

JOINT MEETING
OF THE HILLTOWN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AND THE FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU
Wednesday, March 6, 1996
7:00PM

pg. 2765

The joint meeting of the Hilltown Township Fire Prevention Bureau and the Board of Supervisors was called to order by Chairman William H. Bennett, Jr. at 7:00PM and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Also present: Kenneth B. Bennington, Vice Chairman, Supervisors
Jack C. Fox, Supervisor
Bruce G. Horrocks, Township Manager
Philip Meyers, Chief, Dublin Fire Co.
Elmer Kreibel, President, Dublin Fire Co.
Bill Devlin, Chief, Hilltown Fire Co.
Larry Woodward, President, Hilltown Fire Co.
Timothy Metzler, Chief, Perkasio Fire Co.
David Worthington, Deputy Chief, Perkasio Fire Co.
Jim Dietrich, Perkasio Fire Co.
Don Wilson, Chief, Sellersville Fire Co.
Joe McDonald, Sellersville Fire Co.
Chuck Stockert, Chief, Silverdale Fire Co.
John Perritt, President, Silverdale Fire Co.
George Ruth, Chief, Souderton Fire Co.
James Gallagher, President, Souderton Fire Co.
Joe Rausch, Chief, Telford Fire Co.
Malcolm Jacobs, President, Telford Fire Co.

Chairman Bennett reminded those present that the primary focus of the Board of Supervisors is the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of this Township. Chairman Bennett advised the former "Fire Panel" was composed of people who were not directly involved in any of the seven fire companies. That Fire Panel was reasonably successful in solving problems, however it was later decided that it would be more prudent to actually have representation from all seven fire companies with meetings monitored by the Township Manager. The Board of Supervisors are present this evening to listen because they realize there are some problems. Chairman Bennett feels the Supervisors and the fire companies must be united and work together towards a common goal.

Because this is a public meeting and it has been advertised that the Board of Supervisors may take action on fire related issues, Mr. Horrocks asked all those present to speak loudly and clearly into the microphone.

Mr. Horrocks introduced representatives of the fire companies, thanking them for their attendance. While addressing all issues this evening, Mr. Horrocks hopes the fire company representatives will speak keeping the best possible fire protection for every resident of Hilltown Township in mind, which was the main purpose for the creation of the Fire Prevention Bureau.

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A. REVIEW OF PROPOSED FIRE PROTECTION AGREEMENT (excluding Fire District Map):

For the benefit of the Supervisors and those who did not attend the November, 1995 Fire Prevention Bureau meeting, Mr. Horrocks wished to review what took place at that meeting. Mr. Horrocks provided a copy of a memo which highlights six different revisions from the former 1993 Fire Protection Agreement (excluding any fire district map).

1. The first item is an incorporation of the Township Solicitor's letter, which under the former Agreement was listed as an "Exhibit." Mr. Horrocks advised those paragraphs, word for word and verbatim, were inserted directly into the section they would apply to.

2. The second item, which has been reworded from the former agreement to the new proposed agreement, is the first paragraph on page two of the proposed agreement. This matter was discussed at the November, 1995 Fire Prevention Bureau meeting. Mr. Horrocks believes there was a consensus of an agreement at that time. The proposed agreement states "The Fire Company agrees to enlist the services of the closest available fire companies, geographically, to insure complete and comprehensive fire protection in the Township." The former agreement states "The Fire Company further agrees to enlist the services of other fire companies to insure the fullest fire protection in the Township."

3. The third item is the second paragraph in Section III, which states that a call within a half mile of any boundary line would become an automatic dual dispatch. This too was discussed at the November, 1995 Fire Prevention Bureau meeting and Mr. Horrocks believes Chief Egly had mentioned it in his written report. Again, Mr. Horrocks believed the Fire Protection Bureau had a consensus of agreement about this matter.

4. The fourth item was brought to the attention of the Fire Prevention Bureau at their November meeting as well. While he did not ask for the Fire Prevention Bureau's approval because they do not address money issues, Mr. Horrocks advised "Compensation for Services, Section V" has been revised to be a generic paragraph in order to make it easier on the administration of the Township. In the former agreements, this paragraph was very specifically written for each fire department with very specific amounts. Mr. Horrocks only comment when it was mentioned at the November meeting was that it would make it easier for the Township administration. The money must be approved and directed for disbursement by the Board of Supervisors regardless of how this paragraph is written. Therefore, in an effort to make this paragraph more generic, Mr. Horrocks simply re-wrote that section so that it still says the

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same thing without stating a specific money amount.

