

Town Council Meeting
June 23, 2022

The June 23, 2022, Town Council Meeting was called to order by Denise L. DiFranco, President, in Foster, RI at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present:
Denise L. DiFranco, President
Heidi Rogers, Vice President
Chris Stone
David Paolino
Cheryl Hawes

Also present:
Kelli Russ, Finance Director
Julia Chretien, Solicitor

- I.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- II.

PUBLIC COMMENT
ANNOUNCEMENTS /

Recognition of Mr. Polouski

Lynne Rider asked about the tree clearing across from the Police Station.
Pam Fontaine asked about Animal Control issues as appearing in the Valley Breeze. She stated that she had asked to be put on the agenda two weeks ago. She also spoke about the trees on Rt. 6.
Denise L. DiFranco presented Mr. Polouski with recognition for his 47 years of service in the Recreation Committee. Mr. Polouski accepted the award and gave a speech.
- III.

CONSENT AGENDA

Meeting Minutes
May 26, 2022 and June 9, 2022
Monthly Reports for April
Building and Zoning, Planning, RIRRC, DPW,
Social Services, Police Dept.

Chris Stone moved, Heidi Rogers seconded, to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.
Discussion: Pam Fontaine asked the council once more to put the department reports online with the agendas the way they do in Scituate. Denise L. DiFranco suggested she speak with Mrs. Dillon about what she is experiencing with Scituate. Mrs. Dillon said she could send them to her.
Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.
- IV.

OLD BUSINESS
EMS: Restructuring

Denise L. DiFranco said the proposal is in the council's packet. Heidi Rogers read the proposal (see Exhibit A). Cheryl Hawes read the response (see Exhibit B).
Denise L. DiFranco said the council had proposed a month-to-month payment of \$30,000 a month. The Ambulance Corps requested 3 months at \$155,000 for the three months. The council compromised with two months at \$50,000 a month. Denise L. DiFranco would like to respond to this and move forward with possible solutions.
Cheryl Hawes moved, David Paolino seconded, to accept their proposal of three months at \$155,000.
Ms. Hawes requested at the same time to have a Special Town Council meeting on Tuesday, June 28th to receive their response.
Discussion: Heidi Rogers said she was not in favor. She said they have stalled us for too long. We have gotten absolutely zero cooperation from them. She had two different rescues lined up and because they stalled, the rescues were sold. She said they have not made any changes.
Chris Stone said he thought that they had made some changes.
Cheryl Hawes said that she basically agrees with Ms. Rogers but they gave Gordy [Brayton] authorization to form a committee and try to work something out. He asked for three months, for the quarter, to give them a chance to work it out. She said that she spoke with him at

length and believes that he is on the same page as she is. She feels they should give him that opportunity.

Heidi Rogers said we did, for a couple of weeks, and what we got back was, "give us the money or we're closing our doors." And we got a letter, a formal letter, with a vote from the Ambulance Corps that they are closing the doors and offering no more services as of July 1st at 6 a.m., they're done.

Denise L. DiFranco and that letter was in response to our offer; would you be willing to give them to Tuesday night? Ms. Rogers said she was not willing to give any more. She can get a rescue here in seven days. She has been working on securing a rescue, contacting current employees for the Ambulance Corps who are willing to come over and work for the town, she has volunteers from Moosup Valley; they aren't in it for the money, this is how we always did it, we're in it for public safety. It has nothing to do with power; it has nothing to do with control. Ms. Rogers is not willing to give them three more months to jerk us around so that we are broke in three months. This is public safety. There are people's lives on the line. She knows that nobody else on the council has been in that position, but she has; she has saved a lot of lives. She is not willing to put somebody else's life at risk, and throw money at bad management. This is stall tactics. We need to do something now. We need to buy a rescue, and she has a whole page of people who are willing to come back once this management is gone.

Denise L. DiFranco said she appreciates what Ms. Rogers has done. Ms. DiFranco also appreciates that they gave Gordy permission to move forward to see what he could come up with. We haven't come up with a solution yet.

Heidi Rogers said she just gave them a solution. She gave them a rescue and people who were willing to staff it.

Denise L. DiFranco said we've given him at least until Tuesday night to move forward.

David Paolino noted that their attorney is not here anymore. He promised information two or three weeks ago and never came through. Kelly [Russ] asked for specific information and so did the council; the attorney said he couldn't obtain it because his client was on vacation. At the following meeting he had no additional information. Here we are one week closer and there's no real back and forth negotiation going on. Mr. Paolino said he spoke to Gordon [Brayton] twice and met with him, and he has a good plan.

