

**MUNICIPAL OFFICE**

1140 Minnesota Avenue
PO Box 700227
Oostburg, WI 53070-0227

(920) 564-3214 PHONE
(920) 564-3596 FAX

ALLEN WRUBBEL

President
(920) 207-0255 CELL
allen.wrubbel@oostburg.org

JILL E. LUDENS

Clerk / Treasurer
(920) 564-3214 PHONE
Jill.ludens@oostburg.org

DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS

1140 Minnesota Avenue
PO Box 700227
Oostburg, WI 53070-0227

(920) 564-3844 PHONE
(920) 564-6084 FAX

JOEL TERNES

Director of Public Works
(920) 946-7363

GREG LEMAHIEU

Utilities Supervisor
(920) 946-0952

JEFFREY GABRIELSE

Building Inspector
(920) 946-4270 CELL

VILLAGE OF OOSTBURG EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE UPDATE

First, and foremost, the Oostburg Village Board would like to sincerely thank all current and former members of Oostburg Ambulance for their many hours of service and selfless sacrifice to Oostburg and our surrounding areas. Your life-saving efforts have been sincerely appreciated by the Village Board and the covered communities.

The Oostburg Village Board would like to explain what went into the decision to turn over 9-1-1 medical services to Orange Cross. This was not an easy decision to make and, as you will see, was at least 4 years in the making. For about the first 40 years of their existence, Oostburg Ambulance had functioned with very little oversight or involvement from the Oostburg Village Board. In actuality, occasionally the Board would request an appearance from Oostburg Ambulance to merely be updated with how things were going. That has changed greatly in the last several years.

On May 9, 2016 the Director of Oostburg Ambulance appeared before the Oostburg Village Board to report on the financial position of the Oostburg Ambulance. The Director also requested permission to offer a financial incentive for volunteers to cover week-end on-call hours.

Meeting Minutes: http://www.oostburg.org/uploads/2/3/1/6/23162296/2016-5-0_regular_board_meeting.pdf

In Fall of 2017, the Oostburg Village Board needed to budget \$15,000 for 2018 to provide short-term financial assistance to Oostburg Ambulance due to poor business practices within the Oostburg Ambulance organization. As a consequence of these poor business procedures, the Oostburg Village Board stepped in and hired a 3rd party billing organization to take over the patient billing for Oostburg Ambulance. This 3rd party billing organization takes a percentage of what they collect, which is another expense incurred by Oostburg Ambulance that decreases their overall income.

On November 20, 2018, on their Facebook page, Oostburg Ambulance posted that they were very close to having to close their doors due to a shortage of volunteers. On November 21, 2018 TMJ4 ran an article that called out this dire need shared by Oostburg Ambulance. Due to this serious request, on December 10, 2018 the Village Board voted to authorize the Village president to sign a letter of intent with Orange Cross Ambulance. This letter of intent was requesting Orange Cross to investigate and propose a plan to cover 9-1-1 medical services in place of Oostburg Ambulance. This action was taken to ensure that the villages of Oostburg, Cedar Grove and the surrounding townships would not be without 9-1-1 coverage. Oostburg Ambulance was able to recruit additional members enabling them to continue the service to the

VILLAGE OF OOSTBURG

www.oostburg.org

Village of Oostburg and surrounding area, thereby eliminating the need for an Orange Cross plan.

Oostburg Ambulance Facebook Post:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2095127257206699&id=512671178785656

TMJ4 Article:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2096620570390701&id=512671178785656

Meeting Minutes: http://www.oostburg.org/uploads/2/3/1/6/23162296/12-10-2018_regular_board_minutes.pdf

On, Monday, January 14, 2019 Oostburg Village Board approved the revised organizational structure of Oostburg Ambulance. Wendell Mentink was appointed as the Oostburg Ambulance Financial Officer. The position of Operations Director was also established. Both of these positions were to be paid \$8,000 yearly along with workmen's comp. It took Wendell close to a year to straighten out the accounts.

