

**City of Tipton, Iowa**

**Meeting:** Special City Council Meeting  
**Place:** Tipton Fire Station, 301 Lynn Street, Tipton, Iowa 52772  
**Date/Time:** Thursday, January 26, 2023, 5:30 p.m.  
**Web Page:** [www.tiptoniowa.org](http://www.tiptoniowa.org)  
**Posted:** Tuesday, January 24, 2023 (Front door of City Hall & City Website)

**Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.**

<https://meet.goto.com/275634429>

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**Mayor:** Bryan Carney

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<b>Council at Large:</b>	Abby Cummins-VanScoy	<b>Council At Large:</b>	Jason Paustian
<b>Council Ward #1</b>	Ron Hembry	<b>Council Ward #2</b>	Mike Helm
<b>Council Ward #3</b>	Tim McNeill	<b>City Attorney:</b>	Lynch Dallas, P.C.
<b>City Manager:</b>	Brian Wagner	<b>Gas Utilities Supt:</b>	Adam Fitch
<b>Finance Director:</b>	Melissa Armstrong	<b>Electric Interim Supt:</b>	Jon Walsh
<b>City Clerk:</b>	Amy Lenz	<b>Water &amp; Sewer Supt:</b>	Brian Brennan
<b>Dir. Of Public Works:</b>	Steve Nash	<b>Ambulance Svc Dir:</b>	Brad Ratliff
<b>Police Chief:</b>	Lisa DuFour	<b>Economic Dev. Dir.</b>	Linda Beck
<b>Park &amp; Recreation:</b>	Adam Spangler	<b>Library Director:</b>	Denise Smith

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**Call to Order**

- A. **Roll Call**
- B. **Pledge of Allegiance**
- C. **Agenda Additions/Agenda Approval**
- D. **Communications**
- E. **City Business**

1. Discussion and possible action concerning methods or options to increase ambulance coverage.

F. **Adjournment**

Pursuant to §21.4(2) of the Code of Iowa, the City has the right to amend this agenda up until 24 hours before the posted meeting time. If anyone with a disability would like to attend the meeting, please call City Hall at 886-6187 to arrange for accommodations/transportation.

**AGENDA INFORMATION  
TIPTON CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

<b>DATE:</b>	Council meeting / January 26, 2023
<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	Discussion and possible action concerning methods or options to increase ambulance coverage.
<b>ACTION:</b>	Possible motion with Council direction concerning how to move forward.

**SYNOPSIS:**

The suggestion for the Jan 26 Special Council Meeting was first posed at the Oct 24 Council meeting. However, the topic is the same.

**What can the City do to increase our ambulance coverage hours, particularly outside of normal business hours and on weekends?**

We are anticipating a diverse audience for Jan 26. As the Council requested, Brad has invited the volunteer members of the Ambulance Service. The Mayor has also invited members of neighboring ambulance services to attend.

After my Synopsis, please find a write-up that Brad did. It gives you his view of things—particularly, how things have swung to the better over the last couple of months. Specifically, please take a look at the two examples of schedules near the end of his report. They show that he’s made a lot of progress in filling up typically empty hours. This is progress. But, it is a beginning. It will take time before we can say that things have “turned the corner.”

Brad’s write-up suggests a way of conducting the meeting. And, you can follow it to whatever degree you wish.

My suggestion is that the Mayor open the meeting and summarize its goals—along with what’s inbounds and out-of-bounds for discussion.

Next, the Mayor might ask Brad to summarize his view on the current status of the Ambulance Service.

Between the Mayor, Council, and I, we can try to facilitate discussion by raising some questions.

--We could ask our volunteers for their ideas to increase coverage.

--We could ask the other ambulance service directors what we might do to work together better.

--The City has tried to improve ambulance coverage by:

- 1.) Authorizing on-call pay of \$2 per hour for volunteers.
- 2.) Including funding in the FY 22-23 budget for hiring a new full-timer.

3.) As of last Fall, Brad has worked finding more paid part-timers to fill as many holes in the schedule as possible.

I'm not sure of the impact of #1, and it might be a question worth asking on Jan 26.

As I understand #2 and #3, the combination of these two have made the most significant impact on our coverage situation.

#2 and #3 seem to be the heart of our current strategy: Keep Brad and Eric as our only full-timers and to fill other open hours with part-timers to the fullest extent possible. And, this includes changing the status of a couple (or more) of our volunteer members that wish to be part-timers.

Therefore, another question for Jan 26: Is the Council on-board with that?

But, there are also financial considerations. Below is an excerpt from my Oct 24 Council meeting synopsis:

*With 7 days in a week comes a total of 168 hours. Whether full-time, part-time, or volunteer, if it takes two people to cover each hour, that's 336 manhours. The question is: With limits on paid personnel, volunteer hours, equipment, and funding—how complete can the coverage offered from the Ambulance Service reasonably be?*

*If the Council accepts the premise that all 168 hours (or 336 manhours) per week can't be covered by the current system, how many of those hours of coverage per week should be our goal? And, is the Council willing to make budgetary decisions to reach that level of coverage? Because it is likely that, for every \$1 that we add to the Ambulance budget, we take an equal amount away from someone else's.*

Melissa and I spoke about this. It is difficult to forecast a budget that attempts to add the costs of #1, #2, and #3 above. There are a lot of variables. We'd likely need to learn from two or three fiscal years of budgetary experience before we can get a good understanding of the financial impact.

