



South County Emergency Medical Services

Report to the Board of Oversight

January 13, 2023

Operations:

Calendar year 2022 ended with a total of 1,216 patient responses, which continues our upward trend in call volume. Shelburne Control also provided the mutual-aid responses for the county which help paint the picture of the EMS climate. For every 1 mutual aid response South County received in 2022, we provided 2.15 responses to our neighbors. In contrast, for every 1 mutual aid response AMR received, they provided 0.25. This type of disparity is the primary problem that currently plagues Franklin County.

Nero's Law, which requires EMS services to provide emergency treatment and transport for police K9s, will take effect in early February. Currently there is *no* locally approved training that meets the requirements of the law, which means all ambulance services will be in violation come the deadline. Western Mass EMS (WMEMS) and our sister agencies are working together to apply for waivers with the state to allow time to develop local training. WRHSAC has approved and provided funds for this purpose.

A slew of "First Amendment Audits" have been occurring in the region. While these groups typically target Police and Municipal Offices, they recently interacted with the Gill Fire Department in what seemed like an instance of opportunity. SoCEMS staff has been briefed, and the advisory memo from Deerfield Town Counsel has been shared.

AEMT Zamojski recently completed CPR training/recertification for the Senior Center staff. While his time is provided by South County EMS, his instructor certification, the required equipment, and certification documents are all handled through an outside agency he is also affiliated with.

There has been recent conversation regarding whether South County EMS can continue to provide this service if and when that provider retires, and what other certification services South County EMS could provide to our sister agencies. A preliminary cost analysis shows that it would be prohibitive for South County EMS to invest in the hours and expense of certifying employees as instructors, purchasing the necessary equipment, maintaining records, and becoming a registered training site with the certification bodies. Amherst College Police recently conducted a similar inquiry and found that it was overwhelmingly smarter to contract with an outside agency that handles training and recertifications specifically. For perspective, South County EMS itself contracts with an outside agency to provide these services to our members. Further research on exact costs specific requirements is still being done.

Staff:

New schedule rotation took effect on January 1st and is already proving to be an improvement from the previous fixed schedule. One of our full-time staff members is currently out on FMLA, and we are able to move providers in the schedule to cover open shifts without undue burden on a single or small handful of employees.

In addition, the rotation allows for natural recurring organizational meetings between employees who did not previously overlap. This has allowed us to increase productivity and decrease the need to have employees come in on what would otherwise be their day off.

The rotation has also provided all the full-time employees to overlap with each other over the 5-week span, allowing for more diverse interactions and conversations than could previously occur.

With increased availability for overlap and interaction, and the additional staff availability afforded by our staffing model, more responsibilities and duties outside of mere 911 ambulance response have been taken on by more employees. As previously discussed, these include grant applications, equipment maintenance tracking (including cost and replacement scheduling), community outreach, operational systems review and implementation, and more comprehensive Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) measures, just to name a few.

To help establish clear roles, and provide individuals with a sense personal and career growth, title definitions (such as “leader” and “coordinator”) are being established. While these titles do not carry any additional hourly compensation, they do promote esprit de corps while also solidifying roles and responsibilities in the organization.

Equipment:

Capital replacement of aging equipment will need to be the next large discussion regarding budget strategy. The ALS equipment that was received under the regionalization grant in 2014, or purchased by Deerfield in 2012, is all nearing the 10-year replacement recommendations for such vital items.

Most notably our LifePak15 Cardiac Monitors received in 2014 are potentially the largest concern. Necessary to provide ALS/Paramedic level care, these two units are of a previous generation which cannot be repaired should a specific electronic component fail. This means that should one break, we would not be able to repair it back into service, effectively demoting an entire ambulance from the ALS level to the BLS level.

Paramedic McComb is currently applying for multiple grants to purchase a new and updated LifePak15, which is quoted to cost about \$50,000. Should we receive this grant, the time-frame for delivery is expected to be about a year or longer.

The benefit of purchasing a third LP15 before a failure of our existing units, is the cardiac monitor represents the significant majority of expense when equipping an ambulance at the ALS level. With three cardiac monitors available, we would be able to increase the level of care our third ambulance provides to Paramedic, meaning we would be able to bring that level of care to all emergencies and stand-by events that A3 is assigned to. The importance of having paramedics available at athletic events has become nationally known with the recent NFL cardiac arrest on the field.

For all the reasons outlined, South County EMS should plan on funding the purchase of a new / replacement cardiac monitor within the next few years either through grant funding or capital request.

Replacement of our oldest ambulance, the 2007 Ford E-450, should also be a priority within the next couple years. While South County EMS is diligent about putting money aside every year to fund the necessary and expected ambulance replacement, the cost of a new ambulance has skyrocketed in the last 18 months. As recently as 2020 when we replaced the International, our ambulance cost approximately \$250,000. The most recent quote provided on the MA state bid, which is for the exact same ambulance as our other two most recent units, is \$363,000.

