

# **Greene County Ambulance Review Study Meeting No. 8**

## **Minutes Summary**

Monday, August 4, 2025, 6:00 P.M.  
Greene County 911 Center, 25 Volunteer Drive, Cairo, NY

**Greene County EMS Evaluation Committee Membership, Ambulance Policy Group, EMT's, Paramedics, Greene County Legislature, Media, Staff, Members of the Public:**

Patrick Linger, Shaun Groden, Daryl Legg, Nadine Myrdycz, Phil Myers, Stanley Dushane, Ariel Wooheater, Michael Pirrone, Jim DiPerna, Gerard P. Laird, Bill Rod, Carolyn Rod, Steven Near, Brian Tumey, Thomas Hoyt, JoEllen Schermerhorn, Rick Hanse, Patricia Handel, Sean Hotaling, Michael D. Lanuto Jr., Nicole Maggio, Davia Montie, Jennifer Moore-Warren, Raymond Ward, Patricia McAneny, Mark Evans, Jay Lucas, Patrick McCulloch, Paul Macko, John Bensen, Eli Martin, Joseph D. Kozloski, Michael Bulich, James O'Connell, Sean Mahoney, Sherry B. True, Jim Stone, Alyssa Martin, Pete Kusminsky, Shawn Marriott, John Farrell, George June, Kevin Forbes, and Tanya Ernst

### **Synopsis:**

Chairman Linger opened Ambulance Review Study Meeting No. 8 to order at 6:01 p.m. and turned the meeting over to Mr. Groden who introduced Nicole Maggio, Director of Greene County Human Resources. Ms. Maggio reviewed Civil Service job descriptions that have been used and approved and explained that new or existing titles and descriptions that have been revised need to go through the Civil Service Commission for approval. Anyone who is hired under a title is hired under the title as it stands on the date of hire. Revisions made to that title and description after the fact don't necessarily cover that particular employee and suggests that revisions need to be done prior to onboarding as County employees. She explained that the title of Ambulance Billing Coordinator will no longer be used as billing is most commonly contracted out. Ms. Maggio does not believe that the Ambulance Driver position will be part of a countywide model; Advanced EMT is a relatively new position that was adopted by the Civil Service Commission in June; EMT and Paramedic job descriptions were updated in 2020. Administrator, Coordinator, and Supervisor positions will be compared to similar positions in counties that have countywide ambulance service because the existing positions that are officially used in municipalities like Catskill and Hunter are not broad enough at the county level. There will be job descriptions that will need to be created and job descriptions that will need to be revised; which is about a two-month process. Titles cannot be used until the Civil Service Commission officially adopts a job description. A final draft that everybody agrees on is usually the most time-consuming piece of it. The final draft, submitted to her office at least

two business days prior to the next Civil Service Commission meeting, can be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. Although meetings occur every four weeks, it is possible to ask for a special meeting, if necessary. As soon as titles are adopted, they are immediately available for use.

Ms. Maggio then reviewed New York State Civil Service Law DVS §70 which allows for the transfer of currently held titles. For example, it is typical for a Police Officer in a local municipality to transfer to a County Sheriff's Department as a Deputy or for a Deputy Sheriff in another county to come to Greene County. In this case, the employees who have been hired from an eligible list with permanent competitive status in a local municipality with an existing EMT title, can be brought into a County department as an EMT because it's the exact same title. This can be done even easier if it's done through a transfer of function, which means transferring the emergency services responsibility from the Town of Catskill to the County. The key component is that they have to have been appointed from the eligible list and have taken the training and experience exam. Their application and filing fee are submitted and a score gets assigned based on their experience and training; they are then placed on an eligible list, and the Town officially appoints them. In order to be transferred, they have to have completed their probationary period, which is a minimum of 8 weeks and a maximum of 52 weeks. If there are exceptional newly hired employees who have completed 8 weeks, they can be released early from the 52-week probationary period to transfer. The transfer of status allows them to keep their original date of hire which means they keep their seniority. It doesn't matter which town they were hired in; seniority with the County is based on the permanent date of hire from the eligible list.

