

Ambulance asks Amity Twp. for new tax



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By Denise Larive
For Journal Register News Service

Representatives of Southern Berks Regional Emergency Medical Services suggested to the Amity Township Board of Supervisors on Sept. 21 to impose an ambulance millage tax that would help fund the ambulance organization.

George Mang, executive director of Southern Berks Ambulance, said the revenue from the \$0.18 ambulance millage tax imposed in Cumru Township in 2009 has eliminated the need for ambulance memberships from Cumru residents.

Mang said Amity Township is the biggest growth area for Southern Berks and the call volume continues to increase, particularly at the Keystone Villa at Douglassville, Route 422, and at the Hearthstone, Route 662, retirement communities.

He said their largest call area is Cumru Township.

Southern Berks moved Aug. 1 from Fisher Landscaping, 1100 Benjamin Franklin Highway, to the former Four Chairs location on Church Lane.

"The cost for an Advanced Life Support pack is \$35,000 and we need five," said Mang. "They last about six years. We also need power litters at \$13,000 each, stair chairs at \$1,500 to \$3,000, and last year we bought one new ambulance and re-chassied another one."

He said the annual family membership fee is \$75, \$60 to renew, and \$40 for a senior citizen couple, compared to Cumru's ambulance tax on 8,000 households.

Cumru's tax is \$18 a year for a home assessed at \$100,000 and \$36 for a home assessed at \$200,000.

"Nobody wants more taxes but it's a pretty reasonable thing," said Mang.

"Why do I have the power to put my hand into residents' pockets and impose another tax?" asked Board Chairman Robert R. Yanos.

"It's the power to save lives and put out a fire," said David Kalin, Cumru Township Commissioner, who attended the Amity meeting. "We looked at it as a life safety issue. To spread the cost out becomes a very reasonable expense. I was the most outspoken one about imposing another tax. We took the proactive approach to be sure the ambulance service would be here. We encourage you to do whatever you can."

Kalin said Cumru contributes \$150,000 a year to the ambulance service from the 8,000 households and a little more than 15,000 residents.

The board took no action.

In other business:

The board unanimously approved final land development plans for construction of Phase IV at Keystone Villa at Douglassville, Route 422.

Phase IV will be a 36,000 square foot building with the first floor dedicated to physician offices and diagnostics, and short term rehabilitation services on the second and third floors.

The Villa's Developer James Elliott said construction is expected to begin in November and would be completed within seven months.

The retirement community previously known as the Villa at Morlatton began in 2005 with construction of the 123 unit, independent living building, phase II was a 12-room expansion, followed by construction of Phase III in 2009 of the 83-unit personal care facility.

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