

NORWICH

T O W N S H I P

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Charles Wm. Buck
Larry Earman
Michael D. Cope

2009 TRUSTEE MEETINGS

JUNE 1, 12:00 PM

JUNE 15, 6:30 PM

JULY 6, 12:00 PM

JULY 20, 6:30 PM

AUGUST 3, 12:00 PM

AUGUST 17, 6:30 PM

SEPT. 8, 12:00 PM

SEPT. 21, 6:30 PM

MEETINGS ARE HELD AT:

Norwich Township
Safety Services Building
5181 Northwest Parkway

If you have questions,
please call (614) 876-7694.



NORWICH TOWNSHIP
1813

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

THE DEDICATION of our new Safety Services Building was held on Sunday, March 8. We had an excellent turnout of several hundred people in spite of the bad weather. We received many positive comments and many visitors were impressed with our new accommodations. Residents who were unable to attend the dedication are invited to stop by during normal business hours to see the new facility.



Safety Services Dedication Ceremony.

Due to the wise management of fiscal resources by past Trustees, the Safety Services Building was funded solely by the Township's general fund without additional taxes or debt. A portion of the building is being used by the City of Hilliard for their police headquarters on a 30-year lease. Utilities and other building costs are being shared by the city and the Township.

While the Township's general fund is solvent and no tax increase is warranted, the same cannot be said for our Fire fund. The Fire fund supports all of our fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) activities. A close examination of the Fire fund indicates that, if something is not done, we will soon be faced with the choice of reducing our level of service or raising taxes. Neither of these options is appealing. Billing insurance carriers for EMS transports is an alternative that we have been examining that could delay the need for additional tax revenue. Most other EMS providers are already billing for transports. Reluctantly, Norwich Township may have to join them in this practice later this year to avoid a reduction in service or a tax increase.

In this issue of the Norwich Township Newsletter, you will find several articles that explain the practice of EMS billing in more detail. Please read these articles closely to learn more about the program. Also, we encourage you to attend a special public meeting at our Safety Services Building on Monday, June 8 at 6:30 PM to share your thoughts and ideas on EMS billing with the Board of Trustees.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find other articles on issues of special interest to residents in the summer months, such as storm water management and open burning. As always, if you have any questions or would like more information on these or any other Township matters, please call our Township Administration Office at (614) 876-7694. 🍀

www.norwichtownship.org

EMS BILLING...HOW IT WORKS

EMS billing is not a new or novel idea. In fact, approximately 85% of the EMS providers nationwide bill for patient transports. Some central Ohio departments have been charging for EMS transports for nearly 10 years. Currently, 16 of the 19 EMS providers in Franklin County charge to transport patients to the hospital.

On the surface, EMS billing seems like a money grab where Fire Departments are taking advantage of patients during a difficult and vulnerable time. However, the facts do not support this conclusion. The information below is offered to give residents a better understanding of EMS billing

How EMS billing works:

While treating and/or transporting patients, EMS and hospital personnel gather patient information and, if possible, ask the patient to sign a form authorizing disclosure of specific medical information protected by HIPAA privacy rules. This information is electronically submitted to a third party billing service. They review the report to determine the appropriate fee for the transportation services provided. Once the fee is determined, a claim is submitted to the patient's private or government insurance carrier. Fees are assessed only if the patient is transported to a medical facility. If a patient receives medical attention, but is not transported, there is no fee for the service.

What a Norwich Township resident can expect:

Residents are considered persons who live or work in the Norwich Township Fire Department service area, which includes unincorporated Norwich Township, the City of Hilliard, and Brown Township. Residents would not be billed for insurance co-pays or additional charges above the rate paid by their insurer. Residents may receive a letter requesting insurance information or verification, but they will not receive a bill even if they are uninsured.

What a non-resident can expect:

Transport charges will be billed to a non-resident patient's insurer in the same manner as a resident. However, non-residents will be billed for any unpaid balance not covered by the insurance carrier. If the non-resident is uninsured, they will be billed for the entire amount.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

- Q.** Will I be denied service if I am unable to pay to be transported to a medical facility?
- A.** No. No one will be denied emergency medical service or transport for any reason. The medical treatment that a patient receives will not be changed in any way by an EMS billing program.
- Q.** When will I be asked to pay for transportation to the hospital?
- A.** Sometime after your hospital visit, your insurance carrier will be billed for the transport. When your insurance carrier or Medicare pays the transport charges, you will receive an "Explanation of Benefits" form to notify you that the charges have been paid. That will be the end of the transaction for residents in Norwich Township Fire Department service area. In some cases, the third party billing service may not have the name of your insurer. In those cases, you may receive a letter asking you to provide this information. If you are a resident, you will NOT receive nor will you be expected to pay the bill yourself.
- Q.** How much will the transports cost?
- A.** The cost of the transport would depend on the type of the service provided and the distance to the medical facility. For example, the charge for basic life support (BLS) transports will be less than the charge for advanced life support (ALS) transports. Our rates would be based on the reasonable and customary Medicare rates for our region and would be comparable to the rates of other departments in central Ohio.
- Q.** Will I end up paying for this service through an increase in my insurance premium?
- A.** No. If you are insured, you are already paying for this service. By state statute, EMS transport fees are included in your current premium. All private and government insurers already carry provisions to pay for EMS transport.



