

# *Village of Leicester*

## **April 22, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting & Public Hearing at Leicester Fire Hall**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Briffa called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PRESENT:**

**Mayor:** Barry Briffa

**Trustees:** Don Jacobs, Ken Rizzo, Dan Christiano

**Clerk-Treasurer:** Deborah Beardsley

**Deputy Clerk:**

**Fire Chief:** James Kane, President John Yasso

**Highway Superintendent:**

**Water Operator:**

**Zoning/Code Enforcement:**

**Residents:** Mary Yasso, Rich Neumann, Karen Roffe, Kara Kane, Jason Yasso, Rob Semmel, Lisa Semmel, Jo Barratt, Russ Page, William Kane, Kathy Carnes, Derrick Otis, Adam Bodratti, Howie Green, Jennifer Johnson, Megan Semmel, Bob Fragoman, Renee Fragoman, Chris Thompson, Mark Parsons, Donald Kane, Gary Moore, Gerald Hull, Cassie Dickens, Josh Dickens

**EXCUSED:** Motion to excuse Trustee Frantz made by Trustee Jacobs, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Rizzo. [Motion Carried 3-0]

Mayor Briffa stated this was originally a joint Village / Town Board Meeting to discuss the future of the Fire Department. The Town was not able to advertise in time for this meeting. Their Board Meeting is tomorrow night to determine their Public Hearing. Once they determine that, there will be a joint Village and Town Board meeting to discuss the future. Turning the meeting over to Leicester Fire Department President John Yasso who will explain what has happened, what the future looks like and we will take questions from Village residents first, then Town residents. Mayor Briffa introduced the Board members and the Clerk.

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING:** Motion by Trustee Christiano, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Rizzo to open the Public Hearing at 6:02 pm. [Motion Carried 3-0]

President Yasso stated this is a progression of moving on from the study that was done using tax dollars. Several options were presented as part of the outcome of the study. Before the Town and Village Board can make a decision based on what is good for the public, there will be a couple of Public Hearings and hopefully you can feel free to speak and say what you think about it. Study is available online. Looking at the future of the Fire Departments. We want to improve what's there and include the safety of the fire volunteers and make it better for the public. With that in mind, we can entertain comments. Please stand up and say your name, and if you are in the Town or Village, we will have a discussion. If you have questions, the Village Board may be able to answer them or perhaps I can.

Trustee Christiano asked President Yasso to give a brief summary of the report for anyone that may not have read the report.

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President Yasso explained they had a sub-committee made up of two people from both the Town Board and Village Board and two members from each fire company, with President Yasso as the Chair. This committee looked over the results of the study and basically narrowed it down to a couple of options. One would stay as it is, which is called a “**Fire Protection District**” where the Town collects the funds for the Fire Departments then distributes them out per contract with the Village and the Village Fire Department and the Cuylerville Fire Department. Two Fire Departments under contract with the Town.

Last year the Town had approximately \$107,000 and divided that into the two contracts. The Village, based on what the Fire Department needs above and beyond the Town contract, has to kick in monies from the General budget. The Town tax on your Town/County tax bill listed as Leicester Fire 1 uses the value of your house along with the tax rate of .6237 or basically \$.62 per thousand so a home valued at \$213,000 would pay \$132 as their fire tax. That is how funding is going right now. We can stay that way, but there is no monies available to put away as future planning for new apparatus, replacement hose, turnout gear, air packs, etc. The departments are pretty much operating on what the Town and Village puts into their budgets and there are no extras.

Looking at the future if we go to a **Joint Fire District**, means Town and Village are joined together to create one overall protection area. You would elect some Commissioners, so it becomes a separate governing body and that would be anywhere from 5-7 Commissioners, which would be elected annually, with a term of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1, with every year having 1 or 2 Commissioners elected. Those Commissioners would then set the fire fund for the combined departments, and would budget money for future purchases, looking at the future 10 years down the road. So that’s what we are going, whether we do Fire Protection district and things stay as it is with two Fire Departments and the Town controls the funding or we go to a Joint Fire Department, which the study was kind of leaning to, but did not commit to. We could still have two Fire Departments. Is that good in the future? You would be paying for two buildings, multiple apparatus, some of which may not be needed, and the safety of the fire fighters themselves. They need to be joined together and train together and respond to calls together and be able to talk together and a lot of that isn’t happening right now and hasn’t been.