5. The fifth item is found in the second paragraph of Section VI. Mr. Horrocks noted it is beneficial to the Township to have an updated listing of all seven fire companies officers and their home addresses for mailing purposes.

6. The sixth item is changing the term of the agreement from a one year agreement to a two year agreement. Mr. Horrocks advised the purpose of this change is only for ease of administration.

B. COMPANY REVIEW COMMENTS:

Mr. Horrocks advised there will be a three minute time limit for all fire company representatives to speak. The fire companies will speak in alphabetical order.

1. Dublin Fire Company - No comment at this time.

2. Hilltown Fire Company - Chief Bill Devlin stated he had no problem with the proposed agreement and feels it is 100% correct.

3. Perkasie Fire Company - With regard to item #3, Chief Timothy Metzler asked what goal was to be accomplished by requiring dual dispatch to a call located within a half mile of any boundary. Chief Egly felt this question should be addressed when the map is discussed because the Supervisors and two of the new fire chiefs have not yet had the opportunity to review the map.

Other than that question, Mr. Metzler felt the proposed agreement changes were fine.

4. Sellersville Fire Company - Mr. Joe McDonald stated that at this point, Sellersville declines to comment and wishes to reserve their comments until later after he and the Chief discuss some matters.

5. Silverdale Fire Company - Chief Chuck Stockert advised the questions he has will relate mostly to the dual dispatch issue and he also has a question concerning the word "geographically" which was referred to on page two of the proposed contract. From what Mr. Horrocks recalls of the November meeting discussion, he believes that it was determined to be the closest available fire company geographically to the call. The current agreement states only that the fire company will agree to enlist other fire companies. Mr. John Perritt, president, commented that as far as "geographically," it may not be the most direct route to call in one fire company when a company an extra three miles away may actually be closer than geographically going over fields. Another

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comment Mr. Perritt would like to address later is the matter of dual dispatch.

6. Souderton Fire Company - Chief George Ruth commented that item #3 seems to have some vague language that he would like to clarify after seeing the maps. With regard to section #5, Mr. Jim Gallagher, president, would like to see the Supervisors develop a formula so that the fire companies will know approximately what amount of funding they will receive and so that they will be assured that they will not get less money than they did the prior year. Mr. Horrocks will take that issue to the Supervisors, however money will not be discussed this evening. Mr. Horrocks noted that if this proposed language is used, the fire companies will have knowledge of the date of disbursement and the amount of funds at the same time.

7. Telford Fire Company - President Mac Jacobs is concerned that the fire companies will be asked to sign a blank contract with no fund totals supplied. Further, Mr. Jacobs agreed there is definitely vagueness in the language of item #3 concerning dual dispatch and the closest geographic fire company.

It appears to Mr. Horrocks that the wording should be tied into Chief Egly's presentation.

C. SUPERVISOR REVIEW COMMENTS:

1. Supervisor Bennington wished to reserve comment until the map is reviewed.

2. As far as money is concerned, Chairman Bennett believes the Supervisors could go so far as to guarantee the fire companies a year or two ahead of the minimum amount of funding that would be available. In Chairman Bennett's opinion, no fire company's funding should be cut and to his knowledge, no company has received a lesser amount of funding in a succeeding year than they did in the previous year. Possibly, as revenues increase, and with the Fire Tax at the maximum by law, funds from the State could vary a bit, yet Chairman Bennett feels it would be possible for the Supervisors to guarantee the fire companies would get no less money than they did the previous year.

Mr. Gallagher stated that many of the Townships he is familiar with have wording in their contract that does not necessarily address a dollar amount, but rather has wording such as "the Fire Tax, as it applies to the value of property covered." Mr. Gallagher admits that would be unrealistic in Hilltown Township. For instance, even though Souderton Fire Company covers a smaller area, all of that area is commercial, which carries the highest value. Therefore, it would not be fair to Hilltown Fire Company, who is the Township

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fire company, or to any other fire company, if the formula was based on that fact. Mr. Gallagher was agreeable, however, to wording that would stipulate that the funding would not be less than the previous year.

