

MINUTES  
PENN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING  
OCTOBER 20, 2015

The Penn Township Board of Commissioners convened on Tuesday, October 20, 2015 at 7:00 P.M. Present were Commissioners Felix, Heilman, Klunk, Goldsmith and Prieber. Also present were Township Manger Rodgers, Fire Chief Cromer, and Administrative Assistant Hallett. The following items were discussed:

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Commissioner Felix announced that there was an Executive Session following the Board of Commissioners meeting on October 19, 2015 and the announcements from that session will be read during the Public Safety Committee meeting on November 2, 2015.

Commissioner Felix announced that Fire Chief Cromer presented him with a form from the York County Department of Emergency Services concerning the CAD system which required a signature. The Board made no objections to Commissioner Felix signing the form.

CITIZENS COMMENTS: None

FIRE CHIEF CROMER'S PRESENTATION: Chief Cromer reported that a Steering Committee was formed in December of 2013 to discuss the possibility of combining the Hanover Borough and Penn Township Fire Departments. He reviewed the make-up and purpose of the Committee. Chief Cromer shared that Penn Township and Hanover Borough currently operate with a functional regionalization, which provides for mutually aiding one another while operating under individual guidelines, personnel, and funding. There is presently no agreement in place between Penn Township and Hanover Borough with the exception of the shared Fire Chief.

Fire Chief Cromer reported that there are potential funds available to assist in covering some of the costs of combining the two fire departments. There will be up front cost involved in a regionalization; however, DCED and the State Fire Commissioners Office may offer funds to offset some of this expense. Presently the State Fire Commissioner gives a grant that pays each "group" in the consolidation \$15,000 per year for five years.

Fire Chief Cromer reported that most of the savings in combining departments would come from apparatus expenditures. Eventually there could be savings on personnel expense. Both Hanover Borough and Penn Township spend a tremendous amount of money on overtime, which could be handled more affordably with a combined department.

Fire Chief Cromer passed out spreadsheets showing potential budgets over the next 5 years. He prepared a budget for Hanover Borough's Career Department, Penn Township's Career Department, Penn and Hanover's Career Departments combined and a merger of both Township's Career and Volunteer departments. Commissioner Klunk commented that there would be a noticeable savings with hiring only three firefighters in the combined department versus six with two separate departments.

Michael Brown asked if the Committee set up to oversee the new fire department would be paid. Chief Cromer responded that the Board would be made up of volunteers, as the Chief's research did not show any paid Boards in Pennsylvania. Commissioner Heilman pointed out that there could be housing expense involved with where the Committee meets and also additional administrative expense

related to payroll and other Human Resource functions. He also pointed out that a separate auditor and solicitor would be required.

Michael Brown asked if combining departments would cut out the majority of the overtime. Chief Cromer responded that it is a possibility; however, a lot of the overtime is due to people out on disability and other health related issues. Commissioner Heilman pointed out that vacation and sick leave also contributes to overtime. Commissioner Klunk wanted to clarify that currently one Penn Township firefighter is on Worker's Compensation and two are on disability due to non-work related health concerns.

Commissioner Felix asked to clarify who the ambulance drivers would be working for. Chief Cromer responded that the ambulance personnel are subcontracted and the ambulances are owned by the Volunteers. The Volunteers would need to vote to join the combined department in order for the ambulance revenue and expense to be relevant.

Chief Cromer reported that the next step, if the Board of Commissioners is interested in pursuing the merger, is to appoint the Fire Commission to serve as governing body of the merged departments. The Commission would structure the merger, set bylaws, and negotiate contracts. Chief Cromer pointed out that the Fire Commission would have to present their budget request to the Township's for approval each year.

Chief Cromer reviewed the apparatus savings with a combined department. Commissioner Heilman commented that the savings of \$1,822,242 over 15 years is not a significant amount of money.

Chief Cromer handed out a draft copy of an Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement between Hanover Borough and Penn Township Fire Rescue and Related Services. He commented that, if done correctly, the merger would take at least eighteen to twenty-four months to complete.

Michael Brown asked what the advantage is to combining fire departments and commented that it seemed to be an improvement in 2008 when Penn Township and Hanover Borough began to work cooperatively. Chief Cromer responded that the savings in apparatus and maintenance would be worthwhile. He advised that, if nothing else, a formal agreement be reached concerning Penn Township storing equipment in Hanover Borough's fire stations. Commissioner Prieber commented that negotiating a single Fire Contract would be a benefit to combining departments.

Commissioner Klunk asked what other funds are available that would remove some of the financial responsibility from the municipalities and this was discussed.

Commissioner Felix recommended that the Board take time to consider the information presented and continue discussion during the November 3, 2015 Public Safety Committee meeting.

**2016 BUDGET DISCUSSION:** Manager Rodgers reported that there are no foreseeable revenue or expense changes from what was projected in the original draft budget. She stated that there may be an increase in realty transfer from commercial properties. Commissioner Heilman pointed out that this increase is not something that can be projected for 2016 because they are one time payments.

Commissioner Felix stated that there is no contribution to the Fire Reserve Account included in the 2016 draft budget.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS:** None.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS: Davina Jurgenson from the Evening Sun asked if the combined fire department would be called Hanover Area Regional Fire District. Chief Cromer responded that it's named Hanover Area Regional Fire District in the draft agreement only and this is not set in stone.

Davina Jurgenson asked for clarification on how Penn Township and Hanover Borough are currently working together and Chief Cromer responded.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Angela Hallett  
Administrative Assistant