



Rochester, NY  
[Find Your Town](#)

Tools

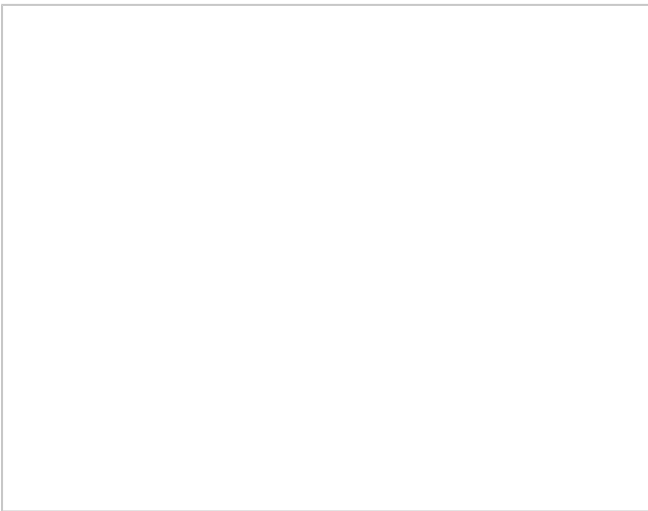
- [Subscriber Services](#)
- [Place an Ad](#)
- [E-Edition](#)

Google Search:

- Home
  - News**
  - Sports
  - Lifestyle
  - Entertainment
  - Multimedia
  - Blogs
  - Opinions
  - Classifieds
  - Homes
  - Shopping
  - Jobs
- Nation / World   Obituaries

Rochester, NY   Web

## Irondequoit Volunteer Ambulance issues 9-1-1 of its own



By Linda Quinlan, staff writer  
Irondequoit Post  
Mon Mar 10, 2008, 04:49 PM EDT

Story Tools: [Email This](#) | [Print This](#)

Irondequoit, N.Y. -

Irondequoit Volunteer Ambulance marked its silver anniversary just last year, but it might not get much past its

ADVERTISEMENT

### Special Sections

- [Pet Tales Magazine](#)
- [Community Wishbook](#)

**2008 Campaign Contributions**  
Find out who contributed to which presidential candidate in your area.

### Yellow Pages

Find whatever you're looking for with the Totally Local Yellow Pages:

in



Search provided by Premier Guide

Popular Searches:

- [Attorneys](#)
- [Auto](#)
- [Auto Parts](#)
- [Beauty](#)
- [Dealers](#)
- [Restaurants](#)
- [Salons](#)
- [Pizza](#)

[Featured Businesses](#)

27th year.

Ambulance corps President Mary Ellen Jones said Monday afternoon that the organization is projecting that unless there are some changes in how the organization is financed by the end of 2009, "we don't know how we can continue to operate."

Noting that financial concerns are forcing the corps to put out its own "9-1-1 call," Jones and the board of directors have called a press conference for tomorrow (Tuesday, March 11) afternoon to discuss the future of the corps.

"IVA has helped many people in their time of need, and today we're asking for help ourselves," Jones said. "This is a generous community, and I know that together we can find a way to keep Irondequoit Volunteer Ambulance operating for many years to come."

Jones added that the corps' plea follows efforts to "reach out" to the town and to the community's five fire districts, "but nothing has been forthcoming ... we may have no other option (than to shut down)."

The ambulance corps has been operating in the red for several years.

When Irondequoit Volunteer Ambulance Service was founded and began operations in August 1982, they were an all-volunteer agency with a budget of about \$50,000, raised exclusively by an annual fund drive. They answered about 500 calls a year.

By 2005, the service's volunteer base had dropped to 25 to 30 active volunteers. To make up the difference, about five full-time and 15 part-time workers were hired.

The corps' budget has mushroomed to about \$700,000 annually. In 2007, they answered 3,379 calls.

"We've gone from a Mom and Pop – everyone doing what they could to serve the community – organization," said Frank Ettaro, the only remaining volunteer paramedic with IVA, "to a professional corps."

IVA has consistently maintained a state-of-the-art approach to its inventory, Jones said. It was among the first area ambulance fleets to be equipped with automated external defibrillators for cardiac emergencies, and was also one of the earliest to carry advanced life support tools similar to those found in emergency units and critical care wards.

"We were also the first to hire career paramedics when it became apparent that we could not keep up our level of service with a dwindling supply of volunteers," Jones said.

It does not, and never has, received any tax dollars.

"After 26 years, we are facing a very difficult decision," Jones said. "We have a deep commitment to serving our neighbors, but economic realities can't be denied. The low rate of reimbursements for Medicare patients, who are increasingly our clientele, and the general state of the national and local economy make it unlikely that we can continue to provide the same level of service beyond the end of 2009."

To make financial ends meet, the corps has no longer been providing free service. The insurance companies of people who call on them are billed, and patients are billed directly for any balance.