Chairman Bennett and Mr. Horrocks have spoken about the fairness of the distribution and what type of formula might be utilized. Chairman Bennett agreed that it would be virtually impossible to use assessed value which might favor a commercial district. Mr. Gallagher feels the Supervisors are definitely in a difficult position trying to determine a formula because Hilltown Township has such a unique situation with seven different fire departments. Mr. Horrocks advised the Supervisors are well aware of the difficulties of devising a formula for Hilltown Township and its absolute magnitude of complexity. This is something the Supervisors have given consideration to in the past.

Chairman Bennett mentioned the point of the relative wealth of the various fire companies since some departments are in better fiscal shape than others. Further, Chairman Bennett believes some fire companies are perhaps stronger than others with more manpower or more equipment. Chairman Bennett would certainly not want to get into a situation where the Supervisors would attempt to evaluate that.

D. REVIEW OF PROPOSED FIRE DISTRICT MAP:

Mr. George C. Egly, Jr., Police Chief/Director of Public Safety, presented a proposed fire district map. Chief Egly assured those in attendance that this proposed map is not to eliminate any fire department from Hilltown Township, as he was instructed at the beginning of this review process. Chief Egly noted there are not seven fire companies who serve this Township, rather there are eight. One of those fire companies do not receive funding, they provide their services on a voluntary basis. Chief Egly commented Telford Fire Company has not been eliminated from serving Hilltown Township as rumors have it.

Chief Egly explained the circle area came from the Fire Commissioner of the State of Pennsylvania eight years ago. Each fire company is circled within a half mile, one mile, one and a half miles, two miles, etc. until those circles begin to overlap. Then the points in between are found and the shortest distance of routes must be driven. Chief Egly drove the shortest distance from one fire company to a point found on one particular road, and then drove the shortest distance from that point on one particular road to another fire company to determine where the halfway mark comes.

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The change Chief Egly suggested for the Telford/Souderton area was that it become a two company response. When Chief Egly checked Telford and Souderton Fire Companies from County Line Road and Reliance Road it was 2/10ths of a mile. (Chief Egly advised he was corrected by someone who had obviously measured this distance by feet, and corrected his statement to 837 ft.). Chief Egly determined that the closest fire company to be called first was Souderton Fire Company, due to the fact that they are 2/10ths of a mile closer.

Chief Egly advised the Sellersville Fire Company coverage district experienced no proposed change.

Chief Egly stated the Silverdale Fire Company coverage district experienced minimal proposed changes, including a small portion on Callowhill Road at South Perkasio Road. Mr. Perritt noted there are other proposed changes, including a change on Rickert Road down to Blooming Glen Road, across Callowhill Road; and South Perkasio Road. Chief Egly commented Silverdale Fire Company is not near Rickert Road with regard to fire coverage. Mr. Perritt replied he is speaking in terms of changes from the previous map. Chief Egly stated he is not dealing with the previous map, he is merely presenting the map he was asked to draw up, addressing the closest responding fire company. If Mr. Perritt says there are other proposed changes, then Chief Egly will have to agree, however he stated they are very minimal. Chief Egly does not know how Mr. Perritt could determine proposed revisions from the former map because the lines were very indistinct. Mr. Perritt presented a copy of the existing map, and stated both he and Mr. Stockert would disagree that those changes are minimal. With the old map, Chief Egly advised, it was very difficult for Bucks County Radio Room to determine where some calls were going because there are several "white" areas (fields, etc.) that were not covered, only the streets were covered. Mr. Gallagher agreed that the County does dispatch the fire companies, however he believes it is the responsibility of the fire chiefs to provide that information to the County. Chief Egly explained he attempted to respond to the County's request in the way he prepared the map so that there is an actual address of where the different coverage areas end and begin.

Chief Egly advised there was basically no proposed changes to Hilltown Fire Company's area. There were some changes on the lower end of Rt. 152 for Station 61, however a mutual agreement had been made with Station 54. Hilltown Fire Company will be covering a bit more of New Britain Township, and Mr. Devlin advised this was a swap made with New Britain.

