

ANSWERS to Questions regarding the Proposed WARE/HARDWICK AMBULANCE SERVICE AGREEMENT

The Town of Ware (Ware) is considering a partnership with the Town of Hardwick (Hardwick) by providing EMS ambulance service to Hardwick residents through an inter-municipal agreement. There is a Ware/Hardwick Subcommittee comprised of representatives of each town working and gathering data to determine feasibility.

Below we answer questions from residents of both towns.

A. WHAT TYPE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES DOES WARE PROVIDE? Ware operates a Fire/Ambulance Department that results in an increased level of total emergency protection for Ware residents. All firefighter personnel are cross-trained; each are in addition either a certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) who can offer Basic Life Support (BLS) services “or a licensed Paramedic who is certified to offer Advanced Life Support (ALS) which are critical services such as tracheal intubation (airway) and intravenous medications. Most importantly, Paramedics bring a body of knowledge and experience to the scene and can recognize subtle presentations of life-threatening conditions.

B. Staffing Levels:

In addition to the Chief and Deputy, the department has four shifts, each with a lieutenant and 3 other firefighters.

-all shifts have a minimum 1 Paramedic and at most times 2 Paramedics

-9 staff members are Paramedic trained. An additional 3 will begin training soon.

Ware schedules 24-hour per diem staff who are paid an hourly rate to maintain availability during specific hours and commit to being available upon immediate notice.

Ware has a robust Recall List of local firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics that can be called in to fill any gaps in service. They are paid only if they work.

Ware has Mutual Aid contracts with West Brookfield, Barre, Belchertown, North Brookfield, East Brookfield, Palmer and Warren.

C. Ware's AMBULANCE EQUIPMENT:

3 ambulances: 2 are used primarily, the 3rd is used for backup to the 2 primary ambulances and for inter-facility ambulance transfers as needed.

Regular ambulance replacement costs are planned for through Ware Capital Plan and are scheduled for every 5-6 years . Ware Capital Plan demonstrates Ware is due to appropriate funding the purchase a new ambulance in 2018

D. WILL THERE BE ENOUGH STAFF AVAILABLE HANDLE THE EXPECTED INCREASE IN CALLS DUE TO A POSSIBLE HARDWICK AGREEMENT?

There would be enough staff available to handle the increase of the expected 2.5 calls per week to the Hardwick. There exists 4 levels of staffing (see above). Each separate level of staffing triggers the next level when needed and include highly qualified paramedics. Having 4 levels of staffing allow staffing needs to be flexible enabling them to grow and shrink as needed to address multiple emergency situations.

E. WILL THERE BE ENOUGH AMBULANCE EQUIPMENT TO HANDLE THE INCREASE IN CALLS DUE TO A HARDWICK AGREEMENT?

Ware currently has 2 primary ambulances and 1 secondary interfacility ambulance for transfers and backup to the 2 primaries. Three ambulances are enough equipment to be able to safely handle the expected increase of 2.5 calls per week. All ambulances are equipped to provide Advanced Life Support level of service.

F. HOW OFTEN DOES Ware USE MUTUAL AID FROM SURROUNDING towns FOR WARE RESIDENTS?

Ware has not been the recipient of mutual ambulance aid assistance by an outside town in over 5 years. Ware has a signed mutual aid agreements with West Brookfield and Warren. Other towns that offer aid are Palmer and Belchertown

G. WHAT IS THE CURRENT AVERAGE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TIME IN WARE and Hardwick AND WILL THAT CHANGE WITH A HARDWICK AGREEMENT?

For both communities, 72% of the calls are in 0-5 minutes, 18% are 5-10 minutes, and 10% are 10-15 minute response times. These average response times will not change with a Hardwick Agreement.

H. WHAT IS THE EXPECTED INCREASE IN NUMBER OF AMBULANCE CALLS TO HARDWICK PER DAY? There will be an expected increase of 2.5 calls to Hardwick per week.

I. WHAT WOULD BE THE TERMS OF THE HARDWICK AGREEMENT?

- There would be a 90-day cancelation clause
- The agreement would be for 3 years
- The agreement would be reviewable annually
- The creation of a "Ware/Hardwick Ambulance Oversight Committee" comprised of representatives of both towns would develop protocol and oversee an annual review of costs and evaluation of quality of service. The Committee would also address residents' concerns and questions. The Committee will be created within 2 months of signing an agreement. In the first year, the Committee will meet monthly and will alternate meeting locations between the two towns. A member of the Board of Selectmen from each community and the Town Manager/Administrator for each shall be included on the Committee.

J. AMBULANCE CALL AND SERVICE INFO:

- 1) Average # of Ware Ambulance calls handled by Ware in Ware? 1,677 calls = 4.59 runs per day
- 2) Average # of Ware Fire calls handled by Ware? 350 which includes fires, natural gas leaks, carbon monoxide incidents, elevator rescues, water rescues, electrical problems, motor vehicle collisions, box alarms, bells and smells and anything else you can imagine including lift assists and permitting.
- 5) Average # of Ware Ambulance Paramedic ALS Intercept calls to other communities? 200 (28 to Town of Hardwick)
- 6) Number of total calls Ware handled in 2016 in Town of Hardwick: approximately 225 (82 were paid. 28 intercepts and 54 Mutual Aid calls) which is approximately 70% of their calls. Since April 1, 2017, Ware ambulance is responding to all Hardwick calls.
- 7) Annual what percentage of ambulance calls to Hardwick are non-payer ambulance transport calls? 3%

K. Hardwick AMBULANCE AGREEMENT COST: proposed \$60,000. The Committee review expects this fee plus increased insurance payments will cover costs (existing and new) of the service to Hardwick. The new revenue to the Town of Ware is very conservatively \$100,000 and more likely \$130-\$150,000. The fee to Hardwick will be reviewed and adjusted annually.

L. Cost to provide service through a Private service. As the service has not been bid by Hardwick, the specific cost is unknown. While unconfirmed, it is anticipated to be higher than the proposal offered by Ware.

M. Has regionalization been explored? This proposal represents a regional approach, although provided by a single Town, Ware. Hardwick did participate in a study by the Central MA Regional Planning Agency with the Brookfields, New Braintree and Oakham. The recommendation from that study was to look to other community ALS services to provide service.

For more information, call the Town Manager, Stuart Beckley, 413-967-9648 x100 or sbeckley@townofware.com