



April 19, 2019

To the Residents and Business in the City of Grand Blanc

Discussion about your New Fire Department

Please send your email address to citymanager@cityofgrandblanc.com to keep posted on latest City events. Please see our website for contact information for your Mayor, City Councilmember and City Manager. Please call if you have any questions.

As always, please know that Mayor, City Council and City Manager are available at any time to discuss the new Fire Department that will begin July 25, 2019.

In April 2017, the City began negotiations with the Township for the expiring Fire .5 operating millage. At the heart of the disagreement was the Township's unexplained refusal to commit to keeping Station #1 open, which is critical to City residents and businesses. This station, which is at 117 High Street and at the center of both the City and the Township, operates as the proverbial heart of City response times. The City also had issue with the Township not committing .5 mill of their General Fund contribution, while the City felt this was a must to fund the Fire Department. While the Township is now attempting to capitalize in the City/Township split, it was the Township, not the City that has led to this dissolution. But as we will explain in more detail herein, the City is already prepared to move forward on its own, for the betterment of its constituents.

Against this backdrop—which admittedly is only an overview of the dispute—we want to provide a detailed response to some of the false information. Without a Fire Station #1 commitment and the .5 mill General Fund contribution, the City and Township agreed to pursue 1.0 mill to the taxpayers for the millage. The City taxpayers did vote in the millage in November 2018. With the millage in place and the budget approved, The City was fully prepared to update the fire ordinance so that the City could move forward with fire protection provided by the Grand Blanc Fire Department for the next ten years. The Township instead withheld funding for the Fire Department and contracted with MGT Consulting on a cost allocation study.

After the presentation of the MGT Study on January 22nd, 2019, Grand Blanc Township voted to dissolve the 80 year joint fire partnership with the City. This was not only a surprise to the City, but even the MGT Study Consultant expressed shock in the Township's actions. Regardless though, in so dissolving the partnership, the City would have **no voice** or a say in the policies and procedures for running the Townships Fire Department, we would just be a

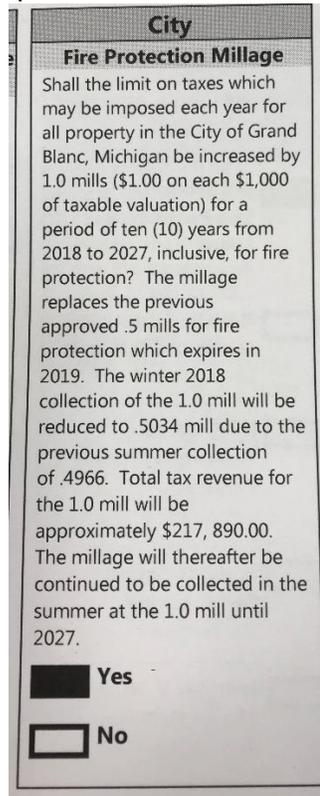
customer of a fire service. The City had ninety (90) days to determine how to proceed. In the meantime, the City was conducting a fire study through the Center for Public Safety Management which will be presented at 7pm on May 8th at City Hall.

The City's fire study determined that the City could operate out of the Station #1 and within the City's millage of approximately \$236,000 and the general fund contribution of \$118,000 for a total of \$354,000. As always, we made the decision that is best for our community.

Here is information about how our services will be provided:

- The City will have 24/7 coverage by our paid on call model. The same paid on call model as the **City of Fenton** who has an **ISO rating of 3**, updated in 2018.
- The City began interviewing on Monday, April 15th. We currently have 9 interested individuals. We planned on having 5 to start, 10 by October, 20 by April 2020. We are already over our goal.
- The Chief will be full time. Once up and running, the Assistant Fire Chief will be part time. The rest of the firefighters will be paid on call. The City is meeting with the City's Police Department on April 18th for the Public Safety option, which would cross train our professional officers who would be ready to respond any time of the day and would understand the needs of the community. We are also meeting with our DPW workers to determine eligibility and interest. These are all daytime workers willing to be firefighters.
- The City is, again, meeting with our police officers and, also, will be meeting with our Public Works employees to become firefighters to cover the day shifts. These are the same employees who provide the same great service to you every day. Our preference is that the volunteer firefighters live in the City, no doubt, but we will also utilize the excellent services of those that live outside and near the City. Police officers and DPW workers are proven employees who are loyal and provide you with **Excellent Service** every day.
- The Grand Blanc City Fire Department will have a wealth of experience. The Fire Chief has over 30 years of experience. We have emails and calls already from well-trained firefighters who want to be a firefighter with our department. The City will continue to educate and train our firefighters on the latest practices and safety techniques.
- Businesses and residents have paid 1 mill which is about \$236,000 to pay for fire protection. This millage will be used to fund the Grand Blanc City Fire Department that was created on April 10th and will begin full operations on July 25, 2019. To fund the Grand Blanc Fire Commission, the City also contributed a .5 mill General Fund contribution (years, we might add, that Grand Blanc Township did not contribute). This contribution totals to about \$118,000 for an approximate total of \$354,000.

