



PEOTONE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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Peotone Fire Protection District and Manhattan Fire Protection District see value in consolidation

For Immediate Release

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Peotone, IL -- The Peotone Fire Protection District today announced that it believes that consolidation with neighboring Manhattan Fire Protection District would deliver benefits to both communities. A full consolidation of the two districts would mean that residents will benefit from the long-term delivery of public safety services at a lower cost to Peotone's taxpayers.

A consolidation would merge the two fire protection districts in to one streamlined agency tasked with providing high-quality public safety, fire, rescue and emergency medical services to both communities. Ultimately, Peotone residents would be taxed for fire protection services at a rate lower than what they're currently paying.

"Consolidation would reduce taxpayer's bills while also strengthening our ability to provide the full range of services that our residents expect and deserve," said Peotone Fire Protection District Board of Trustees President Brian Hupe. "As the region grows and evolves, we need to grow and evolve along with it. By consolidating our fire districts, we would be well-positioned to deliver robust, quality service over the long haul without having to ask taxpayers to pay more."

Currently, budget growth in Peotone and Manhattan over the next five to ten years does not support the ability to implement more stable, full-time staffing models, renovate dated facilities, invest in modern equipment or keep up with regional growth without seeking significant tax increases.

Without consolidation, residents in Peotone may, over the next five to ten-year period, be forced to choose between tax increases or a diminished level of service. And for its part, the Manhattan Fire Protection District will need to determine how to deliver and pay for a consistent level of staffing and coverage amid an increasing demand for services as the region's population—and calls for service—increase.

A consolidated fire protection district would provide for the needed resources and budgeting flexibility to hire nine full-time firefighters, potentially add new stations in both communities and renovate current facilities in the years to come. A consolidated district would also allow for greater investment in training and resources for full-time staff members.

The two districts have already successfully consolidated administrative functions. Under an intergovernmental agreement enacted last year, the districts have been sharing all administrative support functions (facilities/fleet/equipment management, human resources, payroll, benefits, etc.). This agreement has generated approximately \$600,000 in cost recovery and savings in just one year.

"The communities we serve are better off over the long term with us operating as one district instead of two," said Steve Malone, who serves as Chief for both the Peotone and Manhattan Fire Protection Districts. "We'll be able to further reduce our administrative costs, eliminate duplicative costs and reinvest those dollars into hiring full-time firefighters and paramedics, upgrade our facilities and equipment, and ensure that our personnel have everything they need to serve the residents of Peotone and Manhattan proficiently and professionally."

Fire protection districts throughout the region are facing very serious personnel challenges since many rely heavily on part-time personnel. Increasingly, however, fully trained, and certified firefighters, EMTs and paramedics are leaving for higher-paid full-time opportunities. Finding part-time shift personnel is therefore growing ever more difficult. "The fire service has

not been immune to the shortage of employees, and it has become an epidemic within the fire service as a whole,” said Chief Malone.

“The bottom line is that our personnel are our most valued assets. Our residents want professional, qualified, trained personnel who are a part of the community they’re serving,” said Hupe. “By consolidating the two districts we would be able to shift towards a more sustainable and predictable full-time staffing model by hiring men and women truly vested in the communities they’ll serve.”

Both boards of trustees for the Manhattan FPD and the Peotone FPD see value in consolidation. Formal consolidation, however, will require the voters of Peotone to place a referendum question on the ballot at a future election.

Both Districts are committed to providing information to residents about consolidation. They invite the public to ask questions about what the consolidation means to their respective community. “Our goal is to educate residents and share as much information about consolidation so that they can be informed about how essential public safety services are delivered and funded well into the future,” said Chief Malone.

Please visit our websites for updates and more information.

www.manhattanfire.org

www.peotonefire.org

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