

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: August 1, 2022

TO: Residents and Taxpayers of Tobyhanna Township

FROM: Tobyhanna Township Board of Supervisors

RE: PROPOSED FIRE ORDINANCE PRESS RELEASE

Dear Residents and Taxpayers of Tobyhanna Township,

As a part of the continued efforts by the Board of Supervisors to plan, enhance, and provide for the necessary funding of the emergency services provided by the Township, the Board has drafted the attached proposed ordinance to memorialize an agreement to address basic responsibilities and accountability standards between Tobyhanna Township and the independent Volunteer Fire Companies of Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company and Pocono Summit Volunteer Fire Company that serve the Township.

Outlined below, is a brief history on how the Board arrived at the conclusions to design and draft this Ordinance to act in the best interests of the community and to provide for the safety, health, and wellbeing of the residents in a fiscally responsible manner.

In recognizing the need for improved communications between the Township Supervisors and the fire companies, the Board voted to establish a Fire Commission to act as a liaison between both parties. The goal of the Fire Commission was to establish positive communications and planning to bring the Township and fire companies together to develop a strategic plan to address the future needs of the community.

Fire Commission, in conversations with the Fire Company, identified concerns related to decreased volunteerism, equipment needs, and training. Within these discussions-the Fire Company indicated there would be a need for a paid fire program in the coming years.

As the Fire Commission tried to advance these discussions, representatives of the Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company resisted the Fire Commission's authority and positive dialogue; as a result, the path forward began to deteriorate.

In the fall of 2021, under the advice of counsel, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was drafted by the Board for both Fire Companies to have input on, to, again, try to memorialize an understanding between all parties as to the service, budgets, and overall accountability of the Fire Companies and the Township. The proposal was halted due to resistance from the leadership of Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company.

In a parallel track with trying to complete discussions to finalize the MOU, The Board, along with the knowledge of both fire companies, entered a contract with an independent Fire Services consultant to evaluate the current state of the fire companies and provide the Township with a needs assessment resulting from their findings. The purpose of which is to ensure the Township remains current with national safety and fire standards for training and that the fire companies are in possession of the

necessary equipment to be successful at providing high quality and fiscally responsible fire service for the Township.

Without the willingness to cooperate by the leadership of the Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company with the Fire Commission in preparation of the MOU, counsel advised the Board to design a model fire ordinance to establish reasonable expectations and service levels provided by the two independent volunteer fire companies to the taxpayers of Tobyhanna Township. The Board is considering the Proposed Ordinance as a means of a better way to ensure the safety and well-being of the taxpayers and residents of Tobyhanna Township.

This Proposed Ordinance by the Board intends to establish a baseline of accountability, to protect all parties, as volunteers and boards change over time, and to be consistent when those changes happen in the future. The Board has the responsibility under the law to provide fire service to the Township, as well as the fiduciary responsibility to have the funds, given to the local volunteer fire companies from your tax dollars, properly accounted for. The Supervisors' proposed Ordinance is for those purposes only and should not be perceived as anything contrary.

We trust this information provides an understanding of the intended purpose of this Ordinance and not be misunderstood to be anything other than the common goal of providing accountability of fire protection services the Tobyhanna Township residents and taxpayers.

Tobyhanna Township Board of Supervisors