

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF WHITE LAKE
Unapproved Minutes of the Special Board of Trustees Meeting
August 25, 2021

Supervisor Kowall called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Clerk Noble called the roll:

Present: Rik Kowall, Supervisor
 Anthony L. Noble, Clerk
 Mike Roman, Treasurer
 Scott Ruggles, Trustee
 Liz Smith, Trustee
 Andrea C. Voorheis, Trustee
 Michael Powell, Trustee

Also Present: John Holland, Fire Chief
 Jennifer Edens, Recording Secretary

AGENDA

It was MOVED by Treasurer Roman, SUPPORTED by, Trustee Powell to approve the Agenda. The motion PASSED by a unanimous voice vote.

PRESENTATION/WORKSHOP REGARDING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Supervisor Kowall noted that item 6A under New Business is not necessarily to approve it, but to further discover the process. If the Board were to have no interest in pursuing it, then it would not go any further.

Chief Holland shared that when he began, he started as an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) and then became a paramedic. In total, he has approximately nine-years on a rig. He further shared that when he hired in with the White Lake Fire Department (WLTFD), it was licensed as a medical first response department, which is the lowest level of licensing in the State of Michigan. He was able to bring WLTFD licensing up to a basic life support transport service. As of today, the WLTFD is still licensed that way. This license gives the WLTFD the option to transport if they need to.

He opined that the WLTFD is in crisis mode and that its service has not improved in twenty plus years even though the community has changed. He indicated that twenty-years ago they were making approximately 1,000 calls a year and currently it is 3,000. He also indicated that there is a national shortage of paramedics. He further shared that they are currently testing for three positions and that they have only had seven candidates test for them. He shared when he tested years ago in Waterford there was at least 350 candidates.

Currently if Star EMS (Emergency Medical Service) is unavailable, the WLTFD must call Highland or Waterford Township for paramedic services and sometimes transport, which takes from their resources. He did indicate that WLTFD can transport and provide basic services, just not paramedic services, even though most in the Department are paramedics.

Supervisor Kowall indicated that this licensing would be an upgrade to the Township's license as a whole in relationship to the state qualifications.

Trustee Voorheis confirmed that under the current licensing the WLTFD cannot do something as basic as an IV.

Firefighter David Mills indicated that the WLTFD has enough paramedics to stock each of the three shifts with three paramedics. However, under the current licensing the WLTFD must call an ALS unit as soon as they find out that Star is not available.

He further shared that he has held several positions within Oakland County and has been in White Lake for nearly fourteen years. He held a position at the Oakland County Medical Authority as the QI Coordinator for five years. The Oakland County Medical Authority regulates the entire EMS system within the County. As the QI Coordinator he was responsible for ensuring protocol compliance, deviation investigations, education initiatives, and county wide studies. He is also a QI Coordinator for an organization out of Oak Park.

He continued that he has researched this topic extensively and shared that when he was hired by then Chief Maltese the plan was to go ALS. He opined that the system as it is currently designed consistently fails the residents, to no fault of the firefighters. He indicated the WLTFD is shackled by their BLS licensing and that there are so many additional ways they could help the residents, but they are not allowed without breaking the law, again due to the licensing.

He indicated that the goal here today is to make this a priority for the Board. He is unaware of any program that is more important to the citizens of this community than the one they are proposing. The slide presentation he will share tonight with the Board will identify the critical short comings that the Department currently offers, the benefits of a fire based ALS system, which the majority of the municipalities in Oakland County offer, past and present status of fire based ALS services in Oakland County, legal obligations, and to clarify any misconceptions. He further indicated that there are small communities throughout Oakland County that are doing this and that there is no reason White Lake can't.

He shared a multitude of medical procedures that are allowed under ALS licensing, that are not allowed under the Department's current licensing (i.e. draw meds, start IV's, interpret cardiac rhythms, c-collars, ekg, vascular access, definitive airway). Most importantly he noted that ALS provides a team base ALS effort with multiple rescuers giving a patient a chance to survive. The goal is not to save someone's life as they have no control over that. The true goal is to give a patient the best chance of survival. He opined that WLTFD not being ALS, prevents them from being able to do that. They consistently fail at giving patients the best chance of surviving.

