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October 11, 2016

To: Town Board

From: EMS Committee

Re: Ambulance Service

**Committee Members:**

Richard Williams Sr.  
Peter Dandreano  
David Raines  
Adam Stiebeling

Joseph Nickischer Jr  
Denise Montana  
Doug Lange  
Robert Kearns

**Mission:**

Evaluate current Emergency Medical Services Systems available to the Town of Patterson and make recommendations to the Town Board on providing the best EMS (Ambulance) service for all residents of Patterson.

**Current Operations :**

In 2015 representatives of the Patterson and the Putnam Lake Fire Departments approached the Town concerning their ability to provide consistent and viable ambulance service for the Town. Due to the lack of available qualified volunteers, especially during the daytime hours, both Departments indicated that they could no longer provide a safe and consistent response. Following discussions with the Putnam County BOES, Commissioner Anthony Sutton, and Transcare Ambulance management, the Town contracted with Transcare Ambulance service to provide two EMT's that would staff the Patterson Fire Department Ambulance. Transcare was contracted to provide two

EMT's who would staff the Patterson Ambulance from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m every day, and 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. for up to 20 nights per month. For the remaining nights the ambulance was manned by the Patterson Fire Department members at a considerable savings to the Town. In the beginning of 2016 Transcare went out of business and the Town contracted with EMStar Ambulance Service to provide the same level of service for the remainder of 2016. This system is currently in place with a monthly cost to the Town of approximately \$23,200.00, or annually \$278,400.00.

### **Executive Summary:**

Early in 2016, the Town Board formed a Committee to review ambulance service for the Town of Patterson. The Committee was tasked to evaluate the various means and proposals for ambulance service, and develop a recommendation to the Town Board on an appropriate means to provide ambulance service to our Patterson residents. Over the course of the last several months the EMS Committee has been evaluating various means to provide ambulance service to the Town of Patterson. The committee's findings are as follows:

After careful evaluation of the various options, the committee members are proposing a Town Operated Ambulance Corps. The Town would hold the NYS Certificate of Need (Or Certificate to Operate). This would give the Town greater oversight in areas of staffing, and operating guidelines. Under General Municipal Law Section 122-b the Town may own and operate its own ambulance service and charge for that service. Alternatively, the Town may create an "ambulance district" pursuant to Town Law Section 190. The Committee has developed a preliminary budget for a Town operated ambulance service which is attached.

The greatest advantage would be the ability to bill insurance carriers and recover revenue. An overall plan to house the ambulance(s) is being discussed as are specifications for ambulance(s) and operating guidelines. The intent is to grow this system which would initially cover 800-900 calls to a larger program which could easily cover 1500 calls and be nearly self-sustaining with the increased revenue from billing. It is also recommended that the Town discuss with the Patterson Fire Department the use of their existing ambulance as a second ambulance or back up to the primary Town operated ambulance.

Committee members felt that a Town ambulance service would afford several advantages to the Town. It would allow more control to the Town concerning the caliber of employees used to staff the ambulance by establishing a high standard for their employment, retention and training. It would allow the Town to determine the best means and methods of providing ambulance service and the level of service provided (EMTs or Medics). A Town ambulance service would allow the Town to have more of a voice in selecting the right equipment, and in determining the appropriateness of costs associated with equipment purchases. Providing this control would give the Town the ability to balance issues of quality of service, against staffing costs and equipment purchases. These decisions would be made at public meetings, thereby providing a greater level of transparency for the community and allowing all of our residents to have a voice in the decisions. As such, a Town ambulance service would ensure that Patterson's residents receive the best value for their dollars. The Town already has the basic administrative and financial resources already in place to startup and

oversee the ambulance service.

A Town ambulance would allow the Town to have a voice in the County Mutual Aid Plan and determine when the Town ambulance would respond to calls outside of the Town limits. We cannot ignore our neighbors in times of need, but Patterson's Residents cannot finance ambulance service throughout the County.

Finally, the Committee feels it is very important that a Town Ambulance service should continue to encourage volunteers to serve on the Town Ambulance service.

For these reasons, the Committee is recommending that the Town move forward with a Town ambulance service.

