

Dear Residents and other Concerned Citizens,

The Albion Village Board would like to take this opportunity to provide additional information about the proposal to form a Joint Fire District and how we got here. The intent is not to point fingers, but to provide facts about what the next steps should be. In an effort of continued transparency, our goal is to address any remaining questions. We plan to provide a couple of opportunities where community members can voice their concerns, get questions answered, and show support for the proposed Joint Fire District.

Below is a list of facts that the current Village Board would like to convey:

- When most of us took office, there were no reserves to offset larger capital projects or equipment purchases. The Fire Department was forced to operate “paycheck by paycheck” with no savings for future expenses, planned or unplanned.
- The current Fire Department budget was not funded at proper levels to meet operational needs, and the Village was not able to increase funds without significantly increasing the Village tax rate. This resulted in a situation where needed improvements to facilities and equipment had to be delayed, “the can was kicked down the road.”
- The fire contract money from the Town of Albion and Town of Gaines, along with supplemental funds from the Village, is keeping the Fire Department afloat but is not meeting current or future needs.
- We are faced with having to replace two aging apparatus (vintage 1992 & 1997). While evaluating this situation, the Chief Officers of the Fire Department proposed to the Village replacing three apparatus with only two to “right size the fleet.” The Board agreed because long term, this would be a cost-saving move for the taxpayers. NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) Standards recommend that apparatus that are more than 25 years old be retired from the vehicle fleet.
- The Village of Albion does not have the ability to take on the debt for the replacement of fire apparatus, or any other necessary improvements, without significant increases in the Village tax rate.
- Providing fire protection is not an optional service. It must be provided by law. Providing inferior fire protection not only puts our volunteer firefighters at risk, but it is also a letdown to those that expect a high-quality life and property saving service.
- Providing inferior fire protection lowers the community’s Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating and would likely increase the insurance premium of every homeowner and may even cause an insurer to deny you coverage in some circumstances. ISO ratings reflect an area’s preparedness to prevent and extinguish fires, such as the number of firefighters, training, apparatus maintenance and reliability, water supply, emergency communication system, and fire safety education and prevention.

**Benefits of forming a Joint Fire District for the Town Albion and Town of Gaines:**

- The District offers a way to right the mismanagement of past fire protection service and spread the cost of this necessary service evenly across a larger tax base.
- Every registered voter in the Joint Fire District has a say and has the ability to run for Commissioner.

- Every registered voter has the ability to vote for Commissioners, bonding referendums, creation of reserve accounts, etc. that affect the operation of the Fire District. You eliminate “taxation without representation”.
- Your tax bill will have a separate line item with the Fire District Tax. You will have peace of mind that your fire tax dollars are being spent on fire protection.

**What happens if the Joint Fire District is not approved:**

- If the Joint Fire District is not approved, the Village of Albion will be forced to raise Village taxes about \$5 per \$1,000 of assessed value (a 25% increase in Village taxes). In addition, once the Town Fire Protection Contracts expire at the end of 2026, the Village will be forced to negotiate higher rate contracts with the Towns to properly fund and operate the Fire Department. The towns will then need to increase taxes to pay the higher rates.

The Albion Village Board and the Albion Village Fire Department are setting up two Public Informational Meetings to provide additional information about the proposed Joint Fire District and also answer questions the public may have. Please join us on June 10, 2024 and June 17, 2024, at 6pm at the Hoag Library located at 134 S Main St, Albion, New York 14411.

-The Albion Village Board and Albion Village Fire Department