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A Special Meeting of the Town Board was held on Thursday, May 2nd, 2013 at the Community Center with the following members present: Richard Rowland, Supervisor; Daniel Pemrick, Thomas Kinsella, Daniel Cochran and Walter Chandler, Councilman. Also present was Highway Supt. Walter Barss and approximately 80 residents.

Supervisor Rowland opened the Public Informational Meeting at 7:00 PM for the purpose of soliciting public input regarding the Ambulance Committee Report. Clerk presented proof of legal publication. Supervisor Rowland asked anyone wishing to speak to please come to the front of the room, give name & address for the record. All comments must be addressed to the Town Board only. Each speaker will be allowed 5 minutes. Kinsella, C. made a brief presentation from the Ambulance Committee. Currently the Town receives ambulance service through Empire which operates out of the fire station on West Avenue in Saratoga. The Town has approximately 300 to 350 calls per year. The committee looked at several options available to the Town for ambulance service and this evening they were looking for input from everyone to make sure that the correct decision is made. The first option would be to continue to use the same service currently in place. The second was for the Town to run our own service, however the committee has dismissed that option due to the number of calls per year making it very expensive. The third option would be to contract with a non-for-profit service. There are 3 located in adjacent Towns that the Town could contract with to provide an ambulance in a central location in Town. The Fire Department has offered to house the ambulance at the firehouse on South Greenfield Road on a temporary basis. The fourth option would be to go to a non-for-profit service and have them run out of their own house. The fifth option was to divide the Town into thirds and contract with the 3 services having Jessup's Landing cover the northern part of Town; Community covering the western part and Wilton covering the eastern part of Town. A homeowner with a house assessed at \$150,000. is currently paying approximately \$11.00 for the services received from Empire. The 2nd option to operate a Town service is much too expensive and not being considered. If a non-for-profit ambulance service was located in a central location in Town the cost would be approximately \$61.00. The committee did not come up with a cost for the 4th option to have a non-for-profit running from their own house. It would be somewhere between \$22.00 and \$61.00. The cost for the 5th option which would be to divide the Town into thirds and contract with 3 services would be approximately \$22.00. These are rough estimates that were developed by the committee. Final prices will have to be obtained once it is determined which option the Town would like to pursue. Kinsella, C. stated that every year when the Town Board works on the budget they have had to take money out of the fund balance and if they continue to draw from the balance it is not going to last forever. There could be no change in taxes if the Board decided to change the services provided to the Town. For example they could pave less miles of road per year and reduce the youth and senior services. He added that if option 3 were chosen the Town would have to come up with a long term solution as to where to house the ambulance and that would result in additional costs. Kinsella, C. explained that there is advanced life service where there is a paramedic on every call or basic life service

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which is the next level down. He would be interested in knowing what type of service the residents would like to see.

Mary Vetter, 350 Porter Road – She believed that the Town needed better service than Mohawk considering the fact that there have been times that they have arrived at the scene without proper equipment, they have gone to the wrong place, etc. She felt that the best option would be to consider a service that would be centrally located in the Town and start incorporating the expenses into the budget. Having a proper ambulance in Town should be a #1 priority.

Ernest Mann, 653 No. Creek Road – He felt that this was a really important decision that needed to be made. He would like to see good service and he believed it could be done. He felt that the committee did a very good job and put together good recommendations. He believed that a long term solution needed to be developed. That does not mean that you have to continue with one vendor or another. You have a process in place and things may change from time to time. He believed that some of the core requirements would be time sensitivity, qualified people, good equipment and good reputation. Once selected there should be a criteria to evaluate them. He stated that he attended a few of the committee meetings and was concerned with the comments he heard regarding the dissatisfaction of the current service. He felt that the financials were going to be important. He believed that the community was fairly prosperous and should be able to get a really good ambulance service. The Town should be creative in their funding. The Fire Dept. sends around envelopes looking for donations. He thought that people would be willing to give if they were not being taxed.

Rick Schwartzbeck, 236 Plank Road – Has lived in Town for over 40 years, member of the Fire Dept. for over 20 years and retired from the Highway Dept. He went to some of the committee meetings and has done a lot of research of his own. His main concern at the moment was cost. He asked if advanced life support was necessary at this point in time. He was not sure how many of the calls this past year required advanced life support above what the Fire Dept could handle. He stated that the Fire Dept. does a great job. They have \$20,000. in their budget dedicated to EMS. Three of the firehouses have EMS and there are 2 fast cars in the district. He was worried about a duplication of service. Many of the volunteer squads have had problems, such as Saratoga, Corinth, Moreau & Thurman. The State continues to come up with more mandates for volunteers regarding their training. He was a volunteer himself for many years, however he was concerned as to whether or not it was going to be cost effective for the Town at this point in time. He stated that this Town was a blue collar bedroom community with 76% of the residences in this Town assessed for under \$300,000. He explained that his wife has property on Bockes Road that is assessed for \$140,000. The Highway tax on that property is \$207. The proposed \$61. increase is 29% of the current Highway tax. He believed that the Town Board should have something in black and white outlining the costs. The taxpayers need to know what the costs are going to be and it should be up to the people to decide what type of service they want.

Bob Hyndman, 164 Denton Road – Mr. Hyndman stated that his biggest concern was with raising taxes. We currently have a service where there are 2 vehicles, paramedics, EMT's, etc. We are not without service and there should be no rush to make

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a decision. The Town needs to take their time moving forward. He was not in favor of raising taxes significantly for a service that we already have. In reviewing the report, he felt that there was a real bias against the current service and against for-profit businesses. He felt this was interesting because the two ambulance services that folded and one of the reasons the Town is even having this conversation were non-for-profits. The report stated that non-for-profits have better, more expensive, state of the art vehicles, which means that they are spending more money. He was not personally interested in having the Rolls Royce of ambulances. He would like the adequate and safe service. He felt that the Fire District does a really good job, however believed that they had bad days and the other ambulance services do as well. The report does not look into their service records. Another option that has been brought to the attention of the Town, he believed after this report was written, was the fact the Prestwick Chase was going to put up its own emergency station on their property on Daniels Road. There was some discussion regarding the donation of the structure to the Town. He felt that this would allow for other options and that this needs to be looked into.

Stan Weeks, 4 Ashlor Drive – Mr. Weeks stated that he was a conservative republican living in a conservative County and a conservative Town. He felt that the reason Saratoga County was so successful in the democratic controlled state was because it was a conservative group of people. Last year when Empire was appointed there was a group of people really unhappy up front before Empire had even made a single call in this Town. He came to an ambulance committee meeting and felt that it should have been called “anybody but Empire” meeting. The bias was so strong and the statements were so strong that he went back to the Town Board meeting and stated that if the statements were all true then Empire should be gone now and if not, we better stop saying this stuff about them. A survey was taken of people who have used the service. The survey results indicate that the majority of people considered the service as excellent. The next paragraph in the report basically states “so what do they know, they are just the customer”. The average citizen has little or no experience with ambulance services and the committee recognizes the limited usefulness of this information. He would argue, who do you survey to find out what the service was like? The report indicated that the structure that Empire works from was older then the structures utilized by other ambulance corps. He stated that it was good enough for Saratoga Emergency (SEMS). The report also stated that the ambulance and equipment used by Empire was on average older than that utilized by other ambulance services. He did not believe that if they pulled up to a call with a 2007 Van with 150,000 miles rather than a Lexus no one was going to say that they did not know what they were talking about. As long as the building and equipment were serviceable and approved by the State he did not see what the problem was. The report also states that one of the disadvantages of Empire was that they operate as a for-profit business. He asked how many people worked for a for-profit business or owned one. He felt that being a for-profit business was not a negative, it was just the way that they function. If they did not do a good job for their customers, they would not stay in business. As far as the comment regarding radios, the contract can/should specify that the ambulance has to be equipped with radios. The conclusion of the report suggests that the choice comes down to using a service that merely meets the

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minimum standards or using a higher level of care at a modestly higher level of expense. He did not feel that six times what was being paid now was modestly higher.

Mike Aquino, Empire Vice President – He stated that Empire Ambulance Service was an advanced life support agency. They are governed by New York State Dept. of Health and are continuously inspected for vehicle and equipment compliance. They are currently in compliance and have been for many years. They currently contract with Saratoga Hospital, Glens Falls Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital to perform emergency and non-emergency transports. They have contracted with each of the facilities for over 20 years and perform hundreds of advanced life support emergency calls for each one of these facilities every year. Each of the facilities have told them that they provide an excellent service to the hospital and the communities that they serve. Approximately 1 year ago, they began responding to 911 emergency calls in areas of Saratoga County. In February 2012, the City of Saratoga Springs contracted with them to back up the City Fire Department. They are very satisfied with the service that has been provided and have recently renewed their contract. They completed their first year of providing service to the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in 2012 who stated that they did an excellent job covering all of their venues and have also recently renewed their contract. He stated that they receive many letters from family members and patients throughout the year thanking them for the compassionate care that was provided to them. He provided the Board a copy of a poem that they recently received and have hanging in their communication center.

