

IV B

Ambulance Contract Town History

In Fall of 2019, the Houlton Town Manager notified the Ambulance Contract Towns there would be a rate increase in 2020. The increase amount was not known at that time, due to meetings, discussion, and designs with Ambulance Staff, and management as to Ambulance needs.

The five (5) year lease/maintenance program was expiring with Autotronics, and a decision had to be in regards to future vehicles. The current fleet consisted of a 2015, 2012, 2007, and 2004 ambulances.

With input from all staff it was agreed the best decision was to purchase four (4) identical units, with power load systems, identical configuration, and equipment. Identical units would minimize confusion during emergency calls.

The ambulances were purchased November 4, 2020, and the contract fee was not finalized until the budget was approved January 4, 2021. The Ambulance Contract increased from \$16.47 per person to \$74.00 per person.

The contract towns met and formed a committee to discuss creating a new service to provide ambulance coverage for their communities, the Southern Aroostook Emergency Medical Services.

Our Town Manager has supplied information requested to all contract towns regarding budgets, revenues, and calls.

I have also answered questions from contract town residents, and offered to attend meetings.

Contract Town Calculation Sheet

2020 Employee Benefits Costs Sheet

Ludlow Information Sheet

Bangor Daily News Article May 29/30, 2021

2021 Community	Population Census 2019	Valuation of Buildings	Fire Contracts	Ambulance Contracts	Septic Contracts	Total Due	Ambulance Per Capital	Date Paid	#88 in Trio
Amity	227	4,965,423	144-44-301	145-45-401	169-59-604				
Cary	213	4,047,544	\$15,670	\$16,798		\$32,468	\$74.00		
Dyer Brook	209		\$12,773	\$15,762		\$28,535	\$74.00		
Hammond	113	1,388,655	\$4,384	\$15,466		\$15,466	\$74.00		
Hodgdon	1285			\$8,362		\$12,746	\$74.00		
Houlton(6476)				\$95,090		\$95,090	\$74.00		
Linneus	930			\$68,820		\$68,820	\$74.00		
Littleton	1042			\$77,108		\$77,108	\$74.00		
Ludlow	381	6,852,688	\$21,628	\$28,194		\$49,822	\$74.00		
Merrill	263			\$19,462		\$19,462	\$74.00		
Monticello	744			\$55,056		\$55,056	\$74.00		
New Limerick	471	33,096,127	\$104,442	\$34,854	\$455	\$139,751	\$74.00		
Oakfield	685			\$50,690		\$50,690	\$74.00		
Smyrna	425			\$31,450		\$31,450	\$74.00		
Participants Total	6988	50,350,437	\$158,896	\$517,112	\$455	\$676,463			
			803137 amb budget				552644 Fire 2020 budg.		
			220908 amb payments				563404 2021 budg		
			<u>1024045</u>				<u>10760</u>		
			50%				552644		
			512022.5				0.019470039		
			6988						
			<u>73.27168002</u> Per Cap				1.95% Increase		
Increase from 2020 to 2021									
Fire 1.95%									
Ambulance 50% of budget + Amb									
Payments in Debt service									

2020 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS COSTS

Yearly Ambulance Costs Not Included in Regular Ambulance Budget	
Health insurance*	\$116,214.00
Income Protection*	\$2,300.00
Retirement*	\$6,000.00
Vac/Sick Liabilities	\$17,711.63
Workers Comp	\$44,102.00
Debt Service - Ambulances	\$221,000.00
Vehicle Insurance	\$7,200.00
FICA	\$44,950.00
Regular Ambulance Budget	\$803,137.00
TOTAL	\$1,262,614.63
*Dependent on	
Employee Participation	

Employees "fringe" benefits expenses

These costs NOT in operating budget. NOT charged to service communities.

