

At the joint meeting with the Town of Victor and the Victor-Farmington Volunteer Ambulance Corp., held in the Town Hall or by Phone/Video Conferencing on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2021, at 6:00 PM, there were:

**PRESENT:** Peter Ingalsbe – Supervisor  
Mike Casale – Councilman  
Steven Holtz – Councilman  
Nate Bowerman – Councilman  
Ron Herendeen – Councilman  
Michelle Finley – Town Clerk

**TOWN OF VICTOR TOWN BOARD:** Jack Marren – Supervisor  
Michael Guinan – Councilman  
Dave Condon – Councilman  
Drew Cusimano – Councilman  
Ed Kahovec - Councilman

Also present in person: **Jeff Graff** – Attorney for the Town of Farmington, **Frank Pavia** – Attorney for the Town of Victor, **Richard O'Donnell** – Finance Director – Town of Victor, **Kevin Duhamel, Dave Degear, James Hood, Maureen Bills, Suzanne McCaffery** – Victor Farmington Volunteer Ambulance Corp., **John Williamson** – Victor Resident, **Brad Badali** – Victor Resident, **Daniel Chapman** – Victor Resident, **Christine Hood** – Victor Resident, **Alexis Ogra** – MOA for Assemblyman Gallahan, **Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan, Chief Michael Carlotta** – Victor-Farmington Ambulance Corp., **Don Giroux**- Highway and Parks Superintendent, **Ed Hemminger** – Planning Board Chairman, **John Weidenborner** – Zoning Officer, and **August Gordner** – Code Enforcement Officer.

Mr. Hood, Victor Farmington Ambulance President, gave a presentation on requesting community support for community ambulance services. He stated that the Victor Farmington Volunteer Ambulance Corp. has been serving the residents of Victor and Farmington for over 51 years and they are all very fortunate to have a legacy of caring in service and sound business decisions that have been made by the volunteers over the past five decades. He stated that the opportunity they have today is to provide a secure future for high quality ambulance services in our community is a testament to dedication and sacrifices of those who volunteer to serve. He stated that they are very fortunate to have a very strong community-based leadership and all their members have professional degrees with a great diversity of experience including EMS, health care experience, emergency services, government, and business.

Mr. Hood stated that Victor Farmington Ambulance is a well-managed agency with a 1.7M annual budget and the only significant source of revenue comes from patients and the changing dynamics in health care and employment environments make continuing this approach a highly risk proposition. They feel that the sick and injured are paying for the service and it's not right, everyone in the community benefits from having ambulance services in their communities. He added that everyone expects high quality care in the community, and they don't want to have to wait for an ambulance to come. Mr. Hood stated that the budget they are proposing is a 60/40 cost sharing model with 40 percent coming from community funding to ensure stable high quality ambulance services for years to come, this will stabilize the business model and provide much needed cash flow during the first quarter of the year when they experience our insurance and workers compensation payments which makes up 7% of their budget which have to be funded before they see any cash flow for the rest of the business. He added that during Covid they experienced a decrease in calls and revenue during the first quarter due to the Covid shut down. He believes that they don't want to risk the ambulance services based on volatility that is associated with when 911 calls that happen during the year. Their near-term goals are to increase staffing to raise their call coverage, Victor-Farmington and the mutual aid partners cover 100% of the calls and they organically cover 5% of their calls, their goal is to cover above 98% of their calls by increasing staffing to 3 during the daytime and 2 ALS ambulances overnight. He added that they also need to enhance employee compensation and benefits, improve recruiting and retention in a challenging employment market. During the midterm they plan on expanding their public health services, as they are aware, during Covid the Victor Farmington Ambulance Corp. through the Public Health Department, to provide Covid-19 testing at no cost. They plan on expanding their CLIA laboratory services, offer free CPR and First Aid training to residents, businesses, towns and villages, organizations and school districts. They have also recently adopted community AED partnership programs. Mr. Hood stated that long term goals is that they need to make capital investments in new facilities and garage space because they are the only public service that cannot house all their vehicles and to purchase additional heart monitors and defibrillators and CPR machines. He stated that together they can make a positive impact to ensure a highest quality community-based emergency medical services for years to come. He thanked the Boards for the opportunity to present and appreciates the support from the Towns of Farmington and Victor.

