

Possible Levy Request

The need to form a citizens' committee and a partnership with residents and involved institutions were among priorities discussed at a recent meeting of Sylvania Township trustees in connection with the possibility of a request for fire levy.

Trustee John Crandall, Township Administrator John Zeitler, and Fire Chief Jeff Kowalski have been meeting and preparing a plan for how best to move forward in addressing a projected deficit in the fire fund of \$1.2 million in 2016.

John Jennewine, chairman of the trustees, said the item was on the agenda to "get the community up to speed" on progress on the issue.

Mr. Zeitler handed out a draft report which he said was nearly complete although some of the numbers needed to be added and some may need to be revised before the draft copy is ready.

Mr. Crandall said the three would then seek input from the other trustees and a final copy should be ready soon. He said the group will also seek input from the city of Sylvania, the school system and nursing homes and others who often call on the fire department.

Mr. Jennewine said he and Mr. Zeitler had recently met with a representative from the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association about a possible study of the township department, comparisons to other departments in the state and general issues which may impact fire departments generally in the future.

He said he is confident in the ability and service of the Sylvania Township Fire Department, "but the more information the better." He added that outside validation of the department may be helpful if a levy is sought.

The chairman added that the township has delivered on all of the promises made to the community prior to the passage of the last fire levy.

Mr. Crandall said the most important single step at this point is to reach agreement on just what is needed and then determine the best method to accomplish the goal.

Trustee Neal Mahoney, noting that "knowledge is power," agreed with the idea of getting an assessment and comparison from the state fire chiefs association is a good idea.

He added that if a levy is sought it will not pass, "if we're not all on the same page."

John Barnes, a city of Sylvania resident and a Springfield Township firefighter, asked if it is true that trustees are considering contracting out fire service to Toledo as the Village of Ottawa Hills has done.

Mr. Jennewine said it is the board's policy not to respond to rumors and hearsay.

He did note that there are mutual aid agreements with other departments and there is a general trend in government toward sharing resources.

He added, "I don't think any one of us wants to contract out fire services."

Each of the other trustees agreed with that.