

**District Township Supervisors
Special Meeting
July 27, 2023**

BUSINESS MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ed Overberger called to order the District Township Board of Supervisors Special Meeting, held at 202 Weil Road, Boyertown, PA at 7:01 p.m. Present were Chairman Ed Overberger, Vice-Chairman Leonard Robb, Solicitor Gene Orlando, Emergency Management Coordinator Tim Adam, Secretary Elaine Schvien and Assistant Secretary Kim Schroeder. Present from Eastern Berks Fire Department - Chief Mike Mutter, Deputy Chief Chris Schaeffer, President Scott Reitnauer, as well as additional members from the fire department. Total attendance, including residents, approximately 60. Supervisor Ron Leibowitz was delayed, arriving at 7:30 p.m.

AGENDA

The July 27, 2023 Special Meeting agenda was posted to the District Township website and municipal building on 7/25/23.

PROPOSED FIRE TAX DISCUSSION

Mr. Overberger opened the discussion stating the intent of the meeting was to be an informational session to better understand what EBFD does for District Township residents and the local community, to discuss funding, an opportunity to ask questions, and to better understand there is a Statewide crisis with emergency services which is affecting a lot of communities. Mr. Overberger stated there will be no decision made at this evening's meeting.

Chief Mutter provided some history on the fire department, noting they serve several communities including Washington Township, District Township, Bechtelsville Borough, Bally Borough, and 1/3 of Pike Township. In 2022 they had approximately 500 calls with 58 of those in District Township. Calls for structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, assisting the ambulance, assisting with down trees, the recent 2-day brush fire on Cherry Drive, etc. Per Chief Mutter, EBFD is funded by the municipalities they serve (tax or donation), donations from residents, and the fire company's fundraising events. Their volunteer time is better spent on training than fundraising. It is difficult to have a budget that relies on donations versus a steady cash flow provided by a tax. EBFD is 100% volunteer.

Residents asked various questions/gave various points of view. Several noted comments:

- ❖ Was the State Representative invited to the meeting: No, but the Board has had conversations with Senator Pennycuik.
- ❖ Seisholtzville Fire Department is closer: Response difficulties.
- ❖ How many EBFD volunteers: 42.
- ❖ Expenses for EBFD: Insurance, truck maintenance, water fees, fuel, station maintenance, fundraising, administrative, fire prevention materials, etc.
- ❖ How is the Bechtelsville fire tax done, flat fee or millage: Millage. Per Solicitor Orlando, a flat fee is not permissible per the Second Class Township Code.
- ❖ Request to consider increase to the per capita tax instead. The millage tax seems unfair due to differing assessed values: The Board will look into the per capita tax idea.
- ❖ Average assessment in District Township is \$133,000/at .5 mill the average fire tax payment would be \$66.50/approximate total annual revenue generated for the fire company \$38,000.
- ❖ Currently only 15% of residents donate to EBFD.
- ❖ Cannot afford a fire tax, the fire company must live within their budget.
- ❖ Is District Township paying more than their fair share compared to Washington Township: Washington Township has increased their funding. EBFD is discussing with each municipality.
- ❖ Will District Township still donate to EBFD if a fire tax is approved: No, the Board will consider increasing the emergency services (ambulance) donation.
- ❖ EBFD annual expenses \$222,000/income \$285,000 for 2021.
- ❖ Would the fire tax be split with other companies: No decision has been made, primary EBFD.

Mr. Overberger noted the Board has received correspondence from 3 residents, 2 in support and 1 oppose, a potential fire tax. Mr. Overberger, on behalf of the Board, thanked everyone for their participation.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None further.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board, there was a motion made by Mr. Overberger, seconded by Mr. Robb, to adjourn the special meeting at 8:20 p.m. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Schwien
District Township Secretary