Town of Adams Massachusetts 01220-2087

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL BUILDING
8 PARK STREET

Monday, November 20, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

TOWN HALL, 8 PARK STREET, ADAMS, MA 01220
1st Floor, Board of Selectmen Meeting Room

CALL TO ORDER: On the above date, the Cheshire Board of Selectmen held a joint meeting with the Adams Board of Selectmen and the Savoy Board of Selectmen at 6:00 PM at the Cheshire Community House. Adams Board Chair Christine Hoyt opened the meeting for the Town of Adams. Present: Chairman Christine Hoyt, and Members Rick Blanchard, John Duval, and Joe Nowak.

Cheshire Board of Selectmen Chair Sean McGrath opened the meeting for the Cheshire Board of Selectmen. Present for the Cheshire Board of Selectmen were Shawn McGrath, Chair; Jason Levesque, Vice-Chair; Michelle Francesconi, Member; Ray Killeen (arrived late), Member; Ron DeAngelis, Member.

Savoy Board of Selectmen Chair Justin Kaczowski of the Savoy Board of Selectmen called the Savoy Board of Selectmen meeting to Order. Present for the Savoy Board of Selectmen were Justin Kaczowski, Chair and Marie Saucier, Member.

Also present were Jay Green, Adams Town Administrator; Jennifer Morse, Cheshire Town Administrator; Bri Hantman, Recording Secretary; John Pansecchi, Adams Fire District Chief; Tom Francesconi Cheshire Fire Department Chief; Amalio Jusino, Adams Emergency Management Director; Corey Swistak, Cheshire Emergency Management Director; Chief Scott Kelley, Adams Chief of Police; Chief Mike Alibozek, Cheshire Chief of Police; Dominic Singh, Western Massachusetts Office of Emergency Medical Services; Members of Northern Berkshire EMS including Chief John Meaney; Member of the Adams Ambulance Service; Casey Pease of Senator Paul Mark's Office; Jay Meczywor, Vice-chair of the Adams Finance Committee; Myra Wilk, Moderator for the Town of Adams; and residents of the towns of Adams, Cheshire, and Savoy.

Chairman McGrath introduced the topic that the Adams Ambulance Service (AAS) would be closing. Chairman McGrath noted that neither the General Manager of the Adams Ambulance Service or members of the Board of Directors of Adams Ambulance were present that evening.

In November of 2021 the town of Cheshire donated $63,250 to the Adams Ambulance Service from Cares Act funding. Christine Hoyt and members of the Town of Cheshire Board of Selectmen met with leadership of the Adams Ambulance Service to discuss that they were in a challenging financial situation. Both the communities of Cheshire and Adams expressed that there would need to be significant public outreach and that the funds being requested would need to be made of the Towns in Advance of the Budget season. Leadership from Adams and Cheshire requested financial reports from the Adams Ambulance Service. Unfortunately, that information was never received.

In September of 2023, it was expressed again that Adams Ambulance needed funding. On October 3rd, an email was sent to Adams Ambulance requesting staffing information, financial information, audits, long term, and short-term business plans. That email went unanswered. In October, the Cheshire Ambulance exploratory group began meeting with Northern Berkshire EMS.

Chairman Christine Hoyt: There was a meeting in March of 2022. AAS asked Adams, Cheshire, and Savoy officials to attend. Communities explained budget process and funding. Adams offered vehicle maintenance to be done at the Town of Adams Department of Public Works garage as a way of relieving some costs.

September 2022, Department of Public Health was contacted for guidance for a Service Zone Plan required by law by December 31st, 2006. Adams and Cheshire did not have one.

In August of 2023 Board Chair and Administrator received an invite to Adams Ambulance meeting which was occurring at the exact same time as the regularly scheduled Adams Board of Selectmen Meeting. At this meeting no financial documents were provided. No formal funding formula was proposed. It was suggested that Adams Ambulance be added to the "Special Funding" line on the tax bills. The request for funding was anywhere from $119,000 and $190,000. Chairman Hoyt explained to the president of the Board of Directors at that time, Dick Kleiner, that that would be illegal for the Town to do. After that meeting, a Service Zone Plan committee was formed.

On November 6th, Data was requested again. None was provided. Sustainability plan, budget, reimbursements, etc were not shown. The Service Zone Plan committee was informed that no grants were applied for in the last 3 years.

