

**MINUTES OF THE MILLVILLE  
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
January 26, 2016 @ 7:00 PM**

In attendance were Deputy Mayor Bob Gordon, Secretary Steve Maneri, Council Member Susan Brewer, Town Manager Debbie Botchie, and Town Executive Assistant Matt Amerling.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Deputy Mayor Gordon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Deputy Mayor Gordon led the pledge of allegiance.

**3. ROLL CALL**

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

**A.** Presentation by the Millville Volunteer Fire Company (MVFC) on a new program entitled “Community Discount Ambulance Service Program” – Doug Scott, President, & John Watson, EMS Chief

Mr. Doug Scott, Chief, MVFC, stated his thanks for being here tonight, and Mr. John Watson, who is the EMS Chief, knows a lot more about this program than him so he is going to have Mr. Watson give most of the presentation.

Mr. John Watson stated this program is called the Community-Wide Discount Ambulance Subscription Service and he would like to first go through and discuss how the current system works. Mr. Watson stated they provide emergency medical services to the communities of Millville, Ocean View, Clarksville, and other unincorporated developments within the MVFC fire district. Mr. Watson stated the EMS operates a fleet of three (3) ambulances, staffed by eleven (11) full-time career staff employees and about twenty-three (23) part-timers on their staff. Mr. Watson stated the EMS currently has two (2) ambulances staffed during the day, with one (1) crew (two EMTs and one ambulance) at Station One (next to the Banks Liquor Store) and another crew at Station Two (on Omar Road in Clarksville), and the third ambulance stays at Station One headquarters in case there are any more emergencies. Mr. Watson further stated the two crews are staffed from seven (7) a.m. to seven (7) p.m., and after 7 p.m., the EMS drops down to one (1) career-staffed ambulance, which is located at headquarters, so any second emergencies the EMS currently gets would have the person (with an emergency) having to wait for a crew to come from home, so the response time would be delayed. Mr. Watson stated they are assisted by Sussex County paramedics, Delaware State Police (DSP) aviation, Maryland State Police (MSP) aviation (if they are needed), as well as various municipal agencies (i.e., Bethany, Dagsboro, Roxana, etc.) who come in when the MVFC is really busy. Mr. Watson stated the four (4) major hospitals with which the MVFC EMS transports to are Beebe Medical Center, Atlantic General, Peninsula Regional Medical Center (PRMC), and Salisbury. Mr. Watson further stated Atlantic General is in Berlin (Maryland), and sometimes the EMS goes to Nanticoke, depending on the situation of the patient and their needs.

Mr. Watson stated the EMS currently works with eight (8) of the career staff working twenty-four (24) hour shifts, with twenty-four hours on, and seventy-two (72) hours off. Mr. Watson stated there are two other employees who work strictly daytime hours from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and they work four (4) days on and four (4) days off, and they work opposite of each other. Mr. Watson stated the EMS has one career EMS chief, which is him, and a career EMS lieutenant who is on a regular shift, and he is the chief's back-up. Mr. Watson stated during the day, having a unit at each station, it seems to work out for the MVFC, helps guarantee them getting out to the first two emergencies for the day, and – depending how close the caller is to the two stations – they can get to the caller quicker, which is essential when most of the calls have to do with heart or respiratory issues. Mr. Watson stated when there are calls at night (after 7 p.m.), there is a delay, waiting for volunteers. Mr. Watson stated the current statistics are in 2012, the MVFC EMS ran approximately one-thousand-five-hundred-ninety-six (1,596) EMS calls; in 2013, the EMS ran one-thousand-seven-hundred-eighty-seven (1,787) EMS calls; in 2014, one-thousand-eight-hundred-seventy-four (1,874) calls; and in 2015, two-thousand-one-hundred-five (2,105) calls. Mr. Watson stated the MVFC is not expecting these numbers to decline. Mr. Watson referenced a graph going back to 2004, stating the MVFC ran one-thousand-seven-hundred-seventy-two (1,772) calls; and in 2009, there is a drastic decline, which is when Bethany Beach took over the ambulance service from the Inlet Bridge to the Ocean City, Maryland, line. Mr. Watson stated because of this, since 2009, the MVFC EMS has had almost a nine hundred (900) call increase in those past few years, and with the developments growing, the MVFC expects these calls to keep increasing. Mr. Watson stated the next page shows the MVFC cost to income and how they have been staying pretty close to even, but one thing not in the cost is the replacement of ambulances, so in the last four (4) years, the MVFC has spent almost a million-three (\$1.3 million) replacing their ambulances. Mr. Watson stated the MVFC tries to keep the ambulances for ten (10) years and two-hundred-thousand (200,000) miles, but just since 2013, they have replaced three (3). Mr. Watson stated the next page shows how the MVFC's second emergency calls have increased over the years since 2012, with four-hundred-eighty (480) second emergencies in 2015, so the MVFC would like to stop the delay in responding to those second emergencies.

