



**City of Jackson, Minnesota**

**STATEMENT FROM THE MAYOR**

Fellow residents of Jackson,

I want to begin by recognizing the skill and dedication of the men and women serving on the Jackson Ambulance crew. Their work is demanding, and the community is grateful for the commitment they bring to every call. Achieving Advanced Life Support (ALS) certification was an important milestone and reflects real progress in what our local team can do for patients.

That said, leadership also means asking whether our system is meeting Jackson's needs in the most reliable and sustainable way. One area that deserves renewed attention is inter-facility transfers getting patients from our local hospital to a higher level of care such as Sioux Falls. In a community where the hospital provides primarily *basic treatment*, that transfer capability has long been one of the greatest strengths of our ambulance service. It is the link between initial care and specialized care the difference between waiting and moving.

In the past year that reliability has slipped. Internal activity reports suggest more than a hundred transfers have been declined this year. Each case represents a neighbor who waited longer for another crew or required costly air transport that could have been handled locally. ALS certification adds advanced capability, but it also creates staffing and cost pressures that sometimes limit availability for these crucial transfers.

These are not criticisms of our personnel they are questions about how we balance capability, cost, and coverage. The concern is whether the model we now fund provides the most consistent value to the people who rely on it.

To put this in perspective, we should look at similar communities. Comparisons are never perfectly apples to apples, but they do show scale. According to the City of Windom's 2024 budget, their ambulance service projected about \$504,500 in revenue and \$932,790 in expenses, with the city contributing roughly \$428,000 to close the gap. In other words, a city of about 4,550 people supports its ambulance service with less than \$1 million in total spending.

By contrast, Jackson population 3,310 budgeted roughly \$1.2 million for its ambulance fund this year, while revenues to date are around \$300,000. That means our smaller community is spending about 30 percent more overall than a larger neighbor and recovering less than half as much through service revenue.

It's true that some ambulance services, depending on their call volume and model, can operate at or near profitability. Jackson's structure makes that far more difficult. Even so, we have a responsibility to taxpayers to narrow that gap wherever possible—by evaluating efficiency, staffing balance, and service priorities to ensure every dollar is working toward better local care.

This isn't an accusation of mismanagement; it's a recognition that our system has become unusually expensive compared to peers. When a larger community operates at lower expense and higher cost-recovery, it's reasonable and fiscally responsible to ask why. Benchmarking like this isn't criticism; it's good stewardship of public funds.

Part of that stewardship also involves open communication. The Ambulance Advisory Board once provided a forum where service leaders and city representatives could look at data together, share challenges, and work through solutions. It wasn't perfect, but it kept communication open and decisions transparent. That structure has since been sidelined, and with it we've lost the habit of regular review and mutual accountability. The city and ultimately the taxpayers still carry the financial responsibility, so clear oversight must remain part of the process.

If governance of the service needs reform, that should happen through a structured plan with open discussion and measurable accountability, not elimination without replacement. Oversight and transparency are not politics; they are good government. When public funds support public service, citizens deserve confidence that their money and their safety are being managed responsibly. Speaking about that isn't interference it's the mayor's duty.

I respect the city council and their commitment to making this work. My intent is not to criticize but to ensure decisions are made with a full understanding of their long-term impact—on residents, on staff, and on the future stability of the service itself. Many in the community quietly share these concerns. The way forward is cooperation grounded in facts: open communication, verified data, and shared responsibility.

A public hearing on the future of the city's ambulance governance will take place during the council meeting on October 21 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. I encourage residents to attend, listen, and share their input.

If you're unable to attend in person, you're welcome to share your thoughts directly with the Jackson City Council by email. Council contact information is available on the city's website under the "City Council" section, or you may contact City Hall or myself for

assistance. Constructive feedback from the people we serve is vital as we work together to strengthen our ambulance service and ensure accountability and the wishes of our constituents.

**Marcus Polz**

Mayor - City of Jackson