

Windham, Ohio

Recommendation Report Joint Fire District Exploratory Advisory Committee July 16, 2007

As directed by the Windham Village Council's Resolution No. 2007-5 (see Exhibit "A"), a committee was formed consisting of Village and Township residents who served with the three Council Safety Committee members for the sole purpose of obtaining detailed factual documents and information about Joint Fire and EMS Districts and compare such information with our current Fire District.

After thoroughly reviewing all the documents, facts and information the full committee has decided on a recommendation. Such recommendation is hereby being provided to the Windham Village Council, the Township Trustees and the residents of the Village and Township. After exhaustive research and six (6) separate meetings that were open to the public and after having outstanding speakers and guests from several Joint Fire Districts, this exploratory Advisory Committee's recommendation has been made unanimously with a yes vote with the best interest of all the residents of Windham Township and Village.

We would now like to address the procedure for obtaining the factual documents and information the Safety Committee requested.

1.) Identify the specific problems which show the reasons why a Joint Fire and EMS District needs to be considered.

A. Village Property Tax Payers have no voice or vote in how their tax dollars are spent (i.e.):

- a. Purchase of equipment without Village approval
- b. Sale of Fire Equipment without Village approval
- c. No longer have quarterly meetings
- d. Trustees place levies on the ballot without Village approval

B. The last three (3) Fire Levies have had difficulties for the first time because of non-support from the opposing side. This needs to change if we ever expect to progress.

C. There has been no operating agreement since December 31, 2003. The Township has made all the decisions unilaterally since that date.

D. Firemen need to have one governing body to report and request funding for all operations.

E. Currently there is no cooperation between the Village and Township on major Fire Department concerns.

2.) Obtain information about Joint Fire and EMS Districts and compare such information with the current Fire District. Such information gathered will include how Fire Departments and their Firemen operate under Joint Districts

A. For this information I need to refer you to:

- a. Exhibit "C" – Minutes for the May 16, 2007 meeting
- b. Exhibit "D" – Minutes of the June 6, 2007 meeting
- c. Exhibit "E" – Minutes of the June 28, 2007 meeting

B. Township is currently billing residents for EMS without approval or an agreement.

3.) Gather the information about Joint Fire and EMS districts in Portage and other counties from District Board representatives, their Fireman and Emergency Medical personnel.

- A. For the information I need to refer you to:
- a. Exhibit "C" – Minutes for the May 16, 2007 meeting
 - b. Exhibit "D" – Minutes of the June 6, 2007 meeting
 - c. Exhibit "E" – Minutes of the June 28, 2007 meeting

4.) Determine if the cost to change to a Windham Joint Fire and EMS District is any different, more, less or insignificant.

A. We will refer you to Exhibit "G" for this information. This three (3) page document addresses all the cost and suggestions expressed in Windham Township Trustee Chairman Dann Timmons letter dated May 1, 2007. It also includes all cost to form a Joint Fire District for Windham Township and Windham Village. Please refer to Exhibit "F" and Exhibit "H" that shows the Fire fund status as of 6/30/2007 to have a cash balance of \$217,812.67 in the Fire Equipment Fund and a cash balance of \$84,166.70 in the Fire Operation Fund. That's a total of \$301,979.37. This money would go to the Joint Fire District Board for operation and equipment purchases.

B. Exploratory-Advisory Committee evaluated the cost to form a Joint Fire District between the Village of Windham and the Windham Township Trustees to be **"insignificant"**.

C. Some advisors and guest speakers even suggested that a Joint Fire District could save money and provide better service at the same time.

5.) Determine the necessary procedure for the Village Council and Township Trustees to change to a Joint Fire and EMS District.

A. The best explanation for this procedure can be found on page 22 and continues on page 23 of Exhibit "E". Fire Chief Comstock explains it very well. This change would involve no equipment consolidation, no personnel changes, and no building problems after a Joint District is formed. A couple of Chiefs stated as such when they reviewed our situation in Windham.

6.) Determine the potential consequences of continuing with the current Fire District.

A. We cannot express strongly enough the dire consequences that can occur if this doesn't go thru. We urge everyone to read Fire Chief Comstock's legal observations concerning the legality of the worst case outcome of a split between the Village and Township over fire protection. Exhibit "E" is a **'MUST READ'** for a clear understanding of our current situation.

7.) Report to Village and Township residents about the information gathered.

A. This report is being reported and delivered to the Windham Village Council at their regularly scheduled meeting on July 17, 2007 and to the Windham Township Trustees at their regularly scheduled meeting on July 19, 2007.

B. We also request that the Village and Township enter this report and all Exhibits on their respective web sites.

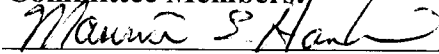
8.) We have been asked to provide a recommendation to Village Council, the Township Trustees and the Village and Township residents. Such recommendation shall be in the best interest of the Windham Community as a whole – Village and Township.

A. We believe this is the best opportunity for both political sub-divisions to come together for what is most certainly a union that will benefit the Fire Department. It has been said several times during the course of this Committee's existence "that if it's good for the Fire Department, it's a win-win for every citizen in Windham, Township and Village."

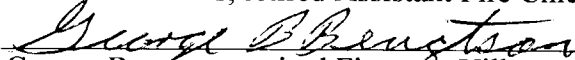
B. We have also learned that a Joint District can provide vision and planning for the future. A good example cited by the Joint District personnel that attended our meetings was the great improvement in their EMS Service. If we are ever to attain a 24 hour, 7 days a week capability whereas an EMS Squad could answer Windham's calls at any time, we think the Joint District with co-operation from all sides is the answer.

C. During our search for the Pro's and Con's of a Joint District we solicited responses from all the guests to offer any negatives about a Joint District and not one could – not Newton Falls Joint District – not Mantua Village – not Shalersville-Mantua Township or the Western Reserve Joint Fire District from Poland, Ohio. As stated by Chief Comstock on Page 6 of Exhibit "E" - **"There are a lot of good things I have to say about Fire Districts. Very rarely do you ever see, almost never do you see a true Fire District disband. But you see a lot of people wanting to go to them. They recognize the economy scale and it usually serves the district for planning purposes in the long term as the way to go."**

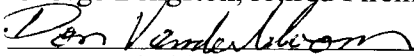
Committee Members:



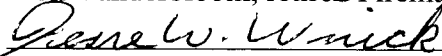
Maurice Hankins, retired Assistant Fire Chief, Village resident, former Village Mayor



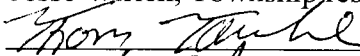
George Bengtson, retired Fireman, Village resident, prior Township trustee



Don Vanderbloom, retired Fireman, Village resident



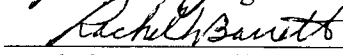
Jesse Wirick, Township resident



Thom Fauche, Township resident



Phil Snyder, Village resident, Council Safety Committee member



Rachel Barrett, Village resident, Council Safety Committee member, past Village Clerk



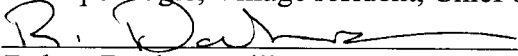
Bruce Rjninger, retired Fireman, Village resident



Ted St. John, Township resident



Bill Sponaule, Village resident, Chief of EMS Community Ambulance



Robert Donham, Village resident, Council Safety Committee member