

Selectman Candidate Rob Richards: Let's Station Full-Time Paramedics in Darien

Author : David Gurliacci

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To the editor:

Darien's Post 53 EMS program is one of the most recognized and well-run volunteer programs in the United States. But because its volunteers are not certified paramedics; whenever an emergency requires a paramedic we have to call on an outside EMS service, Stamford Emergency Medical Services (SEMS). However, I believe if we leased fulltime SEMS Paramedics and stationed them at one of Darien's firehouses our EMS system would be improved and Post 53 would benefit as well.

Did you know a subscription to Netflix is more expensive than having Paramedics in town? The estimated cost of full time Paramedics leased from Stamford would be less than \$8 per month per household. These numbers are based on the 2010 census report estimating the numbers of households in Darien at 6,493.

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For easy math I reduced that number to 5,000. Netflix is \$100 per year [*editor's note: They announced a price increase today to almost \$120*] and the estimate for full time paramedics is less than \$400,000 as proposed to the Board of Selectmen during a meeting with the Director of Post 53. Therefore, if every property tax paying household paid an extra \$8 a month it would contribute an extra \$500,000 to the budget. Keep that in mind the next time your read about how much something costs the town.

Post 53 and SEMS have been working together in concert for 20 years. Out of the roughly 1500 emergency calls received each year for Darien, approximately one third or 500 of them require SEMS paramedics. Currently SEMS charges each resident \$500 per ambulatory visit. This means SEMS is collecting approximately \$250,000 a year from Darien residents and interestingly enough almost half of those fees are collected from our seniors. We could save our seniors money by removing this fee.

There has been much debate about SEMS paramedic response times and nobody disagrees the times are longer as a result of being outside of Darien. The disagreement is about the impacted on the quality of care.

Let me be frank, EMS systems are complex in any situation and it should be clear that no single aspect of an EMS system should be the entire focus. With that said, I am sure we can all agree, reducing our paramedic response times by establishing a unit in town will improve our EMS system and eventually the quicker time will save someone's life.

But the real issue here has little to do with our EMS system; it is a lack of communication within our community. For instance, recently the town approved spending \$30,000 to conduct an EMS study and for what? This study will be a waste of time and money. The conclusion will be, it's up to us to decide if we want paramedics in town or not. We should not use consulting services as the middleman for engaging the community.

Darien is full of intelligent and highly educated people. If we utilize our collective knowledge through communication and respect for each other we can solve any problem that arises. There are ways to manage growth and solve Darien's traffic and parking problems, as well as discover new avenues to reduce our mil rate.

Regards,

Rob Richards

Democratic Candidate for Darien Board of Selectmen