

Peninsula Ambulance Corps

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Peninsula Ambulance Corps Serving the Blue Hill Peninsula and Beyond

PAC Welcomes the Town of Castine

The Bagaduce Ambulance Corps closed its doors last January and no longer provides a valuable service to the Town of Castine and to the peninsula beyond. It had served Castine for 35 years with a substantially all volunteer staff, and its board of directors had struggled with problems that torment small ambulance services everywhere and had overcome most of them. Finally, it was a lack of volunteers in a small town with a changing demographic that spelled the end.

We all owe gratitude to Bagaduce Ambulance Corps and its board of directors for their unrelenting efforts. We especially thank Sarah Hudson, the guiding light for the service since the beginning.

When the end of Bagaduce's service was undeniable, PAC approached the selectmen in the six towns of our primary service area to discuss the idea of our expanding to include Castine. After considering the impact of such a move on existing service, all agreed: Castine is a neighbor and a part of our community and must be served.

PAC assumed responsibility for serving Castine in January of this year. Peninsula and Bagaduce had worked together for a long time so the transition was smooth. Although it is a nonprofit organization with a volunteer board of directors, PAC employs a paid pro-

fessional staff and has enough call volume to keep that staff viable and busy enough to maintain high morale and sharp skills.

Throughout its history, PAC has been able to respond to the needs of the towns it serves because all were contributing supporters. With the addition of Castine, services have expanded, community support has broadened, and PAC is adapting to the change.



The Case for a Capital Campaign

The Peninsula Ambulance Corps (PAC), although a non-profit §501(c)(3) organization, must meet its operating budget each year and also provide for the replacement of its capital assets—the ambulances and their equipment.

In November 2010 PAC needed a new ambulance immediately. An existing unit had grown unreliable; on two occasions it had left its crew stranded beside the road with a patient on board. Given our commitment

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to quality service, we had no choice but to use cash reserves for the down payment of \$38,000 for a new ambulance and to borrow \$120,000 to complete the purchase.

In 2003 PAC had also needed a new ambulance, and it mounted a capital campaign to pay for it. However, there are two major differences between then and now. First, PAC has grown into a larger operation than that of 2003 and must now raise \$200,000 annually to cover its operating deficit. Second, another new ambulance costing approximately \$150,000 for a basic unit with no specialized equipment will soon be needed. A capital campaign for two units would require raising a minimum of \$300,000 over three years, with PAC's essential annual appeal running concurrently.

The life span of an ambulance is less than 10 years. If, in the best case, purchases were staggered to buy one unit every five years, simultaneous three-year capital campaigns and \$200,000 annual campaigns would run six out of every ten years. This constant cycle of fund-raising is not sustainable; even if the board could bear its demands, the public could not, and PAC's existing goodwill would wear thin. PAC needs a steady and reliable funding mechanism—a reserve account to be funded annually as ambulances age.

PAC's board of directors concluded that the capital campaign necessary to cover the purchases of the most recent and the next ambulance should be the final such campaign. While the annual appeal would continue as in the past, PAC would now ask the towns served for annual contributions to an ambulance-replacement

fund. In Spring 2011, PAC requested that the towns make an additional contribution to fund this new reserve account. The case was simple: if the citizens of the greater Blue Hill Peninsula were to continue to have an ambulance service, the towns must help. At all town meetings, the vote was resoundingly in favor of this increase in funding.

With a plan in hand to consistently fund a reserve account, PAC is now conducting its final ambulance replacement capital campaign to pay for two ambulances—the one purchased in November 2010 and the one the board anticipates will be required by 2014--and to equip them with state of the art life-saving gear. By the time that the third and future ambulances are required, the reserve account should be sufficient to fund each purchase.

During the past nine months, a steering committee of the board has outlined the structure for a capital campaign and every member of the board has made a contribution. We have approached a number of local individuals, whose responses have been favorable and generous. Indeed, as we prepare to take the campaign to all the citizens in PAC's service area, we are pleased to say that the first ambulance has been paid for in full. To bring the campaign to a successful conclusion, however, the financial assistance of everyone will be required to assure that funds will be available for the acquisition of the second ambulance. Please respond as generously as possible when you receive a request for a donation to the capital campaign, so that we may continue to provide dependable, professional ambulance service to you and your neighbors.

Letter from the President

There are many things for which we residents of the Blue Hill Peninsula can be thankful. Foremost on my list is the heartfelt thanks I feel toward the voters of Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick, and Surry for choosing to back the Peninsula Ambulance Corps 100% this year.

PAC asked for the same contribution from each town in our primary service area: \$11.43 per capita based on the 2010 census. Seven dollars of this figure will help underwrite the PAC budget and \$4.43 will be placed in a reserve account specifically dedicated to purchase of ambulance units as they reach the end of their 10-year life expectancy.

Even when faced with lowered support from the state and federal governments for essential services such education and welfare, and with tight local budgetary constraints, the voters in each town understood that emergency medical service is not an option. It is a requirement. Like the fire department, when it's needed it must be there.

PAC would prefer to be self-supporting; that is, to

have our income cover our expenses. But our largest customers, the State (MaineCare) and the Federal government (Medicaid and Medicare) do not pay what it costs us to provide service and they prohibit our charging more than their set rates. If we were to charge more, they would no longer certify us for any reimbursement. Consequently, we incur about a 28% operating deficit and are forced to turn to the towns for support.

At Town Meetings across the peninsula, voters responded positively. As a result, monies approved for the Peninsula Ambulance Corps, together with about \$120,000 raised from our annual appeal, will enable PAC to continue providing the same efficient, dependable medical emergency service our towns have come to expect.

We're proud of our organization and its record, and we appreciate the confidence and support of those we serve.

Thank you, again.

