



Truro Talks

TRURO'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

January 2023 Edition

Truro Accelerates Timeline to Move Forward with EMS Service Provision Changes

Truro Fire Department Chief, Timothy Collins

The Town of Truro is accelerating its transition plan for absorbing emergency medical service transports currently provided by the Lower Cape Ambulance Association (LCAA). LCAA is a regional ambulance service that employs EMTs and paramedics to transport patients to Cape Cod Hospital from Truro and Provincetown. EMTs are certified to provide basic life support (BLS) and paramedics are certified to provide advanced life support (ALS). In early January, the town received word from LCAA that it will cease operations on July 1, 2023, after 86 years as the uncertainty of emergency medical service provision on the Outer Cape made the projection of proper staffing levels difficult for LCAA and impacted the organization's ability to commit to providing the level of service required.

While the timing of the decision to cease operations came earlier than the Town of Truro expected, the decision itself has been one that the town has prepared for in recent years. A general override to add (4) full-time paramedics was included on the 2020 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. It was deferred at that time, but the explanation related to the article includes a statement that "In anticipation of changes to the provision of EMS services in Truro, the Board recommends adding four (4) permanent firefighter/paramedics in Fiscal Year 2021. This four additional personnel will allow the department to operate three-person shifts, which will help the staffing levels meet community demand if contracted EMS service providers are no longer able to operate."

A similar article and related ballot question were presented to voters at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting and were approved. The \$355,765 override increased staffing levels from nine full-time employees to thirteen, with the four positions approved in the override specifically described as "firefighter/paramedics." This article again described the importance of increasing staffing levels to meet demand if contracted EMS service providers are no longer able to operate.

In February 2021, town staff prepared a request for District Local Technical Assistance funds to perform a study that would explore regionalization opportunities and best practices as the towns of Truro, Wellfleet and Provincetown collaboratively determine long-term solutions for Outer Cape fire and emergency medical services that meet the present and future needs of the communities. As explained in the grant request, "All three towns provide mutual aid to each other, and as such, we recognize that changes to one community's service model impact the



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other two communities. It is critical to approach the planning of our respective departments in a collaborative way to ensure the safety of our residents, visitors, and first responders; to address regional hiring shortages and issues of turnover, and to meet these needs in the most cost-effective manner.” This study was precipitated by the Town of Provincetown’s decision to explore providing its own EMS service through the Provincetown Fire Department, raising concerns within the Town of Truro of a potentially significant increase in its contractual obligation to LCAA.

As the lead community on the grant, Truro received the funding to pursue the requested study and by the end of 2021, Capital Strategic Solutions was selected as the consultant to complete the study.

In April 2022, the study was completed ([available here](#)) with various levels of participation from the three towns and LCAA. It identified the significant challenges facing the Outer Cape including the significant seasonal population increase, the significant distance to the nearest hospital (resulting in ambulances being out of service on hospital runs for four hours sometimes during peak season), and the staffing challenges that we face due to the rural nature and high housing costs of our area. The study also provided options and recommended short-term and long-term paths forward for Truro which included the recommendation to hire eight additional paramedics. Truro voters approved the hiring of the first four paramedics of this recommendation at the 2022 Annual Town Meeting and 2022 Annual Town Election.

Now, after months of meetings with LCAA and Provincetown, and considering the new timeline for LCAA to cease operations, the town will need to hire the remaining four paramedics to prepare to absorb the EMS service provision previously provided by LCAA. The town will require an administrative/ licensing position to manage the increase in administrative tasks associated with the startup of an ALS transport service including overseeing the ambulance billing process, creating and overseeing an EMS QA/QI program, and supporting ALS licensing and affiliation agreements. This position and the four additional firefighter-paramedics will be funded through the approximately \$430,000 budgeted for LCAA services and the estimated \$230,000 annual receipts in ambulance billing revenue previously captured by LCAA that will eventually become a revenue source for the town. Town voters will likely consider a modest article requesting approximately \$150,000 to cover increased capital costs as well as additional salaries for increased staffing.

Aside from the necessity of being able to provide emergency medical service transports in Truro, the addition of this staff will improve firefighter and community safety by improving fireground safety and improving the delivery of suppression activities as evidenced by the 2010 NIST



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Residential Fire Staffing Study. This would most certainly lead to an improved Insurance Services Office Public Protection Classification rating for the fire department, leading to a reduction in homeowners insurance premiums for residents.

While the timeframe for implementing our emergency medical services provision plan is shorter than we would like, we are committed to ensuring that our community continues to receive high-quality care and trust that all our planning and preparedness will help smooth this transition. We continue to recruit for the existing firefighter-paramedic positions in Truro and encourage qualified candidates to visit www.truro-ma.gov/jobs to learn more about the positions and the \$3,000 sign-on bonus being offered.

Sincerely,
Chief, Timothy Collins
Truro Fire Department