

# Memo

**To:** Berlin City Council  
**From:** Jim Wheeler, City Manager  
**Date:** 03-07-2016  
**Re:** City Manager's Report

1. BEMS provided us with their Annual Report for Year Ending 2015. During 2015, the trend of increased call volume continued. Chris and Jonathan Dubey have been co-owners of the business for the past ten years and in 2015, Jonathan decided to resign his position and transfer his holdings in the company. Chris has provided the draft terms of a contract renewal which will be brought to the Council in the near future.

BEMS continued to offer low or no cost services to several community activities including the ATV Festival, Downtown Clean-up, Riverfire, Berlin Gladiators, the Farmer's Market and BHS parades including Homecoming. The full report from BEMS is attached.

2. With the assistance of Kelly Croteau and Jennifer Gagne (Make-A-Wish representatives) and many other volunteers the Berlin Fire Department and Northern NH Corrections held a Make-A-Wish Benefit Hockey Game on Saturday, March 5 at the Notre Dame Arena. NH Corrections won 5/4 however the real winners will be the NH children who have their wish granted by the Foundation. The event raised \$5,620.00. Seniors Julia Grey, Mathew Morin, and Nathan Trull raised \$2,400 on their own. There were approximately 500 in attendance along with 8 Make-A-Wish children and their families. Thank you BFD and NH Corrections for participating in this worthwhile event.
3. Bids for the reconstruction of Hutchins Street will be received by the City until 2:00 p.m. local time on March 22, 2016. There was a mandatory pre-bid meeting on Friday March 4<sup>th</sup>. A total of 9 general contractors were represented. This is a sign that there should be some good competition for the project.
4. Rte. 16 bid packages have been prepared and will be advertised on Tuesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. A pre-bid meeting is scheduled for March 17<sup>th</sup> and the bid opening is scheduled for April 14<sup>th</sup>.
5. An application for an expedited NHDES Wetlands Permit was submitted by HEB Engineers on February 22nd for Route 16. The Wetlands Permit is for impacted wetlands where the turning radius of the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge will be improved. A copy of the permit request is available for review.

6. 56 Iceland Street is out for bids which are due March 10th. The property has a minimum bid of \$5,000 as requested by the Council.
7. In addition to the Neighborhood Stabilization Grant work Linda White will be tying up some loose ends on a few housing issues including the training of a new housing coordinator when one is brought on board.
8. The Police Department's statistics for January 2016 are attached.
9. A Public Works Department Report is attached.
10. House Bill 1198, a bill that prescribes a method for telephone pole valuations, will go before the full House on Wednesday March, 9<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup> the House Ways and Means Committee voted 16-5 to recommend a proposal drafted by Fairpoint Communications. This action opposes a recommendation that was made by the Assessing Standards Board. Efforts are underway to encourage the voting down the bill at the House or to adopt an amendment that follows the recommendation of the Assessing Standards Board.

The House Judiciary Committee voted to recommend killing HB 1687 and 1688 which would have increased municipal liability in negligence cases.

The House Finance Committee has recommended that HB 1698, Medicaid Expansion bill, as Ought to Pass with amendment. This bill will extend the NH Health Protection Program for two years. This program has shown to save municipal welfare programs money.

Last Tuesday the House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee voted to recommend that SB 380 Ought to Pass. This bill establishes a drinking water and groundwater trust fund using the approximately \$300 million in proceeds from the State's lawsuit with Exxon over MTBE groundwater contamination.



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## **Berlin EMS Annual Report 2015**

- 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:**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
Total callouts:	1748	1708	1506
No transports:	335	279	306
Routine:	232	233	162
Emergency:	1181	1196	1038
Calls with transport:	1413	1429	1200

During the calendar year 2014, the trend of a decreasing call volume, that had been continuing for several years, reversed, showing a significant increase for calls for

service, responded to by Berlin EMS. While it is certain that the opening of the federal prison, as well as the population of the Cornerstone apartment buildings helped to make the increase happen, the actual volume is, in the opinion of Berlin EMS management, simply an example of the wild unpredictability of attempting to project when and how often a population will need emergency services. During 2015, the trend of increased call volume continued, but the most notable increase has been in our 'no transport' calls. This is relevant as they generate no income.