As of the FY24 budget, with the normal money set aside, we would have the necessary funds to replace our oldest truck had the price remained fixed to inflation. With the unanticipated increase in cost, we are now about \$160,000 short, which at our current pace wouldn't be met until FY26 assuming no further increases.

The vehicle to be replaced is not only lacking the modern safety equipment all new ambulances are required to have, it is becoming prohibitively expensive to maintain. Our two newest ambulances cost approximately \$2.80/mile to maintain, while the oldest unit in question is around \$6/mile. Additionally, the Ford emergency vehicle technician which services our ambulances has stated that the EGR and turbo are on their way out, which could be a \$5,000+ repair. With these numbers in mind, we may need to take the vehicle completely out of service without a replacement if the cost of repair is not warranted in context.

Taking the unit out of service without a replacement will negatively and significantly impact the department's ability to maintain our expected level of service. With our current 911 call volume, we must keep 2 ambulances in service to cover the calls. Additionally, we would not be able to cover any special event or medical stand-by (such as sporting games) which our third ambulance is used for. Should we decide to send one of only two remaining ambulances to conduct those events, or should an ambulance be out-of-service for routine or unexpected maintenance, we would be without the number of vehicles needed to cover our 911 requests. Not being available to respond to those calls would additionally have the impact of decreasing revenue, which we count on for the majority of our department funding.

Paramedic McComb is currently applying for a national grant to cover the cost to replace this grant. While the potential dire situation makes us a more likely recipient, the extreme competitive nature of such grants makes us receiving the award a long-shot. We should know the outcome of this application round in the latter-half of the calendar year.

Finally, a requirement was made by OEMS in 2017 to carry medication pumps on ambulances. At the time these pumps were estimated to cost around \$7,000 a piece, and a capital request was made (and approved) in FY18 for \$21,000 to purchase three.

The requirement by OEMS was delayed, and our purchase was never made, as there were no FDA approved crash-worthy transport pumps available on the market. The money set aside for this purchase was eventually released back into our Enterprise Fund after a few years.

Within the past couple years, OEMS has reinstated their requirement as FDA approved pumps are now available and our updated required medication list necessitates pump administration of some medications. A review of available pumps was conducted, and the unit that has been in use by Northampton Fire, and many other agencies in our region, was selected. These pumps are significantly cheaper than previously estimated, and a Capital request for the \$7,500 out of retained earnings to purchase the three required units will be made.

Although these pumps are mandated for us to carry, they will provide a significantly higher level of safety and reduced liability, as they automate and monitor potentially dangerous medication administration.

Admin:

The latest FY24 draft budget (v3) has been created with adjustments including those incorporating the Town of Deerfield COLA recommendation of 3%. Benefits and Indirect costs were carried over from FY23 or based on estimations, and will need to be updated with appropriate numbers once available.

Retained earnings and revenue from billing have both been increased based on increases to Medicare reimbursements and anticipated increases in call volume and associated revenue.

The end result is a total FY24 assessment to the members towns of \$680,628, or a \$12,767 (1.9%) increase from FY23.

That breaks down to:

Deerfield:	\$352,301 (\$6,609 increase)
Sunderland:	\$214,239 (\$4,018 increase)
Whately:	\$114,087 (\$2,140 increase)

A review of overtime usage was conducted, and it shows that on average approximately 1,400hrs of OT is realized each year department-wide, which is about 2.7hrs of OT per employee per week. In the FY24 budget this amounts to just under \$71,000. This OT is a result of a provider being held over for a "late call" about once a week, performing an occasional additional duty at the start or end of a regular shift, or taking 1 emergency call-out shift a month.

Not only is this number well below the threshold that leads to concern about burnout or safety issues, it is well below a "typical" OT experience at other agencies. (Anecdotally, one responder known to the department worked 700 hrs of OT last year at a nearby municipal agency.)

Our OT amount is also less than the hours that an additional FT employee would cover at significantly hire cost, and the nature of this type of OT would not lend itself to being addressed by

adding a single FT employee. The only way to effectively eliminate all this kind of OT would be to add an additional one or two FT employees to every shift.

The new schedule should help address some percentage of this OT, as we will have more flexibility and overlap between employees, but further reduction in the estimated hours cannot be made without more experience with the new schedule.

The other expense which contributes to the overtime line item in the budget (and which has been given its own line in this draft), is the hours incurred through the Deerfield Personnel Bylaw Holiday policy and don't actually represent additional hours worked. Currently in the by-laws, holidays are required to be paid at an employee's "regular rate." The way this is handled is that all 13 observed 8-hr holidays are entered into an employee's timesheet on their respective day. If that employee chooses to take 8hrs off that week, they physically work 32 hrs and are paid for 40, just like a typical office worker.

