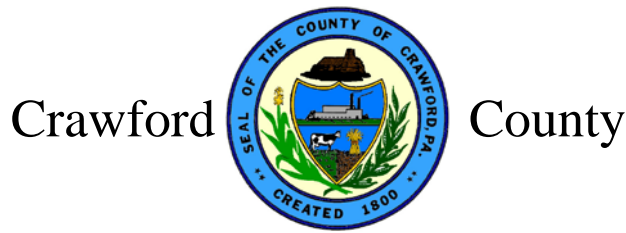


**County Commissioners**  
**Chairman**  
Eric S. Henry  
**Vice-Chairman**  
Scott T. Schell  
**Secretary/Treasurer**  
Christopher R. Seeley

**Fire Commission Members**  
Eric Coston, East Mead  
John Fuller, Vernon Central  
Robert Horvat, Vernon Township  
Chuck Lawrence, Saegertown Borough



## Fire Commission

c/o Crawford County DPS  
632 Pine Street  
Meadville, Pennsylvania 16335

**Fire Commission Members**  
Phil Koon, Saegertown  
Bob McCartney, Fallowfield  
Jim Pratt, West Mead #2  
Ryan Sekerski, Cochranon  
Joe Smock, Meadville  
John Treacy, Conneaut Lake  
Bob Wimer, Greenwood  
Jim Brown, Titusville  
Josh Manuel, Townville  
Brad Johnston, West Mead #1  
Peter Albaugh, Summit Twp

### **Crawford County Fire Commission Minutes**

February 22, 2024, 7:00pm

- I. Commissioner's Welcome – Commissioner Scott Schell welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for serving on this board. The mission of the Commission is to preserve and plan for the future of the fire and rescue service in Crawford County. He stated we all need to be active and engaged with the departments in our areas. Please come to the bi-monthly meetings prepared with suggestions, solutions, and concrete steps to move forward on.
- II. Introduction of Commission Members – those not knowing each other were introduced
- III. Commission Overview – All agenda, minutes, and support information are posted to the Crawford County web-site at [www.crawfordcountypa.net](http://www.crawfordcountypa.net) on the Public Safety Page. A roster with Fire and EMS Commission Members, DPS Staff, and GoTo Meeting were passed out. In 2021 Commissioners established a Fire Task Force which turned into a Fire Commission in 2022 and a new Fire Commission established in 2024.
- IV. Committee Updates
  - a. Communications: Public Safety Director Greg Beveridge
    - i. 9-1-1 Center Enhancements – A new perimeter security fence and gates were installed for increase security. Fire Central went down three different times for three different reasons over a weekend which were all addressed by the vendor.
    - ii. P25 Radio Project – The Crawford County Commissioners have hired MCM Consulting to do a needs assessment. Greg has sent information out to everyone regarding the specifications of what the radios need to be for P25 compliance. Assistance to Firefighters Grant is an option to apply for funding for radios. Several fire departments in the central part of the county are submitting a joint application. The price tag has increased substantially to 20 million dollars. Additional information will be sent to the Commission Members and Public Safety Chief's as it becomes available.
    - iii. Public Safety Agencies Enhancements – The I Am Responding Two Tone Detect has been activated and working well. There is a new CAD View system with new features for public safety agencies.

- iv. John Treacy from Conneaut Lake, Jim Pratt from West Mead #2, and Jim Brown from Titusville were assigned to be liaisons with Greg in each of their regions.

b. Government:

- i. Municipal Tax Forgiveness Program – Robert Horvat from Vernon Township gave an overview of the tax forgiveness program Vernon Township implemented. Firefighters must respond on 50 calls a year, take twelve hours of training, and take Essentials of Firefighting modules. He will develop a program that can be taken to all municipalities to educate them and encourage them to do the same for fire fighters in their municipality. He suggested that first the County Commissioners should implement some tax forgiveness program first and then have municipalities adopt the ordinance.

**ACTION ITEM** Rob Horvat will schedule a time to meet with the County Commissioners to discuss county tax forgiveness.

**ACTION ITEM** Rob Horvat will develop a program that can be presented to the municipalities asking them to implement a tax forgiveness program as well.

- ii. Added to the Government Committee with Rob Horvat Chairing, was Bob Wimer and Chuck Lawrence.
- iii. The 2022 DCED Fire Study can be viewed and downloaded from the Crawford Conty web-site at [www.crawfordcountypa.org](http://www.crawfordcountypa.org) under Public Safety page. This study lists recommendations that could be implemented county-wide.
- iv. Rob Horvat reported he is now the Chairman of the French Creek Council of Governments (COG). This organization is a collection of twenty-three municipalities, school districts, and organizations that work together in joint projects. [www.frenchcreekcog.org](http://www.frenchcreekcog.org) He suggested the Fire Commission become a member of the COG for \$250 per year. Eric Coston and Brad Johnston were asked to represent the Fire Commission to the COG.

