

2/16/2007

TNH [Town of North Hempstead] Awarded \$180K to Study Possibility of Sharing Ambulance, EMS Services

Westbury Times 2/16/07

North Hempstead Supervisor Jon Kaiman, Town Councilman Wayne Wink, and Village of Great Neck Plaza Mayor Jean Celender announced that the town has been awarded a \$180,000 grant from the New York State (NYS) Department of State to study the feasibility of providing coordination and shared services between ambulance and emergency medical services in six of seven fire districts under the auspices of the town and by the two fire departments serving the Village of Great Neck Plaza (co-applicant with the TONH in the grant proposal).

"We're pleased to announce the awarding of this grant," Kaiman said. "The Town of North Hempstead is serious about addressing the issues and concerns that our communities have regarding the cost of government and the role of special districts. We pursued this grant so that we can acquire the knowledge and information necessary to make sure we protect our communities while fulfilling our fiduciary responsibilities to our constituents."

The six town fire districts in this proposal that provide these services are: Albertson Hook & Ladder; Carle Place Hook & Ladder; Floral Park Centre Fire Co. No. 1; Glenwood Hook & Ladder, Port Washington Fire Department, Inc.; and the Roslyn Fire Department, Inc. The Roslyn Fire Dept. contains two separate companies - the Rescue Hook & Ladder Co. and the Roslyn Highlands Hook & Ladder Co., each of which provide ambulance and emergency medical services. The two Great Neck Plaza fire/ambulance companies are Vigilant Hook & Ladder Co., Inc. and the Manhasset-Lakeville Fire Department.

The grant-winning proposal calls for the creation of a working group of stakeholders in ambulance and emergency medical services. This group, which will include representatives of the town, Nassau County, villages, fire districts and private hospitals, will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and a qualified consultant will be hired to perform the actual study. The consultant will first study the existing status of service delivery in the town, including the organizational structure of fire districts and other entities providing ambulance and emergency medical services; current funding streams for operating budgets; existing assets, quality of service delivery and geographic regions served.

The next aspect of the study would then look at various issues that would arise in a consolidation, including the structure(s) of any new entity providing these services; required managerial and personnel structures; necessary infrastructure; expected increased efficiencies; and budgetary impacts. The consultant will then perform a comprehensive financial and legal analysis.

If the feasibility study indicates that consolidation is both warranted and possible, the report will outline future steps needed to bring the consolidation to reality. The Town intends to utilize the lessons learned from any possible consolidation of services in pursuing the possibility of consolidating other types of services provided within the Town. The feasibility study will also be made available to other municipalities for study, and may serve as a model for consolidation elsewhere in New York State.

"There are over 100 municipal corporations providing services in the Town of North Hempstead," Councilman Wink added. "Many of them provide identical services to different geographic areas, and it may be in our residents' best interests to study ways of saving money and creating greater efficiencies. This feasibility study can serve as a model for similar ideas in the future."

"Local governments are struggling with rising costs, loss of revenue sharing and keeping tight fiscal controls on our budgets and spending," Mayor Celender stated. "Difficult times like these can be opportunities for local officials and our partner special districts, such as fire and ambulance departments, to work together to see where we can consolidate operations and work cooperatively to save money. Today's trends require that we have to find progressive solutions to our fiscal challenges."