

**Tulpehocken Township Board of Supervisors**  
**Public Workshop Meeting for Fire and Emergency Service Tax**  
**Wednesday, July 17, 2024**

This Workshop Meeting was held in the Boardroom at the Tulpehocken Area School District Office located at 27 Rehrersburg Road, Tulpehocken Township. In attendance from Tulpehocken Township were Supervisors Gary Deck, Lester Feick and Harold Zimmerman; Secretary Kathy Judy and Township Solicitor Atty. Michelle Mayfield. Representatives from Bethel Ambulance Service, Western Berks EMS, Keystone Fire Company of Rehrersburg and Mt. Aetna Fire and Rescue included: Mike Bashore, Fred Kreiser, Anthony Tucci, Leonard Mays, Zach Batdorf, Robert Conner and Laverne Frey

Other Public in attendance included:

Sylvan Wittmer *	Harry Reinhold *	Corvin Martin *
Gary Keener *	Kirk Merkey *	Amanda Sholly
Dennis Royer	Paul Brossman	Sheila Hess
Merlyn Zimmerman	Ruth Sholly	Gerean Sholl
Linda Lanshe	Wayne Leshner	George Field
Gary Kiebach	Paul Desmarais	Linda Desmarais
Tracie Kerns	Connie Bashore	Joshua Bollinger
Jeff Hohn	Eugene Umbenhauer	Linda Umbenhauer
Steve Shollenberger	Susan Shollenberger	Justin Kiebach
Glenn Schneck	Kim Schneck	Gary Himmelberger
Daryl Martin	Heather Lanshe	Leon Huey

*(\*Fire Company Volunteers)*

Chairman Deck called the Workshop to order at 6:30 P.M.

The workshop began with the pledge to the flag.

**Introduction:**

Chairman Deck welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He continued by explaining that this workshop is to discuss a tax to help fund emergency services; this is the first public workshop, but the 4<sup>th</sup> overall as there were three prior workshops with the fire and EMS agencies.

Chairman Deck then announced that he wanted to take this opportunity to thank the emergency responders for the job well done in responding to the July 1, 2024 house fire in Rehrersburg and the recent barn fire on Hurst Drive. He asked for everyone to join in giving them a round of applause.

This was followed by introductions of the Township, EMS and Fire Company Representatives seated at the tables.

The meeting continued with the Chairman sharing:

- information about why the Township has been looking into a possible tax to fund emergency services
- what information we've learned through the workshops that were held in April, May and June with Fire and EMS Representatives.
- What we still need to determine or work on before a tax could be put in place
- Tax rates that are being considered, how they would appear on tax bills and what they could generate for our emergency service agencies.

A Public Comment & Discussion Period was then opened Below are the comments, suggestions and questions from the audience. Discussions were held on each point raised:

- Is there a way to make the levy an equal amount for everyone so that everyone would pay the same amount, rather than a millage on assessed value that will result in some paying more than others?
- Suggested that the ambulance should raise their membership rates to increase revenue.
- Has the Fire Company tried billing insurance for response to calls on the interstate?
- Would it be a valid vote with a Fire Chief and Supervisor in one seat?
- Would this be a vote of the Board of Supervisors or would it be a question on the ballot?
- Suggested that any tax credit should come down from the state.
- Does the Township see a Profit & Loss report on money that is currently being donated; are they seeing where the money is going and where it is being spent?
- Question to clarify - if the current tax is 1.6 mill rate, and if a .5 mill for EMS and a 1.1 mill for Fire Services is put in place, that would equal 3.2 mill total and be double what is being paid now?
- Why not just raise the Township tax, instead of labeling it as Emergency Service Taxes, so it wouldn't be locked into that use and would be available as needed?
- Suggestion that fire company could raise more if volunteers solicit door-to-door instead of sending fundraising mailers.
- Suggestion that Rehrersburg Social Club should upgrade and remodel to generate more business and bring in more revenue
- Will there be requirements imposed on the Fire Companies for receiving tax funds, like having to show how funds are being used? What if it is just shown to be put in an equipment fund account toward future truck purchase?
- Are the Fire Companies prepared for changes that are coming? Has anyone considered OSHA 1910.156 proposed requirements? What about the physicals; for 25 volunteers it will cost \$25,000 every two years and an additional \$1,000 physical if they see 15 fires a year?
- Concern that additional tax will be a hardship; there are some that will not be able to afford an increase.
- Concern that imposing a tax could lead to a decrease in volunteerism.
- Suggested; that if the tax is imposed and relief is offered to active volunteers, that may help increase interest in volunteerism.
- What would happen if the club could not bring in a revenue to fund the Fire Company? What if the club shutdown for some reason, Liquor Control Board, Covid again....? Where would the Fire Company get money? The Township is trying to be proactive. If it is not and something happens, it may mean a huge tax later.

With no additional comments or questions from the audience; the Board agreed they would hold another Public Workshop in August.

The Workshop Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Judy, Secretary  
Tulpehocken Township