

Town of Bozrah
Public Safety Advisory Committee

The Town of Bozrah **Public Safety Advisory Committee** held a meeting on **Thursday January 17, 2019 at 6:30 P.M.** at the **Bozrah Town Hall Meeting Room**

MINUTES

- 1) **Call To Order:** Meeting called to order at 6:32 PM by Chairperson Lang
- 2) **Attendance:** Zickwolf, MacFadyen, Lang, Sholes, Ballinger, Driscoll, Lewitz, and Lavallee
Three members of the public.
- 3) **Review and approve minutes of January 10, 2019:**
MOTION: Lewitz/SECONDED: Driscoll PASSED
- 4) **Correspondence:** Email dated January 11, 2019 from Gregory Allard of American Ambulance recapping his presentation to the PSAC on January 10, 2019
(Forwarded to committee members by his request on January 15, 2019)
See PSAC EXHIBIT "B" 01/17/19- Two Pages
- 5) **Discussion and/or action as required:** Information summary provided by Chairperson Lang dated January 17, 2019. Extensive discussion on the handout ensued.
See PSAC EXHIBIT "A" 01/17/19- Four Pages

Attached written correspondence submitted to Chairperson Lang from Committee member Earl Lathrop. **See PSAC EXHIBIT "C" 01/17/19- Three pages**
- 6) **Draft/preparation/arrangement to construct Final Committee Report to the Town due January 31,2019:** Chairperson Lang will work with mini-groups to prepare sections to bring a Draft to the January 30th meeting
- 7) **Future meeting date(s):** Wednesday January 30, 2019 6:30 P.M. Bozrah Town Hall
- 8) **Public Comment(s):** Raymond Barber 25 Goshen Road Bozrah, Connecticut
- 9) **Adjourn:** MOTION:Lewitz/SECONDED:Lavallee PASSED 8:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Glenn S. Pianka

Information Summary 17 Jan 2019

PAGE 1

To: Bozrah Public Safety Advisory Committee

From: M. E. Lang, Chair

Re: Summary of Information Gathered to Date

Bozrah Volunteer Fire Company statistics for 2018 pending. Here are some of the stats for 2017. [Source: EmergencyReporting.com]

Total calls

- EMS calls not involving motor vehicle accident—213
- EMS calls MVA with injuries—21
- Total EMS calls 234
- Total fire and non-EMS calls 119
- Total calls 353

Calls without response to first tone

- Calls with no crew available—43
- # of such calls M-F during day (7:30 AM to 6 PM)—34
- # of such calls for which Automatic Mutual Aid received—23
- # of such calls for which Mutual Aid received—11

Automatic mutual aid received from

- Gardner Lake VFC
- Colchester FC
- Mohegan VFC
- East Great Plain (Norwich) VFD
- American Ambulance (EMS only)

Mutual aid balance

- Total mutual aid received—69
- Total mutual aid given—58
- Written complaints to BPSAC about uneven mutual aid—1
- Complaints about mutual aid in surveys and interviews—0

Surveys and/or in-person interviews with FDs in neighboring communities

Fire departments contacted: Ashford, Baltic, Canterbury, Coventry, Franklin, Hebron, Lisbon, Salem VFC, Gardner Lake VFC (Salem), Scotland, Voluntown

FDs who filled out surveys and granted interviews: Baltic, Hebron, Lisbon, Salem, Gardner Lake (Salem), Voluntown

FD who granted telephone interview: Coventry

- Total number of responses—7
- # of responding volunteer FDs who have trouble staffing fire and ambulance calls during work hours Monday through Friday—7
- # of responding volunteer FDs who have some paid staff—5. Three towns hire their own p-t or f-t fire fighter/EMTs; one town (Hebron) uses staff from Windham Hospital Emergency Medical Service (EMT staff only, no ambulance, no fire fighters); one town (Coventry) uses Vintech Management Services (EMS staff only).
- # of responding volunteer FDS who rely on simultaneous dispatch from American Ambulance for medical calls when no volunteer crews available—2

Other information was gathered by the surveys, including:

- Considerable differences among towns concerning organization; whether town or volunteer company owns building, vehicles, and other equipment; how budgeting is done
- Discussion of volunteer and paid staff interactions, basically positive

Information from visitors invited to speak to the committee

- 1) Chief Savalle from Gardner Lake came to talk about cooperation among fire departments and how all departments in the area work together. He also said that volunteers and paid workers can work together to provide the emergency response that towns need.
- 2) Chairperson Lang had a long phone interview with John Barbagallo from Vintech Management Services, whose goal is assist volunteer staff by supplying p-t paid staff, and invited Mr. Barbagallo to talk to the committee January 3. We learned:
 - Vintech, based in Torrington, currently provides staff for 21 towns in Connecticut.