**ACTION ITEM** Commissioner Scott Schell will discuss with the Commissioners paying the \$250 membership fee and report back.

c. Operations:

- i. Defining a Rescue Department; Equipment, and Personnel. This topic was discussed. The question asked was, does the Fire Commission have authority to enforce minimal standards on fire departments and if not, who does? Assigned to this Committee was Chair Ryan Sekerski, Bob McCartney, Phil Koon, Jim Brown, John Fuller, and Joe Smock

<https://www.osfc.pa.gov/Certification%20Document%20Library/VRSR%20Vehicle%20and%20Machinery%20Guidelines.pdf>

**ACTION ITEM** The Committee will review this list again and develop a survey to send to fire departments to see which fire departments currently meet the equipment, personnel, and training vehicle rescue standards.

- ii. County-wide Standard Training Guidelines. This topic was discussed. Jim Pratt and Joe Smock were assigned to review minimum fire and rescue training standards.

**ACTION ITEM** The Committee is to review fire and rescue training standards, courses to hold, and the cost of conducting them to be included in the SAFER Grant.

- d. County-wide SAFER Grant for Recruitment and Retention – Allen Clark gave an overview of the recruitment and retention components of the SAFER Grant that the Crawford County Commissioners are applying for. Additional information about this grant is attached to these minutes. All Crawford County Fire Chiefs were e-mailed directions and forms to complete. Each department that wants to participate must complete the MOU and data form and send it back to him by the end of March. Fire departments must be current with their PennFIRS reporting to the State Fire Commissioners Office.

**ACTION ITEM** The Fire Commission needs to determine; number of new volunteers per year county-wide for four years, which recruitment options to apply for, and the costs for each program to be included in the grant application no later than their next meeting.

V. County Organization Updates:

- a. Crawford and Venango Counties Fire School Committee – Bob Wimer reported that Sam Firster from Chapmanville is now the Fire School Committee Chairman and they are picking courses to hold. The Crawford County Fairgrounds will probably be used again for most of the courses. It will cost around \$300,000 to repair the burn building so it can be used for courses.
- b. Crawford County Fireman’s Association - Phil Koon reported the next meeting will be on Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm at Saegertown Fire Dept.

VI. Engaging the State Fire Commissioner’s Office – It was discussed to invite either the State Fire Commissioner Cook or Deputy Commissioner Tedorski to come to a Fire Commission Meeting for us to explain what Crawford County has done and answer questions we have to move forward.

**ACTION ITEM** Eric Coston will contact the State Fire Commissioner and asked for Allen Clark to help develop the presentation with him.

VII. Next Meeting, Wednesday, April 17, 7:00pm at Crawford County DPS. Committees and workgroups are encouraged to meet before the meeting and to come to this meeting with information and completed action items.

- VIII. Jim Pratt showed a video of the new hovercraft that the Crawford County SCUBA Team purchased with funding help from the Crawford County Commissioners and other agencies. There is additional training needed and they hope to have it in service in June of this year.
- IX. Adjournment – with no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm

## **Crawford County SAFER Grant Application**

The Crawford County Commissioners are applying for a County-wide Federal SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grant for **fire department** recruitment and retention efforts in Crawford County.

There are no matching funds from the county or for any fire department that wishes to participate. This is a four-year grant performance period.

Commissioners have entered into a contract with a consultant to assist with the completing the application aided by Crawford County Dept. of Public Safety staff.

### **Recruitment**

Recruitment program for **new fire fighters only**; physicals, fire gear, firefighter 1 and firefighter 2 training and testing, and media campaign. Are you in favor of these items? What goal should we set to obtain new firefighters in the county? 50 new members each year for four years county-wide?

In order to get new gear, the new firefighter must obtain a physical which is paid by the grant.

New members recruited will follow your fire department membership process and obtain fire gear that matches your fire department gear. Junior firefighters are eligible but won't obtain gear until they turn 18. Can be used to pay for EMT classes.

### **Retention**

Retention program for **any current or new firefighter** includes; life insurance around \$25,000 per member, college tuition, and a nominal stipend program. Are you in favor of these programs?

### **Next Steps**

Fire departments that want to participate in this grant need to provide the needed information to Allen Clark at DPS as soon as possible. Most of the information can be found on your State Fire Grant Applications.

Fire departments will need to sign a memorandum of understanding.

The Fire Commission will determine eligibility and dollar amounts to apply in each program.

The Fire Commission will obtain quotes for the cost of physicals, fire gear, training, life insurance, and determine the nominal stipend program amount.

The SAFER Grant application tentatively opens in March and closes in May.