

PRESS RELEASE

On July 19, 2023, Judge C. Daniel Higgins, Jr., of the Court of Common Pleas of Monroe County issued an Order compelling Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company (TTVFC) to vacate the Tobyhanna Township owned fire houses and to return nearly all the fire trucks and equipment in their possession to the Township. The Court also ordered the Township has the right to conduct a financial audit of the fire company to determine the amount of township tax funds held by Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company at the time they voluntarily removed themselves from service in August 2022.

On August 15, 2022, the Tobyhanna Township Board of Supervisors enacted an updated fire ordinance. The intent of the updated ordinance was to ensure fiscally sound practices were being followed whenever tax funds were utilized. The Board also felt that since tax funds were used to purchase many of the fire vehicles and much of the equipment used by the TTVFC, the vehicles and equipment should be owned by the Township of Tobyhanna.

Once the ordinance was enacted, the Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company voluntarily removed themselves from being a recognized fire company within the township. Consequently, they were precluded from responding to fire calls within the township, however, Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company continued to respond to fire calls outside the township with the vehicles and equipment purchased with township tax funds. The Board of Supervisors felt it was inequitable and unfair for the township residents tax funds to subsidize this volunteer fire company to fight fires in other municipalities with the fire vehicles and equipment purchased and maintained by the residents of Tobyhanna Township.

Tobyhanna Township filed a Declaratory Judgment Action, in Monroe County Court, on August 25, 2022, seeking the return of fire vehicles and equipment purchased for Tobyhanna Township Volunteer Fire Company by the taxpayers of Tobyhanna Township, the vacation of the township owned buildings being occupied by the fire company, and a financial audit of the fire company. Testimony and evidence at the hearings held December 9, 2022, and December 20, 2022, revealed the Township residents funded the

volunteer fire company with nearly two million dollars in tax funds and services over the past several years.

With this decision the Board of Supervisors looks forward to continuing to improve fire protection service, to the residents and visitors of the township, through the Pocono Summit Volunteer Fire Company and the newly formed Tobyhanna Township Bureau of Fire.