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Honorable Jean Schmidt
HB 244

July 6th was an awful day for Goshen!

Although we had no loss of life and saw a community come together like never before our community's critical infrastructure took a direct hit!

Of the 500 homes and businesses damaged or destroyed, 9 of 10 Goshen Township owned facilities received damage as well as all our school buildings and several churches. Goshen Township Fire and EMS's main fire station, Station 18 on Route 28 was the epicenter of the storm, where the National Weather Service stated the strongest winds, just shy of a category 3 tornado struck the fire station causing a portion of the building to collapse with extensive ancillary damage throughout. The force of the storm as it hit the fire station took tools and equipment like axes and firefighter gear and blew them away. Some items were found weeks later more than a mile away in people's backyards and homes. Thirty-two (32) of the township's vehicles were also damaged or destroyed.

Typically, Fire, EMS and Police are the "*first responder*" to a storm like the one that struck on July 6th but in Goshen our first responders were also the victims. The most severely damaged facility being our main fire station and headquarters, Station 18. Many of our personnel, my self-included, had damage to our homes and lost vehicles too but we had a job today and serving the community came first on July 6th and for many weeks after.

Station 18 was built in 1982. At the time it was considered the largest most state-of-the-art firehouse in the region, but it was built for what at the time was an all-volunteer force making a few dozen fire calls and a few hundred EMS calls a year. It met the codes and standard of the early 1980's but those codes change every 5 years so a modern facility today would have seen more than 9 code revisions since the facility was originally built. A fire station of 2023 is built to a much higher standard, requires it to have emergency back-up power, construction able to handle high wind and other nature disasters, on July 5th the day before the tornado station 18 was "grandfathered" from those codes as the building remains mostly as it was originally built.

On July 5, 2022, the day before the tornado, our firehouse was staffed by 18 FT and 35 PT personnel 24/7 responding to over 3,000 calls a year. Prior to Station 19 going in service in 2016 Station 18 was the business firehouse in Clermont County, busier than any firehouses in the City of Loveland, City of Milford, Miami Township or even Union Township all from a 41-year-old facility built for volunteers.

Also keep in mind that Station 18 doesn't just protect the residents of Goshen Township but routinely responds to communities in Clermont County (Wayne, Jackson, Stonelick, Milford, Miami, Loveland), Hamilton County (Milford, Loveland, Symmes, Indian Hill) Warren County (Hamilton, Harlan, Salem, Morrow, Deerfield) and Clinton County (Blanchester, Marion) for mutual aid.

On July 5th, 2022, Station 18 didn't have any of the modern facilities that would be built in to or required in a critical facility like a fire station. The building was grandfathered from those requirements, but didn't meet the building codes of the 1990's, 2000's, 2010's or 2020's.

We now have an opportunity, sure it's an opportunity born out of tragedy, but we also need help!

Insurance alone will not pay for the repairs and upgrades needed to build a code complaint facility for Goshen Fire And EMS. The township could put an expensive 3-million-dollar Band-Aid on the building and move the firefighter back into the 42-year-old building that doesn't meet modern buildings or life safety codes. In my opinion, as a 35-year public servant, prior Chief of Goshen Fire and EMS and someone who has built several new fire stations to simply make repairs would be negligent, maybe even malfeasant.

In 1982 our firefighters responded from home and were volunteers, today we staff our firehouses 24/7 with part-time and full-time staff who provide the best in quality care. In fact, award winning, Goshen was the 2022 EMS agency of the year in Ohio and in 2021 our firefighters won the State of Ohio valor award for a rescue of a civilian from a burning building, one of several rescues our firefighters have made in recent years.

The goal is not to build fancy new firehouses, it's to give our staff the facilities they need to provide service to all of us and to provide those services based on the codes and standards in place now and into the future to protect our firefighters, but most importantly to protect our community.

Goshen Strong was born on July 6th, 2022, we are a stronger community today than we were on July 5th, 2022, but we are without a firehouse, we do not have the funds or resources to build the new fire house and to merely rebuild and repair damage would put our fire and EMS personnel back into a 42-year-old non-code complaint building which is dangerous if not malfeasant.

Please Help!

Stephen N. Pegram

Chief Steve Pegram (Retired)
Former Chief and now Goshen Township Resident