



City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL DATE: MAY 6, 2025

FROM: FIRE DEPARTMENT WARDS: ALL

**SUBJECT: AMENDMENTS TO RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 5.66 -
AMBULANCES TO MODERNIZE DEFINITIONS, UPDATE FRANCHISE AND
PERMIT REQUIREMENTS, AND ENHANCE OPERATIONAL STANDARDS
FOR AMBULANCE SERVICES WITHIN THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE**

ISSUE:

Proposed amendments to Chapter 5.66 of the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) to modernize definitions, update franchise and permit requirements, and enhance operational standards for ambulance services within the City of Riverside

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council:

1. Approve the proposed amendments to the Riverside Municipal Code – Chapter 5.66 – Ambulances, and
2. Direct the City Attorney Office prepare a resolution to adopt recommended changes to RMC 5.66.

BACKGROUND:

Chapter 5.66 of the Riverside, California Code of Ordinances regulates ambulance services under Title 5 - Business Taxes, Licenses, and Regulations. It establishes that all ambulance services operating within the city must have a valid franchise or permit granted by the City Council or Administrator, with mandatory accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS). Definitions for terms like ALS, BLS, CCT, and franchisee are provided. The application process requires detailed information about the applicant's business, equipment, personnel, rates, and insurance, with permits or franchises granted for up to five years. Applicants must meet state and local EMS standards, including equipment maintenance, personnel training, and continuous 24/7 service availability, with exceptions for special events. Ambulance rates must be approved by the city and increases above 5% require special approval. Audits can be conducted to verify revenue and costs. Inspections of ambulances are conducted to ensure compliance with safety and operational standards, with fees assessed as necessary. During emergencies, franchisees are required to provide necessary resources upon request.

Complaint procedures allow users to report excessive charges or unsatisfactory services, which are investigated by the Administrator. The ordinance outlines enforcement measures, including inspections, suspensions, revocations, and appeal processes. Public hearings are conducted for disputes regarding franchise status. Additionally, the chapter maintains severability, ensuring the remaining provisions remain in effect if any part is deemed invalid.

The last revision to Chapter 5.66 was in 2020. At that time, Section 5.66.060(D) was amended to include an appellate remedy for applicants who were denied a permit or had their permit revoked or suspended. This provision allows applicants to file an appeal in writing with the City Clerk within 15 days of notification, outlining the grounds for the appeal, with a hearing to be conducted before the Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed amendments reflect the need to address evolving operational requirements, incorporate compliance with current state and local EMS standards, and enhance oversight to maintain high-quality ambulance services.

The key updates in the proposed amendments include:

1. 5.66.020 Franchise / permits:

- The proposed amendment in 5.66.020 section 5 introduces a provision allowing unpermitted ambulances to operate upon approval of the Administrator in situations where significant time delays may adversely impact patient care. This ensures that when permitted ambulance services are verified to be delayed or unable to provide the required level of service, alternative arrangements can be authorized to address urgent medical needs effectively.

This change aims to mitigate the risk of care delays in critical situations by granting the Administrator the flexibility to approve supplemental or alternative ambulance services. The provision prioritizes patient care and addresses scenarios such as unexpected service interruptions, increased demand, or logistical challenges faced by permitted ambulance providers.

2. 5.66.040 Application for a franchise or extension of a franchise:

- The current ordinance requires applicants for ambulance service permits to verify their current accreditation with the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS). This ensures that ambulance providers meet nationally recognized standards for quality and safety in emergency medical services.

The amendment allows the Ambulance Administrator to grant a variance for applicants who demonstrate a commitment to achieving accreditation within six months to one year of receiving their permit. Failure to achieve CAAS accreditation within the specified timeframe will result in the removal of the permit.

3. 5.66.050 Processing of application:

- As part of the application evaluation, the Administrator will prepare a detailed report. The proposed change increases the timeframe for the Administrator to

prepare a detailed report for Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee from (14) to (45) days. The increased timeframe will allow sufficient time to complete the report and to allow for changes in the committee schedule, which has been found to be problematic.

4. 5.66.195 Permit for ambulances:

- The revised version would state: "Each permit holder shall annually submit for inspection to the Administrator 50 percent of its fleet of ambulances operating in the City, such that all ambulances of a franchisee operating in the City are inspected on a biennial basis." This change provides clarity, as "biennial" explicitly conveys the intended two-year rotation and avoids misinterpretation that could lead to non-compliance. It also ensures accountability, as the clear schedule aligns all stakeholders on expectations that the entire fleet is subject to inspection.

5. 5.66.180 Ambulance rates

- The proposal to adjust the percent increase limit from 5% to 10% aligns with Riverside County's policy framework for managing rate changes. This change acknowledges the reality of escalating costs and offers greater flexibility for meeting operational needs while maintaining a structured review process.

These updates aim to enhance the City's EMS framework, protect public safety, and ensure equitable access to ambulance services.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The proposed ISA aligns with Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Priorities, supporting the following goals:

No. 2 Community Well-Being, Goal No. 2.6 Strengthen community preparedness for emergencies to ensure effective response and recovery.

1. **Community Trust** – Strengthening emergency response capabilities through updated regulations.
2. **Equity** – Ensuring all residents receive timely and fair access to emergency medical services.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Establishing cost-recovery mechanisms to sustain oversight and enforcement.
4. **Innovation** – Leveraging current EMS standards to promote best practices in ambulance services.
5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Promoting a resilient EMS system that adapts to emergencies and disasters effectively, safeguarding public health in the long term.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this report. The proposed fee increase will be charged by the ambulance provider to the customer, with no fiscal impact to the City.

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Certified as to
availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form: Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Exhibit A – Proposed Amendments to RMC 5.66
2. Presentation