

# Lamoille Ambulance Service, Inc.

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February 15, 2016

Dear Vermont Legislator,

Lamoille Service Incorporate (LAS) purposes to establish an even closer partnership with the Department of Vermont Health Access. It is clear to LAS that Medicaid requires personnel that are top notch professionals. LAS proposes a plan to transport exclusively non emergent patients though out Vermont. It is our intention to start off with the purchase of two ambulances with a cost of \$320,000 and two, full time Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) per ambulance. Personal cost would be \$84,000 per year. These ambulances will have to be coordinated with facility needs. LAS will bill Medicaid, and all payments to LAS will be reinvested in the continuation of the above mentioned service.

To keep up with the heavy use on the ambulances and stretchers, and to maintain excellent quality of care, ambulances will be replaced every five year or at 75000 miles, whichever occurs first. After crossing this threshold, LAS will assume ownership of the ambulances and stretchers, and new ambulances and stretchers will be purchased. All other equipment that does not expire will be transfer to the new ambulances purchased. This will cost the state a total of \$43000 per year for the ambulances and \$84,000 a year for EMT wages. In total, per year, it will cost between \$128,000 to \$160,000 depending on insurance, maintenance, and fuel cost.

Additionally, these non-emergent ambulances would be structured in the same way as Vermont has done with other programs aimed at taking care of our disadvantaged people with physical and or emotional needs. For example, care givers are paid \$35,000 or more with little or no income tax withholding. EMTs in this Medicaid sponsored program will be treated the same way.

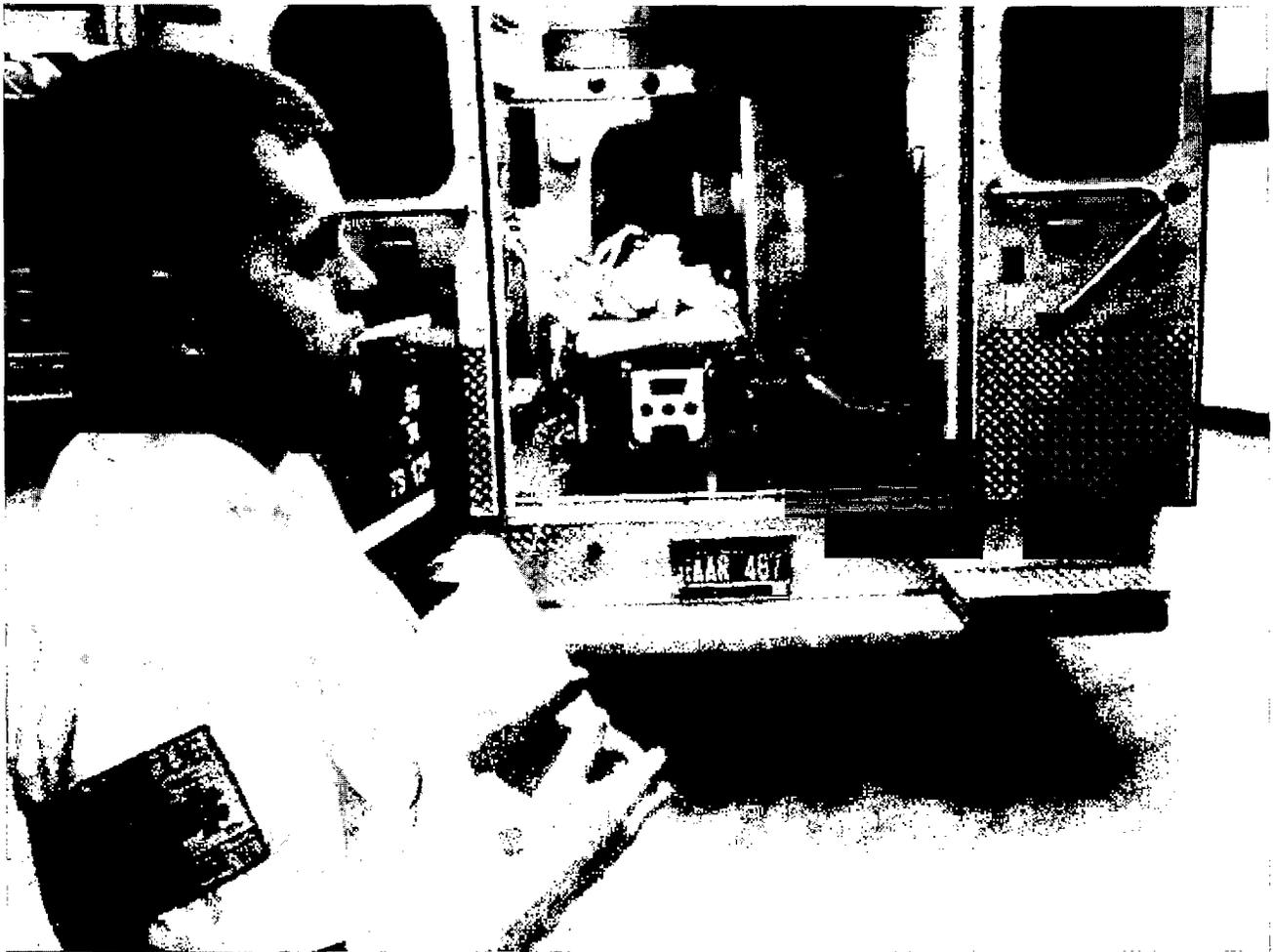
As it is, emergency transports are being covered by increased taxes to the towns. As revealed in Johnson's Town Report for 2014 & 2015, the non-profit Northern Emergency Medical Services, have increased their budgets by 14.2%, \$3.43 per person living in the area NEMS provides service for.

