

Paxtang Borough votes unanimously to move forward with the contracted services of Swatara Township Fire and Rescue

Due to a lack of retention and recruitment by the Paxtang Fire Company, Paxtang Borough Council has been considering viable options for Fire Protection for the past decade, starting with the independent professional third-party review of Fire Services, done jointly with Swatara Township, which was supported and encouraged by Fire Chief Zwigart (Chief 5 terms: Jan. 2005- Dec. 2019). The discussions following the report involved combining Paxtang Fire Company with a Swatara Township Fire Company.

In the meantime, there have been various discussions across PA involving the growing concern about the decreasing number of Firefighters, volunteer and paid, willing to serve.

In September of 2020, Paxtang Borough Council authorized contact with local fire companies in the surrounding municipalities to explore future fire protection for Paxtang Borough. Swatara Township, Susquehanna Township, and Harrisburg City submitted proposals for service.

Due to Harrisburg Mayor Papenfuse's offer for three free years of service (saving a total contract fee of \$75,000 to the Borough Property Owners), in May of 2021, Borough Council decided to focus discussions with Harrisburg City authorizing the solicitors and Borough Manager to discuss details of the draft Agreement for consideration by Paxtang Borough Council and Harrisburg City Council. The details from discussions with Harrisburg Chief Enterline were immediately provided to the Harrisburg City Solicitor to prepare a draft Agreement Proposal. Six months later, in November of 2021, Paxtang received a draft Proposal from Harrisburg City Solicitor's Office. The Borough Officials reviewed the document and returned it to the City for edits within a few weeks. Then four months later in March of 2022, the Borough received a Revised Draft Agreement, which went directly to the Public Safety Committee for review. The revised Agreement had changes that included the removal of any free or discounted years that were previously offered.

The Public Safety Committee contacted Swatara Township to inquire if they would still entertain providing services to the Borough with the Township advising its proposal would remain the same as presented the previous year.

As we have already shared, Swatara Township Fire and Rescue (www.STFR91.com) provides the opportunity for monetary compensation to the certified and trained active Firefighter volunteers and Fire Police volunteers under the membership and direction of Swatara Township Fire and Rescue. Paxtang members who are currently serving Swatara, with others submitting their applications since the recent vote. Swatara Volunteer Fire and Rescue currently includes over 60 firefighters. We would like to see the Fire Service transition continue in a positive manner.

Borough officials appreciate the comments that have been shared in our Council Meetings and the individuals who have contacted us directly with questions or comments. The Borough of Paxtang would like to again, express our appreciation to the men and women who have served and those who will continue to serve the Paxtang Community as Firefighters, Fire Police, and in support of those individuals. Although there are only 6 firefighters currently serving Paxtang Fire Company at this time, we hope the remaining active members in addition to those who were active in the past, will continue their service to Paxtang, under the professional leadership of the Swatara Fire and Rescue Service.

As a resident and business owner, you will see no change in service, just the painting on the trucks. The surrounding municipalities, including Swatara, have been providing mutual aid to our community for many years. Paxtang Borough has an average of 60 calls per year within the Borough, ranging from false alarms, pet assistance, vehicle accidents, tractor-trailers stuck under a bridge, and medical assistance, to structure fires. These calls often involve police or ambulance services as well. We have, at most, 1 active fire per year in Paxtang Borough. In the most recent fire, Fire Companies from Susquehanna Township and Swatara Township were the first two responding companies on the scene to jump into action, soon followed by Harrisburg City and Paxtang Fire. Every call and situation is different with several factors determining who may "arrive first" to provide the service at that moment.

The member standards of Swatara Township Fire and Rescue, both on and off scene, reflect true professionalism. They care and are already active in our Paxtang Community. Swatara Township Fire and Rescue will continue to embrace the hometown feel we have come to love by expanding participation and joining our current police force, in our other events such as the Parade, Trick or Treat, the Santa Runs, and more.

Mutual Aid and respect among all firefighters is so important to stay focused on the common goal! Paxtang is fortunate to benefit from mutual aid from all directions. It is the municipality's responsibility to name a specific service as our designated Fire Service. We are pleased with the outcome of the unanimous vote for Swatara Township Fire and Rescue. The relationship between Paxtang Borough and Swatara Township has always been a good one but has grown over the past 10 years and we look forward to continuing a mutually beneficial relationship with Swatara Township as we expand the Public Safety Services.