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of September 1, ARS is now charged for all supplies and medications used in pre-hospital care. These items have historically been supplied at no charge to ARS by the local hospitals. This change will impact the ARS budget by an estimated \$8,000 per year, worsening an already perilous operating budget.

Weekday Response

Over the years, as the average daily demand for emergency medical services has increased, the ability of Andover Rescue Squad to provide adequate and timely emergency medical coverage during weekday business hours has diminished due to other commitments held by its volunteer members. Because of this, there has been a noted increased frequency of Franklin Fire Department (FFD) responding to EMS calls in Andover.

To combat this particular issue, ARS has requested and received a proposal from FFD for EMS coverage in Andover from 5 AM to 5 PM, Mondays through Fridays. The preliminary \$8,500 cost for this option is modest for the service provided, but it would add another significant expense to the ARS budget. However, to ignore the problem places the residents of Andover in greater jeopardy.

ARS Proposal To The Town

These two large additional expenses, coupled with a variety of other expenses that have not been adequately covered by ARS budgets of recent years, mean that ARS could be bankrupt as early as 2010. Therefore, Andover Rescue Squad is proposing to the selectmen and the residents of Andover a plan to restructure ARS into a Town department.

The proposal includes another very significant change: The newly-formed Andover EMS would begin billing for the services it provides, just as hospitals, other ambulance services, and doctors' offices do. Funds received from billing would then be dedicated to a fund for capital expenditures for the eventual need to replace the ambulance and other medical equipment.

The proposal would allow town leaders and residents to determine their own destiny regarding emergency medical services while equitably distributing the

costs and responsibilities. As it stands now, the rough estimate for an operating budget of a newly-formed Andover EMS would be approximately \$42,000, excluding capital funds.

In the coming weeks and months, the officers of ARS will be meeting with the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen to draft a formal written proposal. ARS welcomes the input, thoughts, concerns, solutions, and possible alternatives from all residents. This proposal will affect every resident of Andover, so everyone is urged to participate.

Questions And Answers

To help initiate an open dialogue, here a few anticipated questions and answers:

Q: What are the biggest problems the Andover Rescue Squad faces?

A: The two biggest problems are:

- ARS is not always able to respond in a timely fashion to medical emergencies during weekday daytime hours due to a lack of available EMTs. ARS is an all-volunteer squad, and most members are not available during normal work hours.
- Our operating costs have been on the rise, and just this summer, due to federal regulation, our resource hospital announced a change in medical supply restocking that will significantly increase our cost to provide care.

Q: If a private company, such as Twin Rivers Ambulance Service, can operate successfully through billing alone, why can't ARS do the same?

A: Private ambulance services make most of their money performing patient transfers between hospitals and other specialty healthcare facilities. This generates more revenue than a 911 service such as ARS.

Additionally, companies like Twin Rivers run 10 to 15 times the call volume that ARS does, which is the biggest factor. If an ambulance runs all day, the revenue is able to offset the expense. Low run numbers like ARS has will not cover expenses, never mind break even.

Q: What would happen if ARS simply dissolved and Andover no longer had a responding ambulance?

A: Andover residents would likely not be able to simply dial 911 in the case of an emergency medical situ-

ation. Residents would have to keep a list of phone numbers for other responding EMS agencies and call each one directly until they found an agency with available resources. In the effort to find adequate daytime coverage during weekdays, ARS was unable to find an agency interested or able to cover Andover on nights and weekends.

Q: If other towns have successful volunteer squads that bill and collect donations, why can't ARS do the same?

A: Though we do receive generous donations, the donations and billing alone are not enough money to offset our operating cost and capital expenditures. Other towns may be able to provide service 24x7, but at this time ARS has inadequate weekday coverage, which means a timely EMS response from FFD would be best for all.

Q: What if the Town of Andover agrees to pay for daytime coverage, but does not want to take on ARS as a Town department?

A: As mentioned earlier, the squad cannot continue to fund its operations without receiving additional income. Even with daytime coverage provided, the town still needs first responders during the day, and we must be able to provide care and transport during nights and weekends. Additionally, there is still not enough money to put away for capital equipment purchases and a future ambulance replacement purchase.

Q: Is it possible that the difficulties for daytime coverage could eventually

also apply to nighttime and weekend coverage?

A: We would like to think not, but that is entirely possible. There is no way to tell if we will always be able to rely strictly on available volunteers.

Q: If Franklin Fire Department is willing to cover Andover's EMS service during weekday business hours for a contracted fee, would they be willing to cover Andover 24x7?

A: FFD is not ready to commit to a 24x7 contract for EMS service at this time. They have agreed to provide EMS coverage for the Town of Andover Monday through Friday, from 5 AM to 5 PM, for one year (2010) with a contract, but this is a trial basis and will be evaluated by both communities at the end of that year.

Q: How much of an impact will there be on taxes if the Town of Andover votes to accept Andover Rescue Squad as a Town department?

A: We are currently in the process of developing a formal budget to propose to the Selectmen and the Budget Committee. Had the estimated \$42,000 ARS budget been part of the 2009 Town budget, a \$200,000 property would have seen an additional \$30.80 in property taxes. Look for a more precise potential tax impact in the *Beacon* by the first of November.

Please direct any correspondence regarding this proposal in writing to Andover Rescue Squad, PO Box 209, Andover 03216

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