PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT SERVICES

Modena Borough
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WESTWOOD EMS

Background

2000 Creation of Westwood EMS in Valley & East Fallowfield Townships
2005 Esteemed Pennsylvania "Ambulance Service of the Year"
2011 "Ambulance 144" is created at the request of municipalities following the closure of Martins Corner Ambulance
2018 Westwood EMS is awarded grant funds to expand the service at the request of municipalities
2020 "Station 244" is created after an intermunicipal agreement was established
2021 Westwood EMS elevates level of service to include Advanced Life Support (ALS)

With the abrupt closure of the Martin's Corner Ambulance service in 2011, Westwood EMS successfully transitioned emergency services in that region to include a groundbreaking collaborative effort between several municipalities currently has over 10 years of tenure.

Basic Life Support vs Advanced Life Support

Basic Life Support – An ambulance staffed by at least two EMTs that can provide basic life support such as bandaging and splinting, providing oxygen, and performing CPR.

Advanced Life Support –
- **Chase Medic** – A response model that includes one paramedic in a non-transport unit. This works in conjunction with BLS services to provide care and division of responsibility.
- **MICU (Mobile Intensive Care Unit)** – An ambulance staffed by at least one EMT and one Paramedic, so there is no redundant staffing. More severe incidents can be treated primarily by the paramedic, with the assistance of the EMT. Less severe incidents can be treated by the EMT.
Risk Assessment

The well-publicized “Crisis in EMS” has affected the Commonwealth for several years, appearing in several studies and PSATS publications. This has left several municipalities struggling; with insufficient time to find adequate EMS services and/or develop an adequate funding model. The COVID-19 pandemic added further difficulties with retention and recruitment in EMS.

In our region, the recent closure of TowerHealth’s Brandywine and Jennersville Hospitals has exacerbated this issue as well – sometimes tripling the time it takes to handle an emergency.

Locally in Modena Borough, Basic Life Support services are currently provided by Modena Fire Company Ambulance.

Advanced Life Support services are currently provided by TowerDIRECT Medic 93. TowerDIRECT has stated that they will cease operations in this area, effective September 1, 2022.
'THIS IS A CRISIS'

Emergency responders 'fear' loss of advanced life support services

By Jen Samuel
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PARKESBURG — Western Chester County first responders gathered last week to discuss the impending emergency crisis stemming from Tower Health's recent decision to suspend advanced life support from the region with the closure of Medic 93, effective Sept. 1.

"This is a crisis," Chief Brian Gathercole of the Keystone Valley Fire Department said.

Gathercole organized and led the informational meeting Wednesday evening at Parkesburg Point. The stated aim was to help explain to community members — strangers, neighbors and friends — and get all involved to create a better system of the region's emergency management services with a sharp focus specifically on advanced life support — which is a crux component for emergency responders to do their jobs when helping people in need.

"When an alarm goes off we, go out and do our job," Gathercole told the packed room of more than 40 people, mostly first responders although some regional lawmakers were also present ranging from the mayor of Parkesburg to the council president of Modena and nearby municipal council members.

"This is a countywide problem," Gathercole said.

Noteworthy, Chester County Commissioner Josh Maxwell was also in attendance. He spoke at the closed of the meeting, which lasted nearly two hours.

In June, Tower Health announced that it would be closing Medic 93 services in certain Chester County areas, which were until earlier this year also served by two recently closed hospitals.

Tower Health purchased Jennersville Regional Hospital and Brandywine Hospital approximately six years ago. The entity then closed the facilities a few months back, shutting down Jennersville Regional near the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve and closing Brandywine down on Jan. 31.

With these closures, medics have been traveling greater distances to bring patients to further away hospitals.

According to emergency of SERVICES » PAGE 10

Fire Chief Brian Gathercole of the Keystone Valley Fire Department holds an informational session on Emergency Medical Services and the need for Advanced Life Support on July 27 at Parkesburg Point on Main Street.
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Officials at the Wednesday night meeting in Parkesburg, this matter will be compounded tremendously with Tower Health's decision to end Medic 93's services in western Chester County.