Chairman Linger asked what the difference is if an employee comes from a Not-for-Profit and asked if it's possible for them to carry their seniority with them?

Ms. Maggio stated that, for Civil Service purposes, it would not be possible because they've never come from an eligible list, and they don't have permanent competitive Civil Service status. Civil Service seniority is basically there for layoff purposes. If and when a union picks up the employees, the negotiated collective bargaining agreement can speak to different ways that seniority is calculated for things like shift assignment and vacation bids and can be different than Civil Service seniority. Those coming in from the Not-for-Profits will not keep their seniority and their original date of hire; they would have to start over and go through the Civil Service process to get on the list. Ms. Maggio explained that it does not impact retirement as long as the employee is a member of the retirement system in the municipalities they are in; they will be able to keep whatever tier they were in in their retirement. For those coming from a Not-for-Profit, if they aren't a part of the state retirement system, they would be entering as a new employee. Ms. Maggio stated that seniority starts the date employees are hired from the Civil Service eligible list. Municipal employees who were not hired from the eligible list will need to be. Ms. Maggio's office

is working on compiling a list of current employees from Not-for-Profits and Mr. Groden is getting a list of employees from each of the municipalities for comparison.

Mr. Groden stated that he could see there being two dates in the system; the Civil Service date, which is specific to layoffs and tenure, versus someone who has been working from a private business with five years of service. We could negotiate giving those years of service in terms of earning vacation time and shift bidding so that time wouldn't be lost, provided that when credentials are reviewed, Civil Service criteria are met.

Chairman Linger stated that Greene EMS, Durham, Greenville, and the Not-for-Profits could fall into that category with people with 20 years or more of service.

Mr. Mahoney believes that he has some employees from the Town of Hunter who were not hired off the Civil Service eligible list but who are qualified and are in the state retirement system with multiple years of service and who will want that same accommodation once they go on the Civil Service eligible list.

Ms. Maggio responded that it would depend on how the collective bargaining agreement is negotiated. She has no doubt that a union will pick up the employees but isn't sure which, but it's not up to the County to decide. The Taylor Law states that the unions make claims on the positions and, if there's more than one union that does that, then it goes to PERB to make the decision. Ms. Maggio responded to questions from the audience and stated that Civil Service for EMS started in approximately 2014/2015, which is when the County was required by New York State Civil Service to start covering EMT's and Paramedics within the towns. There are going to be quite a few people who have the same seniority date. If someone has gone from EMT to Paramedic, it's considered a promotion and, in a promotion situation, you fall back to the original date of hire in the lower title. Once PERB makes a decision, the Union can change the terms that the County agreed upon with collective bargaining. The County can make an agreement with the employees at the time of hire if there is no Union assigned by then. However, a collective bargaining agreement can change those terms. For health insurance and retirement benefits, as of right now, you have to have 20 years with the County in order to take your health insurance into retirement at a lower percentage rate. If you work ten years with the County, you get the benefit of the lower cost of health insurance, because we're a group, but you pick up the full cost of the health insurance in retirement.

Legislator Lanuto stated, "So, if you came over with 10 years in one of these other agencies, you would have to work an additional 20 years at the County for your health coverage in retirement?"

Ms. Maggio stated that health insurance benefits are not negotiated in the union contracts; they are established through County Legislative resolution. She explained that the entire Civil Service system is under a radical review to change the way Civil Service Law is

administered in New York State and are about a year away from finalizing the new version.

Chairman Linger stated that a Legislative resolution may provide an opportunity to bring some of those folks in and account for those years of service.