Mayor Briffa stated there is one other option. The Village and Town can combine together with one Fire Company and the Town would still control the Fire Tax. There wouldn’t be a Fire District but the Town would have the say about how much everyone pays for the Fire Tax. That would be the third option and hopefully the Fire Department would be centrally located within the Township. Mayor Briffa has had meetings with the Town Supervisor but not the Town Board, and his feeling is the Leicester Fire Hall could be the best option. And one thing the Village has done, which has to be completed by April 30, is to apply for a new State grant, for one million dollars to fund a new Fire Hall. And the Fire Company is also applying for a grant for new turnout gear.

**Jennifer Johnson** - Village and Town – Concern is that they are talking about putting this new building here that’s gonna house 3-4 pieces of equipment. You need way more than 3-4 pieces of equipment to run what needs to be run, to include EMS and everything in total, so where are you putting the rest of the vehicles?

**President Yasso:** this process isn’t going to happen overnight, but over time. No matter which Fire Hall is used, it is going to be left up to Public Hearings and what the Commissioners want to do. Commissioners that you will elect come December. If the Town/Village decide to do a Fire District they have to nominate 5 Commissioners. So anyone that wants to become a Commissioner, let me know, because we are going to be looking for some

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people. Those 5 Commissioners will pretty much run the status until December, then there will need to be an election. Those people will be the ones that are going to speak for you, and it's not going to happen overnight. What are we going to do with the extra equipment? Hopefully we will be getting rid of some equipment because my thought is we have way too much.

**Jennifer Johnson:** But to run an entire district, you have to have a certain amount of vehicles.

**President Yasso:** You could have three trucks and an EMS vehicle. You can have two vehicles, three vehicles... if something happened where this was the Fire Station, maybe EMS would have to come out of Cuylerville, just throwing out ideas.

**Adam Bodratti:** If I remember correctly the Fire Study specifically stated that three pieces of equipment, a rescue, a pumper and a tanker, which is a nominal equipment status.

**Bob Fragoman** – If we just built Cuylerville and it's bigger than this one, why do we have to build another one when it's probably significant for everything we need now?

**President Yasso:** I'm going to give you my thought.... Long range plans, Commissioners need to think about what's going to happen in the future, so Cuylerville is bigger. It has a large meeting room, 4-5 truck bays. Location is one thing. If you're on that side of town, all our volunteers have to go there. If you live in Pine Tavern.....

**Bob Fragoman:** So if everyone is here and you live over there they have to come here, so you kind of need to leave it the way it is.

**President Yasso:** That's a possibility. Or down by Celebrate Church there is a large lot, or down by Joe Montemarano. There are some parcels that could be possible for a new Fire Hall. A new Fire Hall isn't going to happen next week and would likely take another five years or so. In the meantime, you get your fire volunteers and Commissioners and work this out and what equipment they need and where they gonna put it. I have no problems with Cuylerville Fire Hall. Newer fire halls, we have diesel trucks, so we need air purification things that connect to the trucks, because otherwise all that smoke and stuff goes back into the air where the guys are trying to get their gear on and they are breathing that in. That is one of the things that have to be done down there. I'm sure they could use some insulation, heating updating, communications, that type of stuff.

**Bob Fragoman:** So how are we gonna make one big family outta two families that don't care for each other?

**President Yasso:** Eh, well...

**Mayor Briffa:** It all comes down to finances, that's what it boils down to.

**President Yasso:** Comes down to financing, and you either get along or get out.

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**Mayor Briffa:** I want to point out to everybody one thing. We spent \$40,000 between the Town and Village to do this study, \$20,000 a piece, not to stay where we are. We can't do that, the future says we can't afford it, the Village can't afford it and the Town residents can't keep affording it either. I think as a whole with the Village residents involved with the fire tax and the town we can do it. And just because I say we can build a new one here, doesn't mean it's going to happen. That's just my opinion being the Mayor of the Village and I only get one vote out of ten.

**Marty DeMarte** – Market St/ Village – So short term probably if combined together, I think it makes sense if they combined in Cuylerville. I know it's not centrally located but you have to start somewhere. Secondly, that million dollar grant you're talking about... how much would a new building cost? How much would that help? Anything would help. A million dollars sounds like a really good start.

**Mayor Briffa:** I have the estimate to replace this building around two million roughly. The one in Caledonia is going to be fancy, that's about ten. (Many voices in audience shared that had been voted down.) Bottom line is two million, we are applying for one. The difference is that would be up to whoever is the Fire District, the Town or whoever. That grant is good for three years.

