

Hope-Jackson Fire Co.

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January 4th, 2023

Dear Budget Committee Members,

I am writing to provide some clarification to the SFREB proposal for increased funding to support a pay increase for the Towns EMS system.

Our system is staffed at and provides Advanced Life Support (ALS) service to the town utilizing Scituate Rescue 1 located in the North Scituate and Scituate Rescue 2 located in the Hope- Jackson station. Both departments utilize their members as well as EMTs from outside departments, hospitals and ambulance services to maintain operations. Our EMS system initially operated just 10 hours a day and as volume increased moved to 12 hours a day and then a rotating 24/12-hour configuration. After some response time concerns from residents and the town council related to calls for aid in the evening and overnight hours, we adjusted our staffing to where we are today. We operate both rescues 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. The system is supported by an engine response from each fire district. This move made a tremendous difference in our ability to service the residents in a timely manner and undoubtedly saved lives and reduced disability due to our ability to provide rapid interventions. The move also increased our revenue, simply because we were able to capture volume previously lost to mutual aid rescues coming into Scituate and increased our ability to provide mutual aid, allowing us to capture revenue from outside our town. As the system operates today it is efficient from an expense aspect, however it presents some extreme challenges from a staffing perspective. Our schedulers work diligently to fill shifts weekly and they do an outstanding job, however any last-minute openings, holidays or summertime weekends often cause interruptions in service. We expect that a better rate of pay will reduce cancellations and attract providers. In order to maintain this model, we must continue to remain competitive. We must attract qualified providers to support this system. Prior to the pandemic we would expect to collect approximately 448k against an operating budget of just over 481k. During the first two years of COVID we saw a significant decrease in revenue due to several factors and now post pandemic we are seeing a steady increase but still have not reached our pre-pandemic collection rates. Our operating budget has also increased significantly with the additional hours of coverage added to the system. It is a priority to improve collection rates via better reporting, more aggressive billing and organic growth. Even with improvements to the system, we most certainly will not capture enough revenue to offset the total cost associated with providing this level of service but should see enough to cover approximately 50-60% even with the salary increases. This rate increase is just another step to what I believe will be an annual increase until we reach a competitive rate of \$25-\$28 per/hr. for per-diem staff w/o benefits. I am always available to answer any questions or concerns regarding our system and proposed changes and I look forward to working with you to improve the system.

The Fire Chiefs that make up the SFREB and our staff will do whatever we can and work within our budgets to provide the highest level of service to our residents. Again, If I can provide any additional information to anyone on the Committee, please feel free to contact me anytime.

Respectfully,

John Robinson, Chief
Hope-Jackson Fire Company
Director, Scituate EMA