John McPhillips, Brigham Road – He has lived in Town for 30 years. He agreed with Mr. Weeks that \$11 was a lot different than \$61. He added that he has not heard much about objective criteria, why Empire is not right and why some unnamed service with who knows what resources they have, are going to fill in for what Empire has said they are doing to Saratoga Hospital, Saratoga Springs, Glens Falls Hospital, etc. Mr. McPhillips stated that nothing is perfect in this world. He added that we are in an age of consolidation. There should be objective criteria for judging the cost. Without that objective criteria and equal objective criteria for choosing another service he did not know how you could do that.

Dan Lynch, 4 Pine Robin Road - Mr. Lynch thanked whoever put the flyer in his mailbox. He had no idea that there was any discussion regarding ambulance service going on. In looking over the flyer, it was pretty alarming to think that there could be a tax increase of \$80 to \$106 per thousand. He did not want to be spending his money on a system that he had no information on, no history of, etc. If there is some special interest involved in this, the tax payers should know all the facts. Mr. Lynch was pretty happy with the service that was currently in place. They have been in business for many years and are doing a pretty good job.

Fred McNeary, 264 Daniels Road – Mr. McNeary stated that he was here both personally and on behalf of Prestwick Chase. He stated that he was at a recent Town Board meeting when the ambulance report was discussed. After the meeting he read the report and decided to do a little research of his own. He also believed that the report was biased. Being that he runs a for-profit business he almost felt that it was insulting. He stated that he was the operator of Prestwick Chase and they are planning an

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expansion. He did not want this ambulance service decision to involve his expansion. They realize that they have roughly 100 calls out of the 300 calls that the Town has each year and they are using a lot of the service. Mr. McNearly asked if options 3, 4 & 5 included 1 or 2 ambulances. Kinsella, C. stated there would be 1. Mr. McNearly felt that one ambulance was a good starting point. However, if that ambulance was out on a call then you would have to go to mutual aid and that could take quite some time. The numbers show that it could possibly work however it would cost our community a lot of money. More than likely, the costs indicated in this report would probably double to give you sufficient coverage in this Town. Prestwick Chase realizes that they have a need. If they get the necessary approvals and are able to expand, the number of calls is going to increase. In order to give back to not only their community but the whole community, they have proposed to donate a piece of property and build the building, a 4 bay unit, to house an ambulance. The building would be located on Daniels Road which is not centrally located in the Town. He drove the most direct route from the Greenfield Fire Station to Lake Desolation which was 7 miles. He then came back down Middle Grove Road and across to Daniels Road and it was 6 ½ miles. He believed that the people in the very north end of the Town understand that it might take an extra 5 or 10 minutes to get there. When he moved here from Saratoga Springs he realized that it was going to take an extra 5 or 10 minutes then it did in the City. For Prestwick Chase, he did some research on Empire, Wilton Emergency and a few other services. He visited the Wilton Squad building and understands the difference between a van ambulance, box ambulance, decontamination room and everything else that goes along with an ambulance service. Hopefully all of this is including in the report since it appeared to be very costly. So far this year, they have had 71 ambulance calls at Prestwick Chase. He asked his residents who used the service about their experience and they were all very satisfied with the service received. Mr. McNearly stated that he also called the NYS Dept. of Health and spoke with a gentlemen at the BEM (Bureau of Emergency Medical) Service who oversees all the ambulance squads. He received a very positive response regarding both Empire and Wilton. He contacted both Saratoga Hospital and Glens Falls Hospital, where his residents have been transported to, and was told that they have never had a problem with the service from Empire. Mr. McNearly read a letter from his residents. The residents felt that the Town made a good decision last year when they hired Empire to provide services for the Town. They were pleased with the response time and the attention that they received and were in favor of keeping what the Town had. The letter referenced other options in the report where the Town would have to pay for an ambulance, equipment, training, housing, etc. This could cost thousands of dollars in start up costs and millions of dollars in salaries and benefits over the next 5 years. They questioned why the Town would want to increase the cost and liability to the Town at a time when they are trying to cut the budget to make ends meet. The residents felt that the study proved that the Town made the best decision last year when they signed a contract with Empire and that it was in the best interest of the taxpayers to continue with Empire.