**President Yasso:** If, the grant received is a million and the estimate is two million dollars, you've got a million dollars to pick up. Right now, it would come out of the Village. They would have to bond that, come out of Village Taxes. If this was a Joint Fire District, if it was formed, and the Commissioners took this over, the district would finance that million or two million dollars over the next 30 years. So now we pay a few thousand a year, so there are advantages to that Joint Fire District is that they can not only look toward the future, they can also finance things, if they had to buy a truck, they could finance that, and spread the payments out over a period of time. Correct me if I am wrong, the Town and Village Boards have a year budget and that's all they have to work with, and at the end of the year, the auditor comes and says, you have a zero balance there and that's what you need to have. They can't throw an extra hundred million dollars into an account somewhere.

**Lisa Semmel** – Town – Two things, the one thing is we are one of the lowest fire taxes in Livingston County. Most of them are a dollar to two dollars or around that area, so we are doing well. Second thing, York when they combined, one of the things I said, cause eventually they ended up with the York Fire Hall, and I'm like what if the Yard of Ale catches fire, god forbid please don't happen, but, they were like mutual aid helps you also. So if we based out of Cuylerville, and had a fire up there, obviously they would call Perry or Perry Center for mutual aid whoever is closest. It's a long way from York, you know, to this side of York. So mutual aid.

**President Yasso:** Another thing about having the amount of equipment and stuff like that, do we have the manpower to man all that equipment for one thing. I know it's a little scarce during the day. And if we got down to less number of vehicles we'd have the people to man it and if we needed it, a tanker or aerial truck, we call Perry, we call Mt. Morris, we call York. Cause mutual aid is always there. We just kind of leave it up to the Chiefs to make sure they make the decision ahead of time. If they have a fully engulfed house, they better be calling for mutual aid no matter what.

**Megan Semmel** - Village - Member of Cuylerville Fire Department – Just to say some say that Cuylerville has too many people show up to the calls, so if you are ever worried about us being able to come to a call .... More than enough people on all of our trucks, and back to the study, the study did say Cuylerville could do the updates to

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the Fire Hall to comply with what we need. I love it there. I think it's a great place and we do a lot of EMS calls. It's a great way to be a part of the public and I think if we were to build a Fire Hall I think EMS needs to be in the same building. I see that Mt. Morris has an ambulance bay, but we aren't talking about an ambulance, we are talking about Certified First Responders, someone that has first aid, advanced first aid is what we are doing next. And we're really trying to bring it to the Community. We are part of the Fire Department not a separate entity. Our firefighters are trained in first aid, trained in CPR. Jen is our only EMT in our department, so we have one EMT, so she is there to tell us and guide us in the right direction, but I would say being part of the Fire Department is the biggest honor I can imagine, having our own separate place to go to be getting EMS calls. We are all part of the same thing. My husband's the chief, I'm secretary but we still all come together for those amazing fire and EMS calls. I think it's important to make sure we are in the same place, I think that's something to be said.

**President Yasso:** Yeah, I agree. I mean, I wasn't trying to separate it out. Park a truck here, or in the back.

**Megan Semmel:** .... To build a four-bay, have EMS, find a mutual location, using Cuylerville until Cuylerville is no longer sustainable either is a great solution instead of [unintelligible] So I think that's gonna be the priority.

**Jennifer Johnson:** We also have to take into consideration that Cuylerville is the holding place, but we are also the emergency shelter. That's kind of, that we have that space is huge. Because nowhere else does. And yes we can always use more volunteers, but honestly we do not have any issues with, everybody can use more obviously, but our enrollment is not suffering whatsoever.

**Megan Semmel:** If you want to join, please do. We have a spaghetti dinner in June if anyone wants to come and see us.

**President Yasso:** There's some free advertising.... [laughter]

**Gary Moore** – Town – Did you ever think of cross-training now to see how it works. If I'm a Cuylerville Fireman and I'm coming down 20A, and the fire alarm goes off, wouldn't it be just as easy if I stop here? If I'm Leicester and coming down Dewey Hill, wouldn't it be just as easy to stop in Cuylerville? Just a thought to get things started.

General comments regarding gear location and obtaining gear.

**Adam Bodratti:** There may be some insurance issues there too.

**President Yasso:** I mean, that's kind of where we are hopefully going is to at least get the firefighters all working together whether we have two companies or not, that's a whole other thing. If we do the Joint Fire District and get one set of line officers. Right now, you could possibly have two chiefs, two first assistants, two second assistants, maybe four captains and four lieutenants, I mean that's the whole fire department. And then they get some volunteers. Should they train together? Most definitely, that's one of my biggest things is safety and the two should work together. We got to get them working together, cause they aren't going to do it on their own.

