



801 Burrows Run Road
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING via ZOOM MINUTES

October 29, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Present: Dr. Richard L. Leff, Chairman; Whitney S. Hoffman, Vice Chair; Scudder G. Stevens, Supervisor; Eden R. Ratliff, Township Manager; Amy Heinrich, Finance & HR Director; Matt Gordon, Acting Chief of Police, Dave Sander, Solicitor

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Leff called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and explained how the meeting was going to proceed.

2. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

3. NEW BUSINESS (ACTION ITEMS)

There was no new business.

4. 2021 BUDGET SCHEDULE & PROCESS

a. Emergency Medical Services Delivery

(www.kennett.pa.us/DocumentCenter/View/4361)

- Ratliff began this special meeting with a detailed presentation surrounding Emergency Medical Service Delivery in Kennett Township. That presentation can be found on the Township website at the link above.
- Stevens said regarding the Commission's recommendation in 2018 of consolidating EMS services in Kennett Township and the Borough, that while it was recommended, the Commission chose not to do consolidate. Rather, it chose specifically to allow both service providers to continue as it did not want to put either out of business. He said the goal has been and continues to be to allow the two companies to work together to overcome any inefficiencies. Ratliff clarified that the Commission did in fact vote to consolidate services, but they realized the decision to do so was with the individual municipalities and in 2018 Kennett Township did not vote to follow the recommendation. There was discussion about the annual renewal and designation of service providers.
- Hoffman asked if the 15% increase from the Commission this year was to cover administrative costs. Ratliff said that would be discussed later in the presentation.
- Stevens asked Ratliff to explain what happens on a BLS call. Ratliff answered that when a BLS call is from west of Bayard Road, Kennett Fire Company handles the call and when a BLS call is from east

of Bayard Road, Longwood Fire Company handles the call. The two companies are involved with each other when the BLS call west of Bayard Road upgrades to ALS. Stevens offered that excess of 50% of the time the calls are BLS.

- Leff asked that if there is a MICU stationed in or around the Borough, what will that do to response times for ALS calls for the western part of Kennett Township and if they would have faster service. Ratliff said generally, yes.
- Leff asked if it would be more expensive to run MICUs compared to BLS and explained roughly how much Kennett Fire Company costs versus Longwood Fire Company. Ratliff said yes but other costs and supplies are factored in and the region will have those costs regardless because we must provide ALS service. He said the question becomes if there is a way to run a model that allows for what can be an ALS call if need be, respond to BLS calls and be more efficient and provide a cost savings to the region. He added the paramedics are more trained and therefore more expensive than an EMT and that Longwood's service region is larger than Kennett Fire's.
- There was discussion surrounding the data points that the Commission would use, and Stevens spoke of the specific cost breakdowns Ratliff presented in light of those data points and stated that the service provider does not need to be decided until January. Ratliff added that the 2022 funding would look at 2021 numbers, and if for any portion of 2021 Kennett Township is using a dual EMS provider, that will count against the Township for a likely budget increase going into 2022. Ratliff also spoke to the personnel matters that Kennett Fire would have to handle if Longwood becomes the sole provider and spoke favorably for advanced notice for them. He said the longer Kennett Township has dual service providers for ALS, the longer we can expect increased contributions to the Regional Commission, which will ultimately impact taxes. He said the impact he is looking at is not just 2021. It is long-term.
- Hoffman asked if there was a mileage charge for the distance of an ambulance ride. Ratliff said yes, both companies have an "out-the-door" charge as well as a fixed rate per mile and said that is standard EMS practices. There was more discussion about why the Kennett and Longwood companies have different fees.
- Leff summarized the difference between costs of ALS and BLS calls for Kennett residents east and west of Bayard Road with more discussions with Ratliff and Hoffman.
- Stevens outlined two issues. The first has to do with paying for what is used and the second is double billing. He said if he had a need for a BLS service but was then discovered to be having a heart attack, that would be an upgraded to an ALS call and a paramedic would have to come. He would pay for both the BLS and the ALS because those were the services he received. Regarding the double billing, both Longwood and Kennett Fire Company have worked out sending only one bill that lists those different services rather than send two separate bills. Ratliff pointed out that if Longwood were the sole responder in Steven's scenario, he would not have to wait for a paramedic to arrive as there would already be one there. He also noted that this type of scenario is more expensive for those who live west of Bayard Road and broke down the cost difference. Ratliff then explained the perception of "double billing" in that residents who needed upgraded calls west of Bayard Road would in fact receive two bills. They were not for duplicate services as one was for the BLS call and the other for the ALS intercept. He agreed with Stevens that the two fire companies are heading in the right direction to use the same billing company, which would only send out one physical bill that would list both charges on it. He said that regardless if it comes as one consolidated bill or two separate bills, the charge is still ~\$500 more than it would be for those who live east of Bayard Road. There was further discussion about the cost of having one paramedic arrive versus one EMT arrived and both agreed the paramedic is more expensive, but Ratliff said by ~\$250, not ~\$500. Stevens did point out that the other side of this discussion involved the increased cost the Commission would have to pay for the more expensive paramedic 24/7 versus an EMT.
- Ratliff spoke to the difficulties in navigating this emotional issue from the financial perspective but maintained that in his role of Township Manager, he must advise the Board on matters and policy as it relates to funding. He thanked all of the first responders on the Zoom and who have been participating professionally in these conversations.
- Hoffman commented on how this issue goes around and around and as a Board, there is a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayers to deliver emergency services as efficiently as possible. She spoke to

