

TOWNS OF ALLENSTOWN AND PEMBROKE  
Tri-Town EMS Board of Directors  
311 Pembroke Street  
Minutes of Regular Meeting  
Pembroke, New Hampshire 03275  
May 10, 2017

**Call to Order**

The Tri-Town EMS Board of Directors Meeting for May 10, 2017, was called to order by the Chair at 3:30 p.m.

**Roll Call**

Present on the Board: Harold Paulsen, Michael O'Meara, David Jodoin and Shaun Mulholland

**Others Present**

Tri-Town Staff: Stephanie Locke, Assistant Director

**Approve minutes of previous meeting(s).**

On motion of Mr. O'Meara, duly seconded by Mr. Jodoin, it was voted to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2017, meeting.

**Approve expenditures**

Mr. Jodoin stated here are the expenditures. The invoices are in the front if anyone wants to see them. These went around and have already been signed off on; we did an electronic manifest. He said that another electronic manifest would be going out to everyone on Friday and the Treasurer would be in on Tuesday morning.

On motion of Mr. O'Meara, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the payroll manifest of April 27, 2017.

On motion of Mr. Paulsen, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to approve the payroll manifest of May 11, 2017.

**Approve purchase orders**

There were no purchase orders to be approved.

## **Discuss ComStar revenue report**

Mr. Jodoin reported the charges for April as follows: \$22,000 for Allenstown; \$29,000 for Pembroke; and \$2,400 for others. The total was over \$54,000. April revenue totaled \$28,000 and write-offs were \$20,000. The uncollected balance was \$440,000, with Allenstown at \$209,000; Pembroke at \$197,000; and others at \$33,000.

Ms. Locke presented a balance write-off list totaling \$17,526.54, consisting of Medicaid accounts and accounts of patients deceased with no estate. All have been verified by the normal process. Medicaid accounts can only be billed for the contract amount.

On motion of Mr. Jodoin, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to approve the write-off list.

## **Director's report**

Ms. Locke reported that reaction time was up over one minute due to one event which skewed the average. The lights were not tripping so the pager was not activated for one provider. Also, one new employee had turned off his pager, resulting in a response time of almost seven minutes for that event. This new employee now has his pager on at all times and the situation with the lights has been corrected. They are back to their normal response time.

Mr. Paulsen commented that several people have been leaving pagers in the dayroom.

Ms. Locke responded that they should be wearing them.

Ms. Locke reported that they have received over 50 patient responses. The satisfaction ratings and comments have all been positive. The Vial of Life project is going well; forms have been restocked at the various locations and people have been coming in for help in completing them. The interaction with the public is very positive and exciting. She said that the portable radios are fully programmed and the repeater is now working in the ambulance. The portables are responding to the repeater, so reception in the different areas of town is better. The ambulance has had a bit of work done on its components. The fridge was overheating; troubleshoot it was not successful. PL Custom has taken it out and is looking at it. A new one will be purchased if it can't be fixed. The locking mechanism for the medication and fluids drawer is not locking properly, so it is being kept open for now. A new lock is being sent. They have worked on and dealt with some very minor clinical concerns, and trainings are ongoing.

Ms. Locke continued, reporting that in June they will be at the EMS Ground Rounds Training at the Fire Academy. One of Tri-Town's cases is one of the four capitol area cases that have been selected as topics for discussion so Tri-Town will be presenting.

Chair Mulholland asked Ms. Locke if they would be attending the after action review of the recovery exercise on May 17, 2017. It is going to be at Homeland Security, not the Fire Academy, from 1:00 to

3:00 pm. He also asked Ms. Locke to remind Mr. Gamache about his self-assessment for his personnel evaluation and about his budget.

Mr. Paulsen said we don't do ours until September.

Mr. Jodoin asked Mr. Mulholland if he had discussed the overtime issue.

Chair Mulholland responded that he had spoken with the Director. They have been short-handed because of staffing positions which need to be filled. They want to be sure to have a paramedic on staff.