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**Gary Moore:** My other comment, and this is a Public Hearing only for comments, how do you take a fire company that's a charter 100-year fire company, which they own everything, and combine with a fire company owned by the Village. How does the Village turn this over to the company itself? I don't want the answer, but it's something to look at the Comptroller or your attorney, because really this right here belongs to the Village taxpayers.

**President Yasso:** So to back that up a little bit, yes everything that's in this fire hall belongs to the Village because the Leicester Fire Company got that little truck the Mini Pumper on a grant \$160,000 something, that blue breathing air machine that fills that SCBA cylinder was bought on a grant through the Leicester Fire Company, but the Leicester Fire Company took the easy way out and said we don't want to insure this we don't want to pay for maintenance, so we'll give it off to the Village. The Village now pays to have that machine serviced every year, they now pay to have that little truck there, \$40,000 into the engine, transmission and everything else to get done so it runs good. But if anything goes wrong with the other two trucks, they pay for that. So yes, Leicester Fire Company doesn't really own anything, these tables and chairs and a few things downstairs, stuff like that, cause we've given everything over to the Village to take care of. That made it easy on them.

**Chief Kane:** The Village controls the money. We don't get any money. All the checks get written by the Village. So that's a better way to explain it.

**President Yasso:** The Leicester Fire Company collects some donations and boot drives and things of that sort and buys some loose equipment. Jim and Don get different things from time to time to put on the trucks, but its all turned over to the Village so they can manage it. And Cuylerville got most of theirs through the Town contract so they bought their materials. Now they probably didn't get enough money to do what they needed to do, for one thing, I'm sure. And they definitely didn't put money away based on what the study is showing, they don't have enough put away for future purchases. I mean you have to replace some hose, do some gear, you gotta do a truck or something some point in time. Their two pieces of apparatus are the oldest in the fleet we'll say. So for them to do that, the Town is going to have to give them a whole lot of more money so they can budget that for the future or I don't know, they don't exist after a while I guess.

**Gary Moore:** Well god bless the volunteers, but still if you do merge, you gotta figure out how to turn this into one. Anybody that wants to take a ride on East Groveland Rd and Rossborough Rd, I think, Groveland has just built another building to put another truck in.

**Chief Kane:** Sure they did, but Gary they also didn't have to pay prevailing wages on the building.

**Gary Moore:** That's the other thing, but did you ever think of putting the building in Pine Tavern.

**President Yasso:** Why would we do that? Then we'd have three buildings. We are trying to consolidate and bring things down to one building, one unified volunteer service and keep your tax dollars down so that you don't have to spend extra money. That's one of the things right now having two fire companies, we're duplicating everything, even on runs, Cuylerville, Leicester both report to the government through the National Fire Reporting System (NFRS) the number of runs. We both go on the same runs, it's kind of good for grants and

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things like that, looks like a ton of runs, but really we are doing the same runs. So there's paperwork and duplication of everything.

**Mayor Briffa:** As John said earlier there's a sub-committee with two Village Board members, two Town, two Cuylerville, two Leicester. We had a Zoom meeting with an attorney who specializes in creating Fire Districts or combining Fire Departments and he's done about 90 of them. He's given a lot of good information plus the costs to do it so that is something we could consider down the road and I am sure the Village Board would have no problem. We can't just keep on doing without the help.

**Gary Moore:** I think regardless, you can call it a fund, but it is a tax. And that's the only way to raise money. And there's probably 40 people here or 35 and if you went to the public on a whole and told them that they would have fire protection I think they'd agree to what Lisa's mentioned raising that tax a little to cover what they'd need for fire protection. That's the bottom line, fire protection, motor vehicle accidents.

**Mayor Briffa:** And you know as long as I have been Mayor this Village pays the lowest amount of Village tax. So Village residents shouldn't have a problem with a hundred or hundred twenty dollar fire tax. I haven't seen any complaints. If they do, they know where we live. And I haven't seen anybody come. We just approved the budget. I haven't seen anybody come to the Board meetings and complain about the budget. And my number's available 24 hours a day. If you've got complaints, you know where we exist. And we will work with the Town Board. That's our goal.

**James Kane** - Chief of Leicester Fire Department – Saying this as my personal opinion, not as the Chief of the Leicester Fire Department, location has to be centrally located for members to get to the hall, that's the....