Our mutual aid agreement with the surrounding communities has not changed significantly in the year 2015. Berlin EMS responded to 8 calls for assistance from Gorham, and 26 from Milan. Although Milan ambulance has made some progress with regards to their staffing, the community continues to rely on Berlin EMS for the majority of their ambulance needs. At one point there was some discussion of a formalization of our arrangement, but the outcome of said discussion was that Milan's ambulance service decided to 'try harder'. There have also been some discussions from the communities of Randolph and Shelburne, NH, who have expressed an interest in using Berlin EMS for their ambulance needs. As the first priority of the company is the needs of the community of Berlin, we will not be making any arrangements with any other community without the city council's blessing, to include tangible benefit for the city.

## **2. Personnel:**

2015 was a transitional year for Berlin EMS. For the past ten years, Chris and Jonathan Dubey have been co-owners of the company. Due to health considerations, Jonathan elected to resign his position, and holdings. In order to legally facilitate the transition, the firm Sulloway and Hollis was hired. After several months of data collecting and various required studies, the transition was legally completed in a manner that is satisfactory to all involved parties.

Unfortunately, Jonathan's sudden loss left Berlin EMS without its most widely available Paramedic. During the year of 2015, Berlin EMS ceased having a Paramedic on duty every calendar day for the first time in several years. Although efforts have been made to recruit a licensed Paramedic to replace Jonathan, there have been complications.

Our requirements for a replacement include call time requirements, which can be difficult to fill, as the candidate must relocate to a physical address in the area. Several potential candidates that we have talked to have expressed concern about the survivability of the company past the end of our current contract.

Dealing with an uncertain future and various rumors in emergency services has been a fact of life in this business which management has been aware of for the entirety of our existence. Generally, we handle these situations by ignoring them and focus on our own duties and responsibilities.

Berlin EMS will continue to make efforts to replace the position and return to having a Paramedic on duty every day.

### **3. Facilities:**

During the year. Part of the company's transition process involved the shifting of many responsibilities, including the upkeep of the building. Outside contractors were hired to add more heat efficient windows, and improve the conditions of the bay area. The building received new signage and a fresh coat of paint. When possible, as with the painting, members of Berlin EMS supplied most of the labor.

During the autumn, The company became aware of a sewage problem, which requires attention soon. Although our drainage and waste elimination has been repaired, we were made aware of an impending challenge, in the form of a crack in our main sewer pipe. Contractors have been contacted, and are in the process of providing an estimate for repairs. This will be scheduled for Spring/Summer 2016. Although we are waiting for repair estimates from a few contractors, the unknown nature of this expense means that the company is preparing for a large expense. We hope to be wrong, but will remain prepared regardless.

It is anticipated that, in the near future, the telecommunications company, Avaya will be updating our telephone system. This is anticipated to take place before the summer.

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.

### **4. Vehicles:**

The company maintained a fleet of three ambulances during the calendar year. The fleet manager of Berlin EMS has reported that it is possible that the company may not need to replace a vehicle in the calendar year.

We will continue to responsibly maintain our fleet, and keep the city apprised as to any noteworthy issues. The cost to replace a unit will be 85k, 110k, or 126k depending on which of the trucks is determined to be needing replacement when the time comes. Said figures are current as of the writing of this report.

In addition to the ambulances that Berlin operates, the company was also able to financially assist the Berlin Fire Department, at their request, in the purchase of an off road rescue vehicle. It is our opinion that this vehicle will become very useful in any remote rescues we may have, which are going to become more frequent with the expansion of ATV use in the city.

### **5. Communications:**

Our current communications equipment is sufficient for our needs. Last year, the company purchased two new portable radios, and anticipates purchasing two more in the next year. The oldest, most damaged radios are rotated to backup use.

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.

The switch over in our telecommunications system, mentioned in the Facilities section is also of note regarding communications.

During the year, Berlin EMS changed billing companies, going with M.A.R.S. billing. This change has resulted in laptop computers being used for our documentation needs, and our medical records being automatically transmitted to the State department of EMS. As the change happened in November, it is too early for a full assessment of the updated capabilities, but our initial response is overwhelmingly positive. For a lesser fee, our billing needs are being handled more efficiently, and our overall reporting has improved.

## **6. Equipment and Supplies:**

The community of Gorham received a grant for some additional bariatric equipment and training. This addresses an issue that has been a concern for us, as we have members of our community which, due to their size, present a unique challenge with regards to emergency services. Members of our staff have participated in said training in the new equipment, and we are of the understanding that said equipment and personnel from Gorham's service are now at our disposal when they are needed.