Mr. Jodoin asked if they could you get per diem employees.

Ms. Locke said that she and Mr. Gamache have filled the open spots.

Mr. Jodoin said that it is not fair to you or your family to be working so much overtime – 58 hours in a week. There are also quality of care and competency issues.

Ms. Locke stated that she isn't working overtime only as a responder but is working on the hiring process as well. The staff shortage is why Mr. Gamache asked for a special meeting to get the new employees approved.

Mr. Paulsen observed that it is a lofty call to keep at the paramedic level all of the time. There is no written rule, so they can drop to the service level.

Ms. Locke stated that it is important to have paramedics available.

Mr. Jodoin stated that overtime was high even in January and repeated his concerns about family, care and competency, especially because of liability issues with patient care. He said that this type of overtime is not like him working extra hours to balance accounts.

Ms. Locke said that a lot of her time has been spent running the hiring process. She was coming in on her day off to run the hiring process. The new full-timers are up and running. They are now fully staffed. The new employees have settled in nicely and are doing a good job.

Mr. O'Meara stated that overtime is one issue. He is concerned about workers comp overruns. At one-third of the way through the year, they are already over budget.

Mr. Jodoin stated that those are lump sums that are paid all at once.

Mr. O'Meara noted that the bottom line budget is almost 45% spent as of the end of April.

Mr. Paulsen said that is driven by large annual lease payments.

Mr. O'Meara asked if this would settle out.

Chair Mulholland responded that budget performance is ahead versus last year.

Mr. Jodoin referred to the budget process, saying he is concerned about the seventh person on the Board being a Tri-Town employee. When this individual was added to the Board, they were not going to have anything to do with personnel or finances or payroll because they would have a stake in the matter because it involved their compensation. Who wouldn't vote 'yes' for a pay increase! If six members can't agree on a budget which includes payroll, that doesn't send a good message to either town. The group should go into the meeting with an agreement regarding pay and benefits. He said that last year he and Jeff voted 'no' for the budget. He said that he is seeing five and six percent pay increases for Tri-Town, when nobody in Allentown or Pembroke is getting that.

Chair Mulholland said that they were. Allentown is doing the same thing, trying to catch people up. 2018 is the last year for doing that.

Mr. Jodoin said that they are caught up now. Our wage scale is X and it stops. It only changes if COLA changes. People have been here four years and are making as much money as those who have maxed out, like police officers and fire fighters. It doesn't set up a good method.

Mr. Mulholland stated actually, we have not caught up on all of them. For the years of service they have, not all of them are where they should be.

Mr. Jodoin said I am just saying that some are disturbingly close to current employees who have worked for the Town for many years. If six of us can't agree without the Tri-Town representation, it's not a good process.

Mr. Paulsen said that he is the only person who has been here since the beginning. They never intended to have an employee on the Board, but there was a huge outcry from the old volunteers to have an employee on the Board. It was done in this room. If the vote is 3-3, they should work it out; there should be no adversarial vote. Anything that affects personnel, Tri-Town employees shouldn't be involved in the discussion or the voting. It has been done a couple of times and I think it's wrong.

Chair Mulholland said that there are legal issues. The Attorney General's office will not allow six members.

Mr. Paulsen said that the legal issue is for dissolution purposes; that's where the seventh member comes in.

Chair Mulholland stated I disagree. To pass a budget, you need an odd number of people. The seventh member should not vote on personnel issues, but for a budget vote, you need seven.

Mr. Paulsen responded that the budget includes personnel because there is pay in there.

Chair Mulholland said that the decision about who gets paid what doesn't get made by a Tri-Town EMS member. They just approve a budget with a salary line. The AG is not going to allow you to do it. You can fill the seventh position with someone else.

Mr. Paulsen said we had legal representation at the time and it was six.

Mr. Mulholland said we can send it up there and see what you get back for a response.

