



**TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2023
APPROVED MINUTES**

1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trinks called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donald Trinks, Deputy Mayor Lisa Rampulla Bress, Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Councilor Ronald Eleveld, Councilor Ojala Naeem, Councilor Kenneth Smith

Absent: Councilor Kristin Gluck Hoffman, Councilor Len Walker, Councilor James Dobler

2) PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3) REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY

Town Manager Souza stated this spring the Town engaged the Holdsworth Group, an emergency medical services consulting firm, to complete a review of the emergency medical services delivery system. The system review was prompted by questions raised by the public and Town Councilmembers related to Windsor EMS' staffing levels, response times, financial stability and greater reliance on mutual aid from surrounding EMS agencies.

The Council's Health & Safety Committee reviewed in detail the EMS System Study on August 14th. The Committee requested that the report be placed on the Town Council's September 5th meeting agenda for a high level overview. On September 18, the Town Council decided to hold a separate workshop to review the report and recommendations.

Attached is the study report which includes information regarding topics such as current system overview, community demographics, EMS economics, system utilization, response times, capital investment needs, recruitment and retention, service delivery options, and budget forecasts.

The goal is to have the Town Council provide direction relative to the recommendations in the report. He gave an overview of how the town has been supportive to the EMS helping to stabilize their finances over the years.

Bob Holdsworth, The Holdsworth Group, and Dan Moylan, President and Chief of EMS gave an overview of the report as follows:

The consultant's report (page 24) includes a number of key findings such as:

- Windsor EMS is doing a good job despite labor and financial challenges
- Response times to calls are good, improvement is possible



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- Mutual aid is being requested 2-3 times per day resulting in longer response times and lost revenue
- There is a need during peak hours (9 AM – 9 PM) for another ambulance
- Dispatch data needs slight modifications to allow for better segmentation and tracking of high and low priority call response times
- There is a need for replacement of capital equipment investment
- There is a significant paramedic and EMT shortage in the state and Windsor has had a hard time recruiting and retaining due to shifts in the regional labor market and agency consolidations
- The Town Council's commitment in the FY 23 budget helped Windsor EMS to stabilize the EMS system and the subsidy in the FY 24 budget has allowed for the implementation of a competitive wage scale package
- The continued subsidization of EMS by the Town is a reality regardless of the provider serving the Town
- Windsor EMS needs to expand its leadership team and work towards having 24/7 operations supervisors rather than administrators on call.

Funding

Of the 4,100 requests for an ambulance in Town each year, only about 2,800 can be billed to bring revenue into the system. Of the 2,800, more than 68% of the total are paid at a significantly reduced rate due to the Medicare/Medicaid fee schedule.

Revenue projections have been included on pages 28 and 29 showing the revenue from the 2,800 transport as well as the potential revenue from handling one additional call per day that is currently being handled by mutual aid ambulance services. This will be accomplished with the revised staffing plan which includes a third 'peak time' ambulance (9a-9p)

A subsidy of the EMS system is a reality going forward regardless of the provider.

Staffing/Recruitment

Windsor is currently recruiting for EMTs and Paramedics and this month will also be advertising for shift supervisors who will be able to provide agency/system oversight as well as provide paramedic staffing. This process will take several months to fully implement. The commitment by the Town Council in FY23 and FY24 plus any additional commitment for capital improvement will show potential candidates that Windsor EMS is a stable organization and a solid career step for them.

Capital investment.

Capital replacement has been pushed off for several years. The equipment is safe to use but it needs to be updated or replaced. As the chart on page 17 of the report shows, the ambulances are all at or over their useful life and the mileage continues to increase at a rate of approximately 30,000 miles per year.



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Due to supply chain issues maintenance is getting more costly and time consuming and ordering new ambulances is currently a 12–18-month process. It is recommended the Town Council commit resources now even though the financial impact will start in FY 25 and FY 26. (pages 31 & 32 of report)

The cardiac monitors, stretchers and power loading systems are in the same situation although those will arrive faster, and delivery can begin in FY 24.

Councilor Naeem stated that one recommendation was to create by-laws for the board. Do you know if this has been done? Mr. Moylan stated they are being reviewed by the current board. They will be following up with their attorney to review them. The goal is to get them in place at the beginning of 2024.

