EMS Subcommittee
Monday, April 13, 2026

Matthew Stanley - Chairman

Supervisor Stanley called this EMS Subcommittee to order at 9:00 am with the following in attendance: Clayton Barber (9:06), Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill (9:05), Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, Jim O'Bryan, Tim Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathy Reusser, Matt Stanley, Davina Thurston, Ike Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson, Meg Wood, Mike Mascarenas, Josh Favro, and Jody Whitney. Chris Clark, Ken Hughes, and Timothy Follos had been previously excused

Deputies Present: Bill Tansey, Dina Garvey, and Michael LaVallie.

Also Present: Randi Swires

STANLEY: It is 9:00, so we will call this meeting to order. Good morning, everybody. We're going to try and get through stuff in the first 20 minutes of today's meeting, so we can have a discussion about the radio system for the last 10-15 minutes. So, I'll turn things over to Josh and Jody.

WHITNEY: Good morning, so there's not going to be a lot of updates from last month.
Resolution requests, I don't believe we have anything.
Staffing updates; we removed the inactive per diem employees. We also started a new shift schedule for the medic cars. We are working 6A to 6P and 12:00 in the afternoon to 12:00 midnight and we're no longer staffing the medic car from midnight to 6:00 AM.

STANLEY: Now, is that because we didn't see many calls then?

FAVRO: Yes, the call the volume was low and we kind of mirrored what the Sheriff's Department call volume, as far as the amount of people that are out and using the service. We figured it would be better to go from 12A to 12P to cover the busier times.

STANLEY: Okay

MASCARENAS: Well, and how many of the towns took advantage of the ALS money?

WHITNEY: I don't have that number, but I can get it.

FAVRO: We have Westport, Ticonderoga, Lake Placid.

MASCARENAS: To me, you would look at that number to make your determination.

FAVRO: Right

MASCARENAS: You're only covering a number of towns anyway during those hours. So, of those towns what does your call volume look like?

SWIRES: It's barely a handful, honestly, thinking of it right now, it's barely a handful of the ones that didn't take advantage.

MASCARENAS: I believe you're right.

WHITNEY: Lake Placid, Keene, Keene Valley.

MASCARENAS: I believe you're right, I don't have the list in front of me, but I recall.

WHITNEY: It's probably 4-5.

REUSSER: So, would that accomplish what you're saying? We have reasons not to take it.

MASCARENAS: Correct

REUSSER: But it doesn't mean that the ALS level of service isn't happening.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, so the communities that take the ALS dollars are providing that coverage and we're not. So, we're really responsible for those communities that didn't.

FAVRO: Fill the gaps.

REUSSER: I get what you're saying.

STANLEY: And then it just goes to mutual aid if there's a need for an ALS response.

FAVRO: Yup

WHITNEY: And we also moved a senior paramedic, 7:00 - 3:00, Monday-Friday.
Training and events; there is an EMT Original Refresher starting in Westport on 05/27 and there's also an EMT Original Refresher, starting 04/02 at the Public Safety Building.
Old News on Recruitment and Retention; the two employees started the Paramedic Program.
Community Outreach: the same with the EMS calendar. We just did some updates to that and there is an event at the Boquet Valley High School that we've been invited to on the 23rd.
Big news; the budget grant status, would you like to?

SWIRES: It's signed and I am sending it off today to Eric at DOS and hopefully in a couple of weeks we'll get the check that they owe us for the $1.5 million.

WHITNEY: Yes, and we also received a $375,000.00, I am sure that most everybody here should be aware of that, for Claim #2. It's just submitting Claim #3, which she just said $1.5 million.

STANLEY: Randi, get job getting this accomplished.

SWIRES: Thank you

MASCARENAS: That contact that you have me pushed it along more than anything.

O'BRYAN: That $1.5 million what can we use that for, operations, obviously?

SWIRES: So, it was what was left from our grant. We've already spent the money. We're just now getting paid for what they owe us. That is what all this is through them right now.

WHITNEY: And the rest of it is your call volume stuff.

STANLEY: One question on the training, do you guys try to push that out to anybody? I mean obviously you try to, but does anybody have ideas on how to get the word out more? Like I only see this information on the training and the events during this meeting, but what avenues do we take to try and recruit and train?

