

**TOWN OF FORESTPORT
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF PLACING AN ADDITIONAL TAX
LINE ITEM ON THE TOWN/COUNTY TAX BILL TO FUND AMBULANCE
SERVICES WITHIN THE TOWN OF FORESTPORT**

AUGUST 13, 2020 @ 6:30PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councilwoman Kardash
Councilwoman Abrial
Councilman Scouten
Supervisor Entwistle
Town Clerk, Tracy Terry

MEMBERS ABSENT

Councilman Scott

GUEST SPEAKERS

Joe Smith, Town of Trenton
Joe Rowlands, Town of Steuben
Brian Healey, STaR Ambulance

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Supervisor Entwistle at 6:30 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLIENGENCE:

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

LEGAL NOTICE:

Supervisor Entwistle read the legal notice.

COMMENTS:

- Supervisor Entwistle started the meeting off by introducing the Guest Speakers and asking everyone to state their name before making any comments. STaR Ambulance is an asset to the Town of Forestport as well as the surrounding communities. If STaR Ambulance were to go out of business, the lower 2/3's of the Town of Forestport and the other Towns would be left without an immediate nearby ambulance service to respond. Town of Forestport also contracts with Old Forge Ambulance. This meeting is to discuss adding a tax line item to the property tax bill for STaR Ambulance and Old Forge Ambulance. The Town currently pays Old Forge Ambulance approximately \$12,800 year and STAR Ambulance approximately \$14,800 a year. Ambulance service Budget runs \$300,000 a year and that is an expense for Ambulances to stay solvent. These meetings are for public input before deciding within the next couple months what the plan is.
- Brian Healey introduced Mark Manno, as a Paramedic for STaR Ambulance. The Budget is about \$360,000 to operate on an annual basis. He stated they entered into an agreement with the Towns of Trenton, Steuben and Remsen and had

conversations with the Town of Forestport in 2016. They are currently in the black. STaR Ambulance has made cuts with equipment and payroll. The current Ambulance was purchased a couple years ago and they have a new heart monitor and another one that is looking to be replaced. The cost of a heart monitor is approximately \$45,000. He discussed how difficult it is to get Volunteers.

- Supervisor Entwistle said STaR Ambulance's financial difficulties are not unique. All rural Ambulances are in the same situation.
- Joe Smith stated by joining, there are strict rules with such an agreement. The Town's have the ability to check books, quarterly reports and the Town also has a seat on the Board, and they can pick who sits on the Board from the Town.
- Dan, from Old Forge Ambulance stated he is in full support of STaR Ambulance and they are facing the same situation. Old Forge Ambulance would like to be included in these discussions. Supervisor Entwistle said that has been in the conversations all along. If this goes through, Old Forge Ambulance will be included. Danielle, from Old Forge Ambulance stated Old Forge Ambulance is all Volunteer. She discussed expenses like necessary medications that need to be readily available, insurances and heat.
- Councilman Scouten asked if they did pass the line item on the taxes if it would free up some money in the Town's Budget. Supervisor Entwistle said tentatively, yes. In order to be part of the consortium, the state mandates ad valorem (based on assessment). Supervisor Entwistle and Assessor Brown came up with numbers for the highest rate projected, the tax line item would raise money towards both Ambulances in the amount of \$103,950. A property value of \$174,000 would pay around \$68/year. The cost per thousand is .38 cents. This wouldn't be able to be raised every year. Dave, from the gallery asked what their need is. Supervisor Entwistle said the goal is to get them where they are solvent and planning for the future. Dave, from the gallery asked what the other numbers are. Supervisor Entwistle said Trenton amounts to 35% of STaR Ambulance calls and has a population of 2,250 and total parcels of 2250. They pay \$75,000 a year. Remsen pays \$37,500 a year with a population of 1,400, 1,400 properties and are 25% of the calls for STaR Ambulance.
- Art, from the Gallery asked how this doesn't affect the 2% tax cap. Supervisor Entwistle said he will be speaking with the Town Attorney and the Comptroller's Office to find that out. A couple years ago, there were discussions with all three Fire Departments regarding a Fire District. This could allow the Fire Departments to get more money. Discussion took place regarding how money is distributed for the Fire Departments.
- Dave, from the gallery asked what the need is for STaR Ambulance. Mr. Healy stated last year they stopped paying bills, except for payroll in the middle of October because they ran out of money and in December, they stopped paying their people and they lost people. They received their first check, deposited it and

paid back payroll. All their bills got caught up. They'll run out of money in August this year. They do not pay someone to be on shift from 10pm -6am, and that saves \$81,000 a year, but services are impacted a little. The need is \$81,000, plus a heart monitor and an ambulance. Dave, from the gallery asked what the other Towns are paying for their contract. Brian Healey said the total is \$136,000; Trenton pays \$75,000, Remsen pays \$37,500 and Steuben pays \$17,500. It was asked, why would the town go in at \$75,000. Dave doesn't think they should go over and above. Supervisor Entwistle said there should be some sort of formula to be taxed. Supervisor Entwistle is aiming at \$100,000 because he thinks that is a reasonable number for StaR Ambulance and for the taxpayers.

- It was asked what formula was used for the other three towns and what the populations for Trenton and Forestport are. Supervisor Entwistle stated the Town of Forestport is using the same formula. The population in Trenton is 2,250 Town of Foresport's population is 1,500. The Town of Forestport has 3,465 parcels. Art, from the gallery asked what percentage of calls are in Forestport. STaR Ambulance's total calls are 700 a year. The State mandates every parcel be taxed, even if they are vacant properties. Supervisor Entwistle went over the breakdown of calls for STaR Ambulance; these are approximate:
-Trenton 35% -Remsen 25% -Forestport 25% -Steuben 5%
The other 10% comes from other Towns.
- Mary Beth, from the gallery asked what happened to Boonville Ambulance. Supervisor Entwistle stated they haven't serviced Forestport in quite some time. Boonville currently doesn't have a certificate of need for Forestport. Any Ambulance can come help, but the Town of Forestport does not currently have a contract with them. Discussion took place.
- Dave, from Old Forge Ambulance said he doesn't believe anyone would be concerned with health and safety. The 2% cap can be overridden.
- Supervisor Entwistle will be having another public meeting. The date will be published in the paper and on the Town's Website.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Councilman Scouten and seconded by Councilwoman Abrial to adjourn the meeting.

There being no further business, the hearing was adjourned by Supervisor Entwistle at 8:02 PM. Roll Call Vote:

Councilwoman Kardash-yes
Councilwoman Abrial-yes
Councilman Scott-absent
Councilman Scouten-yes
Supervisor Entwistle-yes

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy M. Terry
Forestport Town Clerk