



BON AIR FIRE COMPANY
PROUDLY VOLUNTEERING SINCE 1918
541 Royal Avenue
Havertown, PA 19083
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September 5, 2019

Statement of the Bon Air Fire Company

For more than 100 years, the volunteer members of the Bon Air Fire Company have provided critical emergency services to the Haverford Township Community. Over the years, our members have extinguished fires in Havertown, aided those ravaged by flooding in Johnstown, and even responded to an oil tanker fire in Marcus Hook. In one instance, such services resulted in the loss of the life of a Bon Air Fire Company volunteer.

The members of the Bon Air Fire Company devote their time and risk their own safety on behalf of the residents of our community. We care about keeping all residents of our community safe.

Yesterday, representatives from Haverford Township removed Township-owned fire trucks and seized the Company's firefighting equipment; effectively shutting down the Company. The Township closed our Fire Company because we refused the Township's demand that we terminate one of our volunteer firefighters as a result of that volunteer's limited interactions with an outside organization. In closing the Fire Company, the Township failed to identify a single instance in which that volunteer's services to the Haverford community were negatively influenced in any way by his brief association with the outside organization.

In refusing the Township's demands to terminate the services of the volunteer, the Fire Company treated the volunteer as we treat all Haverford citizens; fairly and equally. This was a difficult process which required much introspection. Some of the bedrock rights we all share as American citizens are the rights to freely assemble and to freely associate with others. Unfortunately, our beliefs in those constitutional rights are sometimes tested when the groups in question espouse beliefs with which we do not agree.

When the Fire Company became aware of this volunteer's interactions with the outside organization, we acted upon this information by first conducting an investigation. The investigation revealed that the volunteer is not now, nor ever was, a member of the outside organization. While the volunteer attended some social gatherings of the outside organization, the volunteer ultimately decided, after he learned more about the group's beliefs, that he did not wish to become part of the organization. He never attended any rallies or protests and he disassociated himself from the group more than one year ago. He has broken no law and committed no crime.

In his actions as a firefighter, the volunteer has not acted in any way which suggests that his behavior would be influenced by this organization. He has not made any statements to his fellow volunteers or posted any statements on social media in support of the views of the outside organization or which reflect poorly on his ability to faithfully carry out the duties of his position to the Haverford Community. On the contrary, the volunteer has always acted as a caring person dedicated to serving his community. In short, the investigation revealed that he had not engaged in any activity in violation of the mission of the Fire Company to serve the Haverford community.

In addition, the Board of the Bon Air Fire Company has known this volunteer for more than six years. During that time, and in our daily interactions with the volunteer responding to calls and acting as a member of the Fire Company, we have found this volunteer to be a caring person dedicated to serving the community. He was recently honored by our organization. For these reasons, the Fire Company decided not to terminate the services of the volunteer.

It is unfortunate that a Township Commissioner published the name of the volunteer. Such actions do not help to resolve this issue; they only inflame an already contentious situation.

The Township's decision to close the Fire Company is wrong and harmful to the community. As a result of its decision, there are now 37 fewer well trained active crew members available to fight fires in our community and three fewer fire trucks available to be dispatched to alarms. The Township should reconsider its decision which prevents the Bon Air Fire Company from continuing to carry out its mission to ensure the safety of the residents and businesses of the Haverford community. We encourage all Haverford residents to please let their commissioners know that the Township is wrong to close the Bon Air Fire Company.

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