



**TOWN OF WINDSOR
HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 14, 2023
HYBRID MEETING**

APPROVED MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Councilor Nuchette Black-Burke, Chair of the Health & Safety Committee, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with Councilor Ojala Naeem and Councilor Lenworth Walker present.

Staff Present: Peter Souza, Town Manager; Donald Melanson, Police Chief; Paul Goldberg, Fire Administrator; Frank Angelillo, IT Director; Dan Moylan, WVA; Bob Holdsworth, The Holdsworth Group

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3. PRESENTATION ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY

The Holdsworth Group, an emergency medical services consulting firm, compiled a report 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 consultant's report 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
- 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

Primary recommendations of the report include:

- Begin aggressively recruiting EMT and paramedic staff through word of mouth, social media, direct mail and developing in-house training programs to 'grow your own'
- Make capital reinvestments in medical equipment by taking advantage of capital leasing programs before 9/30/23 to lock in existing pricing and rates. Payments are deferred until the FY 25 budget.
- Create specifications and order five new identical ambulances on a staggered schedule as soon as possible. Recommended to place the order within 60 days. The acquisition will reduce down time and maintenance costs. Delivery time will be at least 18 months
- Add a dispatch priority field to each call for both EMS and police units so that response times to high and low priority calls can be better tracked
- Analyze call volumes, mutual aid use and completed transports monthly. Adjust staffing times of the peak unit to capture the most calls possible quarterly as needed
- Work together to create an Operating Agreement between Windsor EMS and the Town memorializing both the transparency of EMS operations and finances as well as the commitment from the Town in the form of planned subsidies to stabilize the system going forward. This has a by-product of assisting in recruiting since staff can see there is career stability in joining the Windsor EMS
- Utilizing the FY 24 approved budget resources, add ambulance coverage during the 9 AM – 9 PM peak period as soon as personnel can be hired

Councilor Black-Burke asked about the calls. Of those 1,900 calls, do we know if an ambulance was called to go out on the call? Mr. Holdsworth stated all of the 1,900 calls were answered by other agencies using their ambulances as the town did not have the resources available to take the call.

Councilor Naeem asked what are the stats and percentage of calls received? Mr. Holdsworth stated that the request for ambulances on average is 4,500 – 5,000 per year. Mr. Holdsworth added that 70% of transports are Medicare and Medicaid patients.

Councilor Walker stated he understood that some of the ambulances have to be replaced due to mileage, wear and tear. Some of the ambulances have issues. Are they being

used or are they just sitting there? Mr. Moylan responded that all but one ambulance is back this week. The one with the transmission issue is not back. It's been in the shop.

Councilor Walker asked about the vehicles. Who drives them? Mr. Moylan responded that the way that licensing works in the State of Connecticut is that you have a paramedic vehicle that holds the paramedic license. So right now the best way to deploy our paramedics is in a fly car. Three of these cars hold a license to have an operating paramedic. So the paramedic can be in the car if they don't have a unit to work with and be a first responder on the paramedic level or we can transfer them from a car into an ambulance on a paramedic level.

Mr. Holdsworth gave an explanation on the billing and stated that we should add a dispatch priority field to each call for both EMS and police units so that response times of high and low priority calls can be better tracked. He stated that overall, the numbers look good for Windsor. Councilor Black-Burke asked if that is part of the recommendation is to add that? Mr. Holdsworth replied yes, it is.

Councilor Walker asked if in the current dispatch system that the Police Department has, can new software be added into it. Mr. Holdsworth stated that they should be able to do that. This should not put any additional stress on the dispatchers.

Councilor Black-Burke asked will this be 30 days or 60-90 days. What is the response time? What is the time line? Mr. Holdsworth stated that with the system, if a citizen made a complaint about a response time on a particular call, the town has the ability to currently pull up every piece of data on that call to be able to identify when the police officer and when the ambulance got there.

Mr. Holdsworth went over some of the options his company has outlined in the report.

