

TRI-TOWN EMS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Wednesday, August 9, 2017
Pembroke Town Hall
311 Pembroke Street
Pembroke, New Hampshire 03275

The meeting was called to order by Chair Mulholland at 3:30 pm.

Present on the Board: Harold Paulsen, Mike O'Meara, Dave Jodoin, Bob Bourque, Hearshell VanLuven, Shawn Murray (Allenstown Interim Fire Chief) and Shaun Mulholland, Chairman.

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

Approve minutes of previous meeting

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2017, meeting.

Approve expenditures

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to approve the July 31, 2017, Accounts Payable manifest.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to approve the June 22, 2017, payroll manifest.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the July 6, 2017, payroll manifest.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Murray, it was voted to approve the July 20, 2017, payroll manifest.

On motion of Mr. O'Meara, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the August 3, 2017, payroll manifest.

Approval of Purchase Orders

There were no Purchase Orders submitted for approval.

ComStar Revenue Report

Mr. Jodoin stated that the charges for July totaled \$90,000. Of this total, \$46,000 was the amount for Pembroke; \$39,000 was the amount for Allenstown; and \$5,000 was for other communities. Revenue for the month of July totaled \$28,000; write-offs totaled \$34,000; and the uncollectible balance was \$472,000.

Director's Report

Mr. Gamache presented for approval merit step pay increases for four employees. He stated that these employees have met the criteria for satisfactory evaluations. Michael Langeel, a per diem paramedic, from \$19.50 to \$20.53 per hour. Year 1, Grade 13, Step 5; Jonathan Harry, a per diem advanced EMT from \$14.53 to \$14.89 per hour. Year 1, Grade 9, Step 2; John Van ??? a part-time employee, from \$13.73 to \$15.43 per hour. Year 2, Grade 8, Step 5; Jasmine Croteau, a per diem advanced EMT, from \$14.53 to \$14.89 per hour. Year 1, Grade 9, Step 2.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Murray, it was voted to approve these pay increases.

Mr. Gamache stated that Tri-Town has a new employee, Joseph Sullivan, a per diem EMT. He was a full-time US Marine and is now in the reserves. He has a national EMT license but not a New Hampshire license because he needs an affiliation for that. His driving record, criminal record and references have been checked. He scored 70% on his exam. His status will be Year 1, Grade 8, Step 1, at a pay rate of \$13.57 per hour. He needs an FBI thumbprint test in order to get his New Hampshire license. Mr. Sullivan plans to enroll in the NH Tech paramedic program using the GI Bill.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. VanLuven, it was voted to approve the hiring of Mr. Sullivan, contingent upon completion of the FBI thumbprint test.

Mr. Gamache reported that June was the busiest month ever, with 126 runs. Of the past seven months, four have been over 100. He projects 1250 runs for the year.

Mr. O'Meara asked about the mix of the runs.

Mr. Gamache said that one person in Pembroke has been using non-transporting services regularly, which will result in a change in the amount that Pembroke will pay. Mutual aid has been a wash. He continued, saying that he has been in contact with the Old Home Day committee and Tri-Town will have a booth with hands-on CPR information and public relations items for children. The long term goal is to be a Heartsafe Community. Tri-Town performed standby detail for two events at Bear Brook: a bike race and a Forest Ranger physical agility test. His staff participated in an active shooter event with Allentown today. Ms. Locke will instruct an Emergency Medical Responder course, running from September through December. She is a licensed EMS instructor for the State. The plan is to offer an Advanced EMT course next year. Also, Will Amos, a paramedic, recently completed CPR training. Tri-Town also worked with the Allentown and Pembroke Police Departments, helping them to be able to carry Narcan. With the prevalence of the Carfentanil opiate, which can be absorbed through the skin, anyone responding to a call is at risk. The police officers will not administer Narcan to patients, only fellow officers.

Chair Mulholland stated that he was impressed with the Active Shooter event today. He said that they are ahead of other communities in the State; Concord is the only other community really embracing it. He congratulated Tri-Town on a job well done.

Review proposed 2018 Budget

Chair Mulholland stated that the Board would complete its review of the 2018 budget and approve it today.

Mr. Gamache stated that what he is presenting is a cleaned up version of his previous submittal. It is up by about \$1,000 due to rounding. Based on a three-year average volume of calls, ending June 2017, Pembroke would be responsible for 56.22% and Allenstown for 43.78%. The increase for Pembroke is mostly due to the one resident who has been using non-transporting services regularly.

Mr. Jodoin questioned Mr. Gamache's calculation.

Mr. Paulsen said that he thought the calculation was supposed to be based on the previous three calendar years.

Chair Mulholland confirmed that Section 6-A of their Inter-Municipal Agreement says that the calculation is to be based on the prior three calendar years. He asked Mr. Gamache and Mr. Jodoin to do the recalculation together so that two people can verify the results.

Mr. Gamache reported the results of the recalculation. Of the \$400,109 total, Allenstown's share is 45.68% or \$187,700, down \$7,969 from last year; Pembroke's share is 54.32% or \$217,339, down \$9,293 from last year. Pembroke's mutual aid calls are included in their tally of calls; Allenstown's are not, so Mr. Gamache adds them to the total.

Mr. Gamache said that Ambulance billing amount has been changed. It reflects 98% of the amount expected for next year, conservatively. This is up \$39,800 from last year's budget. Miscellaneous revenue includes expected income from the Advanced EMT class scheduled for the fall. There are offsetting costs on the Expense side of the budget. If they do not have the minimum number allowing them to break even, they won't run the class. Regarding the Fund balance, Mr. Gamache said this is most likely the last time Tri-Town will budget this way because they are working toward a capital improvement plan. He said that total revenue and expenses are \$837,700, which is \$96,000 less than last year, noting the ambulance payoff included.

Mr. Jodoin stated that they met with CIP last week and went over the process. He said that \$30,000 in the budget this year was deposited into a separate account, which is needed to get to the amount needed in 2020 for a new ambulance. The CIP amount will be increased by \$5,000 each year to reach \$90,000.

Mr. Gamache stated that 20% of the 837,700 total will be moved to the Unspecified Fund balance, with the rest going into the CIP account.

Mr. Paulsen stated that the remainder should be returned to the taxpayers, not put in the CIP account.

Mr. Jodoin responded that the fund balance isn't truly cash in hand; it assumes all bills are paid and all revenues are collected.

Chair Mulholland commented that the future is unknown. One concern is proposed legislation that would eliminate the requirement that insurance companies provide ambulance coverage. This would have a serious negative impact on Tri-Town.

Mr. Jodoin advised spreading expenses as evenly as possible to avoid peaks and valleys – lowering the tax rate and then raising it again.

Mr. Gamache continued with his presentation, discussing the staff schedule and payroll. There are four full-time employees – two administrators and two paramedics. A new schedule is being introduced so

that weekend shifts will be rotated. The result is more overtime and a 42-hour versus a 40-hour work week. He said that this year (2017) they moved staff into their pay grades; for the 2018 budget, they will be working on steps, with not many increases. A one percent COLA is factored in.

Mr. Jodoin said that a fourth employee had been added to reduce overtime, and now overtime is increasing. Our goal was to have more per diem employees to reduce retirements and overtime.

Mr. Gamache said that the new rotation allows employees to plan their own schedules better. Many have two or three jobs. He said that the staff likes the new schedule because they can plan ahead. A full time employee left Tri-Town last year because of the schedule.

Mr. VanLuven said that the new schedule is an extreme improvement.

Mr. Gamache checked with the Retirement Board and the fact that employees will only work 24 hours some weeks is not a problem as long as they average 36 hours.

Mr. Jodoin said that they would receive an exception report and have to respond to it.

Chair Mulholland said that he has spoken with George Lagos, who claims he inherited the law but doesn't agree with it. The exception reports will continue until all of this is straightened out at the Retirement Board.

Mr. Jodoin said that Pembroke employees are only getting a 0.3% increase, versus 1% for Tri-Town. He said that Tri-Town is no longer in the range scale for Pembroke, as they should be, since they are Pembroke employees.

Chair Mulholland asked how long it has been since Pembroke did a wage classification study.

Mr. Jodoin said that it has been about ten years. Pembroke has been tracking with COLA.

Chair Mulholland said we have to decide the appropriate pay for our employees so they can stay with the economy in terms of buying power. The CPI increase is a little more than 2%. If Tri-Town doesn't keep up, its employees become less competitive. A one percent increase is less than half of the CPI increase.

Mr. Gamache said that no one is at the top end of the scale; no one is close to Step 11.

Mr. Murray asked for an explanation of the Call Force.

Mr. Gamache said that it is not operating yet, but they hope to have it up and running soon. Currently, they are staffing only one ambulance, 24/7. There is a second truck but no means of getting it out. The Call Force would enable them to send a second ambulance out if necessary.

Mr. Paulsen asked Mr. Gamache about the additional \$1,000 due to rounding.

Chair Mulholland said that only cents should be rounded, and he will work with Mr. Gamache on this.

Mr. Gamache said that his estimate for Health Insurance costs is the current amount plus 15%.

Chair Mulholland said that they should have that figure by the end of October and they could then make a last minute adjustment, if necessary.

