

Hiram Township Trustees

Special Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2026 at 7:00 PM, Hiram Christian Church

Present: Trustees; Chairman Jack Groselle, Steve Pancost and Dan Ellenberger. Hiram Village; Mayor Ann Haynam, Councilman Chris Szell, Hiram Fire Chief Tony Marotta. Moderator; George Brown. Public; Too many Village and Township residents to list here...

This meeting is being recorded to facilitate the written minutes. The recording will be preserved until the minutes are approved.

Opening Comments:

Rev. Chris McCreight provided thanks and awareness for everyone that was able to attend and provide commentary regarding better understanding of the situation with Fire and EMS services between the Village of Hiram, and Hiram Township.

Sign-in sheets were provided for residents to sign so that both the Township and Village

Introductions:

All members of the panel that were speaking introduced themselves.

Panel Members Round:

All members of the panel took turns identifying what they felt were issues that brought everyone to this point, and also possible ideas / solutions.

Ms. Haynam mentioned that she felt that the Fire Dept. needs more personnel and she is looking for ideas.

Mr. Groselle gave a brief history of prior inner workings of the Fire Department when he and Mr. Ellenberger were directly working IN the Fire Department.

Mr. Szell noted that there needs to be a path forward to resolution.

Mr. Ellenberger noted that no matter what, it's the Village and Township Leadership that needs to provide adequate Fire and EMS safety and services.

Mr. Marotta noted the difficulty of getting employees, training and retaining them.

Mayor Haynem was asked how the pay falls within neighboring communities. Former Chief Byers provided a comparison chart back in January 2026 Village Meeting. Hiram falls more or less average compared to surrounding departments.

Mr. Groselle noted how the ISO rating of Fire and EMS works in the current agreement and how it would potentially affect residents home insurance. He also noted his feelings that Hiram College should pay more to receive services from the Fire Department. Mr. Groselle is opposed to a district in it's current state.

Mr. Szell noted that the Facility and Salaries haven't changed in years. He mentioned that Mayor Haynam took steps to increase salaries.

Mr. Pancost noted that he is also opposed to a district in it's current state.

Mr. Szell noted that the Township residents pay 5mil in levis and that Village residents pay 5mil in levis and a portion of their RITA income tax towards the Fire and EMS.

Mr. Ellenberger reiterated that we collectively need to work on our own collective house in order to work together and provide the proper services.

Mayor Haynam noted the positives of moving to a district. She also noted that she felt that it's more important, right now, to spend money for personnel instead of waiting to save up for a new piece of equipment.

Mr. Groselle reviewed prior budgetary numbers, and the very good working relationship that the Township had with the prior Chief Bill Byers.

Mr. Brown spoke a little bit about Districts, including a brief overview of how they're formed and who in the area has districts. He also explained what a Fire District actually is for attendees that did not know.

Mr. Brown collected questions from the residents in attendance. The panel answered to the best of their abilities.

When was the last time that the Fire committee meet, and why did they not work together? Mr. Szell noted that the committee has not met, to his knowledge, in the last 10 years. Mr. Groselle noted that the Fire Chief would attend the Township Trustee Meetings to provide a report, and take any feedback as needed from the Township.

Who dispatches for the Fire Department? Fire and EMS are still dispatched through the County. Mayor Haynam noted that the Village notified the County of their situation so that calls would not route into the Village for a brief period. Mr. Ellenberger noted that also a house fire was not responded to by Hiram Fire, and a fall on an icy road that was not responded to by Hiram Fire during the brief shutdown.

How can we justify the lack of brief coverage given that the Village and Township have been a joint Fire Department for such a long time? Mr. Groselle noted that if something were to happen with a split, the equipment is split 50/50 between the Village and Township. He also noted how many mutual aid calls were provided by the Hiram Fire Dept vs the much lower number that was received.

Is the Fire Chief expected to step in as Fireman or Paramedic? If so, how can an interim Chief step in as he is on medical leave from Aurora? What % of budget is paid by Hiram Township? Mr. Marotta noted that right now, due to leave, he can not fill in. Once he is cleared for duty by his doctor, then he would be expected and willing to fill in as needed. Mr. Marotta also noted he did not understand how splitting up would benefit the residents and his hope is that the Village and Township resolve their differences and come to an agreement.

Mr. Brown noted some ideas from other districts on how they communicate staff shortages out to everyone.

Is it true that the Fire Department Associates are to clean the Mayor's Chambers/Office? If so, why? Mayor Haynam stated that they do NOT clean her office. The Staff does have other cleaning duties however: Council Chambers, the Hallway, and the Restrooms off the Hallway.

Understanding that there are grants available for infrastructure and equipment. Will these be investigated and applied for? Mayor Haynam and Mr. Marotta stated “definitely”

Is the problem money or moral? Mr. Groselle noted that the Village should make the Staff Surveys public as that would answer this question. Mr. Marotta noted that everyone is very emotional and that he can’t speak to the past.

What coverage will the Township residents have after the 90-120 days elapse after notice of the termination? This was answered later in the meeting by Mr. Szell reading from the Fire contract that coverage will continue while the Village and Township work through this.

The May edition of the Communicator stated that negotiations have happened. Why meetings have taken place, and are minutes available? Mr. Groselle noted that there are no minutes. Any negotiations are between counsel of both parties so they are not public record.

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it... why are changes needed? Mayor Haynam stated her impression, during her first 2 years in office, was that there was 2 people on duty at all times. She asked Chief Byers to put together notes on capital needs, staff needs, and more. That’s when she learned that there was less coverage than she thought.

Has the college been asked to put any money towards the department? Maybe a College representative should’ve been invited to this meeting. Does the College pay through property and income? Mr. Groselle noted if the College was indeed taxed via properties, it would be around \$140,000. At one point, the College was giving money... \$100,000 then 80,000 then 30,000 then nothing. Mayor Haynam approached the College about contributing again possibly and the College refused to assess any additional fees on the students. Mr. Szell noted that during the Lou Bertram era, the college was approached and they would not provide any money. When money was provided, it was split between Police and Fire. Mayor Haynam noted that the Village has a lot of non-Profits are tax exempt from paying into safety services.

What is the Township Trustees plan? The Township leaders want their way, but what happens is forced in this situation? Mr. Ellenberger reiterated what Mr. Groselle stated earlier in the meeting about getting together and join as some form of a District. Also. how does the District work with the College.

Closing words from the various panel members provided

Mr. Marotta then invited residents to his discussion for plans for the Fire Department on May 13th and May 14th.

Closing words from Rev. McCreight

The meeting ended at 9:00pm