- The City residents passed a millage in November 2018 for fire protection millage. The ballot language is as pictured:



- The City agrees, it does take 6 months to train a firefighter. That is why the City is hiring trained paid on call firefighters—i.e., ones that do not require a 6 month training runway. We are also looking into bringing an in-house trainer and may have firefighters trained earlier than expected. We will go through the County academy if we need to at a later date.
- The City will be adopting a mutual aid agreement on April 24th. With this agreement, the City Fire Department will call in any and all Fire Departments it may need to help in times of crisis. The City’s police officers are trained in crisis response, as well. Our firefighters will be trained in crisis training.
 - **Also, crisis training is handled with the full forces, police, fire, ems, FBI, SWAT, the Whole County, State and sometimes Federal agencies are called in. This is where you draw from a wealth of experience in times of crisis. We believe we have those connections and are well positioned with mutual aid.**
- The ISO Rating - Fenton has often been viewed as the city to strive to be like. The City of Fenton has the same model as we will, full time chief, part-time paid on call. Their **ISO rating is 3** and their rating improved in 2018 mainly because of water system improvements. Please refer to our City website. We have attached several articles about the ISO rating and the calculation.

The City mayor, council and city manager spent many years and many months with the millage to determine a fiscally sound conclusion. The City mayor, council and city manager live here in our City. The decisions we make affect our own families, friends, neighbors and community. It was a decision that was not taken lightly and we welcome additional discussion with our community.

The City did not drive this split. Grand Blanc Township dissolved the joint Fire Commission on January 22, 2019, giving the City ninety (90) days to determine the best route for the City. With fourteen (14) fires a year in 2018 and three (3) fires through March 2019, the City determined the best route for response times based on the Township's non-committal of leaving Station #1 open was to create the first City of Grand Blanc Fire Department and create a legacy for the City.

The Township's offer included the City paying 16.25% of the Fire operating budget, capital expenses and indirect costs that the City did not agree with. This budget would be approved and passed by the Township. The City Residents would not have a voice in the matter. In fact, the budget could also go up and the City residents would be forced to pay based on the percentage, regardless of the millage being collected. Under such a scenario, the City could have to raise taxes to pay for the millage if the Township raises the budget, capital expenses or indirect costs. It would essentially be a scenario "taxation without representation" imposed upon the City by the Township Board. **The City is acting fiscally responsible by keeping the budget within its control.**

To put a finer point on this, we also want to address exactly what MGT Consultants provided. Based upon the Township's fire allocation study by MGT Consultants, which the City agreed to participate and pay our share, the Township should be paying 83.75% and the City should be paying 16.25%. The City Council had some questions for the consultants conducting the study. When asked, the consultants were unclear with the figures presented, but insisted it was in the best interest of both municipalities to remain in the current agreement. In detail, the City was presented with the fee to pay for fire services based on the following items of the Fire Budget at 16.25% of their total budget for the current year which seemingly matched the City millage collected plus the .5 mill City General Fund contribution:

Fire Department Operating Budget	\$204,842
Capital Expenses	\$92,908
Indirect Costs	<u>\$44,130</u>
Total	\$341,880 per year

The City disputed the capital expenses going forward for several reasons. The Township could experience significant growth in the next few years. This could mean a new fire station could be built in the south side of Grand Blanc Township, as well as a new fire station in the north side with its new DPW as stated in the February 14, 2019 meeting. New Fire Stations could cost millions, with a considerable amount of those costs shifted to City residents. These fire stations could be further away from the City residents' and businesses properties. Increases

and capital expenses based upon percentages (regardless of capital items are located) could increase.

The Township used this study as justification to load the Fire Department's budget full of costs that would be inappropriate for the Fire Department to pay. These costs include \$149,000 in building costs, despite an agreement that the building costs would be paid by the municipality that owns the building, not the Fire Department, \$27,000 in costs for the Township Assessing Department, despite the fact that a fee is already charged to cover the administrative cost of assessing property and thus charging another fee for this is likely illegal, \$35,000 in computing costs, despite the Fire Department only having five computers, and \$13,500 for the salaries and benefits for members of the Grand Blanc Board of Trustees. Voters generously approved the fire millage to fund firefighters and equipment to protect property and save lives, not to pay these unrelated costs.

All this said, we reiterate that the City did try to work with Grand Blanc Township on several separate occasions. The City Council agreed to put a 0.5 mil increase on the ballot for the Fire Department, which the Township demanded even though it was far more that what was needed to meet the Fire Department's needs. The City's voters passed the millage.

We have appreciated all the City of Grand Blanc residents rallying behind our cause to achieve the best services. We are excited for our future as we continue to connect, grow and become our best. The City hopes to have fully educated you about our plans. Please contact us at any time at firechief@cityofgrandblanc.com and citymanager@cityofgrandblanc.com.

Mayor, City Councilmembers and City Manager