

July 9, 2019

At the special joint meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County and Farmville Town Council, on Tuesday, the 9th day of July, 2019; at 4:00 p.m., at the Farmville Emergency Operations Center, 116 North Main Street, 2nd Floor, there were present:

Board of Supervisors

Jim Wilck, Chair
Jerry R. Townsend, Vice-Chair
J. David Emert
Llew Gilliam
Robert M. Jones
Odessa H. Pride
Gene A. Southall

Town Council

David E. Whitus, Mayor
A.D. "Chuckie" Reid, Vice Mayor
Greg Cole
J. J. "Jamie" Davis
Daniel E. Dwyer
Donald L. Hunter
Thomas M. Pairet

Absent: Pattie Cooper-Jones, Brian Vincent

Also present: Wade Bartlett, County Administrator; Gerald Spates, Farmville Town Manager; John Miller, Associate Professor, Longwood University; Ken Copeland, Vice President for Business Affairs & Finance, Hampden-Sydney College; and Carol Broadwater, Treasurer, PEVRS.

Mayor David E. Whitus called the Town Council meeting to order.

Chairman Wilck called the Board of Supervisors special meeting to order from a recessed meeting. He stated that during a meeting in December, Nat Carter expressed the dire straits of the EMS. He said Carol Broadwater supplied him with information regarding the Squad. He said since that time, Brian Butler resigned his position of Captain; Nat Carter, who served as President of the PEVRS, also turned in his resignation. Chairman Wilck said he does not want to lose the EMS or any more volunteers. He said Mr. Bartlett calculated the volunteers are worth approximately \$200,000 - \$300,000 if they must be replaced. He stated PEVRS needs funds to hire a full-time Executive Director and buy an ambulance immediately.

Supervisor Cooper-Jones entered the meeting at this time.

Chairman Wilck said the ambulance is \$256,000 and some equipment can be salvaged from some of the older models. He said there is a need to do something immediately.

Mrs. Carol Broadwater stated the ambulance is being delivered to Goodman in Amelia today.

Chairman Wilck stated there is a 30-day notification situation and must notify Goodman by July 18 [2019] as to whether PEVRS wants the ambulance. He said a cash deposit of 50% of the total cost is needed by July 18. He said in addition, the EMS must also hire an administrator at a cost of \$100,000, which would include salary and benefits. These total approximately \$350,000. He said he hopes half of the cost of the ambulance can come from the Town [of Farmville], and half from the County, and the schools can cover the cost of the Administrator.

Discussion followed regarding assistance from Centra; Centra in Lynchburg indicated they want to do their share.

Mr. Greg Cole, Farmville Town Council, said representatives from the Town, County and colleges have been meeting with the Executive team and have been working with them and that it is more than just writing a check. He said it is a business run by volunteers, and over 85% of their revenue is what is collected from their runs. He said the volunteer Executive Board is trying to run the business; he added that the bylaws and the job description for the Executive Director position seem to be crossing the boundaries between volunteers and paid staff. Mr. Cole said they need assistance getting through this transition, but the root of the problem is that the organization must be changed. He said the taxpayer money needs to come with some accountability and structure. He stated volunteers currently control the organization and that scares him.

Chairman Wilck agreed and said something must still be done about an ambulance. He said it would hopefully stem the flow of the volunteers.

Mr. Cole said funding must be budgeted for an ambulance. He said their mortgage payments are \$7,500; if that can be alleviated, it would give them some breathing room. He said there is a need to find someone to help them reorganize the squad.

Chairman Wilck agreed and said the ambulance company requires 50% down and 50% when the ambulance is completed and approved. He said he believes the County would be able to come up with half of the cost. Discussion followed with Mr. Coles stating he couldn't support the Town paying one-half of the cost.

Chairman Wilck stated 58% of the EMS calls are from the Town [of Farmville] and 42% are run to the County.

Mr. Gerald Spates, Farmville Town Manager, said Dispatch took the numbers of the calls, and in 2018, Prince Edward County took 3,524 calls. He said they did not respond to all of these calls. Of that

number, 494 went to Meherrin, 114 went to Pamplin. He said the total EMS calls with a Farmville zip code of 23901, Farmville had 1,564 of those calls, which means 44% were in the Town. He said these calls came off Dispatch which carries all of the Rescue and Fire calls. He said from October 1 through October 31, 2018, Prince Edward Rescue Squad was dispatched to 302 calls. Total rescue calls within the Town of Farmville was 129. Total calls to zip code 23901, compared to the 129, was 220. He said people are assuming all calls going to “23901” are within the Town of Farmville. Discussion followed.

Supervisor Gilliam said [the Rescue Squad] is asking for assistance from five entities and is an invaluable resource and everyone needs to put a little in.

Discussion followed on the statistics and the number of calls received from the various areas.