Meeting Minutes: http://www.oostburg.org/uploads/2/3/1/6/23162296/01-14-2019_regular_board_meeting_minutes.pdf

In the fall of 2019, members of Oostburg Ambulance came to the Village Board again with a concern about the shortage of volunteers to staff Oostburg Ambulance. They presented a proposal to hire two part-time EMTs to fill 45 hours of daytime call time and to have a presence at the station. Representatives of the Oostburg Village Board set-up the Oostburg Ambulance Support Commission. This Support commission included representatives from Oostburg, Cedar Grove and the townships. This commission agreed to fund the proposal at a cost of \$43,000. It became evident that 2 part-time employees could not cover 45 hours so a third part-time employee was sought to help cover the 45 hours. The ambulance was unable to use all the funds they received for hiring part time employees as it took them sometime to fill all three part-time positions. For the past several months 1 of the part time EMTs has not taken any on-call hours. As of January 1, 2021, one of the remaining part-time employees will be leaving for another position. So the staffing problems continue.

Meeting Minutes: http://www.oostburg.org/uploads/2/3/1/6/23162296/10-14-2019_village_board_meeting.pdf

Since Oostburg Ambulance's inception over 45 years ago, the Village of Oostburg has paid for the utilities and provided the facilities rent free. In the fall of 2019, the Village rented a nearby apartment so that ambulance volunteers that resided outside the Oostburg Village limits would have a place to stay during their overnight on-call hours. Currently, the Oostburg Ambulance has 20 – 25 volunteers on their roster. Only seven of those volunteers reside within the Oostburg Village limits.

In October 2020, the ambulance board minutes stated, ***“We are struggling to fill hours and there is concern with what that will look like over the next month.” “We can’t keep going the way we are.”*** Therefore: ***“The Oostburg Ambulance Board of Directors recommends that the Village of Oostburg Board starts looking into other alternatives to provide emergency medical care for their residents along with the residents of the towns they serve”***.

As a Village Board, we looked at the pattern of Oostburg Ambulance struggling to cover their on-call hours. Each time Oostburg Ambulance approached the Village Board for help their request increased in magnitude. This led the Village Board to seriously consider the long term viability of Oostburg Ambulance. Additionally, the Board members were hearing comments that volunteer ambulances in other parts of the state were also struggling with staffing issues.

In accordance with the Oostburg Ambulance statement, (***“The Oostburg Ambulance Board of Directors recommends that the Village of Oostburg Board starts looking into other alternatives to provide emergency medical care for their residents along with the residents of the towns they serve”***), the Village Board began looking into options for continuing quality emergency care for our communities. The Oostburg Village Board is concerned with the care and safety of each individual in and around our community. We wanted to make sure that everyone is safe and covered in the community.

One option was to transition to a First Responder (non-transport) unit and have Orange Cross paramedics respond from current stations and transport. Most of the county operates this way. Howards Grove, Town of Sheboygan, Glenbeulah, Elkhart Lake, Cascade, Town of Sheboygan Falls, and Town of Wilson all have First Responders and Orange Cross ambulance does the transport.

A second option was presented by Oostburg Ambulance to hire two full-time employees to cover the daytime hours and continue to seek out additional volunteers for the evening hours. This would cost taxpayers over \$150,000 per year.

Since Orange Cross is already dispatched to over 160 (40%) of Oostburg Ambulance’s 400 calls per year, we decided to reach out to them as a third option to get their input on our situation. After being provided with information from Oostburg Ambulance and Sheboygan County Sheriffs Dept., Orange Cross made a proposal to the Village Board as to the service they could provide to our area.

On October 12, 2020, the Oostburg Village Board voted to authorize the Village President and the Safety Committee to enter into negotiations with Orange Cross to provide full-time ambulance service in the Village of Oostburg. The Village clerk was instructed to set up an emergency meeting for October 13, 2020 with Oostburg Ambulance, Village of Cedar Grove and the surrounding townships to explain the action the Oostburg Village Board had taken the night before. This meeting was called because the Oostburg Village Board recognized the impact it would have on the territory covered by Oostburg Ambulance. At this meeting the Orange Cross

Ambulance proposal was presented and the reason the Village Board had taken that action.

