

TRI-TOWN EMS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Wednesday, November 8, 2017
Pembroke Town Hall
311 Pembroke Street
Pembroke, New Hampshire 03275

The meeting of the Tri-Town Board of Directors was called to order by Chair Mulholland at 3:30 p.m.

Present on the Board: Harold Paulsen, Mike O'Meara, Bob Bourque, Shawn Murray, Shaun Mulholland

Excused: Dave Jodoin and Hearshell VanLuven

Present on the Staff: Chris Gamache, Director; Stephanie Locke, Assistant Director

Approve minutes of previous meeting

There were no minutes to be approved.

Approve expenditures

There were no expenditures to be approved.

Approve purchase orders

There were no purchase orders to be approved.

Chair Mulholland stated that health insurance costs came in lower than anticipated, which is good news; however, workman's comp is up.

Review proposed policy changes

EMS Licensing and Training Reimbursement

Mr. Gamache stated that this item was tabled last month and has been rewritten. He is submitting it now, and it is significantly different. Reimbursement funds would be allocated in the budget each year, employees would apply for the funds, and the Board would divide the money as they see fit. This would only be for EMS licensing courses as required by New Hampshire EMS and/or the National Registry. The length of service requirement would have to be met, and funds would not be paid out if the employee leaves prior to being reimbursed. One other stipulation is that the Director can request that money not be paid. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Jodoin expressed two concerns to Mr. Gamache. Under Section 2a, he would like employees to be eligible to apply for course reimbursement after one year of service, not six months, with the Board having authority to shorten the time. He would like to add verbiage stating that reimbursement should be tied to grade, per Pembroke's policy. Mr. Gamache said that Tri-Town's

policy no longer reflects that of Pembroke. It is doubtful that reimbursement would be paying for the course in its entirety. He would like to keep it simple.

Mr. O'Meara said he likes the change Mr. Jodoin suggested for Section 2a.

Mr. Bourque said he also likes the change.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted unanimously to approve the EMS Licensing and Training reimbursement policy, with an amendment to require one year of employment prior to being eligible to apply for reimbursement, with the Board reserving the authority to shorten the time.

Promotion to Paramedic (3.26)

Mr. Gamache explained the background for this policy proposal. Tri-Town wants to avoid promoting or hiring someone as a paramedic, only to discover that the employee is not capable of doing the job because of a lack of skills and/or experience. The need for paramedics is not as high as it was a couple of years ago, and they are able to be more stringent regarding who they bring on at the paramedic level. The policy states that paramedics with less than two years of experience with Tri-Town or another service, will be at the A-EMT level until demonstrating proficiency through Tri-Town's process, including ride time and testing. Tri-Town will work with them until they are proficient. Mr. Gamache stated that they have history with this.

Mr. Paulsen asked if they could use their skills if called upon.

Mr. Gamache responded that they could not. He said this is a safety net, and they are already doing this with one individual and this policy is supported by New Hampshire EMS and the National Registry. It is not uncommon. As opposed to placing someone at the paramedic level and later having to let them go, they can be useful at the A-EMT level while gaining experience under the supervision of a paramedic. If a paramedic comes to Tri-Town from a service with high volume and is well-recommended by the former employer, an exception could be made.

Mr. Paulsen asked if paramedics coming to Tri-Town with more than two years of experience have a probationary period.

Mr. Gamache said that they must complete 40 hours of ride time for orientation.

Chair Mulholland asked if this policy might make Tri-Town less competitive. Newly licensed paramedics would accept positions where they would immediately be at the paramedic level.

Mr. Gamache said he did not think it would cause a problem. Tri-town now has six paramedics to fill out the primary side of the truck easily. And, their primary responsibility is to protect and care for the patients.

Chair Mulholland asked about the cost of obtaining a paramedic license. Mr. Gamache said that it is at least \$10,000.

Chair Mulholland expressed concern that after spending that amount of money to get a license, an applicant might not be willing to wait two years to be paid at the paramedic level.

Mr. Gamache explained that it is not two-years at the A-EMT level; the employee would be promoted as soon as orientation is completed and competency is assured.

Mr. O'Meara said that it could take as little as one month, then.

