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## Corps having IRS troubles

### Ambulance service on financial mend

By Justin Mason (Contact)  
Gazette Reporter

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**ROTTERDAM** Bookkeeping errors left the Rotterdam Emergency Medical Services Inc. in a federal tax hole, company officials say, but they insist the nonprofit ambulance corps is on the financial mend.

The Internal Revenue Service imposed substantial tax liens against the ambulance corps in November 2007 and March 2008. The liens imposed in 2007 total \$189,814, while those levied in 2008 add up to \$59,631, according to records filed with the Schenectady County clerk during the past year.

In both instances, the liens are for unpaid payroll taxes. Officials from the Internal Revenue Services declined to discuss the liens assessed to REMS, citing their disclosure regulations, which prohibits them from commenting on any individual tax matter.

Joe Vanderwerker, the president of the company's board of directors, said attorneys representing REMS are in the process of working through a resolution with the IRS. Though declining to discuss specific details, he said the company isn't in any financial jeopardy at the moment.

"It has been resolved since then," he said.

Vanderwerker said the error arose in bookkeeping several years ago after the White Eagle and Rotterdam ambulance companies merged. The 2003 merger was intended to create a financially viable volunteer ambulance corps.

"We got stuck with all the liability," he said of the merger.

Meanwhile, REMS now owes Rotterdam more than \$20,000 for town fuel it has used over a nearly two-year period. Town Comptroller Pat Aragosa said the ambulance corps last made a payment toward their 2006 balance at the end of last year.

Aragosa said the ambulance corps is usually more diligent about settling their balance

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and their level of debt with the town is higher than he could recall it being previously. But he said the town is fairly lenient in allowing the corps time to pay off its balance.

“We’d like to get paid, obviously,” he said.

County Fire Coordinator John Nuzback said he was made aware of the lien situation when he was contacted by an IRS agent in April. He said the agent asked how the county would be affected if REMS were shut down.

At the time, REMS was supporting the western fringe of the county, as the Duanesburg Volunteer Ambulance Company attempted to reorganize. Nuzback said he advised the IRS agent that any shutdown of REMS would leave a large swath of the county without an ambulance service.

“I told them in one word, ‘devastating,’” he said.

Nuzback, the one-time board president of REMS, said the ambulance corps hasn’t reached out to his office for help. However, he said he’s been assured the troubles with the IRS are being resolved.

“They are making strides,” he said.

Rotterdam Supervisor Steve Tommasone said the apparent debt incurred by REMS demonstrates the growing need for the town to support the ambulance service financially. The town does not financially subsidize REMS, though officials have often discussed establishing a tax district for such a purpose.

In 2005, REMS asked the town to support an annual \$25-per-residence fee, which would raise about \$300,000 annually for the ambulance service. Though Tommasone voiced support for a such a taxing district, he said the town would first need a glimpse at the ambulance corps’ finances.

“We have to know their financial position as we move forward,” he said.

The town is also awaiting a proposal from REMS that would outline a merger between Rotterdam’s paramedic service and the ambulance corps.

Combining the smaller paramedic service with the larger volunteer ambulance corps would cost roughly \$145,000 more per year, according to a private consultant report returned to the town last year.

“Now we’re at a point where some decisions are going to need to be made,” Tommasone said.

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the  
results



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