FAVRO: So, we have put it underneath our bullets, now, underneath the training tab on our app and on the website. It was never there before. So, we have fire training and we have EMS training now, we've added. So, if you get online and google, Essex County EMS training or anything like that, it should pop up the training schedules.

WHITNEY: And it goes out over AM Responding to the agencies when they're there pushing it.

STANLEY: Okay. Because like an EMT class seems to be a good gateway to get people in the door to help our EMS.

FAVRO: Yeah, absolutely.

REUSSER: Will that go out on our website, the County website as well as an employment opportunity?

MASCARENAS: It's hard. I think we can probably do a better job of the training opportunity. What goes out on the County website is when we have a job available, an opening at any given time. It doesn't necessarily, I think our goal of the program is bigger than that. I think it's the supply, not necessarily direct staffing for us, Essex County, but for the agencies that you rely on to provide the service, so it's a little different animal. But I think we could probably do a better job at targeted social media type. Things like that, that reappear monthly, just kind of keeping those things out there.

STANLEY: One of our biggest problems when I was in the fire service is like how do you get people to realize that they can come join. Like you sometimes think it is this exclusive group that

people can't come be part of. So, the more ways that we can get out and show, hey, you don't need to come knowing anything. You can come, you get trained, help out your community.

MASCARENAS: Yeah and I think people understanding that it's not just firefighters that you're in need of.

STANLEY: Right

MASCARENAS: I mean there are financial people that, you know there are municipal budgets, there are those types of things that we lack countywide.

WHITNEY: New York State does the Open House Weekends in April that usually most departments have an open house and get that information as well and that's usually out there in the media pretty good.

TYLER: I see the dropped calls here, some of you might not know but the dropped calls have been a lot higher than that in the past. Is it basically the same kind of reason that we had those three? There's only three, but those three?

WHITNEY: What happened with those three, why there was any? Is that what you're asking?

TYLER: Well, are there different reasons than the same kind of reason?

WHITNEY: I can speak to the Keene one. They didn't have a 24/7 coverage until February, so there was one dropped in Keene in January. Willsboro/Essex, I am assuming that one was probably after 6:00 PM and Lake Placid, I'm not sure about that one.

FAVRO: Yeah, Lake Placid is…

WHITNEY: That's odd for that to be a dropped call.

FAVRO: We need to look into that. That may have been a second call that Saranac Lake would have had to cover and that shouldn't have been counted.

WHITNEY: Yeah, that one, when I saw that one this morning and said, that's a little odd.

STANLEY: Because Saranac Lake is paid, but Lake Placid is still volunteer, correct?

FAVRO: Lake Placid is paid, as well.

STANLEY: Are they?

FAVRO: And the two agencies lean heavily on each other for mutual aid. So, especially now since the ER is closed in Lake Placid, their travel time is longer so every time the go somewhere they

have to go to Saranac Lake and I have heard, they have had numerous second, third calls, sometimes fourth calls up, there, so I can attest to that. So, we will look into that.

MASCARENAS: You are right, those are low compared to where we were at.

STANLEY: Great, do you guys have anything else? Any questions?

SWIRES: So, the only thing that I have, I have had a couple of questions about where your money is for the EMS Stabilization Plan, the ones that didn't take a waiver. I am just waiting, I believe everybody was CC'd on an email, if you have the proof of what your budget was and then a canceled check or a copy of the check is just want, I am waiting on for a quite a few of you. If you send it over, I can send it out as soon as we get it approved.

WOOD: We pay our team quarterly, does that mean that you do it quarterly or does that mean we just wait until the end of the year. It doesn't matter to us; I just need to tell people.

MASCARENAS: We can do either. If you want to claim it quarterly, we'll pay you quarterly.

WOOD: Quarterly will be great.

MASCARENAS: If you want to wait until the end of the year, we can do it that way, too. So, I think however you do it locally.

WOOD: Lets try to quarterly.

SWIRES: Just send me a copy of that check and I can start doing it that way.

MASCARENAS: So, she will reimburse you half of up to the total amount.

WOOD: Okay, that's fine.

WHITNEY: And we can also do it monthly if necessary.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I don't care how you do it. Whatever works for you locally is fine.

STANLEY: Alright, anything else?

