

**BOROUGH OF MOUNT ARLINGTON
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 11, 2014**

1. Call to Order

- 2. Adequate notice** of this meeting of the Mayor and Borough Council of the Borough of Mount Arlington was given as required by the Open Public Meetings Act as follows: Notice was published in the Daily Record on March 7, 2014; notice was posted on the bulletin board in the main hallway of the Municipal Building on March 5, 2014 and has been available to the public; notice of this meeting is on file in the office of the Borough Clerk.

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-1 et seq.), the Borough Council opens every public meeting for comments of the public. However, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-12: "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit the discretion of a public body to permit, prohibit or regulate the active participation at any meeting,...."

Speakers at Borough meetings shall have five minutes to present their comments to the Borough Council so as not to consume time that would otherwise be allotted to other persons who wish to speak.

3. Flag Salute

The Mayor asked for a moment of silence to remember all those who put themselves in harm's way to protect our freedoms.

4. Roll Call

Councilwoman Danchuk, Councilman Cangiano, Council President Sorge, Councilman Sadow, Councilman Windish, Councilman Stanzilis, Mayor Ondish. Elizabeth Valandingham, Esq., Borough Attorney, and Carolyn Rinaldi, CFO/Municipal Administrator, were also present.

5. Mayor and Borough Council Comments

The Mayor stated we received notice recently from Saint Clare's regarding proposed changes to our ambulatory service. The Mayor and Council want the public to be involved in the possible changes in service and decisions that have to be made. The Borough has been using Saint Clare's for nine years and enjoyed great service; the EMT's work very well with the Police and Fire Departments as well. Financial issues are forcing Saint Clare's to make some changes but we currently still have Saint Clare's full services and coverage.

6. Discussion with Saint Clare's Regarding Ambulatory Service

- Michael Ward, Executive Director, Saint Clare's Emergency Medical Services
- Daniel Haight, Business Manager, Saint Clare's Emergency Medical Services
- Joseph Nolan, Chief Operating Officer, Saint Clare's Health System

Mr. Ward stated that Saint Clare's provides paramedic services through parts of Morris County, Sussex County and Warren County, and nothing will change with that service. We provide two types of ambulance service: we have six ambulances in dedicated 911 contracts and the other service is ambulatory transport – hospital to hospital, hospital to specialty facility, hospital to home. Saint Clare's is very busy with transport but did not have nearly as many 911 calls. Saint Clare's is a not for profit company; they break even with the paramedics and break even with the transports, but last year Saint Clare's lost \$1.6 million on the dedicated 911 ambulance service. We are proposing all the municipalities group the 911 ambulances together, with the nearest ambulance responding to the nearest emergency, set up as a regional deployment. The Mayor stated we have had a rig here in Mount Arlington, parked below the firehouse that responds immediately to any calls from Mount Arlington; there is another rig that then moves closer, as back-up for Mount Arlington. Mr. Ward stated that instead of having an ambulance in Mount Arlington 24/7, we are going to be rotating an ambulance throughout the day as we handle calls. This means a 2-4 minutes longer delay in response time. We are going from 14 ambulances a weekday to 8, and 6 on the weekends. The crews will be rotating as well. The two biggest changes in our service is not having an ambulance parked here 24/7 and different EMS crews. Five ambulances will be parked at strategic locations but there will always be 3 ambulances on hold, not doing transports and always available for 911 calls.

The Mayor summarized: instead of Mount Arlington having a rig parked here to respond at the drop of a hat, there will be a rig floating around, chances are it will be in Mount Arlington when its not responding to another call. But if it is out responding to another call and we get a call here, another rig is dispatched from another point to come here. Mr. Ward stated that Mount Arlington ranks fourth in the number of calls, so we are the fourth priority place for Saint Clare's. Mr. Ward stated presently, when an ambulance leaves here, we move another ambulance closer to Mount Arlington. The new plan will be similar, without having the first ambulance parked in Mount Arlington.

7. Public Comment

Gary Giacobbe, 1 James Drive:

Mr. Giacobbe stated that if there are two BLS calls in Randolph, there is no way a rig can make it here is 2-4 minutes. Mr. Giacobbe suggested the Borough obtain its own state license and hire a billing company; Hopatcong, Sparta and Montville are doing their EMS services this way. Mr. Giacobbe helped Hopatcong start their current system and they are doing well. Mr. Ward stated he cannot guarantee an extra 2-4 minutes for an ambulance but he does have a large staff for service. Mr. Giacobbe questioned handling trauma, requiring the ALS units. Mr. Giacobbe offered his assistance to the Borough if he can be of help in formulating our own EMS services.