the current economic climate, how she is weighing the extra expense of BLS verses the cost savings of ALS calls, and the consideration of those without health insurance. She said she still does not have a good handle on the payer mix in Kennett Township's situation.

- Leff summarized Hoffman's comments and weighed pros and cons.
- Hoffman asked if there was a way for Longwood Fire Company, should they become the sole provider, to lower their costs for BLS services. Ratliff stated that billing rates are not in the jurisdiction of the Township or the Commission.
- Matt Eick, EMS captain at Longwood, explained how their rates are reviewed and compared quarterly with other local and national providers. Regarding mileage, he explained that patients are not charged for the round trip mileage of the ambulance from the time it leaves the station until it returns. Rather, what is nationally accepted is to charge the base rate plus a flat rate for the loaded mileage of transports. Eick also explained that even though a paramedic goes on all calls, the ALS rate is only charged when ALS service is provided which is determined by Longwood's third-party biller. Hoffman gave an example and Stevens again spoke to the costs of Longwood having a fulltime paramedic on its payroll. Eick agreed with Stevens but added the benefits of the convenience and efficiency this model provides. Hoffman asked Eick how that efficiency was determined and Eick elaborated. Ratliff pointed to the net overpayment by Township residents of \$63,500 based on 2019 call data in the current delivery structure.
- Ricky Franks, EMS Supervisor from Kennett Fire Company, added to the discussion his statistical data. He stated that the ALS provider is needed much less than the BLS provider in their service area and discussed percentages of calls being upgraded and/or downgraded. He also said that currently, Kennett Township is served by two and a half transport units, the two at Longwood and the Kennett BLS. Removing the Kennett Fire ambulance from EMS service delivery would put roughly an additional 1460 calls onto Longwood Fire Company and while they could handle a lot of them based on their UHUs, Franks feels this would leave the Township uncovered for a third call in the district. He asked Ratliff what he thought an acceptable number of units coming in to cover the primary units because that coverage will drastically increase response times and he does not feel that is a risk worth taking. Ratliff asked for clarification on the 40% of ALS calls Franks referred to, to which Franks explained that out of all the transports they do, 60% of calls are BLS and 40% are ALS. Ratliff said regarding what is an acceptable number of missed calls or called needed to be covered by a third transport unit not in the area, that they rely on the nationally accepted standard UHU, but it is challenging to state specifically how many missed calls are acceptable from a policy perspective. He added that if they move to the two MICU model, it will bring the UHU to 27% which is nearing efficiency.
- Leff asked how many calls were currently coming from outside our region. Ratliff explained the difficulty in answering that because with the current two provider system, Longwood and Kennett cover each other, which is another way the Commission said consolidating would help clear up this data. He did confirm that currently, there are calls answered by West Chester, Avondale, and Delaware County and Leff summarized that the worry of Franks is that the number of calls needed to be covered by those providers would increase if Kennett goes from two and a half units to only two.
- Hoffman added population demographics from census data.
- Leff and Eick discussed mutual aid given Longwood's current truck use with one operating 24 hours a day and one 16 hours a day in relation to missed calls. Eick said that they are well below the benchmark of being over capacity.
- Stevens commented that the MICU is not the only option and said another option is the two-tiered system which is a combination of ALS and BLS used by many in Chester County, the state of Delaware, and recommended by the Commonwealth. He said that the proposal about to be discussed has various unintended consequences that need to be recognized. He proceeded to list the consequences including losing 50+ years of tradition, effecting services provided regionally, killing Kennett Fire EMS, and damages to the Commission with the Borough pulling out. He said it is more than just saving 2.5% on the budget.
- Stevens read emails from Township residents Ralph Hunter and Chris Gravina. They are attached to these minutes. (Waiting on these emails from Scudder)

