

2010

DAN DEASY
State
Representative

**[REMARKS BEFORE THE
STOWE TOWNSHIP
COMMISSIONER MEETING]**

Regarding the closure of the Independent Hose Co. #5, (Preston 277)

My name is Dan Deasy and I have been a state representative for a year. Prior to this position, I served on Pittsburgh City Council.

My legislative district encompasses part of the City of Pittsburgh, Dormont, Ben Avon, Avalon, Emsworth, Crafton, Ingram, Glenfield, part of McKees Rocks, and part of Stowe Township.

Independent Hose Co., # 5, in Presston (Stowe Twp.) is located in my legislative district and I am aware of the decision pending to permanently close this volunteer fire department.

Given the tough economic times our state and nation are facing, it is becoming increasingly difficult for volunteer fire departments to survive. Declining funding streams and lack of volunteer participation are issues for which every volunteer fire department across this state and nation are facing.

The days are coming when thoughtful and serious consideration must be given to merging departments in order to ensure volunteer fire department viability. Volunteer fire departments are a vital part of the formula to ensure public safety.

As a state representative, I see the struggles that townships, boroughs and municipalities face financially. Not only are conversations taking place about the need to merge volunteer fire departments, conversations are also taking place around the state about merging other services.

The important parts of the equation when considering merging of services are: improving services, public input and cutting costs.

Improving Services – it is vital when considering merging or services that the service to the residents of the community remains at the same level or is improved as a result of the

merger. This part of the equation cannot be compromised when considering merging of fire departments. Residents have to have continued protection and resident safety should not be sacrificed.

Public Input - the public should be given an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns prior to any decisions on merging of services. Volunteer fire departments receive a great deal of financial support from the community in which they are located and therefore the community should have an opportunity to vet their concerns on a potential closure or merger of their department.

Cutting Costs – Given the tough economic times, it is vital and necessary to explore every possible avenue to cutting costs. The cutting of cost should never come at the expense of public safety.

Mergers/consolidations must be considered and explored and should only take place when there is an improvement in public safety while cutting costs.

Independent Hose Co. #5, in my experience as the state representative for the last year, appears to be financially stable and is providing a valuable public safety service to the residents of Presston and neighboring communities. The department has the support of the community and has a solid membership base.

I have a number of concerns about the process which has unfolded when considering the closure/merger of this department.

Presston residents should have had an opportunity to be a part of this decision-making process, all elected official should have had the opportunity to be at the table when the discussions were taking place, and a collaborative approach should have been taken.

While I understand that there are times when the only solution is the most unpopular solution, I don't believe that all possible avenues were discussed and considered before this decision was made.

I am, therefore, urging the Stowe Township Commissioners to reconsider their decision and bring this matter back up for discussion and public input.

Thank you.