Mr. Gamache said that Dental, Life, and Disability insurance amounts have been adjusted downward, based on actual costs experienced. Social Security is 6.2% of payroll; Medicare is 1.54% and NH Retirement is 11.31%. Uniforms for new employees and replacements for existing employees are budgeted at \$6,500, an increase of \$1,500. Regarding Training and Certification, he said there is a typo; it should read \$49,500. Table 10 is correct but the number on the line is not. Tri-Town EMS employees will pay if they take the paramedic refresher course.

Mr. Paulsen said that he doesn't want his employees taking the course because it would only be for their personal benefit.

Mr. Gamache stated that the tuition reimbursement is for Ms. Locke and himself; both are working toward a BS degree in EMS Management. Regarding accreditation, he said that there are 106 standards listing the best practices. During the accreditation process, Tri-Town would be evaluated and given advice on how to improve the operation. If all standards are met, they would receive accreditation for three years.

Mr. Paulsen said that this was not one of Mr. Gamache's goals when he was hired. He has asked Mr. Gamache for a list of pros and cons regarding accreditation but has not yet received it.

Mr. Gamache responded that the costs consist of bringing the accreditation team to town and paying their expenses. His time and that of Ms. Locke adds no additional expense because they are salaried employees.

Mr. Jodoin asked if they would receive a sticker for the truck. He is concerned that the accreditation team might say a fifth or sixth employee is needed and costs will keep increasing.

Mr. Paulsen said that some fire departments who have Class 1 rating, which is the best, have some of the worst incidents.

Mr. Murray referred to how ISO 900 sets standards for quality of service and how this process certifies that an organization has a systematic best practice approach.

Chair Mulholland said that Allentown does risk assessment which evaluates each department on a four-year cycle at a cost of \$8,500 per year. The Board of Selectmen cannot be experts on the work of all departments, and Allentown has seen a lot of value in this process. It helps establish policies, suggests corrective action – pointing out what is being done well and what needs improvement. It is objective, based on standards used throughout the country.

Mr. Jodoin asked if accreditation is forfeited if Tri-Town doesn't do something they suggest.

Chair Mulholland said that at the end of the day, this Board and the taxpayers will decide what is spent.

Mr. Gamache explained that the accreditation process focuses on how the organization hires, trains, does billing, communicates, handles complaints, interacts with other services and deals with the public. They do not evaluate staffing or dictate which stretcher should be purchased. The evaluators come from all over the country.

Mr. O'Meara said that these groups tell you what you need to run a robust business. Hospitals go through this process all of the time.

Mr. Jodoin questioned the amount of extra time this process might take.

Mr. Gamache said that it is part of the job.

Mr. Murray asked about the tuition reimbursement program.

Mr. Jodoin said that it was reimbursement for courses relating to a full-time employee's job, with reimbursement tied to the grade received.

Mr. Paulsen stated that it is not the intention of the town to pay tuition for employees to get degrees. He asked Ms. Locke why she is working on her degree.

Ms. Locke responded that she is doing it to better herself.

Mr. Paulsen said that he was concerned that employees might just take classes because of the reimbursement.

Mr. Jodoin said that the Legal line (\$15,000) is high.

Mr. Paulsen responded that Mr. Jodoin approved that amount.

Mr. Jodoin referred to the employee appreciation gifts, pointing out that Tri-Town is not in the private sector. He is concerned that this might be reported on Facebook.

Mr. Paulsen said that he does not want lockers in the bedrooms, which are for the fire fighters.

Mr. Jodoin said he is concerned that more money will be needed for the Capital Reserve line.

Mr. Gamache said that the portable ventilator, budgeted at \$13,000, would greatly improve respiratory support for patients.

Ms. Locke explained that the portable STAT lab, budgeted at \$15,500, would provide baseline vital information for the ER. It would guide decisions regarding appropriate treatment for patients. The benefit to patients would be significant. However, Tri-Town would have to affiliate to put this into operation and there is a lot of work to be done, so it might not happen.

Mr. Jodoin asked if the money budgeted for the STAT lab would be spent on something else if the project is not pursued.

Mr. Gamache said that he will manage his budget responsibly.

Mr. Jodoin said that Tri-Town does an excellent job and their service is top notch. He is concerned that they are working too much on training, policies, and accreditation.

Mr. Gamache responded that the largest amount of his time is spent tracking billing, doing data entry. The format of the ComStar reports is PDF and it does not track by patient.

Mr. Murray said that Mr. Gamache should reach out to ComStar and work on an easier way to dump the data.

Chair Mulholland said there should be a better way to get this done. He then suggested adjourning and scheduling another meeting to complete the budget review/approval process. He said that Board members should put in writing their items of concern and bring the list to the next meeting. He cautioned members against emailing their lists because of the Right to Know law.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to adjourn at 5:49 pm.

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

CHAIRMAN SHAUN MULHOLLAND