



GARDINER CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET



Meeting Date		Department	
Agenda Item			
Est. Cost			

Background Information

Requested Action	
City Manager and/or Finance Review	
Council Vote/ Action Taken	
Departmental Follow-Up	

<i>City Clerk Use Only</i>	1 st Reading _____	Advertised _____	EFFECTIVE DATE _____
	2 nd Reading _____	Advertised _____ w/in 15 Days	
	Final to Dept _____	Updated Book _____	Online _____



CITY OF GARDINER FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT



Chief Richard Sieberg

February 4, 2026

Dear Members of the Selectboard/City Council,

I am writing to provide background and context regarding current Gardiner Ambulance staffing levels and to outline the need to consider adding two “swing” positions to our staffing model.

In 2021, the City Council funded a pilot program that demonstrated the operational benefits of increasing ambulance staffing to six personnel. Building on that success, in July 2022 four additional positions were approved, bringing daily staffing to five personnel per shift, ensuring two ambulances are staffed all the time while a third ambulance could respond if only one person comes in for station coverage. While this improvement helped address immediate needs, service demand has continued to increase at a pace that now exceeds our current staffing capacity.

The frequency of “back-to-back” calls has risen dramatically in recent years. In 2023, the ambulance station was either empty or staffed by only one person on 561 occasions—an average of 47 times per month. In 2024, this occurred 585 times, or 49 times per month. In 2025, those instances increased to 737 times, averaging 61 times per month. These figures reflect a growing operational risk, particularly as our EMS mutual aid partners are under similar staffing pressures and are often less available than in previous years. At the same time, the number of fire service volunteers continues to decline, resulting in Gardiner Fire Department personnel frequently being first on scene at out-of-town accidents and fires.

In February 2025, the Ambulance Advisory Board agreed to begin phasing the funding model back to an 80 percent ambulance service contribution shared among the eight partner communities and a 20 percent contribution from the City of Gardiner through the Fire Department general fund. This decision reflected the Board’s recognition that demand for GFD services—particularly outside the City—has increased significantly.

In November 2025, the concept of adding two “swing” positions was presented to the Ambulance Advisory Board. The Board agreed that additional staffing is necessary, while also acknowledging that the associated cost must be discussed collaboratively with all partner communities. The proposed swing positions would allow staffing to increase to six

personnel per shift Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and 24 hours per day on Fridays and Saturdays. This approach creates a phased path toward achieving six-person staffing 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For context, Gardiner Ambulance serves a population of approximately 25,000 residents across roughly 200 square miles. Due to the distances involved, the average ambulance call takes approximately two hours from station to scene, hospital, and back to service. Nationally, rural EMS systems average 1,000 to 1,500 calls per staffed ambulance per year. In 2025, Gardiner Ambulance responded to 3,660 emergency calls, with trends indicating a steady annual increase. National benchmarks suggest approximately 1.5 to 2 paramedics per 1,000 residents in rural communities, further highlighting the staffing challenges we currently face.

Adding two swing positions is intended to reduce periods when the station is unstaffed or minimally staffed, improve response reliability, and mitigate operational risk while continuing to evaluate long-term funding strategies with our partner communities.

Implementation of the two proposed swing positions is expected to increase the overall ambulance budget by approximately \$150,000. The table on page 3 provides a breakdown of the estimated increase cost for each participating community.

In order to move forward, it is important that we hear from and have the support of all participating communities. Because this service model and funding approach rely on shared responsibility across the entire service area, the proposal can only move ahead with agreement from each partner municipality. Timely input from all communities is also necessary to allow for accurate budgeting and coordinated planning. We respectfully request that all communities share their position on this proposal via email to me no later than March 16, so that we can determine together whether to proceed or adjust our planning accordingly.

Thank you for your consideration of this information and for your continued support of emergency medical services in Gardiner and the surrounding region. I would be happy to answer any questions, attend a board meeting or provide additional details as needed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Sieberg', written in a cursive style.

Richard F. Sieberg
Chief Gardiner Fire Department / Gardiner Ambulance

Town	\$ Diff
Chelsea (1/2)	8,879
Farmingdale	16,982
Gardiner	47,998
Litchfield	21,369
Pittston	13,098
Randolph	7,199
Richmond	17,164
West Gardiner	14,503
Totals	147,192