### **Options Evaluated:**

The EMS Committee has evaluated and/or discussed a number of proposals including:

- a. A single County-wide ambulance service.
- b. Contracting with a private ambulance.
- c. The Eastern Putnam Volunteer Ambulance Corp. proposal.
- d. The Patterson Fire Department proposal, and
- e. A Town Ambulance Service

#### **a. County-wide ambulance service:**

Initially the committee felt that the best solution to providing ambulance service would be at a County level. However, County representatives have expressed no interest in developing a County-wide ambulance service that would replace the current system of Fire department/VAC based ambulance services currently operating in the County. With the recent contract for supplemental EMS service, the County began to scale back that service. The County currently maintains a Paramedic service contract which Patterson is included.

In recent years EMS and Fire services provided in every Town and Village have seen a significant decline in volunteers, which has challenged volunteer fire and ambulance services to respond with adequate trained personnel to an emergency. Today both ambulance and fire service in Putnam County rely heavily on the County Mutual Aid Agreement to meet the needs of each Town and Village. This is an issue that has not only local implications to the Town of Patterson, but regional significance to the County at-large. Ambulances in one jurisdiction are frequently asked to respond to emergency calls in an adjoining jurisdiction. In recognition of the declining service Putnam County, though a contract with a private ambulance service, has been providing a limited number of ALS fly cars and BLS ambulances to supplement the Fire Department/VAC ambulance service in the County. Recently, the County has scaled back the supplemental ambulance service that the County has been providing, further challenging the Town's ability to respond to an ambulance call.

It is the nature of EMS that there is a great variability in number of calls that must be responded to. Call volumes in Patterson can range from 2 to 3 calls a day to 2 to 3 calls a week. No single Town of Village has the resources to provide a 100% response. A regional, or County-wide solution would likely provide a significant cost savings, with a better level of service than any single Town can provide.

**b. Private Ambulance Contract:**

A second option evaluated by the Committee would be for the Town to contract with a private ambulance service to provide a dedicated ambulance for the Town of Patterson. Service would include an ambulance staffed with two paid EMTs 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In addition, the private ambulance service would be allowed to bill. In March of 2015 the Town had solicited a proposal from Transcare to provide a BLS ambulance for the Town of Patterson. The annual cost for a 24/7 BLS ambulance was \$524,133.00. Transcare estimated that if they were allowed to bill clients for services, they would recover approximately \$230,176.00. The Town would then be responsible for the difference of \$293,957.00. Ultimately the Town signed a contract with Transcare to provide 2 EMTs to staff the Patterson Volunteer Fire Department for \$19.00 per hour per employee. In 2016 Transcare ceased to operate, and the Town entered into a contract with EMStar for the same service and cost.

Contracting with a private ambulance service has the advantage of placing administration and liability for the service with a 3rd party. However, there is a good deal of uncertainty with the cost; the private ambulance service would bill for service, however the Town would remain responsible of the full cost of the service minus any revenues that the company would receive from billing. The potential revenue is very uncertain, and is dependent on billing practices; the amount charged for service, the percentage of insured and medicate patients, and the level of aggressiveness of the collection process. In any given year the Town could experience significant increase in the cost, if sufficient revenues are not generated through billing.

**c. Eastern Putnam Volunteer Ambulance Corp.:**

The Committee heard from a group of individuals that wished to start a volunteer ambulance corps, and provide ambulance service to the Town of Patterson. The EPVAC would provide staffing for one ambulance and one flycar with 24/7 service. The EPVAC would have the ability to bill for service and recapture a portion of the cost of the ambulance service. Under the EPVAC proposal the Town would provide the building for the ambulance and staff, an ambulance, a flycar, and \$300,000.00 for the first year of operation. The Town's contribution in subsequent years would be dependent on the revenue that EPVAC generates through billing. The proposal relied on volunteers to staff the ambulance, but also included two paid daytime EMTs.

The Committee felt that the proposal submitted by Eastern Putnam Volunteer Ambulance Corp. was lacking in detail, and placed too much of an obligation on the Town and was costly. Other proposals were shown to provide a more cost effective alternative.

