

TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP FIRE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
APRIL 12, 2018

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The Regular Meeting of the Tobyhanna Township Fire Commission was held on April 12, 2018, at the Tobyhanna Township Government Center Building, 105 Government Center Way, Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania, 18350.

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

1. Chair George Planchock calls the meeting to order at 6:01PM.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.
3. Announcements
  - a. Julia Heilakka states that this is new to the agenda, but it's a spot for general announcements. For example, at the last Board of Supervisors' meeting, Anne Lamberton stated that John Holahan's birthday was last week.
4. John Jablowski arrives at 6:02PM.
5. John Holahan motions to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve the minutes from the January 11, 2018 Regular Meeting, Mark Argot seconds. Vote: motion carries.
6. Old Business
  - a. Act 172. Ed Tutrone states that he sent the information to Jonathan Reiss. From there, it will go to the Board. He is getting John Jablowski how many members of Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company (TTVFC) are eligible so Jablowski can budget accordingly. John Jablowski states that TTVFC will determine who is eligible.
7. New Business
  - a. The Commission's role. John Kerrick states that the Commission should determine its role and mission statement. He was under the impression that the Commission was the liaison between the fire companies and the Board of Supervisors. Where is this going? George Planchock states that the Commission adopted a mission statement when John Kerrick was not present.
  - b. Discussion concerning Emergency Management Coordinator. John Kerrick states that he is hoping Tobyhanna Township acts as a visionary for fire service. He wonders if the township needs a paid Emergency Management Coordinator, and how to retain and get new firefighters. John Kerrick asks Ed Tutrone what kind of system TTVFC has.

Ed Tutrone replies that there are different classifications of membership, such as drivers. At the last meeting, TTVFC changed from a points to a percentage system. Now, they must attend 25% of the calls per month, 25% of the drills per month, and 25% of the total calls per year. If a member misses the requirements for three consecutive months, they are placed on probation. Since the new system was activated, members are coming to more calls. Over the last six to eight months, TTVFC has gained about 6 new members.

Ed Tutrone states that volunteers are vanishing, but the call volume in this area would not support a paid fire company. Annual call volume is about 450, but that includes automatic alarms. Concerning Kalahari, TTVFC has had four calls there. The EMS is there 1-2 times a day, and the police are there 2-3 times a day. A quick response service (QRS) is probably going to be necessary in that area.

Ed Tutrone states that concerning the Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC), the Commission is discussing two separate positions: and Emergency Management Coordinator, who handles logistics when there is an emergency, and Emergency Service Management, who could potentially oversee EMS, fire, and police. The latter job is very different from the first. These roles can be combined, but EMC is not a full-time job.

David Carbone asks if there is any plan for a major fire at Kalahari, and what happens if only six people show up. Ed Tutrone replies yes, and states that if the township went to paid fire service, there would only be four people on an engine. As of 3-4 years ago, the cost for that would be \$2.5 million a year. Even with a paid fire crew, they will still rely on surrounding fire companies for mutual aid. One problem with a regional fire department is that the area is very spread out.

David Carbone asks the Commission if they will help get more volunteers for the fire department. John Kerrick states that it should be the Commission's responsibility to discern if the role as a full-time EMC is viable, and what the responsibilities of the role could be. The Commission discusses the lack of willing volunteers. Ed Tutrone cautions that a lot of fire companies are hesitant about working with one another.

David Carbone states that the concept surrounding volunteerism has changed. It used to be very important, but people are no longer willing to volunteer.

The Commission discusses the status of Pocono Summit Volunteer Fire Company (PSVFC). George Planchock states the same officers have been reelected. Ed Tutrone states that they have worker's compensation and insurance on their truck. John Kerrick expresses frustration that a lot of taxpayer money went into that company and the township has no say in how the equipment gets used. The Commission discusses the frustration concerning PSVFC's equipment not being

used. Ed Tutrone states that PSVFC members are not told what money is coming in to the company or what the expenses are.

John Jablowski states that he believes it is the Commission's task to define the roles and responsibilities of a coordinator. The Commission agrees.

John Holahan asks if money from the Economic Development Authority's levy can be used to fund a fire/EMS/police presence in the area. John Jablowski replies yes.

John Kerrick states that he believes a regional plan for fire coverage could work. John Jablowski suggests seeing if the PADCED could do a regional study for fire in the area. Having a hybrid department may be the answer.

George Planchock states that PSVFC is not a 501(c)(3), but the Relief Association is. Manpower is the largest issue for this area. Hybrid systems work well in places with larger populations, where people work where they live. This area commutes to work, and people don't want to volunteer because of lengthy commute times.

David Carbone suggests focusing on retention, and discusses programs New York uses to retain firefighters. He would like to see a membership drive.

Ed Tutrone states that training to become a firefighter is a huge time commitment. The younger generation seems uninterested. Hopefully some sort of incentive will help.

The Commission directs John Jablowski to ask the PADCED to do a regional fire study, and set another Fire Commission meeting for when they arrive. The Commission discusses inviting fire companies to join the meeting. Ed Tutrone states that the first Wednesday of every month is TTVFC's meeting, so please don't schedule it on that day.

John Holahan suggests completing a SWOT test, to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats concerning fire service.

8. Public Comment – none.
9. John Holahan motions to adjourn, Mark Argot seconds. Vote: all in favor; meeting adjourned at 7:19PM.