

ISSUES AT TOWN MEETING

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There are three general ambulance types with several subtypes. Type I is based on a truck body with a separate driver compartment. Most heavy duty ambulances are of this type and are used by municipalities far larger than Andover.

Type II ambulances are a long-wheelbase van with an integral cab design. This type is most commonly used by privately owned or operated transporting companies for the purpose of interfacility patient transfers.

Type III ambulances, like ours, are based on a van chassis rather than a truck chassis, but with the cab as an integral part of the ambulance. Within the Type III class, estimates for varying vehicle styles are light-duty chassis (\$155,000), which see an average of five to six years of use; medium-duty chassis (\$175,000), which other departments have indicated last between seven and eight years (ours is now nine years old); or a heavy-duty chassis (\$210,000), which has been lasting nine to twelve years.

The anticipated years of use seen here are for departments with 24 / 7 / 365 crews with annual call volume per ambulance approaching 2,000 calls per year. Andover's call volume is only a fraction of that, but hours operated, increased dis-

tance traveled, road and environment conditions, as well as the simple passage of time all come into play when estimating the life expectancy of our ambulance.

Mileage Calculations

The exact year in which we will be forced to replace our ambulance is uncertain. With proper care and maintenance, we could see three to five more years of reliable service with our current ambulance. However, our ambulance will then be 12 to 15 years old with about 50,000 miles.

In addition to miles, we must calculate idling hours. Ford Motors estimates that one hour of idle time is equal to approximately 25 miles of driving. Averaging one hour of idle time per call, times 150 to 175 calls per year, times 12 to 15 total years will mean that our ambulance at time of replacement will have the equivalent of 45,000 to 65,000 additional miles above the odometer reading, or 95,000 to 115,000 "total used miles."

At such time, reliability becomes a significant issue. At no time should we place the lives or well-being of our residents in jeopardy simply because the ambulance won't start or can't make it to the nearest hospital.

Applying For Grants

The idea of applying for grants to offset the pending ambulance replacement

cost is worth consideration. Preliminary inquiries at this early stage seem to indicate that our roughest hurdle will be a population benefit versus cost analysis.

Like you, providers of grant dollars like to see the most bang for their buck. Providing \$100,000 or more toward an ambulance to serve 10,000 people (in Hooksett, for example) certainly looks like a wiser investment for the grant-making foundation than providing the same amount to serve 2,000 people (in Andover, for example).

This population versus cost analysis may explain why regional ambulance services are growing in popularity. The obvious downside to a regional service is that instead of an on-scene average time under 10 minutes, the average time increases to 15 to 20 minutes due to the larger area served. Unfortunately, the bean counters often don't see all of the implications or effects of their decisions.

By establishing this year a capital reserve fund for our eventual ambulance replacement and adding \$25,000 annually to the fund, we should have half of the needed funds by 2015. Perhaps a grant that offers matching funds will be our best option then. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

In the meantime, we have to prepare the best we can for what we know is coming. Saving funds over a period of time is vastly preferential to raising the funds all at once.

Discontinuing A Class 6 Road (Warrant Article 12)

By Arch Weathers

Friends of Beech Hill

At Town Meeting, voters will be asked to support a petitioned warrant article to discontinue a portion of Beech Hill Road.

In October of 2011, residents living at the end of Beech Hill Road were informed by a developer of his intention to upgrade the surface of a section of Class 6 road in order to access his subdivision.

His company purchased the top 270 acres of the Fenvale Development in 2005. The original site plan, including the upper lots, was approved by the Planning Board in the mid-1980s. Because this acreage is in the Forest and Agriculture Zone, a variance was required from the Andover Zoning Board of Adjustment.

This approval included a dedicated and recorded "paper" road plat with access from Route 4. The access was constructed to rigorous specifications for the sole purpose of servicing the upper lots. Logging activities to provide views and to rough in a corridor for a private drive along the stone wall boundary on the western side were completed this winter.

The development company, with extensive experience in Florida subdivisions, intends to forego the approved plat because of convenience and cost issues.

RSA 674:41-I(d) provides a mechanism whereby a developer, using privately maintained, privately owned road frontage, may satisfy local zoning requirements necessary for building permits.

The Class 6 portion of Beech Hill Road would then serve as the connector. Upgrading the surface of a Class 6 road to Class 5 standards simply requires permission from either the Road Agent or the Board of Selectmen (RSA 236:9-12), and because of its status as a Class 6 road, the Board is not bound by any requirements as to maintenance and liability.

Over the course of the next several years, this has the potential to significantly increase the flow of traffic along the entire length of Beech Hill Road to an unsustainable level given the road's current deterioration (per the Road Agent). Research shows that this scenario ultimately leads to a petition to lay out a Class 5 road over the Class 6 road, which would then add more maintenance expense.

In designing an appropriate response to the level of threat to this scenic corridor, the Friends of Beech Hill felt that four tests needed to be met:

- Safety: The corridor in question contains an 18% grade and limited line of sight.
- Cost: Increased tax dollars required to accommodate increased traffic
- Preserving the Scenic Designator voted by the Town in 1978: Exposed tree roots in the right-of-way will suffer permanent damage and kill the trees lining the road.
- Create a level of permanence from which a mechanism could be created to provide, through private easements, a trail system that would be in keeping with the intent of the Master Plan.

After reviewing the possibilities, the only mechanism that satisfied all four tests was to formally discontinue 690 feet – the least amount necessary to respond to the threat, while at the same time allowing for the appropriate access to the subdivision from Route 4 as approved.

If passed, the discontinuance will then serve as a platform from which a private easement can be designed and held in perpetuity by a land trust and managed locally by the Andover Conservation Commission. What was a burden will now provide a benefit of wide-ranging possibilities for the townspeople to enjoy – perhaps a trail system with connecting links to the Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway, or a school program to map ancient cellar holes.

Most importantly, taxpayers will be relieved of additional tax expense due to the difficult-terrain road costs that would be avoided, and discontinuance will diffuse a potentially dangerous use of Beech Hill Road, one of Andover's most beautiful pastoral by-ways. 

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