



An Open Letter to Wayne Township on the Fire Department Merger

Fellow Wayne Township Community Members,

As you may recall, in March the Wayne Township Board gave me the authority to enter negotiations with the City of Indianapolis to explore the possibility of merging the Wayne Township Fire Department with the Indianapolis Fire Department.

Over the last six months, my team and I have met many times with leaders from the City, the Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD), and the Indianapolis Professional Firefighters Local 416 to share information and engage in open, honest dialogue about consolidating the departments.

At the beginning of that process, I made the following commitments to the Wayne Township community:

- All five Wayne Township fire stations would remain open, fully staffed, and equipped.
- All current Wayne Township staff affected by a merger would be offered new positions with the City or IFD with comparable pay, benefits, seniority and rank.
- Fire education and community outreach efforts – like our annual Public Safety Day Celebration – would continue.

And the commitments I made remain in place today.

However, given the financial complexity of this process, all parties have agreed it will not be feasible to complete a fire department merger by January 1, 2025, as we had initially hoped and planned.

Therefore, moving forward and into the foreseeable future, the Wayne Township Fire Department will remain as it is today, within the Wayne Township government structure. As Township Trustee, I want to assure our residents that the decision not to merge with the Indianapolis Fire Department will have no impact on your safety or that of the community.

The pursuit of a merger has always been a matter of fiscal consideration. Since taking office in 2022, I have instituted several cost-saving measures that have and will continue to stabilize Wayne Township Fire Department's budget. Most notably, along with strict budget controls, the merger of our ambulance service with Indianapolis Emergency Medical Services in March has significantly strengthened the financial viability of the Township and our fire service.

With this decision made, we will now work to create a fire department budget for 2025, including beginning negotiations on a new contract for our union firefighters. Our focus will remain on continuing to provide world-class fire protection to the residents of Wayne Township.

I am incredibly grateful for the work of the City of Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Fire Department, and Indianapolis Professional Firefighters Local 416 and our team at Wayne Township throughout this process. I have full confidence that our strong partnership will continue in the years ahead.

And, most importantly, I want to thank our entire Wayne Township community for your patience and support throughout this process. We look forward to continuing to serve you.

Thank you,

Jeb Bardon, Wayne Township Trustee