

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mark A. Wright, Supervisor
Dave Woods, Councilman
Joyce Cooper, Councilwoman
Tom Thatcher, Councilman
Heath Towne, Councilman
Matthew Fuller, Town Attorney
Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk

Others: Patty Cook, Renee Kennedy, Zack Stagg, Samantha Montville, Shaundra Yaw, Laura Wright, Susan Tubbs, Loretta Euber, Scott Cook, Marge Cross, Joe Bodette, Larry Sheild, Bob Dedrick, Erin Nadeau, John Bartlett, Corinna Woods and others. Paul Bishop and Jim Cassin online from Center for Government Research

Supervisor Wright opened the meeting with the Reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hearing

Formation of an Ambulance District subject to Permissive Referendum

Supervisor Wright explained that we are here to for public comment on the formation of an Ambulance District. We plan to have that district by January 1, 2025. We are on a tight schedule and we will open the public hearing now, but he has some additional comments.

Ticonderoga, like many communities in Essex County and the State of New York; is facing a critical EMS crisis. We cannot have the community continue on a path that we presently find ourselves in. Residents must have adequate and dependable emergency medical response. He considers life saving response as an essential and imperative need for the community. It is important, as a critical public safety such as Fire and Police Protection are. It is necessary for our continued economic growth and health and this Town Board made a decision to investigate establishing an Ambulance District. The Town did pass a resolution to investigate establishing an Ambulance District, we passed a resolution to contract with the Center for Government Research (CGR) to develop a Map, Plan Report. That report was completed and briefed to the Town Board at our August Town Board meeting. The MPR includes data such as the description of current services, associated expenditures and revenues, service area and demographics, proposed operating budget and a proposed cost with typical property. The MPR is on the Town website as is the CGR briefing that was given to the Town Board in August. Online tonight, is Paul Bishop and Jim Cassin from CGR, they can answer any technical questions associated with the construction of this MPR if you have them. Our original plan was to call for a referendum, which requires a minimum period of 90 days, given where we are on the timeline right now pursuing this route would not allow for an Ambulance District in 2025, we would be unable to fund a district until 2026, so he and the Town Board chose to pursue the route of issuing an Order for a Public Hearing pursuant to Town Law, Section 209-d which provides for a permissive referendum. He and members of the Town Board were elected to make decisions that are in the public interest and the Town's decision to move forward with a district formation, via this process is just such a case. Therefore, this Town Board will propose tonight to resolve to

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

form an Ambulance District in the manner in which he described. The MPR examines expenditures and revenues of that which would estimate the Town appropriations of approximately \$397,140.00. The predicted cost per thousand is 49 cents. In his opinion, this is a very reasonable cost to save a life. Public Comment is welcome at this time.

Susan Tubbs noted as far as the Ambulance district she does get it, it is necessary, we live in a region where we need medical care and it is not always easy to get that and it is important; but a few things crossed her mind and she would like to run them by tonight. With this being taxable on all the taxable properties within the Town, if somebody had to have a call for an ambulance service, does the insurance also get billed too, even if you are paying for it through your taxes?

Supervisor Wright agreed yes, it would be part of the billable revenue that whoever the contractor is, would bill for.

Mrs. Tubbs then asked what about outside of our region like Crown Point and Putnam who are not being taxed like our Town is going to be. How will they be billed because we will be paid through our taxes as well as insurance.

Supervisor Wright explained that this district will only cover the property in Ticonderoga.

Joe Bodette explained that he is on the Fire District board in Crown Point and we have a contract with Ticonderoga for services. We pay a fee each year and Putnam does as well.

Mrs. Tubbs thanked him for that information, what she is thinking is making it equal for everybody, no one is better than someone else. Who is going to monitor all of this, will there be an accountant or can somebody from the public come in and look at records?