Mr. Jodoin said I think we are losing track here. It doesn't matter if there are seven members. The Tri-Town employee is there to represent Tri-Town. They can vote on operating expenses, but when there is a payroll item...last year's discussion came down to what to give for COLA. Pembroke was not getting anything but Allenstown was. The vote was 4-2. To be honest, Bob kind of messed up. He didn't want to vote for it. The Tri-Town member voted for it.

Chair Mulholland asked if the vote had been 3-3, where would you be?

Mr. Jodoin said if six people can't come to a decision regarding pay and benefits, we are not sending a good message. Your Board could change over there (Allenstown) or my Board could change. It will change, probably drastically, in a year or two. Is the service going to live and be viable or, like Hooksett, are we going to do our own thing and have full-time, 24/7 firefighters? That's where I don't want to see it going. Six members should be able to go into it saying, 'this is what we are going to pay and these are the benefits'. They are our employees; they should be on the Pembroke benefits plan.

Chair Mulholland stated I disagree. We are the governing body. We set the salary. I don't agree with how you do business. COLA is something based on the economy. People need to buy groceries and salaries need to keep up. I will never agree to some artificial number. Mike and Dana can vote as they choose. Are you telling me your selectmen always agree on the budget? That's a fairy tale world. It's not realistic, where everybody agrees all of the time. It's why we have an odd number. We have been fortunate here for the most part. We get along quite well. We get business done. It is why there is an odd number on many boards.

Mr. Jodoin said our selectmen have voted unanimously for the town budget for nine years.

Chair Mulholland said you are fortunate if you have that. It doesn't happen in most other places.

Mr. Jodoin said our selectmen look at the Tri-Town budget and their employees getting COLA increases and the Pembroke employees are not getting anything. They are not happy and if they could change it, they probably would. A different board could say that they are done. 'Give them their one-year notice and we are going to do something else.

Mr. Mulholland said if whatever we are paying extra on COLA you can save that money by running an ambulance service, you should consider doing that. I suggest you probably can't. We think Allentown and Pembroke together is the most cost effective way. We are not automatons. We are here to make decisions in the best interest of our respective towns. I will continue to do that. I can't say I will always agree with your course of action.

Mr. Jodoin said they are our employees under our health plan and our workers comp. It is a Cadillac health insurance plan. We give them sick leave buyout and a health stipend. Like the sewer department, they are getting the best of both worlds. They mix and match to take the best. Morale is bad with our police officers and firefighters. The fuse will be lit and it will blow up.

Chair Mulholland said the people in Allentown could say the same thing. The point is, how far do you want to take this? It is up to this Board to make the decision. We have to be with one town or the other.

Mr. Jodoin said put them in Allentown employees. It would be easier on my end. They are going to have higher copayments on your health insurance. It's a balancing situation: higher copays and higher COLA's. Pembroke gives an extremely generous benefit plan. Taxpayers on fixed incomes can't give five percent COLA's. It will put people out of their homes.

Chair Mulholland responded we are not putting people out of their homes. We have reduced the amount taxpayers pay for the past two years.

Mr. Jodoin said the tax rate is increasing. Yours is one of the highest and ours is not far behind. Boards are going to change. People are going to be really upset. If you want to take them, go ahead. I won't have to be the large employer under the Affordable Care Act.

Chair Mulholland said that decision was made by the two Boards.

Mr. Jodoin said make them Allentown employees and when it comes to the budget, I'll vote no again. I'll lose, but...

Mr. Paulsen said it should be all or nothing, all Pembroke practices – wages and benefits - not pieces. I agree with Mr. Jodoin; we can let it go to Allentown.

Chair Mulholland said for the next agenda, we can explore that. You can go down that road. You can propose that if it's in your best interest.

Mr. Paulsen said it's just changing the name of the town.

Chair Mulholland responded it's a lot more than that. It's a major undertaking.

Mr. Jodoin said we would have to redo all of the paperwork.

Mr. Paulsen said I understand that.

Chair Mulholland said we would probably lose a lot of revenue over the next nine months while changing that number again. We've already been through that twice.

