



## King Cove Eagerly Awaits Ferry's August 11<sup>th</sup> Delivery of New Ambulance

Within days the Tustumena will deliver a very large, shiny, candy-apple red present to King Cove – and not a moment too soon. The community's new ambulance, complete with all the bells and whistles, has been years in the making. Thanks to the Belkofski Tribe and the Aleutian Housing Authority (AHA), this dream is about to become reality.

"It's exciting," said King Cove City Fire Chief Chris Babcock. "This is something we've been trying to fund for quite some time."

The current ambulance, a 1989 Collins Ford F-350, has been in operation for more than two decades. Despite excellent maintenance on the 34 year-old emergency vehicle, there are several issues that are beyond repair.



King Cove's new ambulance will arrive on the ferry on Friday, Aug. 11th.

"A slipping transmission, spongy breaks and oil leaks continue to cause concerns over reliability," said Kennedy Serr, AHA's Operations Manager.

Additionally, the heat in the patient transport area doesn't work, and the parts needed to repair the problem are no longer available. On top of that, the newer style stretchers don't work well with the older model ambulances. For example, the height of the current ambulance makes it difficult for caregivers/EMS to safely access and load/unload patients. That creates the potential for injury to medical personnel.

"The ambulance we have now is high up off the ground, and it's very hard for our providers to get in and out," said Babcock. "Lifting the stretcher to get into the back of the ambulance is next to impossible."

There was no question the vehicle needed to be replaced. However, initially, funding such an endeavor seemed almost insurmountable.

"Public safety vehicles, especially fire trucks and ambulances, are high-ticket items," said Babcock.

"We are so grateful for our first responders here," said Lynn Farr, Belkofski Tribe President. "AHA reached out to us about one-time grant funds to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and we thought, let's try to get an ambulance."



**The ambulance purchased is a heavy-duty 2023 Ford 550, with a 4x4 drivetrain gas remounted Osage type – Super Warrior. It has liquid ride rear suspension, a VHF radio that ties into the current radio system in the City, as well as many other top-quality amenities.**

In 2020, AHA and the Tribe applied for funding under the Indian Community Development Block Grant Imminent Threat Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (ICDBG IT-CARES) program.

"As the Tribally-Designated Housing Entity, AHA shares funding opportunities with our partner tribes as they become available," Serr said. "If/when one of our partner tribes is interested in applying, AHA applies on their

behalf. The Belkofski Tribe responded and expressed interest in applying for these funds to replace the current ambulance in King Cove.”

“For the first time ever, this grant was ‘non-competitive’ and awarded on a first-come, first served basis,” Serr said.

Under the CARES Act, \$100 million was made available specifically for the ICDBG-IT CARES program. AHA, working closely with its tribal partners, applied for two grants under this funding opportunity: the Unalaska Food Pantry, in partnership with the Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska; and the King Cove Ambulance Replacement, in partnership with the Belkofski Tribe. Both grants were submitted simultaneously. The Unalaska Food Pantry was successfully funded, however, the grant for a new ambulance was not.



Needless to say, the community of King Cove was disappointed.

“They (AHA) reached out to us and said, ‘We like this grant, and no one else asked for anything like this. If funds become available, we will resubmit it,” Farr added.

As luck would have it, it was all about timing. Another opportunity later presented itself. In 2021, additional funding became available under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) ICDBG program.

“We reapplied as a ‘Phase One’ applicant, which gave us a little advantage because we were not funded in the first round,” Serr said. “Thankfully, we were awarded \$354,000 on December 30, 2021.”

“We got a call saying we got the funding,” Farr added. “We are so excited to give back to the community and our wonderful EMS crew! They really deserve it. Aleutian Housing is awesome for submitting the grant on our behalf.”

The funds are administered under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

“AHA is very familiar with the ICDBG program and has been very successful over the years in funding programs throughout the region,” Serr said.

No match was required for the new ambulance. That meant a top-of-the-line EMS vehicle with all the amenities could be purchased for King Cove with this funding.

“We are thrilled to say the least!” Serr said. “As a Housing Authority, we deal with all things housing, but having the opportunity to serve our communities in this capacity is awesome. We are delighted to be a partner in it.”

Once the funding was awarded, Serr took the lead on the project.

“This was no easy task, but she jumped right in and handled everything from the competitive bid and procurement processes, and finally, the purchase and shipping of the new ambulance,” said Erin Wilson Potter, AHA Deputy Director.

Serr worked closely with Babcock, as well as James Ackerman of Balcer Ambulance Sales Corp. dba Sawtooth Emergency Vehicles, based out of Montana, to submit the bids and build the new ambulance.

“She (Serr) said to get all the bells and whistles that you want on it, so it’s the latest model,” Babcock said. “The City of King Cove and the tribes are very excited.”

The ambulance purchased is a heavy-duty 2023 Ford 550, with a 4x4 drivetrain gas remounted Osage type – Super Warrior. It has liquid ride rear suspension and a VHF radio that ties into the current radio system in the City of King Cove. The emergency vehicle is also equipped with an oxygen lift, and multiple storage compartments inside and out. A patient stretcher transport system was also installed, which includes a powered loading system, allowing caregivers/EMS to safely load and unload patients, and raise or lower the cot at the touch of a button.

“It automatically comes out of the ambulance, and the leg drops,” Babcock said. “There’s no physical lifting of the gurney, like we have to do right now.”

“This powered load system allows for safe loading for the patients, while also reducing the risk of injuries to the caregivers/EMS on a call,” said Kennedy.

Currently, providers can only work on the patient from one side of the ambulance. However, the new ambulance allows EMS and care providers to access the patient from all sides.

“That’s especially helpful if we’re doing CPR,” Babcock said.

AHA commends Kennedy for her hard work in making this project happen in such a timely manner.

“This project demonstrated what we truly believe -- working together works,” said Wilson Potter.

“I would like to thank Kennedy for working so hard on this grant,” Farr added. “She put a lot of work into it, and I really appreciate her.”

“I can’t say thank you enough to the Belkofski Tribe and Aleutian Housing for taking the reins and helping us with this,” Babcock said. “We’re very happy with the new ambulance that we’re going to have. It’s really going to be a huge asset to our community for quite some time.

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