Still, the corps operated about \$60,000 in the red for the 2004-05 year, and the outlook hasn't gotten any brighter.

To date, the corps' capital reserves have allowed them to absorb the annual deficits. With a capital fund drive, the corps was able to build and move into its permanent home at 2330 Norton Street in 1990. Mary Ellen Heyman, now town supervisor, was president of the IVA at the time.

In the past, the corps has proposed that the town consider forming a tax district, much like the five town fire districts, to fund ambulance service. The ambulance corps remains the only one of six emergency services providers in Irondequoit (including the five fire districts) that remains independent and gets no tax money.

If a townwide ambulance district were modeled after a similar district in Gates, it is estimated that it might cost around \$20 a year per household in Irondequoit.

Further complicating the picture, however, is that IVA was formed to provide ambulance service in only two of Irondequoit's five fire districts – Ridge-Culver and Laurelton. St. Paul Boulevard, Point Pleasant and Sea Breeze had and have their own ambulance corps. Many of St. Paul's ambulance calls are answered today, however, by Monroe Ambulance, a commercial ambulance service. IVA responds on Point Pleasant and Sea Breeze calls requiring advanced life support (heart attacks, for instance), since they offer basic life support only.

In fact, 429 of IVA's calls in 2007 were for mutual aid to companies not only elsewhere in Irondequoit, but also to Brighton, Rochester and Webster.

The corps has been providing ambulance service to the Ridge-Culver and Laurelton fire districts since 1982. The corps has since made agreements to provide advanced life support services to the Sea Breeze and Point Pleasant fire districts, and has mutual-aid agreements with the West Webster and Union Hill fire districts. The ambulance corps was founded 26 years ago as an alternative in an area at the time serviced only by commercial ambulance companies.

"It (the ambulance corps situation) really is a catch-22," said Bill Burkovich, volunteer chief of the Ridge-Culver Fire Department and also a part-time paid staffer for about the past five years at IVA.

The two fire districts, Ridge-Culver and Laurelton, that IVA was formed to serve don't provide any funding to the ambulance corps, he said. However, since IVA now answers calls in other districts, too, he said he doesn't think taxpayers in just those two districts should be paying for the service.

It might be better to consider consolidating ambulance services in the town, Burkovich said, to solve IVA's financial crisis.

"If people want an Irondequoit ambulance, then it should be an Irondequoit ambulance, not a portion of Irondequoit's ambulance," Burkovich said.

Even \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year would help keep IVA solvent, Jones said.

The two largest fire districts in Irondequoit – St. Paul Boulevard and Ridge-Culver - have operating budgets in the millions and have also gone to paid staff, as has the Laurelton Fire District. Sea Breeze and Point Pleasant remain all-volunteer.

Ridge-Culver's budget was up \$154,735 this year, up from \$1,687,265 in 2007 to \$1,842,000 in 2008. Their tax rate per thousand of assessed valuation went up 22 cents, from \$2.61 in 2007 to \$2.83 in 2008.

The St. Paul budget was up \$60,000, from \$2,058,000 in 2007 to \$2,118,000 this year. Their tax rate was up five

cents per thousand, from \$2.12 to \$2.17.

Laurelton's budget went up about \$3,000, from just under \$842,000 to just over \$845,000.

Point Pleasant's budget was up nearly \$10,000, from \$343,920 in 2007 to \$353,885 this year.

The Sea Breeze budget was up \$346, from \$89,006 in 2007 to \$89,352, but that's still down from their 2006 budget of \$93,557.

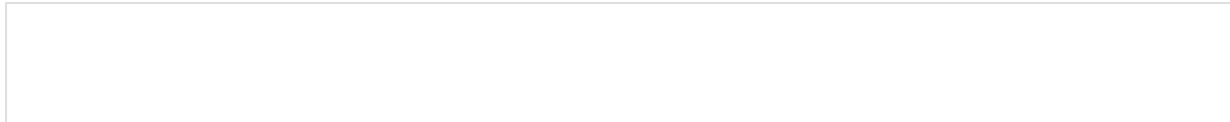
Jones stressed that IVA doesn't want to "bash" anyone, "but it's long past time we looked at this" ... perhaps having a town ambulance.

"Every other town – except our town – subsidizes its ambulance in some way," she said.

Linda Quinlan can be reached at (585) 394-0770, Ext. 350, or at lquinlan@mpnewspapers.com.

#### Related Stories

 Loading additional related stories...




MPNnow, 73 Buffalo St., Canandaigua, NY 14424

[Contact Us](#) | [Advertiser Info](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Yellow Pages](#)  
Copyright © 2006–2008 [GateHouse Media, Inc.](#) Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use  
under a [Creative Commons](#) license,  
except where noted.



WEB BROWSING REDEFINED  FIREFOX 2