

Joint Fire District proposal presented

By Jamie Bowers

After a unanimous "yes" vote by the Joint Fire District Exploratory and Advisory Committee (JFDEAC), a proposal for a joint fire district to include Windham Township and Village was presented to village council last Tuesday, July 17. Council resolved that the village would accept and endorse such an entity. The proposal was also presented to Windham Township Trustees at their meeting two days later.



Council President Scott Garrett read a statement to the trustees that said the joint fire district could be established without changing the tax levy. Expectations of council included near future discussion with the township that would result in a resolution by the trustees by Nov. 1 with a goal of establishing a joint fire district by Jan. 1, 2008. Garrett concluded by saying that he had the utmost respect for the trustees but that a mutual board was the best way to move forward.

While Village Administrator Maurice Hankins distributed informational packets to the trustees, township resident and committee member Ted St. John made an address. He said that a joint fire district would cause no new taxes and that committee members were both township and village residents, most of whom were retired firefighters or current E.M.S. workers. St. John emphasized that their goal is to bring both municipalities to the table for the benefit of all residents in the entire community.

Specific reasons for the formation of a joint fire district were:

Village taxpayers have no say in how their tax dollars are spent.

There is a question as to the legality of the current administration of the fire department.

There are no quarterly meetings.

Levies are placed, equipment is sold and residents are billed for E.M.S. without village input.

Fire departments in surrounding areas have only been able to provide round the clock coverage after forming a joint fire district.

St. John continued by saying that Fire Chief David "Chip" Comstock, who is also an attorney, has helped in the formation of many fire districts said that Windham will not have difficulties with consolidation of equipment and personnel. St. John also quoted Comstock as

saying that dire consequences could result if the municipalities in Windham do not form a joint fire district. He also said that the information provided to the trustees would be available to the public on the village's website and asked that the township do the same. St. John concluded by requesting that the trustees contact council by the date of the next trustee meeting.

Windham Township Trustee Dan Timmons replied that the trustees would take the information under advisement and discuss it at their next meeting. He added that they would not be able to contact council before that time.

Windham Council meeting expectations

The following message was delivered to Windham Township Trustees during their meeting July 19.

During the Windham Council meeting July 17, the Joint Fire District Exploratory / Advisory Committee (JFDEAC) presented their advisory recommendation with many attachments supporting their recommendation. Their recommendation was for the Windham Village Council and Windham Township Trustees to form a Joint Fire District.

Windham Council voted to accept and endorse the JFDEA Committee's recommendation. The Committee found that the current tax levies would not change in changing to the Joint Fire District.

Windham Village Council looks forward to working with the Windham Township Trustees to form a Joint Fire District. They strongly believe, as does the Exploratory Committee, that this will serve the best interest of all Windham residents, the Fire Department Firemen, the Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics. Village Council is hopeful that the Township Trustees will accept the Committee's recommendation and begin working with the Village Council to begin forming the joint fire district. If the Trustees accept, then Village Council is ready to enter into serious discussions to form a Joint Fire District.

Their expectations are as follows: Begin discussions at the earliest agreeable date. Have a Resolution forming the Joint Fire District agreed to and signed not later than November 1. The New Joint Fire District and its new Board Members to commence Jan. 1, 2008.

Village Council believes that there is no other choice but to pursue this option.

Trustees were thanked for their hard work and it was expressed that changing to a joint fire and EMS District is a necessity due to both parties being on a collision course which would be bad for the Windham Community.