

**CENTRAL OHIO JOINT FIRE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**December 12, 2024**

A regular meeting of the Central Ohio Joint Fire District Board was held on December 12, 2024, at the firehouse located at 5138 Columbus Road Centerburg, OH 43011. The following attended:

**Board Members**

Peter Dickerson  
 Tom Stewart  
 Eric Cochran  
 Daniel Hardwick, Centerburg Village Alternate

**Staff**

Chief McCann  
 Courtney DeCosky, Fiscal Officer

**Guests**

Scott Thomas  
 Brett Thomas

Mr. Stewart called the regular Board meeting of the Central Ohio Joint Fire District to order at 7:00 p.m.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (LEVY DISCUSSION)**

Mr. Hardwick read a prepared statement in regards to 5.925 mills expiring levy. He shared that a large number of taxpayers spoke on Nov. 5, and asked that the Board please respect the “no” vote on a replacement 5.925 mills levy.

Mr. Brett Thomas shared that recently his taxes greatly increased, and he is looking for any decrease he can get. He felt a lot of families were in a similar position, and he does not support the levy going back on the ballot.

Mr. Cochran shared with the guests that a levy was necessary for the fire department to operate. However, he understood taxpayers' hardships with ever increasing taxes and asked if the guests would be more inclined to vote for the levy if it was put on the ballot as a renewal, which would collect the same amount of money that taxpayers are paying now and perhaps even less.

Chief McCann pointed out that the recent tax increase was from the State of Ohio and explained how much more a replacement would cost the taxpayers. He also explained that the current levies, which were voted in at 5.925 and 5.5 mills, were now collecting at 4.1 and 3.8 mills due to the tax reduction factor.

Mr. Brett Thomas confirmed he would still vote no on a renewal as he felt across the board, the government was wasting money. However, he would be happier to see a renewal go through versus a replacement.

Mr. Scott Thomas shared that since 2021, taxes have gone up 50%. He doesn't know where the money goes and feels overtaxed.

Mr. Stewart assured the guests that there is no waste in the department and that the Board works closely with the Chief, who is transparent with all expenditures. The department was fighting the same

things the taxpayers are fighting: rising costs. The department purchased a fire truck three years ago for 750K, which is now 1.1 million. He said the department works diligently to spend the money the best they can and explained the necessity to invest in employees to ensure retention. In the past, employees had left after being trained by the COJFD to go to nearby departments with competitive salaries. Mr. Stewart encouraged and welcomed residents to meet with Chief McCann to ask questions and look at the budget and financials, which are public record.

Mr. Brett Thomas inquired about recent parking lot construction, and Mr. Stewart explained that the concrete in the lot breaks due to the weight of the trucks. Repair was necessary to keep the trucks from getting damaged, whose repair would likely be more expensive. He emphasized that the department was doing its best to maintain equipment, while noting the need to plan for the future, i.e.: employee retention, repairing and replacing aged equipment, etc.

Mr. Stewart thanked the guests for their input.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Dickerson moved to approve the minutes from the regular meeting on November 14, 2024, and Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

### **ACCOUNTS PAYABLE**

Mr. Cochran moved to approve the warrants presented, and Mr. Stewart 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)*

After discussion on possibly contracting with Fire Recovery USA, Mr. Stewart motioned to table the discussion until more evidence is available on how it may affect insurance. Mr. Cochran seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Discussion on adopting the Fire Code and Appendices. After confirming that the district would not be adopting any appendices that were blank, Mr. Stewart moved for the adoption of the following resolution concerning the Ohio Fire Code:

WHEREAS, pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code 1301:7-7(A)(2), the Ohio Fire Code establishes State Fire Marshal rules for the administration and enforcement of authorities granted to the fire marshal and fire code officials in Chapters 3701, 3731, 3737, 3741, 3743, 3781, 3791 and 5104 of the Ohio Revised Code; and

WHEREAS, Ohio Administrative Code 1301:7-7-01(A)(2)(a) gives a political subdivision the authority to enact a local fire code, and to adopt the provisions in the appendices of any International Fire Code as part of such codes; and

WHEREAS, the Central Ohio Joint Fire District Chief met with members who are trained as Fire Inspectors to discuss which provisions of the Fire Code should be recommended for adoption;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Central Ohio Joint Fire District Board hereby adopts the 2017 Ohio Fire Code for the state of Ohio as set forth in Ohio Administrative Code 1301:7-7-01, *et. seq.*,

And further adopts the following appendices from the 2017 International Fire Code:

Appendix B	Appendix C	Appendix D
Appendix E	Appendix F	Appendix G
Appendix H	Appendix I	Appendix J
Appendix N	Index	

Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion and the roll was called on the question of its adoption.

