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## **County advisory board OKs emergency medical dispatch operation plan**

By DAN SPRINGER | La Crosse Tribune

It took four months and a flurry of last-minute negotiations, but a La Crosse County advisory board Monday approved an agreement that paves the way for Gundersen Lutheran to begin an emergency medical dispatch operation in La Crosse County.

The Public Safety Communications Governing Board unanimously approved the agreement after nearly two hours of debate Monday.

Under the agreement, county dispatchers will transfer medical emergency calls to a Gundersen Lutheran dispatcher housed in the county's dispatch center. The hospital's dispatcher will stay on the phone and give preliminary medical advice until first responders and Tri-State Ambulance paramedics arrive.

The board in August approved the idea of establishing the operation and assigned the Emergency Medical Dispatch Committee to hammer out details.

The final recommendation did not come easily, and required a number of meetings between city and county officials Friday, a frantic swap of

e-mails over the weekend that included revising the agreement's wording and a last-minute meeting Monday of the full committee.

The agreement appeared to be in jeopardy for much of Monday's governing board meeting as board members differed on how much oversight the board should have over EMD center operation.

La Crosse Fire Chief Gregg Cleveland and Police Chief Ed Kondracki argued the board should have the authority to make changes to the operation, but county officials such as Administrator Steve O'Malley and corporation counsel Bill Shepherd countered the board's bylaws limit it to advising the county board to make changes.

The county's Judiciary and Law Committee and full board must approve the agreement before the new operation can start.

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