If however they choose to work their scheduled 40hrs, they work 40 hrs and are paid for 48, which is calculated as 40 hours of their regular rate and 8 hrs of OT. In many ways this is preferable because it eliminates the need to find 80 hours of backfill in a given week. This backfill is done by our per diem staff members, who hold full time jobs elsewhere, and would only be compensated at the normal hourly rate with at South County. As a result, we would likely need to backfill each FT employee's day off with OT given to another employee anyway, resulting in a scheduling nightmare and without any cost benefit.

The 13 observed holidays, at 8 hours a piece, for 10 FT employees, is equal to another 1,040 hours of scheduled OT for approximately \$50,500 in the FY24 budget.

Added together, the total OT spending makes it appear the department is utilizing twice as many OT hours than it actually is.

FY24 Budget presentations are being scheduled, and the Sunderland meeting will occur on Monday January 30th.

It is requested that the BoO vote to approve the budget as prepared, or make any necessary adjustments, so that it may be presented to our member towns before our next BoO meeting.

Calendar Year 2023 BoO Schedule should be decided at this meeting.

2022 Board of Oversight meetings:

Jan 18 - Feb 8 - Mar 15 - April 19 - June 21 - Sept 20 - Nov 15

Proposed 2023 Board of Oversight meetings:

Jan 17 - Feb 21 - Mar 21 - April 18 - June 20 - Sept 19 - Nov 21

Respectfully,
Chief Z. Smith

2022	Total Runs	Transports	ALS	BLS	INT	REF	OTH	DRF	SUN	WHA	Primary	Cnwy	Grnflid	Htflid	Trnrs	Mont	Lvrtt	Amh	Noho	Nthflid	Shlbrn	Nw Slm	Ashflid	Rowe	Gill	Mutual Aid
January	115	85	69	16	1	19	10	57	31	16	104	3	5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Feburary	79	54	43	11	1	16	8	41	20	12	73	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
March	87	67	61	6	0	15	5	50	19	12	81	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
April	96	69	59	10	1	22	4	45	30	12	87	3	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
May	107	74	62	12	1	23	9	52	27	12	91	2	6	1	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	16
June	105	74	63	11	0	20	11	49	32	15	96	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	9
July	97	62	50	12	3	27	5	50	23	11	84	2	5	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	13
August	121	79	69	10	4	31	7	60	29	14	103	4	11	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	18
September	110	75	62	13	1	22	12	56	28	13	97	4	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	13
October	92	68	57	11	1	17	6	39	24	15	78	1	10	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
November	102	66	49	17	3	26	7	43	29	12	84	4	9	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	18
December	105	67	56	11	1	26	11	58	21	14	93	2	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	12
Totals:	1216	840	700	140	17	264	95	600	313	158	1071	28	77	7	9	1	3	6	6	2	2	1	1	1	1	145
2021	Total Runs	Transports	ALS	BLS	Intercepts	Refusals	Other	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately	Primary	Conway	Greenfield	Turners	Montague	Amherst	Hatfield	Nhmptn	Pelham	Mutual Aid						
January	95	65	51	14	0	21	9	60	18	12	90	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5					
Feburary	79	57	44	13	0	16	6	39	23	14	76	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3					
March	86	46	34	12	1	31	8	51	14	11	76	3	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10					
April	92	74	59	15	0	14	4	44	33	12	89	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3					
May	114	73	55	18	1	36	4	61	31	17	109	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5					
June	84	62	50	12	0	18	4	55	15	10	80	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4					
July	90	65	44	21	0	22	3	41	29	14	84	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6					
August	108	83	69	14	0	21	4	57	21	17	95	4	3	3	0	1	2	0	0	0	13					
September	84	66	58	8	0	15	3	47	23	11	81	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3					
October	104	69	58	11	0	25	10	43	26	22	91	3	0	1	1	3	1	2	2	2	13					
November	90	70	59	11	0	15	5	51	17	15	83	3	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	7					
December	102	85	75	10	0	5	12	47	24	23	94	2	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8					
Totals:	1128	815	656	159	2	239	72	596	274	178	1048	26	26	6	2	7	9	2	2	2	80					
2020	Total Runs	Transports	ALS	BLS	Intercepts	Refusals	Other	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately	Primary	Conway	Greenfield	Turners	Bernardston	Amherst	Hatfield	Leyden	Shelburne	Shelburne Falls	Charlemont	Heath	Williamsburg	Leverett	Mutual Aid	
January	79	57	49	8	5	15	2	28	21	19	68	3	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	11	
Feburary	101	66	54	12	4	27	4	56	24	13	93	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8
March	82	56	40	16	0	22	4	50	15	12	77	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
April	65	36	32	4	0	20	9	36	18	10	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
May	70	51	41	10	1	16	2	34	22	8	64	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
June	86	55	39	16	0	26	5	43	32	9	84	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
July	77	55	43	12	1	19	2	38	15	19	72	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
August	101	70	55	15	0	25	6	51	19	27	97	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
September	83	53	42	11	2	22	6	29	25	24	78	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
October	91	60	48	12	0	21	10	37	27	25	89	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
November	78	55	43	12	0	19	4	42	15	15	72	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
December	86	62	51	11	0	17	7	51	15	16	82	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Totals:	999	676	537	139	13	249	61	495	248	197	940	22	12	6	0	6	1	3	3	3	1					59