Councilor Naeem asked if the board has thought about what we can be doing more of from an engagement and recruitment perspective? Mr. Moylan stated the board has started preliminary discussions on trying to restructure it as a whole. He explained how they are doing that and how recruitment efforts are going.

Councilor Naeem asked about the training division. What's the first reaction of the Windsor EMS on that and what is the feasibility of it? What would be the financial impact? Mr. Moylan said Windsor EMS loves the idea and they already have a training division established. He would like to see it be more of its own entity and self-supportive. He described the training classes that are offered for the EMS and spoke of the possibly of having a dedicated full time person on staff to do them.

Councilor Naeem asked what did he mean about it being self-supportive? Does that mean that you want it to be where it's not pulling from the EMS folks that are coming in to train but having dedicated resources to it? Mr. Moylan answered that many of the instructors that they have are road employees and it means that they need to find coverage or need to rearrange their schedules for the road when they instruct the classes. Over the past two years or so it has been self-sufficient.

Councilor Naeem inquired about the recommendation of analyzing call volumes on a monthly basis and adjusting staff times on a quarterly basis. Do we have things in place right now that will allow us to do that on a monthly basis? If not, what do we need to put in place to make sure that is being analyzed on a monthly basis as well as being reported out to the appropriate channels? Mr. Holdsworth stated we have what we need to do that. He explained the way it could be done.

Councilor Naeem asked who would be doing the analysis on that. Mr. Holdsworth said it could be done internally with staff.

Councilor Walker stated there is an elderly population in Windsor. He feels the report was done well. He explained why we needed something beyond the EMS board to help with decision



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making at times. He feels the Town Attorney should be involved and whatever rules there are should be changed.

Deputy Mayor Bress stated that the collected data can allow Mr. Holdsworth to look more carefully at response times or for different types of priorities. Is there any historical data before this that is available on response times or was it not being done before? Mr. Holdsworth stated the response times were there and they had to go through a manual process with some of the data. The data was good but there were some discrepancies between EMS and the Windsor Communications center for calls for Windsor. He explained how that data gets reported and what has been done to enhance it.

Deputy Mayor Bress asked will the EMT response data be able to delineate between mental health emergencies and heart attacks and different types of things or will it be response times to those types of calls. Mr. Holdsworth said calls are earmarked by type. We can look at the calls afterwards to see what the calls were originally dispatched as and then what it ended up as. They are not presently focusing on this as their focus is to get the ambulances on the road right now.

Deputy Mayor Bress asked about board members. Are they aware of this meeting and how many board members are there? Do they receive training? Mr. Moylan stated the board has seven positions with one being open. There is minimal training at this time.

Deputy Mayor Bress asked about the memorandum of understanding. She asked about accountability and oversight. The suggestion was to support a collaborative arrangement between the town and EMS. She asked without municipal control, how will oversight and accountability take place? Mr. Holdsworth said it all comes down to how far you want to be involved in the ownership and liability of the organization and how much you want to keep contractually at arm's length. He outlined the different ways the EMS organizations work and what Windsor could do for oversight and accountability.

Councilor Black-Burke asked about the board. Has the board been involved and how involved have they been in this process to date? When is the last meeting that has taken place? Is the board supporting what we are trying to do? Have they been a part of the conversations during the process? Mr. Holdsworth stated that they have not been with him and that many boards are having to come to grips with facing things they've never seen before such as the pandemic and people leaving the industry, having recruiting issues, etc. He feels the board was waiting until the report was completed before they became involved.

Councilor Black-Burke asked about the number of calls. Are we able to see the prioritization and segmentation of the calls? Do we have the data on how many of them refused transport to the hospital. Mr. Holdsworth stated that yes, it is included in the report and explained where.

Councilor Black-Burke asked who is assisting in making sure that level of oversight for the revenue is actually being addressed. Mr. Holdsworth said it is being addressed. EMS staff is



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looking over the reports as they come in and is quantifying and assigning them and then they are sent to the billing company. The billing company verifies they've received them and are being billed properly.

Councilor Black-Burke asked what is the pipeline to the schools for those that are interested in this field? Mr. Moylan responded that there is a medical emergencies program at the high school. The hope is to increase that pipeline by tagging onto the fire program.

Councilor Black-Burke thanked Mr. Holdsworth for the report and for working with the Windsor team.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman asked what the other incentives are for the students to do EMS or paramedic studies. Mr. Moylan said it is hard with the age range in the high school. They cannot get certification until they are 18. They have to be of legal age.

