



TOWN OF THOMPSON

SPECIAL SELECTMEN'S MEETING

Wednesday, December 15, 2021
Town Hall- M. Seney Conference Room
and via ZOOM Online Meeting Portal

I. The call to order by First Selectman Amy St Onge was at 5:35 PM: all Selectmen were present. Roll call: First Selectman Amy St Onge, Selectmen Susanne Witkowski and Ken Beausoleil. Appointed citizen participants in the Ambulance Services Planning process: Jamie Seney, Justin Yong, Robert Werge. Via Zoom: Many members of the public, members of the Fire Departments and Public Safety personnel, Bob Holdsworth (Ambulance Services Consultant), Judy Reynolds (OEMS), Recording Secretary Dotti Durst

II. The pledge of allegiance was recited.

III. Citizen Comments: none

IV. Ambulance Service – Discussion and Possible Action: Consultant Bob Holdsworth reviewed the research he presented 2 months ago regarding ambulance usage, as well as 3 possible models Thompson can consider for EMS/Ambulance Services. The advantages and down-side of each was reviewed, including projected short-term and long-term costs.

The 3 options presented by Consultant Bob Holdsworth:

- *Develop Thompson's own stand-alone EMS service by creating a not-for-profit entity or town department, or to reconstitute Community Fire EMS service.
- * Contract for services, issuing an RFP (the current scenario)
- * Combination: work with Putnam EMS Ambulance Service to expand, developing a combined service for both communities

Key points:

- * The PSA (Primary Service Area) document has been relinquished by Community Fire, thus opening it up for use by another entity.
- *However, Community Fire does still have the authority to use the 3 vehicles
- * The timeline for 2 of the proposals: 45 days to get an application completed and a for a public hearing. If no challenges, move to getting the legal documents and the final structure worked out. Total time will be about 6 months. If the RFP process is needed, then the timeframe is unknown, depending on the responses or lack thereof for EMS service for Thompson (a small, rural community perhaps not considered desirable by the major service providers). If successful, the RFP process will probably need 90 days, then, working with the 2 most favorable bidders, selecting one and creating a contract, then putting it in place.
- * Although Thompson owns the 3 ambulances and has them in possession, no one has the authority to use them. Putnam has to be given authority by OEMS or The Community Fire Department can be resurrected, and they can use them.
- *Judy Reynolds noted that OEMS needs to receive a clean application, which she will review for errors/omissions, to facilitate this change, but that the public hearing for smaller communities typically run smoothly. Additionally, Thompson can overlap 2 of these as a long-term solution is implemented.
- * The Need for Service Contract is planned to cover both the Town and the vehicles; in order to move ahead both the PSA and the Expansion of Service paperwork are required and are applied for concurrently. J. Reynolds added a written, formal endorsement by the First Selectman is a prerequisite.
- * It was clarified that the role of OEMS is during the restructuring and approval period, after which they are only involved if the municipality asks or if a complaint is received.
- * Municipalities have access to all the call data (public information) and this does need to be monitored. It verifies service speed, number, and types of calls as well as other quality-of-service factors.

* Mindfulness about this data is very important: the First Selectman is the person to monitor or direct the responsibility to a specific selectman.

* B. Holdsworth favors combining with Putnam for several reasons, which he specified. Among them, sharing staff in the Combination Model reduces likelihood of a salary war for qualified personnel.

* If Thompson selects to pursue combining with Putnam EMS, their Board will need to meet and revise their legal structure, establishing representation by Thompson on the Board, then joint meetings will be needed to work out the many details including the split in funding, given that Thompson owns ambulances which can be integrated into the combined service.

Each of the 3 appointed Citizen Participants and the BOS members asked many questions, reviewed the data which had been provided and offered opinions. Although agenda item *III. Citizen Comments* was already passed, the First Selectman did permit members of the community to participate via Zoom.

* J. Seney advocated for a comparison sheet for all of the available options, positive and negative

* A. St Onge confirmed with J. Reynolds that the town of Morris has experienced a similar sudden EMS/Ambulance situation, which was resolved by combining with Litchfield

* S. Witkowski advocated for keeping the EMS/Ambulance service under direct town control.

* R. Werge would align with the Stand-Alone model if it would work, but all the data say otherwise.

And Outsourcing means higher costs and loss of any control. The combination with Putnam is the most viable. Putnam seems suited to work smoothly with Thompson

* J. Yong: asked about flexibility in how many seats on the new Board of Directors Thompson would/should have, as well as what would constitute a fair split of the funding

* S. Witkowski stated that Thompson EMS are strong people, with positive ideas for reaching out to the school and other groups, looking toward future staffing. J. Seney concurred that in the Combination model, that outreach can take place. K Beausoleil agreed that this should be encouraged

* J. Seney: noted that regionalization is what the future holds and is already happening nearby.

* A. St Onge added that Thompson and Putnam currently need each other. By combining, fair salaries and benefits can be offered, retaining staff. K. Beausoleil noted that in time, other nearby towns will face a similar crunch and may combine with Thompson/Putnam, perhaps one could be Woodstock

* J. Yong suggested: a). income from the Speedway be factored into planning, b). that a draft of a proposal to combine be prepared for review and the first step toward discussion, c). looking long-term, plan to establish a Board that does have some control if a situation requires it, and d). since Thompson has a full-time HR person now, consider this as a value that Thompson brings to a Combined model

After extended discussion:

Motion A. St Onge seconded by K. Beausoleil to move forward to pursue contract negotiation with Putnam EMS Ambulance Service to expand coverage to both towns.

Discussion of the motion:

* S. Witkowski asked for more time to look at various factors including the numbers, the spreadsheet and the Putnam EMS Ambulance administration

* A. St Onge: if we decide to move ahead, then the monthly data will be broken down and a proposed contract constructed

* K. Beausoleil: this action will impact many parties, including K-B Ambulance, the current contracted provider, and budget season will soon be upon the town.

* R. Werge noted that an interim contract could be set up while the details are examined and worked out

* A. St Onge thanked K-B Ambulance and wants them to know the town is appreciative of their stepping up.

* K. Beausoleil added that the Thompson Hill Fire Company deserves praise for their efforts of making space for an ambulance and K-B staff

* S. Witkowski expressed doubt that this is the correct approach for Thompson; she looks to safety and quality of service as the keys

Call for a vote on the motion, which was re-stated for the record:

Motion A. St Onge seconded by K. Beausoleil to move forward to pursue contract negotiation with Putnam EMS Ambulance Service to expand coverage to both towns. Motion carried, 2-1.

A. St Onge: aye S. Witkowski: nay K. Beausoleil: aye

V. Adjourn:

Motion A. St Onge seconded by S. Witkowski to adjourn at 7:35 carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by Dorothy Durst, Recording Secretary *Dorothy Durst*

To see and hear the meeting, click on this link or copy/paste into your search bar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/r44BAINrCl011Jg5CcEUcXbZNuDWQnkpB23EPWWJALsgV1PWxxUAfKVp1gOAwU.comE-aq4VxdP83QH> Passcode: TVK\$E7yJ

These minutes have not yet been approved by the Board of Selectmen. Please refer to next month's meeting minutes for approval of and/or amendments to these minutes.