**Megan Semmel:** But why? People come from Geneseo, people come from Perry, people are grocery shopping, people are not just sitting at home twiddling their thumbs during the day when they get a fire call. I could be coming from Wegmans, or my mother-in-laws house, I'm up there all the time and I'm not coming from a central location 95 % of the time. I'm waiting for Tim Archibald to come from work, cause he responded yes, so I'm gonna wait for him to come, because I want to pull a rig. I'm not going to meet at a central location and have something in the middle of the Village where we don't really have room because we have what 5 foot off the side of that building and 5 foot off the side of that building? Where Cuylerville already has the space. You have so much space down there, you could build a whole other fire hall in the backyard and take the front one down and still have enough space. So why would we have to have a central location when I could be visiting my mom in Geneseo and come to a call cause I know my team is going to wait for me. So it's two sides to the story.

**Derek Otis:** The response times to the halls is way longer from Pine Tavern.

**Megan Semmel:** Not necessarily.

**Derek Otis:** You have an emotional attachment to that hall.

**Megan Semmel:** No, I don't. I could move to Geneseo and be part of that. I am from Geneseo. I chose to buy a house in Leicester because my husband lived here and grew up here. I tried to become part of Leicester Fire

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Department when I moved here in 2015, but I couldn't because I didn't have a permanent address. I only had a PO Box. I was told well we don't know. My husband left Leicester Fire and joined Cuylerville when I moved here because they wouldn't let me join when I moved my address to my mother-in-laws house. So, there's no attachment, there's no separation. I love both fire departments. I'd go to anyone's house. There's no distance wise.... People respect the lights and sirens. If you haven't had that respect then sorry for you, but I've never been in an accident or situation where they haven't respected that red light.

**James Kane:** Still my point, location is my concern. I understand the department assets are owned by the Village, best way to protect all that I believe is to give it to a Fire District. Twenty years ago I was against a Fire District. I thought they were big with money issues and spending a lot of money and stuff like that, the longer I've been in, the County has probably doubled their districts since twenty years ago. They look out long term wise for the departments, they can save their money for future purposes and stuff like that. That's my concerns.

**Mayor Briffa:** The only thing I know for sure is Mt. Morris has their Fire District and they love it.

**James Kane:** I'm sure they do because that takes the responsibility off you guys. There's good and bad, I'm not disagreeing. You already came out and said that you want out of the fire business. You've said that in Board Meetings I've been in, that you want out no matter what it takes to get out of it. So, you're not looking out for the .....

**Mayor Briffa:** That's not true. I'm looking for the future what's best for everybody, whether it's a Fire District or not. You don't know how I'm gonna vote. I'm not saying I'm voting for a Fire District. I'll listen to the Town Board and what they have to say. I haven't made up my mind yet either.

Several voices from the audience responded that the mayor had already commented that he had already made his decision.

**Josh Dickens** – I left Leicester a few years ago and just moved back. I'm only renting. I want to move and live here for the rest of my life. I have four kids, and if one of them breaks their arm, I don't care where you are located, I want you to come to my house. And I think the report said there's ten million dollars of expenses over the next ten years that we have to come up with, is that what the end result was -ish. We had 210 calls a year between Cuylerville and Leicester, \$400 a call or something like that, that's a huge amount of money. I want a fire truck to show up and put the fire out, and I want an ambulance to show up and take care of my kids or my wife or me get hurt, that's all I care about. So when you guys go to vote, vote for what's best for everybody. I know Cuylerville and Leicester have been fighting for years. I was a Leicester firefighter back then, and just rejoined. I don't care. I just want you guys to show up and take care of my family. That's really what it comes down to. So think about the finance. Ten million dollars, we can't afford that can we? Ya, exactly! We've got to figure out a financially smart way to do this. If we get a grant for a million dollars put it where my family is gonna be safe and my insurance rates are gonna stay low. I don't care if I end up buying a house and it goes up a hundred dollars because of insurance. [unintelligible] Fire District and they went up a hundred dollars a year and nobody shook a stick at it. They got seven fire departments and a great response time and great volunteer time and they work great with the companies up there. So you guys have examples out there you can look at. Just consider the citizens and not so much the egos. The report called that out beautifully so we're gonna have



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to combine something. We gotta do something smart so please just do it in a way that protects everybody, whatever that ends up being just show up to my house. That's all I ask for.

**Jennifer Johnson:** I just want to clarify something ... what were Leicester's calls last year? You said that we all respond to exactly the same calls. What were the, how many.....

Multiple voices: Fire calls.

**Jennifer Johnson:** Ok, so Cuylerville with EMS were at 334. So we obviously do way more and it's hundred and whatever is not just EMS calls.

**Mary Yasso:** Don't you get called for mutual aid to Mt. Morris though? There's not many calls that we both don't get dispatched out together though. Not that many.

**Jennifer Johnson:** You can see our numbers. Pretty sure you can't pad numbers with 911 so.

**Megan Semmel:** I'll just say I love the EMS side, so please just don't take it away. Get's me out of the house, it peaks my joy.

