

MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES WORKSHOP BY THE EXETER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON DECEMBER 5, 2013

A special EMS workshop held for the Exeter Township Board of Supervisors was called to order on Thursday, December 5, 2013, at 7:00 P.M. in the Township Building by Chairman Donald R. Wilson.

The purpose of the meeting was to hear a Board requested presentation by Chief Jordan and the Exeter Township Volunteer Township Fire Department on a Fire Department based EMS proposal and to discuss the same.

Supervisors Present: Donald R. Wilson, Chairman
Kenneth A. Smith, Vice Chairman
Dona L. Starr
Gary E. Lloyd
Jeff Bukowski

Others Present: H. David Miller, Emergency Management Coordinator

Pledge of Allegiance

The Meeting was opened with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Explanation of Workshop Purpose

Mr. Lloyd made an opening statement explaining why he and the Board were looking into a possible Fire Company based Emergency Medical Services System. He stated this came about due to the request for funding by the Ambulance Association and upon investigation he learned about fire department-based EMS. He stated Township's financial problems are so large that he felt this avenue deserved investigation. He noted the Fire Department's member presence is low due to the investigative nature of the meeting.

Fire Chief Robert Jordan's Opening Remarks

In accordance with the Board's request Chief Jordan stated he was there to make a proposal. He gathered information from a number of sources so an objective presentation on a fire department-based EMS service for Exeter could be made. He stated they looked at the following categories: "Projected Revenue"; "Startup Costs and Expenses"; "Call Volumes"; "Manning"; and "Fire Department & Township Strategic Planning". Since the spring of 2011 the Fire Department has offered assistance with the growing challenges of offering EMS services. In 2012, the Fire Department assisted in 320 EMS, QRS responses. He stated the Fire Department understands there are no easy fixes to the challenges facing EMS services. He stated that no matter what decision is made by the Board, the Fire Department's primary focus will be to provide a high level EMS service to the residents. He thanked the Board for the opportunity to address this project.

Deputy Chief Chris Chamberlain's Remarks

Deputy Chamberlain stated he is in charge of EMS services for the Exeter Fire Department. He listed his credentials noting he was a Registered Nurse who had worked in the emergency trauma helicopter service. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and a Master's Degree in Disaster Medicine and Management. During his medical career he stayed active in the Fire Service as a

Certified Fire Fighter & Rescue Technician. He stated having served as a volunteer in many Pennsylvania communities and in New York State provided him with an opportunity to see a variety of provided emergency services. He stated the Exeter Fire Department was proposing a progressive, innovative and fiscally-minded emergency services delivery model for the Township with the primary focus on providing an increased level of service to meet the demands of the community. He stated this proposal would incorporate ambulance service along with fire and rescue into a comprehensive emergency response organization. He noted the Fire Department currently has 35 Certified Emergency Technicians and 12 Certified Paramedics. He stated a large number of the emergency staff works for ambulance service providers and transportation is nothing new for the Fire Department.

Slide Presentation

Deputy Chamberlain addressed a potential consolidation with a slide presentation.

Introduction and Consolidation

Focusing on emergency 911 calls, the plan calls for using both full and part-time paid, cross trained/multi-role personnel to staff basic and advanced life support ambulances 24/7 that would operate from Reiffton and Stonersville fire stations. Billing would be handled by a third party contractor and all EMS & Fire related financial information would be available to the Township Manager and accountant on a monthly basis. Service could start within four to six months. He stated a service delivery model would include ability to deliver medical care while performing specialized rescue in the areas of auto extrication; marine rescue; high-angle rescue; collapse rescue environments and hazardous material events; continuity of patient care between first responders and ambulance personnel; continuity of administration; same medical training; same medical equipment standardized operating procedures; medical direction and unity of command.

Consolidation means economies of scale. Integration of services would eliminate duplication of administration, training and support functions. Also being trained in multiple disciplines eliminates hiring one person to perform a single function.

Exeter Volunteer Fire Department's Strengths Abilities and Innovations

Historically, the Fire Department has maintained solid financial management. It is a licensed PA Department of Health Quick Response Unit that has provided medical response and on scene care consistently since 2006. The Fire Department roster has 35 Certified Emergency Medical Technicians and 12 Paramedics and is fully equipped to provide emergency medical services.

Projected 2014 Financial Summary

The detailed financial summary showed a start-up cost of \$1,075,421.84 of which 60% would be allocated for salaries for EMT's and Paramedics. Also included is a onetime expense of approximately \$130,000 for specialized ALS equipment that would have a service life of from five to eight years. Demand for service might lessen start up costs and some organizations have offered used equipment for the initial start-up that would also lessen costs. Some suggestions as to how to finance the start-up were made that included using existing unused capital funds or taking out a loan, or a combination of both. The information in the "Call Volume Summary & 911 Income Details" segment of the financial summary included potential gross yearly revenue

of \$1,131,748 in 2014; and increased revenue each year, thereafter, until 2018. Also shown were 2014 gross yearly expenses of \$1,075,421.84 for a 911 net profit of \$56,326.26 in year one. Other details included potential grant monies, the ability to bill for QRS calls now that ETRFD is operating emergency medical services and a potential elimination of the need to raise taxes to cover the Exeter Ambulance Associations request of \$75,000 a year to operate. The summary offered a total actual realized revenue/savings from moving to a fire department based EMS service of \$261,886.26.