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Taylor Conard, 42 Grange Road – Although he worked for a non-profit, he felt that Empire was lynched in the report. He actually did have an emergency call at his house. The Fire Dept and emergency medical people were right there and the ambulance arrived shortly after. Everybody was very professional. He felt that the response from Empire was very adequate. He would like the Board to consider taking advantage of the offer from Prestwick Chase because it will bring Empire, if that is the service that the Town chooses, two minutes closer to the center of Town. In the long run, it may also save the taxpayers due to the location and housing. He was against the Town starting their own ambulance service. He was a little concerned with hiring out to non-profits due to the fact that we have had problems with Saratoga and Corinth going out. He was also very concerned regarding a backup ambulance which he did not feel was covered very well in the report. He could not tell from the report if the other services had backup ambulances and he knew that Empire did.

John Templin, 265 Locust Grove Road – Mr. Templin stated that has been a resident for 42 years. He is an independent consultant, classified by the government as for-profit. He has been a health care consultant for 44 years and he primarily works with hospitals. He felt that the Town needed to continue what they were doing for the time being. It was a satisfactory relationship and the cost was reasonable. He paid \$40,000. for his home in 1971 and it is now assessed at \$250,000. He would be looking at an increase in taxes of \$200. to \$400. which is significant. He would like to see the Town continue what they are doing and have monitoring in place. They would then have objective criteria that could be shared with the public.

Tim Kemp, 39 Hemlock Drive – Mr. Kemp has volunteered with the fire dept. for 17 years. Fifteen years ago he started volunteering as an EMT with SEMS and remained with them until they closed. During that time he worked with all the local fire depts. and ambulance services. He felt that there was a graphic difference between transporting patients from one hospital to another and responding to emergencies out in the field. You have to have advanced life support services because you never know what you are responding to and you have to be ready at all times. Over the years volunteering with SEMS and now Wilton, he has worked with some very competent people. When the Town was forced into working with Empire a year & a half ago, there was a dramatic difference and there was a lot lower quality than what the Town was serviced with the previous 13 years. Mr. Kemp stated that you can fill out all the questionnaires you want, however usually the people who are being helped by ambulance services do not know the difference. The only people who are really experts at that are the people who work in it all the time, like himself. He felt that it was an extremely small price to pay to upgrade the ambulance service in the Town. He did not want the Town to be pennywise and pound foolish. There are reasons why things costs more and why you would want to pay more for an ambulance service. He has been to many calls where the people at Empire do not know what they are doing. He has had to tell them what equipment to use and they did not have the equipment. The Fire Dept. has had to supply the equipment.

Jay Ellsworth, 114 Barney Road - Mr. Ellsworth stated that he was Deputy Chief in the Greenfield Fire District. He stated that when you hire a company to do a job, especially a for-profit, you would think that they would have the tools to do the

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job. He knows himself, first hand, that he has not been able to reach Empire on several occasions on the radio. For the Town to spend \$55,000. a year for a for-profit service, plus whatever they receive for payment from insurance companies, etc. you would think that they could buy a radio to be able to talk to first responders to help the people of the community. He questioned why the Town Board, for two years now, has not made sure that this has been taken care. Mr. Ellsworth believed that in the contract it states that every Empire ambulance must have a paramedic on board. He stated that he has given the Kinsella, C. many reports where there was not a paramedic on the ambulance. Thank goodness the times that the ambulance came without a paramedic is was not a life threatening call. He felt that the Town needed to look beyond \$55,000. and look at the type of service they are getting. The Town received a wonderful deal from Saratoga for a lot of years. They were very professional and great people to work with and that was not so now. Mr. Ellsworth questioned who would give you a building and property free of charge for nothing in return. There has to be a string attached.

Donna Middlebrook, 331 Porter Road – She stated that she had a bad experience with Empire and she would not call them again and take a chance a take her husband to the hospital herself. They had to wait at Urgent Care for a very long time for an ambulance to get to them, with no explanation, while her husband was having a heart attack. Then she received an \$800. bill. She asked who would be responsible when they were not able to reply and come to her assistance. Would it leave the Town in a lawsuit situation?

Ruby Grande, Pine Robin North – She stated that she was fairly new in Town and thanked the Town Board for taking the time to put all the information together. She wondered why there was a need for change. She has had to use Empire twice within this past year and was treated well and with respect. She believed that the report stated that the break even point was 600 calls and currently the Town only has approximately 300 calls. If Prestwick Chase were to contract with their own ambulance service and take away the 100 or so calls that they had, how much would we be paying per call? She questioned liability for the Town. She also questioned what impact this would have on other programs in Town such as our parks, recreation and Town roads. She did not feel that any portion of the taxes she pays should be shifted to support this new service. She asked the Board to take this to a referendum before anything is done. It was the people's money and they should have the right to speak for what they want.

