

**READING TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SPECIAL MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2018**

Gary Bullock, President of the Hampton Fire Company, welcomed those in attendance and opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance.

Those in attendance included Victor Neubaum, Solicitor, Malone & Neubaum; Emmert Hartzell Jr., Nancy and Shawn Sheely, Jennifer Miller, Barbara Cookerly, Nicholas Shaffer, Randy and Mychelle Wolf, Josh Merani, Beth Trimmer, Jason Trimmer, Alan Trimmer, David Gonzalez, Jordan Cantele, Cody Mummert, Jason Me, Cory Lease, Robert Anderson, Anthony Flickinger, Mr. & Mrs. Harold Ruppert, Bill and Tami Ingler, Zackary Taylor, Bob Miller, Pauline Brodbeck, Greg Heefner, Chuck Williams, Dana Shuman, Kyisten Shuman, Alexis Geamart, Lorraine Ensor, Sandy Starner, Diane Megonnell, Gene Harman, Gene Little, Christine Sowers, Hope Wolf, Troy Reeve, Michael Cookerly, Tony Phillips, Shirley Heagey, Rodney Heagey, William Starner, Brian Starner, Jay Livingston, Curt Friedline, Josh Friedline, Brittany Zeigler, Tina Smith, Nancy Zumbum, Heather Viands, P.J. Trimmer, Susie Ann Schrum, Nicole Jacoby, Brianna & Cody Fletcher, Cheryl Byers, Jeff Megonnell, Jason Phillips, Jess Shaffer and Patrick Taylor II.

Mr. Gary Bullock stated he came to this area from Baltimore with an EMT degree. He has been in this area since 1974. He stated the Fire Company needs funding, it does not happen for free. Hampton Fire Company is looking for a new way to fund the fire company and that is why they are here at this meeting.

Mr. Bullock turned the meeting over to Jason Phillips, Vice President who proceeded with the introductions as follows: Anthony Phillips, Chairman of the Merger Committee, Victor Neubaum, Township Solicitor, Gary Sauble Supervisor, Kevin Holtzinger, Chairman of the Board, Marcia Weaver Vice Chairperson, Kimberly Beard Township Secretary/Treasurer, and Bill Ceravola, Officer in Charge of Reading Township.

Mr. Phillips stated he would like to give Hamptons perspective on the merger. He stated they have been working on the merger for two years. Mr. Phillips would like to establish funding for the Hampton Fire Company moving forward. He also stated, at the October 15th Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board affirmed holding the 2018 funding until the merger discussion is closed. He is also requesting for the Board to leave the territory as it is at this time and not transfer their territory to Lake Meade and East Berlin Fire Company. Mr. Phillips also stated the membership voted on September 4th to merge with New Oxford Hook and Ladder and that is how the meeting is going to start and also end. Mr. Phillips then turned the meeting over to Chairman Holtzinger.

The Special meeting of the Reading Township Board of Supervisors was held at the Hampton Fire Company and called to order at 7:15 pm by Kevin Holtzinger, Chairman. Marcia Weaver, Vice-Chairperson and Gary Sauble, Supervisor were present with Chairman Holtzinger presiding over the meeting. Chairman Holtzinger announced the meeting will be recorded. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and also the volunteers.

Chairman Holtzinger announced a piece of business that was missed on October 15th Board of Supervisors meeting pertaining to the Hampton Roundabout Maintenance Agreement, Resolution 2018-23. Ms. Weaver made a motion to approve Resolution 2018-23, second by Mr. Sauble, motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Holtzinger stated the order of business is to respond to the letter that was written by the Board of Supervisors and their proposal that was previously sent. Chairman Holtzinger stated the Board has an alternative proposal and wants to keep the tax payers dollars within the Township. The Board does not want to implement a fire tax and stated Reading Township has one of the lowest municipal taxes in the county. The proposal of the Township is to support the Hampton Fire Company on its own, independent of any merger agreement. The Supervisors propose the Hampton Fire Company deed the property to the Township to own and maintain. The Township in turn would pay the water, sewer and property insurance, maintain the grounds, assist in establishing funding and timelines for equipment replacement and invest in building improvements, ball-field upgrades and future recreation area. Chairman Holtzinger proceeded to read the following from the letter dated on October 9, 2018:

“What you need to know is that we attempted to schedule another meeting with the membership of the Hampton Fire Company to discuss this proposal; however for reasons unknown, the officers of the Hampton Fire Company blocked us from meeting with them and the entire membership. We can only speculate that it now appears that the Hampton Fire Company plans to join with United Hook & Ladder who will hold their assets as “hostage” while they refuse service to the taxpayers who have supported them so well over the years. We will welcome the Hampton Fire Company membership back to the table for discussion; however, we will not be using your tax dollars to support the domination of United Hook & Ladder.”

Chairman Holtzinger opened the floor for public comment. Below are the main concerns and questions:

Christine Sowers stated she is a resident of Reading Township and questioned the Board as to why she did not receive a letter. Ms. Sowers stated she pays taxes in the Township and the letter should have gone to all residents.

Board-Ms. Weaver replied the letter was sent to the membership of Hampton Fire Company, it was posted on the website, sent to Reading Township Municipal Authority, newspapers, township door and sent to area businesses.

