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PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY REACHES AGREEMENT TO TRANSFER PARAMEDIC SERVICES TO NCMC, INC. AND BANNER HEALTH

WELD COUNTY, CO – The Weld County Board of Commissioners has reached an agreement, brought forward by the NCMC, Inc. Board of Directors (NCMC, Inc.) and Banner Health, to transfer the county’s paramedic service program to North Colorado Medical Center. In the rapidly changing health care arena, this transfer provides the best way to ensure that the communities in Weld County continue to receive high-quality medical transport and services. The agreement reflects a positive restructuring to the long-standing tradition of providing medical care. This agreement joins the award-winning county paramedic team with North Colorado Medical Center, recently named one of HealthGrades® America’s 100 Best Hospitals™.

The agreement between the county, NCMC, Inc. and Banner effectively addresses the commissioner’s two primary goals regarding ambulance service in Weld County: first, the commissioners are committed to a county-wide ambulance service system that will continue to serve the communities in Weld County already receiving service from Weld County Paramedic Services (WCPS); second, maintain the excellent quality of emergency transport services for county residents and visitors.

For 37 years, the county commissioners have been committed to supplying high-quality care and service county-wide via WCPS. During the past year, county commissioners initiated discussions with numerous individuals and agencies involved in the health care industry, regarding the future of health care delivery and what that will mean for various medical services. Health care mandates scheduled to begin in 2014, along with other changes in the health care industry and Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement, prompted commissioners to examine the question of whether or not the county’s current model of paramedic services is sustainable.

NCMC, Inc. and Banner approached the commissioners in February 2012 to propose the idea of transferring the assets of WCPS to NCMC, Inc. and the operation of the service to Banner under their current operational agreement. Recognizing that WCPS has operated at a high level of service in the county for 37 years, the idea also included position offers for current WCPS employees in good standing with the county.

As per the agreement, NCMC, Inc. will pay \$802,627.56 for the assets of WCPS as determined by book value on May 7, 2012 – the date the transfer will take place.

The Commissioners welcome public comment regarding this agreement. Opportunities for comment are available on:
April 18, 9:00 a.m. Board Meeting
April 23, 9:00 a.m. Board Meeting

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HISTORY OF WELD COUNTY PARAMEDIC SERVICES:

In 1974, Weld County government entered into the ambulance business after the private ambulance provider, Greeley Ambulance Company, announced it would no longer provide this service. Pre-hospital emergency medical care was considered to be an essential service to the residents and guests of Weld County. A partnership between Weld County government, the City of Greeley and Weld General Hospital was created to provide ambulance service county-wide. Weld County Paramedic Services (WCPS) was formed on September 16, 1974. Over time, financial support from the city and Weld General Hospital ceased, leaving Weld County with the challenge of solely funding the service. In 1986, WCPS was converted to an enterprise fund and, in 1989, all tax subsidies for the service were eliminated. In 1992, a total “fee-for-service” financial model was created by Weld County in order to maintain the program. As with all county functions, Weld County government has continually monitored the level of service and care provided by this department. Most fundamental to this review has been our need to ensure that the public receive high-quality care provided in the most efficient and cost effective system possible. Weld County government, via WCPS, has provided county-wide, quality care of medical transport services for 37 years.

TIMELINE:

1904: Weld County Commissioners accepted responsibility for the operation of the Greeley Hospital, changing the name to Weld County Hospital in 1906.

1944: Weld County Commissioners appointed the first seven-member board of trustees for the hospital in accordance with legislation passed in 1943 which enabled long-range planning of community hospital buildings to be controlled by a continuing board of trustees. The hospital name was changed to Weld County Public Hospital.

1953: The hospital name was changed to Weld County General Hospital to eliminate the perception that it was a free county facility.

1974: Weld County Paramedic Services was formed following the financial failure of Greeley Ambulance Company.

1977: Paramedic level advanced life support services were added to WCPS.

1978: Second paramedic level advanced life support service unit was added to WCPS.

1981: Paramedic level advanced life support services were added to the Fort Lupton sub-station.

1982: The name of Weld County General Hospital was changed to North Colorado Medical Center to reflect the increase in scope of services provided, the size of the geographic area served and the hospital’s regional role.

1983: Tax-fund support for the hospital was eliminated and control was transferred to NCMC, Inc., a non-profit corporation.

1986: WCPS converted to an enterprise fund.

1989: All tax subsidies for the enterprise fund ceased; WCPS became a self-supporting agency.

1992: WCPS supported through a total “fee-for-service” financial model.

1995: NCMC, Inc. entered into an operating agreement with Lutheran Health Systems to manage and operate North Colorado Medical Center.

1999: Lutheran Health Systems (ND) and Samaritan Health Services (AZ) joined together. Banner Health, the new health system, was named in 2000.

2005: Weld County Commissioners fund purchase of specialized diagnostic equipment to be placed on county ambulances which enable paramedics to utilize EKG equipment to assess patient conditions in the field; this leads to the Cardiac Alert program established in a joint effort with NCMC/Banner Health and WCPS.

2007: WCPS receives the Banner Vision Award for excellence in the recognition and treatment of patients in the NCMC Cardiac Alert Program.

2009: WCPS receives the Children’s Hospital Award for Excellence in Pediatric Care.

2012: North Colorado Medical Center named HealthGrades® America’s 100 Best Hospitals™.

Information for the history and timeline provided by Weld County, NCMC, Inc. and Banner Health