Heidi Rogers says she wants to buy the rescue. She wants a motion tonight to purchase this rescue. It can be shipped by June 30th.

David Paolino said he did not think the negotiation was in good faith. Ms. Rogers said and we got a letter saying "we're done" and the employees got a letter saying, "go find another job. Your shifts are all canceled as of July 1st." They have not come to the table.

Cheryl Hawes said if Gordy hadn't stepped up, she would be voting with her. She feels the same way but she wants to give Gordy a chance. We'll give them the three months and see how their vote is then. If it turns negative, then next Tuesday, we go to this plan. Ms. Rogers says they don't have time.

Chris Stone said he wanted everyone to realize that as a council, after July 1st, they are responsible. If somebody dies because we don't have an ambulance--

Ms. Rogers says that none of them are being offered to us. If they close, they're still not giving us the rescues. Chris Stone said they don't know that. Ms. Rogers asked if they want to take that chance? Chris Stone said there's no good answer.

Lynne Rider said at the last meeting Gordy and the other people were very up front that two months were not going to cut it. It wasn't possible to get that far that quickly. She also said, if it's stalling tactics, to what end? How does that gain anything? All of these people have been pillars of the community. She doesn't think that they are out to get the town. At the end of three months, there may be some movement and she can see why they want to keep it quiet. Denise L. DiFranco said no one here thinks they are out to get the town. Ms. Rider says then that she doesn't understand the power thing.

David Paolino asked what the magic number of three months is. Where are they going to be in three months? He asked if there was any guarantee and they said, "none."

Ms. Rider said that they said there would be something.

She thought there was a contingency plan to hire a company until the council got all their ducks in a row.

Catherine Bay confirmed that they had [seen] no financials—a click of a button in Quickbooks—easy, simple. But you're going to throw \$150,000 at them without this? Where is it? Those should be here tonight. We know what's going to happen because we feel like at Station 3 we are constantly kicked in the teeth. Denise L. DiFranco asked how? Ms. Bay said that we are offering our station for a rescue, we are offering our personnel, we are offering our bunkroom to house these people. We are putting it out there. We are paying the electric in that building. We've got the internet in that building; we pay for it. The building is totally insured. And now we have no financials and you are going to vote to give them \$150,000 for three months and we don't see anything.

She wants to see the financials before any vote is taken.

David Paolino said he had asked if they had people in the wings [at Station 3] ready to go and commit and they said, "No." Has that changed? Heidi Rogers said it was never meant for them to man the rescues.

Cheryl Hawes said she still thought that was a great idea.

David Paolino said they're not mutually exclusive.

Charles Stockwell, Winsor Road, Captain South Foster Fire Dept., liaison to the Engineering Board. Mr.

Stockwell said Gordy has been doing everything possible. He has been living this. He's making multiple phone calls to the Ambulance people; he's meeting with them and with us. He is fully committed to this. He called me this morning and he is very angry because he feels his neck had been stepped on by the people he is negotiating with. The three months in the eyes of those who are working to find a solution is not intended to negotiate Station 4 back into existence. Station 4 has shown that it is not going to continue, now or three months from now. He thinks that what they have in mind was brought up in a meeting six months ago, where Station 3 houses a rescue and the town runs and staffs it. When you look at the list of things that have to take place in order to run an ambulance legally, three months is probably not enough. Heidi Rogers said we already have authorization from the Dept. of Health. All we need is a transport license, which we can get the next day. If we get that truck, it is going to be licensed the next day. Mr. Stockwell asked who is running it? Mr. Stockwell said that in 90 days they have a shot; nine days, he doesn't think so. But we've made multiple calls towards that. We did find three retired municipal EMS Directors who are very interested in the position. We have been doing the legwork. They need to sit together and make a plan. He thinks the lack of transparency has led to this point. He thinks we need to be working about the town taking it over, hiring a director, getting a used rescue—that needs to happen. He

does not believe that three months from now we can rely on Station 4 coming back.

Cheryl Hawes asked Mr. Stockwell what he thought they would do with those rescues. Mr. Stockwell said there is a dissolution plan in their bylaws. If they dissolve, they have to liquidate all their assets and donate that to other 501c organizations. He was told that they were amenable to donating one truck to South Foster.

Denise L. DiFranco said her motion would be the change it to \$155,000 for three months—not per month—and they would provide documents. We would still request that.

Chris Stone said the information they have is that Tom [Walden] has resigned. How do we get the information we need?

