THE TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP FIRE COMMISSION

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

OCTOBER 10, 2017

The Regular Meeting of the Tobyhanna Township Fire Commission was held on October 10, 2017, at the Tobyhanna Township Government Center Building, 105 Government Center Way, Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania, 18350.

Present were George Planchock, Mark Argot, John Jablowski, John Kerrick, and John Holahan.

1. Interim Chair John Jablowski calls the meeting to order at 10:01AM.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.
3. John Kerrick nominates George Planchock to serve as Chair, John Holahan seconds. Vote: all in favor; George Planchock is appointed Chair.
4. John Kerrick nominates Mark Argot to serve as Vice Chair, John Holahan seconds. Vote: all in favor; Mark Argot is appointed Vice Chair.
5. John Kerrick nominates John Jablowski to serve as Secretary, John Holahan seconds. Vote: all in favor; John Jablowski is appointed Secretary.
6. John Jablowski nominates Jonathan Reiss to serve as Solicitor, John Holahan seconds. Vote: all in favor; Jonathan Reiss is appointed Solicitor.
7. New Business
   1. Allocation of Foreign Fire Insurance Funds. John Jablowski states that the Township normally receives about $90,000 from this fund. 83% goes to Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company (TTVFC), and 17% goes to Pocono Summit Volunteer Fire Company (PSVFC). As PSVFC no longer exists, how does the Fire Commission (FC) want to allocate these funds?

George Planchock states that because Pocono Mountain Volunteer Fire Company (PMVFC) is not located in Tobyhanna Township, he does not believe it is legal to release these funds to them. William (Bill) Weimar agrees, and states that PMVFC has the option to charge Tobyhanna Township for all or a percentage of worker’s compensation.

John Kerrick motions to release all Fire Insurance Funds money to TTVFC, John Jablowski seconds. Vote: all in favor; motion carries.

* 1. TTVFC request for release from the Fire Tax Fund - (refurbish 1997 tanker truck). John Jablowski states that TTVFC is refurbishing a 1997 tanker truck, at approximately $161,000. TTVFC has requested $62,000 from the Fire Tax Fund to mitigate the cost.

John Kerrick motions to release the requested funds for the tanker refurbishing of TTVFC, John Holahan seconds. Vote: all in favor; motion carries.

1. Public Comment
   1. Bill Weimar asks what the mission statement is for the Fire Commission (FC). John Jablowski states that they do not have one yet, but the FC will recommend to the Board of Supervisors how money is spent. John Kerrick states that a lot of tax money has gone to a fire company that Tobyhanna and Coolbaugh have no control over; this is a way to open dialogue with neighboring fire companies to efficiently manage assets.

Bill Weimar asks if the FC would be interested in joint ventures of recruitment and retention. Coolbaugh is looking at a LOWSAT program. Because Coolbaugh Township contracts with Thornhurst and Tobyhanna Township, they set forth $4,000 that is restricted for recruitment and retention. At this time, they are trying to increase is to $5,000. This is the first year Coolbaugh is trying this, because they do not want to lose sight of the volunteers they already have, and want to retain members. Coolbaugh does not yet have set parameters for what the money can be used for, but they are in open discussions with their fire companies. Weimar believes that a career or paid fire company would destroy this area.

Tony Lamantia states that fire districts are the easiest way to go. They are their own tax entity, have their own elected officials, take the pressure off the Township, and run off of state and federal bylaws. This is not allowed in the state of Pennsylvania at this time, but the FC could push for legislation that would allow it.

Ed Tutrone states that is discussions concerning the formation of the FC, John Jablowski stated that there are not members of the fire companies on the FC because of political interests. Tutrone suggests having one liaison each from TTVFC and PMVFC, so the FC stays in touch with the members of the fire companies. There needs to be more open lines of communication; TTVFC formed a five-member Strategic Planning Committee to work with the FC, the Township Manager, and/or the Board of Supervisors to ensure open communication between governing entities and the fire departments.

John Jablowski likes the idea of representative, and suggests adding one from Coolbaugh and Tunkhannock Townships so the discussion becomes more regional. There is a problem with lack of communication and miscommunication, and that should be prevented.

Bill Weimar states that the dynamic of a volunteer is changing. They are in discussion about certifying people for certain roles, such as driver only, auxiliary, and rescue technician, but training standards need to be standardized. Ed Tutrone discusses minimum training standards for role-specific fire members, and states that this could help with a manpower shortage.

George Planchock stresses the importance of having a mission statement and a clear direction for the FC. John Jablowski states that the District Attorney

Bill Weimar states that he thinks it would be a good idea for PSVFC to turn their equipment over to TTVFC and reopen the fire company under new leadership. Ed Tutrone states that TTVFC tried without success. Both Tutrone and Weimar state that a few members from PSVFC have joined their fire companies.

Ed Tutrone states that since PSVFC was deactivated, there has been no lapse in coverage, and response time has not changed.

George Planchock states that he will try and talk to the chief of PSVFC. The location of PSVFC is important, because of the confluence of the interstates, as well as the local residential areas and areas like Kalahari. Hopefully, there will be a fire company in that location soon.

* 1. Ed Tutrone asks if the Fire Police of PSVFC were ever decommissioned. John Kerrick says that it should be checked, but anyone in the Fire Police must be a member of a fire company.
  2. John Jablowski states that the Township’s ISO rating has improved. It is 6/6 now; as of January 2018, it will decrease to 4/4.
  3. John Jablowski states that the FC should meet with PMVFC in November to work out financial remunerations for their services. The FC will ask PMVFC for a proposal. The meeting is set for Thursday, November 16 at 6:00PM.

1. John Holahan motions to adjourn, John Jablowski seconds. Meeting adjourned at 11:02AM.