Mr. Watson stated the MVFC's current EMS subscription service consists of in May or early June of each year, the MVFC EMS sends out an EMS subscription to each property owner in their fire district and requests a fifty dollar (\$50) donation from each property owner to the EMS service. Mr. Watson stated the subscription covers the members of the immediate household only, the cost of the transport to a medical facility for emergency care after insurance. Mr. Watson further stated if the patient has no insurance and they've donated their fifty dollars (\$50), the cost of the transport is written off and is marked as "paid in full." Mr. Watson stated if a patient is not a current subscriber and the EMS takes you to the hospital, after the insurance, the patient will be billed for the remaining balance the insurance did not pay. Mr. Watson stated what the MVFC is proposing with this new service is the MVFC ambulance service would continue to process the cost of an ambulance run by billing insurance companies and Medicare for their service. Mr. Watson stated if a member of the community were covered by this new program, any remaining costs to the individual would be written off. Mr. Watson further stated the MVFC would like to propose the community-wide discount ambulance subscription service to cover all property owners, guests of the property owners, renters, and employees of the property owner(s) if said business is in Millville and only during working hours. Mr. Watson stated if there were an employee working for a business in Town and they

were working and got hurt, that employee would be covered under the plan. Town Manager Debbie Botchie asked if, for instance, the Giant Food store pays the \$35 and one of their employees gets hurt, this program would cover that employee. Mr. Scott stated yes, but the program would not cover patrons (i.e., if someone living outside of Town was shopping, got hurt on premises and needed the EMS; they would not be covered). Mr. Watson stated the cost of the subscription would be \$35 per property or improved lot, which means the property would have to have a home or business on it. Mr. Watson stated the cost of each community would be determined by multiplying the number of properties by \$35 and then the Town would add the cost for the ambulance subscription service of \$35 to its annual tax fee schedule. Mr. Watson stated there would be a single invoice sent to the Town each year of which the Town would remit to the MVFC ambulance service. Mr. Watson stated by the Town taking part in this subscription service, it would eliminate the MVFC from having to send out the subscriptions and saving them money by not having the mailers made, as well as the postage costs for mailing them out and providing the self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Mr. Watson stated the discount for Town residents would be about a thirty percent (30%) per home decrease compared to the fifty dollar (\$50) subscription.

Mr. Watson stated MVFC's proposal is, starting February 2016, to increase its staffing to two (2) career-staffed ambulances for twenty-four (24) hours a day, three-hundred-sixty-five (365) days a year, so there would be an ambulance at each station twenty-four (24) hours a day, unless they are out on a call. Mr. Watson further stated this helps give a timely response and reduces any delay. Ms. Botchie asked with residents who have community centers or pools, and one of the residents' visiting grandchildren, who is not a resident, gets hurt, but the resident grandparent does pay the subscription, would the grandchild be covered. Mr. Watson stated currently, the grandchild would not be covered, but once the service goes community-wide under this new program, then yes, the grandchild would be covered; however, if someone jumped the fence and wasn't an invited guest, they would not. Mr. Watson stated the start of the new program would actually be 2017 so everyone has time to get the logistics laid out. Council Member Steve Maneri asked if places like the Beebe Walk-in Clinic and Imaging in Town will just pay the flat rate of \$35 and will it cover the patients. Mr. Scott stated they can pay the \$35 and it will cover their employees but it will not cover the patients (unless the patients are paying into the subscription service).

