



Grand County Emergency Medical Services

Special Service District

Board Meeting

Tuesday, July 8, 2025

9:00-10:00am Special Meeting

Location: Grand County EMS SSD

520 E. 100 N. Moab, Utah 84532

Agenda

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Welcome Public Comment
3. Discussion/Action Items
 - a. Approval of recommendation to proceed with request for special election from Grand County Commission
4. Adjourn

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION DURING PUBLIC MEETINGS. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with special needs requests wishing to attend Emergency Medical Services Special Service District meetings are encouraged to contact the District Board two (2) business days in advance of these events. Specific accommodations necessary to allow participation of disabled persons will be provided to the maximum extent possible. Requests, or any other questions or comments can be communicated to: (435) 259-1301.

Posted by: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Agenda Summary
Grand County Emergency Medical Services SSD
July 8, 2025
Agenda Item #3a

Title:	Approval of recommendation to proceed with request for special election from Grand County Commission
Presenter:	Andy Smith
Summary:	<p>Grand County EMS SSD is seeking additional funding to ensure long-term sustainability. In recent years, patient revenue and the existing 0.5% healthcare sales tax have not kept pace with rising call volumes, inflation, and increasing capital and operational costs.</p> <p>To address this gap, we are proposing an increase in the healthcare sales tax from 0.5% to 1.0%. This measure would go before voters in a special election on November 4th.</p>
Fiscal Impacts:	None for the request, if it's placed on the ballot and depending on the split it could increase our operational revenue by about 1.5MM a year.
Recommended Motion:	"I move to authorize the Executive Director to move forward with a request for a special election for the purpose of placing asking the voters for an increase in the Healthcare sales tax"
Process:	
Attachments:	Draft sales tax concept overview Draft public information sheet

Grand County Rural Healthcare Sales Tax – Special Election Concept Summary

Proposed by: Grand County EMS

Overview:

Grand County EMS (GCEMS) proposes placing a **special election** on the **November 2025 ballot** to impose the additional **0.5% rural healthcare sales tax** available under **Utah Code 59-12-802**. This would increase the total rural healthcare sales tax to the full **1% allowed by statute**. The proposed concept includes sharing this revenue among **Grand County EMS, Moab Valley Fire District (MVFD)**, and the **Canyonlands Health Care Services Special Service District (CHCSSD)** to ensure the long-term sustainability of local emergency services and senior care.

Purpose & Need:

GCEMS is facing severe funding challenges driven by:

- Rising costs of ambulances, medications, fuel, and staffing.
- Decreased insurance reimbursements and revenue from patient transport.
- Hundreds of thousands in unexpected ambulance and facility repairs.
- A depleted fund balance, borrowed operating funds, and an emergency funding request to Grand County in 2025 just to meet payroll.

This tax would help stabilize essential emergency services, rebuild financial reserves, and allow planned capital investments to replace aging equipment.

Proposed Funding Distribution:

The concept includes an initial weighted distribution favoring GCEMS due to immediate needs, with a gradual adjustment over the first five years.

- **GCEMS:** To restore reserves and fund readiness and capital equipment needs.
- **CHCSSD:** To support the increasing cost of rural healthcare infrastructure.
- **MVFD:** To address rising emergency calls, especially from tourism-related incidents (e.g., vehicle accidents, fires) **and potentially to avoid future property tax increases.**

After Year 5, these percentages would be locked in unless the participating agencies agree to a different split based on demonstrated need.

Special Election Feasibility:

A special election is **permissible under UAC 20A-1-203** for sales tax purposes. To proceed:

- A **resolution** outlining the purpose must be adopted by the **Grand County Commission with a 2/3 majority (5 of 7 votes)**.
- The resolution must be passed **no later than 75 days before the election** (by mid-August 2025 to meet the November election window).
- Election timing and details must be coordinated with the **Grand County Clerk's Office** and follow all notice and publication requirements under **UAC 20A-1-204**.

Why Sales Tax Instead of Property Tax?

A sales tax is the most equitable way to fund essential emergency services in a tourism-driven community like Grand County. Unlike property tax—which places the burden solely on local residents and property owners—an **estimated 73% of all sales tax revenue in Grand County is paid by visitors**. These same visitors account for a significant portion of EMS and Fire responses, particularly in backcountry rescues, vehicle accidents, and medical emergencies. A sales tax ensures that those who benefit from our presence and preparedness also help fund the **infrastructure of readiness**, easing the financial burden on local taxpayers while protecting everyone in the county—resident or visitor.

Conclusion:

This proposal represents a **collaborative, equitable approach** to funding **critical emergency services** in Grand County. By sharing the rural healthcare sales tax between EMS, Fire, and Health Care District, we can **protect local property taxpayers**, stabilize our emergency infrastructure, ensure the viability of the care center, and prepare our agencies remain capable of responding to both resident and visitor needs for years to come.

Why Grand County EMS Needs the Rural Healthcare Sales Tax

For the past decade, Grand County Emergency Medical Services (GCEMS) has operated on a revenue model primarily reliant on billing for ambulance transports. While this worked in the past, increasing call volumes, rising public expectations, and shifts in the healthcare system have pushed this model beyond its limits. Without a new, sustainable source of funding, we risk compromising the readiness and reliability of this essential service.

Our Growing Demands

Over the last 10 years, GCEMS has transitioned from a part-time, on-call model to a full-time, professional EMS agency. We built a new headquarters to consolidate operations, expanded our medical capabilities, and navigated a global pandemic—all while continuing to serve both residents and the millions of visitors who come to Grand County each year.

The data speaks for itself:

- **70% increase** in total 911 calls (from 891 in 2014 to 1,515 in 2024)
- **71% increase** in interfacility transports
- **34% increase** in backcountry incidents (rescues of hikers, bikers, rafters, etc.)
- **10% rise** in uninsured patients in the past year
- **Medicaid and Medicare reimburse only \$0.29 per \$1 billed**

Funding Gaps & Critical Needs

Our current funding model no longer covers the cost of maintaining—and improving—our operations. In particular, capital needs have outpaced our ability to save:

Next 10 Years – Projected Costs

- 6 new ambulances: **\$2,000,000+**
- 4 support vehicles: **\$280,000**
- 6 cardiac monitors: **\$250,000**
- 2 ventilators: **\$40,000**
- 1 new full-time ambulance crew: **\$1 million annually**
- Fund balance and capital reserve rebuilding

Why Sales Tax Makes Sense

A **sales tax is the fairest, most effective way** to fund readiness in a tourism-driven community like ours. Roughly **73% of all sales taxes in Grand County are paid by non-residents**, meaning visitors who rely on EMS also help support it. Unlike property taxes, which fall entirely on locals, this model shares the burden more equitably—especially important as we respond to a growing number of out-of-area patients.

This tax is not about expanding luxury—it's about **preserving core EMS services** and ensuring we're ready when the next emergency happens, whether it's a bike crash on Slickrock, a medical emergency at Arches, or a critical patient in Castle Valley.

Let's Invest in Readiness

GCEMS is a lean, efficient, and essential public service. We've made painful budget cuts, delayed purchases, and stretched every dollar we have. But we can't wait any longer. The Rural Healthcare Sales Tax allows us to invest in the people, equipment, and infrastructure needed to continue providing timely, high-quality care for all.