

## *Questions and Answers:*

### **Voorhees Township Fire and Emergency Services Consolidation Safety Plan**

On November 12, a petition drive will begin to collect signatures to support the Voorhees Township Fire and Emergency Services Consolidation Safety Plan. The plan calls for Voorhees Township to assume responsibility for the day-to-day operations of Voorhees Fire District, an independent body that is presently under the control of the Board of Fire Commissioners elected by the residents of Voorhees Township.

#### **Why is this happening?**

This course of action is in response to a series of egregious and unfortunate occurrences that have taken place within Voorhees Fire District involving staffing inconsistencies as well as training and fiscal mismanagement.

#### **Is our safety at risk?**

No, there is no present risk, nor will there be any risk to residents, property owners or visitors during this process.

#### **Why is this plan being proposed now?**

Given the direction Voorhees Fire District has been headed over the last few months, the Township Committee unanimously feels compelled to act now. It is the responsibility of the Voorhees Township Committee to ensure everyone has immediate access to the finest level of fire and EMS services available, while also ensuring the safety of our firefighters and EMS responders.

#### **What is a vote of no confidence?**

Voorhees Fire District's own union, The International Association of Fire Fighters Local 3249, issued a "No Confidence" vote against the Board of Fire Commissioners and Deputy Fire Chief Michael J. Wharton. The vote of no confidence, along with a resolution from the president of the union, put forth the following issues surrounding the department's conduct:

- Inability to maintain a fully operational and balanced general ledger accounting system and controls over purchasing
- Overspending and ignoring accounts payable
- Failure to make timely payroll reports and remittances
- Failure to develop and implement a business plan
- Failure to provide an adequate number of first responders on duty
- Failure to maintain appropriate policies on staffing levels
- Failure to provide adequate training to first responders

#### **How do I know signing this petition is the right thing to do?**

In addition to the "No Confidence" vote, an external fire expert cited numerous problems, as did an outside financial consultant. S&P Global Ratings lowered its rating on Voorhees Township Commissioners Fire District N.J.'s general obligation (GO) debt and issued an outlook of "negative," citing "significant financial deterioration."

**What happens next?**

Once the petition drive accumulates at least five percent of the Township's registered voters, Township Committee will consider the dissolution of Voorhees Fire District at a public hearing scheduled for a future date.

**How do I stay up to date on what's happening?**

Visit the Facebook page entitled, "Voorhees Fire Consolidation Plan" or the Township's website.