Mike D'Arco, 7 Richard Drive:

Mr. D'Arco stated the 2-4 minutes response time is a speculation, we won't know that until it happens. Mr. D'Arco feels it is unacceptable taking away this service from the residents of Mount Arlington; the citizens are going to suffer. Mr. D'Arco worked as a paramedic in the past and any wait, 4-6-8 minutes, the patient is done.

Robert Newkirk, Dorothy Lane:

Mr. Newkirk has lived in Mount Arlington since 1958 and has served as a volunteer for many years. Mr. Newkirk stated Saint Clare's has done a superior job however, the problem is not Mount Arlington and Mount Arlington can't solve the problem. At one time we had 27 ambulances in the 5 mile radius of Dover General Hospital and they had multiple calls and needed extra rigs many times. Helicopters are the most over-used equipment in the State and they are inefficient. Mr. Newkirk suggests discussing this situation locally, with the neighboring towns.

*ALS – acute life support/paramedics/physician directed care
BLS – basic life support/emergency medical personnel/basic

Jeremiah Tobin, 100 Rogerene Way:

Mr. Tobin thanked the Police Department and Rescue Squad for their excellent service, and saving his wife recently. Mr. Tobin asked where the ambulances are going to be stationed; Mr. Ward explained the rotation of rigs.

Patrick Devery, Boy Scout:

Patrick asked if all the towns have the same plan. Mr. Ward explained that all the towns will have the same schedule, with the ambulances moving from town to town where needed most.

Michael Boccher, 65 North Bertrand Road:

Mr. Boccher stated that economics is driving this issue and asked if the stats of the contracts for each Borough will be reported monthly? And, who will comprise these reports? Mr. Ward stated that the longest wait for a non-life threatening event is 12 minutes; these stats will be tracked by MyCom and reviewed by Saint Clare's. There is no state mandate for response time, even in critical, life threatening situations, nor is it specified in the contract. Mr. Ward stated that most people who have walked away from a life threatening heart attack have been saved by law enforcement, because they have the AD's. The ambulance is the second round of help. The Mayor stated that right now, Saint Clare's service does not cost the Borough anything, the users pay for the service billed through their insurance company. If we were talking about a paid service or other option, then we might look at the taxes, but not with this service.

Councilman Windish asked about response time; Mr. Ward stated 12 minutes would be from time of the call, not the time of dispatch. Mr. Haight stated that for all the bills they send, they collect 18% from the insurance companies. Councilman Sadow stated that the company is not sustainable at that percentage, but why is this the Borough's problem? Mr. Haight said 18% is the average service collection. Mount Arlington has averaged 13 calls per week and while we appreciate the great response times, it comes as a cost to Saint Clare's. We are trying to mitigate some of that loss while trying to improve our efficiency.

Bill McCandless, 19 Ridgeview Lane:

Mr. McCandless stated he does not understand why Saint Clare's is only receiving 18% collection rate. Mr. Haight stated this is the normal rate, not just for Medicare but for those with private insurance. Mr. McCandless stated that Saint Clare's is short \$1.5 million but if an ambulance comes to my home, I expect to be billed. What kind of business can you run where you only collect 18% of what you sell? When a person calls 911, the dispatch starts the ambulance right away, and after a series of questions, it is determined if paramedics are needed.

Councilman Windish asked if the 18% was the national average; Mr. Ward said close.

Wendy Maler, Mountainview Avenue:

Ms. Maler also questioned the response time, indicating it is impossible to respond from the various locations to Mount Arlington in 4-6 minutes. Ms. Maler indicated that she has heard that Saint Clare's along with Walkkill Valley, Riverside, Denville and Dover are being bought out and 180 people might be laid off; will that affect ambulance services to the Borough. Mr. Ward stated they are being bought but he is not worried about that affecting the ambulance service.

Bill Burgess, Ridgeview Lane:

Mr. Burgess relayed his personal story of experiencing a stroke recently wherein the Police and ambulance were at his house in minutes. He believes that he is recovering due to the great service of the police and EMT's. Mount Arlington has prime customers for the ambulance service, considering Ridgeview and Nolan's, 65+ communities, a hotel, schools and direct access from Route 80. All of these things are super high-risk and this is the type of area that should not be sharing service, increasing response time. This is an emotional issue for many people, a delayed response could have cost him his life; we need high-quality service in town due to the center of need and he would be disappointed to have our service changed.

