



PISECO VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.
Piseco, New York 12139

August 2, 2024

TO: Residents of the Town of Arietta

SUBJECT: Piseco Emergency Medical Services

Many of you are aware that over the past decade Piseco Volunteer Fire Department Ambulance has experienced a significant decline in the number of volunteers willing to train and certify, or re-certify, as an EMT. This is part of a NYS and nationwide trend. But we are now in a situation where we are not, on our own, able to provide adequate emergency medical services (EMS) to the Piseco community. Our need to rely on mutual aid from the Speculator Volunteer Ambulance is far more than it should be. An effort to contract for on-site EMT staffing fell through 2 years ago – because the provider could not find enough EMT-certified people to hire to meet the requirements. (See earlier comment about trends.)

Fortunately we have a solution going forward that will address this, while providing more responsive and reliable EMS capabilities to cover our area. Piseco Volunteer Fire Department (PVFD) has finalized an agreement with the Speculator Volunteer Ambulance Corps (SVAC) to take over our coverage area for EMS response. The “compensation” to them will be to lease our current ambulance (for an annual fee of \$1). It will be stationed at their facility in Speculator. They will use it along with their own ambulance to respond to EMS calls in Speculator, Lake Pleasant and Piseco. Speculator has been very successful in bucking the trend with EMT staffing. They have a sufficient number of EMS volunteers to cover this additional area. Since we will still own that ambulance, PVFD will provide for all maintenance, repair, and general logistical support. This is a five year contract. We expect it to renew, so we are also committing to replace our leased ambulance under the same terms when it reaches its operational end-of-life.

We think this is a “win/win” for PVFD and SVAC and, more importantly, for the residents of both areas. The Speculator/Lake Pleasant area has a significantly higher EMS call rate than Piseco. They will be able to expand their capability to respond to these calls, to include simultaneous response with an ambulance to more than one call location. And Piseco will have a more reliable and experienced EMS response. We are very grateful to SVAC for helping us in the past and going forward with this agreement.

We understand that an immediate concern would be the response time from Speculator. For the past few years, due to no Piseco EMT available at the time, we have had to overly rely on SVAC to cover more and more of our EMS calls under mutual aid agreements. On balance we anticipate that response times to calls in Piseco will significantly decrease under this agreement since the initial response notification will go directly from the Sheriff's Office dispatcher to SVAC. We do plan to maintain a medical first responder capability within PVFD by transitioning some current ambulance members to our fire service. We have several potential candidates already trained, or who are willing to train. They would respond directly to the call location with sufficient knowledge/certification and equipment to provide immediate care and assessment until SVAC arrives on scene. That capability is still a work in progress and will take 6-12 months to spin up. We are already working with NYS Department of Health (DOH) for authorization for this capability.

From a budget and cost perspective for Piseco taxpayers, this is pretty much a wash. We do not anticipate that this change will increase our budget requirements. We already maintain and equip an ambulance and set aside savings for the purchase of its replacement.

I hope this letter gets widely and quickly distributed. If it reaches you by social media or other means, please share. We understand you may have questions and concerns. I and a few others (mainly Tony Colby, Chris Rhodes and Craig Small) who have been working this solution with SVAC, DOH, and within PVFD, would be glad to address your concerns. We will try to be available at upcoming community events or meetings.

JONATHAN D. LANE
President, Piseco Volunteer Fire Department