As we have had a longstanding policy of not charging Gorham when they needed to use our Paramedics, said new equipment and personnel are to be at our disposal with no associated charges.

Dealing with the challenges of providing aid to patients in excess of 450 lbs. is a concern industry wide, we are confident that we have the resources needed to meet this challenge.

The company is currently undergoing a cost benefit analysis of incorporating portable respirators onto our transfer trucks, as well as trying to stay ahead of industry trends.

Laptop computers now accompany our service members on every call. In addition to completion of their required paperwork, the laptops have the ability to store information involving irregular medical emergencies, which may not be part of the routine work the responders do. Carefully integrating this new technology into our standard practices is considered part of the Berlin EMS long term plan. We would like to utilize new technology as it is proven, but cautious to not jump into the next fad, as doing so can be financially irresponsible.

## **7. Financial:**

A copy of our 2015 financial report is included with this annual report; there are some issues of note. Our receivables are up slightly from last year, but our expenses were as well.

The company was unable, during 2015, to refund funds to the City, despite our increased revenues, partially due to a significant increase in the company's expenses.

Professional fees are considerably up. This is attributed to the business transition.

Insurance fees are up due to an increase to our worker's compensation rates. In the past, an increase of that amount *has responded to a corresponding refund from* whomever our carrier is. We are optimistic that this will happen again.

The medical supplies expenses also went up by \$10,000. This is attributed to rising costs in the overall expanse of supplies, particularly pharmaceuticals, and the addition of a new stretcher, which replaced a 20+ year old model.

The issue of health insurance for the crew has been temporarily solved by adding an 'insurance' stipend to the employees pay. This is calculated on an individual per employee basis. Although the result is a large increase in the outgoing payroll, that increase is counteracted by the loss to individual healthcare expense. As a small company, how our employees obtain and utilize working health insurance is an important consideration to us. Given the evolving landscape of how that is done in modern America, we are doing our best to provide what we feel is competitive and fair.

Revenue streams from Medicare continue to be unpredictable, as we have not begun to receive the compensations for this calendar year. Private health insurances continue to be wildly unpredictable.

Berlin EMS has requested a new contract to continue serving the City. The company is not seeking any additional contractual funds. The company, on the recommendation of MARS/AMB, our billing company, has requested that the council approve a rate increase. This has not happened for since 2009. The increase will bring Berlin EMS more in line with the national average ambulance bills, which is entirely based on average charges for the various services AMB is contracted with. Independent verification of these figures has been done by the company, and they are found to be accurate.

Our non-health insurance needs continue to be met by the Cindy Elbert Service, which we have been with for the past few years. This company has had a solid working relationship with Berlin EMS for several years. They have promptly and professionally handled all insurance related matters, while keeping costs reasonable.

## **8. Projections:**

Berlin EMS, Inc. has been Berlin's sole contracted provider of emergency medical services since 1981. Throughout the past 3+ decades, this company has consistently exceeded our contractual performance requirements. The contract, for example, calls for the company to maintain two ambulances, but we have always maintained three. On our own initiative, we have trained our personnel and upgraded our equipment to keep up with developments in the EMS field.

There has been some interest from some local communities regarding the possibility of Berlin EMS providing them with services. Any additional contract that Berlin EMS accepts will first obtain the approval of the berlin city council, and will be structured in such a way that whatever subsidy is gleaned from another community will offset the subsidy Berlin provides Berlin EMS.

The current structure of Berlin EMS has been around since 1980. Although there have been some changes made, we have remained true to the company's original vision. Our policy has been to provide the best available quality of service, personally overseeing operations, and keeping an eye on the overall well-being of the community. As in any

business, there are ups and downs, and it is important to prepare for the difficult times. We are proud to say that we have been relatively free of problems requiring the City's intervention, and our mutually beneficial relationship continues to thrive. Although we face many challenges in the coming years, we are confident that we can utilize what we have learned to this point to continue our well established record of service.

Call volume, though unpredictable, is a factor in our planning. We will move forward anticipating responding to more, but attempting to prepare for the financial shortcomings if the increase in volume proves to be an anomaly.

The federal government's handling of healthcare continues to be, at best, unpredictable. The downshifting of responsibilities to the State and local levels continues to be a situation that we keep an eye on, but our focus is on the local level.