- Ratliff restated that a MICU, even if singularly provided by Longwood Fire Company should absolutely be stationed in the Borough of Kennett Square, if not at Kennett Fire Company. Secondly, he clarified from the emails read that Kennett Fire Company is not running their ambulances with volunteers.
- Leff summarized Stevens comments and discussed the challenges of having two service providers. With one, there is a greater chance of drilling down on efficiency. Stevens said that once Kennett Borough is out of the Commission and once Kennett Fire EMS has closed, they are not coming back. He suggested postponing this decision another three or six months to give both companies a chance to work this out.
- Stevens also commented that a one-provider model is a monopoly. Hoffman added to the discussion and expressed a desire to do a six-month trial.
- There was more discussion around where on the western side of the Township a MICU could be stationed.
- Ratliff said that running a MICU model is not unheard of and exists presently in ~9 other companies. Additionally, he stated that he is concerned about the idea of Kennett Borough pulling out of the Commission. Ratliff went on to say that Po-Mar-Lin Fire, Kennett Fire, Longwood Fire, Kennett Fire EMS, and Longwood EMS are all currently under funded and the funding from the Commission is not closing that gap.
- Leff stated that this difficult discussion and decision in no way diminishes the great service Kennett Township has received from both Kennett Fire and Longwood. In addressing the comment about a monopoly, Leff pointed out that Longwood already is the sole ALS provider.
- Hoffman reported takeaways from a recent County-wide webinar on this matter that she attended that there is potential, years down the road, the County will have to take over these services due to the lack of volunteers and the increasing costs.
- Leff and Ratliff discussed the potential reallocation of Commission funds for Kennett Fire if they no longer have an ambulance.

Motion presented by Hoffman to authorize a change in Emergency Medical Service Provider territory to allow Longwood Fire Company to provide Advanced and Basic Life Support as the first due responder in Kennett Township effective January 1, 2021. Leff seconded the motion.

Stevens moved to table motion and discussion for three months. This motion was not seconded.

Hoffman moved to table this motion and discussion for one month. Stevens seconded. Motion passed 2 -1 with Leff dissenting.

- Ratliff spoke about the timeline and consequences of delaying this discussion and motion including the impacts on Kennett Fire EMS staff and the dual call data that will inform the 2022 Commission budget.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

- Jack Melton (615 Norway Rd) asked if Kennett Fire Company denies placing a Longwood ambulance in their station, how much will it cost the Kennett residents to construct a new building or lease a space for that? Why was the two-tier system not discussed but rather shot down? He said he heard that taxes were going to increase even if Kennett does not provide EMS services. Lastly, he asked why it was always Kennett EMS having to change but never Longwood? Ratliff stated that he is not in a position to pontificate whether or not Kennett Fire will agree to house Longwood's ambulance, but he hopes there is cooperation there as he knows both Kennett and Longwood first responders' value providing service over all else. He added that rather than build or lease, there are a number of community partners that the Township could work with and building or leasing would not be the first option. Leff said in regard to why it is always Kennett EMS that needs to change, that it is not

favoritism. It is simply needing to get this change started. Leff also explained that the 2021 budget requests were just that, requests, and nothing has been decided yet. If the requests are all granted, there will be a need for additional revenue. But that has not been decided yet.

