

Memo

To: Berlin City Council
From: Jim Wheeler, City Manager
Date: 2/18/2019
Re: City Manager's Report

1. BIDPA has chosen Camoin Associates of Saratoga Springs, NY to be their Economic Development and Marketing Strategy consultant in response to BIDPA's RFP for these services. As soon as a contract is formalized, Camoin expects to begin their work.
2. Jarad Vartanian and Bob Vachon of Vachon and Clukay will be at the February 25, 2019 Work Session to present the FY18 audit.
3. Ancestry (Library edition) is now available for patrons of the Berlin Library to do genealogy. This program is not accessible remotely; however EBSCO, and Heritage Quest can be accessed from home computers. Login information can be obtained from the Library.
4. At their meeting of February 7th, 2019, the Governor and Council re-appointed Mayor Grenier to the Assessing Standards Board. I will participate regularly as the Mayor's designee.
5. On Friday, March 1st, 2019 the Berlin Police Department will begin using an Automated Attendant system on the PD's phone system. The Department purchased a new phone system in July 2018 to replace their outdated and failing system. The new system allows for better call quality and system dependability. In addition, the Automated Attendant will allow for quicker and more streamlined call handling.

Beginning at 8:00am on 3/1, upon calling the Berlin Police Department's primary line (603-752-3131), callers will receive an automated message instructing them to dial 0 if it is an emergency or they need to speak with the dispatcher. There will be other options for the prosecutor, records, administration, a dial by name directory, and an anonymous tip line. If a caller is unable to or doesn't choose one to dial, it will default to the dispatcher. The PD assures that emergency calls will continue to be answered in a timely manner.

6. Berlin Emergency Medical Services (BEMS) submitted their annual report which is attached for your review.
7. The Public Works Activity Report is attached.
8. PD Statistics are attached.



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Berlin EMS Annual Report 2018

- 1. Call Stats**
- 2. Personnel**
- 3. Facilities**
- 4. Vehicles**
- 5. Communications**
- 6. Equipment and Supplies**
- 7. Financial**
- 8. Projections**
- 9. Other Business**

1. Call Statistics:

	2018	2017	2016
Total callouts:	1787	1771	1721
No transports:	370	365	385
Routine:	203	182	201
Emergency:	1214	1224	1135
Calls with transport:	1417	1406	1336

The calendar year of 2018 saw a relative stability in the number of callouts that the service responded to.

The surrounding communities of Gorham and Milan are still having difficulties staffing their ambulances, and requiring occasional assistance from our service doing this. It is worth noting that said challenges are not unique to this area. The State of New Hampshire has had an overall decline of EMS providers, and this affects rural services disproportionately to the heavier populated areas.

Although at times, it has seemed as though our transfer and callout load was getting heavier, the calls in this industry come in clusters, and there is no real way to plan for it. We continue to monitor the situation.

2. Personnel:

The year 2018 was a challenging one for Berlin EMS, at the end of 2017 we had a significant departure of several of our personnel. There were a variety of reasons for this, many related to instability of the field, with two of our people leaving ambulance work for further pursuit of medical careers, and some others, noting discussion and rumor of an uncertain future of the company, departed for other EMS agencies.

This led to a period of time in which the remaining crew was severely overused, with several of us having to cover far more shifts than we are used to, occasionally five to six days straight either on the city truck or the transfer truck. It was rough, but, we did get through it, and were able to recruit enough individuals to be up to a full staff.

Two of the EMTs hired have gone to their Advanced EMT classes, one has passed and is a licensed EMTA, the second is pending testing. Berlin EMS sponsored both.

One of our EMTA's hired has started Paramedic school, with some financial support, and an employment commitment agreement from the company.

The company has sponsored several students, at company expense, to take their initial EMT class, as well as providing our instructor and personnel support to said class, currently finishing at the Berlin Fire Department. One of our independent students has already tested and passed, the students at the class going on at the Fire Department are nearing their testing phase, and we are optimistic.

We lost one provider to a wrist injury in June, she has been out on disability since, with limited options for very light duty.

We have hired a young woman to assist us with shredding for an hour per week, she is disabled, and has an assistant with her.

Although recruiting was difficult, and finding people to work on a service which is currently under study as to whether it will exist in a year, is a tough sell, the very strong probability that whatever agency is providing EMS at this time next year will almost certainly give consideration to current Berlin EMS employees as part of said transition is a probability that our new hires have bet on.

3. Facilities:

During the year, the company remodeled the back bunk room, re dry walled the room, build a new bed, and added shelving, as well as some smaller painting projects.

In December, we had to replace our hot water heater, the new heater is larger than our previous, so we have been in contact with a contractor to expand our closet space in the front office to accommodate the new unit, they will also be replacing the flooring in the front office and hallway area. This project should be underway shortly.