100% of these Benefit costs paid by Town of Houlton. (Employee Fringe Benefits)

2021 Houlton pays 50% of operating budget and 100% of the above costs.

Vehicle Insurances 100% paid by Houlton

Debt Service paid 50% by Town of Houlton/ 50% Debt service shared by service communities

TOWN OF LUDLOW SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

MAY 12, 2021 AT 6:00, OUTSIDE, SOCIALLY DISTANCED
AND WITH MASKS SAEMS AMBULANCE SERVICE QUESTION

Do you favor as a voter of the Town of Ludlow joining the newly created Southern Aroostook Emergency Medical Service? Yes or No

- Houlton Ambulance Service sent bills the first week of January, 2021 to the neighboring towns with rates going from \$16.47 per person to \$74.00 per person.
- None of the neighboring towns had a say in this increase.
- Houlton purchased four new ambulances and seems to be billing the other towns for this: Contracts total increased from \$117,810 to \$517,712.
- Houlton's total expense was \$1,262,614 minus income of \$864,945 with a balance of \$397,935. \$399,302 was billed out to the other towns.
- Houlton does not bill its residents but if it did bill the other neighboring towns and its residents, the cost per person would be \$30.00.
- SAEMS budget involves setting up a new service and that involves acquiring a building, training full time coverage, and purchasing the ambulances and equipment needed.
- Total SAEMS cost are estimated to be \$847,258.
- Total SAEMS income for 911 calls is estimated to be between 270 thousand dollars to 328 thousand dollars.
- Per capita would be between \$82.47 and \$74.18.
- By joining SAEMS, each town has a voice at the table and a say in the future of its ambulance service.

It is expected that over time the SAEMS should pay for itself. Please attend this important meeting and vote your choice. SAEMS needs the names of the member towns on the legislation going before the Maine Legislature by June 1, 2021 and this service would be in place by December 31, 2021.

From the Selectmen of the Town of Ludlow, Daniel Hiebert, Theron Bickford, Shonna Davis, Roxanne Bruce and Anthony Long

SATURDAY/SUNDAY, May 29-30, 2021
Bangor Daily News

Ambulance coverage at crisis point in County

Towns try to fill gap with new services

BY HANNAH CATLIN
ST. JOHN VALLEY TIMES

MADAWASKA — Aroostook County has an ambulance problem. Costs for equipment and training are higher than ever, insurance reimbursement rates are lower than they were in the 1990s and nobody can fully staff their roster of paramedics.

The state's authority on emergency medical services, Maine EMS Board, is convening a working group this fall to discuss the future of ambulance services. Meanwhile, in The County, a few departments have

taken matters into their own hands in a move that some officials say is untenable given the financial crisis the industry is experiencing.

In the mire of the rural ambulance economy — high costs, diffuse population, low staffing and inconsistent reimbursements — three new ambulance departments have sprouted in Aroostook County in the past year. Two are now fully functional: Fort Fairfield Fire-Rescue ambulance service and Central Aroostook Ambulance Service, based in Blaine. The

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Services

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third, Southern Aroostook Ambulance Service, awaits legislative approval.

The trend comes amid a wave of closures of ambulance departments across the rural U.S., where many struggle to maintain access to essential emergency medical care.

The new services aim to fill gaps in coverage and combat rising fees from larger departments. Established services raising rates and smaller towns forming their own departments are two of the areas the EMS Board hopes to tackle in its fall meetings — two wholly different approaches to the same crisis.

The first two of Aroostook's new ambulance services sprung up in 2020 in the fallout of Northern Light Medical Transport (formerly Crown Ambulance) canceling 911 services the year prior. Lee Farley, manager of the Central Aroostook Ambulance Service and one of its two full-time paramedics, said that having worked for Crown for several years, he knew going into his new role that running an ambulance service is no money-making business.

"It's a big gamble," Farley said. "If you don't have the call volume there to offset your operational costs, you have to rely on the taxpayers."

But the alternative is to rely on other departments, which in rural, diffusely populated places like Aroostook County can mean long wait times and unreliable coverage from towns 30 or more miles away. In the end, it wasn't a choice.