Joan Stunzi, Town Bookkeeper & Budget Officer – Joan commended the committee and stated that they did put in a lot of time and effort putting together this report, however she had a few questions. The report states that the break even point is approximately 600 calls and the average is about 300. In order to break even, the Town has to raise enough revenue to meet that need. It is not an option to run at a deficit as the report indicates. In order to raise this money you could do as Kinsella, C. suggested and cut the Highway Dept and Recreation Dept. but questioned if it was fair to put the other departments in jeopardy just to fund this service. She believed that the only option would be to raise taxes. According to some of the figures contained in the report, she was not quite sure what they were basing it on as far as the total amount needed, however she felt that the realistic number would be far greater than what was presented. She put together

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a chart that shows the amount of tax that needed to be generated for every \$100,000. She stated that the Town can not put themselves into a position of running at a deficit, not being able to pay our bills and therefore putting other departments and their responsibilities at jeopardy.

Dr. Jama Peacock, Wilton Road – She stated that it was very clear to her tonight that everyone needed to take a step back and realize that everybody has their feelings and their approach to what is happening with the ambulance situation. It was very clear that elected officials, volunteers and citizens here this evening were very dedicated to doing what is right. Ambulance coverage is not a light issue. It could mean life & death of someone's loved one. Approximately one year ago she had to call an ambulance for her father and there was over a one hour wait time. At that time the Town was relying on mutual aid. She understood the need to take the right path to make the right decision, however it needed to be done as expeditiously as possible. She stated that when Empire first came on board she observed, listened and watched to see how Empire responded to the concerns that she was hearing. All of her patients who have had to use the services of Empire have had a concern or complaint. She stated that for 4 years she drove to Albany Medical Center from this area and made the trip within 45 to 50 minutes. One of her patients had to be transported from Saratoga Hospital to Albany Medical Center. Even though she left ten minutes after the ambulance did, she actually wound up ahead of them. They had taken a very unusual route which took them 1 ½ hours to arrive at Albany Medical Center rather than 45 minutes. At first she thought it was just an unusual occurrence, however later found out that this was what happened during another transport. She questioned when there were concerns brought up are they going to try to improve and look at where a possible error in judgement has been made and work to fix what is not working. She listened to some of the comments made this evening and it was not the job of these individuals to teach someone what they were hired to do. There needs to be someone to step up and do what needs to be done and do it as professionally as they can. She believed that there needs to be some kind central coverage with appropriate backup. The cost concerns are very valid. People can not afford what is being thrown at them these days from the government. We need to find the best solution that will provide the level of care desired that the Town will be able to sustain because they can not continue to raise taxes. There have been generous offers from various business and believed that there are other people in the Town who would be willing to do whatever they could to help reduce start up costs, etc. She had 14 acres of land that she would be happy to put to use in any form because the quality of life in Town matters. She asked the Town to pick the goal and work to figure out the budget to give everyone an honest look at what the numbers are and find a plan to accomplish it. She added that some times doing the right thing might cost a little bit more.

Butch Duffney asked if the meeting was going to be adjourned this evening or closed. Supervisor Rowland stated that more time would be necessary to inform the public and that there would have to be another meeting at another time.

John Templin stated that he keeps hearing about the 2% tax cap and asked how this would be impacted by that. Supervisor Rowland stated that there are many factors taken into consideration, but in order to go beyond a 2% tax increase you can over

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ride it with a 60% majority of the Town Board. The Town has done that the past 2 years. The Town had a surplus fund of approximately 2 million dollars. The Board has taken money out of that fund every year in order to keep taxes from going up. When the 2% tax cap came about, the Board decided to override so that additional money could be raised by taxes and they would not have to continue to draw from the surplus account. At the rate they were withdrawing money, the surplus would run out in about 8 years. In the past five years the Highway Tax has risen from \$1.00 to \$1.48 per thousand. There is not a Town General Tax. The sales tax money received from the County pays for the General portion of the budget. The Board has worked very hard to try and keep any tax increases minimal. The Town has got to get the point where the budget is balanced or any surplus is going to run out. Supervisor Rowland stated that the 2% tax cap really makes the biggest difference with school taxes. If the Board were to decide to go with option 3 it would mean that the tax rate would have to increase to approximately \$2.00 per thousand.

