

TOWN OF NIAGARA: Rural/Metro contract extended

By Rick Forgione/forgioner@gnnewspaper.com

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TOWN OF NIAGARA — A two-year contract extension has been approved allowing Rural/Metro to continue offering exclusive ambulance services in the Town of Niagara.

Despite having no changes in the agreement, the contract waited in limbo for two months while town officials addressed a request from Niagara Active Hose Volunteer Fire Company.

Fire Chief Dan Hosie had asked for a meeting with the town and Rural/Metro representatives to outline some concerns about the chain of command when responding to an emergency. Currently, Rural Metro has top priority, but Niagara Active has been attempting to secure approval to offer ambulance services for the past five years.

"I think overall, the relationship between the fire company and Rural/Metro is pretty good," said Robert Clark, who serves on both the town board and Niagara Active Hose. "Like anything, you're going to have times when people are going to butt heads. My main concern is the parties getting along and working together."

Town Supervisor Steven Richards said most of the concerns were worked out during a recent meeting between himself, Hosie and Rural/Metro.

"The meeting was very beneficial," he added. "It was a communication problem, not a contract problem."

To keep the lines of communication open between the two services, Richards said Niagara Active officials will begin attending monthly staff meetings of Rural Metro to discuss any issues that arise.

Currently, when a Town of Niagara resident calls 911, the police department will dispatch both Rural/Metro and the volunteer fire department for a medical emergency. Rural/Metro has an ambulance with one paramedic and one emergency medical trainer available in the town 24 hours a day.

Rural/Metro responded to about 400 calls in the town last year.

Niagara Active does have an ambulance, but it is not up to code or certified to transport patients. The department is attempting to secure a "certificate of need" from the state granting permission to begin offering ambulance services. If that happens, the town would have the option of dropping the Rural/Metro contract.

Contact reporter Rick Forgione