The Mayor stated we had a volunteer squad for many years but one problem is the training requirements have become so intrusive, time consuming and overwhelming that it became very difficult to become a volunteer. When the Borough started to lose volunteers, Mayor LoPonte started looking at Atlantic Health knowing what was coming in the future. The Rescue Squad approached Mayor Ondish in need of help, they did not have coverage all the time. We contacted Saint Clare's who agreed to cover the Borough for 12 hours during the day but after a month or two, the Rescue Squad requested Saint Clare's cover all the time and the Squad disbanded. The Borough did have a budget for the Rescue Squad because we had to buy the rigs and the equipment. Saint Clare's took our rigs and used them for transport. When the rigs got old and were un-usable, Saint Clare's brought in their own rigs with no cost to the Borough. The purpose of this meeting today was to give an overview and understand what was being proposed, answer some questions and offer any alternative ideas. Before the Borough went with Saint Clare's, we looked at other options of doing our own billing, hiring full time people, and reviewed other options. We could not top the offer with Saint Clare's and have been very fortunate to enjoy such great service for the past 9 years.

Ray Simard, Robert Terrace:

Mr. Simard stated he is a longtime resident and member of the Fire Department for 39 years; the response time will not work, he knows what a difference two minutes made when we had a problem. We have assisted living, luxury apartments and older residents, and an extra 2-3 minutes makes a big difference. The squad that is here now is fantastic.

Diana Kunka, 117 Ondish Court:

Ms. Kunka asked the time frame for this change. The current contract we have expires April 11, 2014, with a 60 day opt-out clause.

Bill Keuntje, Succasunna Road:

Mr. Keuntje asked the length of the contract. The current contract was for five years but the terms can change with a new contract. Mr. Ward stated that all the dedicated 911 ambulances are going to see an increased response time. Mr. Keuntje asked if this solves Saint Clare's problem; if we have a two year contract, we don't want to go through this again in two years.

Kathleen Sandy, 34 Birch Terrace:

Ms. Sandy questioned one of Mr. Ward's opening statements wherein he stated certain people need rides from the hospital and then certain people have only one or two emergency calls; to her, this means those people who want rides home are more important than the emergencies. Mr. Ward stated that he had many people wanting rides home from the hospital and with 6 ambulances hardly doing anything, those rigs could be used for transport. Ms. Sandy had an incident with a relative two years ago where there was a medication issue that could have resulted in death; the Police were there instantly but no one knew what was happening. You are relying on a 911 operator being able to draw enough information out of the patient or relative to find out the problem; that 2-4 minutes changing to 10 minutes can make a great deal of difference. Paramedics will not be coming if the 911 operator does not determine the exact emergency. Mr. Ward stated that if there is a need for paramedics and the ambulance already has the patient, the paramedics will meet them en route. Ms. Sandy said she understands the budgetary issues of this change but the response times must be addressed.

Betty Ann Hedemus, Maple Lane:

Ms. Hedemus asked if the contract is signed and we are not happy with the response times, can we cancel the contract. The Mayor stated that they would first meet with Saint Clare's but there will be an opt-out clause in the new contract.

Keith Licata, Chief of Police:

Chief Licata reiterated Mr. Ward's statements that there would be four units for 911 to cover Jefferson, Rockaway Township, Rockaway Borough and Mount Arlington and we are a priority #4 location. If there is one call in Boonton, we move up to priority #3, so that any call in any other coverage area takes our rig out of town. Mr. Ward said that if we are down to 4 ambulances, he has 5 ambulances waiting on other calls, so when the sixth ambulance is dispatched on calls, that is when the Mount Arlington ambulance would be unavailable to be sent to the call. Chief Licata stated if we are at that a minimum of three, we don't have any to come to town. Mr. Ward said they are looking at putting additional rigs in service during high demand times that will insure we are not going below three available; this is not guaranteed but being reviewed. Chief Licata asked what is going to be their standard of service with response to the Fire Department and motor vehicle accidents. Mr. Ward said right now they are sending an ambulance to activated fire alarms, smoke, alarms, odors in the building and those types of things, it is very rare to have a medical emergency when there is an activated fire alarm. We will respond to working fires, accidents and to the request of the Police or Fire Chief in command. Chief Licata asked how often will Saint Clare's review the statistics and make changes accordingly if needed. Mr. Ward stated monthly. Chief Licata stated he heard that the paramedics were driving ambulances so they could transport but now they all have SUV's so they can no longer transport. Mr. Ward stated that part of their analysis is evaluating putting the paramedics in the SUV's; we anticipate putting more BLS ambulances in service to support that transport. Chief Licata stated his last comment is in regard to response time - it is very interesting that you are willing to lock yourself into numbers on response time, because every EMT and firefighter knows you cannot guarantee a response time. I would not and I just want to make it known that we shouldn't extend the response time or mark it with a definite time. Currently, we have the situation where EMS is basically walking in the door with the Police; we are spoiled, we have had it very good. Chief Licata said he understands things change and need to be addressed; half of his department is EMT certified, they have the training, but the sooner the ambulance gets there the better.