Contrarily as a BLS unit they are trained and carry an AED machine and use it proficiently. However, it is nowhere near being able to work with an ECG monitor which has a fifteen second difference in less delay. The difference between an AED analyzing and a trained advanced provider analyzing with an ECG over the total span of a cardiac arrest could add up to 60 to 120 seconds, which is a lot of compressions considering you are doing 120 per minute. This minor thing shows the Board how significant the difference is between ALS and BLS.

He opined that more striking in the contrast of ALS vs. BLS is that the medications that WLTFD can carry as a BLS provider consist of three; naloxone, epinephrine, and oral glucose. However with ALS there is a long list of medications, many of which are incredibly important, and many of which are found in most medicine cabinets (i.e. Tylenol, aspirin, dextrose, pain reliever medication, ketamine, TXA for internal bleeding, and medications that can stop seizures). He indicated that currently if Star is arriving fifteen minutes later and that they must sit there and watch as a patient who is having a seizure, seizes and there is not much they are allowed to do.

In response to a question of Treasurer Roman, Firefighter Mills indicated that there is a standing protocol that if you encounter a certain situation, you administer a specific medication. There is an app that allows them to access medications, use, and dosage. The reference materials are awesome. All of which can not be done with ALS.

Treasurer Roman asked how to avoid an allergic reaction without medical records.

Firefighter Mills indicated that there is a low allergic rate, but if there is a reaction then, and only as ALS, they can push epinephrine. He further indicated that there is no cost to carry all the medications under the ALS licensing. They are provided by hospital pharmacies and as soon as they are administered the patient is billed for the same.

He further indicated that there is a fire industry and EMS system that does not have a high volume of applicants, yet the community continues to grow as does the number of EMS calls at almost an 11% increase. Therefore, when a municipality is back logged, they must call a private agency, which will not turn down the work as they are businesspeople, regardless of how thinly they are stretched.

Clerk Noble confirmed that if the Department is unable to obtain a private EMS, they will need to transport.

Chief Holland interjected that with this presentation, they are not proposing taking over transport. He indicated that they go on the calls and must be there. Response teams that go to a call stay with the call. They would like the paramedics to be able to treat the patient and have Star transport if available. He clarified that they are not proposing a transport service.

Clerk Noble questioned if Star is lacking, then why does WLTFD not use a different service. He further suggests investigating the cost of having a dedicated ambulance for the Township. He would be interested in finding out what the cost of such a contract would be.

Trustee Powell joined in on the suggestion.

Firefighter Mills indicated that it is projected that the need will grow by 15%. In response to the challenges that have been going on for a longtime, the OCMCA reduced the minimum staffing level for ALS licensed vehicles from a 2-medic model to a 1-medic/1-basic EMT model. While most agencies indicated they would not accept the 1-medic, it is frustratingly the case now due to staffing. He shared that you may have six medics on scene but only one is authorized to perform advanced procedures.

He believes the best proposal is the one that they are proposing. They currently have thirteen medics that are only able to operate up to the level of state licensing, which is BLS. Currently if they respond to a call where a patient is hypoglycemic, all they can do is watch him/her until an ALS unit arrives or try to give oral glucose that never works. If they have ALS licensing, they could administer effective medications to aid and the patient and allow them the choice to go to the hospital. All of that could happen before Star even gets there. Currently, they must wait for Star and that prolongs their call times and the time the patient goes with out treatment. He shared other similar situations where an ALS unit could assist a patient prior to Star's arrival and noted upon their arrival they can pass the patient to Star for transport. The impact is far reaching. ALS would legally permit all medics in White Lake to assist in ALS procedures and perform ALS procedures.

Trustee Ruggles inquired as to how many career firefighters in White Lake Township are paramedics.

Chief Holland responded that there are twenty including he and Jason Hanifen, but sixteen that are active. He would like to, if this proposal goes through, to have new hires sign a letter of agreement that they will go to medic school as part of an employment agreement, which is a fifteen-month program.

