

# BUCKINGHAM TOWNSHIP

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## BUCKINGHAM TOWNSHIP Board of Supervisors Work Session Agenda August 28, 2024 6:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m. Fire Companies – Funding Discussion

Manager's Items

Executive Session

**Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors**  
**Work Session**  
**Minutes**

The work session of the Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors was held August 28, 2024 in the Township Building, 4613 Hughesian Drive, Buckingham, Pennsylvania.

Present:	Paul Calderaio	Chairman
	Maggie Rash	Vice-Chairman
	Jon Forest	Member
	Dana S. Cozza	Township Manager
	Craig A. Smith, Esquire	Township Solicitor
Not Present:	Daniel Gray	Township Engineer
	Luke Rosanova	Bucks County Planning Commission
	Gary Weaver	Township Water/Wastewater Consultant

**Fire Companies – Funding Discussion**

The Presidents, Chiefs and other volunteers for Midway, Lingohocken and Doylestown Fire Companies were present to continue discussing financing objectives with the Board of Supervisors.

Mrs. Cozza thanked the companies for providing financial information as requested for staff to analyze and use to determine the full financial picture of the fire companies. She explained that upon completion, the DCED study being led by the Doylestown Fire Company, will provide even more information for potential recommendations and financial resources for the companies.

Mrs. Cozza said the DCED study is expected to be completed by Spring 2025, however, the Board of Supervisors intends to take action prior to that and then make a determination on how the report results may effect all three fire companies.

Mrs. Cozza explained the Supervisors and staff recognize that additional funding is needed by the fire companies and have studied various options including increasing millage from .75 to 1.5 which would increase the current fire tax proceeds of \$297,290 to an estimated \$594,580 to be spread out per the annual fire company agreements in the percentages set years ago. However, she continued, the millage will not be available until 2025 as it will need to be adopted and put into the 2025 budget.

In the meantime, Mrs. Cozza explained, the township has a fund balance set aside and that the Board of Supervisors have agreed to contribute \$250,000 to the fire companies in equal portions, and to do so this year. She said that the township also has agreed to double the fire tax millage for the year 2025.

Mrs. Cozza said in the last conversation with the fire companies, a referendum was discussed, and that may still happen in the future. She said in the meantime, the township, in coordination with the fire companies, hopes to be able to explain and educate our residents about the importance of supporting our volunteer fire companies. Mr. Kilfeather, President of Lingohocken Fire Company, agreed that the education of the residents that they are served by volunteer firefighters, not paid firefighters, would be extremely helpful, as many residents believe the firefighters are paid by their taxes. He said they also should be told about the volunteer opportunities available. Mrs. Cozza said a fall newsletter is being worked on, and she would make sure there is an article written on this topic. Mr. Calderaio said the township can also continue to share the information via email blasts and other social media.

Mrs. Cozza noted that in addition to the newsletter article, October is fire prevention month, and the township could use social media to have a weekly highlight on each of the fire companies, along with the fire coverage response map (which is posted on the township website), and the need for residents to be sure their street address is visible from the street.

Mrs. Rash asked for an update on volunteer status. Mr. Forsythe, President of Midway Fire Company, said they get new applicants quite regularly; however, they need so many hours of in-person training that the applicants can't complete it. Mr. Kuder suggested that online training would be helpful, with the practical qualification held at a certified fire training facility. Mr. Forest said that may be a change that requires action by the legislature and that should be requested.

Mr. Kreuter, President of Doylestown Fire Company, explained that he brought firefighter James Babinetz to the meeting this evening as he initiated a great program that they hope works out, where a 14-year old can be a junior volunteer firefighter and can begin training. He said they cannot ride the truck but can do other things around the firehouse.

Mr. Kreuter also said that many fire companies in Bucks County, other than those that serve Buckingham, are a combination, with some paid employees and others volunteers. He explained that none of our three fire companies want to be paid and keep challenging themselves to explore other options. Mr. Kreuter said an internal study said they need to hear other people's opinions so that they can adjust how to get the job done the best way that they can. He said all three fire companies mission statements are identical.

Mr. Forest asked about traffic in Doylestown with so much new construction going on. Mr. Wood, Chief of Doylestown Fire Company, said there are more delays with traffic signals going in and that the traffic creates delays in the firefighters getting to the firehouse and getting the trucks out of town, if needed. Mr. James, Chief of Lingohocken Fire Company, explained that several townships are taking responsibility for their volunteers and have added to their public works departments and let them park a truck there (i.e. Wrightstown Township). Mr. James said that some municipalities require their public works department employees to be firefighter certified and give them additional

money as a supplement. He also heard of a township allowing members of the police department, who are certified firefighters, to carry gear in their car as they are on the street and can get geared up and initially help out. Mr. Forest said Buckingham has always done that with several of the public works and police personnel on call for the fire companies.

Chief James said they supplement guys to drive the truck so that can be out the door quickly. Chief Wood said they have daytime and nighttime crews who stay at the firehouse so they can have a truck out the door in 2 minutes.

Mr. Calderaio announced that in year 2025 the township is celebrating its 325<sup>th</sup> anniversary and it would be interesting to see historical pictures the fire companies have to include in the year long celebration.

Everyone thanked one another for the very productive discussion held this evening and agreed to continue the ongoing conversation.

*7:00 p.m. The Work Session was adjourned.*

**Approved by the Board of Supervisors on the 25th day of September, 2024.**

**Buckingham Township Board of Supervisors**

Paul Calderaio, Chairman

Maggie Rash, Vice-Chairman

Jon Forest

Attest:

Dana S. Cozza, Township Secretary

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Lori Wicen.*