Steve Norman, Fire Chief, Mount Arlington Fire Department:

Chief Norman stated the EMT's we have now are great but he is not for regionalizing the ambulance program and against any delay in response time. Mr. Ward stated he is not delaying response, they will send the nearest ambulance to the nearest call all the time. Chief Norman reiterated Mr. Ward's previous statement regarding responding to fire alarms, and asked what would happen if one of the firemen got hurt. Mr. Ward questioned how often and how serious have injuries been; Chief Norman stated it happens, it has happened and he is against any delay in response time. Some firefighters are EMT's, some are first responders, but the EMT's have always been right there.

The Mayor stated we have had it very good in the Borough for many years, the EMT's know our streets, know our ins and outs, and know our funky addresses; he doesn't think we have much of a choice but there are options to explore.

Brian Shatzel, Assistant Chief, Mount Arlington Fire Department:

Mr. Shatzel asked why the ambulance would be parked in Jefferson, which is closer to Sussex County. Mr. Ward stated it is not going to Sussex County but as we look at the workload, that's a good location based on the combined 911 and transport. Mr. Shatzel also asked why did Saint Clare's move dispatch from the county to MyCom, which causes an additional delay in response and the Police and Fire Department have no direct contact with MyCom. Mr. Ward stated two-thirds of the workload is non-emergency so MyCom is superior for transport, paramedics and special care units; they are working with the County and MyCom to correct the delay issue.

Robert Newkirk, Dorothy Lane:

Mr. Newkirk asked if the 18% was due to the fact that the ambulance calls were not deemed emergencies. (inaudible)

Sharon Voytush, 8 Lakeview Terrace:

Ms. Voytush has been a healthcare professional for nearly 4 decades. She stated it is really a shame that Saint Clare's is losing money on the services provided however she is wondering how Saint Clare's is benefiting monetarily from the residents of Mount Arlington, both as inpatient and outpatient services. Mr. Ward stated he is only responsible for the cost of ambulance services. Ms. Voytush stated she is disappointed with the projected response time; there is a huge array of medical emergencies.

Mary Riley, 76 Mountainview Avenue:

Ms. Riley has been a resident for about 49 years and served as an EMT for about 5 years, and she is a Registered Nurse with Saint Clare's. her concern is response time. Her mother had a heart attack many years ago. Mother had heart attack many years ago, Borough had a volunteer squad and were are other calls, her mother did not survive, waiting for responders. More and more baby-boomers are reaching the high-risk age, which magnifies that many more people that would need that type of response. She noted this is an emotionally charged issue for everyone.

Michael Boccher, 65 North Bertrand Road:

Mr. Boccher asked when the Borough knew about this change; the Borough received the official notice in February and that's why we are holding this special meeting. Mr. Boccher suggested a meeting with the Mayors of the other towns affected. The Mayor stated it very costly to create your own service; the Mayor stated there is no price-tag on maintaining life and we will look at other alternatives. Mr. Boccher stated he believes there is a lot of skepticism in the response times being given; he believes the response time will be much greater than Mr. Ward had explained.

Wendy Maler, Mountainview Avenue:

Ms. Maler asked when Saint Clare's is sold, what happens if the new owners don't want to provide ambulatory service? Mr. Ward said during the transition period, all activities initiatives are being monitored by Catholic Health Initiatives, the current owner, and the prospective buyer. Mr. Ward stated that any present agreements will be honored by the new owners. Councilwoman Danchuk stated that as it stands now, both parties have only 60 days to opt out of the agreement; the new owners can take us but only have to give us 60 days if they want to cancel.

Jeremiah Tobin, 100 Rogerene Way:

Mr. Tobin stated that if there is a choice of driving someone home from the hospital or saving a life, choose saving a life; Mount Arlington's usage is approximately \$499,000 with 5200 residents, raise my taxes.