Firefighter Mills responded there are seven EMT' s and that many of them are older and looking to retire. He pointed out while they are shorthanded, this proposal does not involve any operational change or any staffing change than what they currently offer. They are not proposing that they transport any more often than they currently do. If they go ALS they will transport when they must. They are proposing a partnership between the WLTFD and Star to maximize ALS coverage and saturate the community with ALS resources. It will eliminate critical delays and time sensitive procedures which will reduce patient suffering, morbidity, and fatality. He shared a map of communities within Oakland County highlighting the majority of ALS coverage in the surrounding area, many of them are communities smaller than White Lake.

The ALS proposal proposes that WLTFD partners with the private ALS service, and to keep them here they incentivize them by partnering and making them the first choice of transport in every case. He also noted that the Bennet Bill can be utilized which allows the WLTFD to maintain its BLS licensing for the first two years but allows them to offer ALS services only when they have adequate staffing to do so. There is no legal obligation to maintain an ALS unit in service 24/7 during the first two-years. This allows for a transition to build staffing and tool-up. After the two-years the WLTFD would be required to meet the obligation of 1-medic and 1-EMT staffing licensed ALS transport unit 24/7. He shared that they could upgrade or downgrade as often as they want to with regards to other trucks, but that the one would have to always respond as an ALS. Firefighter Mills shared that there is no more liability than what they currently have as BLS.

Chief Holland will speak with the Oakland County Medical Director to see if there is anything that needs to be upgraded. He wanted to get the Board's approval before putting too much work into this.

Firefighter Mills shared that the worst thing that has happened to someone who made a terrible indiscretion on the job, was that they lost their job. He cannot speak as to what happens to the municipality.

Supervisor Kowall shared that you cannot walk through life worrying about lawsuits.

Trustee Smith opined that you can be anywhere, doing anything and be a target of liability.

Chief Holland declared that it is hard to get in trouble when you follow protocol.

Supervisor Kowall noted that as he understands, in the event that something goes wrong, the first step is a review by the County Board that reviews the procedures and actions to determine if something was done in error. If the Board finds that nothing was done in error the quest for suit lessens.

Clerk Noble indicated that it is the Township Board's responsibility to protect the fire and police from frivolous lawsuits and litigate such. He declared that as long as they are in policy, the Township is fine. If a deviation occurs, then the Township is not fine.

Firefighter Mills indicated that many of the mistakes that are made are because there are firefighters that were not immersed in rigorous ALS training. He opined that if WLTFD goes ALS it would have to have a rigorous training in place.

In closing he noted that currently what WLTFD offers fails to meet benchmarks and established treatment standards. He shared that prior to this meeting, this has not been brought to this Board's attention. The written proposal has been presented to the Board for further review.

Trustee Voorheis thanked Firefighter Mills for his passion and a great presentation. She is in support of this and has been for five years. She believes the Township needs to help its residents and that you can't put a cost on a life.

Trustee Powell agrees with what Trustee Voorheis stated, but he doesn't feel that he knows enough to make an intelligent decision. He appreciates the presentation and is impressed with Firefighter Mills. He believes it would be frivolous of this Board to say that it does not care what the cost is even if it saves one life, as it cannot pay for one-hundred officers. He opined that the Board must be wise about what it does, but that it sounds like an incredible opportunity. He asked the following questions to be answered later:

- What would happen to STAR or the private companies if WLTFD is able to do everything they do? Would we be putting them out of business? Would it be wiser for them to update themselves rather than lose a job?
- What changes are needed in staffing and education in staffing to make this happen? Do the nine trained need to be retrained and certified? Do the others just stand there and watch? Can the others onsite administer aspirin?
- Is there a way to have new employees sign a noncompete agreement?

- What is the cost to bring the department up to the level needed in education and what might the Board ask for in negotiations?

Firefighter Mills did offer that if WLTFD goes ALS they will need a new position for a fulltime ALS coordinator. He also stated that there could be multiple responders working on the same patient.

Supervisor Kowall has instructed HR to call out benefits to new hires as incentives that the Township can offer. He further indicated that he would like the Board to compile questions and present them together.

Treasurer Roman questioned of the pay difference between someone who can provide ALS service and someone who couldn't.

Chief Holland really doesn't want to discuss pay tonight.

