

## Citizens Advisory Committee Recommendation to the Concord Township Administrator to be Forwarded to the Trustees

### **Recommendation: 5-Year, 3.9 Mil Fire Levy**

After extensive review and consultation regarding the financial requirements necessary to maintain and enhance fire and emergency medical services (EMS) in Concord Township, the Citizens Advisory Committee formally recommends the implementation of a 5-year, 3.9 Mil Fire Levy. This recommendation is driven by the urgent need to address critical gaps in funding that currently hinder our ability to provide optimal fire protection and EMS to our growing community.

### **Key Benefits of the Levy:**

- **Enhanced Emergency Response:** Funds will be used to purchase state-of-the-art equipment, ensuring our fire and EMS teams can respond swiftly and effectively.
- **Increased Personnel:** The levy will allow for the hiring and training of additional personnel, improving our capacity to handle emergencies.
- **24/7 Community Patrol:** Revenue from the levy will also enable the restoration of full-time deputies, providing round-the-clock patrolling and enhancing overall community safety.

Together, we can ensure that Concord Township remains a safe and secure place for all. For more information or to discuss any concerns, please join us at our upcoming town hall meetings or visit the Concord Township website.

Let's safeguard our community's future by investing in the essential services that protect us every day.

### **Financial Overview and Levy Justification**

Our analysis highlights an immediate need for increased funding to support personnel costs, essential equipment upgrades, and operational expenses that have escalated beyond the capacity of existing funding mechanisms. The proposed 3.9 mil levy is calculated to meet these needs without overextending the financial burden on our residents.

### **Concentrated Allocation of Funds**

The revenue from this levy is specifically earmarked for fire and EMS services, ensuring that the funds are concentrated and effectively utilized where most needed. While the revenue from the new levy cannot be extended to broader safety services, the passage of this new levy will free up the needed funds from the existing Safety Levy. This reallocation will enable the police force to be restored to 10 deputies, providing Concord Township with the services of two patrol deputies available 24/7.

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### **Enhanced Community Safety**

Implementing a second neighborhood patrol not only significantly reduces response times to residents' calls but also ensures more efficient backup support for situations that are too risky for a single deputy to handle alone. This enhancement in patrol coverage directly contributes to the safety and security of our community, providing peace of mind to residents and deterring criminal activity.

The proposed 3.9 mil levy offers a balanced approach to addressing the immediate funding needs of our fire and EMS services while also improving the overall safety infrastructure of Concord Township. We urge residents to support this levy as it will have a direct and positive impact on the well-being of our community.

For more detailed information or to discuss any concerns, please join us at the upcoming town hall meetings or visit the Concord Township website. We are committed to transparency and ensuring that residents have the information they need to make an informed decision.

### **Allocation of Levy Funds**

Ensuring competitive salaries for firefighters and EMS personnel is paramount to maintaining staffing levels that meet national standards for safety and efficiency. The proposed funds will support this endeavor, enabling us to attract and retain highly skilled professionals who are dedicated to serving our community.

### **Competitive Salaries**

Competitive salaries are essential to attract top talent and incentivize retention. By offering salaries that are on par with industry standards, we ensure that our firefighters and EMS personnel are motivated and committed to their roles. This not only enhances the quality of our emergency services but also instills confidence in residents that they are receiving the best possible care during emergencies.

### **Ongoing Professional Development**

In addition to competitive salaries, ongoing professional training and certifications are crucial to service excellence. These investments ensure that our personnel are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills necessary to handle diverse emergency situations effectively. By prioritizing continuous learning and development, we uphold the highest standards of safety and performance within our fire and EMS departments.

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### **Equipment and Apparatus:**

Immediate procurement of replacement firefighting equipment and EMS apparatus is essential. This includes acquiring a new fire engine and updated EMS vehicles to replace outdated machinery, ensuring reliability in emergency responses. In most cases there is a two-year lead time for replacement vehicles.

We currently have a thirty-one-year-old fire engine with multiple welded frame repairs, electrical issues, and structural rust. Additionally, a twenty-year-old ambulance is nearing retirement due to its obsolescence. The replacement of these outdated vehicles is critical to enhancing our emergency response capabilities and maintaining the safety and well-being of our community.