The proposed change for Perkasio Fire Company is due to the fact that they can not cross Schwenkmill Road bridge with their fire

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trucks. The bridge has a weight limit of 5 tons. Chief Egly spoke with Mr. Metzler who advised to cover that area, a three mile route down Callowhill Road to Branch Road through Blooming Glen Road to Blue School Road to Schwenkmill Road must be used. It would be a 2.5 mile trip for the Dublin Fire Company.

Another proposed change for Dublin Fire Company was the halfway distance between Dublin and Station 61, which moved the line. Chief Egly spoke with Mr. Meyers and Mr. Kreibel of Dublin Fire Company, who agreed that the line would move, on the condition that the half mile line between the companies, which are so far apart, becomes a dual response. Chief Egly has made this suggestion for liability reasons.

Upon review of the proposed map, Mr. McDonald of Sellersville Fire Company advised his company has lost a good portion of Orchard Road and Diamond Street, and also Hillcrest Road down to Orchard Road.

Supervisor Bennington is confused by the changes being proposed to the map, and requested a list of the proposed revisions. Chief Egly does not have that information available at present, but he will provide it to the Board of Supervisors. Chief Egly explained there is still a great deal more work to do on the map, and stated actual street addresses must be forwarded to the County for coverage area. In November, Mr. Horrocks commented the existing chiefs and presidents each received the map showing the proposed changes, and their old contracts each contained a map showing their service coverage area. Therefore, the fire companies had since last November to review the proposed changes. Supervisor Bennington understands that, and according to Chief Egly, Sellersville and Silverdale's coverage areas experienced little or no proposed changes, however from what he has heard this evening, there are quite a few proposed changes. Mr. Perritt commented that Chief Egly contends that any proposed changes for Silverdale are "minimal" or "insignificant," yet he wished to state for the record that the Silverdale Fire Company feels they are indeed significant changes.

Discussion took place concerning coverage area liability. If Souderton and Telford fire companies can agree to allow the existing coverage areas to remain, Chairman Bennett asked if it would really be necessary to propose any changes to the map for that area. Chief Egly reminded the Board that the area in question is the highest density area in Hilltown Township. Chairman Bennett agreed, and stated Hilltown Township may have as much as 18% to 20% of its total population in that one square mile area. Mr. Gallagher advised that if Hilltown Township lists the Souderton Fire Company as the primary department on our map, Souderton Borough's workman's compensation insurance will increase. Mr. Gallagher explained that workman's compensation is based on a flat

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rate, per 5,000 people that you protect. When changes are made to the map, it affects not only Hilltown Township but every surrounding borough and township as well. If Souderton Fire Company is listed as the primary, which will put them up in the next tax bracket, then Souderton Borough, by Pennsylvania law, must cover the fire fighters for that additional population. If that puts the Souderton Fire Company into another 5,000 person population bracket, Souderton Borough will be required to pay another \$1,400.00. This recently happened due to the population expansion in Franconia Township. As population grows, Mr. Gallagher stated it will affect every fire department as well. Mr. Gallagher stated the Souderton Fire Company received \$6,800.00 from Hilltown Township last year, and noted that 25% of that is workman's compensation cost for the population they cover.

With regard to the old coverage map, Mr. Rausch commented "if its not broken, why fix it?". Mr. Wilson knows Chief Egly put a great deal of effort into revising the coverage map, however he wondered how many fire companies really want the coverage district changed at all.

Mr. Metzler of Perkasio Fire Company stated that when he became fire chief in 1993, there were problems between Souderton and Perkasio about who was responsible for the coverage of the intersection of Rt. 113 and Diamond Street. It was one of Mr. Metzler's goals when he became chief to rectify this situation. Mr. Metzler spoke to Bill Steinrock, the chief of Silverdale Fire Company at the time, who stated he was following the box map. When the Fire Prevention Bureau meetings began, Mr. Metzler asked who was responsible for the coverage of the Rt. 113 and Diamond Street intersection. When Mr. Stockert became fire chief of Silverdale, Mr. Metzler believes it was rectified that Perkasio was the primary rescue company with Souderton being second for that intersection. For several Fire Prevention meetings, all the fire chiefs have argued about territories. Last year, all seven fire companies agreed to have Chief Egly, as the Public Safety Director, review the coverage map, full knowing that any company may lose or gain coverage territory. Now that Chief Egly has presented proposed changes to coverage areas, each fire company is unhappy with the results. Mr. Metzler stated he will be losing territory that he was unaware of, however he understands that if it is best for Hilltown Township, so be it. Mr. Metzler advised if this is what the Township requires, that is what the Township deserves. He realizes that losing coverage territory can create morale problems and financial difficulties, but feels Chief Egly did what was asked of him, yet there is now controversy and misconceptions. Mr. Metzler is baffled by the response from the fire companies since each of them knew there was a possibility they could lose or gain coverage territory. Mr. Metzler realizes Perkasio Fire Company will be losing coverage territory and admitted he is not in favor

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of it, however if it is in the best interest of the community, so be it.

