

MINUTES

AMBULANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY, AUGUST 8, 2022 WILLIAM L. PULLEN MUNICIPAL BUILDING MEETING ROOM ONLINE NON-INTERACTIVE ON TOWN HALL STREAMS 6:30 p.m.

Committee members present: Libby Casas (Washington), Tracy Weed, Heather Jackson, Patrick Costigan (Appleton), Scott Esancy (Appleton), and Ken Keiran

Others present: Jesse Thompson (EMS Chief)

1. Call Meeting to Order: at 6:30 p.m.

2. Election of Officers:

Motion to nominate Tracy Weed as Chairman by: Heather Jackson
2nd by: Patrick Costigan
6-0

Motion to nominate Jeff Grinnell as Secretary by: Tracy Weed
2nd by: Ken Keiran
6-0

3. Discussion:

Jesse sent an email hopefully covering most of the information requested last time, including a member list with license level, what town they live in, how many hours per week they work on average, and current pay rates. They are all per diem, no full time.

He said when we talk about call volume, anything regarding calls for service is always done on a calendar year. When we talk financials, it is always done on a fiscal year, July 1 to June 30 though Washington follows a calendar year.

Tracy asked if Jesse has a sense of how many EMS providers live in our coverage area that are licensed or license-able but inactive. Jesse used to know but does not now. Tracy brought up the entry license level called EMR, which is like a first responder level, and asked if there had been any exploration of trying to build up some of the towns' EMRs. Jeff had brought this up earlier. Jesse said the problem with EMRs is that for 10 extra hours, they can become a basic EMT. We haven't really considered that because they can't transport by themselves. They can be drivers. They can go back and help the EMT. There has to be an EMT there to be an overseer; it's not EMRs can never transport, they just have to have a higher license with them. It could work under the right conditions.

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He also noted he hired two medics who are just getting started, and another medic who's starting to put in more time. He needs at least a driver and an EMT to go out. Ideally you would put the paramedic on a fly car. He explained the emergency codes.

Scott noted the payroll is currently \$30,000. Jesse explained it's all per diem and we have no full-time. Michelle Robinson sets up the payroll which then goes through the town treasurer; she is also an AEMT. She works barely three hours a week.

Jesse has two or three drivers there if he needs them, but it's safer for people if he has two license levels. So if there's a paramedic and an EMT, one of them can drive. He always tries to put a paramedic on, because it saves us from calling one of our mutual aid ambulance services to come and give us a paramedic *if* they have a paramedic. They always work in pairs, minimum.

Jesse noted we are no longer considered volunteer. There are two people in the station 24/7, 365 all the time now though there are days when he can't find people to work. He could call the fire department for a driver but doesn't like to, as fire departments are having a hard time getting staff. There are bunk rooms upstairs.

In answer to Scott, Jesse said overtime is incurred every week. It's built into the per diem budget. Jesse will work on what the number for overtime is for the next meeting. Overtime is considered anything over 40 hours per week, time and a half. Jesse tries to schedule people to be at 36, but the problem is when he has holes. He is worried about numbers, but he is also worried about that truck rolling to a medical emergency. Jesse will prepare how much of it is overtime and who's getting it – the license level and the number of hours.

Jesse said re: scheduling, on August 5 he started filling September. He allows people 36 hours a week. After the 10th-ish, roughly, he goes back and sees if there are any open holes. If he doesn't schedule ASAP, they will make plans for somewhere else or pick up hours at their full-time job. He starts awarding hours where they're going to be overtime. He tries to be fair. All decisions lie with him. He has scheduling software.

In answer to Patrick re: cost increase year over year layering in full-time people, Jesse said we were originally talking about having four medics here 24/7. There would always be a medic available. The caveat is – we are already starting this – there is grant money out there for community paramedicine, allowing us to keep the elderly in their houses longer. Rockland and Camden public nursing will not come out to Union let alone Washington. The paramedic would be in the fly car dealing with this paramedicine and available for calls as well.

Jesse said his proposed budget was to hire the four full-time medics, keep the two per diems, but one of those per diem's cost would be shifted over to the fire department because they're also available to be a firefighter. This doubles for Washington and Appleton as well because if there's a fire they can hop in a truck and bring that to your

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town when called. The four full-timers wouldn't be here at the same time: 24 hours on, 72 hours off.

Jesse noted he hasn't even started developing his budget for this year. In answer to Scott, Jesse said he gets health insurance from his full-time job in Gardiner. Tracy said the people on this roster are not getting health insurance; if you went to a full-time position – the utopia – you would have health insurance, holiday pay, regular traditional benefit packages. Ken noted that an employee costs considerably more to his company or any entity than their take-home pay.

Jesse again said no one gets benefits from Union. He feels dirty and sly about saying it but double-checking with the lawmakers: as long as we don't consistently schedule someone to work over 40 hours a week, we do not have to pay insurance.

Tracy brought up the grant and the upcoming ICSD (Independent Community Self-Determination) assessments. Jesse has already started giving them information including the committee members' information. At some point they will meet with us. They will do an audit, inspect us, check us against Maine Bureau of Labor Standards, reach out to the community then come back with recommendations for us. Jesse has been working on a "must interview" list. Jesse said they are hoping to be done with their assessment by December.

Jesse noted EMS used to restock from hospitals for free. Now it costs, and the costs are going up each year.

Ken brought up the activity tracker reports, one for each fiscal year.

Jesse will see if Kevin McGinnis can come to the next meeting and explain it all (ICSD).

Back to the activity tracker reports, Ken said it's atrocious what our charges should be reflecting vs. what you're able to collect. Discussion included the insured, the uninsured, federal and state insurance, and the formula used to calculate what each town pays.

Jesse noted all the billing gets vendored out. The only thing we do in-house for billing is get runs ready for billing. We have X amount of time to do it, so he has to pay someone to do it as after 30 days they start reducing how much you can collect if it's not billed in a certain time period. The billing company gets paid a percentage of what we collect.

Patrick asked what other towns do for billing. Tracy said it's industry standard. She mentioned her work at Athena Health and asked if our billing company goes back and disputes discrepancies. Jesse said he does not have an answer for that now. He cannot get hold of any of the insurance companies to get us in network; half have no idea what he's talking about, half won't even talk to him. This not just him; it's across the board.

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In answer to Scott about anyone helping with this, Jesse said we pay dues to multiple organizations. There's a group called the Maine Ambulance Association. We have now brought it to the Maine Legislation table: "Hey, this is a problem." We are actively trying to get them to address it, and we are actively trying to do it ourselves amongst other ambulance services to see who we can contact in these groups. We are doing the lobbying. Jesse has contacted our representatives. Patrick said this could be a great outreach for our towns: call your legislator on these items.

Jesse said re: Medicaid the government is doing a study because ambulance services have complained saying we're not getting paid enough. They have started a survey wanting to know all about where every red cent goes. The idea is they get data to show we're not getting reimbursed enough. The problem is crisis mode – they're going to get bad data from previous years. Anyone who collects Medicaid is taking part in the survey.

Next meeting is August 22.

Patrick asked about repeat ambulance visits. Jesse mentioned HPAA, where community paramedicine could come in, and perhaps volunteers: for example, a patient who calls repeatedly because they are lonely, not getting enough socialization, and an hour's visit with some cribbage is a fix. Libby mentioned Visiting Volunteers in Rockland.

4. Adjourn:

Motion by: Heather Jackson
2nd by: Patrick Costigan
6-0

Meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Abaldo
Secretary