Toni Kinsella, Lesters Lane – She could not believe that people would put a price on saving someone's life. She stated that the Board needed to listen to Dr. Peacock and the Fire Dept. They were the first people on the scene and they are trying to tell the Town that Empire is ill equipped, they do not have radio's etc. She did care how many calls there were, 1 or 8,000, but you need an ambulance service that was good and had up to date equipment, not just a service that can take transport someone from Saratoga Hospital to Albany. Anybody could do that. She would be willing to pay twice the proposed amount for a decent ambulance service.

Bob Hyndman clarified that the \$10.95 in option 1 was the amount that was currently being paid at this time. If the Board were to choose an option that would require a building, etc. and the additional expense comes in, would it be absorbed into the Town General Budget or would a separate tax district be set up? Supervisor Rowland stated that it depends on whether it would be a Town service or a contract service, a for profit vs non for profit, etc. The Board has to come up with a decision as to which option to go with.

Mary Wright, So. Greenfield Road – She did not think that anybody was putting a price tag on anybody's life or death. When Empire was hired it was an unknown and what the Town is considering jumping into now is an unknown. She has heard a lot of bad things about Empire this evening and asked if they have been addressed with Empire to make a change and get radio's. Mike Aquino stated that Empire has a 24/7 communication center. The dispatch center is in constant communication with their ambulances and is connected with the County radio system. Volunteer services get the radio's from the County. For Empire, if their ambulance starts out on a call from the Saratoga station then they have a Saratoga County radio. However, if they have to bring the patient to Albany Med, then another ambulance from their fleet would be dispatched to the area to cover the calls. They would have to outfit their entire fleet of ambulances and fly cars with Saratoga County radio's. They do not do that in the other counties that they service. Their dispatch service can talk with anyone on the Saratoga Co. radio system. Mary Wright asked about the staffing on each call. Mr. Aquino stated that he has provided the Town with a report of every call they have responded to which includes

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the names of the Paramedic and EMT that responded to the call. Supervisor Rowland showed the report from the month of March which showed there were 25 calls responded to and that there was a Paramedic and EMT on every call. Mary Wright stated that one of the other items brought up this evening was that the equipment on board the ambulances was old. Mr. Aquino stated that the Health Department checks the ambulances by pulling them out of service and go through them top to bottom. They check the vehicle, go through all the cabinets on the vehicle and every piece of equipment. Mrs. Wright asked if they need to borrow the equipment from the Fire Dept. as stated earlier. Mr. Aquino stated that he would like to know what call that was because they have every piece of equipment that they are supposed to have. Mrs. Wright stated that a lot of things have been said here this evening and she was not sure of what the unknown was and how much the unknown is going to cost. She wanted to make sure that it is well known to the public as this process goes along and felt that it should go to a vote of the people. The people need to know all the facts and everything that is going on. It was a surprise for a lot of people who did not even know that any of this discussion was taking place. She appreciated getting the flyer about this meeting.

Tim Kemp felt that during the time period when there was mutual aid coverage the response was more timely then the average Empire call.

John McPhillips stated that if the Board was going to have another meeting he would like real figures on what it costs with 300 calls per year as opposed to 600 calls per year. He would like to know what the alternative to Empire is. He added that he has been a physician for 38 years and he was not going to put a price on lives. He would like a real alternative and wanted to know who the Town would go to and what are their figures. There have been assertions that paramedics are not on each call. He would like a full report of that brought to the next meeting.

Ernie Mann stated that it sounds like there is conflicting information from Empire versus the Fire Dept whether or not paramedics were aboard each call and asked the Board to check on that for the next meeting. He asked for clarification that the estimated cost of one of the options was that it would cost \$61. per \$150,000. of assessment and not \$61. per thousand as some people have stated. Supervisor Rowland stated that it was \$61. per \$150,000. Chandler, C. asked for clarification as to how much the tax rate would go up if the cost were to go up \$100,000. Cochran, C. stated that the rate would go up approximately 8 cents per thousand.

Fred McNearly asked what the Board was planning on doing with all the other options if there is only one ambulance and it is already in use to transport someone say to Albany Med or somewhere outside of the area. He also asked that if the Board was going to have another open meeting in the future could they please provide information with comparable coverage to what exists now, i.e. two ambulances, so that it was easier to understand.

