

PUBLIC HEARING

DELAWARE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**LOCAL LAW INTRO. NO. 20 OF 2023
REAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND
AMBULANCE WORKERS PURSUANT TO SECTION 466-A OF THE REAL
PROPERTY TAX LAW**

AUGUST 23, 2023

The Delaware County Board of Supervisors held a Public Hearing concerning Local Law Intro. No. 20 of 2023 in the Board of Supervisors' Room of the Senator Charles D. Cook County Office Building, 111 Main Street, Delhi, New York, at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 23, 2023, Chairman Tina Molé presiding.

Chairman Molé called the hearing to order and read the notice of public hearing:

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

**LOCAL LAW INTRO. NO. 20 OF 2023
REAL PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND
AMBULANCE WORKERS PURSUANT TO SECTION 466-A OF THE REAL
PROPERTY TAX LAW**

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held by the Delaware County Board of Supervisors on Wednesday, August 23, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. in the Supervisors' Room of the Senator Charles D. Cook County Office Building, 111 Main Street, Delhi, New York, concerning proposed Local Law Intro. No. 20 of 2023 entitled, Real Property Tax Exemptions for Volunteer Firefighters and Ambulance Workers Pursuant to Section 466-A of the Real Property Tax Law.

All persons interested in speaking concerning the proposed local law will be heard at the aforementioned time and place. Disabled citizens who require assistance in attending said public hearing or in furnishing comments or suggestions should contact the Clerk of the Board's office to request assistance at (607) 832-5110.

Dated: August 9, 2023

Penny A. Bishop
Clerk of the Board
Delaware County Board of Supervisors

Chairman Molé stated that a sign-in sheet is being passed around and asked that anyone wishing to speak regarding Local Law Intro. No. 20 of 2023 to please stand and state their full name and town they reside in.

John Gilmore, Chief of the Sidney Fire Department and Chair of the Delaware County Fire Advisory Board, gave the following statement:

“Good afternoon, my name is John Gilmore, Chief of the Sidney Fire Department and Chairperson of the Delaware County Fire Advisory Board. Today I represent the thirty volunteer fire departments that proudly protect the residents, visitors, and property of Delaware County. I speak today in strong support of this local law.

As you are aware, volunteerism across this county as well as across the nation is dwindling quickly. There are many reasons but what we must concentrate on is it is the new reality.

Fire departments and emergency medical services have been hit especially hard in their efforts to recruit new members as well as retain those we already have. Another truth we live with is our remaining volunteers are reaching ages where they should not be actively fighting fire, yet they remain dedicated responders. As an example, four of the top five responders in the Sidney Fire Department are more than sixty years old. Two of them are in their seventies. And I know my statistics are not unique to the county fire departments.

The thought of fire departments shutting down once was unimaginable, yet a week doesn't go by that I read about a fire department somewhere in New York State or the nation closing its doors because they no longer have enough members to respond. I learned just yesterday that a fire department in a neighboring county is closing its doors. How long before that story comes to our county?

And what happens when volunteers no longer answer the call? The FASNY (Firefighter Association of State of NY) commissioned a study to look at the economic impact that volunteer firefighters have in their communities. It has been determined that volunteers save New York State taxpayers \$3.8 billion in salaries and benefits alone. What would the cost be in our county?

We need to find new ways to bring members into the emergency services. Even if we are able to recruit members we need strong incentives to retain them as valued firefighters. Passage of this law will be one of those new ways and give us a much-needed tool to help recruit and retain firefighters and EMTs.

But while a valuable and much needed step, it is only one step of more that needs to be taken. I would also ask each Supervisor to further support the emergency services within your townships by mirroring this local law at the town level. We would also ask for your support as we approach school boards, village boards and fire districts to also support passage of similar local laws. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the Town of Middletown and Village of Margaretville. Through a cooperative forward-thinking effort between the fire departments, town and village boards, fire commissioners and school board all of the entities unanimously passed local laws providing exemptions for firefighters.

Together these efforts will give fire departments a strong and we believe effective tool to bring people into the emergency services of Delaware County. The thirty fire departments that protect Delaware County commend you for moving this bill into law and thank you for showing

us that you do support our efforts as proud volunteers. Thank you for your time today.”

Since no one else wished to speak, Chairman Molé declared the hearing adjourned at 1:06 p.m.