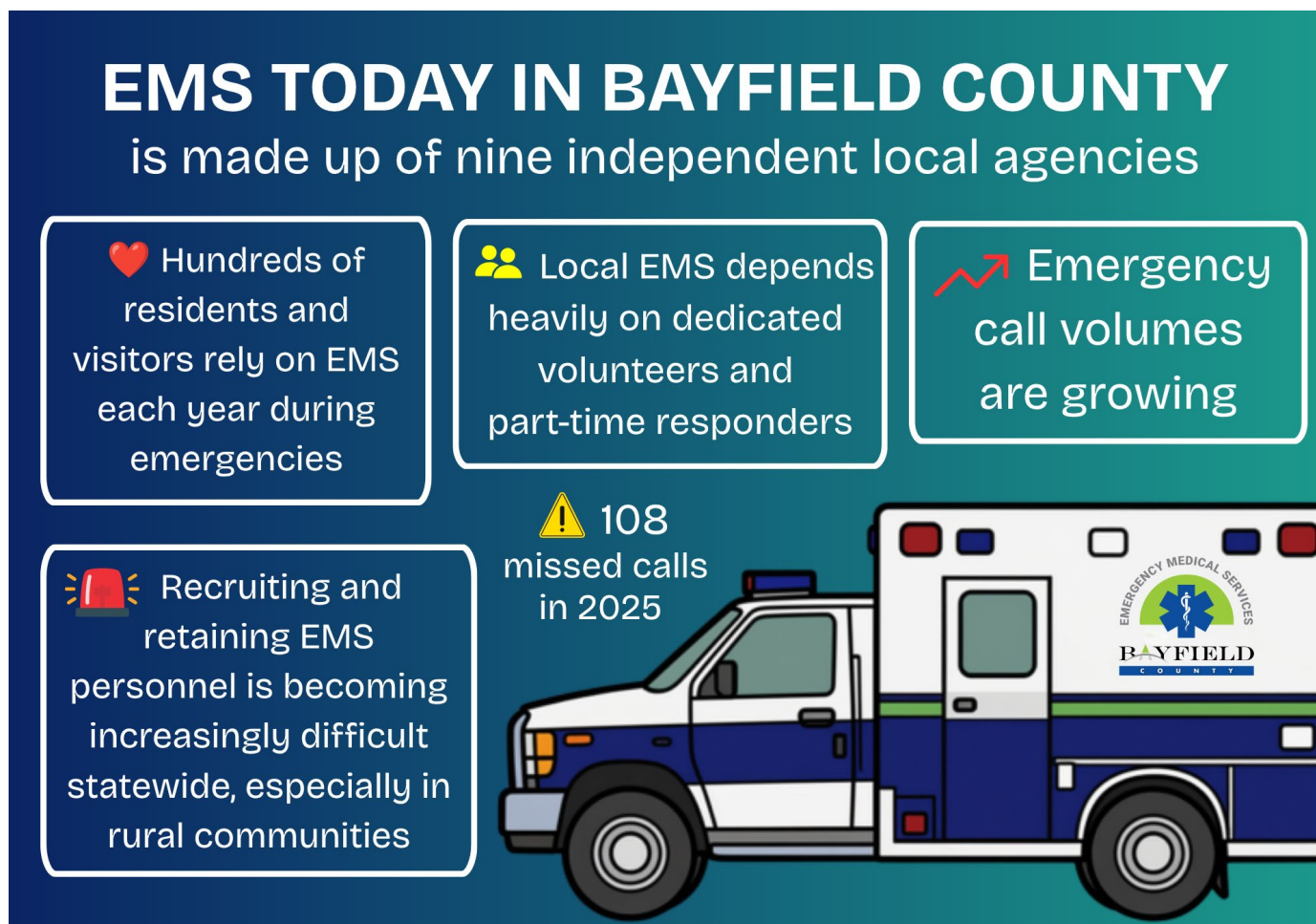
GIS data shown on map is approximate.