Treasurer Roman confirmed Star is paid for by the patient, not the Township. He asked how Star would feel if the Township contracted with a secondary service.

Chief Holland indicated that there is no secondary service in this area.

Firefighter Mills shared that the ambulance service must have a letter of understanding signed with Med Control of Oakland county. The agencies must have a letter of agreement with the municipalities.

Treasurer Roman asked what the effect on police dispatch would be if ALS is approved.

Clerk Noble asked if the dispatch would have to stay on the line if ALS is approved.

Firefighter Mills indicated that WLTFD would be calling the hospital and arrival at the hospital and then arriving back to the station. It would briefly draw out the call of transportation. If it can transfer to Star for transport for service, nothing operationally will change. WLTFD will only transport if they must. He further indicated that EMD (emergency medical dispatch) is a requirement unless you can consistently get to a call in less than two minutes.

Treasurer Roman asked if Chief Holland has spoken with Star regarding their disappointment. To which, Chief Holland indicated he has spoken with them, but would not call it a disappointment as there is a shortage of staff.

Treasurer Roman noted that he has never heard of a complaint so whatever WLTFD is doing, is working. He is concerned with money and liability.

Trustee Smith thanked Firefighter Mills for the enthusiastic presentation. She is sorry this took so long to get before the Board. She couldn't agree more that this needs to happen and that this Board should take this on as a priority. She feels confident in the presentation. She has concerns regarding funding, but she looks at it from a humane approach. To her this is a no brainer. She is 1,000% on board other than wanting funding information. As far as service she thinks this is great and she is in favor.

Trustee Ruggles agrees with what Trustee Smith said. He is thankful for the presentation and feels that he learned so much. He will be very supportive to get this where WLTFD wants this to go. He feels it is terrible that they could respond to a call and not be able to aid a patient. He too wishes this could have been done sooner.

Clerk Noble noted it was a great presentation. His suggestion is to check and see what a contract with a service would cost. He stated that the Board has a fiduciary responsibility. His big concern is the lack of applicants. The costs of EMS captain, special equipment, billing, overtime, more regulations concern him. He believes that perhaps structured contracts could attract individuals to the positions. He noted that you must have the passion to want to do this type of job. He suggests that the Board compile its questions, share them with Chief Holland, and meet again.

Supervisor Kowall would like us to move forward with it in the future discovery of it. He notes there will likely be one or two more workshops to discuss it.

Trustee Smith noted that seconds to count. She asked of Supervisor Kowall if the future workshops could occur before negotiations begin.

Supervisor Kowall indicated that an effort will be made, but there is no guarantee.

Trustee Powell noted that he is of the age and has a condition that makes this personal. He questioned where a 911 call is dispatched to and was informed it is the White Lake Dispatch. He questioned what happens next.

Firefighter Mills indicated that Dispatch would dispatch both fire and police and transfer the call to Star's emergency dispatch center where prearrival instruction, if needed would be shared with the caller. They then would dispatch their own unit. He reiterated that if there is not a close Star's unit, and WLTFD is ALS they would be able to start treating immediately and not have to wait for Star.

Clerk Noble noted that a shared dispatch with the county delays the time of response.

Trustee Smith questioned if a patient could select which hospital they wish to go to.

Firefighter Mill indicated they are bound to the same protocol of closest hospital unless medical control authorizes permission to bypass to another hospital.

It was MOVED by Supervisor Kowall, SUPPORTED by, Trustee Smith that the Township Supervisor continue to explore the implementation of ALS response subject to the budget and program approval by the Board of Trustees. The motion PASSED by a unanimous voice vote.

Clerk Noble presented to Trustee Voorheis a binder that Deputy Clerk Santiago created that includes laminated minutes of the meeting wherein a tribute was given to her father and her father's voter registration card.

ADJOURNMENT

It was MOVED by Supervisor Kowall, SUPPORTED by, Clerk Noble to adjourn. The motion PASSED by a unanimous voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

I, Anthony L. Noble, the duly elected and qualified Clerk of the Charter Township of White Lake, County of Oakland, State of Michigan, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of the August 25, 2021 special board meeting minutes.

Anthony L. Noble, Clerk
White Lake Township
Oakland County, Michigan