

**Select Board Meeting
Town Office
October 26, 2023, 6:30 pm**

MINUTES

Attendance: See attached sign-in register (on file in the Mount Holly Town Office).

1. **Call to Order and Welcome from Moderator Andy Tanger at 6:30 pm.** Moderator Andy Tanger welcomed the members of the Select Board, as well as Brendan McNamara, Municipal Manager, Ludlow, and Stephanie Grover, Ludlow Ambulance Service Chief.
2. **Sign Road Salt Contract.** Mark Tuco noted that, in accordance with the Town's Purchasing Policy, the Select Board does not need to go out to bid for the purchase of winter road salt, as it plans to use Cargill, who is the existing vendor. Mark Turco made a motion to select Cargill as the Town's winter road salt vendor; at the quoted price of \$86.50/ton; Diana Garrow seconded; unanimously approved.
3. **Mount Holly Medical Services Community Meeting**
 - a. **Update Regarding Dissolution of Mount Holly Volunteer Rescue Service.** Mark Turco noted that the MHVRS indicated its intention to dissolve on October 17, 2023, effective October 31, 2023, and that it will hand over all keys, equipment and materials to the Town, in the care of the Select Board, on the morning of November 1, 2023. Final asset transfer and financial reporting will take place after that date.
 - b. **Consideration and/or Approval of Ludlow Ambulance Services Contract.** Brendan McNamara noted that the Town of Ludlow is preparing a proposed contract between LAS and the Town of Mount Holly for the provision of EMS to the Town of Mount Holly, with LAS providing primary coverage to the town, including first response and ambulance transport. Mr. Turco noted that the Select Board will not approve a contract this evening, given that a revised draft has not yet been received from LAS. He noted that the terms of the prior draft indicated an annual fee of \$72 per 911 address, for a total of approximately \$88,000 owed by the Town.
 - c. **Q&A for LAS.** Mr. Tanger opened the floor to questions from the community:
 - i. Amy Turco asked whether the working quoted fee from LAS is an annual fee payable up front, or whether it will be prorated for the remainder of the current year, and then billed in full at the beginning of the new year. Mr. McNamara noted that the fee schedule is open to negotiation and that LAS is happy to be flexible.
 - ii. Mark Turco asked whether LAS transports to a specific hospital when hospital transfer is necessary; Ms. Grover said Vermont State protocols dictate that the patient go to the closest appropriate facility; that is typically Rutland Regional Health Center for Mount Holly patients, but could also be Springfield Hospital.
 - iii. Steve Hazelton asked Ms. Grover to explain LAS's staffing and how it flexes during the ski season. Ms. Grover noted that they are fully staffed; they have 3 EMS providers at the station during the day, and 4 during the weekend, with one additional on call.
 - iv. Steve Hazelton asked what paramedic level the staff was. Ms. Grover noted that they strive to have Paramedic level A (ALS) staffing 24/7. They currently have 4 paramedics on their staff; two do two 24-hour shifts per week.
 - v. Town Treasurer Elizabeth Karle asked how many towns LAS provide primary EMS to. Ms. Grover noted that they provide primary EMS to Ludlow, Proctorsville, Cavendish and Plymouth (to Route 100A); she noted that these towns are a similar distance from the station as the far edges of Mount Holly.
 - vi. Ms. Karle further asked about the LAS's third-party review in December 2019. Ms. Grover noted that LAS had hired a third-party consulting firm, Municipal Resources Inc., which

reviewed all of LAS's staffing and activities and prepared a report in December 2019. MRI's only suggestion for improvement was that LAS go to six full-time EMS providers; they are currently staffed at five full-time EMS providers and working toward hiring a sixth.