Joan Rowland, Ormsbee Road, asked if Prestwick Chase was going to set up their own ambulance service on site and take care of their own calls would that then bring the number of calls that the Town is responsible for down to 200+. Mr. McNearly stated that they would need 24/7 service. If the Town decides that they can not afford that and can not go that route, then Prestwick Chase would contract privately for 24/7

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coverage for their community. Supervisor Rowland stated that the Town has the offer from Prestwick Chase to build the building and provide the land. If the Town chooses that option, then the calls for Prestwick Chase would be included as part of the Town calls. If the Town does not go that direction and chooses anything less than 24/7, he believed that what he was hearing from Mr. McNeary was that he needs that coverage and he would build his own building and contract for his own service.

Tim Kemp stated that he was a member of the ambulance committee and he felt that the report had the answers to all these questions. The number 600 is the number of calls that an ambulance can service in one year. That is the number you would use to decide the number of ambulances required. The numbers presented based on a \$150,000. assessed value home were all considered using 300 calls per year. The numbers came from the estimates provided from the 3 non-for-profit organizations. He felt that all the due diligence was done as far as looking everything up. If there were more calls, the cost may be lower due to increased billing. As far as what to do when the one ambulance is out on a call, the County provides for mutual aid.

John Templin stated that it sounded like at some point that we might lose or not want 24/7 coverage and he asked the Board if they believed there was anyone in the room that wanted anything less than 24/7 coverage. Supervisor Rowland did not believe that to be the case.

Cochran, C. stated that the committee spent a lot of time and did a lot of research. They went to the various squad buildings, talked to a lot of people and held a public information meeting and he did not want to see their work ignored.

Joan Stunzi stated that was obvious by the options presented, etc. However, it states right in the report that you would have to have 600 calls to break even and if the average is only 300 then there is a big gap. She stated that she keeps hearing the figure of \$61. and asked how much additional revenue that was based on. Kinsella, C. stated that the average of the estimates that were provided to the committee would put the cost at approximately \$200,000. He calculated the increase based on the tax rate. Joan Stunzi felt that \$200,000. was less than what was being looked. Kinsella, C. stated that would include 24/7 coverage with and one ambulance stationed at the fire station on South Greenfield Road with a paramedic.

Louise Okoniewski, Lake Desolation, asked if the \$61. would include the ambulance itself, all the equipment, salaries for the paramedics and EMT's, etc. Kinsella, C. stated that it would for a home assessed at \$150,000.

Mary Wright asked if the proposed cost would cover the salaries, increases, maintenance, etc. and how much would it go up a year. Kinsella, C. stated that the contract would be on a one year basis and would have to be renegotiated each year. It could go up 5% a year. Mrs. Wright asked if they use the South Greenfield Road option as a temporary place to house the ambulance, how long would that be for. Kinsella, C. stated that one option would be to move it into the building that Mr. McNeary is proposing or the Town could find another piece of property and put up our own building. Mrs. Wright asked what the cost of the building would be if the Town were to put one up. Kinsella, C. stated that they did not try to estimate that.

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James Wood, Brigham Road, asked if the paramedic was going to be paid or a volunteer fireman. Kinsella, C. stated that the proposals call for one paid paramedic. There may be a volunteer as well. The proposals from Community Emergency and Wilton Emergency both provide for 2 paid people on the ambulance.

Sarah Lieberman, Porter Corner Road, asked if the committee used an RFP to obtain the information. Kinsella, C. stated that they did not ask for a formal proposal at this time, just a budgetary estimate. Mrs. Lieberman felt that if she was going to make a decision she would want to make the decision based upon the same criteria and exactly the same coverage. Kinsella, C. stated that he asked the companies for the cost for an ambulance stationed at South Greenfield Road, training, equipment, etc. and they provided the committee with a budgetary estimate. The estimates they received back were similar. The committee did not think that it was fair for the services to have the cost to provide a full RFP at this time when they were just trying to make a comparison. Eventually this will have to have an RFP to do a formal evaluation.