The vote was as follows:

Tom Stewart	<u>Yes</u>
Pete Dickerson	<u>Yes</u>
Eric Cochran	<u>Yes</u>

Mr. Stewart moved to discard the MSA Accountability System and place on GovDeals, ID TAG# 1042, having no further use or value. Mr. Cochran seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Chief McCann explained the need to create a Volunteer Firefighters' Dependents Fund Board and the \$300 annual fee, which ensures part time firefighters and families get settlement support in the event of an injury or death. He referred to the board members listed with his report.

Mr. Scott Thomas and Mr. Brett Thomas left and thanked the Board and Chief McCann for their time. They were thanked in return for their input and invited to come talk to Chief McCann or FO DeCosky at any time.

After discussion on options for E422, Mr. Stewart motioned to allow Chief McCann to get the best deal with Flora's Diesel with no repair. Mr. Dickerson seconded. 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 November was \$25,629.17.

### **LEVY DISCUSSION, Continued**

Further discussion on the levy. Mr. Hardwick shared that the COJFD should be resourceful in these times and work on the margin. Mr. Stewart expressed his concern that they were working with peoples' lives and was concerned if the Board asks for less by putting the levy on as a renewal during

the next election, taxpayers will assume the district did not need the additional money. Chief McCann expressed that there were more expenses coming in the future due to the cost of doing business and employee retention. Discussion continued until it was tabled to discuss new business.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Dickerson motioned to have the Fiscal Officer reallocate \$11,034.75 out of Accounting and Legal Fees (100-220-311-0000) to Contracted Services (Operating Expenses - Office 100-220-360-005) for the 2025 Lexipol Software License and Fire & EMS Learning Platform, and Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Mr. Cochran motioned to have the Fiscal Officer reallocate \$2,007.99 out of Dues and Fees (100-220-510-0000) to Medical and Hospitalization (1000-220-221-0000) to be reallocated towards employee insurance premiums, and Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

FO DeCosky reported there is a 2% Bureau of Workers' Compensation discount given when the annual premium is paid in full. Mr. Dickerson motioned to have the Fiscal Officer reallocate \$6,492.15 out of Contracted Services - Building (100-220-360-0003) to Workers' Compensation (1000-220-230-0000) to be reallocated the 2025 estimated annual premium, and Mr. Cochran seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Mr. Stewart moved the adoption of the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Trustees of Central Ohio Joint Fire District,

Knox County, Ohio, that to provide for the current expenses and other expenditures of said Board of Trustees, during the fiscal year, ending December 31st, 2025 the following sums be and the same are hereby set aside, and appropriated for the several purposes for which expenditures are to be made for and during said fiscal year, as follows, viz:

APPROPRIATIONS - GENERAL		APPROPRIATIONS - CAPITAL	
Line Item	2024	Line Item	2025
Compensation of Board Members	1,350.00	Capital Outlay	
Salaries	1,294,845.00	Buildings	0.00
Other Salaries Special Events	2,700.00		
Medical Director	10,000.00	Machinery Equip. Furniture	0.00

PERS	3,500.00	Other- Capital Outlay	
Social Security	16,622.00	Tax Collection Fees	2,000.00
Medicare	24,208.00		
Volunteer Firemen's Dependent Fund	\$0.00		
OP&F	330,339.00		
Medical	75,000.00		
Other insurance	0.00		
Worker's Comp	8,800.00		
Accounting/Legal Fees	15,000.00		
Auditing Services	10,000.00		
UAN Fees	4,000.00		
Tax Collection Fees	35,000.00		
Training	17,000.00		
Professional/Tech Services Grant	0.00		
Garbage	2,500.00		
Repairs & Maintenance	50,000.00		
Telephone	12,000.00		
Postage	\$500.00		
Electric	13,000.00		
Natural Gas	4,200.00		