- vii. Ms. Karle also asked about the proposed payment schedule for fees. Ms. Grover noted that other towns pay quarterly, and that there is flexibility to negotiate a payment schedule that works for the Town.
- viii. Mr. Turco asked whether LAS has enough ambulances to serve Mount Holly, given their current commitments? Ms. Grover noted that they currently have one fully staffed ambulance regularly and two fully staffed ambulances during busier times. She noted that this is usually sufficient; mutual aid has come in only 10 times to support LAS in the past year, while LAS has *provided* mutual aid 42 times. That said, LAS is also in the process of adding a third ambulance to their fleet. Ms. Grover and Mr. McNamara further noted that LAS also shares personnel with Okemo Ski Patrol, who are trained as certified first responders (VFER certification). She explained that when there is an emergency call increase due to increased activity on the mountain, the existence of a trained Okemo first response team means patients can be treated in place, on the mountain, when needed, without stretching LAS's resources.
- ix. Bob Herbst asked whether there was a plan to liquidate MHVRS's equipment and ambulance to defray cost of contracting for LAS's services. Mr. Turco noted that discussions regarding these activities were in progress.
- x. Phillip Crane noted that he was unsure of the scope of services provided by LAS in exchange for the proposed ~\$88,000 fee. Ms. Grover noted that the \$88,000 fee should be thought of as the fee for LAS to provide standby support for the Town of Mount Holly for all EMS responses. In other words, LAS is staffed in such a way that it can respond 24/7/365 to emergency calls from Mount Holly. She added that residents should be aware that patients who call 911 are also billed for the services. If they have private insurance, their private insurance will be billed; if they have Medicare, Medicare will be billed. She noted that the LAS also has a membership program, which is akin to third-party insurance. Membership is \$60/household if everyone in the household is insured, and covers any out-of-pocket costs, including co-pays or co-insurance incurred after insurance is billed. Membership is \$120/household if some or all members of the household are not insured, and covers all costs of EMS in that case.
- xi. Diane Deegan asked LAS to confirm that it meets Medicare requirements. Ms. Grover confirmed that it does.
- xii. Mr. Turco asked whether LAS could make any assurances regarding response times. Ms. Grover noted that LAS's average call-to-response is 1-2 minutes, and sometimes up to 3 minutes at night. Calls-to-scene average about 7 minutes overall, across all serviced towns.
- xiii. Diane Deegan asked whether LAS is prepared to accommodate "hospital to the home" programs, in which family members provide some care to patients at home, as an alternative to hospital care. Ms. Grover said they do not currently participate in such programs specifically, but do other community health outreach, including performing blood pressure checks at nursing homes and sending paramedics out for community health screenings.
- xiv. Brendan McNamara noted that as Chief of LAS, Ms. Grover is very good at looking down the road to adapt to EMS changes that are coming down the pike, and is ensuring that LAS is ready to deal with health care adaptations that are 3, 6 and 12 months out.
- xv. Sara Delphia asked for clarifications regarding the membership program. Ms. Grover noted that the membership program writes-off patient's out-of-pocket costs billed for

- services, while the budget for LAS's contract paid by the Town ensures that LAS is contracted to provide primary EMS to the Town.
- xvi. James Heald asked whether 911 calls would be dispatched differently if LAS provides EMS services. Ms. Grover confirmed that 911 calls would continue to go to state dispatch, and then to local dispatch to the ambulance service.
 - xvii. Dennis Devereux noted that the Town of Mount Holly has several buildings with AED units, and that they are registered with the state, which should let LAS know where they are located. He noted that most are in locked buildings, which could pose an access issue. Ms. Grover noted that Ludlow is a heart-safe community (one of only 10 in the state); that LAS is ready to respond to all emergencies and has an appropriate amount of AEDs per capita; that Ludlow police also carry AEDs, as does the fire department.
 - xviii. Julie Parcels asked whether LAS will collaborate with the Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department. Ms. Grover noted she is open to working with the fire department; LAS has helped Cavendish and Proctorsville fire department members get certified in first response, as well as the Ludlow Ski Patrol. She noted she would love to help Mount Holly's fire department get first-response certified if they are interested. This would offer additional EMS support locally.
 - xix. Stephen Michel repeated the questions regarding which hospitals LAS transports to. Ms. Grover repeated that they are bound by state protocols to bring patients to the closest appropriate facility; there is some crew discretion if the patient is stable, after the closest appropriate facility standard has been met. She added that LAS does not transport patients to Dartmouth or UVM. Approximately one-quarter of LAS patients are transported to Rutland, and about three-quarters to Springfield.
 - xx. Amy Turco asked whether LAS would entertain using the current Rescue building and Ambulance in Mount Holly; Ms. Grover said this could be discussed.
 - xxi. Katie Schneider asked whether LAS has access to household information regarding patients in Mount Holly with pre-existing health concerns? Ms. Grover said they do not, though they use a state database called SIREN to get some information. She noted that LAS would be willing to accept a list of all fire department members, alongside any preexisting conditions and resting vitals; this information is useful, as LAS serves as a standby response team for structure fires. Mr. McNamara also noted that every town has an Emergency Management Plan that LAS will be apprised of.
 - xxii. Dave Venter asked whether there is an alternative provider of EMS, other than LAS, for Mount Holly? Mr. Turco noted that Rutland Regional Ambulance Service is not able to provide primary standby coverage—only mutual aid. The Town has not asked for a quote from Wallingford but can do so.
 - xxiii. James Rasp asked whether the Town of Mount Holly pays anything to LAS currently? Mr. Turco confirmed that it does not.
 - xxiv. Mr. McNamara stated that he will revert a new contract to the Select Board on Monday or Tuesday. Mr. Turco noted that the Town's attorney will also review the contract, as will the fire department. The Select Board will meet again after the new contract is received and reviewed. Mr. Turco noted that his biggest concern is avoiding a lapse in coverage, so a decision will be made as soon as possible.

4. Adjourn. Mark Turco made a motion to adjourn at 7:08; Diana seconded; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Caitlin Boyle, Select Board Clerk