

The Town of Moriah Town Board held a Public Hearing on Thursday April 18, 2024 at 5:00pm at the Port Henry Knights of Columbus, 4253 Main Street, Port Henry, NY on the Proposed Town of Moriah Ambulance Squad (EMS) Special Improvement/EMS Tax District.

Present:	Matthew Brassard	Supervisor
	Paul Salerno	Councilman
	Tom Anderson	Councilman
	Nathan Gilbo	Councilman

Others Present: Bill Trybendis, Chris Gibbs, Ned Phinney, Shelly Winters, Jeanne Taylor, Thomas Cowin, Bruno Mazzotte, Ron Nesbitt Jr., Sandie Pattison, Sharon O'Connor, Ed Roberts, Chuck French, Katrinka Tromblee, Sharyn King, Jim Hughes, Sylvia and Joel Zelinsky, Peter Gilbo, Susan Gray, Mark Lashway, George Clark, Josalyne Chavez, Fran Wilhelmson, Paul and Nancy Tromblee, Tod Hicks, Carol and Joe Chiarella, Debbie Mandy, Joann Munson, Lani Sprague, Jason Sprague, Brent Ida, Jim Curran, Erin Pooler, Kelly Ashe, Dakotah Olcott, Mike Moran, Bailea Frenier, Nappy Marcotte, William Tansey and Rose French-Town Clerk

Supervisor Brassard called the public hearing to order at 5:00pm by saluting the flag; he then read the legal notice calling for the public hearing.

The Supervisor thanked the Moriah Ambulance Squad for being here. The Supervisor stated we all knew this day would come; volunteers are down. We can either form a district or continue status quo and the ambulance squad will only last another year. The Supervisor stated the Moriah Ambulance Squad has not had a dropped call since November 2023. He spoke to Lamoille Ambulance Service and their fee would be higher than forming a district; he was quoted \$500,000-\$650,000.

The Supervisor turned the meeting over to the Moriah Ambulance Squad. Dakotah Olcott-Assistant Captain, introduced Mike Moran-Captain, Kelly Ashe-Vice President and Bailea Frenier-Trustee.

Dakotah Olcott presented a power point.

Please see attachment:

After the presentation the Supervisor asked the Board if they had any questions for the Ambulance Squad.

Councilman Salerno asked why \$45,000-\$75,000 was "lost" and Mike Moran stated it was from Medicaid Billing. Kelly Ashe stated past membership was not good at charting patients to get reimbursed. Councilman Salerno stated he would never support taxing all 273 parcels. He wants the taxpayer to be able to vote on the new EMS District. Councilman Salerno asked if the new district goes through who will control the budget; he feels the Town should have a large say in it. Dakotah Olcott stated the Town would be the deciding factor. Supervisor Brassard stated the Board would have final say.

Paul Tromblee stated you cannot compare apples to oranges; the ambulance squad and fire department are two different things. Mr. Tromblee asked Dakotah Olcott what the equity was in the ambulance when they trade it in for the new one and Mr. Olcott stated \$15,000. Mr. Tromblee stated the new building is priced at \$800,00 when an addition would only cost \$100,000. Mr. Tromblee asked what about the Moriah Fire Department Fire Commissioners and Mike Moran stated you will have to ask the fire commissioners.

Councilman Salerno suggested moving the Assessor's back to the Town Hall and giving the old Village Hall to the ambulance squad; upgrade the 2nd floor of the Town Hall/install a ramp out back by the Angel of Hope; would be a significant savings; just a possibility.

Councilman Salerno asked why is only 36% to 37% of patient billing being paid and Mr. Olcott stated billing reimbursements are low; Medicaid and Medicare pay minimally and the rest gets written off.

Councilman Salerno asked if out of 273 parcels 200 is farm land will they be taxed the same and Mr. Olcott stated that is an Assessor question.

Councilman Salerno stated again that the taxpayers should vote. He asked William Tansey, Town Attorney if there could be different line items and Mr. Tansey stated it is the Town's special election; they determine the questions; regarding budget; would follow Municipal Law.

Councilman Anderson thanked the Ambulance Squad; especially for last night and all the football games they are at; he feels it should be public referendum.

Councilman Gilbo stated he supports public referendum as well. He asked what drives the EMT vs AEMT and Kelly Ashe stated more training.

Councilman Gilbo asked about mutual aid; when we help out other towns does that Town get billed and Mr. Olcott said yes.

Councilman Gilbo asked if larger Towns were having staffing issues and Dakota Olcott stated Ticonderoga has County wide staff; they are an advanced life support agency.

Councilman Gilbo asked if the squad has reached out to other billing agencies and Mr. Olcott stated this one is one that all Town's in the County use; there are other ones.

Councilman Gilbo wanted more detail on the 36%-37% not paying and Mr. Olcott stated the bills are just not getting paid; insurance sends check to person and they keep it.

Councilman Gilbo asked why they don't sell debt to a collection agency and Mr. Olcott stated they chose not to.

Councilman Gilbo asked how they work with Moriah Fire Department and Mr. Olcott stated they try to support each other; work hand in hand with all three fire departments.

Councilman Gilbo asked if there is someone on call 24/7; an EMT and a driver and Mr. Olcott stated per NYS there is an EMT on board when the ambulance rolls; their staffing model would not change; there is a cost of living increase staff wise.

Councilman Gilbo asked if there were 2 people on 24/7 and Mr. Olcott said yes; Kelly Ashe stated there is usually 3.

Supervisor Brassard wants to put it up to the voters in November.

