

Statement from Philipstown Supervisor Richard Shea

Feb. 5, 2021

Much has been said in the last several weeks about the Town of Philipstown and the contract that we have presented to the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corp. I would like to clarify some of the misinformation that has been put in both print and on the web.

The first complete fallacy is that the Town is trying to cause the demise of the PVAC. This could not be any further from the truth. The Town fully supports the PVAC and wants it to succeed. What we are doing is the very thing that the public puts us in office to do; watch over tax dollars.

Each year the PVAC receives over \$350,000 dollars from Philipstown taxpayers, roughly a million dollars every three years. A lot of money by any standard. This money is used to pay full-time staff who are on call twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year. The funds are also used to purchase ambulances and equipment to perform the duties of an ambulance service. This money comes directly from Philipstown residents and is intended to benefit Philipstown residents.

When the Town Board discovered that the PVAC had extended its operations into two neighboring towns we were concerned. Why would Philipstown residents pay for ambulance service for Kent and Putnam Valley? This was not part of the Putnam County mutual aid agreement by which emergency service providers from one Town will go to another, in the event that the other community can't get out to the emergency. PVAC was going out as if every call in the two other Towns was a call to Philipstown. Philipstown taxpayers should not be funding ambulance service in other Towns. This arrangement was made with no consultation with the Philipstown Town Board.

Another point of concern is billing. In accordance with NYS General Municipal Law, a volunteer ambulance corp. can bill when it provides service, but that money must be received by the municipality, which in this case is the Town of Philipstown. The Town then passes on the funds to the ambulance corp. for use as they see fit. This is a control to make sure that funds are properly administered. It is the law by which we must abide.

There is also the issue of the disposition of expensive items that Philipstown taxpayers have paid for in the event the ambulance corp. ceases operations. The Town Board feels that in this situation, items like ambulances, which cost nearly two hundred thousand dollars, should become the property of the taxpayers who paid for them. If language is not included in the contract to that effect, the ambulances are sold and the taxpayers receive nothing.

There are other small items that pertain to smoking and maintaining a professional and courteous behavior while on duty that are part of a code of conduct that are being disputed by the PVAC members. I can't imagine anyone being allowed to smoke while driving an ambulance.

As we have most recently witnessed, the internet is often used to spread lies and confusion. This is currently happening on the Philipstown Locals group, in an attempt to block even the most basic oversight of taxpayer money and how it is used by the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corp.

On the other hand, The Garrison Volunteer Ambulance Corp. will be signing the exact same contract. After reviewing the document, making some good suggestions and having them put into the contract they were satisfied with the outcome. A constructive and adult way of doing business.

Stamping your feet on the ground and repeating no, no, no doesn't work for a child having a temper tantrum. It certainly isn't going to work for the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corp.