

At a Finance Committee Meeting of the Board of Supervisors
Held in the General District Courtroom
on Thursday, September 21, 2023 - 4 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

C. Eric Fly, Sr.
Rufus E. Tyler, Sr.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Wayne O. Jones

STAFF PRESENT

Richard Douglas, County Administrator
Deste J. Cox, Treasurer
Ernest Giles, Sheriff
Nick Sheffield, Fire and Rescue Chief
Shilton R. Butts, Assistant to the County Administrator/
Clerk of the Board

Item 1. Call to Order/Determine Quorum (4:20 p.m.)

The September 21, 2023 Chairman Fly called Finance Committee meeting of the Sussex County Board of Supervisors to order.

Item 2. Invocation

There was no invocation offered.

Item 3. The Pledge of Allegiance

There was no Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 4. Agenda Amendment

There were no agenda amendments.

Item 5. Approval of Agenda

By general consensus, the agenda was approved.

Item 6. EMS Contract

There was discussion of authorizing the County Administrator and the Chief of Fire and EMS to move forward with the development of the 24-month long term plan to include construction of two buildings, the purchase of ambulances and eventually paid staffing and bring the plan back to the

Board with costs. The questions are whether the County wanted to pursue or are they happy with where they are.

County Administrator Douglas stated that the 24-month plan is the window to construct the fire and EMS station. He stated that he would like to have the stations built and purchase the ambulances in one to two years. He stated one was for Stony Creek; the land was already there. One for was Waverly. There was inquiry of the projected costs. It was estimated to cost \$5 -\$10 million.

There was inquiry of the 24-month plan as to whether if \$5 million was invested in a station in Stony Creek, will it cover Henry District? Or, will the County need a cooperative agreement with Greenville. Mr. Sheffield stated that Stony Creek current response area covers the area in question, Grizzard, Yale and the backside of Jarratt. Jarratt Fire Department is added to the calls as a First Responder, but they don't transport. It was stated that they don't have a transport license and a medic unit. It was noted that the options there are, to place a 24-hour ambulance in Stony Creek, or have the option to add another unit to Jarratt Fire Station. Mr. Sheffield stated that he spoke with the Jarratt Fire Chief. The Fire Chief seemed to be receptive to adding a unit there.

They discussed the goal of a 20-minute service response time to calls. Mr. Sheffield stated that the Rivertown Road tends to be the one spot that seems to be "no man's land". It was mentioned having conversations with the County's neighbors about having automatic Aide Agreements as to whether it would be a quicker response for Capron. It was noted that they don't do First Responders. They staff medic units. There was discussion of area coverage.

There was discussion of shared services. There was discussion of a location to service Grizzard and Jarratt.

It was stated that two or three days, Jarratt staffed a Stony Creek ambulance. They moved it to Jarratt and staffed their firehouse, because their personnel wanted to staff at the firehouse.

It was noted that there was two issues with Stony Creek. One issue was paid unit during the day. The 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. coverage was dependent upon volunteers. The second issue was the ability to hire staff. There was also discussion of response time.

There was inquiry as to whether the Board could meet with Stony Creek and Waverly before developing a plan. It was stated that there is a Sussex County Charter Department. (?)

There was discussion of the County EMS building a new station. There was discussion in regards to Jarratt and Stony Creek facility, as to whether one was depended on the other. Currently, everything is coming out of the Stony Creek Rescue Squad building. Mr. Sheffield stated that the Grizzard problem could be fixed. If money was given, a 12-hour medic unit would be placed in Jarratt to cover the Grizzard area everyday. It was mentioned that there were negotiation for the Supervisor position using their truck. It noted that the Grizzard area was no longer to be excluded.

It was noted that the County had two choices, (1) whether to move forward with the County's EMS Plan; or (2) the County negotiate an agreement with the existing two rescue squads. There was

inquiry as to how Stony Creek Rescue Squad feels about the direction the County was going. It was stated that they were not in favor. It was stated that the proposed plan of the County, would put the County's own building, rescue squads and employees in place. The volunteer rescue squads, Stony Creek and Waverly, would still operate. They have their own license and trucks; however, they would not be the primary call. They would be the backup, secondary call. They would still exist as volunteer rescue squads with independent interests. They would still bill for the calls that they would run. They will be independent entities, if they wanted to be. There would be separate County-owned facilities and volunteer facilities.

Mr. Sheffield stated that he thinks the 20-minute service call should be the priority of how the County focus to build the plan. He noted the fifteen minutes it takes to respond from home. There was inquiry that if they are not housed at the facility, how would they receive their calls. It was stated that they responded coming from home. It was stated that the only way to respond to the 20-minute service time, they would have to place a paid unit in Stony Creek to cover the 7 pm to 7 a.m.

There was discussion of housing staff situations.

Handouts with questions that were given to Stony Creek and Waverly Rescue Squad and the responses they provided to the Finance Committee. There was brief discussions of the Fire and Rescue responses. There was discussion of operating without a MOU in place. There was discussion of whether the two entities would sign the contract. There was discussion of coverage for Stony Creek. It was stated that Stony Creek stated that they didn't want staff in their building. It was noted that Waverly covers the east side 24-hours and not coming from home. It noted that Stony Creek was estimated to respond in the 32-minute out the door/travel time(?). There was inquiry as to what could the County do to make Stony Creek a part of it.

County Administrator Douglas stated that guidance was needed; county paid employees drives the discussion.

Supervisor Fly stated that the County wasn't trying to eliminate the volunteer rescue squads. He stated that on one side of the County, there is no coverage sometimes between 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. We have a building that doesn't attract employees. Supervisor Fly stated that on the other side of the County, we have a building that doesn't attract employees, but we solve the 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. coverage problem because paid staff was inserted.

There was inquiry of how many trucks were needed for each side of the County. It was advised that for every truck, a back up was needed. Two trucks run in Waverly, a third truck was needed. One truck was run in Stony Creek, a back up was needed, It was stated that a total of four or five trucks were needed. An estimate of the cost of truck was given to be \$375,000 to \$415,000 per truck. There was discussion of demo and stock production trucks.

There was discussion of how many trucks each side of the County have. There was discussion of estimated costs that would be spent in 24 months.

There was discussion of meeting with Waverly and Stony Creek for a discussion. Supervisor Tyler recommended to authorize to move forward after giving Waverly and Stony Creek the opportunity to meet with the Board before authorizing staff to move forward with anything to make sure accurate information was provided.

Supervisor Fly inquired about authorizing staff to get a second shift for coverage from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. in Stony Creek. There was discussion of having a BLS provider present on the truck.

There was discussion of Mr. Sheffield timeframe to gather information 12 months to the prior year for the meeting.

A meeting was scheduled for the Board of Supervisors for Wednesday, October 18, 2023 at 7 p.m. in the General District Courtroom Judicial Center to meet with EMS members. It was noted to have the County Attorney present at the meeting.

Item 7. Citizens' Comments

There were no citizens' comments.

Item 8. Recommendation(s) to Board of Supervisors

There was no recommendation.

Item 9. Adjournment

ON MOTION OF SUPERVISOR TYLER, seconded by SUPERVISOR FLY and carried: RESOLVED that the Sussex Board of Supervisors hereby adjourned the September 21, 2023 Finance Committee Meeting at 5:34 p.m. All members present voted aye.