

**July 30, 2008**

**For Immediate Release**

**Media Advisory**

**Eleven Hamilton County communities collaborate on grant application for fire district feasibility study**

Yesterday, eleven Hamilton County communities submitted an application to the Ohio Department of Development for a Local Government Services & Regional Collaboration Grant. The communities: Wyoming, Woodlawn Springfield Township, Springdale, Lincoln Heights, Lockland, Greenhills, Glendale, Forest Park, Elmwood Place and Arlington Heights - a unique combination of villages, cities and a township - are interested in investigating the possibility of combining fire and emergency medical services into a regional fire district. Each community currently provides separate fire services to the residential and commercial properties within their communities. The partnering communities realize there is significant duplication of fire service, manpower, and apparatus in the region.

Beyond sharing close proximity and boundaries, the partner communities share a commitment to consider opportunities to enhance fire service quality and productivity, to investigate alternatives that would improve effectiveness of fire service financial resources and address a growing need for public safety services in each community. A grant from the State of Ohio will provide just such an opportunity to conduct an impartial and professional feasibility study to investigate a Valley Fire District in which benefits to all communities may be realized.

All eleven (11) partner communities support a feasibility study that will be conducted by an impartial expert consultant with prior demonstrated experience; said candidate to be selected by a competitive process and reviewed by a panel consisting of representatives from each partner community. Each partner community supports a study that will provide analysis of the fire services that currently exist in the Valley, why a fire district may be warranted, estimates of implementation costs, estimates of savings, a review of physical, personnel and legal challenges and potential impediments. Lastly, the feasibility study will provide a realistic implementation framework to effectively allow the creation of a Valley Fire District (or hybrid levels of collaboration) should that be the chosen course.

A prior attempt to begin a feasibility study in the 1990's failed. The initial direction and concepts discussed were somewhat biased due to the initial analysis being conducted solely by a committee composed of the entities involved. This preliminary discussion did not utilize a professional consultant and clearly failed due to the lack of objectivity. The possibility of funding from the Ohio Department of Development is providing the impetus for this concept of a district to be re-visited. The missteps of past efforts provide significant knowledge on the part of each participant. If this application is funded and a feasibility study moves forward, a panel of knowledgeable managers and fire department staff will assist the professional consultant by providing unique insight to the process and potential hurdles. Additionally, this leadership group will serve as a steering committee through both the feasibility study and the possible, future implementation phase.

**WHO:** Evonne Kovach, Municipal Manager, Woodlawn

Walter Cordes, Village Administrator, Glendale

David Krings, Village Administrator, Lockland

Robert Harrison, City Manager, Wyoming

Derrick Parham, Asst. City Manager, Springdale

Susan Farley, City Manager, Lincoln Heights

Ray Hodges, City Manager, Forest Park

Steve Surber, Mayor, Arlington Heights

Richard Ellison, Mayor, Elmwood Place

Michael Hinnenkamp, Administrator, Springfield Township

Jane Berry, Administrator, Greenhills