

A G E N D A  
Fire Commission  
Special Meeting  
September 13, 2018  
6:00PM

1. Call Meeting to Order: George Planchock, Chair
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Announcements:
4. Consider the minutes of April 12, 2018 Meeting
5. Old Business
6. New Business  
Fire Commission Vacancy - discussion
7. Fire Commission Report/Comment
8. Public Comment

**ADJOURNMENT**

**AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING IN PROGRESS**

TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP FIRE COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

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The Regular Meeting of the Tobyhanna Township Fire Commission was held on September 13, 2018, at the Tobyhanna Township Government Center Building, 105 Government Center Way, Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania, 18350.

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

1. Chair George Planchock calls the meeting to order at 6:00PM.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.
3. John Holahan motions to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approve the minutes as presented [April 12, 2018], John Kerrick seconds. Vote: All in favor, motion carries.
4. Old Business
  - a. Regional Fire Study Initial Meeting. John Kerrick asks how the meeting with the State went. Ed Tutrone replies that John Jablowski, Autumn Canfield, Troy Counterman, George Planchock, Supervisors, George Ewald, Coolbaugh's fire company president, Albrightsville, and Lake Harmony were present. Coolbaugh stated they have no interest in a regional department, and asked about individual needs studies. The townships and fire companies must agree before the State will pursue a study. The fire companies decided to meet and discuss this. George Planchock states the State normally comes into situations where fire companies are at each other's throats, and they seemed surprised by our situation. John Kerrick suggests not necessarily regionalizing fire service, but perhaps something to promote equipment sharing.

Ed Tutrone states some municipalities may feel like they are carrying others in a regionalization plan. John Kerrick states the township could consider a deal where a regional service balances its time between municipalities. Ed Tutrone states during a call at Harvest Mills, the dispatcher called the Tobyhanna Army Depot because he was guaranteed four people. For Tobyhanna Township, the call volume is low and may not justify a paid department. Many alarms are cooking smoke. John Holahan states once an alarm goes off, security is supposed to call the homeowner to verify the alarm warrants a response, but that often gets missed.

Ed Tutrone states he and Troy Counterman are meeting with Coolbaugh to discuss recruitment and retention. Their Supervisors mandate that we must use part of their money for recruitment and retention. The stipends seem to be

working. TTVFC just changed to a percentage system for number of required calls, and that is helping.

Ed Tutrone states if the State does the study, it would be at least a year until we receive results. George Planchock asks if the township can sustain a fully paid fire company. John Holahan states regionalization is for sharing resources. Ed Tutrone states most fire companies have their own EMS, and a paid fire company would need four people.

Ed Tutrone states no matter what happens, the township must be covered. John Kerrick asks how many volunteers will you lose if you started paying certain people. Ed Tutrone states there are paid fire departments nearby: Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Williams Port, Wilson Borough, Army Depot, Allentown, East Allen. John Kerrick states he has legal questions, and asks if the Commission can use the Board's solicitor.

Ed Tutrone states the Commission and TTVFC should talk. John Holahan states he has sent Julia Heilakka a list of paid Fire Commissions in Monroe County. According to the National Fire Protection Agency, 69% of firefighters in the US are volunteers. The average salary in a paid fire company is \$35,000 to \$53,000. Ed Tutrone states the State is waiting to hear back from us. We have the option to do our own study, but they like the idea of doing a study for multiple townships.

John Kerrick states there is more to this than regionalizing. There is also discussion on the shortage of manpower; does the State have solutions for the shortage of manpower? George Planchock states the State has said no. John Holahan asks to find out who in the legislator has proposed bills over the years regarding fire. We should reach out to legislators and ask for help with legislation.

George Planchock states the State does not have answers to fire company problems; they tend to arbitrate disagreements. Ed Tutrone states the State tends to recommend building a regional fire house. John Holahan suggests calling the Control Center and acquiring statistics for call volume. A pro forma for a paid fire company would be beneficial.

John Kerrick asks if the Economic Development Authority is operational. John Holahan replies yes. The money for the Public Improvement Levy (PIL) could pay for police and EMS if it was for the PIL area.

Ed Tutrone states the fire companies were named in the ordinance, and they should be named by resolution. John Holahan states we need to revisit the ordinance.

John Holahan states we must find out what it would take to take care of ourselves. Ed Tutrone suggests looking into the stipend. Troy has information on this, we



can ask him. The stipend seems to be working. Ed Tutrone believes a stipend does not affect relief.

John Holahan motions to ask the Board of Supervisors for use of their attorney. John Kerrick seconds. Vote: All in favor, motion carries.

John Holahan motions to ask township for use of staff for research purposes. John Kerrick seconds. Vote: All in favor, motion carries.

John Holahan states he will reach out to Jack Rader regarding legislation. The Commission directs Julia Heilakka to ask Troy Counterman to come to the next fire commission meeting.

- b. Pocono Summit Volunteer Fire Company (PSVFC). George Planchock states he stopped by PSVFC and spoke with George Tallmadge, and PSVFC still has no interest in merging. They must be running out of money. Ed Tutrone states the merger is still on table if PSVFC is interested.

## 5. New Business

- a. Fire Commission Vacancy discussion. John Kerrick states both are well qualified. We have been hoping to have place at the table for both of them at the FC later. The FC feels unorganized right now. George Planchock states he would vote for Troy Counterman.

John Holahan motions to recommend the Supervisors appoint Troy Counterman, Mark Argot seconds. John Holahan states if we want the cooperation of the fire company, Troy Counterman is most likely to be motivated to do that. Mark Argot states this will probably boil down to ego. George Planchock states personalities can get the better of us, but Troy Counterman has a lot of experience. Vote: All in favor, motion passes.

John Holahan states he has spoken with CJ Dickinson; Dickinson is passionate, but Troy Counterman would be better. We would like to see CJ Dickinson involved.

## 6. Announcements

- a. George Planchock states the next meeting is October 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm.

## 7. Public Comment

- a. Andy Bethel asks if the stipend is a flat rate or a paid performance. George Planchock states it is a term for monetary compensation, it could be anything.

Andy asks if George Tallmadge ever submitted a binder for the mill? Ed Tutrone says no. Andy Bethel states he will give Ed Tutrone his binder.

8. Mark Argot motions to adjourn, John Holahan seconds. Vote: all in favor; meeting adjourned at 7:18PM.
9. Board enters Executive Session.

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Minutes recorded by Julia Heilakka