Supervisor Wright explained that the Town Board becomes the district commissioners, whatever contract we have with the provider would list requirements such as how often they would brief the Town Board on expenses, what they have to provide to us in terms of their financial records, that would be determined. We might expect to see like quarterly reports, they might be required to come to Public Safety meetings and brief us on status and activities. All of those things will be covered in a contract. The contracted entity that will provide the service will be responsible for billing and getting revenue. The only thing the Town would do is look at their budget every year, look at their appropriations and what they are asking us for what the appropriation will be and we will have a discussion as to whether we agree to those charges or we don't agree to those charges.

Mrs. Tubbs stated that the tax rate does sound phenomenal for the services that will be provided.

Supervisor Wright continued that this is because we are taking all of the former exempt properties into consideration.

Mrs. Tubbs agreed, she looked at the roll today so she saw every parcel is already coded for it within the Town, except for Easement properties.

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Supervisor Wright explained that our total Town Property assessment value is somewhere around \$747 million, when you take in all the other exempt parcels that are applicable for this, we are around \$815 million, so that drives that cost per thousand to where we are at 49 cents.

Mrs. Tubbs asked if there is a company or applications that are being accepted, are these going to be full-time positions within this budget?

Supervisor Wright explained how this will work, we just contract for a service. So, the town will probably issue a request for proposals and anyone that is interested in providing that service to the Town for emergency medical services will provide us a proposal and we will evaluate those proposals and one we chose somebody, we are just asking for the service. How they set up their employee staff is up to them to provide that service and what they will do with that is totally within their operational responsibility, but we will be monitoring what they do, what they spend, what kind of service they are providing and things of that nature.

Mrs. Tubbs believes this sounds good, it sounds like a really good plan right now, we do not always get this information if we are just out and about. She would like to finish with just a little tid bit, in going through the final roll today there were two different codes. She knows they are both for emergency services. Most, 99% are codes as E1616, but what does the E1615 stand for in the roll?

Supervisor Wright is not familiar with those codes – you would want to speak with the Assessor regarding that.

Laura Wright would like to piggyback off from one of her questions, she has been fortunate enough where she hasn't had to call an ambulance in her adult life, so, she is not familiar with the billing process. She was assuming it is similar to a doctor's process where your insurance is billed and then whatever isn't covered by insurance is then billed to her. (Yes) Ok, that is how the ambulance service works. So, even though we are paying this 49 cents per thousand, it is really just a payment to have the service available and then whatever our insurance doesn't cover we are still responsible for that billing. Just wanted to throw that out into the atmosphere, because there are a lot of questions out there, where people think that it will stop at the billing point.

Supervisor Wright explained that the Town appropriation is paying that balance, that revenue from the contract entity that is not being brought in. They still have to make payroll, they still have to maintain equipment, they have to buy supplies; so, the appropriation from the Town is paying that difference, that balance.

Mrs. Wright continued, we will get a bill as an individual if our insurance does not cover the full cost of that EMS service, we will get a bill of the balance and we will be expected to pay that, even though we are paying for the district, this is separate from the actual....

Supervisor Wright agreed that would be between you and the contracted

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Mrs. Wright agreed yes from the contracted individual...

Bob Dedrick is here and is sure everyone knows where he stands, March 16 is a night that he does not remember at all; however, this ambulance squad saved his life – no if, and or but about that, he was dead. They came to his rescue, they performed, it was their professionalism that really brought him back. He wants that same chance for every single resident in Ticonderoga that he had. That this ambulance squad will be there. He knows that anytime we talk about an increase in taxes, he knows how difficult that is, he drives the Senior Bus and he sees these seniors paying in change at the end of the month, it is difficult for them. He has in his immediate family which would be his siblings and his siblings' children, we own 13 houses in Ticonderoga. There is not one of them that would not say to him or anybody in this Town, including this Town Board, that you shouldn't have this Ambulance Squad. This Ambulance Squad is absolutely critical to the resident of Ticonderoga, he doesn't have to tell you that. He is living proof, so, he applauds you for having the public hearing rather than the referendum and he thinks it is a tremendous move to make because they are such a professional group of individuals.