Mr. Horrocks asked all seven fire companies to provide a recommendation concerning the proposed map changes in their district:

- Mr. Meyers, chief of Dublin Fire Company, stated it has always been Dublin's contention that they do not want any other department's territory. Mr. Meyers has made a proposal to the chief of Perkasio Fire Company that one certain area will remain Perkasio's area, and all they have to do is add Dublin's engine. Mr. Meyers stated Dublin can work with the Perkasio Fire Company and the matter has been rectified. Since January 1, 1996, the gray area on the map is automatically a dual dispatch involving Dublin and Hilltown, and therefore, it has been taken care of. Mr. Devlin, chief of Hilltown Fire Company, felt he should have been notified. Mr. Meyers stated he has corrected what he saw as wrong, and advised Dublin Fire Company is not in favor of revising the coverage map.

Mr. Metzler, chief of Perkasio Fire Company, agreed with Mr. Meyers, stating that proposal would be fine as long as it meets with the approval of the Township. Assuming that no changes are made to the old map, Mr. Horrocks asked if Perkasio would call in Dublin on an engine call in that area. If there are no changes to the map whatsoever, Mr. Metzler stated Perkasio will dual dispatch Dublin Fire Company in that area.

- Mr. Bill Devlin, chief of Hilltown Fire Company, stated that one year ago, seven fire chiefs agreed that the closest department should respond to a call. Mr. Devlin believes the only concern should be the best interest and the public safety of Hilltown Township residents. Mr. Devlin stated he has put his heart into this effort because he is a resident and a taxpayer of Hilltown Township. Most of the other departments speaking tonight do not live in Hilltown Township, nor do they pay taxes in Hilltown Township. There is a definite liability factor involved with this issue. Mr. Devlin noted all seven fire companies are in this together to protect the citizens of Hilltown Township and those that drive through Hilltown Township. He feels all seven companies should work together towards a common goal. Mr. Devlin wondered why the chief of the Dublin Fire Company did not have the common courtesy to advise him of the dual dispatch and believes there is a lack of communication between the fire companies. Mr. Devlin stated he does not care about the residents of the neighboring communities because his main concern is for the residents of Hilltown Township. The Hilltown Fire Company would be more than happy to assist neighboring communities with mutual aid. A year ago, all chiefs agreed to revise the coverage maps, however now

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that there are changes proposed, there seems to be a problem. Mr. Devlin wondered why the other fire companies seem to have hard feelings towards the Hilltown Fire Company, and believes the matter should be rectified once and for all.

Mr. Meyers commented the Dublin Fire Company, for 80 years, has always put the health, safety and welfare of Hilltown Township first.

On behalf of the Hilltown Fire Company, Mr. Devlin stated the map should be revised to have response from the closest fire department for the best interest of the residents of Hilltown Township.

- Mr. Tim Metzler, chief of Perkasio Fire Company, stated he supports the map changes. The Perkasio Fire Company is in agreement that the closest fire department should be called and if any changes are proposed, the entire map should be changed.

- Mr. Don Wilson, chief of Sellersville Fire Company, advised his department feels the coverage areas should remain as they are. As far as consideration goes, Mr. Wilson advised he is the chief of Sellersville Fire Company, he is a resident of West Rockhill Township, and he deals with four different municipalities, yet he cares greatly about the health, safety and welfare of all four municipalities.

Mr. Wilson would also like to reserve further comment with regard to items #2 and #3. Mr. Wilson is in disagreement with the proposed change concerning the half mile.