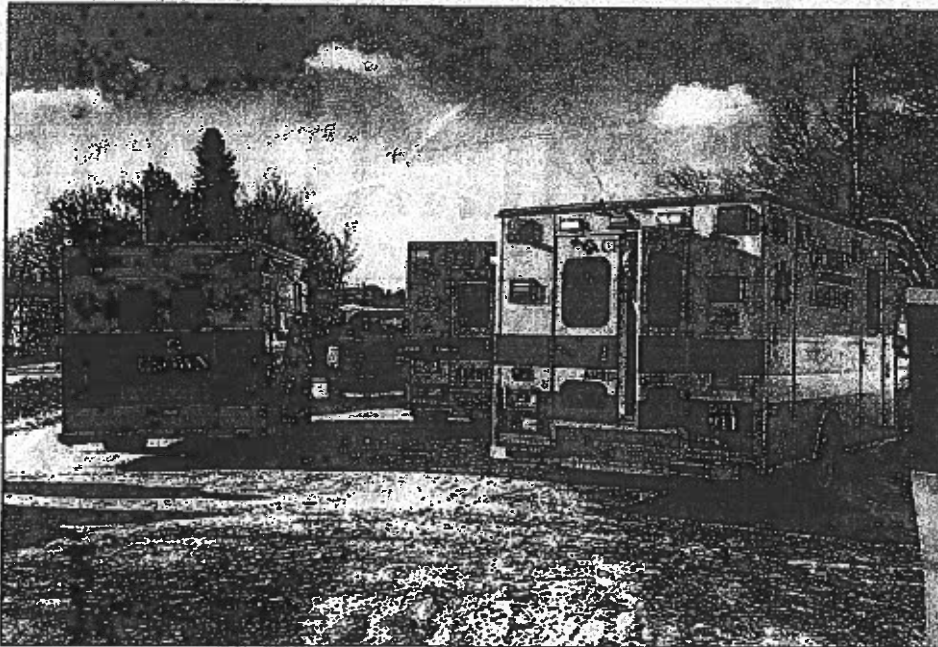
Facing an impending gap in care, Blaine, Mars Hill and Bridgewater voted to form Central Aroostook Ambulance Service. Farley said that so far, the department has done okay, moving from just about 15 calls a month at the beginning to closer to one call a day. But it will be years before it can afford to add more full-time staff or a new ambulance.

Aroostook's newest potential department, Southern Aroostook Ambulance Service, is forming around a collective of about a dozen towns outraged at an unexpected 400 percent fee hike from Houlton Ambulance Department, which has been covering the towns — in some cases for decades. All but two of the towns have committed to the consortium, and the organizers await a vote of approval from the Legislature.

Hodgdon town manager Jim Griffin maintains that based on advice he has received from industry veterans, the new Southern Aroostook department will become a moneymaker for participating towns in time. He said he is well aware of the risks and the high costs of starting a new department — buying ambulances and hiring paramedics, for example — but said it was worth it if it meant the taxpayers would have some over the ambulance costs in a few years.

Maine EMS director Sam Hurley said that he can't imagine

"Our concern is nationally the estimates are that it takes about 1,500 to 1,800 calls annually to support a single full-time staffed ambulance," he said. "[If towns have less than that], that presents a large gap that needs to be cov-



MAINE STATE POLICE

Ambulances from Houlton, Presque Isle and Crown Ambulance sit at the scene of a collision of two passenger vans on Route 1 in Bridgewater in April 2019.

ered somehow — needs to be paid for somehow.”

Houlton ambulance and fire chief Milton Cone said that of his department's almost 2,000 calls annually, roughly 30 percent came from outside Houlton and Houlton Regional Hospital in each of the past three years — from the potential Southern Aroostook Ambulance Service towns. That's about 600 calls.

Caribou's fire and ambulance chief Scott Susi leads one of the larger departments in The County, but he said no matter how many calls his ambulances respond to annually, it is nearly impossible to profit due to low insurance reimbursements. The rates haven't kept up with the rising medical and equipment expenses, he said.

“I'm worried that you have all these companies starting up — and kudos to the town they're trying to solve a problem — but realistically somebody has

to pay for the services,” Susi said. “It's not going to be done through reimbursements so it's going to have to be paid through the taxpayers. That's the cold hard truth.”

So far in The County, taxpayers have largely

been discontent with the rising costs of keeping an ambulance. Houlton wasn't the only town to raise its rates. In 2020, Caribou faced similar backlash when it raised its ambulance fees.

One option the state

might consider is regionalized, county-wide services, Hurley said. In his native North Carolina, some ambulance departments in rural areas operate at this level, and Hurley said the system helps relieve the burden on taxpayers.

In Aroostook, murmurs of a regional solution are spreading among some town managers and ambulance department heads too. Both Farley and Griffin back the idea.

Susi said that he believes the only real solution is for insurance providers to pay up and for the state to agree to spend more on ambulances in general.

“It's hard for me to talk about money because my heart believes we're providing a service for the community, that's our function,” Susi said. “On the other side of it, the business side of it, we have to make it sustainable so we can continue to do this for our community and surrounding communities.”