In conclusion, tonight you will be asked to bring Medicaid reimbursement for ambulances up to 80% of Medicare rates. After meeting with Legislators at the State House on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016, it was apparent that funds do not exist to raise the rates. LAS does not believe profit should be made off from Medicaid. Medicaid exist only to help out the misfortunate and disadvantage, many of our patients were injured or born disabled before working age. These Medicaid owned, LAS managed ambulances will save the tax payers money, and allow the local ambulances to manage the emergencies. Hopefully it will be possible for the Medicaid system to reimburse the towns for the harsh tax increases they have been forced to dole out. Lamoille Ambulance Service, INC, a privately owned business, has been in service for 42 years.

Thank you for your time,

Robert Hoag,

CEO/President  
Lamoille Ambulance Service, INC



Rescue Inc. Operations Chief Drew Hazelton speaks to Windham County lawmakers Monday in Brattleboro about the rising cost of emergency medical services. Photo by Mike Faher/VTDigger

BRATTLEBORO — For 50 years, Rescue Inc. has lived up to its name as a provider of emergency services in southeastern Vermont.

These days, though, Rescue itself says it's in urgent need of some relief.

Windham County legislators gathered Monday at the ambulance service's Brattleboro headquarters to get the latest on what Operations Chief Drew Hazelton is calling a financial crisis: Demand is increasing for complex medical services, and the state's Medicaid reimbursement rates — which haven't changed since 2008 — are forcing ambulance administrators to write off hundreds of dollars every time they respond to a call.

Lawmakers didn't have to look far to see the effects of that situation. Hazelton said that, as of this week, budget cuts have forced him to reduce staffing and to order Rescue's administrative and training officers to respond to routine medical calls.

It's no small thing to suggest a boost in the state's Medicaid reimbursements. Gov. Peter Shumlin's 2015 proposal to do so via a payroll tax was rejected, and the governor has said he won't make a similar pitch this year.

The Windham County legislators at Monday's meeting brainstormed a few ideas, but no easy solutions came up during the nearly two-hour session. Rep. Ann Manwaring, D-Wilmington, suggested that Vermont's ambulance services need to do a better job of letting policymakers know how their duties have evolved and how that has led to their current predicament.

"Get a different conversation going than just 'I don't have enough money,'" Manwaring said. "We're all done with 'I don't have enough money' conversations in the Statehouse. No one has enough money."

The legislators offered to help get across the point that the functions of emergency services agencies have changed, and Hazelton said such receptiveness would be a welcome change. Without some sort of solution, he warned, there will be consequences.

"At the end of the day, our local tax base is going to get billed back the difference. It's going to end up on the local property tax," Hazelton said. "Or this level of service, whether it be for emergencies or interfacility transfers, is going to stop."



Rescue Inc.'s Mark Considine, left, speaks Monday as Rep. Emily Long, D-Newfane, center, and Sen. Becca Balint, D-Windham, look on in Brattleboro. Photo by Mike Faher/VTDigger

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A follow-up on a story we've been covering for some time as the Newport selectboard Monday night unanimously voted to increase the fees charged to both residents and non-residents for use of its ambulance service. {B}

The changes, which will take effect Jan. 1, will increase the fees charges to those within Newport by approximately 28-percent, with non-residents to see an increase of 32-percent.

A previous proposal was seen as being too much of an increase and was cut in half before going to vote. While the new rate does include non-residents, contracts from neighboring Goshen and Unity have not yet been signed for coverage of those communities.

Sunapee has also utilized Newport's ambulance service in the past, with half of its service coming from the Sunshine Town, and the other half being covered by New London Hospital's ambulance service.

Town officials say fees have remained constant over the last three years, despite less coverage from Medicare leaving a deficiency in rates.

**NEWPORT AMBULANCE SERVICE Inc.**  
D.B.A.  
*Northern Emergency Medical Service Division*  
**Annual Report for 2015**

To the Towns of Belvidere, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson and Waterville

We are in our 12<sup>th</sup> year of serving the residents of Northern Lamoille County. We thank you for your past support and look forward to serving you in the future.

Our call volume has increase during the 2015 calendar year. We responded to a total of 1448 calls compared to a total of 1352 calls in 2015. Of these calls 838 were emergency (911) calls with the balance being mutual aid or transports. The breakdown of emergency calls per town are: 16 in Belvidere, 56 in Eden, 231 in Hyde Park, 263 in Johnson, and 23 in Waterville.

For this fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2016 we are asking for an increase of 3.2% in funding from the five towns. This increases the per resident from \$25.85 to \$26.67. This increase is necessary as for the first time in three years we are offering a well earned increase in pay. We also know that Medicare is lowering their reimbursement for the first time in history by -0.4%.

In the calendar year of 2015 we swallowed write offs for Medicare \$302,419.57, Medicaid \$247,018.65 and Veterans Administration \$8,125.10. This totals \$557,562.32 in write offs. These write offs exceed the total funding supplied to us by the five towns.

Our 2015 write offs were \$155,000.75 more than in 2014. Unfortunately this increase was anticipated due to the State's takeover of the Health System. With Medicare funding being decreased for 2016 we again project increases in write offs. Unfortunately our elected officials in both Montpelier as well as Washington D.C. continue to shift cost to the property tax payer.

In 2015 we have continued to be often used as the primary responder for neighboring services. We continue to strive an work with these services and Select Boards to alleviate this situation.

We are a 501 C3 charitable organization and are open to tax deductible donations that would be use to help with the cost of equipment and operations. Please feel free to contact us if you wish to donate.

Once again we thank you for your past support and look forward to serving you in the future.

Sincerely,  
Scot Griswold Vice chairman  
Michael A. Paradis Executive Director

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