Our overhead garage doors are nearing the end of their life cycle. Estimates to replace them are currently at about \$6000.00. This project will happen as surplus funds become available, but it is not a priority.

Our phone system continues to serve our needs.

Our security camera system continues to serve our needs, and has been of limited assistance to the Police Department on a couple of occasions to assist with their investigations on East Mason Street.

4. Vehicles:

Delivery of our long awaited four wheel drive unit from Global Emergency vehicles happened in 2018, and we are at a full fleet. Though there were some challenges with implementing its use, the vehicle is currently performing to expectations.

Our next vehicle scheduled for replacement is our van unit, but it is currently performing fine, with zero significant mechanical issues. This will be the easiest and cheapest ambulance to replace, as a standard stock van will fit into the building with no modifications needed.

Replacement of our box transfer truck is also on the horizon. This unit will be more expensive to replace as it will need a custom design to fit into the building. Fortunately, it has had no mechanical issues.

The fleet is currently maintained privately by Mr. Auto, a Berlin based vehicle garage. The company has an excellent relationship with that organization, and trusts their judgement of what repairs are needed and warranted, as well as when we should begin to look at replacement.

5. Communications:

Our current communications equipment is sufficient for our needs. We continue to cycle our portable radios to backup use as we purchase new models. It is worth noting that the vehicle radio units are nearing the end of their life cycle with service being discontinued by the company which manufactured them. It is anticipated that all three vehicle units, as well as the station radios will need to be replaced in the near future. We are awaiting an estimate on these costs, but, as it stands at the time of the writing of this report, our needs are met.

Berlin EMS is fortunate to have the working relationship we have with the Police and Fire departments, and we look forward to continuing this relationship in the coming year.

MARS/AMB continues to provide our billing services, supplying us with laptop computers, which we have been able to utilize for other purposes as well, updating maps, keeping times, and having access to downloaded protocols have been useful to the emergency crews. Although there have been some challenges regarding some specific billing issues, MARS/AMB has shown sufficient progress in the last two months that we are confident they meet our needs and expectations. This billing company has been adept at meeting the needs of a service of our size. Rarely, if ever, do they not do the needed follow up with insurance companies resulting in a loss of payable revenue.

6. Equipment and Supplies:

Berlin EMS has been compiling a list of equipment that is nearing the end of its life cycle. We are continuing to operate with items that completely meet professional standards, but, for a few reasons, we are hesitant to purchase any large ticket items until the future of the company is clearer.

Stretchers, for one, are moving in the direction of power lift cots, manufactured by a bunch of different companies. It is our belief that New Hampshire may follow the lead of Vermont, and require them to be carried on the trucks. In that event, we will need to purchase them, but, they do present their own challenges, particularly getting stretchers into and out of some of the challenging home designs in the areas, we will need to fundamentally change the way we handle patient care on approximately 30% of our calls, as the notion of carrying a stretcher up or down just a few stairs changes drastically when said stretcher weighs 80 more lbs. than it previously did.

Defibrillators are nearing the end of their life cycle, with newer models coming out. The design and functionality is still roughly the same, but the components are newer, less aged, and, theoretically, less prone to complications. Our current models are serviced, off site, professionally. They are passing all of their tests.

The vehicle and station radios addressed in the communications section ought to be mentioned here as well.

Looking ahead, should the city decide to integrate Fire and EMS, it would certainly be a more cost effective option to purchase these equipment pieces at the government/non profit price offered by the suppliers.

7. Financial:

A copy of our 2018 financial reports is included with this report, there are several matters of note.

Due to the way that our billing company reports our revenues to us, it can be difficult to determine the actual source of the income that we generate, particularly when it comes to Medicaid. Resulting, private fees collected will be, for the most part, also reporting Medicaid fees, often times, when looking at our online banking, the source of

the income can be difficult to distinguish, so, in our annual financial reports, Medicaid funds are almost non-existent, being absorbed and reported as private income, thus, the percentages are not entirely accurate. However, as there has been no real change in the pay schedule, just the companies that are processing, it would be correct to state that Medicaid still pays at a sum loss rate, meaning that doing a Medicaid run, be it long distance transfer, or in town call, while we will get paid, the funds collected will not cover the expense of doing the call.

Our overall receivables are down about \$20,000 from this time last year, but revenue holds steady. This is part of the regular ebb and flow expected when dealing with the irregular status of revenue received, and one of the reasons we report on a cash in-basis.

As the uncertainty of the company's future looms, related to the feasibility study of the Fire services assuming control of EMS operations, the company has spent the year focusing on re-structuring long term debt. We have entered into an agreement with one of our long term debt holders, who has agreed to alter his employment agreement with the focus on paying down the long term debt.

In previous years, we have been comfortable with carrying long term debts, as we did not detect any credible possibilities of the city going in a different direction than Berlin EMS for their ambulance needs. With this now looking like a very likely possibility, we have had to shift our focus so that the owner of this service will not have to declare personal bankruptcy in the event that the business has to close. It is not an ideal situation to be in, but, we do feel as though the possibility of it happening more than justifies this tactic.

