

EUREKA

COMMUNITY AMBULANCE SERVICE

To: Councils of Tarentum Borough and Brackenridge Borough

Supervisors of Fawn Township, East Deer Township, and Frazer Township

Re: EMS Funding

Date: 2-26-2024

Dear Municipal Leaders,

By now everyone should be aware that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is in CRISIS!

There have been several news and media stories, along with print news locally, addressing the grave situation that we are facing. This is not new; it has been escalating and poorly dealt with for many years. There are several reasons for the current state of EMS - most notably are those of funding and staffing, which actually go hand in hand. EMS has had poor insurance reimbursements, ever decreasing annual subscription fund drives, a decreasing workforce due to wage and workload, rising maintenance and insurance costs, and minimal (if any at all) Municipal money from local, State, or Federal levels.

Eureka has been providing dedicated Emergency Medical Services to the residents and visitors of Tarentum and Brackenridge Boroughs and Fawn Township since 1936. In 2017, we became the provider for East Deer and Frazer Townships after the unfortunate closing of the East Deer Fire Department Ambulance service (which had been in operation for 80 years). This was not an isolated event. Reference the following:

2024 January 1st, Seneca Area EMS closed after 28 years.

2023 February 1st, Shipperville Ambulance closed after 58 years.

July 3rd, Jeannette EMS closed after 63 years.

August 2nd, Kutztown Transport closed after 37 years.

October 30th, Dubois EMS closed after 38 years.

2022 December; after 49 years Lower Valley Ambulance nearly closed after turbulent times.

2017 East Deer's closing.

2016 Freeport, C & S, Oklahoma, and Vandergrift joined forces to form the Co -Op EMMC.

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List continued:

2011 May 1st, Springdale VFD Ambulance closed after 38 years.

2008 January; Oklahoma, Vandergrift, and C & S merged to avoid closure.

2001 Kinloch VFD #1 Ambulance closed.

This of course is only a partial list, and admittedly some are not local. However, the gravity of the situation can be seen. When a Service closes a strain is placed on those remaining. Agencies are already struggling with increased coverage areas which bring greater response times. A 2013 report from the PA Fire and Emergency Services Institute showed that statewide there were 1,645 EMS agencies in the Commonwealth and by 2017 that number dropped to 1,278. This is a 22% decrease in 4 years. In 2021 a report from the Pa Department of Health stated 63% of Paramedics and 45% of EMT's allowed their certifications to expire. There was no one specific cause and we had been dealing with the Covid 19 Pandemic, but higher paying jobs was one of the reasons offered. A core issue with all of the above involved some form of a funding issue. The model with which we operate has unrealistic expectations as exposed in the media investigative stories pertaining to particularly insurance reimbursements. On average, a simple statement can be made that any income we will see is less than half of what was billed – and we receive this months later. Additionally troublesome is the lack of income from our yearly subscription fund drives. Eureka C.A.S. has never realized a return greater than 38% from any of our Communities, ever. The State average hovers around 30%. Some form of the current funding stream needs to be corrected, new ones need to be established, and / or government support increased for EMS to survive. Pennsylvania is one of 13 States that allow local governments to deem EMS as essential service thus making it eligible for State funding. State law requires each Municipality to have a designated Emergency Service.

There have been some local initiatives towards supporting EMS. An example is attached relating to Gilpin Twp. Additionally, local EMS leaders have met with Representative Mandy Steele and representatives from the PA Dept. of Community & Economic Development. This collective meeting invited EMS organizations from Representative Steele's district (Citizens, Eureka, West Deer, Lower Valley, Fox Wall and Parkview) to initiate a discussion on funding streams such as Municipal based and/or fee based by the individual Services. This collaborative effort is scheduled to continue and invite local Council and Supervisor Boards to participate in meetings to be better educated on the dire state of EMS. Ross / West View EMS Authority has created a fee based schedule that charges all residents in their coverage districts an annual fee. McCandless / Franklin Park Ambulance has had some success with Municipal funding after meeting with their local governments.

Eureka Community Ambulance Service is making an average of 2,400 calls per year. A breakdown is attached for the past seven (7) years. We welcome and urge you as Municipal Government to make this issue a forefront in your Budget talks. We will participate accordingly to assist you with any questions, concerns, or information that will be helpful in fully understanding our issues.

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We believe that a continued partnership with Tarentum, Brackenridge, Fawn, East Deer and Frazer exemplified through a structured and consistent funding stream will safeguard the future of *your* local Emergency Medical Services. This can be through government budget allocations, individual billing fees, and / or tax funding. It is possible for State and Federal government to intervene with the Insurance reimbursement problems; but this we fear is a monumental task in itself and would be a lengthy process. Our commitment to the AK Valley and its residents is unwavering. Every day our teams witness firsthand the difference that prompt and efficient medical care can make in an emergency. However, the current financial stream of providing these services is untenable. We can no longer provide services to the Municipalities without dedicated assistance. And again, this is not unique to Eureka. Hence, the collective efforts of the six local EMS agencies mentioned previous are to promote the continued talks that are being scheduled with Representative Steele and the D.C.E.A.

Thank you for considering our appeal and we appreciate your support – past and present. Your future support could be the cornerstone of a resilient and responsive EMS system that models the relationships befitting local Emergency Services and their Governments. Please advise us of your discussions within the next 90 days.

Brad James



Chief

Eureka Fire Rescue – EMS

Community Ambulance Service

Dave Webb



President

Eureka Fire Rescue – EMS

Community Ambulance Service

ref. attachments

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Transported Call Volume:

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>
Tarentum Borough-	539	666	606	685	850	1027	1049
Brackenridge Borough-	434	573	418	554	611	663	686
Fawn Township-	134	140	143	176	190	226	214
East Deer Township -	127	139	138	180	176	281	159
Frazer Township -	145	148	160	122	231	274	145
Other Areas -	429	498	355	417	506	543	580

Note: Each year we sustain over **500 Non-Transported** EMS calls which often time result in no or little reimbursement...