**d. Patterson Fire Department Ambulance:**

The Patterson Fire Department has submitted a proposal to the Town of Patterson whereby PFD would spin off their EMS operation and create a separate Not-for-Profit Corporation to run ambulance service for the Town of Patterson. The Patterson Fire Department is seeking a financial commitment from the Town for an additional \$350,000.00 which will go to the new ambulance corporation. In exchange for the additional funding, the PFD would provide two BLS ambulances with 24/7 service. The Board should note that PFD intends to use the ambulance employees to augment staffing of the Fire Department apparatus. The paid EMTs will be available to “volunteer” to take out fire apparatus, should a call come in while they are on duty.

The Patterson Fire Department (PFD) proposal has several advantages to the Town. The PFD plan removes the burden of starting up, and operating an ambulance service from the Town, and places the responsibility with individuals that have the experience and knowledge to operate the service. Patterson Fire Department already has the equipment and housing necessary for the ambulance and EMTs, thereby avoiding a number of startup costs, assuming those assets are transferred at no cost to the new VAC. The PFD proposal would address a growing concern within the Fire Department; having sufficient volunteers available to field fire apparatus to respond to a call. The PFD proposal would aid in providing additional manpower for firefighting. However, the Committee expressed a number of concerns with the PFD proposal.

As proposed, the ambulance service EMTs would be available to also respond to a fire under GML Sec. 209-I . Under GML Sec. 209-I the EMT would need to be a volunteer with a different fire department. Imposing such a requirement for employment would severely limit the field of qualified candidates. 2) Committee members did not believe that the use of EMTs to respond to a fire under GML Sec. 209-I was an appropriate application of this section, and may subject both the Fire Department and the Town to legal action. 3) They were concerned that the firefighters union would find the concept of having paid EMTs providing firefighting service as volunteers as a means to avoid having a union shop, a concept they would not support. 4) Changing leadership in the Fire Department may affect the future operation of the ambulance corp. 5) Finally, you can't require an employee to volunteer, as they are then no longer a volunteer.

**Cost Summary:**

In 2015 Transcare had submitted a proposal which had estimated a cost to the Town of Patterson for 24/7 ambulance service of just under \$300,000 after offset by billing receivables. It is generally felt that over the past two years cost escalations would have increased that rate in today's market to between \$350,000 and \$400,000. The estimated cost to the Town for the EPVAC proposal was \$300,000 plus housing, an ambulance and a flycar; clearly the most expensive proposal. The Patterson Fire Department proposal was estimated to cost the Town \$350,000. Similar to the other proposals, the estimated cost to start up a Town ambulance service is roughly \$350,000. Financially, the Town ambulance is competitive with the other proposals.

**General Municipal Law, 209-I. "Emergency service by volunteer firemen."**

1. Whenever a volunteer fireman is within this state, but outside the area regularly served by the fire company or fire department of which he is a member and has knowledge of a fire or other emergency at or near the place where he is for the time being, such volunteer fireman may report to the officer in command of the paid or volunteer fire company or paid or volunteer fire department, or in command of one of the paid or volunteer fire companies or one of the paid or volunteer fire departments, engaged in the handling of any such fire or other emergency and, on an individual basis, offer his services to assist such fire company or fire department. After his services are so accepted, the volunteer fireman shall then be entitled to all powers, rights, privileges and immunities granted by law to volunteer firemen during the time such services are rendered, in the same manner and to the same extent as if he were a volunteer member of the fire company or fire department which he is assisting, including benefits under the volunteer firemen's benefit law. Any such commanding officer shall have power, in his discretion, to so accept the services of a volunteer fireman unless the legislative body of the city or the village, the board of fire commissioners or other governing board of the fire district, or the town board of the town in relation to (a) the fire companies serving territory outside villages and fire districts or (b) a town fire department, as the case may be, by resolution heretofore or hereafter adopted, has forbidden the acceptance of any such services pursuant to this section. Any such resolution shall continue in effect until amended or repealed by the adoption of a subsequent resolution. The officer in charge of any fire company or fire department shall be notified promptly of the adoption of any such resolution and of any amendment or repeal thereof.

