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*From The Morning Call*

## **Forks Fire Department proposes own training facility**

By Joe Nixon  
Of The Morning Call

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The Forks Township Fire Department would have its own training facility as part of a five-year plan unveiled to township supervisors Thursday.

In addition, department officials outlined a vehicle replacement program for the next quarter century that accounts for the eventual updating of all equipment.

Township Supervisor David Hoff, liaison to the Fire Department and part of a six-member committee that worked on the plan, called the outline "aggressive and doable."

"Everything that has been proposed here will not use general fund money," Hoff said, adding capital purchases in the five-year plan and vehicle replacements over the next 25 years should be able to be financed through increased revenues from the \$52 emergency services tax, which replaced the occupational privilege tax, and through low-interest state loans.

"I think this gives the township the best opportunity to put out there for the residents of the township a well-equipped, a well-trained volunteer fire company," Hoff said.

Supervisors will likely formally consider the plan at their Nov. 3 meeting.

Deputy Fire Chief Bryan Weis told supervisors that fast growth in the township over the past five years has meant more work for firefighters. The call volume so far this year is more than double the 200 calls logged in 1999.

The \$350,000 training facility, projected for 2008, would allow the township's 60 active volunteer firefighters easier access to training, fire officials said. The township could continue to use the Northampton County fire training facility in Washington Township, but Fire Chief Tim Weis said having a township site would allow training to be more easily scheduled and completed.

Fire officials said the training facility, for which the fire company would contribute \$175,000, could be rented by other communities and also used for joint training with township police and emergency medical services.

In other business, supervisors voted to discontinue garbage fee discounts for residents who live elsewhere for parts of the year. The township had been granting the discounts to only about a dozen properties, but there was never a written policy, said Township Manager Cathy Kichline.

Resident Joan E. Shultz approached the supervisors, saying she's received a discount for five years because she lives in Florida for six months of the year.

Supervisors, however, said the township is billed by its hauler on a per-household basis. Supervisor Chairman John Ackerman said if the township grants discounts, the rest of the residents were essentially picking up the tab.

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