

\$93,000 In Funds Sought For Ambulance In Chapin

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Lexington County officials have applied for nearly \$93,000 in state funds to purchase and operate an ambulance in the Chapin area.

Rural areas of Richland County also might be served under the program, which will be considered by Lexington County Council at its Wednesday night session.

COUNCILMEN two weeks ago agreed to consider assigning one of the county's back-up ambulance units to Chapin on a "temporary trial" basis. The test would have been conducted to assess the need for full-time ambulance service in Chapin, which currently is served by a unit stationed 16 miles away at Irmo.

Meanwhile, county administrators learned of the availability of \$5 million in state health care extension funds for the current fiscal year. The officials decided to go after some of the state money to help provide a more permanent solution to the ambulance service problem in the Chapin area.

The funding would be used to purchase, equip and operate an ambulance for 15 months.

The application covers two periods, one of them consisting of the rest of the fiscal year from April 1-June 30. The remaining portion of the funding period covers fiscal 1975-76, and its future depends on a further state appropriation for the program.

THE COUNTY is seeking \$42,071 during the initial period to provide personnel and

operating money plus capital funding for an ambulance and additional medical equipment.

Another \$50,905 is being sought for fiscal year 1975-76 for personnel and operating costs.

The county would provide administrative and dispatch services for the unit and back-up crews to insure continuous operation. The county also would provide a mobile home to house the substation and radio equipment for the ambul-

ance.

Chris Bickley, deputy county manager, said the state funds are intended to provide for extension of health care services to "under-served rural areas and urban poverty areas."

Bickley said the Chapin area fits both descriptions in that it is one of the poorer areas of the county and also relatively under-served be-

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Ambulance

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cause of its isolation from other areas of the county.

IN THE EVENT the state funding for a permanent service does not materialize, officials plan to fall back on their original proposal for temporary service via a back-up unit.

Bickley said council, which was prepared to act this week on the temporary service, probably will be asked to authorize implementation of that alternative in the event the state funding for April through June is not approved.

Under either plan, Bickley said, Lexington officials propose to serve parts of Rich-

land County.

The Dutch Fork area is essentially as far removed from central Richland County services as is the Lexington area from its county ambulance crews.

He said the addition of the Richland area to the substation's service area would help provide the population base needed to support and justify the service.

Bickley said the plan is under discussion by Lexington officials and Richland's ambulance service commission.

"If we can work out something, we can provide better service than they are giving from downtown Columbia or we are getting from Irmo," he said.