



**TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD**  
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## **Statement from the Office of the Town Manager Regarding Public Response to Proposed Department of Public Health Emergency Medical Services Decision**

WETHERSFIELD, CT – I need to address the recent social media comments made by Dennis McMahon of Wethersfield Emergency Medical Service Association (WEMSA) about the recent Proposed Memorandum of Decision, made by the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, Public Hearing Office, in response to the Town of Wethersfield's Request to Change Primary Service Area Responder Petition # 24-003 (the Petition).

Unfortunately, throughout this process, and even as recently as this week, members of WEMSA have mischaracterized the Town's actions. The Town of Wethersfield had no other choice but to act when WEMSA unilaterally decided to change the relationship with AETNA that could have grave impact on our population. It is WEMSA who ended an agreement with AETNA that has served our community well for over two decades. WEMSA was simply not able to provide a sufficient plan to address the EMS needs of the community. The State's proposed final decision fully supports the Town's Alternative Plan.

An Impartial Hearing Officer from the Department of Public Health, after sitting through 23 days of hearings of testimony and evidence, found that **"The Town has demonstrated that Aetna's resources, experience, staffing, quality control, and relationship with its Sponsor Hospital would at least maintain, if not improve, patient care in Wethersfield."**

That conclusion was based in part on the testimony of one of the Town's expert witnesses in favor of the Town's plan, someone who the Hearing Officer identified as one of the leading experts in the country on Emergency Medical Services Design.

This case is not about personalities or money. This case is literally a question of life or death. People often exaggerate or overstate the significance of matters they are involved in. Not in this case. Without adequate EMS resources, people will die. The Town could not let that happen. In terms of money, the Hearing Officer found that, **"The Town has proven by a preponderance of evidence that the [Town] plan would have no financial impact on the Town."**

The hearing officer's Proposed Memorandum of Decision found the following:

**"The Town sustained its burden of proof that the Alternative Plan should be approved. In determining whether to approve the Alternative Plan, the Commissioner must consider the following factors as enumerated in General Statutes § 19a-181f (c)(2):**

- A. The impact of the plan on patient care;**
- B. The impact of the plan on emergency medical services system design, including system sustainability;**
- C. The impact of the plan on the local, regional and state-wide emergency medical services system;**

**D. The recommendation from the sponsor hospital’s medical oversight staff; and**

**E. The financial impact to the municipality without compromising the quality of patient care.”**

**More specifically, the Hearing Officer determined that:**

**“Based upon the evidence provided, the Town has demonstrated that Aetna’s resources, experience, staffing, quality control, and relationship with its Sponsor Hospital would at least maintain, if not improve, patient care in Wethersfield.”**

**“Based upon the evidence in this matter, the Town has demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that the Alternative Plan is sustainable and will not negatively impact system design.”**

**“Based upon the aforementioned, the Town has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the Alternative Plan will not negatively impact the local, regional and State-wide EMS system.”**

**“Hartford Hospital is the sponsor hospital and supports the Alternative Plan to assign Aetna as the BLS and ALS PSAR for Wethersfield.”**

**“Therefore, the Town has proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the Alternative Plan would have no financial impact on the Town.”**

The Proposed Memorandum of Decision fully supports the Town’s position on this matter. AETNA has been a reliable and valued partner in providing Emergency Medical Services in Wethersfield for over two decades. While we value and recognize the outstanding service provided by the former Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association WVAA dating back to 1956, this was always done in partnership with an experienced and well-staffed advanced life support provider. However, a few years ago, WVAA decided, on their own, to go in a different direction and change from a volunteer organization to a paid employee organization (WEMSA). Moreover, they began to unilaterally change the terms of the agreements with AETNA, which had been in place and working well for decades. The Town worked to try and help facilitate a new agreement between the parties, to no avail. When WEMSA took the action in late December 2023, the Town did the only thing that it could do to protect the citizens of Wethersfield and filed this Petition.