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## **Most Davis County Cities to Raise Taxes for Paramedics**

County to end its program in a move officials agree will tackle growth

When Davis County residents open their property tax notices at the end of July, they will see a schedule for public Truth in Taxation hearings set for August. Most of these hearings are driven by one encompassing issue — the elimination of the county-level paramedics program. Cities and fire districts will conduct individual hearings.

Most taxpayers will get a tax increase.

What they won't see on the notice, however, is two years' worth of collaboration among all 15 cities, two fire districts, and the county. Together, officials analyzed every option for the future of Davis County's 45-year-old paramedics program, run by the Sheriff's Office.

"It's been only through a team effort that we got to this point," said Curtis Koch, the county clerk/auditor. "It really is unique. It's a unique challenge, and a unique solution."

The challenge is that county taxes are funding only eight paramedic units, the same number they funded in the year 2000, despite a county population increase of 115,000 since then, and growing.

The solution is to end the county-level paramedics program and its accompanying taxing structure, and expand service countywide by stationing paramedics only in local fire departments or districts, under their own taxing structures.

County Commissioner Bob Stevenson applauded the camaraderie that led to the plan, saying it will result in a jump from eight paramedic units to 11 countywide.

"The new model will create more access to elite service and expand our options as growth continues," he said.

### **New programs, new funding**

Some cities have their own EMTs and ambulances, but have been using county sheriff's deputies as their higher-level paramedics. They will now need to hire their own paramedics and set up their own funding. This includes Farmington, Kaysville, Fruit Heights, South Weber, Syracuse, Clinton, and the North Davis Fire District (Clearfield, West Point, Sunset).

Other cities already have their own paramedics, but have been relying on county taxes to fund them under an old taxing agreement. They will now need to set up their own funding. This includes Layton and South Davis Metro Fire (North Salt Lake, Woods Cross, Bountiful, West Bountiful, Centerville).

### **Expanded service and benefits**

A "unit" is whatever personnel and equipment it takes to have two paramedics on a shift at all times. The entire county will benefit from the increase from eight to 11 units, because although paramedics will be based in various jurisdictions, they will cross boundaries to respond as needed.

Decentralization will decrease response times and allow cities to adapt to their own needs. It will mitigate some of the obstacles that come with sweeping growth, such as congested roads. Residents suffering a medical crisis in Clinton don't want to learn their paramedics are coming from Kaysville during rush hour.

## Deputies stay, paramedic role goes

Since 1976, the sheriff's deputies have held a dual role as paramedics and law enforcement officers. County Commissioner Bob Stevenson reflected on the decades and expressed appreciation.

"It would be difficult to imagine how many lives they have helped over the years," he said.

Their superb skill level requires extensive ongoing training and certification in both the medical field and law enforcement field. Right now, they are working extra shifts and mandatory overtime.

"Those deputies have been doing Herculean effort," Sheriff Kelly Sparks said. "And it's more than we should realistically demand of anybody."

## County taxes go down, city or district taxes go up

When the county ends its paramedics program Dec. 31, 2022, the deputies will maintain their positions as law enforcement officers. County taxes will still be needed for their salaries and equipment, which is the bulk of the cost of their program, but a percentage will be returned to residents. The "Davis County paramedic" line will be wiped off property taxes starting this year. That will partially offset the increases by cities and fire districts.

TAXING ENTITIES Each entity sets their own budget. For questions about taxes charged, please contact that specific entity.	2020 T
	Tax Rate
DAVIS SCHOOL DIST	.005959
STATE CHARTER SCHOOL LEVY	.000083
STATE BASIC SCHOOL LEVY	.001628
DAVIS COUNTY	.001110
DAVIS COUNTY FLOOD	.000199
DAVIS COUNTY HEALTH & SERVICES	.000208
DAVIS 2005 JAIL BOND	.000071
<del>DAVIS COUNTY PARAMEDIC</del>	<del>.000119</del>

## Deputies to ramp up patrol

About 26% of all incidents handled by county deputies are medical. The removal of paramedic duties will allow deputies to increase their patrolling, especially in underserved areas, such as unincorporated county and the canyons.

