



PENN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

100 Municipal Building Road
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Clifford Lindgren

Karen Potteiger

Forrest Woodward

**Minutes of 6/17/25 Workshop
Fire Tax, Fire Protection, and Funding**

The Penn Township Board of Supervisors (PTS) met on Tuesday, June 17, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building for a Workshop on the topic of Fire Tax, Fire Protection, and Funding. Chairman Clifford Lindgren, Vice-Chairman Karen Potteiger, and Supervisor Forrest Woodward attended. Other personnel present were Secretary Jennifer Blouch (hereinafter referred to as Secretary), Darrel Dethlefs (hereinafter referred to as Solicitor), and Helen Klinepeter (hereinafter referred to as Assistant Secretary). A list of visitors attending is on file in the Township Office. Chairman Lindgren convened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a moment of silence. The meeting was recorded to aid in the preparation of the minutes.

Recognition of Visitors:

Duncannon Fire Company Chief Byron Warner: Presentation about funding and the proposed new station project.

Highlights:

- The DFC is 100% volunteer, with 54 volunteers who either answer calls, or perform administrative and fundraising duties. 20 to 25 of the volunteers answer calls regularly.
- Over 5,000 volunteer working hours were documented in 2024.
- DFC averages 400-450 calls per year.
- DFC operates 2 stations; one in Duncannon Borough, and one in Penn Township.
- Municipal Funding comes from 4 Municipalities.
 - Duncannon Borough - \$40,000/year
 - Penn Township - \$100,000/year
 - Wheatfield Township - \$99,750
 - Reed Township - \$1,000/year (Has contributed over 350k in the past 12 years in Gaming Grants)
- Municipal money pays for capital expenses (fire apparatus, insurance)
- Majority of funding comes from Donations and Fundraising from online raffles.
- DFC has received grant money (50-75k/year) from State, Norfolk Southern, and Community Aid Foundation.



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- New station would replace current Duncannon Borough Station.
- Current borough station is outgrown and outdated for today's needs.
- There is limited space for building in the borough.
- DFC needs 2 stations because of the location and size of the building lot in town. The 2003 Fire survey recommended a station in the Township and one in the Borough.
- The majority of DFC members live within the borough limits, and eliminating a borough station would increase response times.
- Phase 2 of The Penn Township Station is not complete due to funding levels and not having the knowledge of what could be built in the borough.
- Both buildings will offer scenarios vital to fire protection but they will not duplicate the different areas of the station.
- Volunteerism has declined, and it is likely that within 10-15 years we will have to hire career firefighters.

Chief Warner thanked Penn Township for recognizing this endeavor as critical, and for being proactive.

Daniel Stump is opposed to building a new station and feels that we should be focused instead on saving money to pay for career firefighters in the future. Mr. Stump doesn't believe High Street is suitable for large fire trucks. It's a blind turn left or right out of Cumberland Street. Mr. Stump asked why the DFC didn't have the knowledge of what they could build in the borough when they built the Penn Township Station. Chairman Lindgren answered that his understanding is that the DFC wanted to make sure before they finished the Penn Township Building that they wouldn't be duplicating the stations, and that they didn't finish the Penn Township Station because of funding. Chief Warner said that they don't know how Duncannon Borough will adapt to the new station location. Mr. Stump asked if it would make more sense to build onto the Penn Township Station where there is plenty of room to pull onto SR 274 without causing a traffic issue. Mr. Warner expressed that building onto the Penn Township Station wouldn't solve the problem of the majority of members living within Duncannon Borough.

Nicole Smith asked how the DFC is going to pay for operating costs of a new building when their 2023 990 showed operating costs of \$267k. Ms. Smith is concerned that her taxes will quadruple. She asked why property owners are responsible, and not renters. The solicitor answered that we will look into a 2nd option making it the responsibility of all the adults in the township,



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instead of just property owners. Chief Warner answered that some of the money from the 990 is related to the new building, such as architectural fees and land surveys, and that everything will be paid as they go and up front except for the building. Ms. Smith asked if they had put any money aside to help pay for the new building. Chief Warner answered that they are hoping the money will come from the municipalities, and your township is responsible for providing you Fire and EMS protection. He stated that eventually the municipality will take that protection over and DFC is hoping to have everything in place for when that happens.