- Mr. Chuck Stockert, chief of Silverdale Fire Company, advised his department feels the coverage areas should remain as they area. Mr. Stockert was not chief when the controversies began, so he can not speak for Mr. Steinrock. Mr. Stockert would be happy to meet with Mr. Devlin to discuss the problems with the Hilltown Fire Company. Upon review of the proposed changes, Mr. Stockert questioned why Maron Road is within a circle that is encompassed in Souderton's district. Mr. Stockert advised Silverdale will be a rescue company effective at the end of March. Mr. Horrocks noted rescue coverage was not yet addressed on the proposed map. Mr. Stockert requested more information concerning the dual dispatch proposal and stated he has numerous questions concerning the South Perkasio Road issue as far as safety goes. Mr. Stockert did his own traveling calculations and determined a distance of 417 1/2 ft. to the intersection of Callowhill Road and South Perkasio Road. Mr. Stockert stated the Callowhill Road hill can not be used in snow, ice, or heavy rains, especially with a large piece of fire equipment. Mr. Stockert noted Perkasio is presently dispatched on anything tactical simultaneously in that district.

- Mr. Jim Gallagher, president of Souderton Fire Company, advised his department does not support any change to the map, however they do support the idea of dual dispatch in areas the Supervisors may feel are critical. Mr. Ruth strongly feels that the two fire chiefs covering any particular area should work together to do whatever is necessary to provide proper fire protection. By doing this, Mr. Gallagher believes that the Hilltown residents residing in areas which may be considered "questionable" as far as fire coverage, are actually receiving more service than what the national standards would dictate.

- Mr. Joe Rausch, chief of Telford Fire Company, stated his department supports no change to the map. Mr. Rausch agreed with Mr. Gallagher's comments regarding all the fire chiefs working together for the good of the community.

E. FUTURE COMPANY PARTICIPATION IN THE FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU:

Unless all seven fire chiefs agree to continue participation in the Fire Prevention Bureau, Mr. Horrocks stated he will not schedule the next meeting for Wednesday, April 17, 1996.

Mr. Ruth of Souderton Fire Company and Mr. Rausch of Telford Fire Company stated they had to obtain approval from the general body of those departments since they both had originally voted to withdraw from participation. Mr. Horrocks asked Mr. Ruth and Mr. Rausch to forward letters of intent as soon as possible.

Mr. Joe McDonald, former president of Sellersville Fire Department, referred to Item #9 of the existing contract dated 1993, which states "This Agreement shall continue in full force and effective January 1st through December 31st. If either party intends not to renew this Agreement for the year, or to modify the terms thereof, 90 days written notice will be submitted." Mr. McDonald commented none of the fire companies ever received 90 days written notice concerning any of the proposed changes to the contracts. Mr. Horrocks replied written notice was not sent because it was under discussion with the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Mr. Horrocks advised he was given the task to organize seven fire chiefs to talk about issues. Many people said that the premise would not work because there would be constant bickering and fighting among fire companies. To those people, Mr. Horrocks responded that things would work themselves out. Unfortunately, this is the first issue that has not been resolved in a timely manner. Mr. Horrocks and Chief Egly were both absolutely aware of the power of the Fire Prevention Bureau's recommendation two years ago. Chief Egly was not blind to the fact that a review of the fire district map would be difficult. Mr. Horrocks reminded all those present that each fire company has one vote, and only one

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vote. Mr. Horrocks hopes the Fire Prevention Bureau continues because he does not know what other avenue would be available for the Supervisors to address fire protection. Mr. Horrocks does not believe the Board of Supervisors would have passed a Burning Ordinance in this Township without the Fire Prevention Bureau's unanimous recommendation. Mr. Horrocks made a plea to both the Souderton and Telford Fire Companies, expressing his hope that they will continue as active members of the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Chief Egly stated he has been a fire fighter for over 44 years, and has been with the Hilltown Fire Company for 15 years. Chief Egly intends to work with each and every fire company; and harbors no ill feelings for any company. As the Director of Public Safety, Chief Egly explained he was asked to make proposed revisions to the coverage map, and he did that, strictly with the interest of Hilltown Township residents in mind. Chief Egly is friendly with people in each of the seven fire companies, and he has heard many derogatory remarks about himself recently, which he does not appreciate. Chief Egly made it very clear that he has not, and has no intentions of trying to discredit any of the seven fire companies. Further, Chief Egly noted this community can not do without volunteers, and he has begged each department to sign the agreement with the fire police because assistance with traffic is desperately needed. The fire departments assured Chief Egly they would work with him to arrange for fire police within their companies.