### **Operational and Maintenance Costs:**

Covering increasing costs of fuel, vehicle maintenance, medical supplies (such as heart monitors which have an expiration date of use) and utilities necessary for day-to-day operations of fire and EMS services.

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### The Case for the 3.9 Mil Fire Levy

The Citizens Advisory Committee recognizes the challenges of proposing a new levy during a period marked by post-pandemic economic recovery and significant inflationary pressures. The burden of increasing property taxes, coinciding with substantial property valuation increases projected for 2025, is understood to place additional financial strain on our residents. Despite these challenges, the proposed 3.9 mil Fire Levy is crucial. It is designed to secure the additional revenue required to sustain the high standards of safety services that our community values and relies upon.

### Addressing Economic Concerns

We are aware that introducing a new levy is never popular, especially during uncertain times. However, the necessity remains undeniable. The residents of Concord Township have consistently demonstrated a deep appreciation for the quality and availability of our safety services, which operate around the clock. There is a broad recognition of the benefits provided by having highly skilled first responders equipped with the latest technology, ready to handle emergencies effectively.

### The Value of Investment

For those who have fortunately never had to dial 911, it is essential to understand that investing in our safety services today will prove invaluable in the future, potentially saving lives and properties. The costs associated with maintaining such high standards in our safety services continue to escalate annually. Without an increase in funding, the existing levies, despite being fixed, cannot accommodate these rising costs or the expansion required to service new developments in our township.

### Ensuring Continued Excellence

The Citizens Advisory Committee strongly advocates for the community's continued support of the proposed Fire Levy. Maintaining our current level of service without reductions in staffing or delays in essential equipment upgrades is imperative. Specific benefits of the levy include:

- **Enhanced Equipment:** Funds will be allocated for state-of-the-art equipment upgrades, ensuring our first responders are well-equipped.
- **Increased Staffing:** Additional funding will support hiring and training more personnel, improving our capacity to respond to emergencies.
- **Sustained Services:** The levy will ensure that our fire and EMS services can continue to operate effectively without service interruptions.
- **24/7 Community Patrol:** Revenue from the levy will also enable the restoration of full-time deputies, providing round-the-clock patrolling and enhancing overall community safety.

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### **Community Communication and Engagement**

Understanding the critical nature of this levy, the committee emphasizes the importance of clear, transparent communication with the community about how the levy funds will be utilized and the direct benefits to the residents of Concord Township.

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### **ABOUT THE CONCORD TOWNSHIP CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Concord Township Administrator and Board of Trustees demonstrated proactive leadership and foresight by assembling the Citizens Advisory Committee, a strategic initiative that leveraged the diverse perspectives within the community. Recognizing the importance of community engagement in governance, especially concerning critical decisions like funding for safety services, the board sought to ensure that voices in the township were heard and considered.

This committee was carefully composed of a broad cross-section of Concord Township citizens. It included representatives from various demographics, professional backgrounds, and geographic areas of Concord Township. This diversity was intentional, aiming to mirror the community's complexity and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the varied needs and concerns of its residents.

The Administrator and Trustees understood that the successful implementation of a new fire levy required not only their vision but also the trust and support of the residents. By forming the committee, they ensured that the process was inclusive, transparent, and reflective of the community's values. This approach allowed for a thorough evaluation of the township's needs, grounded in the everyday realities of its citizens, which in turn fostered a more informed and community-driven recommendation process. Their objective was to seek additional revenue to maintain fire protection/EMS services and Lake County Sheriff patrols.

The committee listened to presentations from the Concord Township fire department and Lake County Sheriff to acquire a better understanding of their current financial situation and forecasts of future funding requirements. A township trustee presented background information on existing revenue streams and a brief history of how the current revenue from the 4-mil safety levy is no longer sufficient to maintain Concord's high standards for fire/EMS and to provide adequate police protection for a growing community.

The Citizens Advisory Committee served as a bridge between the government and the residents, providing a platform for open dialogue and mutual understanding. This initiative highlighted the board's commitment to democratic principles, allowing for a balanced approach to decision-making that was both guided by expert insights and deeply rooted in community consensus.