Cindy Elbert insurance services continues to handle our professional insurance needs, we are pleased with their performance.

8. Projections:

It is currently a time of transition in emergency medical services. The trend seems to be moving toward increasing the quality of the providers, their education level, and the standards that they are held to, both to acquire and maintain their licensure. This trend also seems to be applied to the training of the next generation of EMS providers. Unfortunately, for all of the forward thinking momentum this movement seems to be getting, the part that lacks is the plan for how to increase the wages of said providers. The effect of this forward progress is that many people so inclined to look for careers in emergency services have begun looking toward a path that pays better and has less hassle with regards to acquiring and maintaining a license.

Many surrounding communities are having the same challenges, and they are handling it in different ways. It is our belief that this change, regardless of the outcome, will be expensive. The push to have better paid EMS providers, coupled with the unfunded mandates regarding the purchase of new equipment, mean that the nature of this company's relationship with the city will be changing.

We understand that there has been some movement toward looking at Berlin Fire as an eventual possible replacement, as well as the ever present possibility that another

company may show interest. As always, this company will cooperate in any way that we can to assist with the study and implementation of said plan. It is our firm belief that we are the correct fit for this community, but, should the city go in another direction, we are optimistic that such arrangements can be made that will be satisfactory for everyone involved.

Of late, there has been some discussion with the Fire Department about the possibility of merging departments, with the City, in effect, assuming complete control of the company, assets, and some of the interested personnel. The company is viewing this as an opportunity to explore the possibility. Our intention is to cooperate fully with the development of said plan. This is, in the opinion of the owner, a good chance for the city to avoid the challenges which come with building a new service from the ground up, challenges which can be both time consuming and prohibitively expensive. We remain committed to assisting the City, and the various departments in any way that we can.

9. Other Business:

Berlin Emergency Medical Services continues to do what we can to be a part of this community, covering non-profit events at no cost, and doing everything that we can to keep costs as low as possible when covering events that promote Berlin and help it to grow. Our involvement in the community is important to us, and we are proud to be a part of it.

Berlin Police Department
February 2019 Commissioner's Meeting
- December 2018 Activity Report - YEAR END REPORT

	December 2018	Year To Date 1/1 -12/31/2017	Year To Date 1/1 - 12/31/2018	Difference %
Total Calls for Service	1588	23094	21453	-7.11%
Milan Calls for Service	115	1034	1081	4.55%
Total Arrests	78	722	869	20.36%
Protective Custody Arrests	10	58	99	70.69%
Felonies	14	184	209	13.59%
Misdemeanors	68	921	825	-10.42%
Thefts	13	261	221	-15.33%
Burglaries	0	50	23	-54.00%
Vandalism/Criminal Mischief	4	189	137	-27.51%
Criminal Threatening	4	100	118	18.00%
Sexual Assaults	3	52	35	-32.69%
Assaults	7	114	88	-22.81%
Domestic Violence Incidents	13	239	246	2.93%
Verbal Arguments	3	77	76	-1.30%
Restraining/Stalking Orders	5	86	103	19.77%
Drug Complaints	18	230	223	-3.04%
Suspected Overdose	7	31	22	-29.03%
Motor Vehicle Stops	156	3193	2741	-14.16%
Motor Vehicle Violations	22	436	400	-8.26%
Motor Vehicle Warnings	135	1956	2132	9.00%
OHRV Complaints	1	101	73	-27.72%
OHRV Stops	1	158	64	-59.49%
OHRV Accidents	0	26	24	-7.69%
DWI Violations	3	41	46	12.20%
Accidents	21	213	218	2.35%
Accidents Within an Intersection	8	45	64	42.22%
Parking Tickets	47	364	350	-3.85%
Dog Complaints	13	413	400	-3.15%
Animal Complaints (other)	18	220	282	28.18%
Assists to other Berlin Departments	24	344	340	-1.16%
Assist to Berlin Ambulance	78	922	914	-0.87%
Assists to Gorham PD	8	72	64	-11.11%
Assists from Gorham PD	4	52	63	21.15%
Juvenile Incidents	12	203	143	-29.56%
Juvenile Arrests	0	59	25	-57.63%
Officers issued 47 parking ticket for the following reason:				
Away From Curb	2			
Winter Parking Ban - 1st Offense	38			
Winter Parking Ban - 2nd Offense	7			

2019 Activity Report

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City Owned Property Service Requests												
City Hall	64	53	51	4	4							
Recreation Dept.	18	20	20	1	1							
Library	9	9	5	0	0							
Fire Dept.	7	9	7	0	0							
Schools	7	8	5	0	0							
Parks/Fields/Other City owned	68	76	70	0	0							
CURRENT OPEN WORK ORDERS					188							