- Staffing is interviewed, vetted (incl. background checks and reg. drug screening) paid per diem, scheduled and supervised by Vintech under contract with the towns, who pay a per hour rate.
 - Personal equipment is provided either by the town or by the VFC.
 - Staff provides primarily medical EMS. Although many are cross trained fire fighters/EMT, they are limited in the amount of fire fighting service they can provide.
 - No direct quote was provided, just estimates. They pay EMTs \$15 to \$18 per hour; charge to town is \$25-27 for EMTs, \$28-35 for fire fighter/EMTs.
 -
- 3) Chairperson Lang invited Greg Allard from American Ambulance in Norwich on January 10, 2019. We learned:
- Amer. Amb. provides two levels of EMS to area towns at no cost : advanced life support (ALS) when needed plus mutual aid for basic life support (BLS) when town ambulance doesn't respond to the first tone. These are not guaranteed, but are provided if one of their 26 ambulances is available. Bozrah already has this service.
 - Another free service they provide is called simultaneous dispatch, in which they respond to first tone also, and whichever ambulance happens to get their first transports to the hospital if necessary. Again, this service is dependent on their ambulance being available. Bozrah does not use this service at the current time, but a few other towns in SE Connecticut do.
 - Finally, Amer. Amb. provides a paid service to some towns called in-house service. This means they provide staffing and an ambulance that is kept in the town during contracted hours (such as weekdays). Ledyard has this service for \$75,000 per year.
 - Amer. Amb. does not supply any fire fighting capability.

Information about recruiting adult and cadet/junior fire fighters

- We received suggestions from other departments we surveyed about various methods for recruiting volunteers; however, all departments are finding it difficult in today's climate to get them, especially for service during the work week.
- We received a list of restrictions from the state regarding the types of tasks cadets/junior fire fighters can do. For example, they cannot climb a ladder high enough to reach the top of a typical fire engine and therefore can't roll and stow hoses, wash the top half of the engine, etc. Unlike cadets in previous generations, they cannot train in rescue involving repelling down cliffs, go into a burning building, put out a chemical fire, drive trucks, etc.
- BVFD reports that they have difficulty keeping cadets interested and involved, which is understandable given the above restrictions.

Estimated costs of various solutions to cover weekday EMS only

- * Paid staff provided by Vintech for 9 hours/day for 260 days/year (52 wks. X 5 days/wk.): cost would be approximately \$65,500 to \$81,900 per year, not including cost of personal equipment.
- * Paid staff hired by town for same number of hours at \$15-\$18 per hour: \$35,000 to \$42,000, not including ongoing administrative costs, background checks, personal equipment.
- * American Ambulance in-house service: they did not give us an exact quote, but based on what they charge larger towns with larger call numbers, we think it will be in the neighborhood of \$50,000.
- * American Ambulance simultaneous dispatch: On the surface, this would cost us nothing. However, simultaneous dispatch runs 24/7, so during hours when our ambulance and volunteers are available and we don't need help, we stand to lose the income from ambulance billing.

Estimated costs of solutions to cover both fire and EMS

- We have not found any outside agency that will provide both fire and EMS coverage.
- Paid staff hired by town, cross trained fire fighter/EMTs, for 9 hours/day for 260 days/year (52 wks. X 5 days/wk.) at \$15-\$18 per hour: \$35,000 to \$42,000, not including ongoing administrative costs, background checks, personal equipment.

* THIS IS ONE PERSON COST — REQUIREMENT IS FOR TWO PERSONNEL — THESE NUMBERS MUST BE MULTIPLIED BY 2.

NEXT MEETING JAN 30 6:30

Glenn Pianka

From: Allard, Gregory B. <GAllard@americanamb.com>
Sent: Friday, January 11, 2019 11:26 AM
To: Glenn Pianka
Subject: Thank you

Glenn,

I have no other way of communicating to the panel that I sat before last night so I thought I'd drop you an email. I'd like to thank the panel for having me come before them to discuss how American Ambulance Service, Inc may be able to provide some assistance to the Town of Bozrah. I have been with American for 26 years and for as long as I have been here I can say that American and Bozrah Fire have had a great working relationship. We have employed a great number of Bozrah residents over the years and most of them had relations with the Fire Department at the same time.