Henry Holman III: Mr. Holman asked how long it would take to pay off the 7 million that it would cost to build the new station. Chief Warner answered approximately 35 years. Mr. Holman commented that Penn Township has a 7 million dollar debt structure already. Mr. Holman commented that if there's a major flood there will be no response time from the borough station to anywhere South of the Juniata River. He stated that 10 years ago Township taxes were .50mil. Less than 10 years ago, it went to .75mil. On top of that, there was a fire tax added to that of .83mil. Mr Holman stated that he is here to express his financial concerns for the Township, because of his experiences within the Township and his knowledge of how many private landowners have liens because they are delinquent on other bills within the Township. Mr. Holman asked if the new building would be a 50-75 year firehouse. Chief Warner answered yes. Mr. Holman suggested that if there is grant money, that they get it before the station is built.

Kurt Hepschmidt (Wheatfield Township Emergency Management

Coordinator): Mr. Hepschmidt thanked the board for holding this workshop, and commented that Township Code states it is the responsibility of the township to protect the health and safety of the residents. He commented that PEMA is requiring more every year to get recertified. Mr. Hepschmidt commented that Chief Warner is trying to set something up for the future so that if we have to hire career firefighters, the Township is already prepared.

John Owen: Mr. Owen commented that he is supportive of the Fire Tax, but with structure. He feels that Penn Township is in need of a new municipal building. He asked the Supervisors to explore a combination municipal building and fire station.



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Cindy Chancellor commented that in Dillsburg, if you volunteer with the fire company or EMS you can earn credits that go toward your property tax. She asked if this was a possibility in Penn Township. The solicitor answered that he has seen a similar ordinance that gives credit back to individuals who volunteer. He will supply an example ordinance to the Supervisors.

Michael Conroy asked how big the new station would be. Corey Stone answered 17,100 sq. ft. Mr. Conroy asked how many bedrooms would be in the new station. Chief Warner answered 8 bedrooms to accommodate 16 firefighters. Mr. Conroy asked if the old firehouse in the borough would be sold. Chief Warner answered that it is the plan to sell, but they need to run it by Duncannon Borough who donated the original hall to DFC. Mr. Conroy asked if DFC were to build in the Township, would it affect funding? Chief Warner answered that he did not believe so.

Chief Warner commented that they are applying for a USDA mortgage, which is the cheapest and longest term they can get. The last he heard, the interest rate would be 4.12% for 37 years. They need to have a construction loan in place for USDA to buy it out. They have chosen to go for grant money after the building is complete because the grant money would dictate the construction otherwise. They will be applying for all possible grants to reduce debt reduction once the building is built. The solicitor asked if USDA would be the end financing, with intermediate financing. Chief Warner answered yes. The solicitor asked if USDA will give them a commitment to take over the loan once construction is complete. Chief Warner answered yes. The solicitor asked if they would be paying interest only during the construction period. Chief Warner answered they could do it interest only or pay a balloon payment. There will be a 20 year term at 2% through the State once USDA loan is paid. A resident asked if we have to put money down to get the loans. Chief Warner answered no, because we are paying for everything but the construction up front. A resident commented that by doing the funding this way, the Fire Company doesn't have to pay prevailing wage for labor.

Mel Campbell asked if the Township has the reassessment numbers from the County and expressed that this is a bad time to raise fire tax if real estate taxes are increasing. Chairman Lindgren answered that we do not have those numbers yet. Chief Warner commented that the rate will be adjusted so that taxes don't increase because of the reassessment. Chairman Lindgren commented that after



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the reassessment, it should be tax neutral, and the income the Township gets will be the same. Mr. Campbell replied that it would not be the same for him. Supervisor Woodward encouraged the residents to appeal their assessment if they don't feel it's accurate. Mr. Campbell asked if churches pay fire tax. Mr. Lindgren answered no, but that they are responsible for related fees.

