

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS**  
**Minutes of Special Meeting between Troy Township**  
**Trustees and Parkman**  
**Township Trustees**  
**April 19, 2023**

*The Special Meeting with Parkman Township and Troy Township Trustees was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Troy Township Chairman Leonard Barcikoski. Troy Township Trustees Leonard Barcikoski, Donn Breckenridge, Sharon Simms and Fiscal Officer Jane Grudowski were present. The Parkman Trustees Henry Duchscherer, Lance Portman, Joyce Peters and Fiscal Officer Denise Villars were present. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Troy Township Chairman Leonard Barcikoski.*

Troy Township Trustee Leonard Barcikoski started off the meeting by stating there will be no questions or comments taken from the public during this meeting.

Troy Township Trustee Leonard Barcikoski stated this meeting was requested by Parkman Township so Trustee Barcikoski handed over the floor to Parkman Chairman Joyce Peters.

Parkman Township Joyce Peters stood up and stated why they have called the meeting with Troy Township.

Parkman Township Trustee Joyce Peters said they asked to meet tonight in order to seek a collaboration with Troy Township. Parkman Township Fire Department has staffing problems which we believe are at a critical state. Over the past 16 months they have investigated ways to improve this situation without much success. We come to our neighbor to partner together for a resolution.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said they understand that Troy residents have some concerns about this possible alliance. Trustee Peters knows that some Parkman residents are worried about this as well. Parkman Trustee Peters said she has had much to learn about Fire Departments and EMS services over the past year. She has found in many, many conversations that lots of people don't really understand how all the Fire Department stuff works either. Trustee Peters thought it was important to share as much information as possible in order to find a way for people to work together on solutions to any problem. Trustee Peters gave a short explanation about some of the confusing parts of staffing a fire department. Trustee Peters said she is not an expert and hoped her descriptions are hopefully simple enough to understand.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said first very simple, volunteers are those who respond from home or work to fight a fire, handle an accident scene, or help a person in a medical crisis. Most departments pay volunteers a stipend which is usually a minimal amount of money per call. "Staffing" is where a department involves scheduling Firefighters, EMT's to work a certain number of paid hours on duty at the fire station. They respond to all calls on their shift. Staffing a Fire Department does not mean that the Firefighters are full time employees. They are limited to a certain number of hours in a year, they are not entitled to benefits which would be very difficult for most small Fire Departments to pay for. Staffing

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a fire department can range from 8 hours a day up to 24 hours a day. Ideally, there are two Firefighters assigned at a time in order to provide full coverage. Two Firefighter/EMT's are required by the state to transport any victim in an ambulance. One firefighter cannot by law transport a patient. In that case, the Fire Department must call for mutual aid to Fire Department which has 2 available staff to transport. One Firefighter can get a call started and respond to non-transport calls. Mutual aid basically means "on call" and is a method by which fire departments assure that every township has availability to emergency services. If a department is unstaffed or understaffed, other fire departments are "on call" to respond to those medical or accident emergencies. Most fire situations are always mutual aid since 2 firefighters cannot fight a fire alone. Township fire departments are funded only by levies passed by the voters. Some, if not most fire departments also bill for their services as a revenue source. Hard billing is charging the patient and their insurance for the full cost of services. Soft billing is accepting as payment only what residents insurance will pay. Parkman Township already has an agreement to soft bill each other's residents. The additional stream of revenue is very important to funding.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said Parkman began staffing in 2015 with an 8-hour schedule. It was eventually increased to 12 hours, then 15, and finally to 24. In the beginning, the number of firefighters signing up for shifts was good. We also had a large number of volunteers. The department was able to respond to calls. For approximately the last 5 or 6 years, our number of firefighters has sharply declined. We currently have 5 firefighters who regularly schedule hours. We are down to 2 volunteers who are also on the staffing schedule and can respond to emergencies as volunteers.

Parkman Trustee Peters said staffing is considered 2 firefighters for a 24 hour shift. Each month has a total number of hours available to staff. If you take the total number of hours worked and divide by the total hours available, you get the percentage of hours that the station is covered. We have tracked the number of hours staffed at the station for the last 16 months. It has decreased from an average of 53% from Dec 2021 through May 2022 down to the current average of 30% from June of 2022 through Feb 2023. March has a higher percentage of 57% due to a new employee who has been able to take a lot of shifts. Many of the hours worked consist of shifts that are only covered by one firefighter which is not ideal. Previous boards placed 3 fire levies on the ballot ranging from 4.0 to 5.0 mils from 2020 through 2021. The purpose of those levies was to fund full staffing 24/7 and improve living quarters for those staffers. All failed. The general sentiment was that those levies were more than the residents could afford and there was not a good understanding on the need. This board has continually

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encouraged the department to increase recruiting efforts. To help achieve that goal and encourage potential hires to apply, we passed a resolution approving a permanent plan of 24/7 staffing as opposed with surrounding communities. These measures have not resulted in an influx of applications. We have hired one new applicant in the last year while firefighters have left for permanent positions.