Mr. Maneri asked what will happen if someone is delinquent on their subscription bill, and who is in charge of getting the payment. Mr. Scott stated he does not quite know. Ms. Botchie stated the Town can accommodate this service with its financial software and the Town would not call this a tax, but rather a fee. Ms. Botchie stated the fee would be on the resident's tax bill, which would have property taxes and the ambulance service fee of \$35, which would be submitted back to the Town. Ms. Botchie further stated should an individual not pay the \$35 fee, what is done at the "Big Four" (Bethany Beach, South Bethany, Sea Colony, and Fenwick Island) is each town is responsible for collecting the \$35 fee, and Ms. Botchie's understanding is the Town can penalize the person, and place a lien against their home. Ms. Botchie stated the "Big Four" only had some opposition – maybe the first year – and there is a board made up of the mayor from each town (the chairman of the homeowners association (HOA) from Sea Colony), the president, the chief and the treasurer from the Bethany Beach Fire Company, and they all meet quarterly. Ms. Botchie stated this board approves the EMS budget and they meet to see how the expenditures are going out, revenue coming in, so there is "dual control." Ms. Botchie stated this program could work for the Town whether Ocean View wanted to also participate or

not. Ms. Botchie stated the Town is growing in leaps and bounds, there is a development for the Town with five-hundred (500) new homes which hasn't even started to be built yet, and Millville by the Sea (MBTS) is an eighteen (18)-year build-out, and the Town can still annex property south, west and north, whereas the inland towns will soon be landlocked. Ms. Botchie stated she wanted to let Council know the Town can do this, its software can do this, and she is behind this one-hundred (100) percent. Mr. Scott stated everything Ms. Botchie said is fairly accurate, but he is not sure the MVFC is envisioning such a complex control situation with the Town. Ms. Scott stated, based on the demographics of how many property owners there are in Town here and in Ocean View, the agreement does not need to be as complex as what the "Big Four" has in place, and this program was developed to be offered to the Towns first and then other developments outside of town. Council Member Susan Brewer asked if the MVFC is planning on proposing this program to unincorporated property owners. Mr. Scott stated MVFC's plan is to first look at to the towns because they encompass the most area and they have developments within the town limits (i.e., MBTS) and that way, if the Town were to do it, the MVFC could avoid having to deal with multiple HOAs. Mr. Scott stated if the Town does not agree with the program, then the MVFC would approach the separate developments.

Mr. Robert Gray, of Surfsong Landing, stated this new program would simplify a lot of things because once residents get the Town tax bill, residents can tell their respective mortgage companies there is an additional fee. Mr. Gray stated this program is especially convenient since MBTS does not yet have a resident-controlled HOA. Ms. Botchie stated the Town only has about three (3) developments where the residents have taken over control of their HOAs, but Bishop's Landing is included in the same situation as MBTS, and Dove Landing has not even broken ground yet but will be built. Mr. Scott stated in the next couple of months, the MVFC will be moving toward unincorporated developments and approaching them about this same program.

Mr. Gordon asked about the presentation to Ocean View Town Council and how that was received. Mr. Watson stated the Ocean View Council did not vote on the program that night and they were waiting on their lawyer to review some things, and since then, the MVFC has reached out to their council and offered to come back before them to answer any more of their questions, but, overall, their council seemed "on-board." Mr. Scott stated he also believed the council was in favor of the program, although there were enough comments from the audience which made the council want to think things through more before coming to a decision, but Mr. Scott thinks the MVFC will get their decision at their next council meeting.

Mr. Gray asked when the residents would be billed for this program. Mr. Watson stated they would not start until 2017, but regular \$50 subscriptions will be sent out this year as usual. Ms. Laura Cord, of Pembroke Lane, asked what the number was on the MVFC's runs last year. Mr. Watson stated two-thousand-one-hundred-five (2,105). Ms. Cord asked if the MVFC is able to bill insurance companies most of the time on those calls. Mr. Watson stated on transports, yes. Ms. Cord asked if the MVFC is being reimbursed about \$450 per transport. Mr. Watson stated no, roughly about \$750, and their average return right now is sixty-four percent (64%). Ms. Cord asked when someone does the math, and every business and every household is billed \$35, therefore not paying the out-of-pocket cost, how does the MVFC make any more money to hire more people. Ms. Cord further stated she is thinking of places like Giant Food who has a lot of employees and they're only paying the \$35, so that is a lot of people being covered for such a small fee. Ms. Cord stated she is happy with the \$35, especially since it covers relatives,