Nash Alexander, Chief Operating Office of Wilton Emergency, stated that he has been doing EMS for 16 years and started his career at a for-profit service. A non-profit service is constantly reinvesting any revenues that they get, whether it is through billing, donations, estates or tax revenues, into advances in patient care. They are constantly looking at what they can do to better their patients care. He stated that he wanted to talk about emergency services in the County. Empire has a great fleet of ambulances that are staged between the Cohoes area and Glens Falls area. The non-profits in the County do not cover such a broad area individually. They do that collectively through County mutual aid. Wilton EMS operates 4 ambulances and has between 2 or 3 ambulances in service on any given day. In emergencies, ambulances are moved around to different areas to insure that everyone has coverage. If an ambulance is transporting someone from Greenfield to Albany Medical Center, the rest of the Town is going to be covered as it is currently with Empire. Non profit services are staffed with a 100% paramedic staff and almost all of them have a 2 year college degree. Critical Care is a state sponsored course which is a couple nights a week educational program. The difference being a 2 year degree with lots of clinical experience and the 1 or 2 night with occasional weekend experience. Non for profits offer a trade in service with the fire district. The fire district has an aggressive EMS program and the ambulance service has a lot of resources for education, CPR Training and many other sharing opportunities to help to lower costs.

Mary Vetter asked if the Town would be charged an additional fee if the ambulance is not available and mutual aid has to be called to respond to a call. Supervisor Rowland stated no.

Mr. McNeary stated that this question actually pertained to SEMS and billing. He believed that one of their big problems was with billing, soft billing vs. hard billing, and asked if someone could explain that. Nash Alexander stated that reimbursement is constantly being reevaluated by the Federal government. They all have 2% sequestration on their billing income. Soft billing meant that if they got to a point where it was more costly to collect the debt than the debt actual was, then it was eligible to be written off. That is essentially not the case any more. The Federal government has

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stated that they have to continue to aggressively pursue their funding and have to make every effort to collect for service. They have the ability to evaluate income and provide a variety of discounts based on Federal poverty guidelines. Soft billing is really no longer something that can be done. Mr. McNearly asked if the Town has figured in the cost of hiring attorney's, collection agencies, etc. Cochran, C. stated that would be the responsibility of the emergency service that we contract with. The Town would not be involved in billing.

Stan Weeks stated at the Town Board meeting comments were made about cutting back on the number of miles of road that are reconstructed and paved each year in order to pay for the additional ambulance service. He did not want the Board to consider that as an option. His road is 24 years old and in need of repair. It is becoming very hazardous to pull out of his road onto Middle Grove Road.

Joan Stunzi asked if the cost of the outside management company to take care of the billing has been figured into the proposed cost. Kinsella, C. stated that it was not broken out, however it was in the proposal. Joan felt that it was important to know and to have the costs broken down. That way the Town will know exactly what they are paying for.

Mary Vetter asked about liability to the Town with an ambulance service. Supervisor Rowland stated that right now the ambulance service is covered under their own insurance and there is no additional liability to the Town. The Town Board will have to look at that depending upon which option they take.

Matt Fogerty, 3111 Rt. 9N, stated that he was a per diem paramedic for Jessup's Landing, per diem paramedic for Community Emergency and a career firefighter in Glens Falls. They had contracted with Empire but have since started their own service up their. The numbers for Empire were vastly different due to the fact that they had their own dispatching service. Mr. Fogerty stated that there is a lot of information that is available to help to make a decision. The County will give you the times & dates when ambulances were dispatched, arrival times, etc.

Kevin Veitch, Wilsey Road stated that he heard that Empire provides the Town with a report every month. The Fire Department has also stated that they have given the Town some sort of a report regarding problems they have been having with Empire. Cochran, C. stated that the reports were given to the committee. Mr. Veitch asked how many complaints the Town has actually received from the public. Supervisor Rowland stated that he has not received any complaints at his office.

Ruby Grande asked if the Board would be able to work with Prestwick Chase prior to another meeting to find out what the cost might be for the Town to go with their offer. Supervisor Rowland stated that they would take the offer into consideration.

Pemrick, C. stated that a couple of years ago when we were going through this process, one of the things that the Board asked for and he thought should be included in the report, was a 5% projection of costs just so the Board would know what would be coming for the next 5 to 10 year period. When the Board sits down each year and works to prepare a budget, they look 5 to 10 years down the road in order to make a solid financial decision for the Town.

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Tim Kemp stated that when the Town received service from SEMS, the total cost was in the range of \$50,000. about 15 years ago. He asked if that went up 5% every year or has that been held constant. Supervisor Rowland stated that SEMS did not provide service to the full Town up until the last year or two of service. He stated that 15 years ago the total cost to the Town was much less than that. It was divided between 2 squads and SEMS got the total amount when Corinth went out of service. The total was around \$40,000. to \$45,000. Whether there was an increase or decrease was up to the service provider at the time.

Supervisor Rowland adjourned the meeting at 9:05 PM.

Town Clerk