Legislator Lanuto stated, "Hang on; question. So, this is for the health benefits side of things? (Ms. Maggio stated, "Retiree".) Now, if you do that, if you do an exemption for that, you should have to do that for every other department in the County, especially the Sheriff's Department 'cause there are police officers that would have 10, 15, even 20 years on. (Chairman Linger stated, "Yeah, but they were hired as that position.") No, I'm saying if they were to do a lateral over."

Legislator Lanuto stated, "I just think you'd be opening a huge can of worms if you make an exemption for this lateral of EMS, Paramedic with that time over to get into the health benefits because you'd have to make that exemption for any new laterals to any other agency within the County."

Mr. Groden then discussed the resolution that would be going through the August cycle relating to recruitment. To help with the lack of personnel, the County Legislature will approve the creation of a Paramedic scholarship; the board will appropriate funds for up to twenty people to attend one of the SUNY schools to obtain their Paramedic certification which is similar to the program done for the EMT's except on a larger scale. There will be a signed contract for those who have received the scholarship which will require a certain number of years of service to the County.

Legislator Bulich asked if this resolution would be retroactive to include people who are currently enrolled in Paramedic training. Mr. Groden and Chairman Linger agreed that the resolution can be amended to include currently enrolled students.

Mr. Groden then discussed the CON process and explained that it would take between 8 and 10 weeks to obtain. There would have to be agreements that the existing local CON's would dissolve and the County would have the only CON.

Mr. Groden then gave an update on the House and Senate Bills; one exempting ambulatory service costs from the annual tax cap calculation which Mr. Groden explained that passed both the House and the Senate and is ready for the Governor to sign; his understanding is that the Governor will sign. If a consolidated system is the final decision, the first year of operation would have required the County to adopt a resolution to exceed the tax cap. In this case, we would not have to take that legal step. He explained that he would be responsible for separating the ambulatory system expenses from the general fund in order to ensure that the general fund expenses have not exceeded the tax cap. This would be a large increase on the County bill; the town numbers would come down; how much would

depend on each town's equalization rate. Mr. Groden explained that the other Bill he mentioned would allow for the formation of a special taxing jurisdiction and will be back on the agenda when the Legislature comes back in January. Chairman Linger stated that the County plan is to split EMS to a separate line item on the tax bill. Mr. Groden explained that having a special EMS taxing jurisdiction would clearly indicate the EMS system cost to the community.

The Supervisor of Prattsville, Mr. Cross, called in and stated that his town faces an urgent need for financial assistance and feels that the situation is desperate. In 2023, the town paid \$180,000, in 2024, the town paid \$183,000, and in 2025, the town paid \$220,000. With numbers received from the Town of Ashland, in 2026 the Town of Prattsville will pay \$281,000.

Legislator Luvera asked why the cost has increased and suggested that the increase was due to usage.

Mr. Cross explained that the ambulance budget is based on call volume and that new senior citizen housing has increased the call volume by 30 percent. Mr. Cross asked that implementation of a countywide ambulance service not be delayed. Mr. Groden responded that it's a decision the Greene County Legislature would have to make and that, from a Civil Service and an onboarding standpoint, due to the amount of work necessary, it would not be possible to do in 60-90 days.

An audience member asked if there was enough buy-in from the current staff to start this before 2027.

Legislator Handel stated that she doesn't believe that the County is ready to make a commitment about any kind of date prior to 2027, and that even that might be pushing it. It's a lot to ask the Legislature to make the commitment in 2026, and to push it ahead for one town that's having budget issues isn't fair to every town or to anybody just for a town that's having issues with their budget.

Chairman Linger stated that it's a strictly financial question because Prattsville doesn't run an ambulance system and asked if it would help Prattsville if the County took over 100 percent on the County side of the Greene EMS money. Mr. Cross responded that Greene EMS costs about \$8,600.

Legislator Bulich stated that it doesn't matter if it's town tax or county tax, the cost will be spread across the entire County. Those that have more efficient and more consolidated areas are going to pay for the more rural and harder to reach areas. He then stated, "If you were to take Prattsville and the people who live in Prattsville and transfer it to their County taxes, it'd be the same amount of money, but you're not doing that, you're running it across everybody."