But, unless the Jan 26 meeting tells us otherwise, we're going to assume that the Mayor and Council wish to see us fill as many coverage hours as possible by using the combination of #1, #2, and #3.

Can the Council please confirm this assumption?

#### **A few footnotes...**

Going into this meeting, please remember... The coverage problem isn't limited to Tipton. Rural communities across Iowa are struggling with this. And, if a community isn't currently struggling, it may only be a matter of losing one or two members (for whatever reason) from being in the same situation as the rest of us.

This meeting will look for ways to move forward. It should not be used for personal attacks or "gotchas."

**PREPARED BY:** BW

**DATE PREPARED:** Jan 25, 2023

# EMS Staffing Discussion 1/26/2023

## 1. Opening

### a. Goals for the meeting

- i. **Timely Discussion** – completed within 1 hour
  1. Can schedule another meeting if we wish to continue the discussion
- ii. **Discuss the problem**, not the past or personnel
  1. The council and the community is more than aware of a fragile and struggling EMS entity, we do not need to dwell on the past
  2. The ultimate goal of the council is to see this problem resolved and better delivery of EMS to the community
- iii. **Review current opportunities for growth and movement forward**
- iv. **Discuss limitations of the City of Tipton**
- v. **Set objective goals for measuring our success**

## 2. Discussion about the problem

- a. Tipton is the first community within Cedar County to deliver emergency medical services to the community
- b. Began as a volunteer driven network
  - i. Slowly over the course of years and changes in demand has become what it is today
- c. Many members of our community have contributed to our community's success with EMS in the past
- d. As the times have evolved, so has the ambulance
  - i. Changes in call volume
  - ii. Types of patients requesting EMS
  - iii. Level of care being delivered
    1. Increases in requirements by regulatory entities
    2. Increased in needs needing to be met by our patients
    3. Better understanding of how EMS fits into public safety as a healthcare entity
- e. As we have noticed an increase in demand for EMS, we have seen a decrease in available resources
  - i. Similar to many other industries across the nation – finding people to work is a challenge
  - ii. This is no longer just a statewide or even a nation-wide issue, the healthcare industry, and specifically the EMS industry is struggling now across the globe
  - iii. Locally, this has taxed all of the surrounding communities to assist Tipton in meeting the demand for EMS
    1. We are so fortunate to have the level of commitment and engagement for our team

# EMS Staffing Discussion 1/26/2023

2. Surrounding communities have made substantial contributions to our community to help meet our demands for EMS when our EMS service was unable to meet the demands
  3. We have noted an increase in provider fatigue post COVID
    - a. This is also a nationwide issue too.
  - iv. In response, Tipton has slowly added careered positions to provide coverage and aid in administrative duties
  - f. Over the past year, we have seen days, weeks and months where significant gaps in coverage existed
    - i. Increased coverage gaps usually during holiday and summer
    - ii. We have noted a change in the ability for volunteers to commit to multiple shifts
      1. Changes in work life balance
- 3. Review current opportunities for growth and movement forward**
- a. A few months ago, the City Manager and the City Council held internal discussion about improving our ability to delivery EMS care to the community
    - i. Recommended/ authorized hiring additional career team members
      1. Career members not replacing volunteers, just filling in the holes
      2. Continue to recruit (qualified and capable) volunteers whenever possible
  - b. Over the past month, our EMS service has celebrated increased coverage and capabilities
    - i. We have had some of the best coverage this month we have ever had
      1. But still have gaps that need to be filled
    - ii. This success needs to be credited to all of the following:
      1. A great group of committed volunteers
        - a. A handful of them are giving many shifts per week as coverage (above and beyond what most do or can commit too.)
      2. Successful integration of our FTE paramedic
        - a. Has done a wonderful job at working with the PTE and volunteers to build a better team
      3. Injection of new PTE
        - a. They are not taking away from volunteers
        - b. We can see that there is help on the way
          - i. Staffing nights and weekends is the goal for our new hires
          - ii. Will offer a new buffer for when a FTE is sick or off work
  4. Luck
    - a. I cannot explain why we have been so lucky to have such great coverage.