Many voices talking over each other; laughter.

**President Yasso:** I think I said something to Jennifer at one time in one of our committee meetings, EMS is gonna be [unintelligible] hopefully we can pick up some extra people.

**Jennifer Johnson:** So I want to make sure that everybody here kind of understands the whole aspect of the EMS. EMS does not just transfer over. EMS does not just come from Cuylerville and come to Leicester. Without myself and our first responders it does not just transfer over. If there's no EMT and no first responders, there's no EMS. Everyone makes it out like oh, we joined Leicester it can just be EMS. That's not how it works, that's not even close to how it works.

**President Yasso:** I know there is a whole legal thing there.

**Megan Semmel:** So like if I was to do something wrong [unintelligible; laughter] So like when Jenn's there, she's in charge of me, she's gonna tell me what to do over a Chief or Lieutenant, they don't have a say over an EMS call so that's something you have to think about when you do EMS calls. Only a certain amount of us can do certain things on calls too, so you have to like make sure that.... I'd love to do combined trainings. I think it would be great for everyone to get the EMS trainings we do. We just had a CPR class down to our Fire Hall. People joined us, which is super awesome, from the community and I think having the CPR and Buffalo Bills. It sparked that interest in the community and if we can build that up. It's super great and I think with little kids coming back into the community it would be great to continue because they tend to get hurt more than a lot of us so I think that that's important.

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**Martin DeMarte** – I was a few minutes late, and I'm sorry I was a few minutes late, but I haven't heard anybody say they wanted to get rid of EMS, so I ....

**Megan Semmel:** No, for sure, I just want to preserve EMS as much as possible.

**Martin DeMarte:** You just keep going on about that and I don't think anyone here is saying get rid of it.

**Megan Semmel:** I'm just worried that like with things and people wanting things on specific way of the Fire it's gonna hurt the EMS side and the biggest thing of that study was to preserve volunteerism, right? And preserving volunteerism has been a huge asset to our community of so many volunteers between Leicester and Cuylerville Fire Department and I think that's what I am trying to say, I want to preserve that EMS volunteerism and not be hurt by peoples bruises from the past with separate fire departments. The most important piece is you're making the community feel happy ... I'm sorry you're on your high horses about separate fire departments just do what's best for the community and save us money or get us get us better equipment to save our future houses in the long run, cause I know if my house burns down I would hope everyone in this community would show up to help my house and that's all I care about. I don't give a \*\*\*\* who's in charge.

**Jennifer Johnson:** And I think another thing she was just saying, so you guys just don't, there's talk about making Leicester EMS qualified. It's not that easy so.

**Jeff Loudin** – My understanding from this report, there's two ways this can come about, making this into a Fire District. One is a vote by the Village Board and the Town Board, and the other one is by public referendum. Is there any discussion either way, how that's gonna go?

**Mayor Briffa:** It's a little too early. What we have to do is we have our public hearing. The Town Board has to have their board meeting and then set a public hearing. After they do that, then we can set the meeting where the Village Board and the Town Board get together and discuss what we can do. Nothing is set in stone, how who's gonna do what. Then you'll have so many days, correct me if I am wrong, probably 30 days after that decision to force a public vote or public referendum.

**Gary Moore:** So the thought is you want to do it with a public referendum rather than a Village Board Town Board.

**Mayor Briffa:** No, the thought is the Village Board and Town Board are..... Jason, I don't know if you want to say anything. Jason is the Deputy Supervisor. What we have to do between the two boards is vote and decide if we're going to have a Fire District. If the Village votes five and the Town Board votes five to just take care of the fire tax and not have the Fire District you have to have six votes out of the ten people to decide which direction we're gonna go. So let's say we decide to stay with the Town, they're gonna have the fire tax. And they're gonna control the fire tax and have one fire department. We're not worried about location or anything else. Maybe two years from now they combine the two fire departments, but they have a say in the fire tax itself and the Village says alright, that's fine so everyone in the Village has to do that. You'll have 30 days to get a referendum together to decide no we don't like the decision. It's just like when they turned the water over to the County. You had so many days to get a public referendum together to discuss that.

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**Gary Moore:** My comment to this is keep after it, keep it going. Let's not do this ten years from now.

**Mayor Briffa:** No, that's why. Jimmy's a little upset with me, and that's fine. He thinks I've made up my mind.

Several voices from audience "you said it at a meeting"; "you can make up your mind"; "applaud you for making up your mind, I wish everyone could make up their mind"

**Mayor Briffa:** Too be honest with you, I have to control the finances and you have to look at the future. And you gotta make up your mind. You can't just well we'll do it five years from now. You can't do that. So, Gary we hope to get this in motion and get it done by the end of the year.