Councilor Eleveld said in the chart he made a comment about 65 and over and it is related to Medicare not Medicaid but in the demographic data that was not priced out. Mr. Holdsworth stated that in the budget there is a percentage of Medicare and Medicaid for billing purposes.

Councilor Eleveld stated the differential that Medicare pays is about 50% versus what a private insurance company should be paying. Medicaid pays almost half of that. Is that a state or legislative issue? Mr. Holdsworth said this past legislative cycle there was a bill proposed that would bring the Medicaid level up to the Medicare level, but it failed. The state gave a one-time 10% increase to the retail rates (OEMS rates on the chart). They said they gave the ambulance industry a 10% increase. That was the thinking. The reality is 68% of the patients that are transported by Windsor did not get impacted by that 10% increase.

Councilor Eleveld said the 10% is negotiated by the insurance companies, probably close down to where Medicare is. Mr. Holdsworth explained the process.

Councilor Eleveld looked at the capital investment page. He sees the newest piece of equipment is 2017. There are also 6 cars. Why? Mr. Moylan explained they are down to five at this time. The fifth one is currently trying to be sold. Three out of four are licensed paramedic vehicles which hold our paramedic licenses from OEMS. This allows us to put a paramedic in a fly car to utilize them in that capacity or put them on an ambulance. Those licenses need to be held by a vehicle.

Councilor Eleveld asked what the fly car does. Mr. Moylan stated by having the license on the cars, it gives them the ability to put a paramedic and EMT on an ambulance and have that ambulance respond as a paramedic ambulance.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the five trucks. Why would we want five trucks within a two or three year period when you'll have to replace them in seven or eight years out? Mr. Holdsworth



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said even if you said yes today to one truck, that won't be here until a year down the road. It makes sense to do it now.

Councilor Eleveld asked why someone didn't come to them two years ago to say there are trucks with high mileage that need to be replaced. Did your Board of Directors not say to you why are you doing this? Mr. Moylan responded the Board of Directors at that time was not in tune to what was going on.

Councilor Eleveld asked who maintains the vehicles. Mr. Moylan said they use two fleet service companies. One is an ambulance specific fleet service which is also the factory warrantee shop for our ambulances and the other is just for fleet cars to maintain them.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the proposed bonding of the ambulance for \$1.25 million. Why did they make that suggestion versus the leasing? Mr. Holdsworth said he was putting options on the table for the town to decide what they'd like to do. Some towns want to pay for it and others want to bond it out as they do with firetrucks.

Councilor Eleveld said you have about \$400,000 of equipment. What is the difference between an ambulance stretcher and a power load stretcher system? Mr. Moylan said the ambulance stretcher, which have power components to them, alleviate the physical labor and stress on provider's backs. The other stretcher is the cot, the stretcher that everyone thinks of.

Councilor Eleveld asked about other equipment on the ambulance or within the ambulance department.

Councilor Eleveld asked how often the Board members meet and are they compensated. Mr. Moylan said they meet quarterly and they are not compensated.

Councilor Eleveld stated that the report has financials going forward but none going backwards. He'd be interested in seeing them from the last two years.

Councilor Smith stated on the 2019 EMS plan, it states that the WVA staffs three ambulances during the day and two at night. Is that accurate? Mr. Moylan said it was for 2019.

Councilor Smith stated on the 2019 EMS plan, there were several full-time and part-time paramedics and EMTs in addition to 10 volunteers. Is that still accurate? Mr. Moylan responded there are several of each for paid staff, paramedics and EMTs. The volunteers are probably down to three.

Councilor Smith stated on the 2019 EMS plan it shows that they operated 4 MIC (Mobile Intensive Care) level ambulances and two paramedic fly cars. Mr. Moylan stated that was correct for what we had in 2019. Since then we've increased it to five ambulance licenses and three fly car licenses.



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Councilor Smith said the public safety access points contact for your mutual aid companies in 2019 it said it was Ambulance Service of Manchester (ASM) if WVA is not available backed up by Bloomfield, Granby, Windsor Locks or AMR. Is that still accurate? Mr. Moylan stated those are all mutual aid companies. Now our primary for the last two years has been East Windsor.

