

We have received several questions about our levy on the November 5th ballot, Issue #21. The most common question we get is, “What is this levy for?”

We need staffing. We lack volunteers and part-time members to ensure our life squad gets out the door. We currently staff the life squad with one part-time member 24 hours a day, which started on July 1st of this year, and one part-time member from 5:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Volunteers staff the life squad after 5:00 p.m. and until 5:00 a.m. We try to schedule two volunteers at night, which allows that 24-hour part-time person to first respond and provide EMS service as soon as possible. If we do not have two volunteers on at night, the 24-hour member must wait for the volunteer member to come from home to take the life squad to the call. We do have some volunteers who stay at the station, which reduces our response time. The fire trucks are staffed by volunteers 24/7. The staffing shortage is not just a Wayne Township problem but a nationwide crisis affecting both volunteer and career departments.

In 2023, we made 1242 calls for service, 863 of those being EMS calls; as of today, October 17th, 2024, we are at 1001 calls, 709 being EMS. We have seen a steady increase in calls for service. This levy is to ensure that we have a minimum of two Firefighter/Paramedics on duty 24/7, and we would supplement them with part-time and volunteer members, allowing us to both staff an engine or cover a second squad run. Our numbers show we are busy enough to have two Advanced Life Support EMS providers cross-trained as firefighters. When you look at some of our comparable departments, Spring Valley, Salem Morrow, and Wayne Township Clermont County, all have full-time staffing; Wayne Township is behind the times. Wayne Township is one of many departments experiencing a staffing issue; volunteer and career departments across the country are experiencing the same staffing crisis. Below is a link to the Nation Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) publication “Volunteer Fire Service Fact Sheet”

<https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/NVFC-Volunteer-Fire-Service-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

We were also asked if we had considered creating a joint district with one of our neighboring departments. This is a great question. While on the surface this seems like an easy solution, there are many hurdles to overcome. Below are a few examples:

- All the jurisdictions involved must agree that it would be of mutual benefit.

There are different tax rates for Fire and EMS in all our surrounding jurisdictions, and new levies would have to be put in place. For example, if we formed a joint fire district with Clearcreek, they operate their fire department on four different levies for a 2023 valuation of residential cost of \$223.83 per \$100,000.00 in property value. Our current two levies cost the taxpayer \$101.36 per \$100,000.00; with the additional levy we are asking for, it would be a total of 171.36 per \$100,000.00. So, if we were to not pass the levy and decide to enter a joint district with Clearcreek, there is a significant tax valuation difference that would have to be evened out through a new levy; the taxpayers in Clearcreek would want everyone to pay the same amount in taxes for the same service, which would be higher than what we are asking for. We can also look

at it another way if we were to join with Massie Township Fire Department. Massie Township is also suffering from a lack of volunteers, and they currently have a contract with Chester Township to cover their EMS runs when they are unavailable due to staffing. However, the funding issue would go the other way in this instance as they pay \$68.01 per \$100,00.00 in levies. Our taxpayers would pay more than the taxpayers of Massie Township until a replacement levy could be passed that would be fair and equal.

I hope this information has provided some clarity on the levy and the issues we are facing. We are committed to transparency and open communication with our community. You can also check out the article in the Fall edition of the Wayne Township magazine for more Questions and Answers

If you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out.

If you would like to talk in person with me or the trustees, please attend our open house this Sunday, October 20th, 2024, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., or you can email us at:

firelevy@waynetownship.us

Thank you for your time

Jason W. Beckett

Fire Chief

Wayne Township Fire Department