Village Board Meeting Minutes:

http://www.oostburg.org/uploads/2/3/1/6/23162296/10-12-2020_regular_board_meeting.pdf

The Orange Cross proposal was published in the November 19, 2020 issue of the Lakeshore Weekly along with a notice of an informational meeting to be held on November 23, 2020. This information was also posted on the Village of Oostburg Facebook page. At the November 23 informational meeting, Orange Cross Ambulance presented their proposal and answered questions. This meeting was held in the Oostburg High School auditorium to allow for greater attendance.

As per the Orange Cross contract, Orange Cross will have a unit positioned in the Oostburg station between 7 AM and 9 PM which accounts for 78% of the call volume. The ambulance will be staffed with at least 1 paramedic and an EMT during those hours every day. Oostburg Ambulance currently is an Advanced EMT level. Having paramedics on **EVERY** call is a benefit to the community. Between 9 PM and 7AM they would respond from another station. Orange Cross would amend its system status management plan to account for a response to Oostburg. About 95 calls (22%) per year occur at night or an average of just under 2 calls per week.

Oostburg Ambulance has an average of 3.73 minutes en route time (which is the time from the initial page until the time they leave the station). Orange Cross, by county contract, must be en route within 2 minutes. This proposal **WILL DECREASE** response time during the day.

The Village initially proposed to provide the station and an ambulance for Orange Cross to use and Orange Cross would provide the staff. Due to legal concerns and insurance reasons, it was decided to sell Orange Cross the ambulance for a small fee. We have a **5-year agreement** with Orange Cross and if anything changes the terms of the agreement, Oostburg will have the ambulance returned to them. Between the hours of 9PM and 7AM the Oostburg Ambulance vehicle will remain in the Oostburg station.

The agreement with Orange Cross would be at **NO COST** to the village. The current #1 Oostburg ambulance will remain stationed in Oostburg and serve the people of the area.

The Village will transition our current service (at the village's expense) to a first responder unit. This would be a true first responder unit set up where the members would have the necessary equipment to respond directly to the scene from their home **DECREASING** response time and be able to assist the ambulance. This is the way most of the county now operates.

In the event that the Village of Oostburg is unable to get a first responder unit up and running before January 4th, 2021, The Village and Orange Cross will work

together to make sure there is **NO DISCONTINUATION** of initial first responder service from the Oostburg station.

The Village will keep the 2nd ambulance for the first responder unit to use for football games and fire standby or anything else it deems appropriate. It could also be used for a backup unit if another ambulance in the area goes down for repair.

Per county protocol, all emergency calls are categorized as A, B, C, D or E level. Orange Cross already is dispatched with Oostburg Ambulance to all the three highest level calls. One of the consequences of this protocol is that it takes two ambulances (Oostburg & Orange Cross) out of service for the duration of the call or until it is determined one is not needed. The Orange Cross proposal would only take 1 ambulance out of service for these calls.

Through the years Oostburg Ambulance has been staffed by dedicated and trained personnel. As times have changed the number of volunteers has decreased along with the number of hours they are available to serve. The current OA staff remains dedicated to their mission. Currently a small portion of this staff is carrying the majority of the on-call hours. A 365 day period represents 8,760 hours. With two people on-call at all times this amounts to 17,520 hours. Three volunteers have currently accounted for covering about 9,500 hours (54%). This left 46% (8,060 hours) to be covered by the rest of the crew. Long term this is unsustainable and Oostburg Ambulance recognized this. So, Oostburg Ambulance requested to hire 2 full time employees to relieve some of this over-work. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that this will be adequate staffing one or more years in the future, since their previous requests for help continued to increase in magnitude. As a result of this uncertainty the Village Board felt that in the long run the Orange Cross proposal would be more sustainable and less uncertain.

The Oostburg Village Board did not set out to disband Oostburg Ambulance, we were merely pursuing options to find the help they requested from us. The Orange Cross proposal provides assurance of long term viability since they are under contract with Sheboygan County to provide 9-1-1 medical services in our county. Volunteer ambulances in our area and across the state are all struggling to recruit and retain volunteers.

The Oostburg Village Board would like to again thank all present and past Oostburg Ambulance volunteers for their time of service. Without your dedication Oostburg Ambulance could not have served our community this long. Frequently you served unheralded and without fanfare. We recognize that sacrifices were made to fulfill your commitment. For that commitment, your community thanks you as does the Oostburg Village Board.

Respectively,

The Oostburg Village Board

