



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE HEARING

Topic: Decline of Volunteer Firefighters

**Richeyville Volunteer Fire Company Hall – Richeyville, PA
October 18, 2018**

AGENDA

- 2:00 p.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 2:10 p.m. Bruce Trego
Acting Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner
- 2:40 p.m. Panel of Local Volunteer Fire Companies:
- Jeff Marshall
Chief, Waynesburg-Franklin Township Volunteer Fire Company
 - Scott Dolan
Chief, Hiller Volunteer Fire Company
 - Mark Giovanelli
Chief, East Bethlehem Volunteer Fire Company
 - Craig Baily
President, Carmichaels-Cumberland Township Volunteer Fire Company
- 3:30 p.m. Closing Remarks

EAST BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY



Engine Company 15

831 Crawford Road ♦ PO Box 445 ♦ Fredericktown, Pennsylvania 15333
Phone 724-377-1660 eastbethvfd@windstream.net

Fire Service Incentive Program Meeting
18 October 2018

Fire Service History

1676 - First fire pumper purchased in the US was in Boston
1676 - First paid firefighter in the US was Thomas Atkins of Boston along with 12 other men
1711 – Concerned citizens formed social groups to assist with firefighting. The Mutual Fire Societies was formed. This became the backbone of the fire service for a century and a half
1736 – Benjamin Franklin created a fire brigade called The Union Fire Company. It was comprised of 30 volunteers. The first volunteer firefighter in America was Isaac Paschall.
1818 - Women began serving as volunteer firefighters. The first recorded female was Molly Williams, a black slave.

Notable volunteer firefighters: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Paul Revere, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, John Barry, Aaron Burr, Benedict Arnold, James Buchanan and Millard Fillmore

Fire Service Decline

1970 – Pennsylvania had 300,000 volunteer firefighters
2016 – Approximately 50,000 volunteers in Pennsylvania
2016 – Pennsylvania has 1,795 registered volunteer fire departments

Why the decline (speculative)

Greater number of possible activities for families to participate in

Number of hours worked per day / week

Both parents work

Fire service requirements

Training – approximately 400 hours minimum

Fundraising

On-going, in-station training

Work details

Incentives for volunteer firefighters:

Standardize the titles –

Recruit – New to the fire service, no formal training or in training

Fireman – Has met minimum standards established by the Commonwealth. These could be, but not limited to:

- Hazardous Materials Operations (with annual refresher)
- CPR / First Aid
- Essentials Module I Introduction to the Fire Service (16 hours)
- Essentials Module II Fireground Support (32 hours)
- Essentials Module III Exterior Firefighter (52 hours)

Firefighter – Fireman coursework plus
Interior Fire Fighter (40 hours)
Structural Burn (16 hours)
Successfully obtain Firefighter I certification

Possible Incentives for membership – Available after meeting a minimum level of training and established annual requirements.

Tuition assistance / reimbursement for secondary education to the member or members of their family

Tax incentive – That's on all of you. Maybe a deduction on state filing

Retirement Program – A firefighter earns 1 credit for each successful year of service. 5 years equals \$100.00 per month after retirement. Each 5 year block earns another \$100.00. 25 successful years of service would equate to \$500.00 per month in retirement.

Fund Raising Offset – Divide the 12% Fireworks tax evenly between all PA fire departments in an annual automatic disbursement.

Apply military time to volunteer hours for retirement incentive

Reformulate the Foreign Fire allocations for a more favorable disbursement. Our department receives approximately \$11,000.00. Some departments receive millions. This money is used for personnel only. Personal Protective Equipment, squad type vehicles, pagers radios etc. We all have about the same amount of members, yet the disbursement is grossly unbalanced. We stand on street corners with a boot while some departments pay an accounting firm to manage this one account.

Maybe this should be based on the number of active firefighters rather than the population. If this is used to buy pagers and we have the same amount of people who need pagers, why should one department receive \$3,000,000 while the department down the street receives \$3,000.00?

No one realizes the fire department is a business and needs to be managed as such. There aren't many business managers that work for free.