MCNALLY: For cleanliness, why don't you just pay that? You've got contracts with these people for a year, instead of having to process quarterly payments, why don't you just pay it up front? Its not like the Towns aren't going to do the EMS any longer.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, it's an auditing thing. So, in order to meet the contractual obligations, we have now.

MCNALLY: We have a contract.

MASCARENAS: Right, yeah, if we see it and we know what your financial obligation is I don't have an issue with that. We need some form of backup.

MCNALLY: Quarterly would be a pain in the ass.

WOOD: I mean it doesn't matter to us.

WHITNEY: So, the Auditor did reject that. They want to see a cancelled check or the actual check.

STANLEY: So, what I am going to do for AuSable, we pay quarterly as well. So, what I am going to do is be over that 3rd quarter, we will be over that threshold, submit all the stuff and it's taken our ambulance service that long to get the information together anyways. We have it budgeted to pay so much and then work on reimbursement. So, if I make those first 3 payments, my reimbursement should catch up with this to pay the last quarter.

MASCARENAS: There you go.

STANLEY: For me, but mine is over $400,000.00

MASCARENAS: Yeah, you pay a lot of money.

STANLEY: Any other questions? Alright, the floor is all yours, Josh about the radio system.

FAVRO: Thank you, as most or all of you know, the past year we have been digging into our radio system with the help of DPW Engineering, Mike, myself. It's been very eye opening from the standpoint that we really didn't have an idea of what our radio system was, how to manage it, how it was being managed. So, we're in a lot better shape with that. Because of this, we started digging into the shape the radio system was in. I don't know if you remember, back in the fall we hired Pro Com Systems to inspect Belfry and Gore Mountains, their a tower site inspection company and they also inspect the coax and the antennas that are on each site. We came up with a few things, so far, that need to be fixed. They're 10-years old; we never had a replacement plan for them. So, it was pretty much, it breaks, we fix it sort of thing and we want to try and get away from that. So, I have a few resolutions I am going to bring in front of you at the next meeting. I would like to contract with Pro Com Systems to do that annual maintenance for us, so we try and keep up on budgeted and planning a little bit better than we have been. They're going to do that, for not to exceed $40,000.00. So, we have a report annually. In this contract, they'll also do a time and materials section of the contract with us. So, if something does break, we have them under contract. They're tower climbers, they're very hard to get and they're very expensive. So, if we can have them under contract with us, we're not going to rely on a vendor to get one for us and then mark the price up even farther. I think if you remember when Belfry was struck by lightning, the tower climber crew, alone was about $10,000.00, I believe. So, we're trying to avoid that.

The second resolution I have is Belfry. So, Belfry needs a high band antenna, a low band antenna and then both coax cables. That's going to cost us $26,695.77 to fix. Gore is going to cost us $27,255.68 to fix. My goal is to get everything up to where the standards need to be and get everything 100% and then come up with a plan, asset management plan, so I am not asking you for $30,000.00 for each site constantly. We can plan to say, these antennas are 10- years old, they have a 10-year shelf life, let's start to replace 2 a year instead of having an emergency like we're currently in.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, can I help you out a little bit? Just so everybody understands and what we're going to be doing in the coming months is we've got a really nice report kind of in the works, we have been working on this, again for well over a year, on trying to get a better understanding of where we're at. When Essex County built this system, they hit the switch, turned it on and walked away from it.

STANLEY: Sounds like the Public Safety Building.

MASCARENAS: Right, when you look at, in your own communities, you have water/sewer infrastructure, those types of things. If you're planning for that long term O&M, you're really just pushing the cost off to somebody else that's going to have to make that decision at some point in time and here we are. So, we have this huge asset, over $20 million project, way back when, that there really was no O&M planned. I can tell you we know more than we've ever known. We have some inhouse expertise and we're working in the right direction. I can tell you they fixed a lot inhouse without having to go to contract. We've got a couple of individuals, Mike LaVallie is somewhere in here, he and Nate Jones have really spearheaded kind of this, Todd Hodgson has put an awful lot of effort. He's our inhouse engineer as well and we understand it better than anybody. Just so you know, last year, Motorola came to us and said that you're going to need a $5 million upgrade, and I said, we need to pump the brakes and that's when we started kind of doing this work. It looks like in this paging end of this system we're going to get out of much cheaper and so I like where we're headed. I think we've got a better understanding but understand that these parts don't last forever and you brought up something, Mr. Stanley, last week at the meeting about capital.