Tower Health stated they will transition coverage of Advanced Life Support to other local responders within the municipalities affected alongside the Chester County Department of Emergency Services.

"First it was our two hospitals, now it is our advanced life support service," Gathercole said on Wednesday.

Earlier this year, Chester County lost Jennersville Hospital and Brandywine Hospital, both closed by Tower Health in cost-cutting moves. "Tower Health is a not-for profit health system," Richard Wells, system director for corporate communications and government relations, said on April 3.

In June a deal was closed in which Tower Health sold Jennersville Regional Hospital, plus 24 adjacent acres and two office buildings, to ChristianaCare for $8 million.

Tower Health isn't done making an impact in the county via departures.

In the next two months, western Chester County areas formerly served by Tower Health's two still-closed hospitals will lose the services of West Reading-based Tower Health Advanced Life Support ambulances, known as Tower Direct.

On June 7, Dr. Charles Barbera, senior vice president of Tower Health and president of Reading Hospital, sent a letter to Chester County municipalities serviced by Tower Direct's Medic 93 informing them that as of Sept. 1, Medic 93 will cease to operate in areas served by the former hospitals, as previously reported.

"This is a decision that we have not taken lightly, but it is necessary as a result of the closure of the Brandywine and Jennersville hospitals," Barbera stated "We must now take actions that will better support the communities served by Reading, Phoenixville and Pottstown Hospitals while also improving our operational performance," Barbera 2, the ALS service providers of Medic 94, based across the county in Penn Township, will be there if needed.

"We have to come if we're called," Wohl said. "Tower Health abandoned this community."

Medic 94, unlike Medic 93 which is now owned by Tower Health and operated via its TowerDIRECT enterprise, is an independent nonprofit organization.

Wohl said it took 20 years, however, ultimately all 18 municipalities in the direct service area of Medic 94 now directly contribute financially to fully fund ALS for their residents.

And although Pennsylvania is currently operating with an annual budget of $40.8 billion, funds aren't allotted to pay for community firefighters and other local emergency first responders including ALS providers. If not provided locally or regionally by a healthcare system such as Tower, the burden falls on local organizations to reemerge and answer the call, as Medic 94 has done, but with the essential support of funds from the 18 municipalities, their mission is to serve.

Of the Pennsylvania Department of Health's $80 million fiscal year budget, no funds are allotted to pay the operational costs of local fire departments running advanced life support services from their community hubs.

Because Tower Direct is removing its ALS services from the region, Modena Council President Jennifer Daywalt said on Wednesday that Chester County's smallest municipality is implementing a new local tax to help contribute to advanced life services for their community. Her remarks led to a round of applause, the only moment people cheered during the Keystone meeting in Parkesburg.

"In Chester County, it is ultimately going to come down to our municipalities to ensure our EMS organizations have the funding they need to operate," said Charles Brogan IV, president of the Chester County EMS Council, Inc.

Yet only a few municipalities in Western Chester County attended the Keystone meeting on Wednesday — despite the topic impacting all
said.

Now until Sept. 1, Tower Direct operates three units in Western Chester County: MICU 93, which operates still out of the old Brandywine Hospital, Medic 393 in Coatesville, and Medic 293 at Keystone Valley Fire Department in Parkesburg.

Besides Coatesville, Parkesburg and Caln, these units provide primary Advanced Life Support coverage to Modena, South Coatesville, West Brandywine, East Brandywine, Newlin and West Bradford.

On Sept. 1, Tower Direct, which bought Medic 93 EMS several years back along with the now-shuttered hospitals of Jennersville and Brandywine, will merge operations from Parkesburg, Caln and Coatesville to Medic 93’s current location in Elverson and to an all-new location in Honey Brook.

As a result, these areas will become serviced by Westwood Fire Company EMS units and possibly units from Minquas Fire Company in Downingtown, which may stretch already busy EMS units thinner than they already are, as previously reported.

