

TRI-TOWN EMS  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
Wednesday, September 13, 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 and Shaun Mulholland, Chairman.

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

**Approve minutes of previous meeting**

Mr. O'Meara made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2017 meeting. The motion was duly seconded by Mr. Bourque.

Mr. Gamache stated that a few comments attributed to him were actually comments of Mr. Jodoin.

Mr. Jodoin agreed to make those corrections.

Chair Mulholland called for a vote on the motion as amended. The motion carried.

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

**Approve expenditures**

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the accounts payable manifest in the amount of \$3,540.82 dated August 31, 2017.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the payroll manifest dated August 31, 2017.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to approve the accounts payable manifest in the amount of \$3,095.51 dated August 17, 2017.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the payroll manifest dated August 17, 2017.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted to approve the payroll manifest of September 14, 2017.

## **ComStar revenue report**

Mr. Jodoin reported \$75,176 as the billing total for August. Collections totaled \$32,440; write-offs totaled \$33,252.00; and the receivables balance was \$481,000.00. Allenstown's receivables balance was \$222,000; Pembroke's was \$217,000; and the balance of other towns combined was \$41,583.

## **Approve purchase orders**

There were no purchase orders presented for approval.

## **Review proposed 2018 Budget**

Chair Mulholland stated that it is important to approve the budget today because their Inter-municipal Agreement has an October 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for approval of the budget.

Mr. Gamache said that he would present the changes from last month. He removed what was to be funded out of Fund Balance, including the lockers and the iSTAT device. He reduced tuition reimbursement from \$20,000 to \$5,000. If this passes, his plan is to have a policy drafted by next month to guide distribution of that money. He said that he had three things related to the budget itself. One spreadsheet actually shows the impact of COLA. Then there's a table which shows the three-year average for calls, so it is possible to see what it was for any given year. He went back in time and plugged in the numbers from TEMSIS, showing the numbers for Allenstown calls and Pembroke calls each month. Duplicates were filtered out. Mr. Gamache will use this spreadsheet going forward for distribution of calls per town. There will be some shifting in what the towns owe. Next, he said that he corrected his rounding off of dollars so that amounts are only rounded to the nearest dollar. He said that the last page is the actual numbers.

Mr. Paulsen asked for some clarification where the header on one page did not get carried forward.

Mr. Jodoin stated that he got the budget last night and doesn't like getting it at the last minute. He said that Board members were asked at the last meeting to bring their list of budget concerns today with copies for everyone. He said he would like to go back to the original budget and make his proposals.

Lists of budget concerns from Mr. Bourque, Mr. Paulsen and Mr. Jodoin were distributed to members of the Board.

Mr. Jodoin referenced the back page and said that, based on Mr. Gamache's original budget, he was suggesting a reduction of \$60,089 and an increase in Capital Equipment of \$90,000. The new bottom line would be \$867,611.

Chair Mulholland suggested going line by line, getting all input, and then voting on each line.

Mr. Paulsen noted that only the Pembroke people made changes.

Chair Mulholland said that he told Mr. Gamache the items he did not agree with and those cuts were made.

Mr. O'Meara said that he and Chair Mulholland talked and they agreed on the items of concern.

Mr. Bourque asked if that constituted a meeting outside of public session.

Chair Mulholland responded that it was not a meeting because there was not a quorum of the Board members. He asked for discussion on the full time salary line.

Mr. Jodoin made a motion to decrease the full time salary line by \$1,510. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bourque.

Mr. Jodoin explained that he had used a 0.3% increase for the COLA instead of one percent. All of his other cuts are going to reflect the same thing. He said that Pembroke may not be at the top of the pay scale but its benefits surpass what most are getting, including the State of New Hampshire. The health insurance is the best; they make longevity payments; there are sick leave buy-outs; employees are paid if they don't take the health insurance; there is 100% dental coverage; life insurance; and disability. Pembroke has many employees with over ten years of service because of the excellent benefits. He asked why the total had been adjusted from \$215,000 down to \$214,777.