- Option 1: maintain the current system
- Option 2: invest in the Windsor EMS operated system long term
- Option 3: create a municipal EMS organization
- Option 4: outsource to another provider

Councilor Naeem asked if Mr. Holdsworth had a sense of what the cost would be if we go with an RFP? Mr. Holdsworth stated that if you wanted to go with an RFP and replace Windsor, first you'd have to go out and get someone who would commit to doing an RFP at a price you can afford. Then you'd have to hammer out a contract and from there you'd have to go to the State to petition to take the PSA away from Windsor. There are legal expenses in doing that. Mr. Holdsworth gave an example of a subsidy and how much it costs to get a basic life support ambulance. An ALS truck is running around \$600,000. We are looking here at a BLS truck and a half, that's \$600,000, an ALS truck is another \$600,000 and costs for a supervisor on top of that versus just \$600,000. Town Manager Souza added a PSA does not stay with the town it stays with whoever you contracted

with. Mr. Holdsworth then added that you cannot hold a PSA unless you did option number 3. In option 3 you would have the PSA because you would be the provider.

Mr. Holdsworth went over capital investments with the group.

Mr. Holdsworth recommends that the town order five new ambulances now. This gives the town all new equipment at once and it will make training and costs easier. It will take 18 months to get the vehicles so you can buy three as soon as possible, and have two be delivered a year after the first two.

Mr. Holdsworth stated that if the town chooses to make a 20% down payment at signing on clinical and patient movement equipment, the interest will be reduced to 1.9% and the annual payments will still begin July 2024. He doesn't think the savings of 1% per year is worth the \$96,000 down payment and recommends the no down payment option at 2.9%.

Councilor Naeem asked about the price that Mr. Holdsworth was talking about. Is that from an interest perspective or just the price for the equipment? Mr. Holdsworth stated it was just for the equipment. It also includes a warrantee, service, onsite maintenance, and replacements for the five years as per the contract.

Councilor Naeem asked how often we are replacing equipment currently. Mr. Moylan responded that the average stretcher is about 11 years old, cars are at about the 10 year mark, and everything else has an expected life of about 8 years.

Councilor Naeem asked if historically, it is something that we are replacing every year or are we trying to stretch it out? Mr. Moylan stated historically for the ambulances and the equipment, it's been to keep using it until it is gone and no longer usable.

Councilor Naeem stated she understands that we keep the equipment as they are still working and functioning, but does this have any type of direct tie into when you think about service providers and call times. Mr. Holdsworth stated for example a cardiac monitor went down, under the new plan within 6 hours there would be another monitor here in that five year period. If this one goes down now, there's no guarantee how long it will be down and that truck would then have to be reduced to basic life support.

Councilor Naeem stated let's say that we do this with the ambulances and it's two months out, this is all new equipment that won't be moved into the ambulance correct? Mr. Holdsworth said it can be transferred. The new truck would come without the new system installed in it. As the new medic 5 truck came in, the newer equipment that was put in per the lease would go from the current medic 5 truck to the new medic 5 truck. Mr. Moylan added that the equipment is all transferrable and it's \$1,500 to transfer it from one vehicle to the next one.

Councilor Naeem then asked about the \$250,000 offset they we are talking about, that does not include any equipment, correct? Mr. Moylan responded that was correct.

Councilor Naeem asked if there are any federal funding opportunities that we can go after? Is there much out there that we've done in the past or that the Windsor EMS has done to support capital purchases? Town Manager Souza stated that he has not seen anything in recent years that would go to a private ambulance entity. The fire service does have some federal grants but he's not seen them for the EMS. Paul Goldberg, Fire Administrator, added that it's relatively a very small amount that is given.

Town Manager Souza stated just to clarify neither one of these capital purchases require at the time of signing a down payment. Mr. Holdsworth responded no they do not. There is no penalty for whatever reason the WVA/town decided they only wanted four instead of five ambulances at this stage. Mr. Holdsworth said there would be no penalty.

Town Manager Souza added when you go to the patient care type of equipment, basically what we are doing is signing an agreement so that is a commitment. It's a hard commitment, not seeing a formal agreement of approximately \$103,000 over five years. Mr. Holdsworth added that at the end of that five year period, you would have the ability to refresh the equipment. You have the ability to go another year or two and stay under the manufacturer's suggested life with the service agreement and you'd have to pay for a service agreement after that. There's also the ability to do a buyout.

Councilor Naeem stated in the proposal will this increase the total of net ambulances we will have versus what we currently have? Mr. Holdsworth stated that there would still be five ambulances as the new ones will be replacements.

