



*Pope County Courthouse
Built in 1872*

**Board of County Commissioners
of the
County of Pope
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PRESS RELEASE

Date: October 14, 2021

Citizens of Pope County

The Board of Commissioners would like to take this opportunity to update our citizens on the current situation with the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service. Since June of this year the county board has been working with the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service in an attempt to provide ambulance service for the citizens of our county. The Board was first approached by the Director, Sabrina Banks, in June 2021 indicating the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service was in financial distress and requested the county issue an anticipatory warrant in the amount of \$50,000.00 to maintain ambulance service in Pope County. The \$50,000.00 anticipatory warrant would be repaid by the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service from their first distribution of property taxes collected by the county treasurer. The Board agreed to issue the anticipatory warrant in the amount of \$50,000.00 at a regularly scheduled board meeting on June 29, 2021. A check for \$50,000.00 was written and picked up on July 2, 2021 by the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service. In addition, Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service had requested the Board of Commissioners to purchase a new ambulance for them. The Board met with the regional sales manager, Bill Harrod, of American Response Vehicles to secure a new ambulance and agreed to advance the funds with a second anticipatory warrant. The new ambulance would have cost \$142,458.00 which was to be paid back in five annual installments of \$29,091.60. The Board of Commissioners also offered to buy a new ambulance using the American Rescue Plan funds awarded to Pope County with the vehicle being titled in the name of Pope County and then leased to the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service for one dollar per year. The Board of Commissioners was informed the purchase had been cancelled by the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service. On September 9, 2021 a check for \$50,418.07 was written to the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service which represented the first installment of property taxes collected to provide ambulance service for the citizens of Pope County. The first installment of property taxes collected was \$100,418.07 minus the \$50,000.00 repayment to Pope County for the anticipatory warrant issued on July 2, 2021. Thereafter, the Board was contacted by a board member of the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service and told they would be unable to continue service to the citizens of Pope County because they did not have adequate funds. A demand was made on the Board to advance the remaining ambulance tax levy funds based on the anticipated second installment of property taxes collected or they would shut down. The Board requested the Pope County

Volunteer Ambulance Service provide financial records to show how the \$100,418.07 had been spent by the Ambulance Service. In addition, it was learned there has been filed with the Pope County Clerk several federal tax liens filed against the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service. It should be noted the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance service is a private, not for profit corporation. The Pope County Board of Commissioners was then informed by a board member for the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service they would not be able to operate past December 1, 2021 even with the second installment of property taxes being advanced. The Pope County Volunteer Ambulance service was supposed to be providing monthly financial statements to the county board; however, they have failed to meet their obligation. Once again the Board of Commissioners requested proof of how the taxes collected from Pope County citizens had been spent. A special meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called on Thursday, October 7, 2021 to meet with the Director, Sabrina Banks, and the member of the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service where it was promised the financial reports would be presented for review. However, that meeting was canceled by the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service. The remaining anticipated tax levy funds, if every bit of property tax is collected, would be \$45,854.94. The total funds collected pursuant to the ambulance tax levy is \$146,273.81. Those funds are supposed to secure ambulance service to the citizens of Pope County from December 1, 2021 to November 30, 2022. Based on everything which has transpired in the last three months the Board decided to look into and accept bids for a new ambulance service to serve the citizens of Pope County. The Board continues to look for a new ambulance service provider due to the uncertain future of the Pope County Volunteer Ambulance Service and in an effort to protect the tax money collected from the taxpayers of Pope County, Illinois. The county has requested mutual aid from other providers in neighboring counties in order to ensure ambulance service is in place to our citizens. The Pope County Board of Commissioners is trying it's very best to ensure the best possible ambulance service for its citizens.

Pope County Board of Commissioners