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Posted: 4:37 p.m. Monday, March 10, 2014

County awards \$10M transportation contract to Fairfield company

By Denise G. Callahan

Staff Writer

BUTLER COUNTY — A new \$10 million transportation contract for Butler County Job and Family Services means 50-plus people will lose their jobs at the old transport company.

The county commissioners ratified a new three-year contract with Fairfield-based Universal Transportation Systems on Monday. JFS Executive Director Jerome Kearns said UTS underbid the current provider, LeFleur Transportation by about \$800,000.

In the first year of the three-year deal, UTS came in at \$3.3 million. The LeFleur bid included a fuel surcharge, which brought its bid up from \$3.4 million to \$3.6 million, and the final bidder, Ride Right, offered \$4.4 million for the first year.

The transport service takes people to and from non-emergency medical visits, and the bids were based on 150,927 trips a year. The old contract, which expires at the end of the month, was for \$8 million over three years. Kearns said Medicaid expansion and the rates bid account for the increase. The county is reimbursed 100 percent for the transport costs.

"There are many factors, utilization, people are required to utilize their HMO first before they access these Medicaid transportations, so there are a number of variables," he said. "We could see an increase of Medicaid recipients in our county, which could impact these services."

Rick Manifold, state director for LeFleur, which is based in Mississippi, said the contract loss won't push him out of business, but he'll be down to bare bones, handling some school contracts he is obligated to maintain. Three years ago his company was in hiring mode after landing the lucrative county contract.

"You have to be willing to deal with this stuff," Manifold said.

UTS held the county transportation contract from 2004 to 2011 and in years prior to that, according to Kearns. The company also recently won the contract for the county Veterans Service Commission. County Commissioner Don Dixon said with a \$10 million contract they should be able swing a better deal for the veterans.

County Administrator Charlie Young said he spoke with former Veterans Service Executive Director Curt McPherson and there was no interest in collaboration.

"I spoke with the Veterans Service director at this commission's direction a couple months ago," Young said. "After reviewing this contract and what they had, they chose to not participate in this bid and decided to move forward with their own contract because it did not meet their needs."

Dixon asked Kearns to talk to UTS about possibly getting a cheaper rate for the veterans.

"I'm really disappointed that we don't have something worked out with the veterans, I think there is an opportunity here with a \$10 million contract to able to push some saving to another agency," Dixon said. "They aren't under us and we don't control them, but it still affects us and the general fund, indirectly."

Kearns said he spoke with UTS officials and since the JFS contract is based on per trip rates and the veteran's \$263,628 contract is based on zones, the deals are too dissimilar. The veterans commission saved about \$30,000 with the new contract and the amount was nearly half what was budgeted.

UTS President Carolyn Burer declined to discuss the new contract.

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- Posted by TyphoidMary at 8:52 p.m. Mar. 10, 2014
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WOW! NO KIDDING! WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT!

The commissioners announced months ago their hope to grease the palm of UTS again. The good ole boys club still running strong here in Butler County.



- Posted by SS_snake at 9:51 p.m. Mar. 10, 2014
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@ TyphoidMary

It has nothing to do with the good ole boy's club. UTS legitimately won a contract through a fair bidding process. I am glad to see the contract go to a company that was started here in Butler County and has been doing business in Butler County for over 30 years rather than go to one of the other two top bidders who are based out of state. I am thankful to keep those dollars circulating right here in Butler County rather than send them to another state. UTS is a good company that started from scratch and has grown into what it is today through the hard work of all that work there.

Thank you UTS for your commitment to providing a valuable service to the citizens of Butler County.



- Posted by taxes at 11:34 p.m. Mar. 10, 2014
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for your info wasnt it the owners of uts that got busted for voter fraud in Fairfield , and how do you know the good ole boys didnt tell them what was the lowest bid



- Posted by angrydog at 6:50 a.m. Mar. 11, 2014
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@ SS_snake,

You make us laugh when you post through a fair bidding process.

WHAT A JOKE!

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