EMS Task Force- July 11th 2017

Summary of recording with Mark Butler-

Mark Butler- Practices law for fire and ems- represents municipalities across the state and a variety of ems councils – EMS instructor for 25 years.

Mark says he has four dissolutions of EMS services pending in his office. The state is aware of the issues with volunteer EMS services. The state is overwhelmed and understaffed, and are unable to confront the problems because of the demands on their time. Underlying issues: lack of personnel, proper funding, and a lack of vision and leadership. Home grown EMS is failing; demands on time and recertification. BS calls are draining resources and time. Successful models he has seen Capital region combination of systems, paid and volunteer personnel with good leadership. Sustain funding at local level for ems and ambulance service…. Better utilization of tiered services. ALS with fly cars, not every rig is an ALS rig and not every call is an ALS call. Third party billing advice… need to have 1200 calls per year to sustain a single ambulance, full time with paid personnel, if it relies on third party billing insurance. There is no immediate solution. Shrinking tax dollars and commitment to funding, ambulance service is suffering all over the state.

DOH does not certify ELS first response agencies. There are a few hoops to jump through to get an agency number. They do not certify or do inspections. The only reason DOH is involved in any oversight is for EMT and training reimbursement.

Ed Kokkelenberg asks about the Town requiring workers to be EMS trained and be on call for duty during regular work hours. Mark says this is do-able. The problem would be sophisticated planning and execution.

There has been some talk about reimbursements going away. Mark says EMS education is completely funded in the 17-18 budget. State reimbursement is one of the reasons the why the EMS system exists as it does today 135.5 hours of training plus clinical experience and then every three years they need to recertify. One of the core reasons people walk away from EMS is because of the re-certification process.

Joe Mareane asks if there are certain key elements for a solution? Mark’s reply- Albany county developed a county wide ALS system with Sheriff’s office. County wide operating certificate. Sheriff’s office working with local agencies so that local agencies are providing a tiered ambulance service and sheriff’s office is supplementing that. Sheriff will provide personnel to local agencies to back fill their personnel needs to assure the fire district has adequate personnel. No system will survive with an all-volunteer agency. Erie County has also gone to county wide ambulance certificate to supplement local providers.

Ed - suggestions on nuisance calls?

Mark- Mental Hygiene calls, whether a danger to themselves or others, law enforcement officer may take someone into custody, but nowhere in the law does it have a say there is a necessity to transport. Medical Director can tailor to the needs of the community, one thing to keep in mind, you must send somebody to assist.

Bill- political side, are there efforts going on to reforming state laws to help us all out and are their ways we could get involved to help push changes?

Mark- there have been a variety of efforts on the fire side; a bill has been introduced every year over the last 15 years or so. He does not see EMS being an important issue with the State. Until there is some voice, a legislative address, there will be no solutions that will be viable, it is not on the political radar by the State. Mark says he would be glad to talk with our group another time before he concluded the call.

Irene discussed what to do next and who we need to get involved in our efforts. Schedule was discussed. Next meeting July 26th.

Meeting was adjourned.