The company has initiated a new profit sharing/retirement plan with Edward Jones financial in Berlin. This has been a popular decision among the crew, as lifetime care and planning for employees is an important part of the long term planning of the ownership of Berlin EMS

We recognize the need for the City to exercise due diligence in dealing with contractors such as ourselves. During this year, there will probably be discussions as to how to best meet the EMS needs of our community. Berlin EMS will, as always, be more than happy to participate in said discussions, please consider our expertise available.

## **9. Other Business:**

The Berlin EMS model of providing not only Ambulance service to the City, but actively participating in its development continues. This year, Berlin EMS was able to offer low or no cost services to several community activities, including, but not limited to: The ATV Festival, Downtown Cleanup Day, Riverfire, The Feast of St. Anne, The Berlin Gladiators, The Farmer's Market, High School related parades including homecoming, and a variety of other, smaller projects. In short, we like it here, and want to support anything positive that any group wants to do in our community to make it better. Volunteering our services when we can is, in our view, part of the benefit our city receives for contracting with us.



Berlin Police Department  
March 2016 Commissioner's Meeting  
**- January 2016 Activity Report -**

	January 2016	Year To Date 2015	Year to Date 2016	Difference %
<b>Total Calls for Service</b>	1517	1385	1517	9.53%
<b>Milan Calls for Service</b>	41	63	41	-34.92%
<b>Total Arrests</b>	51	62	51	-17.74%
<b>Protective Custody Arrests</b>	6	8	6	-25.00%
<b>Felonies</b>	26	17	26	52.94%
<b>Misdemeanors</b>	70	73	70	-4.11%
<b>Thefts</b>	20	19	20	5.26%
<b>Burglaries</b>	15	2	15	650.00%
<b>Vandalism/Criminal Mischief</b>	13	10	13	30.00%
<b>Criminal Threatening</b>	24	7	24	242.86%
<b>Sexual Assaults</b>	6	5	6	20.00%
<b>Assaults</b>	8	7	8	14.29%
<b>Domestic Violence Incidents</b>	21	21	21	0.00%
<b>Verbal Arguments</b>	7	3	7	133.33%
<b>Restraining/Stalking Orders</b>	10	7	10	42.86%
<b>Motor Vehicle Stops</b>	139	158	139	-12.03%
<b>Motor Vehicle Violations</b>	13	8	13	62.50%
<b>Motor Vehicle Warnings</b>	95	128	95	-25.78%
<b>DWI Violations</b>	2	0	2	200.00%
<b>Accidents</b>	12	18	12	-33.33%
<b>Accidents Within an Intersection</b>	5	10	5	-50.00%
<b>Parking Tickets</b>	50	28	50	78.57%
<b>Dog Complaints</b>	30	12	30	150.00%
<b>Animal Complaints (other)</b>	9	5	9	80.00%
<b>Assists to other Berlin Departments</b>	41	42	41	-2.38%
<b>Assist to Berlin Ambulance</b>	82	105	82	-21.90%
<b>Assists to Gorham PD</b>	6	10	6	-40.00%
<b>Assists from Gorham PD</b>	3	4	3	-25.00%
<b>Juvenile Incidents</b>	7	8	7	-12.50%
<b>Juvenile Arrests</b>	2	5	2	-60.00%
<b>Officers issued 73 parking ticket for the following reasons:</b>				
Winter Parking - 1st Offense	34			
Winter Parking - 2nd Offense	10			
Winter Parking - 3rd Offense	3			
Against Traffic	1			
Sidewalk	2			

**City of Berlin Public Works Department  
February 2016 Activity Report**

	<b>February 2016</b>	<b>Year to Date 2016</b>	<b>Year 2015</b>
Total Service Requests	69	122	762
Administrative Service Requests	7	16	15
Cemetery burials	3	3	24
Maintenance:Bldg/Furniture repair, Fences/Railings/Walls, Lawns/Trees, Signs	13	21	153
Parks and Grounds	7	7	48
Refuse/Recycle/Yard Waste	5	15	58
Sanitary Sewer	6	9	76
Storm Drainage System	5	7	75
Streets and Highways: Repairs of curbs/sidewalks/streets, line painting, sweeping, sanding, sand barrels, paving and potholes	15	36	313

<b>City Owned Property Service Requests</b>			
City Hall	6	10	41
Recreation Dept.	0	0	4
Library	0	2	10
Fire Dept.	0	0	5
Schools	0	0	7
Bridges	0	0	2
Parks/Fields	3	4	23