Ms. Claudia Meinhard, Chief Nursing Officer at Centra Southside, said that Tom Angelo, CEO of Centra Southside Community Hospital, could not attend and presented a statement from Mr. Angelo:

In regard to the 911 services meeting today, Prince Edward County Centra wants to be helpful in any way that we can. If the governing body for Prince Edward 911 Services unanimously requests for Centra to assume responsibility over 911 services in this area, it would thoroughly evaluate this but it would not be for a year or more given our certain strategic priorities. That being said, we would like to be a part of the solution. Centra deeply cares about the well-being and the patients in our community. What we can do now is request monetary support from the Centra Foundation; this may occur if we are not the only entity that is funding [inaudible] to be supporting this endeavor. The Foundation will likely want to see a joint venture with other parties as this is a community issue.

Supervisor Emert said he spoke with a Board member in Albemarle County who stated they were also having a problem with EMS as Prince Edward County is. He asked the Albemarle Board member his thoughts on a fee to the students attending the colleges [in Prince Edward County]. Supervisor Emert said the Albemarle Board member said he would not have an issue as it is something that is needed, and that UVA was considering doing something “along the same lines.” Supervisor Emert said the Albemarle Board member said Scottsville Volunteer Rescue Squad just went under; he stated it would be much better to come up with the money than it will be to provide a paid service.

Chairman Wilck said if we have to hire someone and lose the volunteer service, it costs \$600,000 for one ambulance and one crew to provide service 24 hours a day; right now we have three, which would be \$1.8 million. He said if nothing is done, the service will be lost.

Mr. John Miller, Longwood University, said there are creative solutions being proposed, but all things need to be deliberated over and thought about, and it will take some time. He said Mr. Cole mentioned, from Longwood's perspective, there is a willingness to commit to subsidize an Executive Director's salary for a few years. That leadership position would be beneficial and guide the Rescue Squad through these strategies and let the volunteers be First Responders. He said if the Town and County are willing to commit to the immediate search and hiring of an Executive Director, expand the Board and take those necessary steps.

Mr. Ken Copeland, Vice President for Business Affairs & Finance, Hampden-Sydney College, stated he agreed but from a collegiate perspective, it would be a difficult time tacking on another fee to a bill that is already, in the minds of the majority of the parents, is too high already. He said there has been a lot of scrutiny on the Comprehensive Fee, and there are a lot of Legislators in Richmond who want the Comprehensive Fee to be shown, line by line, what it amounts to. He said there will be enough entitlement on the parts of some of these parents that will think it is a "podunk outfit that they have to charge kids to run an ambulance." He said he doesn't think that speaks well of the community.

Mr. Whitus stated he agrees wholeheartedly and the Town of Farmville would never participate in something that will bill students who are coming here to spend money and get an education and live. He said it bodes horribly for our community.

Mr. Copeland said if Longwood is willing to make a commitment on the Director's salary, Hampton-Sydney would also entertain that, but would rather see the two schools make a commitment that has a sunset, rather than committing to a salary that might not have a back-stop three years down the road. He said he may have a difficult time convincing trustees going into a subsidy for a salary for a position that needs to be kept in perpetuity. He said either way, they are prepared to do something, and he understands the necessity and the importance of what these folks have done and what the organization means.

Mr. Cole said if they can find the right person, within two years, [that person] should increase revenue that will cover their expenses. He said with their income is currently, about 85% is from their runs, 10% is from government, 5% comes from Squad Care and donations. He said that is an untapped area that

the right person could easily raise almost \$100,000 a year if they get out and tell the story and express the need. He said the volunteers don't have the opportunity to do that. He said the Executive Director position can give an opportunity to begin to build the revenue and put it on a solid foundation financially so it can support [the Squad]. He said there is a need to fund new vehicles and equipment. Mr. Cole said the Administrator position is critical to the growth and survival of the Squad; he stated the Town has agreed to give \$30,000 for a salary for one year which sunsets unless they see something happening at the Squad. He said they could raise donations on Squad Care and asking businesses to purchase Squad Care. He stated the By-laws need to be revised to alleviate discussions by volunteers. Discussion followed.

Mr. Thomas Pairet, Farmville Town Council, asked if there should be two separate entities, one from the business side and from the volunteer side, to allow the volunteers do their work and let the business side be run by a professional.

Mr. Cole said that is why they need to do work on the bylaws and change them from what it is now, to give business protection.

Chairman Wilck asked that since they have been alerted to this issue in December, why hasn't anything been done as far as the Bylaws.

Mr. Cole said the Committee has reviewed the Bylaws, and were meeting to discuss the Bylaws and overlapping job duties of the Director position. He said there was a situation the Squad was working on but the Committee was there to pick up the pieces and move it forward. He said there were a lot of complications but it is much further along than it was at the beginning of the year. There is a good plan; the Squad isn't in dire financial need, it still has its reserves.