Emmert Hartzell stated his thoughts on the comment of Hampton Fire Company blocking a future meeting; the Board was more than welcome to attend their monthly regular meetings.

Jake Phillips-The membership denied any more special meetings, which is being held at this time anyway.

PJ Trimmer stated in July at their officers meeting which the Board attended, Chairman Holtzinger stated their will be no more special meetings and that there have already been 14 of them. That statement is in the minutes from that meeting.

Chairman Holtzinger stated Hampton Fire Company is running out of time to make a decision according to the letter that was sent.

Zack Taylor stated Hampton voted to merge with New Oxford and he thinks the Board should support that decision.

Chairman Holtzinger asked if United Hook & Ladder want Hampton without any funding or territory.

Jason Phillips stated he is authorized to make that answer and it is yes.

Randy Wolf, Member and taxpayer stated that concerning the proposal that was given to the township, where Hampton offered the building to Reading Township, donate the grounds for a rec park for the community, United Hook & Ladder offered to remodel their engine room and also offered to refurb the fire truck.

Chairman Holtzinger replied the way they were going to accomplish that was to implement a quarter mil fire tax and make the township give them \$65,000.00 a year for ten years.

Randy Wolf stated the township is already paying that. Part of the taxes also go to Lake Meade and East Berlin. Mr. Wolf can guarantee United will not come back for more funding in 10 years.

Chairman Holtzinger is concerned once United Hook & Ladder are brought into the Township, they will have no bargaining power, and they will be in charge. He also stated there are members of Company 32 that are willing to help with fundraisers and enjoy doing them. They will also man a truck at Hampton Fire Station.

Alexis Gearhart questioned the Board as to the 2018 donation to Hampton Fire Company. The money was already promised to them and now the Board is holding it "ransom". She stated the donation for 2018 should stay at Hampton to pay the bills they currently have.

Ms. Weaver replied the second class township code states the only thing the Township is required to provide is workers compensation.

Nancy Sheeley, resident of Reading Township- stated if the supervisors are speaking on behalf of the residents then why the residents not received a letter. Why were they not given an option on where they would like to merge with? Ms. Sheeley stated there is a lack of communication between the Township and residents. Ms. Sheeley would like a newsletter sent out periodically.

Jason Phillips read the proposal from United Hook & Ladder. See attached. Mr. Phillips stated the fire tax that would be implemented would also go to East Berlin and Lake Meade.

Chairman Holtzinger stated that money would go to United Hook and Ladder not East Berlin and Lake Meade and it is not listed on the proposal so Mr. Phillips should not mislead the residents.

PJ Trimmer stated it would in fact go to any company that services the township.

Chairman Holtzinger stated it would cost the tax payers \$130,000 because if Reading Townships gives United \$65,000 they have to be fair and also give same amount to Company 32.

Christine Sowers stated she thinks every tax payer should pay \$25.00 a year as a donation.

Jason Phillips stated Company 32 did not offer anything to Hampton, United Hook and Ladder had a solid plan for the future.

Greg Heefner stated Hampton was involved with the merger with Company 32 until November when they decided to go with United. Company 32 was planning to upgrade the Hampton Fire Station and hold major fund raisers at that building. Hampton was supposed to be the main building. Mr. Phillips stated that was a true statement.

Randy Wolf asked the Board why there could not be a referendum on the ballot to ask the citizens about charging a fire tax.

Attorney Neubaum stated it must be taken as a private and Township mailing to all homes and residents. There is not authority in the law anymore to place non-binding advisory referendums on a public ballot on Election Day.

Bob Miller stated in the 1990's he held the tax collector position. He stated a couple of years ago he went back to his records to see how many properties and owners were in Reading Township, Hampton, Lake Meade and East Berlin first due. At that time the research showed Hampton only had fewer than 40% so the Board of Officers decided at the time it was not beneficial to implement a fire tax.

Chairman Holtzinger stated at the third meeting the Board had with United Hook & Ladder they want \$65,000 and 50% of the territory, Chairman Holtzinger questioned United, what if they give a quarter of the territory instead of half. United stated, that is fine but they still want their \$65,000. He stated at that time the Board knew United would be in control. Chairman Holtzinger also stated East Berlin and Lake Meade have proven they have a solid track record and financially responsible, updated some equipment, made some improvements and have not come to the Township asking for more money on a regular basis.

Mr. Phillips stated once the merger goes through with United and there is no funding from Reading Township, they will not respond to any calls in the township. He stated they do not work for free.

Greg Heefner questioned Mr. Phillips that if Reading Township does not let Hampton keep their territory and provide funding once the merger is complete, does that mean Hampton will not respond even as mutual aid?

Tony Phillips stated they cannot run for free.

Bob Anderson also questioned Mr. Phillips as to if there is a fire in Reading Township, will United Hook and Ladder respond?

Mr. Phillips stated if they have the boxcards yes they will.

Mr. Phillips asked the Board to negotiate with United Hook & Ladder.

Chairman Holtzinger stated the Board will discuss if they are willing to negotiate again.

On a motion by Ms. Weaver and seconded by Mr. Sauble the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Beard
Secretary/Treasurer