1-a. A volunteer firefighter who, because of his residence or usual occupation, is regularly in the area served by a volunteer fire company or department of which he is not a member may nevertheless volunteer his services on an on-going basis to the officer in command thereof to assist such fire company or fire department for the purpose of assisting such company or department's general or emergency ambulance services, or for the purpose of assisting such fire company or fire department at a fire or other emergency scene or for the purpose of training with such fire company or fire department. After his services are so accepted, the volunteer firefighter shall then be entitled to all powers, rights, privileges and immunities granted by law to volunteer firefighters during the time such services are rendered, in the same manner and to the same extent as if he were a volunteer member of the fire company or fire department which he is assisting, including benefits under the volunteer firefighters' benefit law. Any such commanding officer when authorized by the legislative body of the city or the village, the board of fire commissioners or other governing board of the fire district, or the town board of the town in relation to (a) the fire companies serving territory outside villages and fire districts or (b) a town fire department, as the case may be, shall have power, in his discretion, to so accept the services of a volunteer firefighter.

1-b. In the event that an active volunteer firefighter provides services under subdivision one of this section when there is no jurisdictional officer in command present, such volunteer firefighter shall be entitled to coverage under the volunteer firefighters' benefit law provided the fire company or municipality the volunteer serves adopts a resolution granting coverage for the provision of such services. Upon arrival of a jurisdictional officer in command, such volunteer shall be entitled to benefits in the manner set forth in subdivision one of this section.

2. The municipal corporation or fire district which would be liable for the negligence of any volunteer members of the fire company or fire department which has accepted the services of the volunteer fireman pursuant to this section shall be liable for the negligence of such volunteer fireman while acting, after such acceptance and during the time such services were rendered, in the discharge of his duties as a volunteer fireman in the same manner and to the same extent as if he were a volunteer member of the fire company or fire department which he assisted. If the fire company or fire department which has so accepted the services of a volunteer fireman pursuant to this section is a paid fire company or paid fire department, such paid fire company or paid fire department shall, for the purposes of this subdivision and section two hundred five-b of this chapter, be deemed to be a "duly organized volunteer fire company" within the meaning of such section two hundred five-b.

3. As used in this section, the term "volunteer fireman" means a "volunteer fireman" as such term is defined in section three of the volunteer firemen's benefit law; the term "area regularly served" means the home area of the volunteer fireman as described in subdivisions one, two, three, four or five of section thirty of the volunteer firemen's benefit law and, in addition, any other area served pursuant to a contract for fire protection and the terms "fire company" and "fire department" shall include emergency rescue and first aid squads or other squads or units of a fire company