STANLEY: I was going to bring that up again.

MASCARENAS: This is where we're at with this, but the final piece of our report that I want to prepare for the Board prior to doing those meetings is a Plan of Finance. So, the first thing is defining, what do we own, what are our assets, what's the life expediency and what's our Plan of Finance, long term to make sure that we're keeping up with the expectation of the system. So, we're putting that piece together. At some point, I would like to see this meeting as EMS solidifies going into next year, hopefully I would like to see some of this meeting shift into this radio discussion, because it is one of our largest assets. When you call 911 or when you have a fire, you should get a response, and we need to make sure that we're keeping up with what we need to.

STANLEY: So, is the end goal to essentially have, sort of like we went through and did those asset management plans across the County for water and sewer? Do the same thing with our communications stuff so we can build and sort of have an annual maintenance plan, if you will, out of capital reserve.

MASCARENAS: Correct, right sized approach to capital and making sure that we can meet the needs without driving tax base is kind of the goal here. Again, if you understand our system, we'll get into the details when we get into those reports. We're very large, our terrain is not the easiest to build these communication systems. A lot of counties rely on us in terms of interoperability. So, after 911, what led to a lot of these buildouts was the State's requirement to become interoperable. If you remember at that time, communications were very poor and at that event it led to a lot of problems, including probably a lot of deaths that were unnecessary. So, that is kind of drove all this from day one. We can now rollover, something happens to us, Clinton County without having to have duplicated services we can do the same for them. We're in a much better position to meet the needs and have redundancy, but again, it's an asset that's a large asset. How many sites are we at now?

FAVRO: Ten

MASCARENAS: Ten different sites that we have to manage. We own Terry Mountain, which is costly. That's a site that's a challenge to get up. If anybody ever wants to go for a ride, you go in the summer. Let's just say, stay tuned, these are fixes that have to happen now, which is why he's bringing them up, a lot of it is future planned type changes that need to happen, but these are common, antenna breaks, those types of things are end of life stuff, lighting strikes, those fun things.

TYLER: Is there money in contingency to do this stuff?

MASCARENAS: Right now, I think we found money. We have a SIG Grant that will cover X amount of dollars. We also, he has money budgeted, not necessarily for this work, but in another area that we are going to shift, right now to cover this cost, but in future years we absolutely will have this. Contingent, we could go to if we have to. We would likely have to go to unappropriated fund balance if we have major issues.

O'BRYAN: When this all started, Mike, 10 years ago, it seems to me, as I recall there was some portion of our cell phones across New York State that was supposed to pay into this system.

MASCARENAS: Correct

O'BRYAN: Did it even happen?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, so the State now grants us money that comes from that 911 surcharge, I think is what you're talking about.

O'BRYAN: Yes, that is what I am talking about. I know the State Police got the majority of it.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, yeah, so if you look on your cell phone bill, there are 911 surcharges. The original intent was to come back to the County for this type of work. We are fortunate that they now grant it to us, where we shouldn't have to beg for it, but that's kind of the situation that they kept up and no the full amount doesn't come back. So, again the SIG grant, statewide inoperability, that's kind of some of the money we throw at it, but we also use it to operate dispatch and so there will be some initial investment on our end that we have to do, but we do take advantage of whatever grant dollars we can to purchase these items, but you're absolutely right.

STANLEY: I also know, Jim's not here to brag about our engineers, but they have been out, just in our water/sewer communications, to find things that were set up that were not being used at their capacity.

MASCARENAS: Correct, that's correct.

STANLEY: So, I think they find a lot of little things that we put total trust in communication companies sometimes and not that we're getting like the wool pulled over our eyes, but they're looking to get more money, and I mean not using stuff to its full capabilities, sometimes barters another sale of something that's not needed.

MASCARENAS: Absolutely.

STANLEY: So, I just want, it's another thing to say, our engineers, even thought they're not one of the cheapest departments, they do save money in the long run.

