

911 response time too slow, board in Amity says

By Denise Larive, News Writer

Amity Township Board of Supervisors said the recent 12-minute response time to a 911 call by Southern Berks Ambulance was unacceptable.

The board agreed on June 2 to resolve the situation and ensure that all township residents receive a timely response to 911 calls.

Board members said the resolution may include using alternative emergency responders such as Goodwill Ambulance from Pottstown and ambulances from Boyertown.

They said the problem is two-fold: Berks County Communications doesn't have GPS (Global Positioning System) for emergency vehicles and also that the Southern Berks Amity rig accepted the emergency call while it was still returning to the township from Reading Hospital.

"Southern Berks Ambulance shouldn't accept calls when it isn't in Amity Township," said Supervisor Terry L. Jones. "And, their practice of pushing calls over to its Birdsboro rig is also unacceptable. The response time would be at least 10 minutes, probably more. If the Amity Township rig is not available, it should go to another outside rig — not to Southern Berks Ambulance."

"They can't say they're in-service when pulling away from Reading Hospital," said Board Chairman Robert R. Yanos.

"This is where we've had problems before," Yanos said. "Their base may be in Douglassville but if they're at Reading Hospital, they're not the closest rig. The issue is that the next closest rig should be called. Is there anyway 911 can know where they are? Can we require that they're back in the township before they say they're back on duty?"

Amity Police Chief Kent A. Shuebrook said Berks County's communications system won't be updated until at least 2013.

The board directed Township Manager Charles E. Lyon to contact Brian A. Gottschall, deputy director of the Berks County Department of Emergency Services, to work on a solution.

Southern Berks Ambulance has operated part time in the township for a number of years. In 2004 they were stationed at Premier Medical Care, Benjamin Franklin Shopping Center, Route 422, and are now stationed

at Fisher Landscaping, 1096 Benjamin Franklin Highway West.

J.P. Mascaro has recently offered Southern Berks Ambulance a parcel of land near the Exeter Township line to build a full-time station.

“We should immediately notify Berks about the run-card system and have Goodwill Ambulance respond as well as Southern Berks Ambulance,” said Jones. “Southern Berks is not dedicated to Amity Township. You want it in writing that Goodwill could respond?”

“What about all the [Southern Berks] ambulance memberships?” said Supervisor Paul R. Weller. “That all goes out the window.”

“Do we need to wait for someone to die?” asked Jones.

In other business:

- Amity Heritage Society President Charles Miller said he is finalizing a land parcel agreement within Berks County to rebuild the Peter Jones House.

Miller said the stones should be removed from the township’s land parcel on Morlatton Road by the end of June.

Miller thanked the board for its help with the house, as well as the public’s help and said his recent public appeal for a relocation site yielded 15 offers; two were in Amity Township, two in Union Township, and two in Exeter Township.

Lyon said he had told Miller previously that the \$20,000 grant secured by Sen. John Rafferty (R-44) to rebuild the house would now be used to finance two township projects.

The grant’s expiration date was June 30 and the board authorized on May 19 that the township would use the money.

The board confirmed to Miller that they would not extend the grant to rebuild the Peter Jones House.