Councilor Smith asked about how we rotate using the backup ambulances. Mr. Moylan said the dispatch center should probably use East Windsor first as they are the most reliable and available. Geographically, if it's in Rainbow, East Granby would be a smart choice instead of Hartford.

Councilor Smith inquired as to how stand by services are addressed or billed such as the Shad Derby, fire engine on standby, etc. Do we get compensation for any of those things? Mr. Moylan said currently they do not charge any of the town entities for standby services. Private events hosted in town are billed.

Councilor Smith asked if the sponsor hospital for EMS and the Police Department still use Hartford Hospital or is it St. Francis Hospital. Mr. Moylan replied it is Hartford Hospital. Only Police Department dispatch goes to St. Francis Hospital. Town Manager Souza added that St. Francis is for dispatch as they had the first emergency medical dispatcher or EMD protocol set up.

Councilor Smith said on the EMS 2019 report it said that hot responses were 5 minutes and cold responses were 8 minutes for the Police Department. Now, these times are longer. It goes to 7 and 10 minutes. Is that because we have fewer police officers on the road at one time now as compared to 2019? Town Manager Souza said it could be a variety of reasons.

Councilor Smith asked about the 9:00-9:00 time frame. His evaluation is very good. Monday-Friday the 9:00-9:00 works but on weekends it doesn't seem the same. If you were to do a third ambulance would you do it 7 days a week or 5 days per week where it is most predominant? Mr. Holdsworth stated that the current budget is for 7 days a week.

Councilor Smith asked if there are written mutual aid agreements with Manchester and Aetna? Mr. Moylan said yes along with Suffield, East Windsor and Bloomfield which is still in the works. Councilor Smith said the verbal will be with Granby and Windsor Locks? Mr. Moylan said yes.

Councilor Smith said in the 2019 plan there was a goal to apply for the National Accreditation through the Commission of Accreditation Ambulance Services. Is that still a goal? Mr. Moylan stated it is a goal but it hasn't been moved on in the past two years due to the lack of manpower.

Councilor Smith asked if they could briefly explain the role of the part-time Administrative person they're asking for? What duties/responsibilities would that person have? Mr. Moylan explained the duties of the administrative person.



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Councilor Smith asked if we will still be able to get the discounted rate for the equipment even if it is past the cutoff mark of September 30th. Mr. Holdsworth said no. It's a 3% increase.

Councilor Smith asked if the call volume is up because of the density of some of the projects like Great Pond or Poquonock Village. Do you get a lot of calls in that area or is it more convalescent homes, traffic accidents, etc.? What is your biggest call volume calls? Mr. Moylan said it is split between all of those categories. He added that I-91 is a huge factor to their call volume, along with the nursing homes in town and the elderly communities.

Councilor Smith stated he'd like to see financial statements and maybe an audit if that is possible. Mr. Moylan stated he could do that.

Mayor Trinks stated his frustration lies with the State of Connecticut. There was supposed to be legislation that got us reimbursement for I-91 emergency calls. He doesn't think that we've got a check for that. They were supposed to be adding to Medicare. There are all these assurances that we are getting but they are not being followed through. He feel \$0.35 on the dollar from Medicaid is not acceptable. He appreciates what EMS is facing.

Councilor Naeem thanked them both for coming to the meeting. She went over some points that she took away from the conversation so far.

Councilor Walker stated the board is definitely a weakness. As far as getting additional staff, Windsor has thousands of people working in health care but most of them cannot work on an ambulance. A trauma doctor cannot volunteer at the WVA. The qualifications they are requiring to work on the ambulance is putting the cart before the horse. If you volunteer 'x' amount of hours how about you get a break on your taxes, similar to what we do for the fire department.

Deputy Mayor Bress asked what kind of incentives are other towns offering to attract EMS personnel besides the obvious salary. What kind of incentives have you seen across the state to attract volunteers? Mr. Holdsworth has not seen a lot of successful things completed to attract volunteers. In smaller towns (2,000-3,000 people), there has been some success with coming out with a program as it becomes a social event. Those are agencies that do a call every other day not 11.5 calls per day. They are not ALS providers. It is exceptionally difficult to get volunteers on the EMS side. He compared the fire department's strategy to the EMS. They will continue to try and get volunteers.