Floor Open to the Public:

Paul Tromblee spoke; stated he is a past EMT/Captain. He stated these are modern times and everything is very expensive. He stated 3 EMT's from the County cost \$210,000 and Mr. Olcott stated that price was for 4, they backed it off to 3; this amount is based on information from the County; he stated if Mr. Tromblee is looking for different rates that is a question for the County. Mr. Tromblee stated that is \$60,000 a piece! He stated half of the Town of Moriah is on a fixed income; they can't afford this. Mr. Tromblee stated the County has been responding and aren't being billed, why and Mr. Olcott stated they had a grant so they weren't charging but that grant has run out. Mr. Tromblee stated the ALS payment went from \$200 to \$15,000 and Mr. Olcott said yes, that is from Advanced Life Support, grant has run out, will have to start paying. Mr. Tromblee asked how much we pay County EMT's and Mr. Olcott stated they pay Town of Moriah EMT's. Mr. Tromblee stated that is a lot to put an EMS District on the Town, we are only at 68% of the tax assessments and next year we will be at 100%!

Katrinka Tromblee stated she is a retired RN; she was on the ambulance squad many years ago. Ms. Tromblee stated we have 273 taxable parcels; how many parcels are not being taxed. The Supervisor asked William Tansey, Town Attorney who is exempt and Mr. Tansey stated Schools, Religious Groups, Veterans, Cemeteries, Agriculture, Forest Land, etc. Ms. Tromblee stated that school tax is higher this year for Seniors and Seniors can't afford it; need to look at the whole community.

Ms. Tromblee asked how many people are on the ambulance squad and Mr. Olcott said 18.

Ms. Tromblee stated there isn't a building in the Town of Moriah that's worth \$800,000.

Ms. Tromblee stated the new ambulance has already been ordered; Advanced Life Support is just Town of Moriah and Mr. Olcott stated they use the County as needed; Moriah has 3 EMT's that stay right in Moriah; usually 1-3 per day; 7AM -5PM.

Ms. Tromblee stated Mr. Olcott said there was an EMT at the station Monday –Thursday and Mr. Olcott said yes, Monday night through Thursday morning.

Ms. Tromblee asked about life flight and Mr. Olcott stated life flight is defunct.

Ms. Tromblee asked about billing for Medicaid and Medicare, was the squad going to go after the money and Mr. Olcott stated the paperwork has been rectified.

Ms. Tromblee asked how much money the Town currently gives the ambulance squad and the Supervisor stated @\$64,000. Ms. Tromblee asked if the vote goes to referendum and passes would the cost be less, same or increase every year and Mr. Olcott said it would increase. She asked if the money would go back to the Town in that case and Mr. Olcott said yes.

Ms. Tromblee asked if they would have to go to bid for new vehicles and Mr. Olcott said yes.

Ms. Tromblee stated she "heard" that a gentleman fell from a ladder and was life flighted and was charged \$50,000. She asked if an EMT could cancel a helicopter and Mr. Olcott said yes. Ms. Tromblee stated the individual received a bill, worried about a lien against his property; Mr. Olcott stated there is a patient advocate that would make sure that doesn't happen. Ms. Tromblee asked if the patient has no insurance the squad bills them 3 times and then nothing; Mr. Olcott said correct.

Ms. Tromblee asked if the squad would still send out the donation letters and Mr. Olcott said no.

Joe Chiarella thanked the ambulance squad for being here. He asked if the amount that the Town gives the squad would be reduced and the Supervisor stated it would come back to the Town and go in the General Fund.

Sylvia Zelinsky stated she used to teach CPR/First Aid. She stated the squad has their own people and the county people on their payroll and Mr. Olcott said yes, they don't have enough employees; if they did they could possibly get rid of the County. Ms. Zelinsky asked if the squad had 5 people and Mr. Olcott said no; 2 people at a time. Ms. Zelinsky asked if the backup people get paid and Kelly Ashe stated there are 2 EMT's on call because we need ALS; show up you get paid. Ms. Zelinsky stated she heard if you were on call you got paid and Mike Moran said no! Ms. Zelinsky stated the new building would be 2,400 square feet, how many vehicles would it hold and Mr. Olcott said 2. Mike Moran stated there would be bunk rooms, bathrooms, kitchen, etc. Ms. Zelinsky asked how many people in the Town of Moriah have a home this big with a garage.

Bruno Mazzotte stated he has lived here his whole life. He asked who will get the bill for the new district and the Supervisor stated everyone. Mr. Mazzotte stated this will price everyone right out of Town. He stated he is calling for the Board to call for a forensic audit of the ambulance squads books and bank accounts. William Tansey-Town Attorney said to table this and move on. The Supervisor stated the Board will take the advice of the Town Attorney. Mr. Mazzotte stated he is old enough to remember when there was no ambulance squad; the squad was formed in 1960. Mr. Mazzotte stated he feels someone on the squad anonymously called OSHA.

Mr. Mazzotte stated the squad paid \$20,000 for the property across the road, where did that money come from and Mike Moran stated it came from their fund raiser account. Mr. Mazzotte asked how much the new ambulance was and Mike Moran stated \$328,000 and Mr. Mazzotte stated he heard it was \$367,000.

Mr. Mazzotte stated the ambulance squad budget does not show any of the money from the Town and what the squad pays for the billing service company, where is that?

Mr. Mazzotte stated he heard that the Supervisor has met with an architect regarding the new ambulance building and the Supervisor stated he absolutely has not!

Mr. Mazzotte told the Supervisor the Board should sit down with Lamoille Ambulance, if this passes it will only get bigger, he feels it will get voted down.

Paul Tromblee asked Mr. Olcott if the EMT's from the County get paid \$60,000; they can have other jobs correct and Mr. Olcott said yes.

Ned Phinney asked if the Ambulance Squad Board of Directors would be elected and William Tansey-Town Attorney said no, they determine their own; they are 501C.

The meeting adjourned at 6.35pm.

Town Clerk