Mr. Gamache responded that it was a rounding correction.

Mr. Bourque said that it is not a good idea to throw a new budget at the Board at the beginning of a meeting. A day or two ahead of time would be better. This throws the process into chaos. He said he doesn't know if the items about which he had concerns still apply anymore because he hasn't seen the new budget yet.

Chair Mulholland said that he doesn't think it makes a lot of difference in this situation. Mr. Jodoin was going to make this cut from one percent to 0.3% anyway. The issue hasn't changed at all. He said that the Board would have to act on this as they have it. He said that the CPI is at 1.9%; Allenstown employees are getting a two percent increase. It is important to ensure that employees are at the same level in the economy, that they maintain buying power so they don't slip behind. A 0.3% increase won't do that because it is not even keeping them constant with the economy; it puts them behind.

Mr. O'Meara said that he agrees with Chair Mulholland and supports a one percent COLA. It doesn't quite keep employees even, but it's closer than 0.3%.

Mr. Murray stated that the EMS field is a competitive one. They must bump up the pay a little to draw people from other places. A one percent increase in this economy is reasonable.

Chair Mulholland called for a vote on the motion to decrease the full time budget line by \$1,510. The motion was defeated, 4-3.

Mr. Paulsen said that Mr. VanLuven should not be voting because this affects his job. It is the same reason he does not vote on employee issues.

Mr. Jodoin said that he agreed. He said that if the Board members can't agree on payroll, that is a real problem. Mr. VanLuven should not be casting the deciding vote. Nothing is guaranteed to anybody just because they are municipal employees.

Mr. Bourque said he agrees that Mr. VanLuven should not be voting.

Mr. Jodoin said that Mr. VanLuven should only be precluded from voting on pay-related items. He said that the vote is going to be 4-3 on everything because all of his cuts are payroll-related.

Chair Mulholland said that Mr. Jodoin should not presuppose how people will vote.

Mr. Jodoin made a motion to cut the per diem salary line by \$1,724, using 0.3% for the COLA instead of one percent. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bourque.

Mr. Gamache said that he is particularly concerned about decreasing the COLA for per diem employees because they only receive hourly compensation. They do not have benefits. Only four of the 25 employees are full time with benefits; he proposed an increase of one percent for those 21 employees.

Mr. Murray asked where Tri-Town sits regionally regarding the pay for per diem employees. He wanted to know if Tri-Town was competitive.

Mr. Gamache responded that they are on the low end of the scale now, while two years ago, they were in the middle range.

Mr. Bourque said that he questioned that because Tri-Town employees had been receiving pay increases for the past two years with the goal of making them more competitive.

Mr. Gamache said hospitals pay more because of the nursing shortage. One large ambulance service recently gave a \$4 per hour raise to its staff.

Mr. Bourque asked if that was a private company.

Mr. Gamache responded that it was.

Mr. O'Meara said that they can't compete with private companies.

Mr. Jodoin said that we can't compete with certain towns either.

Mr. O'Meara questioned why the per diem COLA would be the same as for a full time employee.

Mr. Gamache explained that everybody, regardless of their classification, fits into the same grade and appropriate step. They do not have separate grades; that has never been discussed before.

Mr. Murray asked how often the step increases come along.

Mr. Gamache responded that the early ones are every year or every other year. Step three to step four is two years and after step four is three years. That is their merit step. Then the amount is adjusted by whatever the Board does with COLA.

Mr. Paulsen addressed Mr. Murray, saying that he needs to know that in the last couple of years there have been several percentage raises for all of the steps, so it is not the same pay scale it was two years ago.

Mr. Murray said he has an issue with the COLA raise for the per diems also. They are pretty much consistently moving up the pay scale.

