

## **2014 Fire and Ambulance (EMS) Levy**

### **Levy Facts:**

#### **First Fire levy in 34 years:**

*In 1982 Goshen Township voters passed a fire levy, this was the last time a fire levy has passed. At the time fire protection in Goshen was provided by the private Goshen Community Fire Company. The private fire company began hiring part-time and then full-time staff starting with a full-time chief and then paid firefighters to cover calls during the day when most volunteers were at work. 3 new fire engines were purchased with these levy funds between 1982 and 1994 (11 years).*

#### **First Ambulance levy in 28 Years:**

*In 1986 Goshen Township voters passed an Ambulance Levy (EMS) to fund the private Goshen Life Squad. The life squad started in the early 1970's as an all volunteer force, by the 1980's they added part-time paid staff and into the 90's additional full-time paramedics were hired to cover the increase in calls and lack of volunteers. Our EMS budget is still supported by the 1986 levy and EMS billing money, Goshen bills for EMS transports but Goshen residents do not have to pay, we bill insurance only.*

#### **What will the levy cost:**

*Average homeowner will pay about \$12 a month on the township's average home which is one with an appraised value of \$150,000. If you appraised value is lower then you will pay less.*

*5-Year Levy – If you don't like/trust how we have spent the money in 5-years you will have the opportunity to vote again in 4 years*

#### **What will the levy be used for?**

##### **50% will go towards personnel costs:**

*Our goal is to get our on-shift staffing back to 2003 levels (7 per shift). When fire and EMS were merged in 1998 there were 6 full-time EMS employees and 4 full-time fire employees (10 full-time total). When the merger occurred there were two chief officers who worked day shift and 5 personnel on duty per shift (Combination of full-time and part-time). Staffing was increased in 2003 to 7 personnel per shift giving Goshen a total of 13 full-time staff.*

*Staffing 7 personnel per shift allowed Goshen Township to always have 2 ambulance crews and one fire crew. Today due to staffing cuts we have 9 full-time staff (less than there was 20+ years ago) and we can only guarantee one ambulance and one fire crew each day.*

*When the levy passes we will hire back at least two full-time firefighter/paramedics, shift staffing will be increased back to 2003 levels of 7 per shift. However Goshen still will not have as many full-time employees as we did at our peak in the 2000's of 13 full-time personnel. In the future, part-time and volunteers will continue to be used and increased as needed to supplement staffing and our budget.*

**50% for Equipment/Repairs/Maintenance:**

*Equipment and new ambulances etc. Over the past 20+ years we have all seen an increase in what things cost. Fire trucks, ambulances and equipment are no different.*

*In the 1980's Goshen purchased 3 new fire trucks and a fourth in 1994 (14 years). From 1994 -2007 (13-years) we purchased none. In 2007 a new fire engine was purchased. Three of the current fire trucks are overdue for replacement based upon national fire standards (NFPA 1901) and insurance standards. Both recommend fire trucks to be retired after 20 years (less depending on wear and tear).*

*When the new levy passes there will NOT be enough money to replace 3 fire trucks. Instead the fire chief has developed a plan to replace two trucks with one. By purchasing a combination truck we can both save money on the initial purchase and over the life of the 1 truck as opposed to 2 we will save annually in maintenance, fuel, insurance etc.*

*Other pieces of equipment that need to be replaced are Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) which are the air cylinders firefighters wear inside a structure. By 2017 Goshen will have to start replacing these items as a cost of over \$6,000 per SCBA. Funding will also pay for replacement hose, nozzles, rescue tools and firefighting turn out gear.*

## **What has happened in the past 30 years:**

*Population of Goshen has gone up*

*911 Calls have gone up (2,700 in 2013)*

*Staffing down (From 7 per shift to 5 and from 13 full-time to 9)*

*Budget has gone down. Goshen's Fire and Ambulance budget topped out at 2.1 million dollars, since then it has been cut back to around 1.6 million in 2014)*

## **Did you know?**

*Goshen is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in population in Clermont County. Larger than the City of Loveland, and larger than the City of Milford*

*When the last fire and/or Ambulance levy passed in Goshen Township neighborhoods like Woodland Streams, Cameron Crossing, Timber Ridge, O'Bannon Creek, O'Bannon Meadows, Telford Farms, Heritage Woods and Fairways at O'Bannon Creek didn't exist. All of these homes have been built since the last levy increasing our coverage area and calls for service.*

*Goshen is the 4<sup>th</sup> busiest in call volume (Fire and ambulance calls)*

*This shows there is a direct relationship between population and call volume, as we are ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in both categories however when we talk about what that cost?*

*Goshen is 12<sup>th</sup> in spending for fire and ambulance services in Clermont County.*

*Goshen pays around \$109 per resident for fire and EMS services, while the county wide average is over \$250 per resident and in one rural township residents are paying more than \$1,000 per resident for the same level of service.*

## **What has already been done to cut cost's?**

*Over the past five years several initiatives things have been done to reduce costs.*