To recap the points I made last night. We have the capacity to provide an ambulance through a simultaneous response agreement. The response increase for American sounded as if it would be approximately one per day on average. We understand that there may be multiple requests at the same time and that there may be incidents requiring multiple vehicles at the same incident. In those incidents we would do our best to respond with enough assets to handle all the requests. As with any resource there are limitations and if we, at the time of the request, had no resources to send we would advise QV dispatch that we did not have the resource and they in turn would begin the next due mutual aid provider. This mutual aid practice is no different than what is currently being done anywhere in our region.

I also mentioned our current response numbers to Bozrah as being 113 responses of which 27 were canceled, 34 American actually transported the patient and the remaining 52 were intercepts. An intercept is when our Paramedic jumps on Bozrah's ambulance and works on the patient while they are traveling to the hospital. Our response times were good in that 50% of our responses we were on scene in 10 minutes or less and 92% of the time we were on scene in 15 minutes or less. I would suggest comparing that to what is currently being done by the Fire Department Ambulance. We are confident we have ways to improve these times and would look to take those measures should we enter into an Agreement.

Most importantly our simultaneous response program is FREE to the town. If we are the transporting ambulance we will bill the patient for the services we provide. If we get canceled from the call, there is no fee. We simply put that ambulance back into our available resources which may handle the next emergency and/or transfer that we may be requested to do.

With regards to Emergency Medical Services, American sees the following as possible courses of action that the Town of Bozrah could take. Option 1, the Town and Department can keep doing things the way you are currently doing them. I obviously don't think this is a valid option. If it were, you wouldn't have established this panel. Option 2, you could enter into a FREE simultaneous response agreement with American. As an aside, once we signed with Franklin their ability to handle transports jumped up. Over the next few months that ability dropped back and since that first year we've seen that ability rise and fall for a variety of reasons. We would envision the same thing occurring in Bozrah. Option 3, the Town contracts American or an employment agency to have EMTs in the firehouse so the ambulance gets out to emergencies. American would also be willing to discuss placing cross trained team members that are firefighters. Option 4, the Town hires its own employees which is a very costly proposition when you include salaries, taxes, health benefits, retirement, worker's compensation and the increased liability. Not to mention the need to manage them. Option 5, enter into a

contract with a provider to take over the BLS Primary Service Area. This would obviously be at a cost to the town as well. This really isn't a valid option as the call volume in Bozrah alone isn't enough to offset the provider's expenses. Option 6, is to consider entering into a regional response agreement with American Ambulance & neighboring towns Baltic and Franklin. This option would reduce the contracted fee that each municipality would have if they were to choose Option 5 noted above. I am willing to provide more details to this upon request.

Again, I wish you and the remainder of the panel the best of luck in making your decision. If you need me to return to discuss anything we talked about last night or in relation to things I mentioned in this follow-up please do not hesitate to contact me. My direct office and cell phone numbers are in my email and on my cards for a reason. Thank you again for the opportunity.

Respectfully,

Gregory Allard

VP, American Ambulance Service, Inc.

VP, EMS PRO, Inc.

VP, Assoc. of CT Ambulance Providers

Chairman, CT EMS Advisory Board

Cell: 860.234.6841

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As I am unable to attend the January 17, 2019 meeting because of another commitment which I stated in the very beginning regarding the 3rd Thursdays of the month, I am writing the following:

I feel many of the meetings I attended were a complete waste of my time. The committee went out with questionnaires to some local and some distant fire companies about their reasons for paid help. The Fire Company (Bozrah Volunteer Fire Company) had spent almost six months doing that same thing, but we didn't ask for that information or use it.

I feel we should have been looking at the problems with fire and EMS coverage in this town and only adjoining towns which we give mutual aid to and receive mutual aid from.

We all know volunteerism is at a low point in this town as well as many others. We have no Boy Scout or Cub Scout Troop in this town because of the lack of volunteers. We have boards in town that have vacancies.

I sat at the meetings and heard the Fire Company torn apart. The Fire Company is an asset. Think for a moment if the volunteers quit what fire coverage would cost in town.

The most informative meeting were the presentations by Chief Sholes of Bozrah, Chief Jim Savalle of Gardner Lake Fire Company (Salem), John Barbagallo of Vintech LLC, and Gregory B. Allard of American Ambulance.

I feel we should have done more on demographics of the Town and Fire Company.