Chair Mulholland said that his concern is that the per diem people are doing the same job as the full time employees. The concept is the same – to keep them at the same rate as far as their purchasing power. Otherwise, they are going to fall behind. We have been making progress with those changes so that they can get caught up. To slide backwards would be a mistake. To treat one class of employees differently is not appropriate. The full-time employees get the benefits, whereas the per diems do not. The per diems are a large part of our force and we have to stay competitive.

Mr. Jodoin said that treating people differently is what they are doing already. The Town of Pembroke employees are being treated differently than the ambulance employees who are Pembroke employees.

Chair Mulholland said that he has no responsibility over the Town of Pembroke employees but does in Allenstown. This body governs the ambulance employees; in Allenstown employees are getting a two percent increase. If that were the rationale, he would be saying that Tri-Town should get a two percent increase.

Mr. Jodoin said it's easy to tell Allenstown employees that they don't get the same thing as the Pembroke employees or the Tri-Town employees because they are not employees of Pembroke. If anyone thinks there is friction now between the departments, there is going to be a lot more friction when Tri-Town employees get increases that exceed what the other Pembroke employees get, and still retain the same benefits.

Chair Mulholland said that unfortunately, Pembroke already has that; because of the market they are paying police officers more.

Mr. Jodoin said that they can't compete with Hooksett, Bow, or Concord. It's a known fact that we are going to lose those officers to the state police or the City of Concord, like we have already. There is no more loyalty; there is no more longevity. It's all about the money. They are going to come and go as

soon as they can. Pembroke has a full-time firefighter who will probably be here three years and he'll be looking for a full time shift, 24/7, two-days on and four days off.

Chair Mulholland said that his point is that Pembroke is in the situation where you have to make changes to keep employees. Pembroke's sewer department pays a different rate than the rest of the town.

Mr. Jodoin said that sewer was with them.

Chair Mulholland said that in Allentown the sewer department pays a different rate of increase because that's what they deem they need to do to keep those positions. In regards to police officers, Allentown's turnover rate just got reduced significantly because they were paid more. For Allentown, it was more cost effective than to continually lose them. There was a 40% turnover rate and now it's ten percent. We can't throw up our hands and say there is nothing we can do. We can say that we can't compete with other jurisdictions, but we do compete with them because our people will go there. It's up to us to make a decision about what we are going to do. We are not going to cover that gap completely. We've made steps to increase it, and we don't want to fall backwards.

Mr. VanLuven said that he understands that disparity between departments and the towns are not wanted, but where is the differentiation made between industry standards for salary and town comparisons.

Mr. Jodoin responded it's between taxpayer dollars and private corporate dollars. There's no way to compete with private – their benefits, their perks and their salaries. It's like us trying to compete with the City of Concord. Hooksett is having the same issue with police officers. They are losing them to Manchester, Nashua, Londonderry, wherever. There is no more true loyalty anymore. People just up and leave. Two-family incomes right now, with both parents working, they are going to look for wherever they can get the biggest bang for their buck.

Chair Mulholland said that loyalty goes both ways. It is a responsibility of the employer to look out for the employees appropriately. If Tri-Town can keep its people current with the economy, instead of dropping back, that shows commitment to our employees. It isn't going to be ideal. We aren't going to pay as well as Concord, but we are at least going to try to close the gap as best we can.

Mr. Jodoin said that they are doing that. The 85% health plan goes up 17% every year. The City of Concord doesn't have this plan; Manchester doesn't have it. He said he doesn't know anyone who does. Concord Hospital used to be an HAS plan with \$1,500 or \$5,000 deductible.

Chair Mulholland said that's a decision that the Pembroke Board of Selectmen made. Apparently, the residents of Pembroke support that. Because that's the case, we don't have a choice as to which insurance plan they pick. When it comes to salaries, the Tri-Town Board gets to make decisions. This is a democracy.