Supervisor Wright shared as screen from the presentation of the MPR, and explained the cost analysis, for example on a house for \$75,000.00 it would be \$37.00 additional cost for the district, at \$150,000 it would be \$74.00 additional, etc. it is simple multiplication. The Town collects that levy just like we do with the Fire Department. You will see that on your tax bill.

John Bartlett would like to follow up on the insurance, he thought he understood that the billings to insurance companies was considered soft billings and if the insurance company didn't pay then that would be the end of it.

Renee Kennedy explained, we do send our bills to the insurance company, the insurance company will deduct quite a bit off the bills making it less than what the charge was and we do soft bill and if there is a reason why there is a balance left over and a person cannot pay that amount we do have a hardship letter that they can fill out and they can make small payments for the amount that is owed.

Mr. Bartlett to further clarify, you aren't doing the follow up with the client for the difference...

Mrs. Kennedy stated that we have a billing company that does that.

Mr. Bartlett continued that this would not be from the insurance company then...

Mrs. Kennedy stated no.

Mr. Fuller would like the record to show that the entity bills the customer or the patient and then there is a hardship policy after. We are not going to have any discussion about hard or soft billing.

Supervisor Wright agreed and he can tell you the town is going to expect whoever is contracted to do their best to get that revenue.

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Patty Cook noted that NY State has just a regulation that some insurance companies used to send the checks to the patient; now that is not going to happen, it is going to go directly to the agency. That will help a little bit because there are sometimes that we don't see the check for the payment from the insurance company because people keep them. So, NY State has changed that regulation, so insurance companies are now sending it to the agency that will help.

Larry Shield explained that he was Chief in Schroon Lake for 15 years in charge of the Ambulance Squad and approximately 10 years ago we went to the same thing that we are doing here tonight and it was the best thing that ever happened to the ambulance squad. It has worked out very well, we have had no complaints in the Town from anybody on their taxes and in the billings. It is a must for every department now.

Supervisor Wright agreed and would like to point out that the County is not prepared to do this yet, the State is totally ignoring the whole crisis, we just can't wait any longer, we have to do something. He appreciates the comment and is glad it is so successful in your area.

Mrs. Wright stated that the thing she is most excited about with the district forming is again, we don't know who the contracted entity will be at this time, but the change for our community is it becomes a career opportunity for our kids and our adults, because, at this point it has been a mixture of volunteers and paid and you still had to work at the mill or you still had to pull a shift at Walmart or something, so, with this becoming an official district that doesn't have to worry about where their next dollar is coming from. It is more secure for a person to just leave their other employment and do this full-time, so, she thinks that again enhances what our community has to offer to our area. It is another additional employer per se'.

Supervisor Wright explained that when individuals and companies and corporations are looking to do activities, set up activities, move to Ticonderoga they need certain services. They need fire, police, hospital, grocery stores, good schools and certainly EMS is a service that they need. Without these services, nobody comes here, people eventually leave and go to where they can find those services, so, this is just another economic nail in the coffin to secure our economic growth and just the general health and welfare of the residents.

No further comment.

Public Hearing closed at 6:20 p.m.

Resolution #433-2024 brought by Dave Woods, seconded by Heath Towne providing for formation of ambulance district, subject to permissive referendum, pursuant to Town law Section 209-e. **All in Favor** Mark Wright – Aye, Dave Woods – Aye, Joyce Cooper – Aye, Tom Thatcher – Aye, Heath Towne – Aye. **Opposed** – none. **Carried.**

**TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF TICONDEORGA
COUNTY OF ESSEX, STATE OF NEW YORK**

Resolution Number 433 of 2024

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Adopted September 19, 2024

Introduced by Dave Woods
who moved its adoption.

