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[Town ambulance district forces changes, concerns](#)

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PLATTSBURGH — The Town of Plattsburgh's creation of its Consolidated Ambulance District has led to changes for two other communities — and raised concerns at local fire departments.

The town used to administer ambulance agreements for itself, Beekmantown and Schuyler Falls.

Since Jan. 1, it has administered the contract only for its own new Consolidated District, which is served by two providers: EMT of CVPH and Morrisonville-Schuyler Falls EMS.

Town of Plattsburgh tax rates for ambulance service were also raised.

NO CONTROL

Wally Day, chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners in the South Plattsburgh Fire District, said many people equate ambulance service with fire departments, but that is not the case for the five departments in the Town of Plattsburgh.

South Plattsburgh Fire Chief Jeff Santor said departments such as South Plattsburgh, Cadyville and Cumberland Head do have EMTs who provide first-responder service on ambulance calls, so that's why many may think the fire departments set the rates.

Day wanted to emphasize that fire officials have no issues with the service provided by the two ambulance companies.

Jeff Favaro, chairman of the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Cadyville Fire District (one of those in the Town of Plattsburgh), said residents of the district have been asking why they raised the tax rate in the Fire District and then raised the tax for ambulance service also.

He stressed that the ambulance-service rate is set by the Town of Plattsburgh, not the fire commissioners.

"The biggest thing is to show people that the ambulance district tax is something we have no control over," Favaro said.

AUDIT

Plattsburgh Town Supervisor Bernie Bassett said the decision to consolidate was the result of an audit of the town by the New York State Comptroller's Office. It found that the town was not properly monitoring the service it received from the two ambulance companies.

That has been addressed in the agreements, as the town will now receive monthly reports on activity.

new RATES

Before the consolidation, town property owners served by Morrisonville-Schuyler Falls EMS paid 52 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value of their property, while those served by EMT of CVPH paid 25 cents per \$1,000.

The tax rate for the Consolidated Ambulance District is 36 cents per \$1,000.

THEIR OWN DEALS

Schuyler Falls Town Supervisor Harold Ormsby said the Town of Plattsburgh decision caught him by surprise.

"They dumped it on us with no warning," he said.

Ormsby said his town has reached its own agreements with Morrisonville-Schuyler Falls EMS and EMT of CVPH. He said the town actually saved some money with its new contracts.

"Our costs have gone down a little bit."

Beekmantown Town Supervisor Dennis Relation said the town has reached an agreement with EMT of CVPH. Town residents continue to receive what has always been very good service, he said.

Relation said he understands why the Town of Plattsburgh decided not to administer the agreements for all three towns. The town informed him of the plan several months before it consolidated its districts, he said, and met with him again when the plan was finalized.

Bassett said the town had public sessions and public hearings on the proposal.

"We made every effort we could to make sure the other municipalities were aware we were pursuing this," he said.

PACT WITH CVPH

The agreements call for the Town of Plattsburgh to pay EMT of CVPH a minimum of \$520,000 for service in 2011. That is based on an estimated 1,070 calls at a rate of \$486 per call.

The agreement allows for a maximum of \$560,000, based on 1,150 calls at the same rate.

It also calls for EMT of CVPH to provide two advanced life-support ambulances with two-person crews from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and one crew from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.

MORRISONVILLE PACT

The town will pay Morrisonville-Schuyler Falls EMS a minimum of \$398,000 for service in 2011. That is based on an estimated 600 calls at a rate of \$664 per call.

The agreement allows for a maximum of \$425,000. That is based on 640 calls at the same rate.

It does not spell out the level of service to be provided.

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