



## Big budget increase for Durham Ambulance

*By Andrea Macko  
Porcupine Soup*

DURHAM—Following a public hearing last week, the Durham Town Board adopted 2021 contracts for emergency services. These include the Oak Hill-Durham Volunteer Fire Company, East Durham Volunteer Fire Company and Durham Ambulance, Inc.

The fire companies saw slight budget increases, while the ambulance contract provided for a more substantial boost.

The Town Board approved a \$325,000 contract for Durham Ambulance, which represents an increase of \$80,000 over this year's \$245,000 budget.

Reay Mahler, president of Durham Ambulance, explained to the town board in October that they currently pay their emergency medical technicians (EMTs) \$13 per hour without benefits, making it difficult to attract and keep employees. Throughout Greene and Columbia counties, the hourly rate ranges from \$13 to \$19, Mahler said.

The budget increase will allow Durham Ambulance to raise the hourly rate to \$14. The cost of building maintenance and workers' compensation insurance is also increasing, Mahler explained.

The East Durham Volunteer Fire Company's 2021 budget is \$142,978, up from this year's \$140,175.

The Oak Hill-Durham Volunteer Fire Company budget increased from \$134,001 to \$134,200.

Durham Ambulance covers the entire town, with its budget paid as a tax levied town wide. The fire companies each cover their respective districts with monies paid levied from each district.

The hearings and adoption are standard practice to ensure fire protection and ambulance service for the town. The contracts are each for a one-year period.

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