

City raises rates for ambulance service

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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As the City of Port Washington prepares to upgrade its ambulance service to a paramedic unit, aldermen on Tuesday agreed to increase ambulance rates to help cover the cost.

The rate increase is the first for the service in four years, Fire Chief Mark Mitchell told the Common Council Tuesday.

Mitchell said he hopes to find out next week whether the state has approved the city's application to become a paramedic service.

The department is poised for that ruling, he said, noting that there are already four paramedics on the roster.

"Unfortunately they can't use their paramedic skills until we're certified (by the state)," Mitchell said.

Those four members will be supplemented by part-time paramedics once the state certifies the department as a paramedic service, he said.

The department expects to initially offer part-time paramedic coverage, increasing its service to full-time by the end of 2012.

"We're very excited and ready to move ahead," Mitchell said. "We're going to get some real enhanced service with this.

"But it's taken a little longer than I expected."

The department was poised to begin offering paramedic services in January, but the state review process was not complete.

Currently, the Port Washington ambulance service is rated for emergency medical technician-intermediate — one step below paramedics.

If the paramedic program is approved, Port would become only the second department in the county with this level of service. Thiensville is the other.

Paramedics receive a significantly higher level of training that enables them to better assess patients, administer more medications and conduct procedures that EMTs cannot perform.

The Common Council's action increased the basic ambulance rate from \$350 to \$525 for city residents and \$400 to \$600 for non-residents. The mileage charge for residents increased from \$8.75 to \$12.75, and for non-residents from \$9 to \$13.

It also increased the charges for two tiers of advanced life support care, basic and advanced on-scene care, administering oxygen and spinal immobilization.

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