We are not able to write a check as there is not $190,000 in the reserve fund. It was agreed at that meeting that a November 14th meeting would be scheduled to discuss a transition plan wherein Northern Berkshire EMS (NBEMS) would begin being the primary service provider for the Town. .

On November 10th employees are told that Adams Ambulance Service would close on December 31st. Chairman Hoyt reached out to AAS leadership to inquire about the validity of that statement. On November 12th Chairman Hoyt asked the Department of Public Health (DPH) if they had been notified of a closure. A DPH inspector had spoken with AAS and NBEMS. DPH confirmed that they received notice that AAS intended to close by December 31st. At that time, the Board Chairs scheduled today's public meeting to give the community an update on what was happening.

On November 17th at 4:30pm AAS disclosed that they intend to close on December 31st .

Fred Balawender, President of the Board of Directors at Adams Ambulance Service approached the microphone to state that some staff members had a proposal. Joshua Koch, an employee of the Adams Ambulance Service stated that the notice to employees was just a sudden as it was to the community. They were not aware of the financial situation of the Adams Ambulance Service. They believe that they have developed a plan to keep the doors open.

Mr. Koch stated that the group of AAS employees believe that the service zone of NBEMS is too large and will constitute a risk to the public.

Mr. Koch stated that AAS is in a significant amount of debt. AAS has been in contact with several investors who are interested in purchasing the building. Other options include contracts/ transfer contracts with local care facilities and a restructuring of their billing system.

Mr. Koch stated that there is a massive outpouring of support from residents that has been overwhelmingly encouraging and it is the main reason that they are really trying to push to take care of the community. Mr. Koch stated that they would like to ask the residents of the communities to voice their opinions and there is a meeting on November 28th to vote on if Adams Ambulance should stay open and continue to fight.

Hussein Hamdan, Selectboard Member for the Town of Hawley and employee of the Adams Ambulance Service approached the boards/ Hussein thanked the town of Adams and Cheshire for going over the timeline of their engagement with the issues of financial struggle. Hussein stated that he was equally surprised and shocked about the lack of notice given by AAS, as is legally required of them to give 90 days' notice to the municipalities that it serves should they anticipate a change in services provided or a closure. Mr. Hamdan stated that there were some significant mistakes that were made. Mr. Hamdan recognized that there are some very dedicated staff members at the

AAS and that they provide a good service to the community. Hussein stated that there are some unacceptable financial inefficiencies happening within the agency.

Mr. Hamdan stated that it is not realistic to have NBEMS cover Hawley due to the distance and the last thing we need in the area with an aging population is less EMS providers.

Dominic Singh, Western Mass EMS approached the board. Mr. Singh is the director of the Western Massachusetts Regional office. A lot of what is being stated now indicative of EMS Services across the state and the nation. Reimbursement rates do not keep up with costs.

Mr. McGrath called Darlene Rodowicz of Berkshire Health Systems to speak next.

Ms. Rodowicz stated that it is important to be on the job paying attention to make sure that finances are maintained. You need to have a structure that you can depend upon and rely upon to be sure that the frontline workers can be there to serve the community. Darlene also vouched for the great work that NBEMS does.

Chief John Meaney, NBES approached the microphone. Chief Meaney thanked the Towns for the invitation to participate. Chief Meaney stated that he is a proud alumnus of AAS where he started in 1999. He thanked AAS for their 50 years of service. Chief meany stated that this is a challenging time for the employees and community as change can be tough and emotional. Chief Meany stated that there is a contingency plan in place should the December 31st deadline not be met. The Forest Wardens station and Cheshire Fire Department have been inspected by OMS and their approval is imminent. Berkshire County Radio Control has been working to update radio communication. It is Chief Meany's commitment to hire AAS staff members and it is their desire to ease that transition Let's not allow this collaborative opportunity to create a divide.

Myra Wilk, Adams Town Moderator approached the board. In order to set the ground rules for public comment. All individuals will have 2 minutes. All individuals will be asked to speak at the microphone. Calling out will not be tolerated. Individuals will need to identify the community that they are representing.

Art McConnell, Cheshire Resident approached the board. Mr. McConnell asked if this was the first time that the Community Officials were presented with the proposal from AAS. Mr. McConnell also asked if it was feasible.

Chairman McGrath stated that this was the first time that that proposal was stated.