Councilor Naeem said she is not sure if this is tied back directly to if we have the right number of people and do we have the right system for dispatching. To her this is more a secondary piece. She is trying to get to the root of what the core problem was that started a lot of this conversation. Do we have enough people and are we moving fast enough in terms of dispatching?

Councilor Black-Burke went over the points of the March 2023 community meeting. The points that came up were the response time, scheduling issues, and 13 minutes for an ambulance response time. In looking at the Holdsworth Group's recommendations, yes, we need to actively be prudent. The staff was able to cover some things that were in arrears as well as adding one EMT. The other piece that she heard is reviewing the dispatch system and the response time. The last piece is looking at our mutual aid. Regarding Councilor Naeem's concern, there will be five new vehicles replacing the existing ambulances.

Councilor Black-Burke said she would like to hear more about the key pieces and were they heard as to what the community brought to us in March. Mr. Holdsworth stated the analysis was what the actual response times are. The important part about maintaining

the response times is having personnel to be able to respond. The other part of it is making sure that we have the capacity with those people and vehicles to get them there. Yet another part of it is the competition in a market place. We're trying to lure people from Hartford Healthcare and from AMR to Windsor EMS. Part of that is asking yourself if the organization is stable enough for them to take a chance to move to Windsor. So you'd look at the organization to see if it is stable enough by looking at their equipment and how much they invest in it and if they aren't used to having equipment that is down or not available. Everyone in ambulance services is investing in capital. He would argue that if you want response times to be up and be maintained you'd have to have people that come, people that stay and have reliable equipment to do patient care because a provider wants to be able to give the best possible patient care. One problem the Windsor EMS now has is it's a revolving door. That is not the fault of the EMS but rather due to the market.

Councilor Naeem asked if Mr. Holdsworth could speak about the recommendation for the operational deployment patterns. Mr. Holdsworth stated he spoke to that earlier.

Councilor Black-Burke stated we still have an obligation to respond to the community based on what they shared with us during the March meeting and how we got to that. We need personnel in order to get a lot of this to move. How do you address that? How do you keep individuals? She realizes that Councilor Naeem is looking at the cost but she's trying to see how we can get people on the bench. The other piece she doesn't want us to lose sight of is how are we holding the line on realizing the data contingency by having our own proven cycle as it relates to the call times going through dispatch. What recommendations are we going to give to the full Council and the broader community? Mr. Holdsworth stated there are a lot of moving parts in every EMS system. None of them are inexpensive. Personnel, ambulances and quality care are expensive. In looking at the timing of the mutual aid responses, that 12 hour block is where 70% of the EMS calls are being missed. It is clear that as Mr. Moylan is bringing people into the organization, that's where that truck will go. The recruiting is ongoing and the pay structure went into full effect as of July 1st. In the meantime, paramedics are being recruited.

Councilor Walker said he would have loved to see more information on looking at what Hartford Healthcare has to offer. His personal opinion when people like EMTs or paramedics want to move to other jobs is that they also want to look at benefits. So, amongst the different ambulance companies, they are looking at where they can get better benefits. Maybe if they had better benefits from Windsor, that might be a draw because the EMT crisis is not going anywhere. We know that it's not only in Connecticut. He thinks the larger systems like Hartford Healthcare offer a lot more. They have more resources. This additional information allows them to make a better, balanced decision. It wouldn't hurt if the Council could sit down and say somewhere, this is what we can offer. In the report, one of the things that were briefly mentioned to one of the barriers of moving forward is the agreement that the Volunteer Ambulance has with the Town of Windsor. In that agreement it was written that there was a Board of Directors and apparently they are not leading enough. Therefore, he'd like to know who these Board of

Directors are. Mr. Holdsworth stated that every Board of Directors that he's looked at in different EMS services have people that are serving (that have served for a while) and there's a need for some fresh rotation of personnel. They are meeting as often as they need to be, but perhaps they could meet a little more often. Bringing in some fresh blood to the organization is healthy.

Councilor Black-Burke stated that she believes the Holdsworth Group has hit on all the March items that were brought forward.

Councilor Black-Burke asked about the piece of the dispatchers and the priorities at 30 days or so. She wanted to follow up on that. Town Manager Souza said that will help with the next recommendation of analyzing the call volumes and mutual aid. That will help us and the EMS to go look at the data on a monthly and quarterly basis.

The committee discussed the next steps.