**President Yasso:** Hopefully we have a decision by July or so because the time frame basically if this goes to a Joint Fire District, the time frame would be that the appointed Commissioners would have to be in place by July, first part of August, because those new Commissioners now have to work on a budget and get it passed through the Town vote, I believe has to go through a public vote. Have to see what that budget is and present it to the Town Board at that point, so now you're looking at October or so. By November this has to be locked in and submitted to the County. So, if it doesn't get done by that time frame it drifts into next year and you might just as well pour water on it, I guess.

**Marty DeMarte** – So from that meeting at the Church I believe one of the things the people stated that did that study, was that it could be done within a year realistically.

**Mayor Briffa:** Just to add to that, when we did the Zoom meeting with the attorney, he said we could get it done by the end of the year with full cooperation of everybody.

**Gary Moore:** The Commissioners, do they have to be on the ballot in November?

**President Yasso:** No, the Commissioners are always the second Tuesday in November in a special election just for Commissioners.

**Gary Moore:** So, when you had that you'd elect one for one, the next one for two years, three years, four years and the longest one would be five year term and every time they come due it would be a five year term, am I right?

**President Yasso:** No, the five year one would stay in for five years, if I remember it's based on the number of votes they get or something like that that starts them out, and then it goes through a rotated sequence. The guy in for one year can re-run next year, or someone else can run against him, or can have ten people running for that one-year term. There is a way it progresses through so that the five-year guy is in there and after five years he's out or gets re-elected again. So, it is a constant thing.

**Adam Bodratti:** If I remember correctly, the initial Commissioners are actually appointed.

**President Yasso:** Yes.

# *Village of Leicester*

## **April 22, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting & Public Hearing at Leicester Fire Hall**

**Adam Bodratti:** And then the next round is when the elections come in.

**President Yasso:** The time frame come this December there would be those Commissioners that would be elected. Maybe somebody else would want to come in and run for the office. But at least those first five or so would start out getting the first budget in place and start working with the attorney to get new by-laws and things going pretty much as a business type thing. Questions/ Comments anybody?

To throw some more information out there to you, cause we were talking about Districts and things like that. I was going to have a person here to speak on this a little bit better. Mt. Morris had three fire companies that joined together to create one fire company. The Town and Village got rid of their obligations, and they created the Fire District. So now they have the Fire District run by Commissioners and they have one fire company. It took them quite a few years to do it, but they did it. Right now, in the last couple of years they purchased two new trucks to replace old ones and are starting to build their own building. They are looking ahead to the future. Their fire tax last year was .78 cents a thousand in 2023 after creating a Fire District.

?? : But their assessed valuation is a lot higher than ours.

**President Yasso:** Yes, it probably is. And that's a good point. They were telling me when you look at the current situation, the Town people are all taxed at that sixty some cents a thousand, the Village includes it in the Village tax, they don't know how much they are paying, they could be paying a dollar or two per thousand. It's all built into their Village budget. There's no separate line item there. So, by creating the Joint Fire District, now Village and Town residents will all pay the same amount, whatever the Commissioners set for it. There is also, they are telling me, there are also some properties in the Town and Village of Leicester that are Town and County tax exempt. Nobody is exempt from a Fire tax or fund, so that puts more people into the pie, spreads it out a little more, hopefully keeps the tax rate down. Will it go up? I can pretty much guarantee it's gonna go up. How much? It may go up a few cents, it may go up twenty cents. Say if it goes up from .62 to .92 on my tax bill next year means I will pay \$196 which is \$63 more than I paid this year. Do I want that? You better believe it! Cause I want that fire truck to show up, I want that EMS squad to show up, when I need them. My two cents.

Lisa and I tried to do this ten, twelve years ago. We started this process and contacted the Lawyer and couldn't get enough people to get on board. I'm hoping that's changed now so.

**Lisa Semmel:** I hope so.

**Megan Semmel:** I think something important to say, is if we do combine and become a district, we do re-write all of our by-laws, which is really great, so we aren't taking something from Cuylerville, we're not taking something from Leicester and putting it together. We're building a whole new by-law, rules of thumb so we're not gonna be like, we're gonna take this from Cuylerville, we're gonna take this from Leicester and piece it together. It's gonna be proper and legally written so it's gonna be a great piece to have for standards of what we need to practice within our fire department in our Town and Village. Someone a few years ago gave us a lot of the guidelines. The proper by-laws are very lengthy and written out and literally pages and you're definitely going to have a better structure and plan with a district and training schedule, because the district comes up with the training schedules. There's a lot put into it than just a few people at the top.

