Wappinger looks at ambulance guidelines
Non-contracted services would be prohibited from responding

By Michael Woyton
Poughkeepsie Journal

WAPPINGERS FALLS - The Town of Wappinger wants to make sure its residents get what they are paying for with ambulance service.

"Our residents are paying close to $400,000 a year for ambulance service," Supervisor Joseph Ruggiero said. "It demands an orderly system."

The town has drafted a law that will prevent ambulance services not contracted by the municipality from attending to patients unless they are dispatched through the county 911 system.

Contract signed in 2005

In 2005, the town signed a five-year, $395,000 contract with TransCare Hudson Valley to provide two ambulances and crews for advanced life support and one ambulance for basic life support.

The Brooklyn-based company serves communities in New York City, the Hudson Valley and Long Island.

The proposed legislation grew out of an incident when a town restaurant employee directly contacted an ambulance service for an injured party instead of dialing 911.

At the same time, 911 was called by another person, and an ambulance from TransCare was dispatched to the scene.

The TransCare ambulance arrived first, but the ambulance from Mobile Life Support Services that had been called directly disputed who was responsible for taking care of the patient.

Councilman William Beale, an emergency medical technician, said Mobile Life should have relayed the direct call to 911.

"When I receive calls on our seven-digit phone number, I immediately turn it over to the proper 911 center," he said.

Ruggiero said the proposed law will assure the patient receives the proper level of care and provide data about the call, including response times.

There also could be a financial consideration in using the town's ambulance, he said. Not everybody has insurance for ambulance service.

The town created an ambulance district and covers any shortfall after TransCare bills the patient's insurance.

"We want people to not have to make a decision to call an ambulance," Ruggiero said. "When our people go to sleep at night, they know that an ambulance will be there if they need it."

The board will continue discussing the law at future meetings.

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