Nancy Absalon, 15 Oak Street:

Ms. Absalon stated that Hackettstown Regional Medical Center does the same service, maybe we can see what they offer. The Mayor stated we can also create an RFP and find others who perform these services.

Mike D'Arco, 7 Richard Drive:

Mr. D'Arco had other questions regarding third party billing and the number of ambulances available daily.

Gary Giacobbe, 1 James Drive:

Mr. Giacobbe stated that if Mount Arlington was to fund their own Rescue Squad, they could use a billing company to handle all the billing and insurance companies. Councilman Cangiano asked about the Rescue Squad members of the other towns, if they are paid from the township or receive any type payment from the insurance companies. (inaudible)

Councilwoman Danchuk stated that about ¼ of our calls are for the assisted living facility and per the Developers Agreement, the facility is supposed to provide their own ambulatory services. Councilwoman Danchuk stated that if the Agreement were enforced, it would cut down on Mount Arlington calls. Mr. Ward stated that they are trying to work with all the assisted living facilities within his territory, confirming that they do not dial 911 for transport calls. If the facilities fund their own ambulatory services, it would free up a large amount of time in Mount Arlington and possibly decrease response times.

Councilman Windish stated Jefferson has their own EMT services, why would Saint Clare's park in Jefferson? Mr. Ward stated an ambulance will be there due to Saint Clare's workload.

Councilman Stanzilis stated the Borough is concerned about response time and wanted to know if this is a negotiable proposal, are you willing to go back to the drawing board due to the concerns of our citizens? Mr. Ward stated that based on what they were given to work with, this is their best offer.

Councilman Sadow stated he was on Saint Clare's staff for 28 years, Chief of Surgery, and accepted many patients, surgical emergencies, traumatic emergencies, etc. At the very beginning of the discussion, Mr. Ward mentioned the transport/ambulatory services. Councilman Sadow does not understand why people are going home with EMT's from a hospital. Why would you take a full blown rig, with staff, and use it to transport patients home from a hospital; inter-facility transfers of course but rides home? Councilman Sadow said that Saint Clare's stated we are responsible for one-third of their shortfall and asked how many years have they been short-falling in the ambulance business at \$1.6 million, above or below? Councilman Sadow stated Saint Clare's hasn't met their bottom line since 1993, with a brief exception of \$800,000 in 2001; Saint Clare's has been losing approximately \$4 million dollars a month for the last several years. Councilman Sadow said the ambulance services we have been getting are outstanding and the EMT's are excellent and very competent. This is a small Borough of 5,200 residents with 788 calls and yet you claim that we have one-third of the responsibility for municipalities that are much larger in size, as your shortfall. There is some skepticism here in the audience because these numbers do not make a whole lot of sense; it seems that there is more money in transport than in acute 911 calls. Maybe transport should be a separate business plan to free up the ambulances that carry EMT's and a host of materials and machinery, so they are able to respond to 911 calls. Councilman Sadow stated he would rather have the rigs sitting idle doing absolutely nothing, waiting for that stroke, which is going to come, than transporting "Granny" who can go home by car. Councilman Sadow asked, are we sitting here spinning our wheels tonight or are you going to give us the ambulance service we contracted for. Mr. Ward said we are giving the service we contracted for but we are cancelling that contract on April 11, 2014. We are willing to work with you on finding alternatives to the existing ambulance contract, as we are doing

with all the communities we contracted with for ambulance services. We cannot afford to do what we have done in the past. Councilman Sadow stated that before a 60 day clause were to be exercised, and given that you have been losing money for several years, another few months where an opportunity for the Mayors to get together or perhaps a Council Commission might be in everyone's best interest to help you figure out a way out of this predicament; with everyone telling you how to run your business, which clearly you are having difficulty running, how about some outside help? Councilman Sadow stated he knows the Borough is not happy with the statement "...we are stopping the service as you have come to know it."

Gail Delaney, Howard Boulevard:

Ms. Delaney asked about the other municipalities Saint Clare's contracts with; Mr. Ward said each one has gotten the same information.

The Mayor thanked the public for attending and thanked Saint Clare's.

8. Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn: Council President Sorge

Second: Councilwoman Danchuk

Roll Call:

All in Favor – Aye.

None Opposed.

Motion Approved.


Linda DeSantis, RMC
Borough Clerk

Minutes Approved at Council Meeting of April 1, 2014.