Legislator Legg stated that there would be efficiencies with a consolidated system to which Legislator Bulich stated that he doesn't see any efficiencies with the proposal and then cited the \$11 million cost going to a \$15 million cost which is on the conservative side.

Mr. Mahoney stated, "I do think that there's efficiencies if we talk about ALS transporting. I think that's a major efficiency that goes from multiple Paramedics roving around, bringing one of those medics onto a rig; you're not paying half the rig anymore because now you got the ALS person on the rig, and so, and now, you're actually adding more people into the system to work additional shifts."

Legislator Bulich stated, "If you can attract more personnel."

Legislator Legg responded that everybody has to realize that the County is supposed to work together for the betterment of everybody and then stated that half the money for the County comes from the mountain and that the other half comes from the valley. He then suggested having two ambulance services; the mountain service and the valley service and that will be it, and it'll be divided up.

Legislator Bulich stated, "It doesn't matter, Daryl, you're just saying efficiencies and there's no efficiencies when the price goes up by \$5 million. There's no efficiencies. The numbers don't lie, everybody. You can think they do, but they don't lie."

Chairman Linger stated that his opinion is that efficiency is about more than numbers.

Legislator Handel stated, "You know, I don't think there's any, I don't think we're saying there's the mountain, that we're not gonna worry about the mountain top because we live in the valley. I don't think anyone of the fourteen of us feels that way, and I think it's very unfair of you to sit here and say that, Daryl."

There was discussion regarding the accuracy of the numbers in the Fitch study, and it was recognized by Chairman Linger that the numbers are higher and not extremely accurate because, a lot of it, you can't see until it's there.

Legislator Lanuto stated that the numbers aren't reflecting if there is some sort of exemption carrying time over into the health system which is an unexpected cost that has not been accounted for.

There was discussion regarding the Town Supervisors' proposal and that a phased-in approach was preferred and would begin with the hiring of an Executive Director to design the system, establishing a timeframe, and making Greene EMS a County agency.

Legislator Bulich stated that without increased personnel, the system can't get the numbers down, to which there was agreement. Mr. Mahoney replied that the system is working pretty good as far as response times. Legislator Bulich responded that if Mr. Mahoney's constituents are happy with the response times, you can talk about a consolidated system, as is, to try to keep those response times like they are but that it can't be done as is. Legislator Bulich then stated that he's hopeful that Paramedic scholarships will attract more personnel to Greene County for this system but that it's unknown. It may take until 2027 to see how it will play out.

Chairman Linger stated that it's the Executive Director who should be making the decisions as to the number of ambulances and flycars and bring it to the Legislature for approval and then stated that the Legislature should not be making operational decisions.

Ms. Maggio stated that it would not be possible for her and her staff to be ready in 2026, as it is critical that the employees come over and explained that she could possibly do it halfway through 2026, but that it would be a huge lift with a staff of five. Therefore, she has requested an extra staff member for 2026. If there's enough lead time, she would be able to do group orientations and then do the data entry for health insurance and other benefits after the fact. All onboarding could be ready when the switch is made by keeping employees in a 'pending' status.

Chairman Linger stated that he isn't sure if hiring an Executive Director is an Emergency Services position, a completely new department, or if it would fall under the Sheriff's department. Some of the things being considered already exist in other departments. In October, the County will be presenting our budget which will be based on what the County thinks can be accomplished in 2026; hiring an Executive Director and team. Chairman Linger then explained that the same exercise needs to be done on a grander scale for the 2027 budget. He then acknowledged that it will be difficult to hire an Executive Director who is keeping the current system running. Chairman Linger then stated that what needs to be considered is what can be done for 2026; who and how many need to be hired. This will determine the dollar amount for the 2026 budget. In 2026, we would move ahead with a plan for the rest of the system and get a budget amount for 2027. The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.