

To: Cape Elizabeth Town Council

From: Michael K. McGovern



Re: Rescue Coverage

Date: September 23, 2011

Since the Town Council workshop in September, the Rescue Study Committee has met to make a recommendation regarding staffing for the Cape Elizabeth Rescue.

Their attached report recommends that we maintain a rescue service that is primarily continued through our on-call rescue volunteers but that is supplemented by an Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider or paramedic serving on a per diem basis for 9 or 10 hours a day, 7 days a week.

I recommend we implement the recommendation effective January 1, 2012. The funds would come out of the rescue special fund, but I anticipate that additional funds will be needed from the general fund effective January 1, 2013. There are just not enough revenues in the general fund and the federal government caps what we can charge.

Per diems are contractual employees who receive very limited benefits.

The recommended pay levels based on a survey of regional pay levels for rescue per diems:

ALS Certified \$16.25 per hour

Paramedic Certified \$ 18.25 per hour.

The assumed annual cost is \$ 76,394 based on a 10 hour day all at the paramedic rate and assuming 15% costs above straight wages. There would likely be a partial offset of this cost as fewer call personnel would be responding during the day. I hesitate to provide an estimate for any offset.



Cape Elizabeth Fire Department

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To: Michael K. McGovern, Town Manager

From: Peter Gleeson, Fire Chief

Subject: Rescue Staffing Proposal

Date: September 23, 2011

Per the request of the Town Manager, a committee of emergency responders was created to look at the future needs of the Rescue Company, a division of the Cape Elizabeth Fire Department. The committee members are: Chief Peter Gleeson (EMT-B), Deputy Chief Jim Wilson (EMT-I), Rescue Captain Steve Peters (EMT-B), Rescue Lt. Casey Pearson (EMT-B), Rescue Lt. Tim Cram (EMT-P), and Rescue member Maryanne Denison (EMT-I). Rescue Lt. Lynn Klug-Jordan (EMT-P) will also be part of the committee but she was unable to attend the meeting. The committee held its first meeting on Thursday September 15th 2011.

Background

- The Cape Elizabeth Rescue is a Fire Department Company under the direction of the Fire Chief.
- They are staffed by on call "volunteers" who are compensated for hours worked (on calls or at training).
- They respond to approximately 450-500 calls for service a year (Avg. 1.2-1.4 calls per day). This is a decrease from near 600 from early 2000.
- The only scheduled coverage is "night duty" 10:00 pm to 6:00 am each night, where 3-4 members are required to be available and respond to all calls during that period.
- Currently the other sixteen (16) hours each day are covered using the age old volunteer system of maintaining a large membership and hoping there are enough members available at any given time to respond to the call.
- Cape Elizabeth Rescue is licensed by the State of Maine (Maine EMS) at the Basic level, permitted to the Paramedic level.
- Maine EMS recognizes three (3) levels of pre-hospital responders.
 - EMT-B (Basic) which is the entry level and these responders can provide basic first aid, use an AED, and some other skills.
 - EMT-I (Intermediate), this level has more education and can administer medications, interpret EKGs (heart monitor) and defibrillate.
 - EMT-P (Paramedic); a paramedic is the highest level of pre-hospital care. Paramedics can do more advanced treatments.
 - Cape Elizabeth's responders are a mostly EMT-Basics with 11 ALS responders (6 EMT-Intermediates and 5 EMT-Paramedics).

The purpose of the committee is to determine if the current system of covering emergency calls is meeting the needs of the community and fulfilling the requirements of Maine EMS. The committee determined that while the current system is meeting the needs of the community it is very fragile as a

large amount of calls, particularly during the daytime hours, are being covered by a small number of responders. As previously mentioned by the Town Manager response times have been increasing each year, the number of responders is decreasing. More calls are requiring the help of the Engine Companies due to a lack of response from Rescue members and South Portland Fire is being called more often to provide either responders and/or ALS responders.

Challenges to current system

- Initial training required to become an EMS provider has increased dramatically. To become an ALS provider is almost impossible in a call company setting. Becoming an EMT-B requires close to 100 classroom hours, Paramedic is almost 2 years of classroom time. The pool of EMS providers that live in town is shrinking. As members move or “retire” not all are being replaced.
- Annual training required to maintain licensure is also major time commitment and is time above what is required by the company to respond on calls and maintain equipment.
- Maine EMS regulations establish the “Standard of Care” which dictates what treatments are expected/required, not local departments/boards. ALS is normally required.
- Hospitals have increased expectations of EMS responders due to changes and budget cuts. The hospitals expect more procedures be done in the field.
- Calls currently can take 1 ½ to 2 hours to complete. This is a lot of unplanned time for responders to sacrifice from their day to day events. Some members cannot commit 2 hours due to other commitments that would overlap. For comparison most “fire” calls take only 20-30 minutes to complete.
- National trends are showing reduced participation in “volunteer” fire departments’ country wide.
- Volunteerism, in general, has been declining in all public aspects (youth sports, clubs, boosters, community boards) due to the economy, both parents working, some with multiple jobs, and lack of free time to “donate”
- Due to the unpredictable nature of emergency calls and volunteer availability we feel it is prudent to have a plan ready to implement prior to the system failing.

Recommendation: Hire a per-diem employee(s) to cover core hours

- Coverage would be for one (1) ALS provider (Paramedic/Intermediate) for 9 or 10 hours a day, seven days a week. Current statistics show that 50-55% of the Cape EMS calls occur between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm; these would be covered by this coverage plan.
- The per-diem would be on duty at the Town Center Station and would respond to all calls for service in the ambulance.
- When not responding on calls he/she would report to the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief and would have daily job duties such as station cleaning, equipment checks and maintenance, fire inspections, and/or other projects as needed.

Pros

- Guaranteed ALS coverage during difficult coverage times (day).
- Additional workload accomplished, which currently is difficult to accomplish each year.
- Improved response times.
- If the per-diem is not needed on the call then he/she can return to cover next call and company members can handle call as before.
- Mentor/training opportunities.
- No benefits, retirement vacation pay/issues.

Cons

- Per-diem employees are challenging to schedule and will require management hours to assure coverage on a daily basis.

- Will still require a response of the volunteers to all calls (will need a driver)
- Still need night coverage as currently established and responses during uncovered time.
- Will begin the demise of the volunteer system.