



**TOWN OF BOXFORD**  
**Office of the Town Administrator**  
**7A Spofford Road**  
**Boxford, MA 01921**

**DATE:** Friday, September 22, 2023  
**TO:** Select Board  
**FROM:** Matt Coogan, Town Administrator  
**RE: Emergency Response Advisory Committee**

At the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Select Board voted to establish a committee to study the Town's emergency response program and the feasibility of having in-town ambulance and transport. The Board also requested the Town Administrator draft a committee charge to consider at the September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. Included with this memo is a draft charge for an Emergency Response Advisory Committee (ERAC). It includes the makeup of the committee, lists the committee's tasks and goals, and sets expectations as far as timeline and deliverables based on preliminary research.

The draft ERAC charge recommends seven members, including the Town's public safety team: Police Chief Jim Riter, Fire Chief Brian Geiger, and Communications Director Warren Gould (who is also a Lieutenant in the Boxford Fire Department). Our public safety team will bring to the committee institutional and working knowledge with regards to emergency response, the ability to provide data and discuss current capabilities, and the ability to utilize their professional relationships to gather the necessary resources for the committee to review in their comprehensive analysis. In addition, there will be a representative from both the Finance Committee and the Select Board to both focus on process and the financial and operational impact of the committee's work. The last two members will be residents at-large, preferably those with professional experience in emergency response, ambulance transport, paramedic, etc.

The ERAC will be tasked with conducting a comprehensive analysis of the Town's current emergency response services, which includes an account of the public safety team's current capabilities with regards to patient care, response times, and budgetary constraints. This foundational data will be compared with the emergency response services of our neighboring communities, comparable communities in the region, and state and national standards. The ERAC will then develop recommendations, based on their analysis, to improve efficiencies in emergency response; more specifically, to develop strategies to reduce ambulance response times by creating in-town ambulance transport services. The goal of this effort will be for the ERAC to submit a plan, with anticipated costs, for the Select Board to review and to present to voters at a future Town Meeting. Vice Chair Margaret Chow-Menzer submitted a more detailed scope of work which I have included with this memo for the Board to discuss on Monday night. That scope could be sent to the committee as well.

Since the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup>, I have done some preliminary research and outreach to get a better understanding of what the Select Board should expect as far as the anticipated process and timeline to achieve the ERAC's tasks and goals, as outlined above. The Select Board should expect the process of analyzing, planning for, and implementing a successful transition to in-town ambulance service to be a

multi-year, phased project. The ERAC charge includes bi-annual written reports to the Select Board that coincide with Town Meeting cycle.

The Town of Topsfield took a multi-year, phased approach to transitioning to in-town ambulance transport. Twenty-four years ago, the Topsfield Fire Department had a similar setup as what Boxford has today: four career firefighters and the chief, a roster of call firefighters, and a contracted private ambulance service. In 1999, Topsfield acquired an ambulance to provide secondary service to the private contractor. Attempts were made to increase staffing in the years that followed, and in 2020 Topsfield transitioned to providing primary ambulance transport. Since then, Topsfield has doubled their career staff, required all firefighters be trained as paramedics, transitioned to 24-hour shift coverage, and now runs two ambulances with ALS service. It should be noted that Topsfield operates out of a single, centrally located fire station; the town is also half of the size of Boxford in land area and has half as many road miles as Boxford.

Plaistow, NH is in the process of ending its relationship with the same private ambulance provider the Town uses in West Boxford, Pridestar Trinity EMS, and will begin providing in-town municipal ambulance service. This decision was reached after 18 months of analysis. Plaistow voted to implement their Fire Chief's transition plan in 2022 and will begin providing its own ambulance service in March 2024.

Since 2020, the Town of Truro has been working to add firefighters and increase their training in anticipation of transitioning to in-town ambulance transport. The transition is happening sooner than expected, as their non-profit ambulance provider announced it was going out of business on July 2023, due to staffing issues. Truro is now running in-town EMS.

Many municipalities utilize consultants to aid with the analysis and development of plans similar to those described above. Truro worked with Capital Strategy Solutions in 2021 and 2022 on a five-phase EMS services plan as part of their transition process. Municipal Resources, Inc. has worked with several Massachusetts communities on EMS plans, including Holliston, Taunton, Amherst, and Manchester-by-the-Sea, among others. The ERAC should consult with representatives of these municipalities and their consultants and consider whether to recommend funding for a consultant to support their work at the May 14, 2024 Town Meeting.

These examples illustrate the magnitude of the investment in time, funds, and resources that is required when considering efficiencies and improvements to a municipality's emergency response services. It will likely take several years, but improvements can be achieved through a phased approach with the support of the community. The Town's public safety team should be given the opportunity to review the draft charge and comment on the proposed process. My suggestion is for the Select Board to review and potentially revise the draft during your September 25<sup>th</sup> meeting and finalize the charge and goals for the committee. The final draft should then be sent to the public safety team for their comment on the proposed process and timeline, as well as for their input on their bandwidth and competing priorities. The Select Board should also send the draft to the Finance Committee so that they can recommend a representative to serve on the ERAC. The Select Board should also decide how to choose the at-large residents and develop an appointment process. Appointments to the ERAC could be made at your October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. I have been working with our public safety team on organizing a Public Safety Information Session, tentatively scheduled for the evening of Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>. The newly appointed ERAC members could attend as a body to kick off their work.

My office is available to support the Select Board and the ERAC in their efforts, should the plan proposed above be implemented.

