



Frankton Volunteer Fire Dept.

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INFO SHEET FOR UPCOMING FVFD MERGER WITH LAFAYETTE TOWNSHIP

This info sheet was developed to help the members of Frankton Volunteer Fire Department answer questions being raised by our friends and neighbors in response to rumors which have surfaced over the last few weeks. For answers to questions not covered in this sheet, please contact Chief Brandon Leisure or Board of Directors President Tony Crum (contact info at end of sheet). PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO COPY AND DISTRIBUTE THIS INFO SHEET IN ITS ENTIRETY TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES.

Is Frankton Fire Department closing its doors?

Frankton Volunteer Fire Department is most definitely not closing our doors! We are currently in the process of merging with Lafayette Township in order to attain a more stable financial footing for the department and to provide better emergency services and fire protection for our coverage areas.

Why won't you serve Frankton any more?

We had every intention of continuing to cover the Town of Frankton as one of our three covered entities. Unfortunately, the town has chosen to go in a different direction. We will continue to provide coverage to the Town of Frankton through the end of our contract. After that point, we will continue to provide coverage to Lafayette Township and the portion of Jackson Township not covered by the Lapel Fire Department.

What happens to me? Who will provide my fire service?

For now, our coverage area and our commitment to the protection of our neighbors remain unchanged. The Town of Frankton has attempted to terminate our contract as of September 10, 2014, and negotiations are ongoing as related to the period from September 10 to December 31. We are currently unaware of any contracts in place for fire coverage at this time, but we do know that as of Friday, March 21, the town had not approached Lafayette Township about the possibility of a new contract. After our contract ends, we will continue to respond to the town if requested for mutual aid, just as we currently respond for mutual aid with any of the surrounding fire departments.

What caused this? What happened?

In short, the fire department is in need of more money in order to continue to operate, and Lafayette Township was the only one of our three covered entities who was willing and able to offer concrete ideas for ongoing funding.

FVFD has operated at a loss for the last several years, managing to scrape by through use of an operating loan and funding some purchases through grant money when available. Each year, when negotiating contracts with our covered entities, we have explained the financial picture and asked for an increase. The town's most recent response to this request was that we should fundraise more, but that's hard to do in a period of recession, with high unemployment and many people already struggling to make ends meet as well as other organizations in town who already depend on fundraising dollars. During the last five years, the price of diesel has doubled, from an average of \$2.02/gallon in March of 2009 to \$4/gallon in March 2014. Also, our apparatus has continued to age, resulting in substantial increases in the amount we are spending on maintenance and repairs.

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In 2014, we are budgeted to receive \$24,000 (25.5% of our funding) from the Town of Frankton (plus a portion of our dispatch fees), \$55,000 (58.5%) from Lafayette Township (plus a portion of our dispatch fees and money earmarked for equipment which is put into a cumulative fund), and \$15,000 (16%) from Jackson Township. Over the last 10 years, the town's contribution has increased by 9%, while Jackson Township has increased by 16% and Lafayette Township has increased by 123%.

To put those numbers in context: In 2013, we made 33.5% of our in-coverage-area runs within the Town of Frankton, 52.6% to Lafayette Township and 13.9% to Jackson Township.

Over the last 18 months, FVFD has worked hard to cut our expenses to the bare minimum. The Board of Directors has evaluated every purchase and every repair, cutting expenses anywhere we could do so without sacrificing safety. But no matter how much we cut, we are still coming up short, and our lean-and-mean budget for 2014 was still going to be more than our expected income from the Town and Townships. Unwilling to continue to run in the red, we started to pursue alternative solutions.

When did all this come about? (a brief history of events)

Last year, FVFD met with the Town of Frankton and both Jackson and Lafayette Townships to discuss FVFD's financial situation while we were preparing the 2014 contracts. We sent the town a letter on August 12, 2013, requesting a meeting to discuss ways to raise revenue, and then met with them in October to discuss. We presented them with a billing resolution, as well as several options for improving the department's financial picture: (a) the town could take over the fire department, (b) the town could join the Lafayette-Richland Fire Territory, (c) the town could budget for an increase for the fire department, or (d) the town could add a small amount to all water bills and earmark that money for the fire department. The town stated that they couldn't provide more money and suggested that FVFD do more fundraising.

In the meantime, since we had made similar suggestions to all three entities, Steve Anderson, Lafayette Township Trustee, expressed an interest in taking over the department, and we began to work towards a merger.

Shortly after first of this year, FVFD Board Chairman Tony Crum met with Town Council President Jeff Borum to have a face-to-face meeting to explain that we had made the decision to merge with Lafayette Township. It was explained that it would be up to the Town to contract with Lafayette Township going forward. At the next town board meeting, it was expressed to the town council that we would not be re-signing our contract, and that any new contracts would need to be negotiated with Lafayette Township. The town council requested that we put that in writing, so a letter was presented to them at the subsequent council meeting simply stating that we would not be re-signing our contract for fire protection for the Town of Frankton. At that time, we had every hope that the Town of Frankton would continue to contract with Lafayette Township under the new structure.

On March 15, 2014, we received a registered letter from the Town of Frankton informing us that, as of September 10, 2014, they are terminating FVFD's contract with the town for fire protection. As our current contract runs through December 31, negotiations are still underway over the period between September 10 and December 31.

For now, it's business-as-usual at FVFD. We're still proud to serve our community and we will continue to do so to the best of our abilities until the end of our contract period!

Who can I talk to if I want more information?

FRANKTON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
phone 765-754-8274

FIRE CHIEF BRANDON LEISURE
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CHAIRMAN TONY CRUM
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