Councilor Black-Burke believes this should go to a Council workshop. That is her recommendation.

Town Manager Souza thanked Bob Holdsworth for the report. It's a thoughtful approach. The capital piece of the presentation was interesting. He didn't realize there was a lag on both sides of the vehicles and the patient care component. But he thinks the action the Town Council took for this budget season put us in a good position to be able to stabilize the Windsor EMS in terms of services and delivery. We have some ideas on how we can provide in-kind services to the Windsor EMS in terms of recruitment.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Town Manager Souza stated he has a report on the public comment on the Oliver Ellsworth situation. Marco Aglieco, the town's new Building and Facilities manager who has a background in HVAC, has spent time with the Board of Education's facility individuals and made adjustments to the system at Oliver Ellsworth. This gives it time to run through different weather to see how it performs. Two days after the Council met, he made those adjustments. He has not heard anything back from them yet. We are looking at a request for proposals regarding design services. That would be the next step. The immediate steps are adjusting the system and it will probably be another several days to see how those adjustments did. Then looking at an RFP for design services to potentially look at how that system can be improved. If these adjustments don't work, there will have to be physical adjustments made in terms of installing new units which would bring direct air into the building and the duct work throughout the building, especially to those classrooms that have been effected. He's reached out to the Board of Education to get more information from them to respond to some of the questions that the Council had at the Council meeting on August 7th. We are waiting to get that information back from the Board of Education. They have taken a variety of steps, from renting humidifiers to getting the building system analyzed.

The Chief of Police and his team are looking at the shot spotter. There are a few different companies that provide different approaches to that. One of those vendors are used for our fixed license plate readers. They already have a system in town that is fixed. They have some software equipment that we may be able to build off of by adding equipment and other locations to those fixed license plate numbers. There should be more information on it in 3-4 weeks.

Town Manager Souza said this committee has asked about how the town displays their call data. Chief Melanson and Jose Garibay from Information Technology are working on a mock up on how we may be able to display that. Right now it is static. Chief Melanson is looking at it to be more 'real' time. This has a mapping component with it and it is something that gets updated more regularly on a 30 day basis.

Councilor Black-Burke asked what wasn't done that we are at this point for the Oliver Ellsworth mold issue? Town Manager Souza said that he's not sure that there wasn't anything done but rather that the system was designed to bring in air through the classroom ventilators. That was the system designed at that point. The Board of Education has been working on this longer than he has been involved. He is waiting for additional information.

Councilor Black-Burke asked if the design that was presented to the school district for the HVAC system was needed or was something missed. How are we here three years later? What has occurred to the system? Town Manager Souza said the Board of Education has the primary responsibility to make adjustments as they observe the conditions on a regular basis.

Councilor Black-Burke inquired about the vendor for the license plate readers. Do you know the name of the system? Chief Melanson responded the system being used is called Raven. It's our shot detectors which is a system that is based on safety and shot camera systems. Councilor Black-Burke then asked if it's the same one as our license plate reader? Town Manager Souza said yes it is.

Councilor Black-Burke asked if we currently provide any of our loop feed of daylight to Raven? So, instead of tranching we could invent something. Could we just have a branch or something to one of our websites? Town Manager Souza asked Chief Melanson if he knew if Raven was asking for specific information. He added they do a large metropolitan study if not every other year its somewhere close to that. Chief Melanson said they received some data about Windsor, he's not sure if it's through us or through another database.

Councilor Naeem said what we are looking for is if there is a third party out there that is gathering 'real' time data from municipalities so that we don't have to build it ourselves. Town Manager Souza stated that there aren't any in 'real' time out there. Chief Melanson explained the system to the group.

Councilor Walker stated that we are looking at a shots fired system. What triggers this device? There are a bunch of individuals in the Greater Hartford area that set their car engines at a certain level where it sounds just like shots. How is that going to affect the shot fire system? Chief Melanson stated that the system is very distinctive and can separate the difference between a car muffler, fireworks and fire arms.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) June 8, 2023 Special Meeting

MOVED by Councilor Walker, seconded by Councilor Black-Burke to approve the unapproved minutes of the March 1, 2023 Special meeting as presented.

Motion Passed 2-0-1 (Councilor Naeem abstained)

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Councilor Naeem, seconded by Councilor Walker, to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

Respectfully submitted by,

Helene Albert
Recording Secretary