Property Tax Credit for Volunteer First Responders

Supporting Worcester and Lower Providence Fire Department

What & Why

What: Follow other school districts in providing property tax rebates for qualifying first responders based on activity levels

Why: Create a substantial tax relief package to retain qualified first responders within our community by addressing retention issues often associated with cost of living barriers

- By providing an avenue for qualified first responders to earn property tax rebates, volunteers will have an incentive to remain in the community and a tool that makes it affordable to do so
- PA had 300,000 volunteer firefighters in 1970, today we have under 38,000 - both departments aggressively pursue all options to not fall victim to this trend
- With call volume and training requirements growing - a property tax rebate can serve as a small reward in exchange for the millions of dollars in savings volunteer firefighters provide MSD taxpayers every year

School Districts Adopting Similar Proposals

- North Penn up to $750
- Springfield Township up to $1,000
- Hatboro Horsham up to $1,500 - matches whatever amount is provided in county rebate

Volunteer Hours

The below table is a glimpse in the man hours required to train for and respond to emergency calls in MSD. Note this total does not include the hours it takes to handle administrative tasks, station staffing, individual academy certification trainings, maintenance, fundraising, and community outreach.

Examples of training this does not include …

- 200 hours to obtain Firefighter 1 Certification
- 50-70 hours to become a certified Apparatus Driver
- 40-60 hours to become a certified Fire Police Officer
- 24-28 hours to achieve specialty rescue discipline like vehicle, rope, water etc…

	Call Man Hours	**Drill Man Hours**	**Totals**
Worcester	*1252*	*3136*	*4,388*
Lower Providence	*2017*	*3652*	*5,669*
			10,057

2025 YTD Data

Junior Firefighters

Both departments have thriving junior firefighter programs that provide students with a unique opportunity for service hours, learn new skills, and professional network.

Worcester	Lower Providence
9 Junior Firefighters	7 Junior Firefighters
Avg. 33 Training Hours	Avg. 34 Training Hours
Avg. 31 Calls Responded to	Avg. 15 Calls Responded to

Problem Statement & Proposal

Problem Statement: Both the LPFD and WVFD historically face challenges in keeping volunteers long term due to the cost of living. Both organizations must find ways to bolster their active membership who are homeowners within MSD to limit personnel turnover.

Proposal: Provide qualifying first responders in LPFD and WVFD with a property tax rebate, following a similar structure to the county program, and capped at $1,000 per responder.

- Make a sizable tax relief package - paired together with county property rebate and EIT rebate
- Under the 2024 county program, 55 volunteers within both WVFD and LPFD qualified for the tax rebate
- 16 of the 55 who qualified for the county rebate do not live in MSD - these are the members we want to avoid losing in the future and retain long term to bolster the % of active members who are homeowners
    - Out of 45 members of WVFD who achieved active status, just 23 are homeowners within Worcester township
    - Out of 20 members of LPFD who achieved active status, just 7 are homeowners within Lower Providence Township
- Using 2024 activity data from LPFD and WVFD, this program would cost MSD approximately $30,000

Administration

At the end of each year, each Chief will certify the list of active volunteers and submit a list to MSD with the names of the qualifying volunteers and the rebate they qualified for. Below shows a breakdown for each department of what that would look like and a current projection of how 2025 activity will be to estimate potential cost. This rebate is only for homeowners in MSD.

Rebate Brackets & 2025 Cost of Rebate Program			
Worcester - (350 calls/35 drills)	Number of Qualifying Volunteers (24)	Lower Providence - (750 calls/48 drills)	Number of Qualifying Volunteers (13)
23% - 37%: **$250**	(5) - $1,250	10% - 18%: **$250**	(4) - $1,000
38% - 52%: **$750**	(9) - $6,750	19% - 29%: **$750**	(3) - $2,250
53%<: **$1,000**	(10) - $10,000	30%<: **$1,000**	(6) - $6,000
# of Members within %5 of qualifying	(2)		
Total	$18,000	Totals	$9,250
2025 Projected Total		*$27,250*	

Tax Relief Volunteers Provide to MSD Taxpayers

Currently, the WVFD and LPFD receive a combined $1 million annually from their respective municipalities for operational and capital expenditures.

- Upper Providence Twp pays just shy $3 million in salary and compensation for career firefighters & administration to staff one engine 24/7 - this is not inclusive of operating or capital costs, nor contributions to volunteer FDs
- Montgomery Twp is currently evaluating a proposal to hire 19 full time firefighters costing approximately $4 million

What’s the benefit to MSD?

Strong volunteer fire departments not only provide emergency services to MSD facilities and MSD families, but serve as institutions in our community.

- Proven track record of providing a strong extracurricular activity for MSD students - providing service hour opportunities, resume builders, and network opportunities for students *(16 Junior FFs total currently between both organizations)*
- Vibrant memberships in both departments provide diverse professional backgrounds for students to network with
- Engaging community events and fire prevention demonstrations for MSD students and their families
- Provide support for students interested in emergency services careers via newly rolled out Montco Tech Firefighter/EMT program
    - Students can graduate with a Firefighter 1, EMT, and dispatch center training certificates making them immediately eligible for careers in emergency services

MSD Events Supported by WVFD/LPFD in 2025

- MHS Career Fair
- 9th Grade Career Expo
- Arcola STEAM Day
- 8th Grade Recruitment Seminar
- Arrowhead & Worcester Elementary Fire Prevention
- “Day in the Life” Event for grades 8-12
- Trunk or Treat & Fire Prevention for Worcester Elementary Home & School
- Methacton School District K-12 Advisory Committee
- Traffic Control at MHS Graduation and Post Prom





