Preston Emergency Services Advisory Committee

January, 21th 2019
Special Meeting Minutes
@Preston City Fire Station

1. Roll Call:

Co-Chairman Dave Paige called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Members Present: Jim Bell, Tom Casey, Dave Paige, Russ Holland, and Jarred Harris.

Members Absent: None

2. Fire and Emergency Services Discussion

Members of both department offered opinions on why the fire departments are experiencing a decline in active members. These reasons include:

- Increased call volume
- More certifications necessary and required to respond
- Certification and training classes are getting longer and more demanding
- More family obligations now compared to previous generations
- Fire departments used to be a larger source of social interaction (Fairs, Water battles, Parades, bowling leagues, Baseball teams, dances, etc.)
- Decreased numbers of responders are resulting in faster burnout rates
- Fear of increased liabilities
- Decreased numbers of experienced members due to an aging membership
- Members reluctance to be on scene without adequate help

Chief Casey reported that he would be requesting additional fire fighter/EMT staffing hours in next year’s budget.

Members of both departments gave the committee many reasons why they support additional paid staff hours being covered.

- Peace of mind knowing with certainty that a qualified person will always be responding to a fire, car crash, EMS or any other emergency call that happens in town
- Having paid staff assist with ambulance services generates funding which in turn helps pay for new ambulances, many supplies, and helps offset cost of their own salaries
- Having paid staff in the stations ensures a quicker response time to all emergencies
- Assistance with the prevention of volunteer burn out
- Responsibility of the town to provide emergency services to its residents

A show of hands displayed 100% support from the members present of Preston City and Poquettanuck fire departments to cover all remaining uncovered hours with paid staffing.
3. **Public Comment**

Andy Depta stated the departments should be responsible to present a long-term plan for future emergency services. Chief Casey responded he has presented to the BOS a long-term plan. Casey also added that any strategy would need to be fluid with many contingency plans giving the unknown requirement that will be a direct result from the Preston Riverwalk development.

Andy Depta expressed an interest in having a third party investigate cost vs. benefits.

Andrew Bilodeau stated the volunteers should be paid somehow through incentives or tax abatements or any other options that might be available.

4. **Adjourned**

The motion to adjourn was made by Tom Casey, seconded by Russ Holland, and approved by the members at 7:46pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jarred J. Harris

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PESAC Secretary