

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR HILLSBOROUGH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

1. Why did the Township of Hillsborough issue Request for Proposals for Emergency Medical Services?

In order to answer this question, it is important to address some of the history pertaining to the provision of Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) within the Township. In 1955, the Hillsborough First Aid and Rescue Squad was incorporated within the State of New Jersey. The stated purpose of the corporation was to provide EMS for the benefit of the people of the Township of Hillsborough. For decades the Hillsborough First Aid and Rescue Squad operated as a volunteer non-for-profit corporation providing EMS within the Township of Hillsborough. In 2012, the Hillsborough First Aid and Rescue Squad was reincorporated under the name Hillsborough Rescue Squad (“HRS”).

As with many volunteer EMS organizations, it became difficult for the HRS to obtain enough volunteers to provide EMS within the Township on a 24/7 basis. Consequently, in 1988, David Gwin incorporated a second entity known as Hillsborough Emergency Medical Services Corporation (“HEMS”) to act in conjunction with the HRS to provide emergency medical services within the Township. Unlike the volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians (“EMTs”) of HRS, HEMS EMTs are paid employees. The purpose of HEMS was to provide paid EMTs to cover those time periods wherein the volunteers of HRS were unavailable. Over the years, the organizations began to operate as one under common leadership. For the most part, the volunteers of HRS gave way to paid employees of HEMS.

As the HRS volunteers gave way to paid employees of HEMS, the Township continued to fund these organizations. On average, the Township contributes over \$300,000 a year to fund the operations HEMS and HRS. The Township purchases vehicles and equipment used by HEMS and HRS. The Township pays for the maintenance of vehicles and the fuel used for their operation. The Township pays vendors providing services to HEMS and HRS. The Township also makes a monetary contribution of \$52,500 to both HEMS and HRS each year for a total annual contribution of \$105,000. In addition to these financial contributions from the Township, HEMS bills patients for the services they provide. If HEMS and HRS respond to a call for EMS within the Township, the patient will be billed for the service provided. HEMS and HRS also derive revenue from charitable contributions.

In 2014, the Township Committee made the decision to retain an outside consultant, Fitch & Associates, to perform an EMS Assessment. The EMS Assessment addressed the services currently being provided, the needs of the Hillsborough community and available options going forward. The EMS Assessment was provided to HEMS and HRS. The Township expressed its desire that these organizations meet the performance standards contained in the EMS Assessment and come up with a plan to become financially sustainable. The Township some two (2) years later has not been convinced that HEMS and HRS has been able to do so. Under the circumstances and based on advice from legal counsel, the Township felt compelled to explore available options for the provision of EMS within the Township through the competitive contracting process of the Local Public Contracts Law.

2. What type of Emergency Medical Services did the Request for Proposals cover?

HEMS and HRS provide Basic Life Support emergency medical services for the Township. It is important to note the difference between Advanced Life Support (ALS) and Basic Life Support (BLS) emergency medical services. ALS units are staffed with trained paramedics and equipment to address life threatening emergencies. In the event of a reported life threatening emergency, an ALS unit is immediately dispatched. BLS ambulances are staffed with Emergency Medical Technicians (“EMTs”) and they respond to all EMS calls. The RFP was for BLS emergency medical services and there will be no change in the provision of ALS emergency medical services.

HEMS and HRS also provide standby EMS with the Township for fire, rehabilitation services for firefighters, flooding, hazardous emergency calls, community events, school sponsored sporting and other events and local youth and nonprofit organization sporting and other events. The RFP issued by the Township covered these standby EMS as well.

3. What responses did the Township of Hillsborough receive to the Request for Proposals for Emergency Medical Services?

Robert Wood Johnson Health Network (“RWJ”) was the only entity to respond to the Request for Proposals (“RFP”) issued by the Township. HEMS and HRS did not submit responses to the RFP. It has come to the attention of the Township that HEMS and HRS made the decision not to respond to the RFP based on their interpretation of the RFP specifications and their belief they could not meet certain specifications contained therein. The Township disputes their interpretation. HEMS and HRS had the same opportunity as any other provider to submit a response to the RFP and they could have done so.

