

From: Blooming Grove Township
Board of Supervisors
Ref: Emergency Services Commission
Special Ambulance Report
Dated: September 28, 2015

Date: October 28, 2015

To all concerned,

The Blooming Grove Township Board of Supervisors would like to commend the Emergency Services Commission for all of their hard work, dedication and commitment to the task of researching and recommending a course of action regarding ambulance service to the township.

During the course of this investigation the commission was able to identify deficiencies within the Hemlock Farms Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company, ambulance division, and the resultant negative effects on the fire division. The following key issues were noted:

1. The ambulance division and paid EMT staff are managed and supervised by a part-time volunteer manager.
2. Bookkeeping, submission of insurance forms and relations with their outside billing service is performed by a volunteer member of the ambulance service.
3. Operating the Hemlock Farms Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company with two divisions, fire and ambulance, is creating operational and financial problems including a decrease in morale among firefighters. Also noted, the volunteer firefighter division is irreplaceable.
4. HFVF&A comingles funds into one general account making it impossible to accurately analyze their financial health.
5. Lack of full-time, professional management for the paid EMT staff has resulted in a lax staff. Potentially, the township could be named as a defendant in the event of an ambulance related negligence law suit.

6. Report of serious operational problems resulting from a lack of professionalism and proper supervision including:
 - a. Staff insubordination.
 - b. Improper interaction with members of fire division.
 - c. Failure to perform routine housekeeping at base location.
 - d. Failure to properly maintain equipment.
 - e. Tampering with security camera equipment.
 - f. Vandalism to emergency response equipment.
 - g. Delay or failure to respond to emergency calls.
7. Voluntary contributions of supporting funds from the public are not consistent or dependable.
8. Lax billing practices to insurance carriers have resulted in a failure to make full collection from these sources.
9. Volunteer administrative and financial officers at the HFVF&R, assisted by outside accounting professionals, are unable to produce accurate and detailed financial records.
10. The lack of accountable financial controls endangers the viability of the fire and ambulance divisions.
11. The Commission recognizes the high degree of commitment and sacrifice to all of the volunteers. However, good intentions cannot guarantee the continuation of the ambulance service now or in the future.

The Commission identified the following positive aspects of a change to paid professional ambulance service:

Commercial providers have:

- a. Redundant staffing
- b. HR departments to ensure compliance with required certifications, additional training, testing, drug testing
- c. Continuous mechanical maintenance on a fleet of ambulances
- d. Integrated billing procedures using real-time form submission to insurance carriers
- e. Commercial companies would seek to rent garage space from HFVF&A

- f. The township will not have to provide a fuel allowance to a commercial service
- g. Commercial service providers would be better able to meet the demands for an increase in service requests
- h. Termination of the HF ambulance division would benefit the morale of the fire division

Conclusion of the Board of Supervisors:

The Board of Supervisors would be remiss in not acknowledging the severe and numerous problems which have and/or still exist within the ambulance division and the adverse effect it has had on the fire division. Yet, we cannot forget the years of dedication and service by the volunteers who have selflessly carried the ambulance service to the present.

Additionally, this Board has weighed the benefits and dangers of contracting with a professional ambulance company. Among them, should the township elect to disband the volunteer/paid ambulance service and sell the equipment, we may place ourselves in a financially unbearable position should a commercial company decide the township is not generating enough revenue for their corporate needs.

It is the conclusion and recommendation of the Board of Supervisors to fix the existing ambulance service utilizing the recommendations of the Emergency Services Commission. Beginning with the hiring of professional management, we believe the existing ambulance service can and will be a viable service provider. The Board of Supervisors will schedule an open public hearing for the purpose of addressing comments and questions.

Nicholas Mazza, Chairman
Blooming Grove Township
Board of Supervisors