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**Statement from the Tobyhanna Township Board of Supervisors:**

Tobyhanna Township is a second-class township and as such is mandated, by Section 1553 of the second-class township code, to ensure fire services are provided within the township and that appropriate financial and administrative assistance is available for the service. The township also requires organizations receiving tax based financial support to be fiscally responsible with the money provided. To ensure this fiscal responsibility, the BOS may by ordinance, make rules and regulations for the government of fire companies and their officers which are located within the township.

Tobyhanna Township provides tax money for fire service through a separate fire tax assessment as well as through the general fund tax money. The fire tax assessment was approved by the residents of Tobyhanna Township in 1985 by a non-binding referendum vote. The money was approved for the specific use of the purchase of fire equipment and apparatus.

Additionally, money from the Foreign Fire Tax Fund, which is administered by the Auditor General of Pennsylvania, is provided to the township for distribution to fire companies recognized by the township. For the ten-year period of 2013 – 2022 TTVFC has been provided with \$ 3,114,508 of financial assistance and PSVFC has been provided with \$ 526,480 of financial assistance for a total of \$ 3,640,988.

Historically, Tobyhanna Township has had a fire ordinance, and even a separate fire commission, to regulate and oversee the fiscal responsibility of the fire companies. In 2022 the fire commission was abolished because TTVFC refused to answer to this commission. With the abolishment of the fire commission, the BOS saw the need to reinforce the Fire Ordinance to ensure fiscal responsibility. While preparing the updated fire ordinance, the BOS met with

officers of both fire companies on multiple occasions to solicit their thoughts and feedback. On August 15, 2022 the new fire ordinance was enacted. On August 22, 2022 TTVFC, thru their attorney, confirmed their previous statement that if a new Fire Ordinance was enacted, as drafted, they would no longer agree to operate as an officially recognized fire company for Tobyhanna Township. PSVFC has agreed to operate under the regulation of the new ordinance and continues to be a recognized fire company. The BOS immediately contacted adjoining municipal fire companies and reconfigured the fire service coverage areas to ensure adequate fire service for the township, without TTVFC.

On October 12, 2022 Tobyhanna Township and TTVFC entered into mediation in an effort to resolve the matter but these mediation efforts were unsuccessful. The BOS continues to seek ways to improve fire service within the township and has spearheaded talks with adjoining municipalities to consider the formation of a regional fire department similar to the PMRPD and PMREMS departments.