# *Village of Leicester*

## **April 22, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting & Public Hearing at Leicester Fire Hall**

**Marty DeMarte:** So, let me give you a little background. I worked for Livingston County ITS. I was there almost 37 years, so I was there when the two nursing homes that the County had were going to be combined into one. They faced the same kind of thing, about ok, we do it this way, we do it that way, they grouped together, talked about what made sense, and kind of moved forward from there, and I did not hear that many issues once they combined together in one facility, so again do you want to do it and make that commitment and move forward with it. So, if the people are willing it should be able to happen.

**Mayor Briffa:** We are already making the commitment.

**Marty DeMarte:** I understand that, but I'm talking about fire companies making that commitment to join.

**Bob Fragoman:** So, it sounds like basically that would be the best way for everybody, except you didn't have as many calls out of here, a lot were down there. If everybody got together and trained together and started to get along with each other and play together, it sounds like the best thing for all of us, for the least amount of money to pay for one fire district, period. Who cares where we put it, you're talking a matter of a minute to go from one to the other, and if that old fire truck can't get from there to here in a minute, we got problems. Instead of having all the trucks that we have together, if we combined and had one, maybe we get an extra truck that was a little newer and a little faster.

**Derek Otis - Village** – I guess I'm the newcomer, I've only been in Leicester since 2006, so I'm fairly new compared to a lot of people in this room. I'm a member of the Fire Department. As a member of the Fire Department, I know there's been bad blood between the departments, I don't know why, I don't care why. I'm new. I'm just here to do what I can to help you. At the end of the day, it's not going to matter what we decide in this room. The Boards are going to make their decisions and we're going to deal with it. And as a volunteer I hope we can all get in the same room and just do what we need to do to make it work. [unintelligible] I want EMS. No one is talking about getting rid of EMS. That would be stupid. It's just been set up this way for so long we're all [unintelligible]. It doesn't have to be that way. We can make it work. We're gonna have to.

**President Yasso:** We are gonna have to.

**Cassie Dickens - Town** – The point is it's gotta happen. What is the other option? Both fire departments deteriorate because you can't afford them. It's got to happen, what's the best way to make it happen where everyone can be satisfied and citizens can have what they need when they need it.

**Mayor Briffa:** I suggest you follow the Board meeting minutes. Ours are online, the Towns are online and we'll show you which way we're headed. We're not going to stop. Once we start something it gets finished or else, at least from the Village perspective. And I'm sure the Town will cooperate. I know they will.

**CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING:** Motion to close Public Hearing at 7:01 pm by Trustee Christiano, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Jacobs. [Motion Carried 3-0]

Remainder of Board Meeting moved to Village Hall for Executive Session.

# *Village of Leicester*

## **April 22, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting & Public Hearing at Leicester Fire Hall**

Quote obtained from Genesee Valley Landscape for repair of blocks around flagpole flower garden for \$2,365.97. Will clean existing blocks and rebuild retaining wall. Motion by Trustee Rizzo to approve quote for Genesee Valley Landscaping to clean and reset blocks around flagpole garden for a cost of \$2,365.97, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Christiano. [Motion Carried 3-0]

Retirement Party for Ed Hauslauer on April 24, 2024 – Board Members attending? Trustee Jacobs and Mayor Briffa have already RSVP'd; Trustee Christiano – no; Trustee Rizzo – yes. Clerk-Treasurer Beardsley will advise Town Clerk Amy Neumann.

**ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Motion by Trustee Jacobs, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Rizzo to enter Executive Session at 7:15 pm regarding water contract. [Motion Carried 3-0]

**EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Motion by Trustee Christiano, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Rizzo to exit Executive Session at 7:30 pm. [Motion Carried 3-0]

Motion by Trustee Christiano, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Jacobs to allow Mayor Briffa to enter into an agreement on behalf of the Town of Leicester Water customers with LCWSA with the caveat that a promised rate decrease for the Town of Leicester water customers will be administered by LCWSA. [Motion Carried 3-0]

**NEXT VILLAGE BOARD MEETING:**

Board of Trustees Meeting, May 20, 2024, at 6:30 pm at Village Hall.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Trustee Christiano motioned, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Trustee Jacobs to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 pm. [Motion Carried 3-0]

Respectfully Submitted,  
Deborah Beardsley  
Clerk-Treasurer  
Village of Leicester