A Strong Tradition, Facing New Challenges

Bayfield County is served by nine independent EMS agencies, including seven volunteer and two full-time organizations. Their commitment has saved countless lives and remains the foundation of emergency medical services throughout our communities.

The Bayfield County EMS system is facing new challenges. Call volumes continue to increase, volunteer recruitment has become more difficult, and many agencies are relying on a small number of dedicated individuals to cover an increasing number of calls. These trends make it more difficult to ensure reliable coverage every day of the year.

The County's goal is to identify ways to better support local EMS agencies by building a stronger countywide safety net - one that helps reduce the burden on volunteers, improves system reliability, and strengthens EMS services for the future.



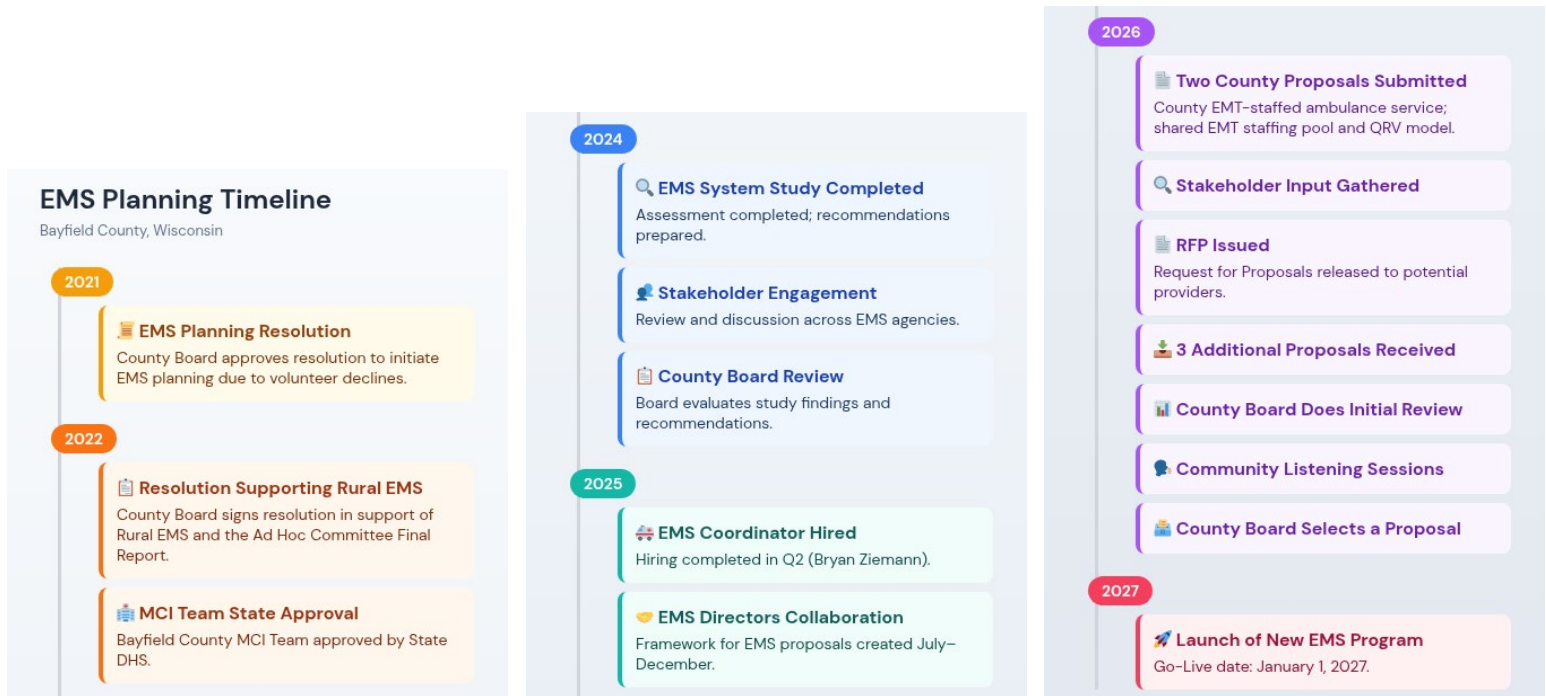
Why the County Began This Process

Rather than waiting until staffing shortages create severe service disruptions, the County Board chose to begin planning proactively. The objective has been to identify a sustainable way to:

- ✓ Support existing local EMS agencies
- ✓ Reduce the strain on EMS providers
- ✓ Improve countywide reliability
- ✓ Ensure residents and visitors continue to receive timely emergency medical care
- ✓ Build a system that can adapt to future challenges

Building Toward a Long-Term Solution

The current effort did not begin with a single proposal or decision. For years, local EMS leaders, municipalities, and County officials have raised concerns about staffing shortages, rising costs, uneven service capacity, and the long-term sustainability of the largely independent, locally operated system. These discussions led the County Board to formally support continued collaboration, training, workforce initiatives, funding advocacy, and other steps to strengthen rural EMS. The timeline below reflects the County's continuing work to move beyond short-term responses and build a reliable, coordinated, and sustainable EMS system for the future.



Five Proposals Submitted

The County Board sought proposals that could strengthen Bayfield County's EMS system while supporting local agencies and improving long-term sustainability. To ensure a fair and consistent review, each proposal was evaluated using a common set of criteria developed through the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. These criteria included the ability to: provide high-quality patient care, maintain reliable operations, support the existing EMS system, and demonstrate the organizational capacity needed to serve Bayfield County over the long term.

Proposals were submitted by the Ashland Fire Department, Essentia Health EMS, North Memorial Health, and the Bayfield County EMS Coordinator (including proposals for a county-run transport ambulance and quick response vehicle).

The evaluation considered each proposal's strengths, supporting documentation, presentations, and responses to questions. The County Board then used that information to identify two proposals that warranted additional review and public input before making a final decision. The two proposals recommended for further consideration include the Ashland Fire Department and Essentia Health EMS.

Both proposals can be viewed in full on the Bayfield County website:

<https://www.bayfieldcounty.wi.gov/1516/RFP-Responses>



Ashland Fire Department (AFD) Proposal

The Ashland Fire Department proposes providing one dedicated ambulance (ALS or BLS) and crew to help fill gaps in Bayfield County's existing EMS system. The service would supplement (not replace) local ambulance agencies.

AFD would initially provide coverage 24 hours a day, three or four days per week, with the option to expand later. The ambulance would be fully equipped, staffed by experienced EMS providers, and available to respond where coverage is most needed.

Estimated cost:

- Three days per week: about \$360,000 for the second half of 2026
- Four days per week: about \$460,000 for the second half of 2026
- Full-time service: about \$1.5 million annually

Ambulance billing revenue would help offset the cost. Details such as where the ambulance would be based, the coverage schedule, and how billing revenue would be shared would be finalized through negotiations.



Essentia Health

Essentia Health EMS Proposal

Essentia Health EMS proposes providing one paramedic-level (ALS) ambulance in Bayfield County, staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by one paramedic and one EMT or AEMT. The service would supplement (not replace) local ambulance agencies.

The ambulance would be co-dispatched with local services and could provide advanced life support, assist at the scene, complete a call when a local crew is unavailable, or provide paramedic intercepts. Essentia would also provide an onsite field supervisor and backup coverage from its regional resources in Superior.

The proposed County subsidy is \$990,000 in the first year, increasing over a proposed five-year contract. Bayfield County would provide a suitable ambulance base; otherwise, the annual cost would increase by \$95,000. Essentia would retain and manage ambulance billing revenue.

Important Note: These proposals differ substantially in service hours, staffing, clinical level, deployment model, contract structure, and cost estimates. Summaries included in this document should not be interpreted as a direct price comparison for identical services.

EMS PROPOSAL COMPARISON

The future of emergency medical response in Bayfield County
with a clear, head-to-head comparison.