Seconded by Heath Towne

**RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR FORMATION OF
AMBULANCE DISTRICT, SUBJECT TO PERMISSIVE REFERENDUM,
PURSUANT TO TOWN LAW §209-e**

WHEREAS, a map, plan and report for the formation of a proposed ambulance district was duly accepted for filing in the office of the Town Clerk on August 27, 2024; and

WHEREAS, on August 28, 2024, the Town Board of the Town of Ticonderoga, duly adopted an order by resolution calling for a public hearing on the formation of an ambulance district pursuant to Town Law §209-d; and

WHEREAS, copies of said order were duly published and posted according to law, and said Town Board did, at the time and place specified in said order, duly meet and consider such proposal and heard all person interested in the subject thereof, who appeared at such time and place, concerning the same; and

WHEREAS, the evidence offered at such time and place requires that the Town Board make the determinations hereinafter made pursuant to Town Law §209-e; and

WHEREAS, the action is not an action that would impact the environment or is otherwise required to be reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA); and

WHEREAS, the Town Board is prepared to render its findings pursuant to Town Law §209-e.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT:

RESOLVED, that the Town Board finds and determines as follows:

- (1) The notice of hearing was published and posted as required by law and is otherwise sufficient.
- (2) That all of the property and property owners, within the proposed

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

district are benefitted thereby.

(3) That all of the property and property owners benefitted are included within the proposed district.

(4) It is in the public interest to establish the proposed district as hereinafter described; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Town Board does hereby approve the appropriation for, and establishment of, an ambulance district as set forth in the Map, Plan and Report dated August 27, 2024, the boundaries of which shall be the geographic and territorial boundaries of the Town of Ticonderoga, located in Essex County, State of New York, as evidenced on the tax rolls of the Town of Ticonderoga, Essex, County, New York as of the date of this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that no improvements in said proposed district are required to be constructed or made; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution is subject to a permissive referendum in Section 209-e of the Town Law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Town Clerk be, and she hereby is, authorized and directed to post and publish the notice of permissive referendum and adoption of this resolution and, upon the expiration of 30 days from the date of this resolution; and be it further

RESOLVED, that if after the expiration of the time for filing a petition requesting that the matter be submitted to a referendum of the property owners of the proposed district or proposed extended district, no such petition has been properly completed and filed with the Town Clerk, she shall file a certificate stating such fact in the office of the Essex County clerk and the office of the department of audit and control at Albany, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, if such a petition was properly completed and filed and after the referendum held pursuant to this section, the Town Clerk shall prepare and file a certificate stating that a petition was filed and a referendum was held pursuant to the provisions of this section and certifying the result of the vote on the proposition submitted at such referendum in the office of the Essex County clerk and in the office of the department of audit and control at Albany, New York; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Minutes for a Ticonderoga Public Hearing regarding the Formation of an Ambulance District in the Town of Ticonderoga with a Special Town Board Meeting held on September 19, 2024, commencing at 6:00 p.m.

_____Mark A. Wright_____ VOTING ___AYE_____

_____Joyce Cooper_____ VOTING ___AYE_____

_____Dave Woods_____ VOTING ___ AYE_____

_____Tom Thatcher_____ VOTING ___AYE_____

_____Heath Towne_____ VOTING ___AYE_____

SEAL

Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk

Supervisor Wright explained that we will next wait the 30 days to see if a petition comes in of the sufficient number and quantity, which is 5% of the property owners or 100 of the property owners, whichever is less. If that were to occur then we would not be able to do the district this year, we just would not have the time. The Town Board is prepared to fund the current ambulance district to a certain dollar amount if that is the case; however, we are pretty hopeful that this will go through and in the 30 days we can move to a district. It has created some interesting challenges in the budget for 2025, but we will get through it. He will keep the residents informed over social media if he sees a petition come in and we will certainly let everyone know if we get to that point where we are free and clear at the 30 day mark or if we have a challenge ahead of us. Thanks to CGR for coming on tonight, we didn't know if we would need them to answer some of the questions, they did a great job on the Map, Plan and Report. They were pretty efficient and quick, which was what we needed as there wasn't much time. Thank you.

We will close the meeting at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Tonya M. Thompson, Town Clerk