and she does not want to pay more than that, but she wonders if that is fair for the MVFC to only bill \$35 to businesses with more people/employees. Mr. Scott stated the MVFC hasn't struck an agreement with anyone yet so this is something maybe the MVFC should review more but if the MVFC gets \$35 from a thousand (1000) residents, versus \$50 from forty percent (40%), then initially the MVFC is ahead. Mr. Scott stated the bottom line is that as more people move here and the MVFC's calls go up, the MVFC service and reliability has to be better than someone coming from their home, and it's got to be guaranteed, and the MVFC is responsible to do that. Mr. Scott stated the MVFC is responsible to recognize the problem of not having enough ambulance crews and then approaching the Town about trying to fix it, so the MVFC needs the public's and the Town's help in coming to a solution and providing sufficient service. Mr. Gray stated he thinks the \$35 covering him, his wife, the grandkids and other family is well worth the price.

Ms. Linda Kent, of Cypress Point Trail, stated in another development of another community in another state, it is \$50 and \$25 per each additional member of your family, and it's a double amount so it is \$50 for a husband and wife, it's \$100 for a commercial building, and they don't have a choice. Ms. Kent stated she agrees with the \$35 for a home, but if you have a commercial building which has ten (10) or a thousand (1000) employees, the fee should probably be closer to \$70 or \$75.

Ms. Roberta Raymond, of Pembroke Lane, asked if the MVFC has already approved the staff of the second crew at night, and has MVFC anticipated their calls will increase if the \$35 fee is implemented. Mr. Watson stated, in response to the crews, the MVFC has enough staffing with the part-time employees to staff the second ambulance at night time, and there are currently two (2) full-time positions which are open and they hope to fill by the end of February. Mr. Watson stated, as for the call volume increasing, there is always that chance of the calls increasing but he is not completely sure, but the area is growing so from that alone, the MVFC is expecting an increase in calls. Ms. Raymond stated she agrees that the \$35 fee for a business is probably not enough. Ms. Cord stated the MVFC might want to base the fee on the number of employees at the business.

Mr. Walter Bartus, of Huntington Street, asked regarding charging businesses, if the contractors who have construction workers on the sites of these developments would be covered. Ms. Botchie stated those workers would not be covered because the builders and sub-contractor companies are not billed a property tax.

Mr. Steve Small, of Longs Chapel Lane, asked how many more calls per year. Mr. Watson stated, on average, about one-hundred (100) to one-hundred-fifty (150) calls per year, but it could be more, and there has been an increase in second emergencies, which is a concern for the MVFC because that means there are calls they could potentially miss if not properly staffed. Mr. Small stated it would not be uncommon for a single housing unit, which was rented, to add a hundred (100) potential people to the MVFC's coverage, so the MVFC might want to put such a person (who rents out their house) at the same rate as an employer/business. Ms. Cord stated she thinks that would create some administrative headaches for the MVFC. Mr. Small stated not really because the Town knows who are renting out their house, because a permit is needed for renting.

Ms. Robin McClane, of Surfsong Landing, asked if she could pay for the subscription service tomorrow. Mr. Watson stated Ms. McClane could stop by the MVFC Fire Hall any time of the day and pay for the current \$50 subscription service.

Mr. Bartus asked if the \$35 coverage would extend to other out-of-town fire companies if their ambulance(s) had to respond to a subscriber who paid the \$35. Mr. Scott stated the MVFC would coordinate with the responding fire company so if they billed the \$35 subscriber, the MVFC would contact that company and tell them the subscriber is covered.

Mr. Gordon asked how many people in the audience are supportive of the MVFC new subscription program. All fourteen (14) participants of the audience raised their hands.

Ms. Botchie stated Council could possibly have a vote on this in February. Mr. Scott asked if Council wanted him back for a public hearing in February. Ms. Botchie stated yes, she thinks that's the right way to go, but if the MVFC doesn't want to start until 2017, the Town doesn't have to put it on such an early meeting agenda. Mr. Scott stated it doesn't matter either way to him. Ms. Botchie stated let's do it on the February 9 meeting. Ms. Botchie stated her thanks to everyone for attending tonight. Mr. Scott and Mr. Watson agreed and stated their thanks for all of the Council's help, and the audience's participation.

#### **5. PROPERTY OWNERS/AUDIENCE COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

There were no comments.

#### **6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING – TOWN COUNCIL MTG., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2016**

#### **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Brewer motioned to adjourn at 8:02 p.m. Mr. Maneri seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,  
Matt Amerling, Town Executive Assistant