Deputy Mayor Bress stated that is the point she wanted to bring to the forefront. Speaking about students, we've heard that EMS work is extremely difficult and challenging. She hopes that the Town Council and the EMS board can come up with some ideas in how we might provide a greater incentive for people to think about volunteering and to make sure that the salary and benefits are competitive. Seems to her that type of person is rare to do this kind of work.

Councilor Gluck Hoffman stated that there are people in the medical field who are not allowed to do volunteer work. If she is understanding correctly, it's the insurance that is a major issue



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with this state. Mr. Holdsworth stated that is not the issue. It's the State Health Department and training equivalency. She believes the board should have CPR training, just the basic understanding, so these folks can see what EMS is dealing with.

Councilor Black-Burke said it's a matter of life and death to her. There are fiscal components, vehicles, infrastructure and training needs. She wants to make sure the EMS board is getting the support they need so they can be vigilant and visible to assist in getting the Windsor Ambulance what they need.

Councilor Eleveld asked Town Manager Souza how much are we talking about in funding over the next couple of years. Town Manager Souza said that on page 31 of the report there is a pro forma that Mr. Holdsworth prepared. He went through the pro forma with the Council. Mr. Holdsworth gave more information on the budget.

Councilor Eleveld asked if we are to go with the approach Mr. Holdsworth mentioned of leasing them, are there one year buy outs at the end of the lease, the same as with the equipment? Mr. Holdsworth said no, they are a dollar buy outs.

Councilor Eleveld asked Town Manager Souza if we are looking to vote on the budget at the next meeting? Town Manager Souza said not necessarily voting on the budget. It could be a sense of the Town Council to move forward with developing the MOU. Town Manager Souza spoke of other ways the Council could go forward at this time.

Councilor Eleveld asked why not consider a disbursement of \$100,000 or at least order two ambulances at this time to start the ball rolling. The ambulances and equipment are old. Town Manager Souza said he believes we could do that. We'd have to speak to Mr. Holdsworth about the logistics of doing that. Mr. Holdsworth added that the manufacturers are not taking deposits because they know they can sell the truck. Town Manager Souza said perhaps Council can put money toward the patient care equipment. That would potentially reduce the lease payments, which would reduce the manual operation costs. That might be something for possible consideration.

Councilor Black-Burke asked if we could solidify recommendations and then be prepared to vote on November 6th. The Council discussed the possibility.

Councilor Eleveld asked that they come back with some frame work of accountability. It is a government issue. We need to button up on this financial accountability. We need to have a better understanding or control or maybe a regular report to the Council if we are going to be funding this on a regular basis to know where we are and how that looks.

Councilor Smith thanked them for their presentation tonight. When you initially said to purchase ambulances he thought it was a good idea, however, there are three that need to be replaced right now. He is suggesting a tweak of doing three now, one in the following year



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and then based on the metrics the next one after that. His concern is staffing levels. It's easy to buy the equipment, but it's harder to staff it. You can't get the equipment before you buy the ambulances because nothing will fit. Some equipment you can get like the cardiac monitors, etc. Is that correct? Mr. Holdsworth said it was not. The existing equipment that is specified for this will meet the current spec of the trucks. The plates that are already in existence are no longer compatible with the new system.

Councilor Smith asked Town Manager Souza if this would become like another enterprise fund. Town Manager Souza said he doesn't see it as an enterprise fund. He sees that if the Council chose to work with the WVA or Windsor EMS regarding a leasing approach, it would be built into that annual contribution.

Councilor Walker said we need to do something to help the WVA out. From what he has heard, he's thinking that something might be on the table for discussion and voting during the next Town Council meeting. Is that correct? Town Manager Souza yes that is correct.

Councilor Black-Burke stated something to consider is Medic 5 that is twelve years old and Medic 1 that has the highest mileage. She wanted to put that on the table for recommendation and consideration for the next Council meeting.

Town Manager Souza asked for clarification. Is the sense at this time working on the assumption that it would be both the patient equipment and vehicle replacement would be in a lease format versus a capital outlay? The Council left it up to Town Manager to decide which avenue would be the best. The Town Council then discussed the available options and Town Manager Souza gave his input.

Mayor Trinks thanked Mr. Holdsworth for an outstanding report.

3) ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Naeem and seconded by Councilor Gluck Hoffman to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Motion Passed 8-0-0 (Councilor Walker absent from room)

Respectfully Submitted,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary