

**Joint Meeting of Westfield Township Trustees and the Village of Westfield Center
August 4, 2009**

Mayor Horwedel stated the Westfield Township Trustees were present this evening as a result of a joint meeting that was held between the Township, the Village of Gloria Glens and the Village of Westfield Center regarding the fire levy and as to why Westfield Center Village and the Village of Gloria Glens were not given the opportunity to vote on the fire levy. He stated Bill Hutton prepared a document that he would use to reference the events that occurred and options available. Mayor Horwedel stated that Mr. Thorne; legal counsel for the Township pursued the question with the Board of Elections. The Board of Elections was of the understanding that the Township had formed a Fire District in 1979. There is a Resolution on record that was prepared by the Trustees at that time that was sent to the Board of Elections that a Fire District composed of the unincorporated areas of the Township was proposed to be developed. Further research of the public records showed that though such discussion did occur during 1979-1981, no formal fire district was ever developed. The records also showed in 1975 and 1979 that both villages did not want to participate in a Township wide levy. That is why there was discussion of the creation of a district at that time. Mayor Horwedel stated the Village has an income tax to fund our portion of the fire department and is not interested in forming a fire district however that does not appear to be a viable option.

Mayor Horwedel then laid out the following options for the Fire Dept. and stated his comments accordingly:

1. Do nothing. This is not a viable option
2. For Westfield Township, Gloria Glens and Westfield Center to put a fire levy on the ballot, which would be assessed against all real property in those jurisdictions. If the levy passes, the money would go to Westfield Township and the Fire Dept. would be run by Westfield Township. If a Fire Committee remains in would be in an advisory capacity only. The Township would hold all the cards. The two villages would also have to pay on the fire levy if it passes because the village residents are in the Township. The downside for the Village of Westfield Center is that we collect an income tax for our portion of the Fire Dept. We don't need to assess additional millage to pay our share.
3. Create a Westfield Township Fire District of the unincorporated areas of the Township. The Village of Gloria Glens and the Village of Westfield Center could then contract with the Westfield Township Fire District for fire and EMS service. There was also the option that the two villages could contract with another entity for such services. This option would keep the Fire Dept. as close to how it is run currently. However in reality the Township would be more in control because it would be their own joint fire district and the villages would just contract with them. Mayor Horwedel stated he personally liked this third option because it stays as close to what is in effect currently and the Village could maintain our income tax to fund our portion of the Dept. and don't have to further tax our residents.
4. Create a joint fire district consisting of Westfield Township, the Village of Westfield Center and the Village of Gloria Glens. This would be a separate legal entity and not

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in control of any one entity. This would have a board of representatives from each of the communities running the department. However this would include a property tax of some sort to support this type of district. The advantage of this district is that it won't be politically run. The disadvantage is that district would have to be financially self-sustaining. They could not get financial support from the Township or the two villages. The board could consist of representatives from the Township and the villages or the number of representatives could be based on population. The Township has approximately 3000 people, the Village of Westfield Center has about 1000 and the Village of Gloria Glens has roughly 500 residents. This looks like a viable option but in the Village's case, we would have to promote and sell a property tax. Bill Huttson feels this may be the best option. Mayor Horwedel stated personally he felt this was a good option but not the best option.

5. The Village of Westfield Center detaches from the Township. Mayor Horwedel stated if that happened the Village could contract with whomever it wants for fire and EMS service. The disadvantage is if the Village of Westfield Center detaches we totally detach from everything. We would not be involved in Trustee elections or anything to do with Township.

Mayor Horwedel stated the Westfield Township Trustees were present this evening to make a few comments and statements. He stated that maybe then we could kick these things over to Fire Committee or have a work session to discuss this further. He continued that the Township Trustees have postponed putting a fire levy on the ballot for November but felt that per the meeting held with them it appeared they were in favor of Option 2 of putting a levy on ballot which would be assessed against all real property in the three jurisdictions. If the levy passes, the money would go to Westfield Township and the Fire Dept. would be run by Westfield Township. Mayor Horwedel stated that he stated at that meeting that he was opposed to that idea. The Trustees in turn decided not to put a fire levy on the ballot for November and try to work these issues out within a reasonable period of time.

Mayor Horwedel continued that to increase or put any type of property tax on the residents of the Village would be a hard sell. The only thing that could possibly equal things out somewhat was the sewer debt. The Village could lower that percentage of income and give a sewer credit but that still would not be equal. Mayor Horwedel then gave the floor to Mr. Likley, Trustee of Westfield Township.

Mr. Likley thanked Mayor Horwedel for his time to be able to speak with him and Council. He stated because all three Trustees were present this evening the meeting had to be advertised as a joint meeting. Therefore he stated let the record show that all three Westfield Township Trustees were present this evening. Mr. Likley added that the Trustees also asked their legal counsel Mr. Thorne be present to be able to ask and answer any questions regarding the fire levy and options for the Fire Dept. organization.

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Mr. Thorne stated if the Township forms a stand-alone district the problem with that is the Township would not be able to fund that district out of their General Fund. The existing fire levy is not sufficient in meeting the financial needs for the operation of the Fire Dept. and therefore the Township would have to put on a substantially greater levy in order continue to operate the Dept.

Mr. Likley stated there is concern about the current Fire Committee operation and the cumbersomeness of that Committee. The Fire Committee meets, makes recommendations, brings those recommendations to the individual entities and that process needs to come together. There is some discomfort with Fire Committee and that process i.e. the time that it takes and the lack of true authority Fire Committee has as a recommending board. If the Township remains an unincorporated District, and the Village maintains its separate funding, Fire Committee could then not go away as that is the common thread that holds the two communities together.

Trustee Sims stated all this information regarding the fire levy and how it has proceeded over the years with the error was a surprise to the Township Trustees. It came to first be realized when Village residents called me asking why Bittner Hall was not open to vote on the fire levy and asked why they did not have representation to be able to support the fire levy. She continued that this then prompted a call to Mr. Thorne who then did some research and found out that a "Fire District" was never brought to fruition. Trustee Sims stated there was support from the residents of the Village for increased services of the Fire Dept. and a desire to improve the Fire Dept. She added she never forgets that as Trustee she also represents the residents of the Village of Westfield Center. Trustee Sims stated she hoped that the decision by the Trustees to delay putting on a fire levy this November was for the benefit of the residents of the Village in order to understand how to best proceed with these issues. Trustee Sims continued that she has seen a great improvement in the Fire Dept. to use the existing funding to improve response time and improve the services provided.

Trustee Kratzer addressed Mayor and Council. He stated that the unincorporated area of the Township has always supported the Fire Dept. with the 1.5 mil levy. However even if the existing levy were renewed it would not bring in enough money to support the Township's share of funding of the Fire Dept. The last fire levy in which the Township requested 2.5 mils was defeated but not terribly as only approximately 350 voters voted. Hopefully with active support if a fire levy were put on the ballot it would pass. Trustee Kratzer continued that he would like to see an unincorporated fire district formed made up of the three entities. This would give all three entities some control instead of just contracting with the Township for service. Trustee Kratzer stated he did not know how the Village's income tax was levied but did not believe retirees had to pay the income tax. If a property tax were levied then everybody would have to pay a new tax. Mayor Horwedel responded that any millage that is unwarranted for the Village would be a hard

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sell to the residents. The Village does not need the money to fund our portion of the Fire Dept.

Mayor Dean of the Village of Gloria Glens addressed the Mayor and Council. He stated he took the previous meetings information back to his Council (their meeting is tomorrow evening). At this point he was just here to gather more information.

Trustee Sims stated one of the options Councilman Huston has laid out is to create a district that would levy a real estate tax to fund the Fire Dept. The problem for the Township is the Township currently collects a 1.5 mil levy which generates approximately \$75,000 in which to run the Township's portion of the Fire Dept. Regarding the purchase of the new fire truck, the Township was able to do so because we had the cushion of the General Fund beyond what the levy generates. With a district, the Township would not be able to pull from the General Fund. Therefore at this time Trustee Sims stated she would not be in support of a fire district because the Township would run short in providing the funding for fire/EMS services. Mayor Horwedel stated he understood that fact and suggested the unincorporated district option. He added this would probably be the only option the Village could commit to because of the income tax. This does have a disadvantage as well for the Village in that we would lose direct control of the Fire Dept. Mayor Horwedel then asked Council if they would like to have a work session and take this back to Fire Committee? Council stated they were in favor of setting a work session. It was stated that if a levy were to be put on the ballot in November, the necessary paperwork to do so would need to be in by August 20, 2009. Trustee Sims stated it would be proactive to address and settle these issues in the next 18 months to be able to put money away for equipment rotation. She continued that it has also been brought to light that Fire Committee has reallocated the funding set aside for a full-time fire chief's salary to support daytime/part-time staffing.

A councilmember stated that if the Township was to put a fire levy on the ballot for November, he did not think the Township would like the outcome. He stated he has digested this information and did not think the statement made by Trustee Sims that the Township was doing the Village a favor by delaying a fire levy was accurate. Mayor Horwedel stated there did not appear to be an immediate need to set a work session and asked that Council take the time to digest the information and options available.

A councilwoman asked what was the date for a fire levy to be placed on the primary ballot in May. Mr. Thorne answered, 75 days before the election date. The councilwoman stated if that was the case this work session could take place in September or October. Mr. Thorne stated he did not know the particulars for Westfield Village but some communities have passed levies but suspend the collection and pay it from another source. He added possibly when Bill Huston returns we can all sit down and lay out some options depending on how the Village's income tax is set up.

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Trustee Sims asked if the Village could decrease the percentage of the income tax that is funding the Fire Dept.? A councilman stated there was disparity between those two tax groups i.e. what you collect from a property tax as opposed to what is collected from an income tax. A councilwoman interjected that you are considering 1000 residents in the Village as opposed to 3000 residents in the Township.

Mayor Horwedel stated he would like to move on to discussion of day-time/part-time staffing of the Fire Dept. and using the money slated for the full-time chief's salary. He stated that both entities stated they wanted a full-time chief and the Village is moving ahead with that process. Mr. Likley stated that re-allocation of the full-time chief's salary for daytime/part time staffing was to meet the immediate needs of response. Mayor Horwedel stated both entities voted to hire a full-time chief and to hire a consultant to move forward with that process. Mr. Likley stated he did not know if the Township contracted with the consultant at this point but money was allocated for the Ohio Fire Chief's Association to assist Fire Committee and the two entities in the selection process of a full-time fire chief. He added he felt from the last Fire Committee meeting that time was going to be given to the Fire Dept. to show what they could do and are capable of doing given the existing situation. Mayor Horwedel stated he too was of that understanding and added it would take 6 months or more to get that moving but in the meantime we would be moving ahead with the hiring of a full-time fire chief.

Mr. Kevin Rych, Pres. of the Fire Association addressed the Mayor and Council. He stated he has presented a report to the Fire Committee and Township Trustees and now Westfield Center on a plan drafted by the Westfield Fire Association. Mr. Rych stated that Westfield Fire Association membership consists of approximately 32 individuals. There will be ½ dozen new EMT's by the first of next year. Mr. Rych continued that on July 5, 2009 the Fire Association held an emergency meeting and 19 members were in attendance. A proposal was drafted and signed by all 19 members, which was different than what fire committee has recommended regarding a fire chief and daytime staffing. Daytime staffing would be done internally as well as externally to cover calls. Mr. Rych continued that the report includes historical data on runs and calls since 2006. Mr. Rych stated that Fire Association does not want a full-time chief nor do we feel we need a full-time chief right now. Fire Association has made recommendations for daytime staffing and a part-time fire chief. Mr. Rych stated the cost for daytime staffing was based on the individual level of training of those covering the calls. The salary of the former fire chief was approximately \$75,000 including benefits. This proposal is for a part-time chief and part-time staffing using an average rate of \$12.00 per hr. and would cost approximately \$74,920 a yr. That is a bit more than what was budgeted for the full-time chief's salary but that would provide day-time coverage from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. 5 days a week consisting of 2 EMT's, paramedics or intermediates whatever the case may be. Mr. Rych stated a squad would be able to roll out of the station everyday just like the TG Fire report that was completed said should be done. The part-time chief could even reduce that cost figure if he was one of the individuals at the station during the day to run calls.

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Mr. Rych stated the 19 members of the Fire Association were very much behind this proposal. That was the reason for the signatures in the report of those members to show acknowledgement and support of the plan. In the proposal was also a draft schedule for daytime staffing. Some of the questions that were asked of the members were as follows:
Are you in support of a full-time chief?
Are you in support of a part-time chief?
Are you in favor of daytime staffing?
Comments.

Mr. Rych continued that last Wednesday we were told to execute the plan by the Mayor and Fire Committee and Mr. Hutton and to use the funds that were allocated for the full-time fire chief's salary for staffing. Mr. Rych stated the plan has been executed and there is now daytime/part-time staffing 4 days a week for the entire month of August already in place. The response time dictated by the American Heart Association is 4 minutes or less. With a full-time chief and no daytime staffing the chief cannot go out on a call on his own but would have to wait for assistance. With a part-time chief and daytime staffing, the response time could be reduced to closer meet that goal and for less money than was allocated for a full-time chief. Mr. Rych stated that the report we paid \$12,000 dollars for (TG Fire Report) received all their information from the former fire chief. He commented that he did not know how much faith could be put in those numbers or information.

A councilman stated after the former Fire Chief resigned his position, he personally called Tom Rile and Mike Carson and asked them what were their recommendations for a fire chief? They responded unanimously the Westfield Fire Dept. needs a full-time chief. The Township Trustees, Fire Committee and Village Council all approved to move forward with a full-time fire chief. Mr. Rych interjected he understood that but wanted to present what the Fire Association wants to move forward with. He added he would like Mr. Robbs as a member of Fire Committee and a council member to look at the surrounding communities and what they utilize. Lafayette Twp. has daytime staffing with a part-time chief and their dept. runs perfectly fine. In Sharon Center, where they have a million dollar budget for their Fire Dept. they have part-time chief and fulltime staffing during day hours.

A councilwoman asked Mr. Rych for the definition of a part-time chief? Mr. Rych responded in the Fire Association Report it meant 25 hours at the station. The councilwoman then asked the part-time chief would also go on runs? Mr. Rych stated absolutely. He added if you took the former fire chief salary and benefits and used it for a part-time chief and part-time daytime staffing it would be a savings of approximately \$25,000. Mayor Horwedel then asked if the Township Trustees were backing out of the commitment to hire a full-time fire chief? Mr. Likley stated we have not. It has not come up for discussion or vote.

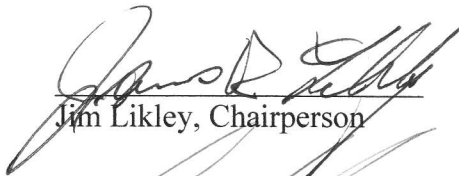
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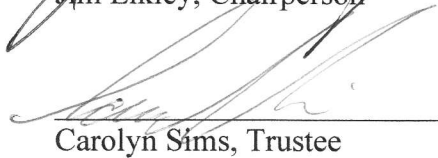
Mayor Horwedel thanked the Trustees for being present this evening. Trustee Sims stated she had a few closing comments. Trustee Sims stated given this taxation issue she asked that the commitment for a full-time fire chief be furloughed as the Township Trustees have furloughed a levy until these money issues can be rectified. She stated she voted against hiring a full-time fire chief but she was in support of having a full-time chief and having new equipment and daytime staffing but the Township needed to stay within our budgetary constraints. Regarding the Township, Trustee Sims stated she had to start with the \$75,000 figure and do a risk management assessment of what best that money can buy. She added her no vote for a full-time chief was because she felt part time staffing for the same money was a better use for all of the constituents so we could provide a better emergency response time during the day and week when our highways are full, Westfield Companies is in operation and school is in session.

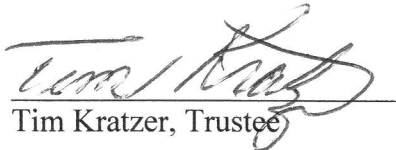
Trustee Sims continued she expressed to Mayor Horwedel and Mr. Oakes that she felt the 8,000 to move forward with an outside source to hire a full-time fire chief was not financially responsible. She added she felt that was the duty of the elected officials. Mayor Horwedel stated the Village was concerned with its constituents also and we support the hiring of a fulltime chief. Where this discussion and decision-making will end up going he did not know.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Ferencz, Westfield Township Admin. Assistant


Jim Likley, Chairperson


Carolyn Sims, Trustee


Tim Kratzer, Trustee