Supervisor Ingalsbe stated that both boards received the ambulances audit reports for the past three years plus their 2021 budget. He opened up the floor for questions. Supervisor Marren stated that he shared an article that will be going into their newsletter from the Chief and Deputy Chief and the positive things that have been for the community and the Covid testing that they are very happy with. Supervisor Marren talked about his experience two years ago when he suffered a heart attack at the town hall and had to call 911 and he was informed that they didn't have a ambulance there so they had to summon another company and in another incident at his house and within ten minutes there was a Victor-Farmington Ambulance at his house, so he has had both ends of the service spectrum. He is in support of the need for additional services for the growing communities. Supervisor Ingalsbe talked about his experience with his mother-in-law staying at his house and they had to call 911 and there was no ambulance available at that time and they had to rely on mutual aid. Supervisor Marren added that Ontario County has an annual Choose the Health Awards and Victor-Farmington Ambulance was one of four recipients considered for the award but unfortunately, they did not receive the award but just being recognized as one of the four within the

County is remarkable. Councilman Bowerman stated that all three times that he has needed the ambulance they have shown up quickly and did a great job. He added that he appreciated the service he received.

Supervisor Marren stated that the County Public Safety Committee will entertain consideration to choose a consultant to provide them with a study for EMS and Fire throughout the County. He added that Livingston County has gone to a county wide EMS but yet places like Victor-Farmington Ambulance still have their own identity and continue to run just under the umbrella of the County. He doesn't want anyone to think that the county was going to take away ambulances or fire trucks, its just they are reaching a point potentially that they would need that type of support and in talking with the County Administrator, EMS will probably be first area of need rather than fire, it will be a six month contract and then they will come back to present their findings to the Public Safety Committee, it will be a guidebook for next decade as we grow as a County. Councilman Condon stated that what he takes away when they have joint meetings like this one is that the general public doesn't understand the financial situation that the ambulance corp. is in, we all expect that service to be there when we need it and that we take it for granted. He feels that educating the public is a key piece as they move forward.

Supervisor Marren stated that his board has talked about district versus contract and they have had the experience because they have the village and up to a couple years ago they contracted with the village for fire protection, they feel that models works, the village came to them annually and they (Victor Board) gave their input and abided by the tax cap. He feels that going with a district is problematic even with good intentions could go in a direction that the public might not want to see and then if they have a county wide EMS, why create a district if in two or three years that district would need to be abolish. It is Supervisor Marren's recommendation that they contract with the ambulance. Councilman Casale stated that the public doesn't understand the cost to run an ambulance and that its n not just a run to the hospital.

Mr. Hood stated that there was a significant decrease in volunteerism during 2020 due to Covid. He stated that EMS has turned into a strong level career, professionals require a lot of education and training, and ongoing certifications. He added that calls 20 years ago were basically a ride to the hospital and 10 years ago 60% of their labor was career base, and today in 2021 they are estimating 70% of their calls requires advanced life support. He stated that there is a significant change in call volume and over the course of their history a significant increase in their training and type of equipment people expect when they pick up the phone and call 911. Supervisor Ingalsbe stated that a fully equipped ambulance cost \$200,000, and right now the ambulance corp. has 4 ambulances and he stated that one of the goals with the increased funding was to turn over the ambulances quicker and in other words they have been stretching the body of the ambulance out for many years and just swapping chassis. Mr. Hood replied that was correct. Councilman Casale added that they also have the cost of replenishing all the medicines, which increase every year.

Councilman Cosimano disclosed that even though there is no legal conflict of interest that he works full time with the Fishers Fire District as a Lieutenant and not a stake holder so that removes any conflicts of interest. With that being noted, Mr. Cosimano stated that when he took office last year the town budgeted \$19,000 to the ambulance and at that time he believes he spoke with the Supervisor because he was shocked at that amount of money which was essentially nothing especially when you look at Monroe County, Town of Gates is \$900,000, and Henrietta is \$700,000, and Town of Perinton is like \$230,000-\$240,000. He thinks that without a doubt that if they want the service the towns need to pay for it a little bit. He thought the first three points that were made about what we need to do with the funding: a second ambulance on overnights, a third ambulance during the daytime, and increase compensation and benefits and he whole heartedly supports those three things. He believes that the town needs to fund the ambulance to help offset some of those costs. He asked how the financials will be between the two towns. Mr. Hood replied that they are looking for an additional increase of a million dollars and stated that as far as the split between the towns he will let the towns decide on that. Mr. Cosimano asked if the towns funding to the ambulance went to particular things such as community CPR or offset co-pays, he asked if that was part of the current plan. Mr. Hood referenced a proposal made to both boards a couple of years ago showing their priorities. The priorities and amount were broken down as follows: Continued Town Support-\$31,820, Employee Retention - \$110,000, Service Improvement-\$255,000, Preparedness and Business Stability (everyone contributes to have ambulance ready)-\$367,000, Capital Improvements (medical equipment, building repairs, and improvements)-\$170,000, and Service Expansion (adding 3<sup>rd</sup> crew M-F 8am to 5pm)-\$165,000.