Mr. Paulsen addressed Chair Mulholland, saying that he can't use an argument one way and then use it differently when it goes another way. You are doing that, he said. This Board could say we're not going to contribute 85% to a health plan; we could make it 50% and not have to follow the Pembroke Board of Selectmen. He said that Chair Mulholland is using the logic that the Tri-Town Board can do nothing about the health benefits. That's false.

Chair Mulholland said that's your feeling.

Mr. VanLuven said he would like to know the reasoning of those who don't want the per diem employees to get a one percent raise.

Mr. Jodoin stated that it's not the monetary value; it's the principle behind the situation. All Pembroke employees, including the sewer department and the library, are getting 0.3%. Now a group of 30 is getting pulled out and getting one percent. There are not a lot of dollars involved; it's the principle.

Mr. VanLuven asked if Pembroke has per diem employees.

Mr. Jodoin responded that the fire department could be considered per diem; they are on call volunteers.

Mr. Paulsen said that in the beginning this Board agreed to follow the Town of Pembroke personnel policies.

Mr. Jodoin said that everyone knew, back in 2013 when Tri-Town was started, that the infrastructure was crap. It needed to be redone completely – vehicles and equipment. The pay was horrible. As Mr. Bourque said, over the past few years they've made some gradual increases and some substantial increases to get to where they are.

Mr. Paulsen stated that he agreed with Mr. Jodoin. It's the principle of the thing.

Mr. VanLuven said that on the other side of the principle, as an industry standard for per diem paramedics, most places – private and public, hospital, whatever – offer a differential for the per diems in place of insurance and other benefits. They offer two or three dollars per hour on top of the base wage.

Mr. Bourque said that those places can afford to do that. Tri-Town is asking taxpayers of both towns to provide operating capital to support this. It's not happening in the private sector.

Mr. Jodoin said that when you have \$480,000 of uncollectible bills and you know you are going to write off all but \$80,000, you are not making money.

Mr. Murray said that that's a Board problem if the service isn't capturing those revenues. There should be a discussion with those who do the EMS billing.

Mr. Jodoin said that this community has a lot of people on fixed income; they have Medicare and Medicaid only. Tri-Town is not going to get those dollars.

Mr. Murray told Mr. Jodoin that he thinks he is wrong.

Chair Mulholland said that in reality, they were not supposed to fund this operation. The service is consistently bringing in more revenue than projected every year. When it starts having less than projected, there is a problem. Everybody knows that the service is not going to be paid for with insurance fees. We will continue to have write-offs unless there is a dramatic change in Washington. He doesn't see that happening.

Chair Mulholland called for a vote on the motion to reduce per diem pay by \$1,744. The motion carried, 4-3.

Mr. Jodoin said that since the full time employees are getting a one percent increase, it isn't fair for the per diem employees to get only 0.3%.

On motion of Mr. Jodoin, duly seconded by Mr. Paulsen, it was voted unanimously to have a one percent increase in salary for the per diem employees.

Mr. Jodoin said that, regarding overtime, while he supports employees having time off with their families, he has a little heartburn knowing that a fourth employee was added with the aim of reducing overtime.

Mr. Mulholland said that he agrees that the budget committee was told this. However, he also agrees with the rationale for the scheduling change which resulted in more overtime. Going forward, the Board needs to think things through more carefully.

Mr. Gamache said that the lack of a set schedule was causing a hardship, so they set up a 24/72 schedule. This decreased the amount budgeted for full-time salaries and increased overtime.

Mr. Jodoin made a motion to decrease the health insurance line by \$963, based on the updated budget from the Director. There was no second to the motion.

Chair Mulholland asked if this reflects an increase.

Mr. Gamache responded that 15% has been added. They don't know what the percentage will be. He verified that there is one employee on a family plan, one on a two-person plan, and two who have taken buy outs.

Chair Mulholland asked if they could wait until they get the actual percentage in October and administratively make the adjustment.

Mr. O'Meara stated that he agreed that the amount could be reduced administratively, but not increased.