4. What was the cost proposal submitted by Robert Wood Johnson Health Network?

The proposal submitted by RWJ indicates they will provide BLS emergency medical services and standby emergency medical services within Hillsborough at no cost to the Township or its taxpayers. RWJ will provide all the required vehicles, equipment and personnel to provide these services. RWJ will derive its revenue from the billing of patients and their insurance carriers for services provided. This is similar to HEMS who also billed patients and their insurance carriers for services provided.

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5. What will happen to the volunteer Hillsborough Rescue Squad if Robert Wood Johnson Health Network is awarded a contract?

The Township is interested in preserving the volunteer HRS. The RFP issued by the Township specifically expressed this interest and requires the successful contractor to cooperate and incorporate HRS into their overall EMS plan. RWJ has agreed to this provision of the RFP. The Township however is concerned the volunteer HRS has already given way to a paid squad employed by HEMS. The Township nonetheless remains committed to supporting a volunteer HRS in the event there is sufficient volunteer interest.

6. What will be the response time and the level of service if the Township switches to Robert Wood Johnson Health Network?

The Township will not accept any reduction in response time or level of service if the Township switches to RWJ. The RFP requires RWJ to meet a national average BLS response time of 10 minutes and 59 seconds. There is a misconception among some that RWJ would be responding to calls from New Brunswick or Somerville. In order to meet the Township's specified response time, RWJ plans to commit two (2) ambulances to Hillsborough Township 24/7 with an additional two (2) ambulances on the borders to the north and west of the Township as back up, as well as, thirteen (13) other ambulances throughout Somerset and Middlesex Counties that are deployed through a Regional Communication Center to maintain coverage as the need arises. As set forth above, there will be no change in ALS emergency medical services for life threatening emergencies. The ALS emergency medical services will be provided in the same manner as always.

7. Does Robert Wood Johnson Health Network provide emergency medical services for other municipalities?

RWJ is licensed by the State of New Jersey, Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services, as a provider of basic life support, advanced life support and specialty care transport services, as well as, operation of a Regional Communication Center. RWJ currently provides emergency medical services on behalf of New Brunswick, Piscataway, Franklin, Manville, South Bound Brook, Raritan Borough, Bridgewater, Far Hills, Bedminster, East Windsor and Hamilton.

8. Does the Township intend to privatize any other Departments of the Township?

There is a misconception amongst some that HEMS and HRS are Departments of the Township. HEMS and HRS are not Departments of the Township. HEMS and HRS are private non-profit entities that provide EMS for a fee. RWJ is also non-profit corporation that provides EMS for a fee.

9. Did the Township's consultant have a conflict of interest?

In 2014, the Township Committee made the decision to retain an outside consultant, Fitch & Associates, to perform an EMS Assessment. Fitch & Associates is a nationally recognized consulting firm that specializes in EMS & Ambulance Consulting, City and County Consulting,

Fire Consulting and Air Medical Consulting. Fitch & Associates was in fact one of the consulting firms recommended by Chief David Gwin of HEMS and HRS. The purpose of the EMS Assessment was to address the services currently being provided, the needs of the Hillsborough community and available options going forward. The EMS Assessment was provided to HEMS and HRS. The Township expressed its desire that these organizations meet the performance standards contained in the EMS Assessment and come up with a plan to become financially sustainable.

The Township some two (2) years later was not convinced that HEMS and HRS were able to do so. Thus, a decision was made to explore available options for the provision of EMS within the Township through the competitive contracting process of the Local Public Contracts Law. The Township received one (1) response to the RFP that being from RWJ. Fitch & Associates provides consulting services to RWJ. This is not particularly surprising since Fitch & Associates is a nationally recognized consulting firm for EMS and Ambulance Consulting. Some individuals suggest this situation raises a conflict of interest. There was certainly no conflict of interest two (2) years ago when the Township contracted with Fitch & Associates to perform an EMS Assessment and a conflict of interest is not now created two (2) years later by the mere fact that Fitch & Associates provides consulting services to an EMS provider that responded to the RFP.

10. How can I obtain a copy of the Request for Proposals, Robert Wood Johnson Health Network Response and Fitch & Associates EMS Assessment?

A copy of these documents can be obtained by submitting a request to the Township Clerk pursuant to the Open Public Records Act. A copy of these documents can also be obtained by visiting the Township of Hillsborough website at www.hillsborough-nj.org.