Contracted services - EMS	5,000.00
Contracted services - Fire Prevention	0.00
Contracted services - Building maintenance	\$7,000.00
Contracted services - Office	25,000.00
Contracted services - Maintenance	0.00
Property Insurance premiums	23,000.00
Operating supplies - EMS	40,000.00
Operating supplies - Fire Prevention	5,000.00
Operating supplies - Building/maintenance	15,000.00
Operating supplies - Gas	45,000.00
Operating supplies - Office	4,000.00
Operating supplies - grants	0.00
Small Tools/minor equipment	32,000.00
Other Expenses	5,000.00
Other Physicals	7,000.00
Uniforms	10,000.00
New Employee Uniforms	15,000.00
Buildings	72,000.00
Dues and Fees	17,500.00

Machinery Equip. Furniture	10,000.00		
Motor Vehicles	100,000.00		
Dry Hydrants			
Appropriations		Appropriations	2,000.00
Loan payment		Loan Payment - to 3101	69,157.20
Grand total appropriations	2,368,064.00	Grand total appropriations	71,157.20

Mr. Cochran seconded the Resolution and the roll being called upon its adoption the vote resulted as follows:

Mr. Cochran, Yes  
Mr. Dickerson, Yes

Mr. Stewart, Yes

The organizational meeting will be held Wednesday, Jan 15, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. with the regular meeting to follow. The records retention meeting will be Wednesday, Jan 15, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

### **LEVY DISCUSSION, continued**

Further discussion on what to do with the 5.925 expiring levy. Mr. Cochran shared that while he agreed with the positive growth of the department, he could not support a replacement because his residents did not want to pay more taxes. He believed the levy would likely pass if put on the ballot as a renewal.

Chief McCann believed a renewal would not suffice and the department would give up 5 years of growth. He also referenced the number of voters who were in favor of the replacement levy, and urged that their voices also be considered.

Mr. Dickerson asked that they consider a decrease in millage. A decrease in millage, as a replacement, would show taxpayers the Board is listening and working to decrease taxes. However, it would still be an increase of what a 5.925 renewal would bring in.

The Board agreed that the department is spending funds appropriately and in the best interest of the district. Overall, the community is very happy with the department and service. Continued discussion on why the recent levy failed in November. It was pointed out that the levy language caused confusion. Moving forward, messaging would need to be clearer. Mr. Cochran pointed out that it was essential that a levy must pass in order to operate, whether it be a replacement or renewal. After more discussion. Mr. Stewart moved to put the 5.925 levy back on the ballot as a replacement, with better messaging leading up to the election. Further discussion.

Mr. Dickerson moved to reduce the millage of the 5.925 levy. Further discussion.

Before leaving, Mr. Hardwick shared that he supported the fire department, just not the cost, and hoped that whatever the board decided in regards to the levy, he hoped that it would pass.

Mr. Stewart moved to enter into executive session with the Chief and the Clerk present at 9:00 pm to discuss sick leave compensation for probationary bargaining unit members, and Mr. Cochran seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

Mr. Stewart moved to exit executive session at 9:05 p.m., and Mr. Dickerson seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

After further levy discussion, Mr. Cochran motioned to put the 5.925 mills levy on the ballot as a renewal. Further discussion. Chief McCann emphasized that when pay raises were voted in, they were based on the levies being replaced and that in order for the station to operate as it is currently, they would have to pass as replacements. Discussion continued.

Mr. Dickerson motioned to reduce the levy to 5 mills as a replacement. Further discussion. It was agreed that whatever was decided, there would have to be a comprehensive plan to get information to the voting public. Further discussion.

Mr. Dickerson made another motion to reduce the levy to 5 mills as a replacement. Mr. Cochran shared again that he would not vote on anything but a renewal at the current millage as that is what the people that voted for him wanted. He agreed that tightening the budget would not be easy, but he did not want to see the department destroyed by failing to pass a levy.

After more discussion, the Board decided to hold a special meeting in the next few weeks in hopes of moving something forward. FO DeCosky would confirm timelines as to when the meeting would need to be held in order to get the potential levy on the likely May 6, 2025 ballot. She would then confirm a date with the board and get out a public notice announcing the date of the special meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Central Ohio Joint Fire District, at 9:50 p.m., Mr. Stewart made a motion to adjourn until the Special Meeting to be determined, unless called upon for urgent business. Mr. Cochran seconded the motion. In the affirmative: Mr. Cochran, Mr. Dickerson and Mr. Stewart. In the negative: None.

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Clerk

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