The solicitor asked if DFC will put the project out for bid. Chief Warner replied that it will be a public bid, hopefully in the fall or early winter, once they get their 100% plan. Chief Warner commented that the DFC believes that the quote they have now is very high.

Henry Holman III asked if the money earmarked for the Penn Township Station will go toward the borough station or the Penn Township station. Chief Warner answered that the money was not earmarked. Mr. Holman commented that because grant money will not be funding the new station, they should look into value engineering.

John Owen: Mr. Owen asked what rate the DFC is asking the Township to raise the fire tax to. Chief Warner replied that we would need to raise the fire tax to 1.1mil to cover the Township's portion. In 2017 the fire tax was .85mil. It generated about 165k a year then. In 2021 it was lowered to .54mil at the objection of the fire company. The current fire tax generates approximately 100k per year. He estimates it would be a raise of \$25 on 100k of real estate per year, if the tax rate wouldn't have been lowered in 2021.

Steve Noss: Mr. Noss asked if the new station would be available to the community. Chief Warner replied that there would be no social hall for rent, because maintaining that extra space would be counterproductive financially. There would be a training room for others to use, and an emergency operations center for disasters.

Ann Delancey asked if the DFC is asking to take the fire tax up to 1.1mil. Chief Warner answered yes. Mrs. Delancey asked what they hoped to get from a tax raise. Chief Warner replied that it would be enough to pay the tax collector, pay workmen's comp, and also give them the money that they would need generated. Mr. Holman commented that the fire tax would be doubled. Chief Warner commented that you'd pay an additional \$56 on 100k of your property value per year. They estimate the fire tax would bring in approximately 210k per year.



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Henry Holman III asked if the fire tax would be lowered if grant money was received. Chief Warner replied that it is a possibility that would depend on a number of factors. Mr. Holman asked if they had a possible grant money number. Chief Warner replied no.

Nicole Smith asked if the other municipalities are going to raise their fire tax.

Corey Stone commented that the tax should have been left alone in 2021, and we should have been saving for the future. Mr. Stone is not in favor of lowering the tax in the future, because we will be back in the same position. Mr. Stone commented that when the tax was lowered, he asked the township to open a savings account for the fire company to invest in, but he was told it was illegal by the previous solicitor, but that the current township solicitor said that it's not illegal. When the tax was lowered, the Supervisors and the DFC signed a contract saying that all money from the fire tax would be given to the DFC. Mr. Stone commented that in the near future we will have to staff career firefighters, and the DFC has found a plan that will work for the future. He also commented that value engineering is not a good option, because the fire station needs to be built to withstand a disaster.

Ms. Smith asked about the people in the township that can't afford to have the tax raised. Mr. Stone replied that he would like to see those who are more well off in the township to contribute more. He commented that the proposed building is not extravagant. It would be a properly sized building to fit the needs of the area.

Chief Byron Warner: Announced that DFC will be starting a capital campaign for the project. They will be soliciting donations to help with the cost of the building.

Michael Conroy: Mr. Conroy asked how much the Penn Township Station cost. Chief Warner answered 458k, and it was built in 2005. It was a 20 year loan that they paid off in 18 years.

Chief Byron Warner: There was a fire study done in 2003 that recognized the need for 2 fire stations, one at the corner of SR 274 & Linton Hill, and one as close as possible to the corner of High St. & Ann St.

Mr. Warner asks that if you have questions, that you come to the Township and ask to read the Fire Study.



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Chairman Lindgren asked that residents attend the next workshop on July 22, 2025 where the topic will be Fire Tax & Roads.

Adjournment: Upon a Woodward/Potteiger motion, the Penn Township Supervisors voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:32pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Blouch
Secretary