Mr. Gamache agreed. He said the purpose is to avoid setting someone up for failure and to provide patients with the safest care possible.

Chair Mulholland asked if this is actually a field training issue. He said that he was trying to find a compelling reason to pay a different rate if an employee has obtained the license.

Mr. Gamache said that they want to avoid setting people up to wash the out when they can be used in another role. He said this has happened three times in the last couple of years.

Chair Mulholland said that there is a probationary period with the police and fire departments. New hires are not on their own until those in charge are satisfied that they can do the job, but they are not paid at a different rate.

Mr. Gamache said Tri-Town is not set up that way, but could be. It is not a good use of money.

Mr. Murray said he understands the concerns of Mr. Gamache. In the past, EMTs had to work a certain amount of time before they could take a paramedical course. This is no longer required, so there are highly inexperienced people passing the paramedic course. He said he agrees with Mr. Mulholland that they should be paid at the paramedic level, because of recruitment and retention issues.

Mr. Bourque asked about the pay differential between A-EMTs and paramedics.

Mr. Gamache said that it is about four dollars.

Mr. Bourque said they could give one half of that difference to the new paramedics until satisfied of their competence, then give them the other half.

Mr. Gamache said that it is not just about pay. This policy would allow them to say that a paramedic is not ready to function at that level. The policy says that the service can assign a new paramedic at the A-EMT level, with pay based on the number of years as an EMT.

Mr. Bourque noted that these people have paid to get a paramedic license.

Mr. Paulson said that as long as they have an employee on probation and the ability to terminate, he is not concerned. He asked if A-EMT's who get their paramedic license go through another probationary period.

Mr. Gamache said that they did. He added that the A side of the truck is where they see most of the overtime.

Mr. O'Meara asked if they might see discontent if two employees are getting the same level of pay when one is able to function as a paramedic and the other is not.

Mr. Gamache said that this is not intended to be punitive. He said that 90% of their concern is about the evaluation policy; the pay is a minor factor.

Mr. O'Meara said he is okay with the policy as long as the personnel issues are not a problem.

Mr. Gamache said that they do want to attract employees. All paramedics start at step one. He said they could adjust the scale, moving everyone down one step and making step one the probationary period.

Chair Mulholland said that Mr. Gamache has drafted this policy and made reasonable arguments for it. He said that he has expressed his concerns, and now Mr. Gamache should decide what the policy says.

Mr. Gamache said that he would like it to be approved as is because they won't lose anybody.

On motion of Mr. O'Meara, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the Promotion to Paramedic policy as written.

Accepted Certifications (3.27)

Mr. Gamache said that this policy makes AHA criteria the only one accepted for CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation), ACLS (Advanced Cardiac Life Support), and PALS (Pediatric Advanced Life Support). The AHA does all of the research and has the most current guidelines. Tri-Town's protocol is based on their recommendations. They are the strictest and have the most requirements. There are others, but this is the best. Also, if an employee's credentials expire, they cannot practice.

On motion of Mr. Murray, duly seconded by Mr. Bourque, it was voted to approve this Accepted Certifications policy. Mr. Paulsen voted in opposition.

Review proposed 2018 Fee Schedule

Chair Mulholland said that this is a first look at the fee schedule. A public hearing will be scheduled and notification will be published in the newspaper.

Mr. Gamache said that the fee schedule was last changed in 2016. At that time, Tri-town was in the 50th percentile of New Hampshire services. They anticipate 800 transports in 2018 at a cost of \$1,107 for each. They are currently seeing payments averaging \$495-\$510 per transport. Under the proposed fee schedule for 2018, the BLS rate would go from \$750 to \$800. The ALS1 rate would go from \$1,000 to \$1,250. The ALS2 rate would go from \$1,250 to \$1,750. Over 80% of Tri-Town's calls are at the ALS1 level; only 5% to 10% are in the ALS2 category. This fee schedule puts Tri-Town in the 75th percentile in New Hampshire, and in line with other full time (24/7) services.

Mr. Paulsen asked about Medicare and Medicaid.