**Rural Emergency Medical Services & Trauma Technical Assistance Center  
Ambulance Service Budget Model Tool**

**Patterson Ambulance Service**

		<b>1st Year Budget</b>	<b>Percent Inflation</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>2nd Year Budget</b>
<b>Patient Care</b>					
6101	Salaries-Patient Care	\$ 268,800	3.00%		\$ 276,864
6102	Benefits-Patient Care	\$ 80,640	3.00%		\$ 83,059
6103	Medical Supplies-Patient Care	\$ 5,500	3.00%		\$ 5,665
6104	Gases (oxygen)-Patient Care	\$ 1,000	3.00%		\$ 1,030
6105	Drugs-Patient Care	\$ 4,000	3.00%	Amount per ambulance	\$ 4,120
6106	Laundry & Linen-Patient Care	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6107	Equipment Depreciation-patient care	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6108	Equipment Repair-Patient Care	\$ 4,000	3.00%		\$ 4,120
6109	Minor Equipment-Patient Care	\$ 1,500	3.00%		\$ 1,545
6110	Training-Patient Care	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6111	Books & Periodicals-Patient Care	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6112	Travel & Entertainment-Patient Care	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6113	Uniforms	\$ 2,000	3.00%	To Include Photo ID's	\$ 2,060
<b>Dispatch</b>					
6201	Dispatch Salaries	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6202	Dispatch Benefits	\$ -	3.00%	\$ -	\$ -
6203	Dispatch Supplies	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6207	Dispatch Equipment Depreciation	\$ 450	3.00%		\$ 464
6209	Dispatch Minor Equipment	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6213	Telephone	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6214	Radio Lease/Purchase	\$ 7,500	3.00%		\$ 7,725
6215	Radio Antenna (Monthly Fees)	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6216	Cell Phone (Annual Fees)	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6217	Pager (Annual Fees)	\$ 2,100	3.00%		\$ 2,163
<b>Administration</b>					
6301	Administration Salaries	\$ 67,840	3.00%		\$ 69,875
6302	Administration Benefits	\$ 20,352	3.00%		\$ 20,963
6303	Office Supplies	\$ 3,000	3.00%		\$ 3,090
6307	Office Equipment Depreciation	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6308	Office Repair & Maintenance	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6309	Office Minor Equipment	\$ 8,000	3.00%		\$ 8,240
6311	Disability Insurance	\$ 1,296	3.00%		\$ 1,335
6312	MTA Tax	\$ 864	3.00%		\$ 890
6313	Administration Telephone	\$ 1,000	3.00%		\$ 1,030
6320	Worker's Comp (7.5%)	\$ 19,044	3.00%		\$ 19,615
6321	Unemployment Tax (0.5%)	\$ 1,270	3.00%		\$ 1,308
6322	FICA Tax (7.65%)	\$ 19,425	3.00%		\$ 20,008
6323	General Liability Insurance	\$ 7,500	3.00%		\$ 7,725
6324	Professional Liability Insurance	\$ 5,000	3.00%		\$ 5,150
6325	Umbrella Coverage	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6326	Health Insurance	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6327	Pension Plan (15%)	\$ 38,088	3.00%		\$ 39,231
6340	Physician Fees	\$ 3,750	3.00%		\$ 3,863
6341	Accounting Fees	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6342	Legal Fees	\$ 2,000	3.00%		\$ 2,060
6343	Collection Agency Fees	\$ 28,000	3.00%		\$ 28,840

6344	Software Maintenance Contracts	\$ 500	3.00%		\$ 515
6345	Consulting Fees	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6346	Service Contracts	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6347	Management Contract	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6348	Claim Processing Contract	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6350	Dues & Memberships	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6351	Licenses	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6352	Donations	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6353	Food	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6360	Printing & Publication	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6361	Advertising	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6362	Employment Agencies	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
<b>Interest Expense</b>					
6400	Interest Expense	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
<b>Building</b>					
6503	Facilities Supplies & Services	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6507	Building Depreciation	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6508	Building Maintenance	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6570	Building Rent	\$ 30,000	3.00%	\$ -	\$ 30,900
6571	Property Taxes	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6572	Utilities	\$ 2,000	3.00%		\$ 2,060
6573	Housekeeping	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6574	Laundry-non patient care	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6576	Property Insurance	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
<b>Vehicles</b>					
6680	Vehicle Registration	\$ 400	3.00%		\$ 412
6681	Vehicle Gas & Oil	\$ 10,575	3.00%		\$ 10,892
6682	Vehicle Repairs	\$ 5,000	3.00%		\$ 5,150
6683	Vehicle Depreciation	\$ -	3.00%		\$ -
6684	Vehicle Leases	\$ 39,000	3.00%		\$ 40,170
6685	Auto Insurance	\$ 1,600	3.00%		\$ 1,648
		<b>\$ 692,994</b>		\$ -	\$ 713,784
<b>Emergency Call Charges</b>					
	(850 calls at \$800.00/call. 50% collection rate)	\$ 340,000	3.00%		\$ 350,200
	<b>Real Property Taxes</b>	<b>\$ 352,994</b>			\$ 363,584

Note 1: If there aren't costs included on the staffing sheet to pay one dispatcher at least minimum wage 24 hours a day, the cost of one dispatcher at an average \$15, less any amount indicated paid for dispatching fees is included in this column. Donated space is also reflected here as calculated on the Building sheet.

Note 2: if there isn't enough costs per staffed ambulance to pay two people 24x7 at least minimum wage, then the donated services indicated here are calculated at \$10 per hour for each of 2 people 24x7 for each scheduled ambulance, less any amounts paid in salary costs on the staffing sheet. A similar method is used to determine at least one manager works full-time at \$15 per hour.