Chester County is currently protected by 32 EMS agencies providing fast response to 911 medical emergencies, however, most offer basic life support — not advanced life support, as with Medic 94 whose coverage area spans 18 municipalities in southern Chester County from Nottingham to Franklin.

Still, Medic 94 — with its advanced life service (ALS) abilities — is preparing to step up and help the people in Parkesburg and beyond once Tower Health pulls its ALS from western Chester County on Sept. 1.

“Your problem is our problem,” said Bill Wohl of Medic 94 during remarks at the Keystone informational meeting.

Of EMS services in 2022, he said, “It’s not profitable. It’s not even economically viable on its own.”

Still, good people will continue to help those in need. And Wohl, like everyone else in the room on Wednesday, remains very aware of this.

If there is an emergency in Parkesburg on Sept.

residents who live in the region — the immediate loss of local advanced life support services thanks to Tower Health’s decision to close shop effective Sept. 1.

To further exacerbate the difficulties facing EMS, there is not only a staffing shortage but also expenses are far outpacing the revenue that they’re able to collect from insurance billings, as previously reported.

“The vast majority of our medical supplies and medication costs have increased significantly,” Brogan said. “In 2019, we paid $6 for a box of gloves. That same box of gloves is now $14.”

The energy index rose 41.6 percent over the past 12 months, the Department of Labor reported last month. The gasoline index increased 59.9 percent during this span, the largest 12-month increase in that index since March 1980.

This past June, U.S. inflation hit 9.1 percent, smashing a previously held 40-year record. For first responders, the impact is hitting hard. Even so, the numbers continue to rise.

According to the Office of the State Fire Commissioner in Harrisburg, in the 1970s, on average there were roughly 300,000 active firefighters across the state. Today, there’s far less, approximately 38,000. Some first responders say the number is closer to 30,000 — or less.

Not everyone, in fact, most people, cannot afford to be a volunteer these days. Yet the need to help others in need has increased in society, not decreased.

“I’m volunteering my life away,” said Chief John Sly of the Westwood Fire Company.

Yet he volunteers to make a difference in his community.

Of advanced life support, the chief said, “We need this service.”
Operational Milestones

The key to a successful community-based EMS system is communication within the community, including business transparency and public involvement.

Westwood EMS prides itself in bridging the gap that has been missing throughout the Commonwealth for so long in the emergency services. With monthly reporting, annual stakeholder reporting, and ongoing community engagement—the residents of the township, as well as those who run it, form a relationship with the leadership and operational staff that serve.
Service Impact

TowerDIRECT Medic 93, station at Brandywine Hospital, responded to Modena Borough 30 times in 2021. Medic 393, from Coatesville City, responded to Modena Borough an additional total of 12 times. The Westwood and Wagontown Divisions of Westwood EMS also responded a total of times.

Upon the ceasing of TowerDIRECT operations in the area, this would represent a 1050% increase in Westwood EMS call volume in Modena Borough.

TowerDIRECT vs Westwood Call Volume
Modena Borough, 2021
Financial Outline

EMS Only Operations – Budget approximately $1,079,000

Currently Supports (2) 24/7 Advanced Life Support Transport Ambulances

**FUNDING MODELS**

- Third Party EMS Billing – (65% of budget revenues)
- Restrictions by Insurance/Medicare/Medicaid
- EMS Tax/Municipal Funding – (24% of budget revenues)
- Fund Drive/Membership Program – (9% of budget revenues)
- Grants/Donations/Ancillary Income – (2% of budget revenues)

**EXPENSES**

- Salary/Payroll – (83% of budget expenses)
- Medical Supplies/Equipment – (8% of budget expenses)
- Vehicle Expenses/Non-Capital – (6% of budget expenses)
- Professional Fees/Ancillary Costs – (3% of budget expenses)

Tax/Municipal Funding Formula based on assessed property values – .25 mill / equivalent
- As community growth occurs, natural funding increases are generated

**MODENA BOROUGH –**

Taxable Assessment: $12,640,840 * .25 mill = $3,160 (3% of current tax rate)

In-kind costs provided by municipalities/fire company partners – Housing/Utilities/Fuel