Chairman Hoyt: At this time, the Town of Adams has not received any official documents regarding their debt and funding gap. Mr. Fred Balawender, President of Adams Ambulance and Cheshire Resident approached the board. He stated that he has requested funding several times and it was "like hitting a brick wall". Mr. Balawender stated that the offer for the building came in this morning. He said that the proposal looks great and that it will keep the doors open.

Kimberly Slaving, Adams Resident asked how NBEMS in North Adams would respond to calls in Adams or Cheshire.

Chief John Meany Responded that one of the Adams Garage locations in the Town of Adams and the backup location in in the Cheshire Fire House. 80% of the time calls are 5 minutes 36 seconds. The overall response time in their 265 square miles is 7 minutes.

DJ Mulaney Adams Ambulance Service employee, expressed her concern that they cover transfers when NBEMS is out of trucks. Ms. Mulaney stated that they are concerned about lack of vehicles to respond.

Kathy Foster, Adams Resident asked why citizens did not hear anything until November 10th.
Chairman McGrath stated that Adams Ambulance is a private entity. It was asked that they reach out to the communities.

Chairman Hoyt stated that there have been no formal proposals or formal asks to be taken up. There has been no formal notice from Adams Ambulance.

Michelle Francesconi stated that in a meeting there were numerous solutions given to the Adams Ambulance Service regarding marketing themselves. It was suggested that they work to do public outreach. Ms. Francesconi stated that there were very clear steps that were laid out for the Adams Ambulance service. We are here today because those steps were not taken by AAS. Chairman Hoyt offered her support. There were offers for help with Grant Funding. In September 2022 the Board of Selectmen did publicly address this.

Chief Meaney stated that 97% of the calls were handled by NBEMS. 3% went to mutual aid. We all have something to look forward to in the reopening of North Adams Regional Hospital. Turn-around times will be decreasing which will generate better availability.

Ashley Davis, Town of Cheshire. Stated her career with AAS. Ashley stated that they would like a chance to show the communities what they can do.

Amalio Jusino approached the board. The way that Adams Ambulance Employees will remain employed is by regionalization. The reality of the situation is that it is not an “us versus them”. It is about the patient. It is about collaborating. This same process was done with the merger with Village Ambulance. Regionalization generates lower response times and lower costs.

Chairman Hoyt stated that DPH has received official notice from Chief Sean Sanderson of the intended closure of AAS. Christine asked Singh if there was a way to reverse the notification, as the staff are now looking to rescind that notification and remain open.

Member Francesconi made a motion to adjourn the Town of Cheshire Board of Selectmen. The motion was seconded by member Levesque. The motion passed unanimously. The Cheshire Board of Selectmen adjourned at 7:09pm

Member Blanchard made a motion to adjourn the Town of Adams Board of Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Member Duval. The Adams Board of Selectmen adjourned at 7:09pm

Member Saucier made a motion to adjourn the Town of Savoy Board of Selectmen. The motion was seconded by Chairman Kaczowski. The Savoy Board of Selectmen adjourned at 7:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bri Hantman, Recording Secretary.

Approved: 12/26/23 by Cheshire Board of Selectmen

Joint Public Meeting - November 20, 2023

SIGN IN SHEET

Name	Address	Community Name
Whitney Flynn	129 Dean Street	Cheshire
Christine Hoyt	22 Mompsion St.	Adams
Bri Hardman	8 Park St	Adams
Sandra Pansecchi	4 FORSTAK	ADAMS
John Pansecchi	4 Forest Park Ave	ADAMS
LYNN MELCHIORI	34 WELLS PARK	CHESHIRE
Janet Strek	403 Harbor Rd	Cheshire
MARK SEBASTIAN	21 TEMPLE ST	ADAMS
Sarah Pansecchi	47 Temple St	Adams
[illegible]	23 Alger St	Adams
Greg Lucia	8 Oak Lane	Adams
KATELYN KELL	40 Fourier Ave. NA	N. ADAMS
Tina Dobbert	82 Meade Ave	N. Adams
Amanda Tobin	46 Williams St	N. Adams
Angela Swistak	24 Monroe St	N. Adams
PAUL ETHIER NBEMS	24 MONROE ST	N. ADAMS
Joseph E Bordeau	54 South St	Cheshire
Corey J Swistak	105 Eastview Dr	Cheshire
David Lennon	53 Highland Ave	Adams
David Lennon	53 Highland Ave	Adams
Stephanie Bordeau	57 South St.	Cheshire
John Duval	22 Powers St	Adams
Rick Blanchard	102 orchard St	Adams
Bob Bahnweaver	271 Notch Rd	Cheshire
Casey Pease	1 River Rd	Savoy
Donna Kozak	46 School St	Cheshire
Walter Kozak	46 School St	Cheshire
Nancy Kozak	393 Notch Rd	Cheshire
[illegible]		P. HS
Jon F. McNeil	31 HAMPSHIRE DR	CHESHIRE