Mr. Jodoin said it's Town of Pembroke DBA Tri-Town EMS. It would be Town of Allenstown DBA as Tri-Town EMS.

Mr. Paulsen said I think we could do that. I don't think it's as complicated as we are trying to make it.

Chair Mulholland said the taxpayer ID number will change. It would be a different entity collecting the money. We are not interested in changing it. It sounds like Pembroke is unhappy. Allenstown is not unhappy. While you are thinking about that, I suggest we have a very high quality of service compared to before. It's a risky business, unraveling that.

Mr. Paulsen said I don't think we are talking about unraveling it. You are making assumptions that are way out of line.

Chair Mulholland said that's fine. Go ahead and do what you think is best. We'll see what happens. If you think it's a small risk, don't worry about it.

Mr. Paulsen said you've worked this thing into going our separate ways. We are very happy.

Chair Mulholland said that's not what I'm hearing.

Mr. Paulsen said Mr. Jodoin is talking about 5-10-20 years down the road. There is a lot of danger from many angles. It has nothing to do with ambulance service. It's economics and budgets.

Chair Mulholland said yes. Who knows what insurance is going to cover. The latest plan that passed the House would not require states to have ambulance coverage for insurance companies. That would have a major impact on us. The question is: 'Is it more cost effective to run your own ambulance service or to do it jointly?'

Mr. Paulsen said if we increase budgets in either fire department, if I had full time people who had to take it on, it's going to be more cost effective for Pembroke to take on the ambulance service. The same would be true for Allenstown. You would be forced to take over to get some revenue stream to offset that.

Chair Mulholland said the problem is that the revenue stream won't be coming in. It would be taxpayer dollars because insurance companies aren't going to pay. For Allentown to have that many people on 24/7 would be awfully expensive.

Mr. Paulsen said the trouble is that the model around here is that smaller towns than us are going that way as we drive volunteers out. There are problems with fire departments answering calls.

Chair Mulholland asked is each little town going to be able to staff that kind of fire department? Does it need regionalization?

Mr. Paulsen responded it does need regionalization, but no one wants to talk about it.

Chair Mulholland said that's what we have right now with this service. Without doing all of the math, it's clear to me that it's not going to be cost effective for either of us, and it's not in the best interest of the taxpayers to each have our own service. If that's what you want to put on the agenda for the next meeting, let me know.

Mr. Jodoin responded I will.

Mr. O'Meara said Mr. Jodoin's concern is that Town of Pembroke employees are saying that the Tri-Town service is being treated differently. That is a fair point, but at the same time, the select boards of each town agreed to where we are today. They put this entity together. I think trying to unravel that is not in the best interest of the service or the citizens of both towns. I am trying to be as dispassionate as possible, being a former EMT volunteer myself. I hate to think the budget process could be a concern of the other employees on the Pembroke side. That's where it's coming from, I think. I don't know if there are issues from the Allentown side.

Chair Mulholland said I've never heard any complaints or concerns.

Mr. O'Meara said I hate to see that as a driver to take this service backwards. This is a decent regionalized service which doesn't exist in too many places. I hate to see disquiet amongst groups of employees in either town. Perhaps we can address that in some way. Maybe the selectmen have to talk about it. I hate to see it unravel the good work that has been done.

Mr. Jodoin said money is the root of all evil. How do you deal with employees who get nothing when others are getting something?

Mr. Mulholland said we have that right now in Allentown. Half of our employees are getting raises this year; the other half are not. I am one of those who is not. We had a wage study done and we are making adjustments. Half of our employees are making what they should; half are not. We are trying to catch up because we are losing police officers. For years, the police officers were getting significant



raises and other employees were not getting anything. We were losing them. The economy drives that issue.