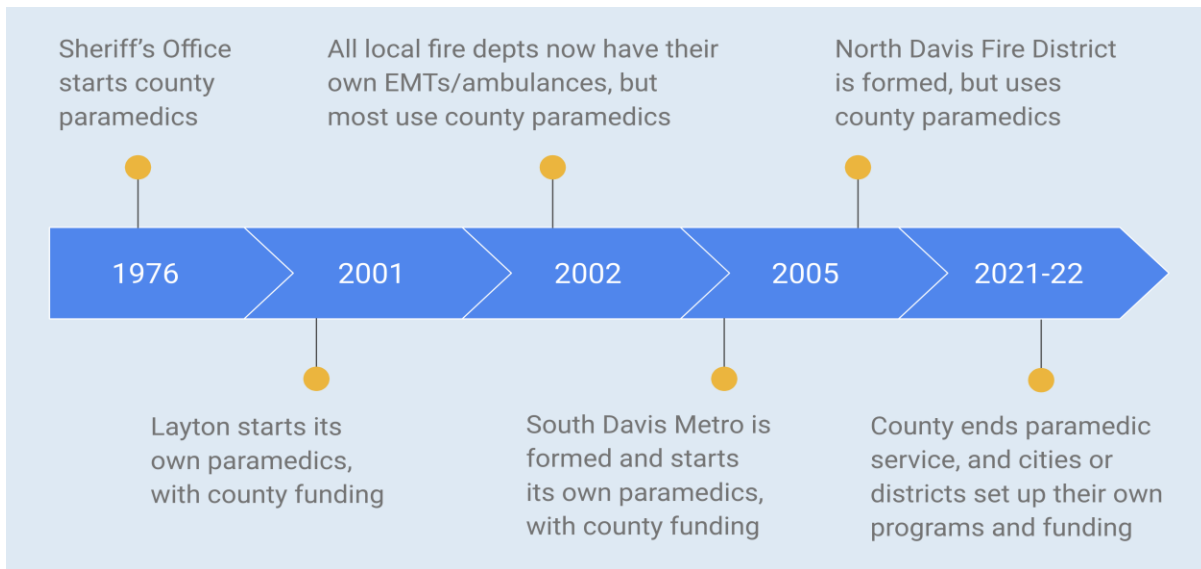
"The basis of their duty is patrol," Sparks said.

That patrol is vital for public safety countywide. Cities rely on the Sheriff's Office for law enforcement backup. Already this year, county deputies have been dispatched in about 1,000 assists to cities.

## Tax hearings related to paramedics:

Aug. 2: South Davis Metro Fire  
Aug. 5: Layton  
Aug. 10: Clinton, Syracuse  
Aug. 12: North Davis Fire District  
Aug. 17: South Weber, Farmington, Fruit Heights  
Aug. 19: Kaysville

Residents should contact their cities or fire districts for specific tax information regarding paramedics funding.



#### Q & A:

**How will the county paramedics program be funded during its transition period — from 2021, when the “Davis County Paramedic” tax line is removed, until Dec. 31, 2022, when the program officially ends?**

The county will cover the transition period with money from its general fund.

**Will the Sheriff's Office lay off deputies?**

No, the sheriff needs all his deputies, not only for the transition period before the paramedics program ends, but also afterward, as he boosts their law enforcement role. He may reduce his staff size over time through attrition, as needed.

**How many paramedics are in a unit?**

A “unit” is whatever personnel and equipment it takes to have two paramedics on a shift at all times. At a minimum, that would be six people, two for each eight-hour shift in a 24-hour period. But people don't work 365 days a year. So departments have to take into account days off, vacation time, sick leave and family leave.

It varies by locality, but a unit could comprise 9 or 10 people. A unit could have a combination of full-time and part-time employees. An increase from eight to 11 units countywide means a couple dozen more paramedics. It means at any given moment across the county, there will be 22 paramedics on shift instead of 16.

**Will all cities and districts have the same tax increases?**

No, each entity will have its own numbers, based on its individual needs and the financial decisions of its leaders. Residents should contact cities or districts directly for specifics.

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