Questions and Answers from Supervisors and Public

Mr. Bukowski urged the Fire Department to get together with Exeter Ambulance Association to try to form a joint venture. Mr. Lloyd stated originally he had suggested both Fire and Ambulance bring proposals to the Board. A short discussion occurred related to a former proposal of bringing Ambulance to the Fire Department to work together and it was not working. Mr. Bukowski stated he was not ready to kick Exeter Ambulance to the curb because they came to the Board and asked for help. He felt the best alternative could be to combine them. **James Halstead**, from Exeter Ambulance, asked why there was not a plan to join the departments instead of the Fire Department coming up with its own plan. He highlighted the expertise of Exeter Ambulance. Mr. Smith stated that Mr. Lloyd had requested a proposal from the Fire Department. Mr. Smith felt there was a way to integrate the two entities that could benefit the Exeter community. He noted no discussion had been held by the Board that would eliminate Exeter Ambulance. He stated if the Fire Department and Exeter Ambulance were not working together they would be competing with each other and that was not a good scenario. Mr. Bukowski agreed stating before he engaged in detailed discussions in executing any plan, both departments had to sit down and talk to each other. **Louise Swartley**, 31 Troxel Road, stated she was all for progress; however, eventually, if Exeter Ambulance joined the Fire Department, the proposed fire station and all of those expenses would come back into the picture. She agreed with Mr. Bukowski stating she would like to see a combined effort due to her concerns about cost and the potential of unions coming into the picture. Mrs. Swartley wanted to know if those townships that had been talked with were second class townships like Exeter to which Mr. Bukowski felt most were. Deputy Chamberlain stated the Fire Department door was open to all discussions and was encouraging participation. Mr. Lloyd stated the point of this was to address the problems that are coming, be it with a two entity joint arrangement or a Fire Department based EMS. He pushed the point of the Ambulance Association not having enough revenue to cover its debt, and purchase a new ambulance while managing its monthly expenses. **Tom Howell**, P.O. Box 4635, asked anyone in the audience who was a resident of the township to raise their hands and Mr. Smith interrupted stating no one had to identify where they lived. Mr. Howell asked if Mr. Lloyd's company was involved in construction of fire companies because he seemed to have so much information to which Mr. Lloyd stated he had no financial interest in fire companies nor did his company participate in EMS operations. **Mrs. Galipeau**, 41 Spruce Avenue, Birdsboro, asked how many years the fire company could survive after taking over EMS without having to ask the Township for money. Mr. Smith stated Exeter Ambulance was asking for money now and that is how this question came about to find the most effective way to provide ambulance service for Exeter residents. He stated the Board was trying to get

those numbers and the Fire Department has provided them. Mr. Lloyd stated this was not just about money; it was about quality service. Chief Jordan stated the approach was to help because the comments made to the Board were that the Ambulance Association might not be around next year and the 911 service was losing money. He said the idea was to look at an alternative, that is what was done and he would respect whatever decisions were made.

Mike Jupina, Exeter Ambulance Board Member and Township resident, stated Exeter Ambulance put themselves here based on the presentation it made to the Board. He echoed Chief Jordan's statements. Mr. Jupina thanked Mr. Wilson for his service to this Township. He stated he has spent 25 years in the business of health care and currently works for St. Joes Medical Center. He felt each fire fighter was worth each cent of the tax dollars which is about \$630,000 in taxes a year from residents and St. Lawrence Borough. He noted that Exeter Ambulance had lifted a significant financial burden off the Township because for 50 years they had provided pre-hospital care without a need to levy a tax and with community support, and self-sufficiency had been a source of pride. He stated the service changed to reflect how important pre-hospital intervention and advanced life support was improving outcomes for those who were sick or injured; and, that change came with costs and challenges that were met. Mr. Jupina stated in responding to 911 calls, we're unlike many businesses in that we don't get to pick our customers. No matter where, no matter when, no matter why you go when called and you save lives and you worry about, and hope, you get paid later. To Mr. Lloyd's efforts to contact EMS providers a few weeks ago to get an understanding on the business side of EMS, Mr. Jupina noted Mr. Lloyd contacted three fire companies, Berwyn, Radnor and Pottstown Goodwill. Mr. Jupina stated those might not have been the best areas to compare our area with because the incomes were double Exeter's and the demographics presented economics that explained how EMS services succeed in those areas. Mr. Jupina noted the unemployment rate in our service area is double that of Berwyn and 32 percent higher than either Pottstown or Radnor. He stated last year both Berwyn and Pottstown recorded small losses and Radnor would have had a loss except for a large contribution that was made to them. He said there were challenges no matter who was running the operations and Exeter Ambulance had shown significant action to reduce costs. Now, they were looking at how to adapt to the new Affordable Care Act Law that promised more challenges.