Mr. Gamache said that this has nothing to do with Medicare, Medicaid, the VA, Martin's Point, Tri-Care, or any other government payers. This is about private payers. Medicare patients who are residents of Allenstown and Pembroke are billed for their 20% portion of the Medicare amount. Under this proposed schedule, their account would not be sent to collections if they are unable to pay. They would receive three bills from ComStar and then they would be written off. The largest group, the self-pay group, has a 6% to 7% collection rate. This schedule proposes billing them at the Medicare allowable amount, under the assumption that they will be more willing to pay a smaller bill.

Chair Mulholland asked about a scenario such as the one which exists with Allenstown employees. The insurance company has a \$3,000 deductible, with the employee paying the first \$500 and the Town paying the rest of the deductible via a third party, Benefit Strategies. These deductible payments go directly to the bank accounts of the Allenstown employees. He said that the insurance company would deny the claim because of the deductible not being met. It is incumbent upon the employee to send the payment received from the third party to Tri-Town. He asked Mr. Gamache if Tri-Town can track these accurately. That is, if the employee doesn't turn over that third-party payment to Tri-Town, could the amount be written off.

Mr. Gamache assured him that they can differentiate.

Chair Mulholland noted that deductible amounts are going up.

Mr. Gamache next talked about non-ambulance charges. This section has been simplified so that there are only two categories, with a base amount and an allowance for possible overtime. Record requests (PCRs) are \$15, per the NHRSA. CPR courses are free to residents and employees of Allenstown and Pembroke. Fees for EMR refresher courses for EMT and A-EMT are listed.

Chair Mulholland said that he will schedule a public hearing and prepare the notice for the newspaper.

Director's Report

Mr. Gamache said that October was the second busiest month in Tri-Town history. They did 126 runs, with 120 handled by Tri-Town and six by mutual aid. They provided mutual aid for nine runs. There were 91 transports, when 50 or 60 would be the norm. They didn't see many chronic users of the

service; there were a few opiate overdoses. Mostly, there was simply a lot of sickness. Pembroke had 65 calls and Allenstown had 52.

Mr. Gamache reported on LP15. They contacted Physio-Control. The tablets and modem were updated; there was a connection issue and the hospitals couldn't read the data in Tri-Town's PCR files. The account was set up with the Physio-Control cloud and the system is working well.

Mr. Gamache said he attended a meeting in October of the substance abuse continuous care group of which he is a member. The group believes that early identification of people who are at high risk of addiction is important. Also, they recognize a gap between recognition and lining up the patient with resources.

Mr. Gamache said that they are working on two applications – one paramedic and one EMT.

Mr. Gamache reported that the front- end alignment for #8 has been done. He contacted PL and they confirmed that an alignment was done before delivery; however, they recommend a second alignment be done after items have been added. He asked about some sort of reimbursement, but the answer was no. He said that ambulance A has 16,700 miles on it.

Mr. Gamache stated that Tri-Town provided the Pembroke Fire Department with training on tourniquet and wound care. This is done on a two-year cycle; the department was appreciative.

Mr. Gamache reported that a CPR class was conducted on October 14th. Eleven people were certified; ten were residents or employees of Pembroke and Allenstown. The members of the crew are finishing up their Primex training.

Mr. Gamache said that he would like to express thanks to Dr. David Hirsch for his good work and support. He is stepping down as medical director and Dr. Nathan LaRochelle is his replacement.

Mr. Gamache reminded the Board that last month he told them about two possible code saves. One was on August 17th and the other on September 25th. Both patients have been discharged neurologically intact after cardiac arrest. This brings the total code saves this year to three; there were none in previous years.

Chair Mulholland offered words of praise for this achievement, noting that this saves substantial amounts of money in the health care system and improves quality of life.

Mr. Gamache also commended Assistant Director Stephanie Locke and EMT Kyle Haas for their work on October 11th in a life-threatening heart attack situation. They notified the hospital early and provided excellent medical assistance en route to the hospital, the result being a 'door to balloon' time of 43 minutes; 90 minutes is the target time. The patient was discharged three days later.

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to adjourn at 4:32 p.m.



SHAUN MULHOLLAND, CHAIRMAN

Harold Paulsen