

**CENTRAL OHIO JOINT FIRE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**November 14, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Central Ohio Joint Fire District Board was held on November 14, 2024, at the firehouse located at 5138 Columbus Road Centerburg, OH 43011. The following attended:

**Board Members**

Peter Dickerson

Tom Stewart

Eric Cochran

**Staff**

Chief McCann

Courtney DeCosky, Fiscal Officer

**Guests**

Mayor Gregory Sands, Village of Centerburg

Crystal McElhaney

Julie Laughlin

Mr. Stewart called the regular Board meeting of the Central Ohio Joint Fire District to order at 7:01 p.m.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (LEVY DISCUSSION)**

A discussion took place on the recent 5.925 mills replacement fire/ems levy that failed to pass on the November 5 ballot. Ms. McElhaney shared her disappointment that the levy failed and suggested that levy messaging focus on the District's needs: 5-year plan, capital expenditures, operating budget, etc., in the future. Mr. Cochran believed more residents would have been in favor of a renewal of the 5.925 mills.

Chief McCann shared he had correspondence out to the Board of Elections and was waiting on answers on what options there were for potentially putting a levy on the ballot in spring. If there were no primary issues, there would have to be a special election for the District's levy. In preliminary conversations with the Board of Elections, they felt that it may cost around \$2,200 to do so. Further confirmation to come.

In regards to the levy language on the ballot, Chief McCann shared that the levy language is the same for all fire/ems departments in the county, which the Prosecutor's office provides. It is then submitted to the Board of Elections for approval.

Ms. Laughlin shared her concerns about the difference in the ballot language and language used to educate voters about the levy. She had hoped that the District would clarify numbers and clear up confusion in the messaging, and she was concerned about misinformation. She believed voters would now want to see exactly what is needed to operate if another levy is placed on the ballot: equipment, wages and benefits, vehicles, etc.

Mr. Stewart shared that the Board, along with Chief McCann, were already thinking forward. He felt that the Board had been transparent to this point. The levy had been discussed at several public meetings and anyone was welcome to come and see the budget. The Board and Chief McCann had public safety as the priority and were always working to do the right thing.

Discussion continued on levy language, the Knox County Auditor's numbers and formulas, and possible confusion in COJFD's representation of the increase. Mayor Sands pointed out the levy vote was likely affected by property tax increasing and rising costs all around. Mr. Stewart thanked Ms. McElhane, Ms. Laughlin, and Mayor Sands for their feedback. The Board would consider their feedback and take it into consideration moving forward.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Cochran requested an adjustment to the draft October minutes on page one, clarifying that the Board would discuss which appendices may be adopted after receiving the former resolution from the Prosecutor. FO DeCosky would make the adjustment.

Mr. Cochran moved to approve the minutes from the regular meeting on October 16, 2024 with the adjustment, and Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

### **ACCOUNTS PAYABLE**

Mr. Stewart moved to approve the warrants presented, and Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Ms. DeCosky presented the monthly bank reconciliation; fund status ledger, appropriation ledger; receipt ledger and payment register for the Board's review and approval.

### **REPORTS**

*Chief McCann Report – (Attached)*

Discussion took place on whether to enter into contract with FireRecovery USA for billing of fire responses. The Board tabled the matter so more research could be gathered from insurance companies and/or the Ohio Department of Insurance to ensure claims would not potentially cause an increase to or loss of the residents' insurance.

Discussion on possibly adopting the 2017 Fire Code and appendices with the resolution provided by the Prosecutor's office. The Board tabled the matter for further review and discussion at the next month's meeting.

Further discussion took place on the recent election results. Chief McCann highlighted the need for the levy by detailing the department's growth in the last 5 years. He went into detail on the budget, noting the cost of adequate staffing, employee retention, medics, firetrucks, radios, etc. and pointed to the amount of grant funds received in the last 5 years, as referenced in his report. Levy discussions had been taking place at the monthly public meetings, with levy notes documented in his monthly report, for several months. It was noted that everyone's property taxes were up and it is a difficult time to ask voters for more money. Ms. Laughlin would like to see the information be broken down easier for voters. Mr. Cochran felt much work was to be done before the District could attempt to place the levy back on the ballot and pointed out that people are being asked for more money everywhere, and the majority don't want to vote to pay more.

Mayor Sands pointed out that COJFD was not the only fire department that had their levy fail on November 5. Further discussion on election results across the county, as well as department growth and budget requirements. Mr. Stewart wrapped up the discussion and said further discussion would continue at the next meeting, where a decision would be made on how to best move forward.

The meeting shifted back to Chief McCann's report.

Mr. Stewart moved dispose BUN coffee maker ID#1066 having no further use or value to the Central Ohio Joint Fire District, and Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Mr. Cochran motioned to accept the resignation of Lt. Aaron Alfrey effective December 13, 2024, and Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

On Chief McCann's recommendation, Mr. Stewart moved to offer Garrett Walters a conditional Part-Time Job Offer @ \$17.00 per hour, and Mr. Peterson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

*Inspector Report- (Attached)*

*Fire Report (Attached)*

*EMS Report (Attached)*

*Training Report- (Attached)*

*EMS Billing Received – EMS Billing received for the month of October was \$37,238.66*

### **NEW BUSINESS**

The new fire truck is supposed to arrive in March. Chief McCann met with JT Graphics to finalize what it will look like.

Mr. Dickerson moved to have the Fiscal Officer transfer \$310 out of Ohio Police & Fire Pension (100-220-215-0000) to Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (100-220-211-0000), and Mr. Cochran seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Mr. Stewart thanked all guests for their time and information. He invited all to come to the next month's meeting where ideas on the future levy would be discussed.

Mayor Sands shared his belief that Chief McCann's first priority is the safety of the community, but expressed his concerns about the failed levy, believing the results may reflect aggravated citizens' feelings towards Chief McCann, in part because of the size of hurdles they have to address before completing any project due to fire code enforcement. Discussion on the subject ensued. Following discussion, Mayor Sands suggested improvements in the department's public relations moving forward.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Central Ohio Joint Fire District, at 9:10 p.m., Mr. Cochran made a motion to adjourn until the next regular meeting at 7:00 p.m., on December 18, 2024, unless called upon for urgent business. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

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