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SIGN IN SHEET

Name	Address	Community Name
Joseph Nowak	78 E. Hoosac St	Adams
Joey Murphy	2 Kerr Ave	Adams
Kate Balavender	221 Notch Rd	Cheshire
John Meaney	1164 Curtis Street	North Adams
Adam O'Neil	102 Liberty St	North Adams
Gary Sagendorph	25 Vin Hebert Blvd	New Ashford fire
Lisanne Kurandsed	64 Lakeshore Dr	cheshire ma
PJ Pannesco	3 Monica Dr	Lanesboro MA
Betty Simkon	41 Railroads	Cheshire Ma
Chris Biddy	65 W. Mountain Rd	Cheshire
Donald Bury	3 Wilfred Ave	Adams
Robert + Victoria West	1214 Main Road, Savoy, MA ✓	Savoy
Jeff Chapot	101 Sodom Rd, Cheshire	Cheshire
TIM GARNER	150 MEADOWVIEW DR CHESHIRE	CHESHIRE
Joseph Wilk	132 Outlook Cheshire	Cheshire
ART KAUFMAN	115 CURRAN Rd Cheshire	Cheshire
MICHELLE MAHER	18 MAPLEST ADAMS MA 01220	ADAMS
Bryce Stebley	4 North St Adams	Adams
Andy Manzer	18 old farm, Pittsfield MA	Pittsfield
MARK BLODGETT	77 Summer St	Adams
Sue Frost	8 Walling Rd.	Adams
Eric Mallet	6 E Orchard Ter	Adams
DJ Mullany	40 Park St	Adams
Joshua Koch	40 Daly Avenue	Dalton
Sarah Satterthwaite	407 chapel Rd, Savoy ✓	Savoy
Royce Bueller	"	"
Abigail Mullany	40 Park St	Adams
Jeff Quinn	2174 Hoosick WNS1	WNS1
Wendy Norcross	2 Woods Drive, Adams	Adams

Joint Public Meeting - November 20, 2023

SIGN IN SHEET

Name	Address	Community Name
ART McCONNELL	241 OUTLOOK AVE	CHESHIRE
Jen Weber	45 Swamp Rd Lanesborough	Lanesborough
Darlene Podolwicz	319 E Harbor Rd Che	Cheshire
MARK BALAWENDER	459 NOTCH RD CHESHIRE	CHESHIRE
Craig Connor	183 So State Rd	Cheshire
J. Dominic Singh	160 Main St	Northfield
Denise Gregoire	188 Church St	Cheshire
Michael McHugh	45 McHugh Way Nassau NY	Nassau
Elizabeth Sweet	70 meadowview rd.	Cheshire
George Sweet	70 Meadowview Drive	Cheshire
Kim Slavin	18 Maple St	Adams
Sandra Moderski	44 Spring Road	Adams
Patricia Conway Bagley	4 North St.	Adams
David Tarzia	68 meadowview Dr	Cheshire
Lindsay Cuttineau	129 Eastview Dr	Cheshire
R. Scott Evans	8 Walling Rd	Adams
Julie Lech	6 E. Orchard Terr	Adams
Jason Mendonca	33 Dean St	Cheshire
Ashlee Davis	29 E Main St	Cheshire
Hussain Hamdan		HANLEY
Mark San		
Jen McGrath Degeneia	459 Stafford Hill Rd Cheshire	Cheshire
Peter Frank	Florence, MA	
Fred Balawender	Cheshire 924 Notch	Cheshire
Fran Guozdz	Cheshire 311 NORTH ST.	CHESHIRE
David Norcross	2 woods Dr. Adams	Adams
ME Baker	408 Outlook Ave	Cheshire
Jill Reynolds	924 Notch Rd	cheshire
Jeff Reynolds	924 Notch Rd	Cheshire