Helene Dolce, said she was impressed with Mr. Stockwell's proposal but she couldn't help thinking about what she heard last week about someone on the Ambulance Corps stealing money. Denise L. DiFranco said it wasn't them. Ms. Dolce said she believed it was. Chris Stone said she was talking about him asking them if they had any more money. He didn't accuse anybody of stealing anything. They gave a proposal in good faith. She is hearing that there's going to be a transition for the next three months. As far as she is concerned, he holds all the cards. She would agree to allow this ambulance company to transition forward, be transparent, and trust the ambulance corps.

Deb Lusignan, Central Pike, said last week they said three months. Denise L. DiFranco said two months. Ms.

Lusignan said then everything changed for them, and it turned upside down for them. Ms. Lusignan said so of course the employees left. People from other places offered them money to leave. David Paolino asked who. Ms. Lusignan said from the council. Heidi Rogers said of course, so they wouldn't lose their jobs. Denise L. DiFranco said no matter which way it went, we would give them first refusal. Ms. Lusignan explained that they said that without funding, the doors cannot open. Heidi Rogers said that is not exactly what they said. Chris Stone agreed with her.

Ms. Lusignan said they were misquoted in the paper and you knew that. Ms. Rogers said the letter was very clear. Ms. Lusignan said there's more to the story that meets the eye. Why would the employees stay? What about the volunteers? Gordy stuck his neck out to make it work, and then the next day, nope. So we lose employees, we lose the treasurer.

Denise L. DiFranco said she would agree but that was internal to the ambulance corps. It's not that they didn't want to negotiate, it's that there's nobody left now. Chris Stone said that they didn't negotiate earlier.

Heidi Rogers said she reviewed it with Kelli. What was in the budget was exactly what we offered them every month, exactly what they asked for in the budget. We offered them exactly what they needed, and they said no, and she does not know why.

Denise L. DiFranco said we could discuss this again and again. There is a motion on the floor.

Kelli Russ said she felt there was no good answer, but what happened is that she looked at the budget they presented. When they originally presented it, it was in .pdf form and there was a bottom line. So we got more details and the breakdown of the payroll is \$649,000, but on the budget it was requested it was \$670,000. It was very specific that there was an extra \$20,000 for overtime for people who take leave and benefits so the salaries were over. We gave them exactly what they needed. She

even said to them, you might need more money up front, you might need that money because of their insurance, that's why we wanted to see the details so we can ascertain when they pay their bills. We didn't get it. That said, if you give them this money, and they end up closing in a month or two or three months, and they have a surplus, where does that go? Because she can almost guarantee that unless things change drastically, it's not going to come to us. So what happens with that if you are funding them at the level they ask for. Denise L. DiFranco asked to that point, can we state that if monies are left over, we get it back? Julia Chretien said to amend the motion. Kelli Russ also explained that part of this is Federal money and you have to verify it.

Cheryl Hawes withdrew her main motion. David Paolino withdrew his second.

Cheryl Hawes moved, David Paolino seconded, to fund the Ambulance Corps for three months at \$155,000 a month on a month-by-month basis for three months with detailed reporting of balance sheets and income statements, and at the end of three months should they decide to close their doors, or prior to three months, the money that we issued them shall be returned to the town.

Discussion: Heidi Rogers said she would not be voting for it because we have seen no financial reports. Denise L. DiFranco said she would because she has faith in Gordy. Cheryl Hawes said she has faith as well. Chris Stone said he agreed to a point because they are not responding to him. David Paolino said he would vote for it to support Gordy. Cheryl Hawes said she appreciates what Heidi has done.

Motion passed 3 – 1 – 1.

David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L.

DiFranco, aye; Heidi Rogers, no. Chris Stone abstained.

Cheryl Hawes moved, David Paolino seconded, that this proposal has a deadline of Tuesday the 28, 2022, at 6 p.m.

Motion passed 5 - 0.

Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

Heidi Rogers said she has researched rescues in anticipation of not having a rescue. She found a 2015 freightliner with 170,000 miles. The asking price was \$45,000. The dealer said he would take \$3500 less to ship it up here. He will incorporate a stretcher in it for \$7800. If he does not have one, she has found one in Pennsylvania. The ambulance is in Tampa, Florida. This all comes under the \$55,000 allowed. She requested a motion. Cheryl Hawes asked who is going to look at it? Ms. Rogers said she could get an inspector in Florida to look at it.

Heidi Rogers moved, Chris Stone seconded, to purchase an ambulance contingent on securing a certified mechanic go out there tomorrow to look at it to pass inspection.

