

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
Wednesday, April 19, 2017

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in special session at Highland Ambulance, 12 Williams Street, Goshen, MA. The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Present: Denise Banister, William Sayre and David Mathers

Also present: Highland Ambulance Board members, representatives from Ashfield, Cummington, Goshen, and Plainfield; and Charlene Nardi

The Board met with the Highland Ambulance Board of Directors and representatives from Ashfield, Cummington, Goshen and Plainfield to discuss the Highland Ambulance FY18 budget and the budget process. Don Boisvert, President of Highland Ambulance Board, welcomed everyone.

Bernie Forgea, gave a brief history of the Highland Ambulance. He noted that it was the second regional ambulance organization in the state and that, while the initial operations were mostly volunteer, that was unsustainable long term, and the proposed budget increases are a reflection of moving from operating with volunteers to a professional paid operation. This is necessary to be in compliance with state laws, mandates and maintaining quality professional service.

The budget reflects all mandated items with the exception of the purchase of uniforms. The pay rates for EMT's and Paramedics were increased to at or just above minimum wage. This is still below what most other companies pay. It is not expected to have such a high increase in the following years, but the intention is to keep moving the salaries up so that they can attract and keep talented folks on staff.

It was noted that Highland Ambulance is not allowed to bill for any service which doesn't result in transport to the hospital, and services that are billed and paid by Medicare / Medicaid are much lower than the cost of service. Discussed options to lobby our state and federal officials on the following issues:

- Why are we designated urban – this results in lower payment rates from Medicare / Medicaid. Research what this federal designation means for the town in other areas before advocating for change to rural.
- IV pumps mandated on ambulances at a cost of \$12,000 – Mike Rock noted that the drug being advocated to be used which requires these pumps is not proven to be more effective than the drug they already have on board the ambulance.

Donations: Highland Ambulance has been fortunate to have many great benefactors whose donations have kept costs down. They have \$150,000 in a fund for a new ambulance: however, it was noted that donations can't be counted on in the future and aren't reflected on the budget sheet. Member Towns asked for the total cost of operation to be included in the budget so that it accurately reflects the cost of doing business. Grants are also applied to offset costs to the town, but are used for one-time purchases. Highland also conducts fundraisers and will be kicking off a

new one in the spring. Communities could support this by getting the word out and using the town-wide calling systems to announce it.

The Highland Finance Committee did state that they negotiated a better interest rate for the building debt, which would reduce the building debt service assessment a bit. They also noted that the increase in workers comp due to proposed salary increases was being covered by a donation this year. After discussion it was agreed that the workers' comp increase should be paid by the towns this year. A new budget sheet will be done up which will reflect the new assessments for each community.

A five-year capital plan will be developed and shared with the communities. It was agreed that an annual budget meeting with the Board and all towns should occur in the fall to maintain communications. Board liaisons should be communicated with on a regular basis and invited to Selectboard meetings to share updates throughout the year.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk