



VICTOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

May 2017

Open Letter from Victor Fire Chief Sean McAdoo:

The ranks of volunteer fire fighters across the nation are dwindling – since 1986 the number of volunteers has dropped by 11 percent. The costs of equipping firefighters have risen 400 percent over the same time period. The Town of Victor has been experiencing this first hand, first in Fishers, and now in the Victor Fire District.

The Town of Victor accepted an emergency services study conducted by CGR that recommended that Village and Town residents would be best served by a regional fire service, creating a single commission responsible to all residents equally, composed of the current volunteer fire departments and supported by paid firefighting staff.

Earlier this year, an advisory committee consisting of subject matter experts in current leadership positions with Victor-Farmington Ambulance, Victor Fire Department, Fishers Fire Department, Ontario County Sheriff, New York State Police, and Mercy Flight Central, endorsed certain recommendations of the CGR study, including the dissolution of Fishers and Victor FP and the Town and Village creating a single Joint Fire District, composed of Fishers Volunteer Fire Association and Victor Fire Department, Inc.

The members of Victor Fire Department, Inc. are proud to carry on the 113 year tradition of volunteer firefighting in this community. We have 49 active volunteers, 21 of which are interior firefighters, and routinely staff two fire apparatus for our 500+ calls a year. In the last four years we have welcomed 6-10 volunteers each year and fully expect to continue in this tradition over the next four years.

The world is rapidly changing. Of our 21 interior firefighters, only 3 are under the age of 45. These 3 fire fighters are in the age group of what we feel represents the prime age for firefighting. It appears we will be facing a significant shortage as our older members age out and we can only replace a small percent of them. Like Fishers 10 years ago, our district is changing to higher-end homes, with two-income families that do not have the opportunity to volunteer. Compounding this issue is the fact that the initial training for new volunteers exceeds 125 hours in the first year.

For the last five years, Fishers and Victor have been working to collaborate with shared purchases, matching our gear and equipment, and aligning our response and training so our respective members can work functionally as one unit. For the past two years, we have had a mutual assistance plan that brings Fishers into our district during the daytime, which is our lowest availability, while we go for calls which require more manpower on scene, such as smoke/odor investigations and traffic collisions. This has proven to be an effective system that provides for the essential service of fire protection, and we wish to continue with this plan.

The cost of paid firefighters has caused Fishers to raise their tax rates. Victor Fire Department recognizes that we, too, will need to have the benefit of paid firefighters in our quarters. In the short

term, this is just during the daytime hours for the routine calls. There will be a point, perhaps as soon as two years, when we will need paid firefighters in quarters.

Every resident pays for fire protection – either as a separate tax line (Town) or part of their property taxes (Village). If Victor Fire has to pay for their “own” career staff, the cost will match what Fishers pays. We don’t need to duplicate what Fishers already has; by following the recommendations of the study, we can utilize the crews already on duty and spread the cost to all residents equally. Early projections for this system places the proposed shared tax rate at around \$1.70/1000 – as compared to over \$3.50/1000 if we paid for our “own” staff.

Two strong volunteer fire companies, supported by an adequately staffed paid crew on duty 24/7, and led by strong volunteer chief officers provides the most cost effective method for fire protection. Thanks to the efforts of the CGR study and the advisory committee, we have found the best way to meet that goal.

More specific information can be found on the victorfire.com website under the tab “Our Future.” We ask that you look at this information, ask questions of any of our chiefs, and come to the public hearing scheduled for May 22, 2017, to share with us your thoughts on the direction we should go.