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MILFORD TOWNSHIP

July 20, 2020

Milford Township Board of Supervisors
560 Rt. 6 & 209
Milford, PA 18337

Dear Residents, Taxpayers, Workers and Visitors of Milford Township,

We are facing a critical challenge that we, as your local officials, must bring to your attention. For many years, the dedicated volunteers of the Milford Fire Department and Ambulance Company have answered countless ambulance calls to aid our community. All of these volunteers have our unending thanks and praise. For some time now, the number of volunteers has been declining. In fact, before the COVID 19 crisis hit, the Department had been answering calls most often for only 12 hours of 24. What happened during the rest of the time? Mutual aid agreements draw volunteers and equipment from neighboring communities to cover any calls.

Then came COVID-19. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which is personal health and safety concerns of the volunteers themselves, many of whom are in high risk age categories, the Department went from 12 hour coverage to no coverage at all. To address this situation, the Department worked with local officials from several municipalities to contract and pay a third party vendor to staff ambulance calls using their equipment. All of the initial allocated funds have been exhausted already and the municipalities, including Milford Township, are still working toward obtaining reimbursement for these costs through various pots of money that have been allocated for COVID-19 response. Now that stay at home orders have been lifted, several volunteers have returned to service and the Department is responding to calls for an average of 4-5 12 hour periods a week.

To be frank and blunt, there are simply not enough trained volunteers available to meet the need here anymore and lives are at stake. This situation is not unique to our community but is playing out all over the Commonwealth. How do we address this as a community? We surely cannot continue to burden the taxpayers of communities who are paying for this service, and the volunteers of neighboring communities, on a long term basis, as has been the case through mutual aid calls. We cannot ask the few volunteers to sacrifice more of their lives. The shortage of volunteers is driving this system to paying positions instead of volunteers. The expense to do this is considerable.

The tax structure in Pennsylvania, combined with the tax base in Milford Township and Milford Borough, does not allow us to solve this situation as your elected officials acting on our authority as local government boards. The amount of ambulance tax that the Township can raise by ordinance amounts to about \$14,000. This does not even begin to cover it. In order to institute ambulance tax at a higher level, the voters must affirm by referendum, which we are glad for because the decision to institute such taxation is not one we take lightly. We are working to ensure that there is a solid, transparent plan in place before you're asked to cast that vote.

What can you do?

- **Volunteer!** There is training available. If we still had the volunteers, we would not need to have this discussion. The existing volunteers welcome and guide newcomers and the Milford Fire Department & EMS will pay the cost of the training. There is information on the Department's website, www.milfordfire33.com about how to sign up as a volunteer. New



training classes are set to begin August 3rd and will be on Monday and Wednesday evenings in Lords Valley.

- **Give!** If the Department had the funds to do this through voluntary contributions, we would not need to talk taxes. COVID-19 has hit the Department's fundraising efforts hard. They need our support. Finally, when the time comes,
- **Vote!** On the referendum.

Together we will solve this challenge and ensure that every ambulance call is answered in a timely fashion. You deserve nothing less. If you have concerns, comments or questions, please bring them to us at PO Box 366 Milford, milfrdtp@ptd.net or during the public comment period of any of our meetings. Thank you.

Best Regards,

MILFORD TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS
Penney Luhrs, Gary Williams & Rachel Hendricks