TYLER: It's like you don't have to rely on these companies and we do all the time, because we don't have the knowledge, the expertise and these companies are going to say, oh you have to have this and we say, okay, I guess we have to have it and now we have people that are actually investigating whether we actually need it or not.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, that was always our thought process. We need somebody on our team that speaks that language and I think that's really something that they brought to the table that has made us less reliant on outside noise or information to make decisions and it's serving us well.

STANLEY: Josh, did you have any more? I don't want to cut you short.

FAVRO: Yeah, so historically we've always had one vendor. We just give them $60,000 lump sum at the beginning of the year and they take care of the low band; we thought they were taking care of the low band radio system. We took that $60,000 and split it. So, the $40,000 that's going to Pro Com is coming out of that budgeted $60,000 and then I am going to ask for a, be able to accept a bid for a time and maintenance contact for JPJ, which is another electronic radio company. They're going to take over the low band maintenance for us, time and material. So,

we're going to take that remaining $20,000 from the $60,000 and set it aside and use that for when we have an issue that they have to look at, we can pull from there. That is where that money is coming from. Other than that, like Mike said, we tried to get creative with the budget, our budget to move things around and try and prioritize things a little bit to cover this repair. We also went through the books and Alexandria and Wendy were able to recover a lot of the revenue that was leftover from 2025. That's roughly, as of right now it's around $17,000 that I am going to ask to increase appropriations and equipment repair with that. So, we are trying to, the last thing that I personally want to do is pull from Fund Balance in April.

MASCARENAS: Right, I told him no (laughter). We'll wait until September-October if we have to, but for now we're going to use what's budgeted and try to get along.

FAVRO: Yup, so we are trying to make it sting less.

O'BRYAN: What are we seeing for failure?

FAVRO: So, what's happening is a lot of these antennas, like Belfry, is it the high band or low band that's cracked?

LAVALLIE: Low band

FAVRO: Mean these things sit on top of a hill, 100' in the hill.

LAVALLIE: The fiberglass is split down the middle.

FAVRO: The coax dry rots, gets water in it.

O'BRYAN: Your single just isn't as strong?

FAVRO: Yes, and we're finding just the changes that Nate and Mike have made by swapping antennas just to check to make sure it's actually just the antenna the coverage is much better. It's never going to be 100% just because of the terrain that we're in, but if we can make sure that our system is 100%, we're going to have obviously the best coverage. Once we get the car fixed, it's going to be a lot less money to maintain if we do it right.

PIERCE: You had talked before about low band maintenance, but has it been done? It hasn't been done?

MASCARENAS: It's been break and fix.

PIERCE: So, they weren't doing regular maintenance on things?

MASCARENAS: Correct

FAVRO: Yeah, they would go to the site and look at the stuff at the site, but they never covered the antenna or the coax, or anything that is actually on the tower. So, last year, numerous times we had to go to Mike and say, hey we have an emergency and we got to get it fixed and that is what we're trying to avoid. So, I just wanted to fill you in.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, and long term, having targeted meetings with the Board that understand how this thing even works I think is imperative. When you see the different sites, the repeaters, how a message in the end either gets to dispatch and/or the first responder on the other end is quite crazy.

O'BRYAN: It's a little different than if you take a look at Clinton County, we're a complex terrain with the mountains.

FAVRO: It has definitely been eye opening.

REUSSER: I do have a question, is there any ability to go back on the contract and get any kind of restitution for not performing, contract violations?

MASCARENAS: I wouldn't call it a violation, what it was, it was a contract so they would remain on-call in the event of an emergency. So, it was kind of an odd thing to begin with when all along it should have been covered under Motorola and their preferred vendor that they had should have been very responsive to our needs to begin with. So, it would have been nice if they had been a little more forthcoming, I guess with that, I would say. But I don't believe there was a violation, it was more of just ignorance.

STANLEY: And Joe Pete, this will be the last question because we need to wrap up.

WILSON: And mine is a quick one, I love this plan, great work. Do you have a map that you could email us that just shows, because I don't really, I know the names of the places and not what it looks like.

FAVRO: The tower sites?

WILSON: If you could email that out, I think that would be really helpful.

STANLEY: The thing that is on your wall, that bounces from this to that to that, it's really cool.

FAVRO: We can get that out.

STANLEY: Thank you very much, good conversation and we will be wrapping up the meeting.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 9:29 AM.

Respectively Submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy Clerk
Board of Supervisors