

## **For Public Release – Fishers Fire District**

The Board of Commissioners of the Fishers Fire District would like to provide clarity regarding the rationale behind the potential dissolution of the District, as well as address related concerns.

First and foremost, we wish to emphasize that the Fishers Fire District is currently in a strong financial position. Our District currently maintains robust reserves, healthy cash balances, has zero debt, and upholds a tradition of disciplined budget management. We undergo annual independent audits, and all audit reports are available to the public on our website.

The rationale cited for a potential dissolution is “future financial instability,” and it is—as stated—a future concern. This concern relates to anticipated future costs and the increase in taxes that would be required to sustain this District as currently structured and operated.

Note that as a taxing authority, the District does have the ability to raise taxes to meet future needs, potentially even doubling them in any given year if necessary. However, in prior public meetings residents have expressed that past and potential future tax increases are not sustainable for our small community. As a Board, we have a responsibility to respond to residents’ concerns. In so doing, we have considered numerous District records, including:

### **Financial background and comparisons**

- The Town of Victor has two fire districts, the Fishers District and Victor District.
- Over the last 10 years, the Fishers Fire District tax levy has more than tripled: moving from \$1.6 million in 2015 to \$5.3 million in 2025. This reflects staffing of 26 full-time firefighters and others.
- In 2025, a \$400k house in the Fishers Fire District would pay \$1,439 a year in fire taxes. A similar home in the Victor Fire District would pay \$636 a year.
- The Victor Fire District budget is \$1.6 million, with 3 full-time firefighters.
- The City of Canandaigua Fire Department budget is \$3.7 Million for 2025. This includes 20 full-time firefighters who cover the entire City and a portion of the town.
- Although not exact comparisons, it begs the question of why Fishers costs are so high.

### **Looking ahead at future costs**

- Although difficult to predict future costs, if the District continues to operate as currently structured, the tax levy is projected to triple again within 15 years.

- The District will also be responsible for providing healthcare coverage for all future retirees and their families. For each of our 26 positions, the district could be paying healthcare costs for both current employees and multiple sets of retirees - as firefighters can retire after 20 years with lifetime healthcare for themselves and their families.
- In the next several years, the district will begin incurring permanent obligations that will lead to annual retiree healthcare expenses that will exceed \$5 million per year—an amount that would double our current tax burden, even before accounting for other rising costs.

### **A question of fairness**

- The Town of Victor has a contract with Victor Farmington Ambulance to provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) for the entire town. The costs for these services are already included in the town tax paid by residents of both the Fishers and Victor Districts.
- We have requested that an ambulance be stationed at one of our stations, or on the north side of Victor, to help ensure similar response times across the entire town.
- It is also worth noting that Fishers residents pay the costs to provide EMS support for the Eastview Mall and the Route 96 retail corridor, even though all of Victor—and even Ontario County—benefit from the sales tax revenue generated there.
- We believe there is a cost-effective and equitable solution for the Town of Victor and Victor Farmington Ambulance to address these EMS concerns in the near term. This should be funded through a Town of Victor and Ontario County cost-sharing approach as discussed with the Town Supervisor.

### **Board actions**

Given the above, the current Board of Commissioners has explored numerous options, including consolidation and cost reductions, to avoid potentially dissolving the District.

Although a previous Fishers Board rejected a merger with Victor in 2018, this Board has strongly supported efforts to combine our district with others in order to share our high service levels, reduce overlapping equipment needs and spread costs over a larger area.

Specifically:

- We have approached the Victor Fire District twice over the past two years, but requests for discussions with two different Board Chairmen have been rejected.
- We actively participated in a regional merger attempt with Mendon and Honeoye Falls. Despite our support for consolidation, this effort was not successful.

From a cost perspective, this Board has been very diligent throughout the budget cycle and thoroughly reviews all proposed expenses. One of our key challenges is the high cost structure associated with the current organization and operation of the department. We have attempted to address this issue in previous discussions, including as recently as June 11, 2025, but our efforts have been declined.

We believe it is important for all stakeholders to understand the background and rationale that has brought the Fishers Fire Board of Commissioners to this point.

**The District wishes to address misinformation that is being shared with residents**

- It is falsely being stated that 911 calls will go unanswered. The Town of Victor has a plan in development to ensure Fire and Rescue coverage is maintained district wide as is required by NY State law.
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is not going away. Residents within the District will continue to receive services through the Town of Victor contract with Victor Farmington Ambulance, which the residents pay for as part of their Town taxes.
- The District is in strong financial condition, with reserves, cash balances and zero debt. The District is independently audited with the results publicly available.
- Firefighters have not been prevented from going to EMS calls when requested by Victor Farmington Ambulance or other agencies seeking mutual aid. The only change is that we no longer automatically respond to low priority EMS calls when VFA also responds.
- The Board did not receive any offers by the Union to address staffing levels in 2023.
- All Commissioners are residents and taxpayers in the Fishers Fire District.