Mrs. Carol Broadwater said because of the payroll, insurance, the high cost of the EMS, on average the billing, after contractual allowances and uncollectables, about \$130 a call is collected. She said that does not sustain what we have, in addition to salaries and those expenses. She said they owe \$412,000 on the building that was borrowed for ambulances that are no longer even in decent running shape. She said they also owe the County \$76,000 for the other half of defibrillators that the grant didn't cover in 2018. Mrs. Broadwater asked if that loan could be forgiveable; she said the interest rate is 3% and they made the payments in 2018 and 2019, and said the payments of \$26,000 "sucked it right out of the checking account." She said there are some reserves from a fund that was given many years ago and could sustain the Squad, but over the last five years, the Squad has been at a negative \$320,000; she said they have cut every cost that

they could. She said the things that cannot be compromised are salary and insurance as those are fixed costs. She said the Squad isn't asking for money other than to continue to provide EMS service to the best of their abilities to the people of Prince Edward County. She said none of the First Responders or the members of the Executive Board have ever taken a dime from the agency, and when you see the costs and no money to cover them, it is a lot of stress. She added she is grateful for the Committee coming to sit in with their Executive Board meetings to help, and said a lot of progress has been made and they will continue to pay the bills as long as they can.

Chairman Wilck asked if anyone can provide funding for an ambulance. Discussion followed.

Mr. Spates asked if Rural Development Funds are available. He said the Town could help with the maintenance of vehicles. Mrs. Broadwater said they would take any help they could get.

Discussion followed regarding possible grants; Mrs. Broadwater said they have applied for grants at 80% and were denied, and then at 50% and were denied.

Mr. Bartlett said the Squad has been denied because they don't score well because of the age of the vehicles. He said the State is replacing vehicles that are older. He said the Squad could apply again, stressing the maintenance costs. He said there isn't much funding available and there are a lot of requests. Discussion followed.

Chairman Wilck said at the very least there is a schedule set on the Bylaws.

Mr. Cole said if there could be a commitment for the Executive Director position, they could begin to advertise for the position. He said they do need an ambulance and asked if funding could be borrowed; he said that is a lot of cash to take out of the budget right now. He said the Squad does need equipment but they need the administrator as quickly as possible.

Mayor Whitus said the Town would provide \$30,000 for a one-year commitment for the salary for an Executive Director. Mr. Miller said President Reveley [Longwood University] can support \$30,000, and Mr. Copeland committed to \$30,000 for a total of \$90,000 for the position for one year. They questioned what the County will do.

Discussion followed on the Executive Director position and advertisement, ambulances currently in service and issues on the maintenance of these vehicles.

Chairman Wilck questioned the Squad's plan of buying an ambulance every two or three years. Discussion followed.

Mr. Miller asked if the Rescue Squad membership is willing to change the Bylaws. Mrs. Broadwater said they are; the current bylaws were created 50 years ago.

Mr. Cole asked if the amendment to add four positions was ever addressed; Mrs. Broadwater said Nat Carter resigned before that was addressed but it will be done tomorrow night during the meeting. Discussion followed.

Supervisor Emert said the Executive Board members are currently not voting members; he said the amendment that will take place tomorrow night will change that to make them voting members, and the Bylaws do need to be brought up to date.

Chairman Wilck asked if it would be possible for Centra Health to loan an employee for a short time to help; Ms. Meinhard said she will find out and report back.

Chairman Wilck said if an ambulance can be purchased every other year and asked the Town to increase from its commitment of \$30,000 or they risk losing more volunteers.

Mrs. Broadwater stated the Squad needs vehicles to pick up county residents. She said the group was willing to provide ambulances but are now backing off. She said if the Town Shop can help with the maintenance on the vehicles, that is a savings of about \$50,000 a year.

Mr. Spates said it would be better to hire the Administrator first and have the Administrator find funds to purchase the ambulance and amortize the cost of the building. Discussion followed.

Supervisor Jones stated the Town has committed to the maintenance on the current ambulances at an estimated cost of \$50,000, and \$30,000 for the Administrator, that is \$80,000; he said the Board of Supervisors needs to get together to see what it can do for the ambulance. He said if something is not done, this will be a lot bigger cost than even if the County covers the whole ambulance. He said the Town has stepped up and the County should come up with some portion of it to help the Rescue Squad out. Discussion followed.

Mrs. Broadwater said she understands that \$250,000 is a big commitment for the County; she said Chairman Wilck did just admit that the other County is paying \$600,000 for one [paid] crew. She asked if the County could forgive the \$76,000 debt on the defibrillators; EMS costs are high and the revenue supported by billing is not there. Further discussion followed.

Mayor Whitus adjourned the Town Council meeting.

On motion of Supervisor Southall, seconded by Supervisor Emert, and adopted by the following vote:

Aye:	Pattie Cooper-Jones	Nay: None
	J. David Emert	
	Llew W. Gilliam, Jr.	
	Robert M. Jones	
	Odessa H. Pride	
	Gene A. Southall	
	Jerry R. Townsend	
	James R. Wilck	

the meeting was recessed at 5:04 p.m.