



Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee:

The Arlington Area Ambulance experienced a series of unfortunate events regarding staffing issues, lack of funding for medical advancement and the uncertainty of maintaining its ambulance license in 2019. As a result of these issues, members of Arlington City Council entertained and discussed options for success. One of the options was to partner with a larger ambulance service or hospital to maximize its service availability.

**Office of the
Ambulance Manager**

In January of 2020, the City of Arlington chose to partner with Ridgeview Medical Center and the City of Gaylord. Ridgeview provided an ambulance manager for the joint effort between the cities of Arlington and Gaylord.

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At that time, Arlington Area Ambulance and Gaylord Ambulance agreed to have a 50/50 expense and revenue partnership under the direct management of Ridgeview Medical Center. As the months progressed, the City of Arlington reviewed the cost versus revenue and found that the expense of the management services was not necessary to succeed. Thus, the decision was made to withdraw from the "Test Merger Period".

The City of Arlington decided to hire me, an experienced rural paramedic, to manage the service and continue their part-time ALS license under new, independent Medical Direction. As a result of this change the Arlington Ambulance lost all their part-time paramedics and I was ultimately forced to cover the ALS timeframes of our schedule and find creative ways to retain the other EMTs that were affiliated with this service. The City Administrator was able to advertise in a multitude of mainframes such as newspaper, governmentjobs.com, etc. With the dedication of current crewmembers, we were able to continue to provide care to our communities we served.

Where others saw our ambulance service to fail, the City Administrator, members of City Council and I were driven to see us succeed. We were able to offer competitive pay for part-time paramedics and increase the wages for our current EMTs while dealing with a financial pitfall from the "Test Merger Period". We continued to look at different ways to retain and show appreciation for those crewmembers who dedicated their time to see this Ambulance Service succeed, when others hoped it would meet its demise. We could not do it without them. Their flexibility and drive for our service to succeed along with the hard work and dedication of a City Administrator and myself not willing to give up and empower an Ambulance Service is what kept us moving forward.

We hope in the future, more rural ambulance services, like ours, get the recognition and opportunity of funding assistance, to help us succeed. We hope the Arlington Area Ambulance Service's pride in taking care of our communities and the people we serve will be a steward in showing that in the face of adversity, we can stand tall and support those who may be faced with the same uncertainty we experienced as a rural ambulance service.

On behalf of the Arlington Area Ambulance, we express a sincere thank you for allowing us to share our story. It is by far a unique issue that is prevalent within the rural ambulance sector. We hope by sharing our experience, members of the Legislature will see how important it is to support local, rural ambulance services by recognizing how we support our local communities with such dedication.

Thank you,

Jaime Weikle, NREMT-P
Arlington Area Ambulance Manager