

Elsie Fire Board to Purchase Property or Enter Into Lease Agreement With the Village of Elsie

by Deb Price

The Elsie Fire Board held their regular monthly meeting on Friday, April 11th, at the DuPlain Township Hall. The agenda included continuing discussion between the the Board and the Village of Elsie pertaining to the property housed by the Fire Department which is owned by the Village of Elsie.

On December 26, 2024, the Fire Association received a termination letter from the Village of Elsie which stated the Elsie Fire Department is to vacate the Village property and fire barn on November 24, 2025.

On February 22, 2025, the Fire Board received an email from Councilman, Todd Carroll, stating that the state agreed on a sales appraisal amount of \$292,362 and would agree on a sale price of \$250,000 to purchase the property or \$1,200 monthly for a lease. The Village would be responsible for the building insurance, all other expenses would be the responsibility of the Fire Association.

In a letter dated March 24, 2025, the Fire Board sent a letter to the Elsie Village Council members reaching out with questions regarding the November 2025 notice to vacate letter. The letter included questions as to a lease amount, term of lease and various other concerns. The letter also asked how the purchase price was determined. It was stated that the recent addition to the fire barn along with spray foam insulation, a new office area and other improvements made to the building were funded by the Firefighters (from fundraisers, dances, etc) not by the Village and was any consideration given to those donated funds when setting the purchase price?

The \$292,362 property value was determined from the Tax Card from the Assessor on November 25, 2024. Since that time the property was split and the new Tax Card value on the property is \$179,475 which was presented to the Fire Board on March 19, 2025. The fire board then asked if the sale price would be lowered due to the new "Fair Market Value", the answer was no.

During a recent audit of the Fire Board for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the auditor commented that the Village provided no contribution during that period. The Fire Association sought and paid for copies from the Credit Union of every check and every deposited item for the 2023-2024 year and there were no checks from the Village of Elsie. The insurance cost totaled \$11,317. It was stated to the Fire Board that the village's ledger showed over \$18,000 was given to the Fire Department. The Association has requested several times the documentation proving that donation. On March 19th, 2025 the Fire Board was told they may never get proof due to the record keeping of the previous Village Manager. The question remains, will the Village further research the situation and will the Fire Board be reimbursed for the \$11,317 insurance bill they paid. The Board asked for a response to there letter before their next meeting on April 11th.

On Wednesday, April 9th, Village Council President, Jason Freeman, sent an email to Fire Board Secretary, Amy Bowen and Cc to all Village Council members and Fire Board Members in response to the March 24th letter from the Fire Board. As to the property split that was done, the Village did not authorize the split and was looking into who did. The price of the fire building is on hold pending an appraisal. He went on the say the Village is willing to write a 5 year lease in the amount of \$1,200 per month with the Fire Board being responsible for all operating expenses, utilities and building maintenance. As to the other questions presented, they would be addressed at the Board meeting on the 10th.

There were several people who commented and had questions as to how they would like to see things resolved. An overwhelming opinion was that the fire department has been in operation for generations and that going forward we need to work together to keep the department intact within the Village of Elsie.

There are many rumors as to the financial status of the Village of Elsie and how they got in the position they are in. Village President, Jason Freeman stated at the meeting on April 11th that the expenses of the fire barn have gotten too expensive. I suspect that we all will learn hopefully in the not to distant future what's actually going on, but in the meantime I'm confident that working together for the good of the fire department and the community as a whole, things will get worked out and addressed for the good of everyone.