Mr. Jodoin made a motion to remove two items from the Training Certificate line - \$20,000 for tuition reimbursement and \$9,500 for accreditation. The motion was seconded by Mr. Paulsen.

Mr. Jodoin congratulated everybody on their new certification, but he does not see accreditation doing anything for the service. He said that they can't get any better than they are now. He stated that the \$20,000 for tuition reimbursement should be taken out of the budget. There is nothing of that magnitude in any other department. The police department has one dollar in that line. He stated that they should not be funding college degrees. That is a bit much to ask.

Mr. Bourque stated that he agreed, but something should be provided. He suggested \$2,000. Then the service should come up with a policy for distribution with a set amount. He added that reimbursement should be available for part time and per diem employees as well as the full timers.

Mr. Gamache said that he struggles with this because he has told the staff that this is a benefit. He has already reduced the amount to \$5,000. He agreed that part time and per diem employees should be able to use the funds for license upgrades.

Mr. Jodoin addressed Mr. Gamache, saying that he has admitted to having an employee who is a professional college degree go-getter.

Mr. Gamache said he agrees that reimbursement should be for courses benefitting the service, but he pointed out that limiting the funds to certification is a problem because one can get an Associate's degree or certification to become a paramedic. They are equal.

Mr. O'Meara said that \$20,000 is too much. A number must be agreed upon. There should be some reimbursement. Money should be budgeted but not dispersed until a policy is developed and approved by the Board. He asked Mr. Gamache if \$2,000 was sufficient.

Mr. Gamache responded that they planned to offer an advanced class in house; there is a lot of demand for that. He pointed out that becoming a paramedic costs more than \$10,000 and takes two years, whether via an Associate's degree or a certification program. He said that some amount is better than nothing, but \$5,000 would be more appropriate. It could be restricted to certification.

Mr. Jodoin said that upgrading certification levels is a true benefit to the service. College tuition reimbursement always comes back to be a problem. There is never enough money, especially when there are multiple requests.

Chair Mulholland stated that he agrees that the funds should not be spent until a policy is in place. He also agrees with seeking accreditation. The award received was not based on a thorough analysis of the service. Allentown recently paid \$8,500 per department for an analysis. It was valuable; a long list of corrective items was produced, some of them critical. He said that he is on the Board of Directors but is

not an EMT and does not run an ambulance service. He doesn't know all of the specifics. Those on the accreditation team will be qualified to conduct a thorough analysis.

Mr. O'Meara said that he supports accreditation in order to have a minimum set of requirements for the service, and the service would hold itself to keeping the accreditation. There is a real benefit to both towns.

Mr. Paulsen said he does not support accreditation for several reasons. They already have oversight by Mr. Hersch, the medical control doctor. Also, the accreditation process will add to the burden of office work for the Tri-Town staff.

Mr. Murray asked how far along the service is in the accreditation process.

Mr. Gamache responded that the biggest project, with or without accreditation, is the revision of policies and procedures. This is important in order to hold employees accountable and to give staff guidance in handling employees. They are already working on it.

Mr. Murray said that he agrees with giving tuition reimbursement and suggests reducing the amount to \$10,000. He also favors keeping money for the accreditation process in the budget.

Chair Mulholland called for a vote on the motion to eliminate \$20,000 for tuition reimbursement and \$9,500 for accreditation. Mr. Paulsen, Mr. Bourque, and Mr. Jodoin voted yes; Mr. VanLuven, Mr. Murray, Chair Mulholland and Mr. O'Meara voted no. The motion was defeated 3-4.

Mr. Jodoin made a motion to reduce tuition reimbursement to \$5,000, to allow it for licensing upgrades only and to distribute the funds only after a policy is approved. Mr. O'Meara seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Jodoin made a motion to remove \$2,000 from the EMS supplies line for employee appreciation gifts, saying that taxpayers should not fund gifts for employees.

Mr. Murray asked if the cost of Narcan had been considered.

