LIBERTY - Sullivan County's only commercial service, Mobilemedic EMS, is taking over the county's largest volunteer ambulance service.

Mobilemedic CEO Albee Bockman said Wednesday his company will take over the Town of Liberty Volunteer Ambulance Corps on July 17. The Hurleyville-based company will assume coverage of Liberty under Mobilemedic's countywide license and the 41-year-old volunteer service will cease to be.

“Nothing is going to change,” Bockman said. “If anything it will improve with the addition of more ambulances and paramedic care. This merely combines services at no cost to the taxpayer.”

Mobilemedic will occupy the same the building on Mill Street and keep in service Liberty's three ambulances and will employ nine of Liberty's staff, including two paramedics.

Capt. Ian Cooperstein, Liberty's EMS administrator, will take a management position in Mobilemedic.

The deal has been in serious discussions for nine months but began informally nearly two years ago. Discussions involved the Attorney General's Office. Attorneys had to structure an arrangement where a commercial service could take over a nonprofit.

“The services will continue,” Cooperstein said. “It is just falling under a different flag.”

Bockman said his company will have to assume roughly $300,000 in capital debt and was required to employ Liberty's staff
who qualified.

Liberty handled roughly 2,200 to 2,500 calls annually in Liberty – the second busiest after Mobilemedic's 12,000 calls - and was under increasing financial pressures.

Cooperstein said the costs of equipment and supplies are “enormous” and it cost roughly $170,000 to replace an ambulance. He also said the idea of a “volunteer ambulance service” isn't reality. Liberty was paying 90 percent of the staff.

Cooperstein said Liberty's service likely would have been able to continue but with diminished service.

The Medicaid reimbursements haven't changed in seven years, Medicare has decreased payments by 2 percent, and the state was no longer offering a sales tax exemption on fuel.

“We wouldn't have been able to go above and beyond,” Cooperstein said. “We still would have been able to cover our calls.”

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