Fire destroys ambulance, no injuries sustained

One of the Town of Coxsackie Ambulance Service's two rigs caught fire Thursday evening around 7:45 p.m. The ambulance was destroyed and there was damage to the ambulance bay itself, including fire damage to the garage door and the building's ceiling. The cause of the fire is not yet known. Photo by Melanie Lekocevic

By Melanie Lekocevic Columbia-Greene Media

COXSACKIE – Just moments after one of the Town of Coxsackie’s two ambulances returned from an emergency call Thursday evening it caught fire, destroying the vehicle and causing damage to the ambulance bay where it was housed.

The cause of the fire has not yet been determined. No injuries were reported.

EMTs had returned to the Town of Coxsackie Ambulance Service’s facility after responding to an emergency call. The EMTs parked the vehicle, then left the building for a few moments. When they returned, the ambulance was on fire.

Firefighters from the D.M. Hamilton firehouse next door responded immediately.

At the Village Building next door, the Republican Party was holding its caucus at the time the blaze broke out when a firefighter burst into the room, asking for Town Councilman Rick Hanse – who was nominated just minutes before to be the party’s candidate in the November elections – to come to the scene of the fire. Hanse is the Village Board’s liaison to the fire department and a member of the Coxsackie Fire Department’s fire police.
By that time, the front of the ambulance was completely ablaze. Firefighters rushed to put out the fire, which completely destroyed the front of the vehicle, but left the rear of the ambulance largely untouched.

The building itself sustained damage to the garage door – which appeared to have partially melted – and there was a small amount of damage to the building’s ceiling. As they fought the blaze firefighters also had to break down a door to gain entry to the ambulance bay.

The ambulance is owned by the town, while the building itself is owned by the village.

The Town Council has been grappling with the issue of ambulances for the past couple of months. Ambulance officials have told them that the town is in need of a new rig – one was recently declared surplus and sold because it had outlived its useful life and was costing taxpayers a lot of money in repairs.

With the fire, the town now faces a new challenge.

“We are down to one rig,” Hanse said. “Now we are really in a bind because we have only one working ambulance.”

The Town Council has agreed the town does need to purchase a new ambulance, but was looking for a way to pay for it. A new ambulance is expected to cost nearly $100,000.