- Dennis Nelms (166 Brandywine Ct) said via Zoom chat, “it’s my understanding that Longwood has an Ambulance Subscription Service that helps offset cost of ambulance that may not be covered through insurance. I believe the subscription pays for the balance not covered by insurance. I’m not sure Kennett offers this service.” Ratliff said that is a fundraising program and he believes Kennett Fire is looking to launch, possibly jointly with Longwood, something like that. He added that if there are no changes in delivery services, Kennett Township would certainly support its residents subscribing to a service like that.
- Henry Schlimme (9 Black Rock Road) commented that he has concerns about the increased response time and said Eick’s mention of the dropped calls at night do not consider the additional calls that would be coming from Kennett EMS if they are no longer a provider. He also expressed concern over the monopoly as Longwood is already charging more than Kennett for BLS. Leff responded that with the ambulance stationed in the Borough or west of the Borough, response times should decrease for ALS calls for those residents in the western part of the Township and remain the same for those in the eastern part of the Township. Eick said that they estimated the absorbed call volume from Kennett would be about 700 calls. That takes into account the ~576 calls that Longwood already was accompanying Kennett on. With that volume, Longwood remains below the national standard of 10% for missed calls. Schlimme asked Eick if missed calls would increase to 10% since they are only at 3% now. Eick clarified that they would remain below 10%, not at 10%, and reiterated the argument that those with missed calls too far below the 10% standard have too much capacity and are over covered.
- Henry Schlimme (9 Black Rock Road) also commented that the numbers discussed do not matter if you are the person that dies because of a delay in arrival. He said he feels it is more important to get there quickly and talked about how police often respond first with Narcan and AEDs. said that a majority of municipalities in the County are running an intercept, or chase car model and perhaps there would be cost savings with that option. Leff again commented that moving to a single provider would provide the ability to focus on the numbers and be able to ask specific questions. Ratliff clarified that he listed companies who are running MICUs, not municipalities. Eick commented on the trend throughout Chester County of upgrading from a chase car two-tier model to a MICU model, citing Phoenixville Hospital EMS division, Westwood EMS and Paoli Fire Department. Hoffman asked why those companies made that transition and what the cost difference was. Eick said he can find out and let her know.
- Chuck Weed (456 N Mill Rd) commented that he does not understand why this meeting is happening right now as we in the middle of a major pandemic. He hopes that this conversation is tabled for a year. He also stated that for ~2% of the budget, he feels there must be other places where the Township can make changes that do not jeopardize the health of the community. Leff stated that this issue has been brewing for years with no resolution. He went on to discuss the challenges of the pandemic, including reduced revenues. Eick commented that call volume for Kennett and Longwood, and even County-wide, was down during the pandemic. Ratliff reiterated the deficit in revenues with the increase in request and that he feels obligated to look at all ways to cut costs and present those recommendations to the Board. He again stated that this affects not only the 2021 budget, but also the 2022 budget.
- Hoffman asked if any EMTs were exposed to COVID-19 and what happens if someone does get it. Eick answered and Hoffman continued this discussion stating the need for enough staff in the event someone does get sick. Eick added that the County had subcontractors ready to go should an entire department come down with COVID-19.
- Leff asked Ratliff if the numbers discussed tonight were from 2019, Ratliff said yes and that these numbers reflected a “normal” year.
- Chuck Weed (456 N Mill Rd) stated via Zoom chat, “COVID is on the rise again...where else can we cut the budget other than our communities health?” Leff answered that there were a number of meetings coming up to address that.

- Jack Melton (615 Norway Rd) asked via Zoom chat, “How long did each company have to give info?” Ratliff explained that the information came from reports that are filed by each company each month and that he personally had conversations with each company over the past week or so.
- Steve Melton (Deputy Fire Chief of Kennett Fire Company) said that he was disappointed in the way the discussion has gone tonight and with the alliance he feels the Manager has formed with Longwood Fire Company. He said he found out about this on Tuesday and believes Eden met with Longwood a few times. Hoffman answered that nothing has been voted on tonight and the whole point of tonight was to have the conversation and figure out what to do. Leff added that while this issue has been discussed before, it has not been done so publicly like this at a Board meeting and that everyone has another month to continue discussing it to find the best path forward. He reiterated that this discussion is not a knock against any of the providers, but an effort to unify the services to meet the changing times.
- Ricky Franks, EMS Supervisor from Kennett Fire Company, added that he is disappointed in the decision and he believes that our area will require three units to cover services. With only two, he feels that dropped calls will increase and that the public would be put at an unnecessary danger. He added that the population is only going to go up as will these numbers. Lastly, he agreed with Stevens that this will become a monopoly. Leff added for clarity that there was no vote to make any changes tonight. Hoffman asked if he would like to continue these conversations over the next month with the Supervisors and he said yes, that he tried to reach out before to no avail and is happy to continue these conversations.

6. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Motion presented by Hoffman to adjourn. Stevens seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously with no discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Eden R. Ratliff
Township Secretary