Mr. Gamache responded that the supply line is different from others. He looks at past spending and the current situation to derive an amount. He doesn't list all supply items specifically. He said that the gift to the employees was monogrammed trauma sheers; employees use them on their shifts. He added that since the hospitals at any time could stop supplying items which they currently supply, he would prefer to leave the amount as it is.

Mr. Paulsen said that if the line was reduced by \$4,500, it would still be above the average of previous years.

Mr. Bourque said that the Director wants the line's dollar amount to stay the same, but they should not use any of the money for employee gifts.

On motion of Mr. Jodoin, duly seconded by Mr. Bourque, it was voted unanimously not to reduce the line amount but to require that money not be used for employee gifts. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Murray asked why postage is up 90%

Mr. Gamache explained that they mailed HIPPA privacy notices and piggybacked on that with a customer survey. This is required for accreditation and is a good practice.

Mr. Murray asked why equipment replacement was up 206%.

Mr. Gamache explained that this line includes all maintenance agreements and the ventilator which would be used to ventilate patients not breathing on their own. It would serve as BiPAP to keep someone in respiratory distress from going into respiratory arrest.

Mr. Bourque addressed Mr. Gamache, asking if he has checked with other providers regarding vehicle maintenance costs or if he is just going to the same place.

Mr. Gamache responded that he goes to Grappone because of the warranties; for the air truck, he goes to 3B for the convenience.

Mr. Bourque asked if that was strictly for convenience.

Mr. Gamache said that 3B was the vendor when he first came to work for Tri-Town. They are happy with the service. They come at all hours and treat Tri-Town very well.

Mr. Bourque said that more money needs to be set aside for CIP; at \$30,000 only, they will fall short of sufficient funds when a new ambulance is needed.

Mr. Jodoin asked for the current budget balance.

Chair Mulholland said that it has not changed; it is \$796,159.

Mr. Paulsen said that it is imperative that more money be put in the capital reserve account.

Mr. Jodoin suggested putting money from the unspecified fund balance into CIP, leaving the 10% balance required. He said that they should frontload the capital improvement account each year with any excess dollars. He recommends \$120,000 be placed in the CIP line 00063 - \$30,000 already allocated and \$90,000 from the unspecified fund balance.

Chair Mulholland explained that, instead of raising taxes, they would be moving funds from the unrestricted fund balance to the restricted capital reserve account. This will increase the bottom line of both the revenue and expense side of the budget by \$90,000 but will not increase the amount that the

taxpayers of Allenstown and Pembroke would pay. Those amounts are still a reduction from last year's amounts.

Mr. Jodoin reminded Mr. Gamache that he does not close the books until December 31<sup>st</sup>.

Chair Mulholland said that the new bottom line is \$886,159.

On motion of Mr. Jodoin, duly seconded by Mr. O'Meara, it was voted to accept the budgeted amount of \$886,159.

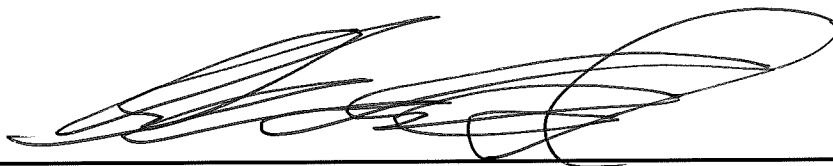
Motion passed 5-1-1 with Mr. Jodoin voting no and Mr. Bourque abstaining.

### **Director's report**

Mr. O'Meara suggested dispensing with the Director's Report in the interest of time, especially since all Board members have a copy of it.

Chair Mulholland said that he would email the Board members if they have to meet again regarding the percentage increase for health insurance. They will only meet if the amount increases, not if it goes down.

On motion of Mr. Bourque, duly seconded by Mr. Murray, it was voted to adjourn at 5:22 pm.

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

CHAIRMAN SHAUN MULHOLLAND