## **Draft – Emergency Response Advisory Committee**

September 22, 2023

The Emergency Response Advisory Committee (ERAC) is created pursuant to a vote of the Select Board on XX, 2023. The committee shall consist of seven members appointed by the Select Board: one member of the Finance Committee, one member of the Select Board, the Fire Chief, the Chief of Police, the Director of Communications, and two resident members at large. The members at large should preferably have professional experience with emergency response, including, EMS, ambulance, or paramedic services.

1. The purpose of this committee is to advise the Select Board, through a comprehensive analysis, on the Town's three-tiered emergency response program and identify strategies to improve service through efficiencies and reduced emergency response times and to meet the current and future needs of Boxford.
2. Meetings shall be held pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Sections 18 to 25, as amended by Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023. Meetings shall be posted with the Town Clerk pursuant to said Laws.
3. The Committee shall appoint a Chair, to coordinate meetings and to oversee progress, and a Secretary, to record minutes. Copies of approved minutes shall be forwarded to the Select Board.
4. The Committee shall conduct a comprehensive analysis and assessment of the Town's current three-tiered emergency response program. Analysis shall cover all resources, including personnel, equipment, apparatus, vehicles, communications protocols, storage, and maintenance. The analysis will consist of a review of patient care, including the capabilities of the Town's in-house First Responder and Emergency Medical Technicians, and the capabilities of the Town's contracted Basic Level Service, Advance Life Support, and Paramedic Support.
5. The Committee shall collect data, including demographic and geographic data, with regards to emergency response. The Committee shall also review and analyze emergency response time data.
6. The Committee may engage the advice and counsel of professional advisors as needed. The Committee shall evaluate and consider emergency response programs by peer communities as it considers proposing future changes to emergency response.
7. The Committee shall develop a phased plan with recommendations for establishing in-town ambulance response and transport based on the comprehensive analysis and data analysis. The plan shall include budgetary impacts.
8. The committee shall issue reports to the Select Board that coincide with annual Town Meeting cycle, per the Town's By-Law Chapter 36 Section 1. The reports shall be issued 90 days prior to an Annual Town Meeting (second Tuesday of May) and 90 days prior to the fourth Tuesday in October, should the Select Board vote to hold a Special Fall Town

Meeting. The reports shall include recommendations for any actions to be taken at Town Meeting based on the development of a phased plan, mentioned in #7.

9. The Committee shall engage the public and solicit public input.

DRAFT

**From:** [Margaret Chow-Menzer](#)  
**To:** [Matt Coogan](#)  
**Cc:** [Margaret Chow-Menzer](#); [Judi Stickney](#); [Peter Perkins](#); [Charles Costello](#); [Barbara Jessel](#)  
**Subject:** EMS Ambulance Study  
**Date:** Monday, September 18, 2023 10:38:27 PM

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Matt

Below are my thoughts on the study committee.

Charge: To study, analyze, and make recommendations for cost effective ambulance transport models that will assure the long term effectiveness and financial feasibility of the EMS services and meet the current and future needs of Boxford.

Tasks should include:

1. Establishing foundational data: Boxford current and 3-5 year projections
  - o demographics - total population & density
  - o geography - total square miles; # of residents per square mile
    -
  - o hospitals and tertiary care facilities serving Boxford -proximity in miles to east and west residents; the amount of time required to drive a resident living in the furthest eastern part of Boxford to each of the hospitals and tertiary care facilities and the amount of time required to drive a resident living the furthest western part of Boxford to each of the hospitals and tertiary care facilities.
  - o Boxford EMS services
    - Call types and #s over 3 year period (nature of injury: burn; heart problem; fracture; fall; abdominal; allergic reaction; diabetic shock; chest pain; unconscious; crash injury; breathing; stroke; head pain; etc.)
  - o researching any similar studies or existing relevant models, particularly of towns comparable to Boxford
  - o researching standards, such as, Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services and NFPA 1710
1. identifying and analyzing existing resources within Boxford (personnel, equipment, vehicles, storage and maintenance, dispatching and management)
2. researching relevant Massachusetts statutes and regulations
3. identify issues such as liability, insurance, legislation, union contracts, retirement systems, education/training/certification
4. Analysis of response time: Reference to NFPA 1710 standard as a goal; How fast a system responds to most calls is better reflected in percentile response times (usually 80 or 9 percentile) than average response times.
  - o Call taking /Dispatch(time when 911 call is made to beginning of transmittal of the response information to EMS)
  - o Turnout/Reaction time (time between receipt of dispatch to beginning point of travel time)
  - o Travel time ( when EMS unit is enroute to the emergency incident and arrives at the scene. (Travel times are a function of geography, road

conditions, traffic/congestion, weather, and the number of and location of the fire station/EMS firefighter home

- Total response time (time from when 911 call is made and EMS shows up
  - Response time of ambulance service (time from when 911 call is made and ambulance shows up); also time between when EMS shows up and ambulance shows up).
5. Ambulance services
- Identification of ambulance services currently serving Boxford, including automatic aid from neighboring towns
  - Over 3 year period:
    - Number of EMS calls with ambulance appearing at scene of accident/incident; separately identify by specific ambulance service
    - Rating/satisfaction with each ambulance service
    - Cost of ambulance service
6. Financial analysis
- In-house ambulance service - use financial models and propose funding methods
    - Capital costs, e.g. ambulance, housing for ambulance, equipment
    - Personnel: staffing, wages, benefits, training, certification, license, etc
    - Location and related costs (utility, communication etc)
  - Third party ambulance service
  - Hybrid model
  - Other

Margaret Chow-Menzer

Boxford Select Board