Trustee Joyce Peters stated she attended the Ohio Township Association Winter Conference. She went to every session that involved Fire Departments and Emergency Services. A session held by the State Fire Marshall Kevin Reardon made it clear that of the 1180 fire departments in the State of Ohio, we only need about half of those. His task force on volunteer fire service issues report makes it clear that the future is evident. Fire departments are duplicating services, manpower and equipment at a high cost to the taxpayer. He urges fire departments across the state to look at the new ways to share services and equipment, collaborate to offer better, more efficient departments and share the small pool of firefighters that are available.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters stated because trustees are not allowed to meet together with others outside of a public meeting. It has been her responsibility as fire liaison to investigate avenues to resolve their staffing problems. She has met with as many experts and knowledgeable people as she can find. She has met with other fire departments to discuss contracting ambulance service and fire service. Most fire districts available are too expensive and the forming of a fire district is very complicated. She has met with a private ambulance service which covers Geauga County. She stated they can longer wait to see if things get better. The options to change the situation are very limited. Hours staffed at sometimes is 15% for a month is unacceptable.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters stated while staffing is definitely a state and national issue, Parkman is in a dire situation. She believes that the residents are now in danger of not having service available in an emergency. She can see that Troy has excellent staffing percentages. Troy is providing its residents with full service. Parkman is proposing that Parkman contract with Troy to provide fire and ambulance services for Parkman Township.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters understands this is no free ride. Parkman will pay their faire share. Parkman residents already pay fire levy taxes. Those taxes collected must be spent supporting fire services for the community, whether they stay in Parkman or pay someone else to provide the services.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said she has met with Geauga County Prosecutor and the Geauga County Auditor to see what and how we are permitted

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to contract these services. They say contracting with another public entity is an acceptable and preferred method of providing fire service to Parkman Township.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters mentioned many years ago Troy Township Trustee Leonard Barcikowski was a Parkman firefighter when Troy did not have a fire department. The leaders of Parkman fire at the time worked hand in hand with Troy to build up their own fire department. That was a beautiful example of neighboring communities working together to help each other.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said they are asking today if Troy Township can make a commitment to sit down with Parkman Trustees and begin negotiating a contract for supplying these services to Parkman Township?

Troy Township Trustee Sharon Simms asked Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters that when they sat down in the past to discuss this situation that this was a temporary 30 to 90-day plan and Parkman would shut down their fire department completely during this time. Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said they are not thinking 30 to 90 days. They are thinking that staffing is not going to come back in that short of time. They are thinking at least a year agreement.

Troy Township Sharon Simms said she understands the position they are in, but It has taken Troy Township a long time to get our staffing to where it is today and the residents have stood up and approved an additional levy to assure we have the coverage they want. Trustee Simms is concerned there would not be enough staff to cover both Townships. Troy Township Trustee Simms said even with Parkman giving us their tax money we still would have to have the personnel to cover both Townships. Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters asked Troy Township Trustee Simms so you're not even willing to consider a contract? Trustee Simms said she did not say that. Trustee Simms is just concerned about actually having enough personnel to cover both Townships. Trustee Simms said she also understands it sounds like it would be using only our equipment? Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said that would all be part of the details negotiating an agreement.

Troy Township Trustee Barcikowski stated even though our staffing is usually completely covered lately that there is still no guarantee to have the personnel to cover both Townships. Trustee Barcikowski feels Troy is in a good position to sit down and discuss an agreement at this time.

Troy Township Trustee Breckenridge said he is willing to sit down and hear what they have to say.

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Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters said they will be consulting with legal and experts in this field. Peters would like to meet with Dan Ellenberger who is an expert on this subject.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters asked at this time they are just asking if Troy is willing to sit down and consider having a collaboration of the fire departments?

Troy Township Barcikoski said they are committing to at least try at this time.

Trustees Joyce Peters and Sharon Simms will set a date for the next meeting.

Parkman Trustee Joyce Peters passed our surveys to the Parkman residents. (The survey is attached to these minutes.)

Troy Township Trustee Barcikoski motioned to adjourn the meeting. Troy Township Trustee Breckenridge seconded. All in favor.

*Meeting adjourned 6:50 pm*

***Respectfully submitted,***

***Jane Grudowski***

***Fiscal Officer***