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Red Cross will give town Island ambulance corps

By [Peter Boody](#) | September 21, 2011 in [News](#)

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Shelter Island's ambulance corps, the only one in the country operated under the auspices of the national

American Red Cross, will be turned over to the Town of Shelter Island on January 1, 2012 and operated as a town-owned agency, it was announced Wednesday morning by Town Supervisor Jim Dougherty and the Red Cross Shelter Island Chapter.

The town will acquire the squad's Manwaring Road garage and office, three ambulances, all medical equipment and supplies as well as an existing cash fund balance that is restricted to capital expenditures. Supervisor Dougherty said the fund "seems close to \$200,000" but the number was "unconfirmed."

The town will take over the squad's operation, which Mr. Dougherty said always has been funded by donations. He estimated its annual budget at about \$90,000 to \$100,000 and said he hoped fund-raising would continue to be a revenue source. He likened the arrangement to the library, which receives taxpayer funding through the Shelter Island School District but also raises funds through donations.

Mr. Dougherty said he would be meeting with the ambulance corps Chief Executive Officer Joy Bausman and other squad officials to set a departmental budget to be included in the town's 2012 budget.

The supervisor will be submitting a preliminary town budget proposal on September 30. He and the Town Board will be holding special meetings in October to finalize the budget in time for a public hearing in November.

Mr. Dougherty has been warning at Town Board meetings all year that the 2012 municipal budget would be a challenge because of rising costs and declining revenues. The state's new 2-percent cap on any property tax increases, he has said, has complicated the challenge.

Of the ambulance squad's transition into operation as a town agency, "There will be not one minute's interruption of the emergency medical ambulance service we have come to rely on," Mr. Dougherty is quoted as saying in the press announcement released by his office Wednesday. "While this comes at a difficult time economically, with significant financial burdens which we are currently tackling, the town is prepared to answer this call from the Red Cross."

He said officials of the squad had approached the town in October 2010, "with the motivation coming from the national office," to discuss a town takeover. If the squad had to find a new home, he said, it preferred to find it with the town. He said "very discrete" talks had been underway ever since then. Ms. Bausman could not be reached Wednesday morning for comment. She is quoted in the announcement from the supervisor's office as saying, "Our team of ambulance volunteers will continue to provide prompt pre-hospital emergency care. We are delighted that the town is stepping in and I am confident that we will have a smooth transition."

The turnover is "in response to the reorganization and consolidation programs of the National American Red Cross ... and at the request of the Shelter Island Chapter," according to Wednesday's press announcement.

The Island's only local ambulance corps was founded in 1931 by local residents under a charter issued by the National Red Cross honorary president, Herbert Hoover. It has about 25 to 30 volunteers and no paid officers or staff.

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