Mr. Stockert stated the Silverdale Fire Company appreciates Chief Egly's efforts.

F. SUPERVISOR REVIEW COMMENTS:

1. Supervisor Fox recalls the problems the Township experienced with fire coverage seven or eight years ago, and he believed they had been resolved. Supervisor Fox believes Hilltown Township has the finest fire service available to any municipality in the area, even though there may be a communication problem between some companies. There are some areas where Supervisor Fox feels the Township should consider dual response coverage, if there is a problem. Supervisor Fox has been threatened to be sued many times, and he understands the element of liability involved. Supervisor Fox feels that only minor revisions should be made to the wording of the contract, and that the coverage map should remain as it is.

2. Supervisor Bennington reminded the seven fire chiefs that they authorized Chief Egly, as the Director of Public Safety, to review the coverage area map; and he thanked Chief Egly for his efforts.

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Supervisor Bennington recommended to the Souderton and Telford Fire Company chiefs that they strongly emphasize to their members the importance of continuing the Fire Prevention Bureau. He feels input is greatly needed from the fire companies, since they are the experts on this subject.

Supervisor Bennington is having difficulty understanding the meaning of the wording "the closest company, geographically," found within the contract and would like to address that issue.

Also, Supervisor Bennington would like to hear Silverdale Fire Company's concerns regarding the Hilltown Fire Company, and would like to discuss them this evening.

3. Chairman Bennett agreed with the comments made by his fellow supervisors, and stated that fire protection in Hilltown Township is excellent. Chairman Bennett wondered if an independent representative from the State had attempted to present possible revisions to the coverage map, if the same controversy would have erupted. Chairman Bennett feels there is room for compromise and noted that on certain roadways, it appears to him it may be more advantageous to have a dual response.

Mr. Jim Gallagher of the Souderton Fire Company does not believe that there is a chief present who can not resolve the matter of dual response with another fire chief. Mr. Gallagher doesn't feel this is a matter that should be handled by the Township. Mr. Gallagher would like to see Hilltown Township follow Franconia Township's lead, whereby a coverage map was drawn up and has been in existence for many, many years. All areas of Franconia Township are not necessarily covered by the closest fire company. The Franconia Township Supervisors are willing to listen to anything a fire company has to say, and the fire chiefs all work together towards a common goal - the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of their community. With regard to territory boundaries, Mr. Gallagher stated the Supervisors are concerned about liability, however they must realize that every fire company fights the dollar. All fire companies are concerned about losing funding from the Township, yet most have built up a rapport of donations in their coverage areas. Therefore, if some areas are taken away from a fire company, it could hurt them financially.

Up to this moment, Chairman Bennett noted the Board of Supervisors have not discussed money.

G. PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Mr. Jack Morgan of the Hilltown Fire Company was the chairman of the former Fire Commission. Mr. Morgan resigned from the Fire Commission two years ago because of controversy concerning

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the Hilltown Fire Department. Mr. Morgan has since joined the Hilltown Fire Department, and after fighting fires in different areas of the community, he has discovered that it wasn't the Hilltown Fire Company that was the problem, but rather it was the companies surrounding Hilltown. The name that keeps surfacing now is "Barney Grunmeier." Mr. Morgan stated all that controversy happened six years ago, and feels everyone should just move on. Mr. Morgan deals with a number of larger townships where he works, and they certainly do not have the problems that Hilltown Township seems to have. In the ten years Mr. Morgan has been involved with this Township, matters have not progressed at all. Mr. Morgan feels it is a disgrace to each and every fire company that they can not rectify these problems. Mr. Morgan would be willing to discuss matters with any chief from any department to find out exactly what the problem is. He would like to see the bickering and the criticisms between fire companies end.

Motion was made by Chairman Bennett, seconded by Supervisor Bennington, and carried unanimously to enter into Executive Session to discuss fire coverage matters with the seven fire chiefs.

Motion was made by Supervisor Fox, seconded by Supervisor Bennington, and carried unanimously to adjourn the joint meeting of the Hilltown Township Board of Supervisors and the Fire Prevention Bureau at 9:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Lynda Seimes

Township Secretary

(*These minutes were transcribed from notes and tape recordings taken by Mr. Bruce Horrocks, Township Manager).