# EMS Staffing Discussion 1/26/2023

i. But I am incredible thankful

## 4. New opportunities – Building a stronger team

### a. Volunteer Applications

- i. Only 1 person expressed interest in joining as a volunteer
  1. They never followed up
- ii. 1 driver is near completion of their EMT program
  1. We would reimburse them a percentage of their course for each month they provide coverage to our community (approximately \$150-200 per month [totaling approximately \$2,500])
- iii. 1 Paramedic is obtaining their Critical Care Paramedic
  1. Offering to join as a PTE
  2. Commit to 30 months of continued service to Tipton

### b. Career PTE Applications

- i. Paramedics – 3 interviewed
  1. 1 currently hired (1-3 shifts per month)
  2. 1 set to start next month (goal 2-4 shifts per month) from our volunteer team
  3. 1 declined – never called back
  4. 2 additional people have expressed interest in considering our team as a place of part time employment
- ii. EMT Positions
  1. 4 currently in the queue for resume review
    - a. 1 from our volunteer team
  2. 4 hired
    - a. 1 new from school
    - b. 2 with 1-2 years of experience
    - c. 1 with 1 year of volunteer first responder experience

### c. Why are people attracted to Tipton?

- i. Seems to be common statements:
  1. We are hiring
  2. Government based EMS – not private
  3. Lower call volume
  4. Higher capabilities of care
    - a. Superior guidelines and progressive medicine unheard of in metro areas
  5. Superior equipment
    - a. Best in class medical equipment
    - b. First in state pilot project
    - c. Nothing is broken, falling apart or not functioning

# EMS Staffing Discussion 1/26/2023

6. Less politics from EMS management
7. Opportunity to grow and learn beyond their capabilities at their existing workplace
8. Fair pay
9. Shift commitments are far less than larger entities
  - a. Larger entities seek 1-3 shifts (offering of coverage) per week
  - b. Tipton's goals are 1-3 shifts per month
    - i. We recognize PTE is just that PTE
- d. In **December of 2022**, this was a typical week/ level of coverage that our team was able to consistently deliver
  - i. Some weeks were better than others

Normally-Isa

	SUN		MON		TUE		WED		THUR		FRI		SAT	
0-1:59	2	2			2	2	2		2	2				
2-3:59	2	2			2	2	2		2	2				
4-5:59	2	2	2		2	2	2		2	2				
6-7:59	2	2		2		2				2		2		2
8-9:59	2	2		2		2				2		2		2
10-11:59	2	2		2		2				2		2		2
12-13:59	2	2		2		2				2		2		2
14-15:59	2	2		2		2				2		2		2
16-17:59	2	2		2		2				2		2		2
18-19:59			2	2	2		2	2					2	2
20-21:59			2	2	2		2	2					2	2
22-23:59			2	2	2		2	2					2	2
	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER
	Volunteer		Open Hours		170									
	Paid FTE													
	Paid PTE													

ii.

e. Current week as of 1/23/2023

	SUN		MON		TUE		WED		THUR		FRI		SAT	
0-1:59														
2-3:59														
4-5:59			2	2										
6-7:59	2	2					2	2		2				
8-9:59	2	2						2						
10-11:59	2	2												
12-13:59														
14-15:59														
16-17:59														
18-19:59														2
20-21:59														2
22-23:59														2
	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER	EMS	DRIVER
	Volunteer						Open Hours						30	
	Paid FTE													
	Paid PTE													

f.

# EMS Staffing Discussion 1/26/2023

- g. We have seen a dramatic reduction in the number of open hours for 1 ambulance covering 1 entire week
  - i. We must recognize though, that there are only a handful of volunteers contributing the vast majority of volunteer hours
  - ii. The newly hired PTE are currently in various stages of orientation, but are expected to be taking on Sunday (day) and two nights per week with the next couple of months
    - 1. Hopefully next few weeks if all continues to go well for their orientation and field experience
    - 2. We have also teamed up some of the new PTE with current volunteers, to enhance their learning opportunity and get a better understanding for the “off hours”

## 5. Upcoming issues on the near horizon:

- a. With an increase in PTE positions, there will be an increase in cost – our budget can not support this long term
  - i. Staffing – Part time pay
  - ii. Clothing
  - iii. Increased Supplies
  - iv. Overtime
- b. We have had a major influx of people interested in joining our team as a careered member (even internally)
  - i. Are we okay with this?
  - ii. Can we support this financially?
- c. We have such a large demand for joining the career team, but we are limited to the available hours to train new people
- d. Are we meeting the needs of the community and the goals of the council?
  - i. Is the council – elected to represent the people, interested in us continuing to fill gaps in coverage using these new opportunities that have become available?
- e. Overnight coverage (usually long shifts to say the least)
  - i. Our team members have nowhere to rest
  - ii. No privacy
  - iii. Joining the blow-up mattress club

## 6. Discuss limitations of the City of Tipton

- a. Financial
- b. Changes in identity
  - i. We are seeing a shift in EMS
  - ii. We are NOT seeking to go away from volunteerism
  - iii. We are trying to move forward with the options available to us today

## 7. Set objective goals for measuring our success



## EMS Staffing Discussion 1/26/2023

- a. Where does the council wish to see the EMS service within the next 6 months?
- b. Where does the council wish to see the EMS service within the next 12 months?
- c. Where does the council wish to see the EMS service within the next 24 months?
- d. Are there alternative strategies to salvage volunteerism that have not been approached before?
- e. Are we prepared to address this using all available options long term?
- f. What limitations do we have financially?
  - i. The cost of coverage has increased, to what level is the council prepared to offer?