1. Suggestions on ways the town could help Fire Company recruit and retain volunteers. (Tax credits, training costs, education scholarships)
2. Projections on future fire and EMS requirements due to growth in town. (i.e. New facility on Salem Turnpike Route 82 with 100 units. The projection of 5 to 7 calls per week per Chief Sholes. That's 260 to 364 calls possible per year at one location and could double the number of calls the Fire Company responds to per year). Increased resident traffic on Route 82 and Route 2.
3. A strategic plan by the Fire Company on how if two Fireman/EMS are hired for 9 hours per day for 5 days how volunteers will be available to drive and operate pumper, tanker or ladder truck during week days. Or are we still going to rely on Mutual Aid. We presently have calls with no or limited volunteers responding.
4. Legal Issues, questions for the Board of Selectmen or Town Attorney about firemen/EMS personnel hired by the town, paid by the town and working on none town owned property (Firehouse and grounds), does this present any liability problems for the Fire Company in case of injury. Does anything need to be in writing defining this for Workmen's Compensation or Liability Insurance purposes.
5. Will any and all Firemen/EMS personal be trained to operate all Bozrah Fire Equipment and by whom?
6. Will there be a crew leader designation for hired personnel each day? If so any extra cost?
7. Who at the Fire Company will be responsible for assignments when not performing Emergency Services?
8. Who will be responsible for background checks, drug testing, driving record checks, the town or the Fire Company and who will maintain these records?

I was asked why the Fire Company doesn't have younger volunteers (Cadets under 18 years old). Chief Sholes provided me with information from the State Commissioner of Labor stating the guidelines for them. After reading them I can see why the younger ones would lose interest. All committee members should have received the guidelines to read. I was questioned as to why the Fire Company members who work for the Mohegan Tribe or other paid departments and work only 2-24-hour shifts aren't available for Bozrah coverage on their days off.

01/17/19

I explained that they are in demand as per-diem employees for other volunteer department coverage during the day. (In my book called the Right to Make a Living)

After listening to Mr. Allard of American Ambulance in which he stated the Fire Company would be expected to roll on all EMS calls in town if they were the contract provider for EMS. I would like to have been presented what the guaranteed contract cost of coverage to the town would be for American Ambulance to be sole provider of EMS Services. On September 25, 2018 I submitted a letter (see attached) to the chair and committee which included questions of cost to fund Fire Company if ambulance billing revenue is lost. The chair chose not to pursue this information to date. I feel this should or could be relevant to the final decision regarding EMS coverage.

The problem of Fire and EMS coverage is not going away and will expand with potential development along Route 82.

Additional questions for consideration:

- Long term planning 5 years or more for paid personnel either fire or EMS or both types of coverage.
- Are two paid Firemen/EMS personnel going to be able to man ambulance EMS and for fire calls?
- Fire Company/Town looking at 2 paid Firemen/EMS for 5 days a week 9-hour shifts. Is this enough time for coverage or should it be 10 hours (7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) each day or adjusted as needed?

In conclusion I would have to question why the Fire Company and Town spent \$250,000 plus on a new ambulance when the volunteers were unable to man it.

The problem of lack of personnel responding to calls has been going on for a long time, this should have been addressed sooner.

I think we have three options:

1. Status Quo – Relying on mutual aid or American Ambulance when no crew responds.
2. Hire paid Fireman/EMS for coverage days on a trail basis for one year.
3. Contract out EMS coverage and town to break contract for EMS coverage with Fire Company and risk losing more volunteers.

I tried to address some of these questions but never was given a chance.

January 17, 2019

Earl Lathrop

Bozrah Public Safety Advisory Committee

To All:

I would like to ask the following questions in regard to the Fire Company volunteers.

1. The minimum age to join the Cadets and the functions they can perform?
The range of ages that apply?
Retention factor?
2. Minimum age to join as a regular and the training required?
Retention factors?

Funding for the Fire Company:

3. Is it in the best interest of the Town to do away with EMS/Ambulance Service and have Fire coverage only?
4. If Fire coverage only will volunteers be able to support or will paid part-time still be required?
5. Will volunteers be able to support an outside EMS coverage?(i.e Auto Accident Scene, industrial accident, etc)
6. What is the cost to the Town to maintain the Fire Company because of the lost revenue to the Fire Company if No Ambulance Billing Revenue?
7. Is it more cost effective to hire two part time Firemen/EMS personnel to maintain effective Fire and EMS service to the town than to provide more funding with no EMS?

These are questions that the taxpayers of Bozrah deserve to have answered. I believe we should be looking at the long-term issues of Fire/EMS services not a Band-Aid approach.

I think we should be looking at how to best serve the citizens and industry of this town with the best services while being cost effective. I believe that questions should be addressed and included in the final report.

Earl Lathrop