Mr. Jupina said the one thing that was missing from the Fire Department's presentation this evening was they did not substantively address the real questions which he feels are not in running the responder side of the service; but, in how to make providing EMS services financially self-sustaining. He felt services were struggling to provide fire and EMS combinations and partnerships, and most of them have some tax funding or subsidies. He stated the question is when and how both EMS and fire become self-sustainable. He stated it remains Exeter Ambulance's goal to continue to meet its mission of providing care without the need for tax dollars and subsidies, and they will continue to do all they can to fulfill their mission.

Dan Graves, an Exeter Ambulance Employee, asked if there had been talks about reallocating funds or creating a team made up of all the players that could work on coming up with some compromise or solution. He felt waiting six months was a very long time to have a new system

609780

in place while people needed service. **Ron Galipeau** said Exeter Ambulance had cut back in every way it could and felt the solution was for the Township's to ban together and work with the County Commissioners to form a county-wide EMS system. Mr. Lloyd felt that would not happen. Mr. Galipeau stated Mr. Lloyd could not guarantee the Township would not have to raise taxes to support EMS services. Mr. Lloyd then pointed to Page 8 of the presentation that shows clear savings in a number of areas that include billing, insurance and administration. He felt these were the best reasons that showed these services could be self-sustaining.

Mr. Bukowski would like to see them sit down at the same table and discuss the matter.

Mr. Bukowski felt the work on the presentation had been going on for two months and the presentation was excellent. He stated the only ambulance association that the Fire Department did not talk to was Exeter Ambulance. He stated both said they wanted to sit down with each other and he was asking them to prove it and do it, and he would help facilitate it if necessary.

Mr. Bukowski felt the best brainstorming sessions would come from the two entities talking together rather than each brainstorming separately. Mr. Smith asked each of them to commit to getting together. Chief Jordan stated he was totally committed to working with Exeter Ambulance and noted the Fire Department put a lot of man hours into this proposal. Mr. Smith felt if they came up with the result that they could not work together that should be known.

Mr. Smith stated he would appreciate their working together. He stated he would like to have an update by the second December meeting. Mr. Galipeau then stated if the Fire Department called, they would talk; and, Chief Jordan said he would call. The Board felt that was an invitation and the two groups could go from there. **Lisa VanderLaan**, 5560 Boyertown Pike, felt the Fire Department showed it could provide 911 services at no cost. Mrs. VanderLaan noted the Board voted to give \$75,000 to Exeter Ambulance, which is a private company, and asked what the government's role is in subsidizing private industry. She referred to a previous meeting in which Mr. Galipeau requested funds for an ambulance and the Board requested the Ambulance Association open its books; and, the Ambulance Association declined that request due to the private business information on the books that the Ambulance Association didn't want to share. She also said she took offense to the comment made by Mr. Jupina that Exeter Township residents were getting a free ride. She stated as a taxpayer she pays for services in the Township. She said the Ambulance Association was a private company that got paid for the services it provides and she was strongly opposed to a government bail out. She stated no one could tell her that Ambulance did not understand their financial situation for months before they came to the Board for help. She also objected to Exeter Ambulance personnel filling the seats in the meeting room taking up the room for residents who needed the services ambulance is to provide.

Mr. Jupina defended his remarks by stating Township residents technically did get free 911 services. Mr. Galipeau stated both Exeter Ambulance and Exeter Fire Department were both private non-profit companies. Mr. Galipeau stated he has been a volunteer for the past 29 years and he had a commitment just as Chief Jordan has who has been a volunteer since 1996.

Mr. Lloyd stated the goal was to get the best possible EMS situation and the Fire Department based direction looked like a possibility to him that he wanted to have explored. He felt they had to think differently about the way things were done to meet the need to offset taxes. Mr. Wilson echoed Mr. Lloyd's comments and also had a concern about the potential of ambulance employees losing their jobs. Mrs. Starr reiterated the responsibility of the Board fell under a State mandate to provide emergency services. She complimented both Mr. Galipeau and Chief

Jordan for their commitment to saving lives stating their work and their commitment to that work was passionate because the services they provide require that passion. She felt it was going to be hard to get together to work on this and she thanked them for coming to the Board and agreeing to meet.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Bukowski, seconded by Mr. Lloyd, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Troy S. Bingaman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Troy S. Bingaman
Township Secretary

609780