

FEBRUARY 23, 2016, PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED JOINT FIRE DISTRICT

Board Members Present:

Manheim

Supervisor John Haughton

Councilmember Peter Jaikin

Councilmember Frederick Doerrer

Councilmember Rodney Swartz

Dolgeville

Mayor Bruce Lyon

Trustee Bill Reynolds

Trustee Brock Herringshaw

Trustee Kornel Martyniuk

Oppenheim

Councilmember Pat Haberek

Councilmember John Houle

Manheim Supervisor Haughton called the meeting to order at 7:00pm, the pledge of allegiance was recited.

Attorney Kenneth Ayers thanked everyone for coming, asked the board members to introduce themselves, and read an opening statement which stated that the purpose of the hearing was to present more information to the public on the proposed Joint Fire District and to receive public input and comments in connection with continued efforts to research and form a Joint Fire District. He also stated that the Manheim Town Clerk would accept written comments on the proposed joint fire district creation until 4:00pm on March 1, 2016.

For the record it was noted that the clerk for each municipality provided proof that a legal notice regarding this meeting appeared in their designated newspaper, that the legal notice was posted in 5 public areas in their municipality and that a copy of the notice was mailed to each member of their governing board.

Attorney Ayers went through a short power point presentation containing some general information, tax rates of fire departments in surrounding areas, a map of the proposed district showing the current rates being paid for fire protection, a schedule of how much residents are paying now at a rate of \$1.01 per thousand outside the village and those inside the village paying \$2.11 per thousand, and one showing what they would pay at a rate of \$1.65 per thousand. The \$1.65 per thousand rate would fund the district with \$198,000.00. The rate would probably rise as the commissioners assess the needs of the district.

Written Comments:

Supervisor Haughton received letters from the Dolgeville Fire Department Inc., Raymond Smith, County Legislator for District 10, and Robert Vandawalker, Herkimer County Office of Emergency Services Director all in favor of establishing a joint fire district.

Public Comments:

D. Contino: will there be a public vote? *Ayers- only if someone petitions for a referendum*

G. Thompson: do all of the boards have to approve to do this? *Ayers-yes there has to be a majority affirmative vote of each board.*

C. Brown: questioned the demographics in appointing the commissioners. *Ayers- will look into it & get back to her*

D. Contino: each individual board has to approve it right? *Ayers-Yes What's the time limit? Ayers- they have to wait until after the SEQRA is done, so possible 60 days after that.*

G. Thompson: would it be done in time so if it goes to a vote it will be on the November ballot? *Ayers-yes we'll have everything that needs to be done so if challenged it would be on the November ballot.*

B. McCue: can the limit on purchases be lowered? *Ayers- it's statutory and there's a formula used by the state to set limits he will see if the commissioners could set a lower limit.*

R. Jaikin: if it had to be put up for a vote (to spend over the \$1,120,000.00) would it have to wait until November or could it be a special vote? *Ayers- it could be done by a special vote*

T. Giarrusso: wanted clarification on the rate. *Ayers said as best he could figure the village residents are now paying \$2.11, if the district is formed everyone would be paying \$1.65 per thousand. There will be a separate line item on your town & county tax bill just for fire protection.*

G. Thompson: rate will be the same for all communities in the district but Oppenheim's equalization rate is a lot lower than Manheim's, shouldn't their rate be higher. *Ayers-will look into it*

W. McCue: feels Manheim residents will pay more than they do now and have less input

B. Spaulding: He'll be paying more; what will he get out of it? *Ayers-the feasibility study stated that if something isn't done to better fund the DVFD it will cease to exist, then fire protection would have to be contracted for from neighboring departments at whatever fee they choose to charge. Will a substation be put somewhere in the town?*

Ayers- doesn't know what commissioners may decide; they can choose to contract with other departments to cover the areas furthest from the Dolgeville station

J. Haughton: the \$1.65only maintains the DVFD; if you contract with outside agencies it will add to that \$1.65

K. Ayers: it would be naive to think that that rate will stay at \$1.65 for long; it doesn't begin to address much needed capitol improvements or purchases

Mayor Lyon: would the commissioner always be 2 from Manheim 2 from the Village (in Manheim) and 1 from the Village in Oppenheim? *Ayers-doesn't know, but it will start out that way, he'll try to have more information for next meeting*

C. Brown: does anyone know how much of the budget will be funded by village residents vs. town outside residents? *Ayers-on page 10 of feasibility study it states 55% of assessment is within the village*

J. Bergeron: he's willing to pay more for fire coverage; maybe the commissioners will be able to work out agreements (such as dual-toning) with neighboring departments

R. Swartz: wanted to remind the audience that the feasibility is on the town's web site

Next Steps:

SEQRA Review

SEQRA Hearing

A Motion was made to adjourn at 8:02pm by Bruce Lyon and was seconded by John Houle.

Ayes All

Respectfully Submitted

Marie Gressler