Supervisor Marren asked what challenges does individuals choosing high deductible healthcare plans present to the district in the first quarter of a calendar year. Mr. Hood replied that in the first quarter of a calendar year they start billing about 36% of their patients either self-insured or on NY plans and since the affordable care act was enacted around 2011-2012 they've seen more substantially larger portion of their population be Medicare patients and people with full insurance has dropped to 12%. He stated that they are very negative cash flow in the beginning of the year. And the State is not the faster payer when in comes to Medicare and Medicaid which causes a challenge for them. Councilman Bowerman asked if that Medicare and Medicaid payments are less than half of what it cost to run the ambulance. Mr. Hood went over their billing rates. He added that Insurance and Self-Pay rates compensate for losses and includes a 6% margin. He stated that they get a lot of complaints from people who have to self-pay because they have a higher rate to pay. Medicare and Medicaid rates can not be changed as they are set by law. He added that with the current business model they only have a little sliver of margin for compensation they have does not allow them to make any improvements in terms of compensation, wages, benefits or capital investments and service equipment. Councilman Holtz asked if the ambulance had projected rates under the new model. Mr. Hood replied that the plan was to leave them where they are to keep the 60/40 split and proposing to maintain the rates.

Supervisor Marren asked where they stood on building maintenance. Mr. Hood replied that the building is over 50 years old and is in need of work, the AC unit just failed, and they are not ADA complaint, they only have room for four of the seven vehicles in the building. He would like to see them either revamp the existing or build a new facility. Councilman Bowerman asked if they thought about splitting to two locations. He replied that they have not made any formal plans as of yet.

Mr. Hood stated that their average call time to Farmington is 7 minutes and to Victor is 6 minutes, and to Fishers is 9 minutes, and they would like to improve those times. Supervisor Ingalsbe stated that the boards won't make a decision tonight and asked if the ambulance corp. could provide them with their 2022 budget. He asked that if the towns were to give them \$400,000 each or \$500,000 each, where would that fit in their budget, to give them some ideas on that. Supervisor Marren stated that the money the ambulance corp. is looking for today is earmarked for adding an additional ambulance and some staffing and asked them to wait until the county wide study is done before making any decisions on building a new facility.

Supervisor Marren stated that Mr. Hood stated that the ambulance corp. would like to have additional outreach programs in both communities, Mr. Marren asked Mr. Hood if he could provide a description of that. Mr. Hood stated that they are looking at ways to expand their CLIA license so they could do influenza testing and vaccinations, provide free CPR services, free first aid training, and implement an AED partnership program to encourage businesses and facilities to install AED's. Supervisor Marren asked if there is a charge for just a lift assist, Mr. Hood replied that they currently do not charge for just a lift assist but if it involves a medical check over, then there is a charge.

Councilman Bowerman inquired about if they are double billing residents if they are paying a tax and then having their insurance getting billed. He added that property tax would probably \$150 or less per year. Councilman Kahovec inquired about the one-million-dollar request and if the split would be between both towns and the village. Supervisor Marren stated that the split is just between the two towns, not the village. Councilman Kahovec asked if the split would be 50/50. Supervisor Marren replied yes. Supervisor Marren stated that at one time Victor was the fastest growing town in the county and now they are sitting in the fastest growing town in the county and the population is close between the two towns. He feels the 50/50 split would be the best way to go. Councilman Condon stated that they need to find the "hot spots" in both towns to cover them better and he felt that the eastside of Victor needs to be covered better. Mr. Pavia stated that Jeff Graff provided a pretty detailed list of comments back in May regarding the proposed contract, this is the first he is hearing that the Village of Victor will no longer be a part of this. Supervisor Ingalsbe stated that both towns are in their budget cycle right now.

John Williamson from Fishers asked if this will be a contract services versus a District. Supervisor Marren replied that it will be contracted services. Mr. Williamson asked that if in February the total design gets mapped out for the County, they could opt out and do something different. Supervisor Marren replied that it will be interesting to see what the consultants come up with and make recommendations and timelines might be associated with that and that could certainly change the future. Supervisor Ingalsbe stated that in Farmington there are three fire departments and at budget time sometimes the fire departments want a yearly budget and some want a three year contract for services with slight increases in their budgets.

Councilman Cosimano touched on the importance of staffing and the contribution increase to their benefits is an essential component to keeping and building upon that service and it is not a luxury but a necessity to have trained professionals. Mr. Hood reviewed the employee compensation chart and just trying to meet industry standards to compete with box stores and fast-food places. Supervisor Ingalsbe stated that even Burger King had a sign stating starting pay was \$17.00 per hour.

Supervisor Ingalsbe thanked everyone for coming.

Adjourned at 7 p.m.

Michelle Finley, MMC, RMC  
Farmington Town Clerk