Mr. Jodoin said when people don't get what they expect, we start dealing with unions. There were disgruntled employees at the beginning of the pay increases when this was posted on the agenda in April. 'How come they are getting raises and we're not?' That has since changed but again, money is the root of all evil. 'If they are our Pembroke employees, why are they getting better plans?' I hear it all of the time with the sewer department. That's all I'm saying. I'm not saying to disrupt the service. They are our employees, and they are getting a very generous benefit plan from Pembroke. There has to be some way to neutralize the pay increases and COLA increases. When you look at the pool of numbers that we have and what we are going to dole out for wages and benefits, you can't give somebody a five percent pay increase and a two percent COLA, the Town is going to eat four to seven percent on the health insurance. People need to look at the benefits package that is going with it. Someone making \$50,000 who is on the family medical plan is actually at \$80,000 to \$90,000. I'll lose, but I'll have my say.

Chair Mulholland said I can say the same thing. It's not fair that your employees get better health care than mine do.

Mr. Jodoin said since they are getting a pay increase via COLA, maybe there should be some sort of negotiation. If they are getting a COLA increase or a huge step increase, maybe they don't pay 85/15; maybe they pay 20% out of benefits. That would help your employees who aren't getting that type of benefit. Don't forget that they are getting health reimbursement or a sick leave buyout. I don't know what your employees are getting for vacation and personal time. Ours get two personal days and vacation as soon as they step in the door.

Chair Mulholland asked Mr. Jodoin if he wanted to negotiate with them.

Mr. Jodoin responded no, but when we are going through the budget, that's something we should be looking at. If they get a one percent COLA increase, maybe they have to pay more for health insurance.

Chair Mulholland said when we do a budget, that's part of the discussion we have. This is what this Board has agreed to.

Mr. Jodoin said we still have no idea what our plan is going to be. Our medical plan is done in December. That's gone and the sewer plan is gone. They are not offering it anymore. There are going to be changes, and we have no idea what those are going to be.

Chair Mulholland said your sewer commission determines what their plan is going to be.

Mr. Jodoin said their plan is gone too. They still pay 85/15 down there. Their plan is cheaper because there are less people. With more exposure and more use, it goes up. They are on a different plan and the premiums are less than ours.

Chair Mulholland said ours is 80/20. We have higher copays and all of that.

Mr. Jodoin said if you don't use sick time, you get paid 48 hours of sick time, and you get paid \$2,200 per year if you don't take health insurance. There is going to be a lot more appeasement. If we do that internally here when finalizing the budget, it is better for all employees.

Mr. O'Meara asked Mr. Jodoin if he wanted that to be part of the budget process.

Chair Mulholland said when we get a budget from the Director, we can take a look at that. The Board will vote. If we don't want the Tri-Town member to vote, we will have to change the intermunicipal agreement. The AG's office will have to approve that. I suggest that might be a problem; they will want us to have an odd number. It is great that we have gotten along quite well over the past four years.

Mr. Paulsen said that's why we structured the Board this way. If we can't all pretty much agree in its entirety, it won't work anyway.

Chair Mulholland said I'm not sure we are always going to get everyone to agree.

Mr. Paulsen said we are not going to get 6-0. Going into this we knew we had to all think pretty much alike for it to work, and it has. It's a good model.

Chair Mulholland said I think so.

Mr. Paulsen said no one has supported this more than I have. Stephanie can tell you that. I told her that jobs are what we are concerned about. I promised her and we've honored that promise. When you were talking about police salaries, I was not laughing at your comments. It's that we are hearing in Pembroke that we have to raise police salaries because Allenstown is higher.

Mr. Jodoin said Allenstown is \$2 to \$3 higher. We increased our people \$2 because we didn't have \$3 in the budget. We told them we would see where we are at the end of the year.

Chair Mulholland said you are low. It goes back to the market. We have to pay what the market demands because we are in competition with every other town. If you're not paying, you're not going to have the coverage.

Mr. Jodoin said loyalty isn't there anymore; they go where the dollars are.

Chair Mulholland said I call it the salary race for police officers. The available pool is so small. Ours are looking at another jump.

Mr. Paulsen said we are going to see regionalization on that.

Chair Mulholland said I wrote a white paper on that.

Mr. Jodoin said we had a regional meeting on that.

Mr. Paulsen said we can digress to that. I'm a firm believer. Why should we have two police departments or fire departments within a half mile of each other, and two ladder trucks?

Chair Mulholland said that's millions of dollars of taxpayer money inefficiently spent.

Mr. Jodoin asked Mr. Paulsen if he really wanted to go back to the 60's and 70's again.

Mr. Paulsen responded no.

Chair Mulholland said this is an example of where we were able to make it happen. I'm committed to this organization. This is an excellent model. This is a shining example of us being able to work together. It is very efficient and provides high quality service to people, which is our ultimate goal. I get scared at even the thought of shaking that up.

Mr. Jodoin said if we start getting housing developments, especially elderly housing, that will drive the service more. Hooksett grew and it was financially feasible to have two stations. They had all of the money in impact fees. They paid for the ambulances with cash. They already had 24-7 coverage at both stations. Whatever they would get as revenue would just offset their costs; they already had the people there. This could happen in Pembroke or Allenstown.

Chair Mulholland said that is not going to happen any time in the near future in Allenstown.

Mr. Paulsen said fire chiefs all over the country are scrambling to find revenue to pay existing expenses that are history driven.

Chair Mulholland said mine wants that and he isn't going to get it. He wants to expand the empire and we can't afford it. This is what we can afford to do. We get the best benefit at the lowest cost the way we are doing it now. Until someone shows me a model otherwise...that's what I told my fire chief. We can't afford full time staffing at the fire department.

Mr. Paulsen said my point was that if you go to full time staffing, there is no economic justification not to take the ambulance service.

Chair Mulholland said unless insurance companies aren't going to be paying.

Mr. Paulsen said they would be paying if you are running an ambulance service, just like Hooksett collects revenue.

Chair Mulholland said the point is that Affordable Care states can opt out of requiring insurance companies to cover ambulance service. We are in deep trouble if that goes through.

Mr. Jodoin asked how you justify ambulance service in any community.

Chair Mulholland responded we need to have the service if someone gets hurt. The taxpayers are going to foot the bill.

Mr. Paulsen asked which RSA says that you have to provide ambulance service.

Chair Mulholland said private ambulance service is dying. Our employees have a \$3,000 deductible. We pay \$2,500 of that with HRA. Insurance kicks in at \$3,000. We pay the employee \$2,500 but the employee may not pay Tri-Town. Look at our collections for people running short; that is the category they are in. That payment rate is very low. We are in deep trouble if that legislation passes. To keep the service running, we will see a major influx of property tax dollars.

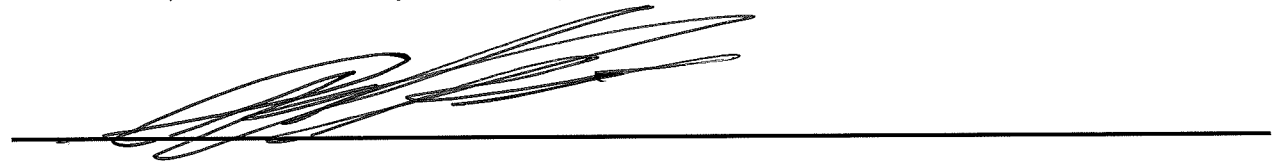
Mr. Jodoin said that's when you say you no longer need full time paramedics. Pick them up and drop them off at the hospital.

Chair Mulholland said that's a decision the people will have to make. Do people want this quality level of service? Where I live, if my loved one needs help, I want someone to show up who knows what they are doing. We will cross that bridge.

Mr. Jodoin said it is not going to be our decision. Each town's board will decide. We are one of the few paramedic services in the area 24/7.

Chair Mulholland said let's say we are only going to hire EMT's. How much are we really going to save?

There being no further business to come before the Board, on motion of Mr. Paulsen, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to adjourn at 4:29 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Mulholland', is written over a horizontal line.

SHAUN MULHOLLAND, Chairman Tri-Town EMS