

GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
March 17, 2022

Present: Ian Gilbert, Chair; Richard Chartrand, Vice-Chair; Phil Hathway; Andrea Moroughan and Josh Leviker.

Others present: Legislators Larry Dolhof, Ron Burns, Jeffrey Nellenback, Lisa Virkler and Tom Osborne; County Manager Ryan Piche; County Attorney Joan McNichol; Treasurer Eric Virkler; Human Resources Director Caitlyn Smith; and Information Technology Director Conner Biolsi.

Committee Chair, Legislator Gilbert, called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

Legislator Chartrand made a motion to approve the February 15, 2022 committee meeting minutes, seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried.

EMS Issues – Bib Mackenzie, Fire & Emergency Management Director

Bob began by explaining that the current EMS shortage is quickly becoming a crisis, not just in Lewis County but across New York State. In Lewis County, there are 8 agencies and all but one of those are volunteer basis. There was an event held called “Touch and Ambulance” to bring awareness to what these ambulance volunteers do but not a single resident showed up, which was disappointing to say the least. Volunteerism, in general, has been declining over the past several years and continues to decline.

Bob shared a map showing the different providers in Lewis County. He pointed out that Camden and Boonville, which are outside Lewis County but do respond to calls have both paid and volunteer members as well and Carthage Area Rescue Squad and our very own Lewis County Search and Rescue. Bob went on to state that many people come to Lewis County for recreational reasons or outdoor activities due to the vast wilderness and ATV trail system. The majority of the calls that are received are medical in nature, which over time have declined some. The issue is that when these calls are made there are now some ambulance services that are “out of service” during the day which then requires mutual aid to be called into action. The Croghan Volunteer Ambulance signed over their Certificate of Need to Lewis County Search and Rescue because there just wasn’t enough volunteers to man this unit properly.

The issue is that the younger group of eligible volunteers from 10 years old to 30 years old are stating they are too young for this type of work, the 30 to 50 year old group are stating they are too busy to volunteer because they have families now, and the 50 to 70 year old group are stating they are too tired to do that much work at their age. These reasons are all valid and make sense which is why volunteerism in general is declining, but on top of that the requirements to become and maintain certification are outrageous.

To become a Basic EMT, a person is required to have 200 classroom hours, plus have ride and clinical experience. An Advanced EMT is required to have 300 hours, plus ride and clinical experience. There used to be a Critical Care class which was over 500 hours but is no longer being taught. A Paramedic is required to have 3,000 hours plus ride and clinical experience.

The time and dedication it takes to get these certifications on top of the time being volunteered once the certification is received is overwhelming for so many.

Some of the most prominent EMS issues in Lewis County are: Abuse of services, which are people who use the ambulance service as a way to travel to Lowville; dwindling volunteers; expanded scope of knowledge required for certification; transportation to specialized hospitals, which takes several hours from start to finish; Electronic PCR; being a rural and expansive county; and lack of specialized mental health support services.

The cost of operations are: pharmaceutical costs, even for basic life saving levels; ambulance costs are between \$150,000 to \$240,000; equipment inside the ambulance can be roughly \$45,000 for a monitor, 412,000 for a stretcher, each equipment bag is roughly between \$200 and \$500, traction split in \$500; reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid are hardly anything; private insurance tends to send the payment directly to the patient which never makes its way to the ambulance service; and cost of re-certifications and training, but time is the biggest cost.

New York State rolls out regulations and protocol changes with minimal training; they also mandate additional adjuncts. Another issue is that volunteers are certified not licensed so they have to recertify every 3 years which has its own set of requirements. The Ambulance Recertification through the NYS Department of Health is over 200 pages long. Bob concluded that the Ambulance Services in Lewis County are not state mandated services, therefore communities are not required to send an ambulance. The EMS issues that Lewis County is facing are not just local; they are statewide issues that many other counties are facing too.

Legislator Hathway questioned whether the ambulance service bills for services, Bob responded that it is a mix as some do, and some don't. Bob went on to explain that there are no EMS contracts with specific communities. Legislator Dolhof stated that he would set up an Ad Hoc Committee for further discussion on this topic with Bob Mackenzie as the lead. The Committee would consist of three legislators, a hospital representative, an EMS representative, and a couple Town or Village representatives.

Committee Chair Gilbert stated that the discussion on Snowmobiling in Lewis County would be done in executive session due to public safety matters, Sheriff Carpinelli disagreed with that statement and stated that he wouldn't be able to stay.