*In 2009 Goshen was paying more than \$20,000 a year to keep its fleet of ambulances on the road. The ambulances were worn, had high mileage and were constantly breaking down, sometimes even while on emergency calls. A new ambulance was bid in late 2009 with the cost coming in at more than \$200,000. Rather than purchase this ambulance, a used ambulance was purchased for \$22,000 from the Village of Greenhills. Although the ambulance we bought was a 10 years old, it only had 23,000 miles on it and is still in service in Goshen today. This purchase alone saved tax payers more than \$200,000.*

*By 2011 another ambulance was bleeding the township in repairs and was overdue for replacement so a new demo ambulance was purchased for \$119,000, \$71,000 less than a similar new not demo vehicle, again saving tax payer money. Three years later, this ambulance is still in service as Goshen's primary ambulance and is about to turn 100,000 miles in just three years.*

*The purchase of the new (demo) ambulance and the used ambulance has not only saved money in the cost to purchase but also in maintenance. The ambulance maintenance fund has been reduced \$12,000 annually.*

*A 1974 85' ladder truck was purchased used in the late 1990's, already more than 20 years old when purchased although rarely used Goshen had to incur the cost of maintenance, testing, training on this vehicle and if it was ever to be replaced the cost could be more than 1,000,000. In 2010 after consulting with insurance industry and fire derive experts the decision was made to sell and NOT replace Goshen's ladder truck This decision saves Goshen thousands of dollars in annual cost's to operate. Instead, automatic mutual aid agreements were made with Loveland, Miami and Stonelick Townships, all of whom own ladder trucks to respond to Goshen when a fire requires a ladder truck.*

*A rescue truck no longer used except when another piece of equipment was out of service was sold and not replaced saving cost of maintenance,, fuel and insurance.*

*In 2009 Goshen operated 7 fire trucks; 4 engines (Pumpers) 1 ladder truck, 1 water tender and 1 rescue. The ISO rating for our community (Insurance rating that is used to decide how much you pay for property*

*insurance) only requires three engines trucks. Therefore, in addition to selling and not replacing the ladder truck and reducing one of the four engines, a 1982 model (30 years old) was sold saving again cost to maintain, test, and insure.*

*In 2009 Goshen was using an antiquated alpha numeric paging system. These pagers were worn by fire and EMS personnel on and off duty to notify them of emergencies as well as send out notifications about training, open shift etc. Goshen was paying \$400 a month for alpha pagers (\$4,800 a year). These alpha pagers were replaced with an on-line computer based application for \$600 a year, saving \$3,800 annually.*

*The fire house built in the early 1980's was state of the art. Over the next 30 years the building and its systems became worn and in need of repair. Recently Goshen replaced all the interior lighting with high efficiency fixtures. This upgrade cut our monthly electric bill by \$1,000 a month or \$12,000 a year.*

*Secured more than \$300,000 in grants to fund the purchase or replacement of:*

- SCBA's*
- Firefighter turn out gear*
- Air Compressor for refilling SCBA*
- Cardiac Monitor/Defibrillators*
- Vehicle Exhaust System*
- Paramedic Training*
- Smoke Detectors for residents*

*Avoided lay-offs of employees in 2011 and 2012 due to the unexpected retirement of two Assistant Chiefs, one EMS Lieutenant and one firefighter/paramedic. All four full-time employees have not been replaced. Instead, part time firefighter/paramedics were used to cover shifts saving Goshen taxpayers over \$100,000 a year*

*Firefighter's union agreed to no pay increases in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, and 2014.*

*Firefighters union agreed to reduce staffing from 7 to 5 per shift for 2013 and 2014 saving taxpayers \$242,000 a year; or \$484,000 in the past two years.*

*Placed an ATV (gator) in service for brush fires or EMS calls that are in remote areas FREE. 100% of the cost of this vehicle was paid for by donations (\$25,000)*

*Jeep Cherokee seized by our police from a drug dealer was converted into an Advanced Life Support Vehicle saving tax payers \$44,000 over the cost of buying and equipment a new vehicle.*

**To summarize:**

*Today we operate with less full-time staff 9 down from 13*

*Today we have more volunteers and plan to continue this trend*

*More reliance on part-time personnel for shift coverage (cheaper)*

*Purchased Used and demo Ambulances to save initial cost and cost of repairs*

*Operate less fire apparatus and plan to have even less after the levy passes as we will combine an engine and tender in to a combination truck engine-tender.*

*Reduced utility bills, cell phone bills, paging bills, cost of vehicle and building maintenance.*

*But that all means we have less personnel to respond to an emergency, rely more on mutual aid, which as a result takes longer for help to arrive at an emergency.*

**While all these cuts were made we:**

*Increased the cross training of our personal*

*Increased the number of employees certified as fire safety inspectors*

*Increased the number of state certified instructors on staff*

*Joined into group purchasing with neighboring communities for annual pump testing and ladder testing*

*Reduced what homeowners pay for property insurance by lowering the ISO rating for Goshen from a 6 to a 4.*

*Started annual physical assessment for all firefighters and instituted an on duty physical fitness program.*

*Annual fire hydrant maintenance and testing program*

*Annual fire safety inspection for all Goshen Schools, business, churches etc*

*Increased partnerships with Goshen Local Schools for fire safety programs in the school*

*Handled an increase in calls with fewer employees.*