ESSENTIA HEALTH EMS

Service Model

Essentia proposes a 24/7 paramedic-level ambulance in Bayfield County using a co-dispatch model that allows local EMS to cancel, request assistance, or rely on Essentia to transport.

Staffing and Personnel

Essentia staffs its Bayfield County operation with 13 dedicated personnel—including 6 paramedics, 6 EMT/AEMTs, and 1 EMS Field Supervisor—supported by regional redundancy from Superior.

Coverage & Deployment

Essentia proposed a centralized Bayfield County base with forward deployment during local outages, supported by regional backup when needed.

Cost

Estimated cost for years 1-5:
\$990,000–\$1.2M annually
(depending on contract year).

Equipment & Fleet

Provides new Type I 4x4 ALS ambulance + access to advanced regional fleet.



DELIVERY



WORKFORCE



READINESS



PRICING



RESOURCES

ASHLAND FIRE & EMS

Service Model

AFD provides a hybrid paramedic & basic ambulance service with the option to begin part-time and transition to full-time, staffed by paramedics and EMTs cross-trained in fire, hazmat, and rescue.

Staffing and Personnel

AFD requires a combination of seven full-time and part-time staff for 24/7 coverage and maintains an established workforce of full-time personnel familiar with Bayfield County.

Coverage & Deployment

AFD deploys its ambulance strategically to fill gaps in volunteer staffing or during local transports while also supporting major events and other local surge periods.

Cost

Part-time coverage costs \$359,623 per year for three days per week or \$462,060 for four days per week, while full-time 24/7 service costs \$1,525,671 annually.

Equipment & Fleet

Provides fully equipped ambulance (F550 4x4) with backup units available from its fleet of five.

Learn More Here!



**Both complete proposals are available
on the Bayfield County website:**

<https://www.bayfieldcounty.wi.gov/1516/RFP-Responses>

Questions Still Being Considered

Before any final agreement is approved, the County Board will continue evaluating several important questions:

- **Long-term cost:** What will the service cost over time, how much revenue may offset that cost, and how will the remaining expense be shared equitably?
- **Facility needs:** Where should the ambulance and crew be based, and what space, equipment, or improvements will be required?
- **Governance and oversight:** Who will oversee the service, review performance, address concerns, and coordinate decisions?
- **Transition planning:** How quickly could the service begin, and what steps are needed to avoid disruptions during implementation?
- **Performance expectations:** What standards should apply to staffing, availability, response, reporting, quality, and accountability?
- **Contract terms:** What protections, renewal provisions, cost controls, and options should be included in a final agreement?
- **Community impacts:** How will the proposal affect residents, taxpayers, municipalities, and access to emergency care throughout the County?
- **Relationship with local EMS agencies:** How will the safety-net service support existing agencies, preserve local participation, and avoid unnecessary duplication or competition?
- **Other considerations:** If you have other questions we may have missed, please send them via email to ems@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov.

Bayfield County Would Like to Hear From You

The County Board welcomes questions, concerns, and ideas as it continues evaluating these proposals. Helpful feedback may address questions such as:

- What strengths do you see in either proposal?
- What concerns should the County address before making a final decision?
- What practical or implementation issues should be considered?
- What additional information would help you better understand the options?
- How should the new service work with existing local EMS agencies?
- What should a successful countywide EMS safety net look like five years from now?

Comments do not need to support one proposal over another. The most useful feedback will help the County understand community priorities, identify issues that were missed, and develop clear expectations for a final agreement.

Please submit written comments by Monday, July 27 at 12 p.m.

Email: ems@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov

Online: <https://www.bayfieldcounty.wi.gov/165/Contact-Us>

In Person:

Bayfield County EMS Project
Emergency Management
117 E. Fifth Street, P.O. Box 878
Washburn, WI 54891

Comments received by Monday, July 27 at 12 p.m. will be provided to the County Board prior to the July 28 meeting.