



A Time of Change Is Before Us  
October 15, 2019

As your Mayor, I was asked by the Burlington Rescue Squad (BRS), the Common Council and Burlington Rotary to write a more personal communication with thoughts and feelings of the decision why the Burlington Rescue Squad is dissolving. For those of you who don't know, the Burlington Rescue Squad, Inc. is a 501c3 providing Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (A-EMT) ambulatory service to both the City and Town of Burlington. I was chosen because of being Mayor of the City of Burlington, my long time connection with Burlington Rescue Squad and being a Burlington Rotarian. My husband Warren Hefty Jr., served as a BRS member in the 1970's until his early death in 1985. I was a spouse standing on the sidelines, watching the roller coaster of emotions and how it affected him through his BRS service. After his death, I joined Burlington Rescue Squad and served 20 years, becoming a Gold Badge Member.

First, I can't say enough of the commitment by Burlington Rescue Squad to our community. The men and women who provided 73 years of selfless volunteerism. Many of which, sacrificed time from their jobs and families to give to their community.

So what changed?

Volunteerism has changed, family dynamics have changed, and rescue calls have increased. As early as 2015, the Burlington Rescue Squad has been faced with trying to cover a range of 1300 to 1600 calls PER year. In 2017, the City hired/scheduled a part-time EMT from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to assist Burlington Rescue Squad for daytime ambulatory calls. If Burlington Rescue Squad had enough coverage for the call, that A-EMT would stay at the firehouse for the next call, if needed.

In 2018 when BRS replaced one of the ambulances, they gifted that unit to the City of Burlington Fire Department. Being that the Burlington Rescue Squad holds the A-EMT License, the gifted City Fire unit has run as a First Responder level of emergency care. When BRS is dispatched, the City unit will go out on the call to initiate patient care and transfer patient care to Burlington Rescue Squad. If a second call came in, following patient transfer, the City unit was diverted to the next call. This unit didn't transport patients as it was not licensed with the state.

During this same time period, the Burlington Rescue Squad asked City Fire EMS to become Associated Members of Burlington Rescue Squad, enabling City Fire Department EMTs to function under Burlington Rescue Squad license. It was a great idea to assist in these calls, as it would allow these City Fire EMTs to use their level of licensed skills through the State of Wisconsin.

In summer of 2018, I stepped down as a member of Burlington Rescue Squad. I did so because of complications of my left leg and I didn't want to be a liability to the squad. It personally was highly emotional for months before and after I resigned. It was like part of my life was gone.

In November 2018, I was asked to attend a closed meeting of Burlington Rescue Squad Officers and Burlington Rotary /Rescue Board of Directors. It was stated we need more help to meet the numbers of calls. The next meeting of Burlington Rescue Squad I attended, as I am allowed to attend being a Gold Badge Member. I talked about all the developments on the horizon and 1600 calls are going to be on the low end. We need more housing including senior living buildings. I said, I wanted to see a merger so that those who want to volunteer still can. Many meetings were held since November 2018 trying to create a strategy that would work. We included Town of Burlington representatives and their Chiefs Bill Vrchota and Deputy Chief Mark Sekey to assist in working with Chief Alan Babe, City Fire Department, and Chief Brian Zwiebel of Burlington Rescue Squad.

Many of you have heard multiple sirens thinking there must be a large emergency event. Actually many of these sirens are back to back calls. Seven calls during the day is not unusual. I think the highest was 14 in a day.

Question: So how do we move forward?

The City had to strategically think of how to provide EMS serving this massive amount of calls today and in the future. The City has obtained the license of Advance Emergency Medical Technician (same as BRS) and credentialed the City Fire Department staff. The City will begin hiring paid EMS/ FIRE personnel. The City will continue as a hybrid paid and volunteer department. These ambulances will be going out the door 1 to 2 minutes after receiving dispatch. Burlington Rescue Squad can still volunteer or be paid for a part-time shift.

Burlington Rescue Squad has looked at perhaps serving the Town of Burlington only. On October 12, 2019 a meeting was held in which the Board of Directors and Rescue Squad officers decided it would not be viable to only service the Town and dissolution of BRS would occur effective December 31, 2019 at 11:59 p.m. no longer serving the Town and City of Burlington.

The City of Burlington will run Rescue Squad services on January 1, 2020.

Question: So what happens to the Town of Burlington?

Being pro-town, the Town of Burlington can decide if they want our full coverage of EMS service through a contract with the City of Burlington. We have worked through the years on projects together, this will be another one to help each other. We will focus together on giving all of our citizens the emergency care needed. The City has run the numbers to meet this challenge and it falls within our operating means. The BHS One course, run by Troy Everson, will remain with Burlington High School and will work directly with the City of Burlington Fire Department

In conclusion, no one failed! I look at it this way, Burlington Rescue Squad served this community over and above for 73 years. Imagine, those that are reading this, could you handle the demand on volunteering trying to keep up with large volume of calls, trainings, recertifications, still hold a job and have a life with your family? I am sure many of you will say no.

During this final transition we must keep these volunteers within your thoughts and prayers. They will feel the same as I did, part of their life is suddenly gone.

Question: I keep hearing about the Rotary, what does Rotary have to do with the Burlington Rescue Squad?

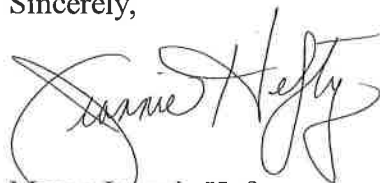
Burlington Rotary Club was the financial supporter of Burlington Rescue Squad. They managed the business operations and saw that Burlington Rescue Squad had the finest fleet and current technology to serve the entire Burlington Community all these years.

So to the Burlington Rotary where do I begin to thank you supporting this service for the entire Burlington Community through the years? I will be working with Rotary to have an open house in February 2020, at Veteran's Terrace for all of our community to come and thank current and past members of Burlington Rescue Squad.

I want to notify the Governor and our local State and County leaders of a tribute to Burlington Rescue Squad and Burlington Rotary Club. 73 years of volunteer service! I will hope to see large numbers of our community coming out on a Sunday afternoon and letting them know how thankful we are of this remarkable history in our community.

This story of 73 years will not go un-told! I want the whole State of Wisconsin to understand this sacrifice and how the dynamics of changing times affected the existence of Burlington Rescue Squad.

Sincerely,



Handwritten signature of Jeannie Hefty in cursive script.

Mayor Jeannie Hefty