

This is FWFC excerpt from the Ward 1 Newsletter from Commissioner Bob Pesavento.

The funds for fire services were a bit more complicated. Upper Dublin is pretty much unique in that we fully fund our volunteer fire company. Other communities may make a donation but for the large part those fire companies have to raise their own money. **The Board of Commissioners believes the community should fund "the mission"**. It is an important mission, but one that is changing in that here and nationally the number of fires are thankfully decreasing. Adding operations and capital funds typically exceed one million dollars each year. The prime fundraising activity of the Fort Washington Fire Company (FWFC) is the annual mail appeal. This generates about \$80,000 and until several years ago they turned this money over to the Township to be used for purchasing capital equipment for the FWFC. However, the FWFC made a unilateral decision to keep those funds and they use them primarily for "esprit de corp" - functions such as going to a Phillies game, their annual picnic and so forth. Your taxes have to make up the difference.

There is a "relief association" for the Fire Company which is fully in accordance with the laws of Pennsylvania. The Commonwealth provides funds from tax revenue to relief associations across the state and this year it is over \$291,000 for Fort Washington. This Relief Association is audited by the Commonwealth every two years and the most recent audit showed they had assets over \$2.2 million. Of course, with the economic downturn that

number is likely less. However, the Relief Association has more assets than all but literally, a handful of such associations. In that audit, for the two year period the Relief Association spent \$353,592 on life insurance for the members, \$23,200 in disability payments and \$18,146 for administrative fees. \$927 was spent on equipment and training. The rest is invested. Other relief associations provide those funds to buy fire apparatus and in some cases, the entire cost of a fire truck whereas Fort Washington's Relief Association has other priorities. Your taxes have to make up the difference.

The FWFC requested a new rescue truck this year with an estimated cost of \$625,000. The new pumper truck purchased in the last budget was about \$485,000 whereas other fire companies have purchased a similar trucks for less money - primarily without township funding. I proposed, and the Board agreed with me, that a **study should be funded and conducted through the Township Fire Administrator to determine the true apparatus needs of the FWFC** while looking at the surrounding communities for opportunities to reduce duplicative resources. The study will look at all fire truck purchases in the past five years in Eastern Montgomery County and list the type, cost and funding source (how much was township provided, how much was fundraised etc). In light of this, the Commissioners did not fund the new truck in the budget but held the tax money in reserve until the study was complete. With the future cost of trucks continually rising plus the cost of the new fire station (featured in my last newsletter) the Commissioners felt it was best to increase the capital budget for fire services by \$125,000 to build up a reserve.

On the operations side of the FWFC, given the economy, the Commissioners felt that funds allocated to the annual Fire Company banquet be reduced from \$20,500 to \$10,250 and that the FWFC should make up the difference from their "esprit de corp" funds raised by the annual appeal. The Township will continue to fund "the mission" but this is clearly not part of that mission.

The bottom line is that Real Estate taxes will increase by 3.9% or \$33 for the average home. A significant reduction from where we started.

R. L.