The following dockets were reviewed:

1. Authorizing the Implementation and Funding in the First Instance 100% of the Costs of a Transportation Project, of Which Qualified Costs May be Reimbursed from BridgeNY Funds for Bridge Culvert Local Town of Lowville Project (PIN 775412) known as Gardner Road over Tributary to Deer River. *In response to Legislator Chartrand's question on the resolution wording, County Attorney Joan McNichol stated that the costs need to be qualified first then they would be reimbursed.*

AYE 5 NAY 0

2. Authorizing the Implementation and Funding in the First Instance 100% of the Costs of a Transportation Project, of Which Qualified Costs May be Reimbursed from BridgeNY Funds

for Bridge Culvert Local Town of Lowville Project (PIN 775413) known as O'Brien Road over Tributary to Mill Creek.

AYE 5 NAY 0

3. Authorizing the Implementation and Funding of 100% of the Costs of a Transportation Project, of Which May be Eligible for Federal-Aid and /or State-Aid, or Reimbursement from BridgeNY Funds for BridgeNY Local Town of Watson Project (PIN 775410/BIN2220750) known as Bailey Road over Independence River, Bridge Rehabilitation.

AYE 5 NAY 0

4. Authorizing the Implementation and Funding in the First Instance 100% of the Costs of a Transportation Project, of Which Qualified Costs May be Reimbursed from BridgeNY Funds for Bridge Culvert Local Town of West Turin Project (PIN 775411) known as Crofoot Hill Road over Tributary to Sugar River.

AYE 5 NAY 0

5. Authorizing the County of Lewis to Accept Real Property Obtained by NYS Relative to Bridge Project known as CR 43 (East Road) over Moose Creek (PIN 775389/BIN 3339700).

AYE 5 NAY 0

6. Authorizing Supplemental Agreement No. 1 to Contract No. D040264 between New York State Department of Transportation and Lewis County for the Transportation Federal-Aid Bridge Replacement Project (PIN 775389) known as CR 43 (East Road) over Moose Creek.

AYE 5 NAY 0

7. Authorizing One-Year Agreements with South Lewis Central School District and Harrisville Central School District and the County of Lewis to Provide a School Resource Officer during the 2022/2023 School Year. *Legislator Hathway pointed out that he preferred more than one year contract but understood the reasoning against it. He thought that the cost amounts should be in the resolution so the schools know what their share would be. County Attorney Joan McNichol stated that the cost depends on who the officer is as well as other factors which could be different for each school. Legislator Hathway also had issues with the wording of the resolution, stating that it seems that it is a punitive measure towards schools over something they can't control. Further discussion on this was had, with Ryan stating that he would send out specific cost in an email format.*

AYE 5 NAY 0

8. Amending Compensation Plan with Reference to Recreation, Forestry and Parks to abolish a Recreation Crew Leader position at Grade 19 and Create a Recreation Crew Leader position at Grade 23. *There was discussion on this change which was done because the position was posted twice with one response but was turned down due to the inefficient pay. This position requires a CDL too.*

AYE 5 NAY 0

Motions:

1. Legislator Moroughan moved to authorize Buildings & Grounds Supervisor, Matt O'Connor to send out an RFP for Mechanical Services at the Glenfield Elementary School property, seconded by Legislator Chartrand and carried.
2. Legislator Leviker moved to authorize Buildings & Grounds Supervisor, Matt O'Connor to send out an RFP for Mowing & Plowing services at the Glenfield Elementary School property, seconded by Legislator Chartrand and carried.
3. Legislator Hathway moved to award hot asphalt mix bids based on project location in accordance with the tabulation of all bids prepared by the Highway Superintendent and placed on file with the Clerk of the Board, for the period of April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023, seconded by Legislator Moroughan and carried.

County Manager Ryan Piche updated the committee that the county is in the process of closing on the Glenfield Elementary School property but there are some mechanical system issues that will need to be addressed. On the new Highway facility project there is an issue with the NYS DOT regarding the entrance onto State Route 812, and a meeting has been set for next week to resolve this. It will cost a little more money to adjust the entrance but should be a good solution.

Legislator Chartrand questioned if the Sheriff should be moved to next months committee meeting and Legislator Gilbert responded that the Sheriff was asked to submit a brief write up ahead of time and failed to do so. Legislator Gilbert would like anyone who is presenting to the committee to submit something in writing ahead of time as material for members of the committee to form relevant questions.

There being no other business to come before the committee, Legislator Chartrand made a motion to adjourn at 1:58 p.m., seconded by Legislator Hathway and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Cassandra Moser, Clerk of the Board