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- PRESS RELEASE -

Morrow County Statement on Ambulance Services

February 27, 2024

It is with concern and sadness that Morrow County must report that last night, Morrow County Health District (MCHD) rejected consideration of a compromise option that would have had MCHD continue ambulance service in the Irrigon and South County areas. The compromise option was a framework for a possible contract and was open to further development. It featured the following considerations:

- MCHD would continue to operate ambulance service in Irrigon and the South County areas as currently constituted. Boardman Fire Rescue District would provide ambulance service in the Boardman area. *This approach would save residents of Morrow County up to \$800,000.*
- MCHD would have a five-year contract to provide stability and fiscal planning assurances.
- Morrow County would compensate MCHD for financial loss for operating ambulances in their areas in the amount up to \$1 million per year. Per MCHD records, the Irrigon and South County areas reported a loss of over \$400,000 in FY2023. While current loss projections for FY2024 have not been provided by MCHD, *the \$1 million was a starting point to help make MCHD whole for the increase of staffing that has occurred over the past two years in those areas.*

MCHD provided the following reasons for refusing the compromise option. First, that Boardman Fire Rescue District had cancelled their mutual aid agreement with Irrigon Fire earlier that day. That is not true and is not related to ambulance service. Second, that they would staff at higher levels to serve two areas than they currently do for three because of lack of trust for mutual aid agreements. This is shortsighted in nature. Third, that MCHD felt that areas in the Columbia Development Authority should be part of the Irrigon area of fire and ambulance coverage. The County expressed interest in discussing that possibility but that was not entirely in the County's control. MCHD ended the meeting without providing any counteroffer or any indication of further discussion on providing ambulance services with the County.

At this point, the County will continue with its plans to provide interim service for the County as outlined in its Board meeting held on February 21, 2024. We anticipate full coverage of the County and will work to meet the needs of the residents and businesses of Morrow County.

Please direct inquiries to:

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