

From: Lee Peterson <leepeterson2011@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 31, 2023 6:50 AM
To: Clerk, Greenwood Township
Cc: John Bassing, Greenwood Chair
Subject: Opportunity to upgrade ambulance service
Attachments: Cook Area Ambulance Service, new co-directors 12-23.pdf

12-31-23

Greenwood Town Board,

The City owned Cook Area Ambulance Service will have new Co-Directors as of Jan. 1, 2024. They are Paramedic Will Fischer and EMT Amy Luecken.

With this change in Cook, I cannot help but believe that there could be an opportunity for Greenwood to consolidate with the CAAS and evolve into having a single, higher level ambulance service for the whole township. It would seem to me that with the new Director being a paramedic, Cook may now be willing to upgrade their ambulance service toward Advanced Life Support as opposed to a previous Cook Director's adamant refusal at the 2022 McGrath Study input session to even consider upgrading. The Tower Director, at that same input session, was also adamantly opposed to upgrading the TAAS. Of course, the City of Cook would have to be agreeable, the Primary Service Area boundaries would have to be redrawn and details would have to be worked out, not the least of which would be township participation in sustainably funding the service. I can think of a number of scenarios as to how this would work, including different options of ownership if necessary. Exploring this will be in line with Greenwood's goal of doing what is best for the patient and the ambulance staff, in working toward a modern, sustainable ambulance service for our area.

My feeling is that the Bois Forte portion of Greenwood Township, represented by Jeff Damm at the TAAS, may want to stay with the TAAS. I don't have a problem with that if Bois Forte prefers it.

There is a portion of Greenwood along the south shore of Pike Bay that is accessed off of Hwy. 169 by Manitou Dr. and Glenmore Dr. It is bordered by Vermilion Lake Township and the City of Tower. Due to its very close proximity to Tower, it would logically be best that this area stay in the TAAS Primary Service Area.

An endeavor such as this is going to require significant, permanent funding from Greenwood Township taxpayers and the other entities within the PSA. By the same token, staying with the status quo is going to cost significantly more than it does now, just to sustain the current Basic Life Support level of care. I would prefer to be paying for a higher level of care.

There are reasons why now would be a good time to begin working on this, not the least of which is that all of the area ambulance services are experiencing very serious funding and staffing problems. Also importantly, the Legislative EMS Task Force is looking for solutions to the EMS ambulance crisis. If our area's solution requires any legislative action, now would be the time to get it done. Time is of the essence concerning this issue.

To get the discussion started, I would appreciate it if this could be put on the agenda for the Greenwood January 9, 2024 Town Board meeting for discussion and possible action to form a committee and to pass a motion to contact the City of Cook and the Cook Area Ambulance Service to talk to them about a possible consolidation. Please include this letter in the Jan. 9 meeting packet.

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Cook hires ambulance co-directors

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

COOK- In a move intended to strengthen the overall operation of the Cook Ambulance Service, current crew members Amy Luecken and Will Fischer will take on leadership of the service by sharing its directorship beginning in January.

News of the move was contained in the Cook City Council agenda sent to the *Timberjay* on Tuesday and was to be discussed at the council's regular December meeting on Thursday.

Current ambulance director Roland Shoen, who has been on board since July 2022, explained the rationale for the change in his monthly ambulance report to the council.

"We have been working on getting a full-time EMT/Director for the service. This is needed to provide a stronger sense of leadership from a director who can be on the roster and running with the crew," Shoen wrote.

"We knew this but, (it was) further reiterated by the crew in the EMSRB (Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board) survey from September this year."

"I, Director Shoen, when brought into the service agreed to help direct the crew until we could get such a person into the role," Shoen continued. "Living in Chisholm we knew it was not possible for me to take calls, or be on call/able to cover call time, but hopefully could bring some continuity to the overall operation of the service."

"Now, after 18 months with many improvements, and staff morale being high (according to the same survey), Amy Luecken and Will Fischer are going to work in tandem to fill the position of director and I will be resigning the position on Jan. 1st, 2024," he concluded.

"I wish them success in this role and hope Cook Area Ambulance Service continues to provide great service and continues to

get better in the future. Thank you to the crew, council, mayor and administration for the faith and trust you have put in me this past year and a half."

Including Luecken and Fischer, the service currently has eight EMTs and five EMRs on staff, with two members out on medical leave, according to the report.

Prior to the release of the agenda, the *Timberjay* contacted Shoen for an interview about the ambulance service, but he de-

ferred an interview until after Thursday's council meeting. The *Timberjay* will report on any additional information from the meeting in next week's edition.

COOK CITY COUNCIL

Council approves five percent levy increase and budget City selects veteran staff as new co-directors for ambulance service

by DAVID COLBURN
Cook-Orr Editor

COOK- The Cook City Council held its Truth in Taxation meeting Thursday night, and approved a five percent increase in the property tax levy to help fund what City Administrator Theresa Martinson called a "bare bones budget" for 2024.

Martinson noted that the increase could have been higher if not for the city council's mandate to cut costs.

"We had proposed eight percent and the council mandated us to reduce it to five percent," Martinson said. "We've cut everything we possi-

bly can. There's no longer a designation for street equipment funds. There is no planning and zoning. There is no economic development. What's being presented to you (covers) the cost of inflation and utility costs. It's a bare bones operating budget."

The approved levy increase will generate a total of \$515,429.78 for city operations.

In other business, the council:

►Reviewed the proposed agreement with St. Louis County for the upcoming road projects on Vermillion Dr. and North River St. Martinson said they should seek clarification regarding responsibility for street lighting

expenses once the county installs new lighting on Vermillion Dr.

►Heard from councilor Liza Root that the city will receive funds from both St. Louis County and the Department of Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation to cover the costs of a comprehensive housing needs assessment to be conducted by Maxwell Research. Councilor Liz Storm pointed out that having such a study in hand would be necessary for the city to pursue additional housing assistance funds.

►Accepted the resignation of ambulance director Roland Shoen and the appointment of paramedic Will Fischer and

EMT Amy Luecken as co-directors, as reported in the Dec. 22 edition of the *Timberjay*. The change will become effective Jan. 1.

►Approved payment of an invoice from SEH in the amount of \$8,050 for work related to the relocation of the Automated Weather Observing System at the airport.

►Heard that the HealthLine billing service used by the ambulance service has been sold to Hometown Billing LLC, and there will be no changes to the service from how it has been operating.

►Approved a new drug and alcohol testing policy for city maintenance workers. The poli-

cy is required by the U.S. Department of Transportation because of the size of the trucks workers have to operate.

►Approved a contract with auditing firm Walker, Giroux and Hahne, LLC to perform the required annual financial audit for the city. The contract specifies that the fee for the audit will not exceed \$26,000.

►Hired Dave Gustafson as a clerk/stocker for the liquor store.

►Approved changing the regular council meeting time to 6 p.m. after hearing the results of a citywide survey about meeting times. Martinson reported that 88 respondents preferred 6 p.m.

while only 20 chose 10 a.m. The change will take effect in January.

►Storm reported on a recent emergency management meeting facilitated by Cook Hospital. The goal is to pull together a more comprehensive emergency management plan for the city, Storm said, and she invited anyone with an interest in being involved to contact her through the city office.

►Heard that the city will contract with American Legal Publishing to review and update the city's ordinances to ensure they are in line with state requirements. Once finished, the city's ordinances will be available online as well as in book form.