2019	Total Runs	Transports	ALS	BLS	Intercepts	Refusals	Other	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately	Primary	Conway	Greenfield	Turners	Other	Mutual Aid		
January	86	63	46	17	1	17	5	40	24	15	79	2	2	0	3	7		
Feburary	90	59	38	21	1	24	6	52	21	11	84	2	3	0	1	6		
March	76	49	42	7	1	22	4	39	21	13	73	2	1	0	0	3		
April	83	62	47	15	2	14	5	38	19	21	78	3	1	0	1	5		
May	98	69	44	25	0	23	6	57	23	16	96	0	0	0	2	2		
June	83	57	40	17	1	16	9	33	21	21	75	2	0	3	3	8		
July	81	52	40	12	0	23	6	47	18	14	79	1	0	0	1	2		
August	86	64	53	11	1	15	6	49	15	21	85	0	0	0	2	2		
September	89	59	54	5	3	21	6	48	19	15	82	4	0	1	2	7		
October	95	71	55	16	3	18	3	46	21	24	91	0	1	1	2	4		
November	89	62	57	5	1	22	4	51	14	15	80	3	2	0	4	9		
December	81	50	41	9	0	27	4	38	22	16	76	2	1	1	1	5		
Totals:	1037	717	557	160	14	242	64	538	238	202	978	21	11	6	22	60		
2018	Total Runs	Transports	ALS	BLS	Intercepts	Refusals	Other	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately	Primary	Conway	Greenfield	Turners	Amherst	Hatfield	Other	Mutual Aid
January	113	85	56	29	3	19	6	70	25	10	105	3	3	0	0	1	0	7
Feburary	95	74	53	21	2	15	4	49	22	11	82	3	5	1	2	2	0	13
March	88	60	43	17	3	18	7	51	16	11	78	5	3	0	0	0	2	10
April	73	47	33	14	1	18	7	50	9	8	67	2	3	0	0	0	1	6
May	103	60	48	12	6	34	3	54	22	9	85	0	14	2	0	0	2	18
June	104	62	43	19	6	28	8	41	20	30	91	1	4	5	0	0	3	13
July	103	72	49	23	2	23	6	45	22	15	82	5	6	2	0	3	5	21
August	111	65	50	15	11	23	12	51	24	18	93	2	9	5	0	0	2	18
September	89	61	49	12	5	17	6	44	13	15	72	5	5	2	0	0	5	17
October	98	59	49	10	5	23	11	53	14	18	85	1	5	4	0	0	3	13
November	103	60	41	19	5	28	10	46	21	19	86	2	8	1	1	1	4	17
December	114	69	51	18	10	26	9	66	18	10	94	3	11	0	0	1	5	20
Totals:	1194	774	565	209	59	272	89	620	226	174	1020	32	76	22	3	8	32	173
2017	Total Runs	Transports	ALS	BLS	Intercepts	Refusals	Other	Deerfield	Sunderland	Whately	Primary	Conway	Greenfield	Turners	Amherst	Hatfield	Other	Mutual Aid
January	80	54	46	8	2	14	10	43	19	10	72	0	4	2	0	0	2	8
Feburary	80	52	37	15	3	18	7	46	15	11	72	2	3	0	0	0	3	8
March	84	51	37	14	0	24	9	44	22	11	77	3	3	0	0	0	1	7
April	73	49	30	19	3	10	11	41	16	8	65	2	4	1	0	0	1	8
May	93	78	51	27	0	10	5	45	28	17	90	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
June	81	58	42	16	0	18	5	37	27	13	77	2	2	1	0	0	1	4
July	74	50	36	14	3	16	5	39	18	10	67	2	2	1	0	0	1	6
August	97	65	46	19	0	22	10	45	28	15	88	4	5	0	0	0	0	9
September	101	63	51	12	5	22	11	52	25	14	91	3	1	2	0	0	4	10
October	105	64	41	23	1	34	6	58	26	11	95	3	5	1	0	0	1	10
November	94	70	53	17	3	11	10	50	20	14	84	4	5	1	0	0	0	10
December	93	61	43	18	5	18	9	52	23	8	83	4	4	1	0	0	1	10
Totals:	1055	715	513	202	25	217	98	552	267	142	961	30	38	9	0	1	15	93