Discussion: Deb Lusignan asked if they were going down there. Denise L. DiFranco said, no, they would ship it. Ms. Lusignan said there would be more miles. Would it be a certified EMS? You can't just send it to any mechanic. Ms. Rogers said yes you can, they will check the brakes, tires, engine, transmission all the lights, the AC, all the panels. Sal said they should get a warranty. Ms. Rogers said they would get an after-market warranty.

Lynne Rider said Florida must have state inspection stations. Denise L. DiFranco yes, we would use that.

Charles Stockwell said should something fall through, towns in this State do have backup rescues that they may

be willing to lend out. As far as the inspection with the truck goes, the only thing that might be a problem is software because the inspections usually come with a special coding. He would ask specific questions in EMS inspection.

Motion passed 5 - 0.

Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

V. NEW BUSINESS
Zoning Board Appointment

Denise L. DiFranco said next is a Zoning Board appointment for an Alternate member position which would expire in December. There are two people interested.

Cheryl Hawes moved, Denise L. DiFranco seconded, to appoint Rudolf DiCenzo.

Cheryl Hawes said the reason she suggested Mr. DiCenzo is that the other applicant, Steve Bellucci is not on the computer ever, doesn't do emails, and Mike would have a hard time keeping him up to date.

Motion failed 1 - 5.

Heidi Rogers, no; Chris Stone, no; David Paolino, no; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, no.

Heidi Rogers moved, David Paolino seconded, to appoint Steve Bellucci as an alternate on the Zoning Board.

Motion passed 5 - 0.

Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION
PURSUANT TO RIGL 42-46-5a (2) Collective Bargaining
Local 3422, International Assn. of Firefighters

Heidi Rogers moved, Chris Stone seconded, to go into Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 for a work session regarding Collective Bargaining / Negotiations or Litigation according to RIGL 42-46-5-a (2) and to reconvene into open session and to further keep the minutes of said meeting closed and the minutes of all executive sessions held previous to this meeting remain closed in accordance with provisions in RIGL 42-46-4 & 5. No discussion.

Motion passed 5-0.

The council reconvened in to Open Session at p.m. Denise L. DiFranco announced that one vote was taken to approve the contract for Local 3422.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Submitted by,

Susan M. Dillon, Town Clerk

As discussed at the Town Council meeting last night, the Town Council's proposal to the Foster Ambulance Corps. is as follows:

1. The Town would provide \$50,000.00 per month for two (2) months (July 2022 & August 2022), these payments will be in two (2) separate installments, not a lump sum;
2. The Foster Ambulance Corps. will provide the documents requested by the Town yesterday afternoon, specifically, the Quicken Balance Sheet Detail for the fiscal year-to-date (July 1, 2021 to present) and the Quicken Profit and Loss Detail Report for the fiscal year-to-date (July 1, 2021 to present);
3. The Foster Ambulance Corps. will provide the Town with the complete Quicken Balance Sheet Detail and Quicken Profit and Loss Detail Report for the complete 2022 fiscal year as soon as practicable;
4. The Foster Ambulance Corps. will provide a detailed breakdown to the Town Council for the July 21, 2022 Town Council Meeting, either in the above-described manner(s) or a more detailed manner, of how the July 2022 \$50,000.00 installment was spent through July 21, 2022, and a projected and/or expected breakdown of how the remaining funds will be spent through the final ten (10) days of July;
5. Upon receipt and review of the detailed breakdown(s) of the July 2022 installment, the Town will forward the August 2022 installment; and
6. The Foster Ambulance Corps. will provide a detailed breakdown to the Town Council either in the above-described manner(s) or a more detailed manner, of how the August 2022 \$50,000.00 installment was spent, for a Town Council meeting occurring during the month of August, date to be determined.

Foster Ambulance Corps



P.O. Box 62 Foster, RI 0282
Phone (401) 647-0498
Fax (401) 647-2728



To: David R. Petrarca Jr.

From: Foster Ambulance Corps

Date: June 21, 2022

A vote of the Foster Ambulance Corps' Executive Board has been taken and 8 of 9 (one member not available) vote nay to accept the recent offer from the Town Council of Foster to pay for our 911 Emergency Services. The vote included: 1st quarter payment is not an option at this point as employee retainment cannot be committed to. Given that the town is unable to pay for our services as requested, we will be ending our service of responding to 911 Emergency Calls as of 0600 hours July 1, 2022. Please notify the Town Council on our behalf.

Thank you,

Virginia Colwell
Commander
Foster Ambulance Corps
401-408-7991