

# St. Petersburg council votes to sign EMS contract

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ST. PETERSBURG — City Council members unanimously agreed Thursday to a three-year deal over the funding of emergency medical services.

The deal won't become binding until approved by the Pinellas County Commission, which will likely happen later this month.

The agreement halts, at least temporarily, a long-standing battle between St. Petersburg and the county over the amount Pinellas pays the city for first-response EMS service. Negotiations have been so strained that, since 2009, the two could agree only on one-year contracts while they tried to resolve larger issues. Mayor Rick Kriseman said the main reason the two were now able to hammer out a three-year agreement was a new spirit of collaboration from the county that has set in since the departure this spring of County Administrator Bob LaSala.

"I was very pleased," Kriseman said. "All of us had to work together to get this to happen."

Under the agreement, St. Petersburg will receive about \$11.8 million to provide first-response EMS service in the 2014-15 fiscal year. That's about \$708,988, or about 5.7 percent, less than the \$12.5 million the city is getting this year. The city is projected for an increase of about \$997,460 — about an 8.4 percent hike — for the 2015-16 fiscal year; and a second increase of about \$784,300 — or about 6.1 percent — for 2016-17.

The contract contains a clause that would allow St. Petersburg to ask for more money the last two years should those projections not prove enough to cover the costs of providing service.

St. Petersburg also receives about \$603,350 each year for providing EMS service to the unincorporated east High Point area. That funding would remain static. The contract has two one-year renewals after the initial three years.

*Anne Lindberg can be reached at [alindberg@tampabay.com](mailto:alindberg@tampabay.com) or (727) 893-8450. Follow @alindbergtimes on Twitter.*

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