

THE TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AND THE TOBYHANNA TOWNSHIP FIRE COMMISSION
JOINT MEETING
NOVEMBER 20, 2018

A November 2018 Joint Meeting of the Tobyhanna Township Board of Supervisors (“Board”) and the Tobyhanna Township Fire Commission (“Commission”) was held on November 20, 2018, at the Tobyhanna Township Government Center Building, 105 Government Center Way, Pocono Pines, Pennsylvania, 18350.

Present are Anne Lamberton, John Holahan, III, Heidi A. Pickard, Brendon Carroll, David Carbone, George Planchock, John Kerrick, and Township Manager John Jablowski. Mark Argot and Solicitor Jonathan J. Reiss, Esquire, are not present.

1. Chairs Anne Lamberton and George Planchock call the meeting to order at 5:30PM. It is determined that a quorum is present.
2. Minutes
 - a. John Kerrick motions to approve and dispense with the reading of the minutes for the October 11, 2018, meeting, John Holahan seconds. Vote: motion carries.
 - b. John Kerrick motions to approve and dispense with the reading of the minutes for the September 13, 2018, meeting, John Holahan seconds. Vote: motion carries.
3. Solicitor’s Report – none.
4. Old Business – none.
5. New Business
 - a. Heidi Pickard arrives at 5:33PM.
 - b. Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company (TTVFC). John Jablowski states the Board expressed interest in a joint meeting with TTVFC. John Kerrick states he doesn’t want a repeat of Pocono Summit; TTVFC doesn’t want to sign equipment over to the township, and he is wondering if Jonathan Reiss could draft an agreement.

Ed Tutrone states TTVFC was asked to attend a meeting regarding budgetary needs of TTVFC. They applied for a grant, and ask for assistance with the shortfall of purchasing equipment for structural and trench collapses. Brendon Carroll states this request should go to the Commission first, who could then bring it to the Board. The Board must define what the Commission does going forward.

Ed Tutrone states TTVFC will need a stipend or paid program in about five years. The role of the Commission could be to gather information and figure out how a paid company works. It will be less expensive to start with a stipend program, but the system will eventually need to transition to fully paid. John Jablowski states TTVFC could pursue a duty crew. Ed Tutrone states there are different types of stipends. Anne Lamberton asks if there are local fire companies that use stipends. Troy Counterman states Coolbaugh Township is considering \$10 call and \$8 a day for training.

Heidi Pickard states the stipend is a great idea, but once people start getting fully paid, the volunteers will disperse. John Holahan states the stipend would cost \$500 - \$1,000 per person. The Commission also considered revamping the fine structure of false alarms; the township should consider raising fines. Ed Tutrone states there is concern over what qualifies as a false alarm.

Anne Lamberton states we should contact Chris Wagner and find out what PMRPD's policy is on false alarms. John Holahan states Jason Fitzgerald could help TTVFC pursue grants. John Holahan states the Commission also considered a system like EMS has. Ed Tutrone states TTVFC can't charge for fires but can charge for extraordinary expenses, like HAZMAT and car accidents. TTVFC has billed in the past, but collection isn't good.

Troy Counterman states to the end of October, TTVFC received 392 calls, which is up about 100 calls. Total man hours so far are 1,102 hours. TTVFC averages 35 calls/month and 1/3 of them are false.

John Holahan states the township must figure out how to fund this. Anne Lamberton asks Troy Counterman to reach out to paid fire companies. Troy Counterman replies in Lake Placid, most firefighters are on the municipal's DPW. One employee carries the pager on a rotation and must respond to any fire calls. When they respond, they are paid DPW wages. The other firefighters that respond receive a stipend. Another fire department in Connecticut gives a \$3-4/hour stipend. Ed Tutrone states Lake Placid's model works until all of the employees are working on the same project. John Holahan states the Board and Commission reached out to DCED concerning a regional study, but surrounding municipalities are not interested.

The Board and Commission agree that a paid company is inevitable. Ed Tutrone states TTVFC could take over commercial fire inspections. It generates some money and is good public relations. John Kerrick states we need to know the cost of a paid fire department. Ed Tutrone states Coolbaugh Township said they are not interested in regionalization. He also contacted Wilson Borough and received statistics from them.

Anne Lamberton states the DCED can complete a regional study including only Tobyhanna Township. They could consider a stipend and paid department, as well as how to gradually transition.

John Jablowski states the ISO rating will drop if TTVFC uses a duty crew. Ed Tutrone states the offer is still valid to Pocono Summit Volunteer Fire Company (PSVFC). TTVFC told PSVFC that their name would change and they would work under TTVFC's rules and regulations, but the company could still run out of their house. The bylaws allow members to live in the primary coverage area; they don't have to be located in Tobyhanna Township.

Anne Lamberton summarizes the discussion: the township will do the fire study, with a focus on stipends, a full-time department, and a transition between the two. Troy Counterman and John Jablowski will meet to prepare a draft budget for a fully paid company, which will then go to the Commission. The Board will consider amending its false alarm ordinance.

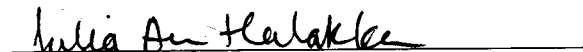
John Jablowski states he will reach out to Coolbaugh Township and find out why they weren't interested in regionalization. Anne Lamberton states Jonathan Reiss is working on the reformulation of the Fire Commission.

Troy Counterman asks about the progress for the firefighter tax relief. John Jablowski replies the Board approved it, but Jonathan Reiss has yet to implement it.

6. Open Discussion – none.
7. Public Comment – none.
8. Meeting adjourned at 6:49PM.

Minutes recorded by Julia Heilakka

Respectfully submitted:


Julia Heilakka, Township Secretary