- Q. What if I am not insured or my insurance does not cover the total cost of the transport?
- A. Norwich Township's third party billing service provider will be instructed to practice "soft billing". Once the Township's billing service receives verification that you are not covered by insurance or Medicare, the billing process stops for Norwich Township residents. No bill will be sent and you will not be expected to pay the charges. Non-residents will be billed for any unpaid balance.
- Q. How are these funds used?
- A. By statute, revenue raised by charging for EMS transports would be used for expenses associated with the "management, maintenance, and operation of the Township's fire and EMS services". Currently, these expenses are being paid by tax revenue in the Fire fund. Without this new source of revenue, Norwich Township would be forced to seek a Fire levy increase in the next year or two to avoid a reduction in service. EMS billing would postpone the need to seek new tax revenue through a Fire levy for several years.
- Q. Who do I talk to if I have a question about EMS billing?
- A. If you have a question about Norwich Township's proposed EMS billing program, contact Fire Chief Dave Long or Township Administrator Wayne Warner at (614) 876-7694. 🍀

FIRE FUND FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

With the State of Ohio forecasting an \$825 million decline in general revenue fund receipts over the next two years, Norwich Township, like all other townships, will continue to see a reduction in our local government distributions as well as other revenue streams. Thanks to the fiscal restraint of our past and present Board, as well as our employee's commitment to provide superior service in an efficient and cost effective manner, Norwich Township is in a good position to weather this financial crisis facing our nation. However, today's financial position alone will not be enough to secure our financial future.

Our Fire operations have been faced with a number of financial challenges over the past few years. As the State of Ohio continues to completely phase out Tangible Personal Property (TPP) tax, the resulting impact is a loss of approximately \$800,000 in operating revenues for our Fire fund. In addition, Wall Streets' financial crisis has driven down investment rates so drastically that the Fire funds investment income has dropped by more than \$400,000 annually. Lastly, the Township has lost roughly \$350,000 in real estate tax revenue due Tax Incentive Financing (TIF) collections that have been redirected to support infrastructure efforts. Currently, the Fire fund is deficit spending approximately \$2 million per year. At this current pace, it is projected that the Township's savings will be depleted by 2013. Due to these conditions, we must prepare now. The last fire operating levy our residents passed was in 1998. It is the Township's intention to delay for as long as possible asking our residents to consider renewing our fire operating levies or to place a new fire operating levy on the ballot. The implementation of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) billing will aid in this effort without placing any additional financial burden upon our residents. Initial projections indicate that the Township will generate a minimum of \$600,000 in revenue related to EMS billing. The sooner we begin these efforts, the sooner we will help to minimize the long term impact of the other revenue losses.

Residents can expect that Norwich Township will continue to carefully manage the Township's finances and exercise good fiscal prudence with our expenditures. We will continue to look for ways to save money, share services, and participate in joint contracts. 🍀 *Jamie Miles, Fiscal Officer*



SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE !!!

In an effort to secure the long-term financial health of the Norwich Township Fire Department and to continue to provide the highest quality of service to our residents, the Board of Trustees is considering charging for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) transports. Currently, approximately 85% of all EMS providers nationwide charge for this service. Norwich Township is one of only three EMS providers in central Ohio that does not charge for EMS transports. Revenue collected from billing for this service would help offset the loss of revenue due to the legislative actions of the state of Ohio and the City of Hilliard. Implementing an EMS billing program would postpone the need for a tax increase through a new Fire levy.

The Norwich Township Board of Trustees will host a public meeting on Monday, June 8 at 6:30 PM at the Safety Services Building at 5181 Northwest Parkway to discuss the EMS billing process and its effect on residents as well as the finances of the Norwich Township Fire Department. The Board encourages all residents in the Norwich Township Fire Department service area, including unincorporated Norwich Township, the City of Hilliard, and Brown Township, to attend this informative meeting. 🌱

COMMENTS ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

As Norwich Township moves towards billing insurance companies for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) transports there is always a concern on how it will affect services provided. I want to assure our residents that nothing will change. When you call 9-1-1, our dispatchers will quickly gather important information including your name, address, phone number, and a short explanation of why you called. This information is used to assure the proper level of care is dispatched to your emergency. This process takes less than a minute and by the time the dispatchers hang up the phone, they are dispatching the proper equipment and personnel. With EMS billing, this process does not change.

EMS billing is a method for the community to take advantage of a funding source that does not affect your family's budget. Your medical insurance, by law, contains coverage for medical transportation. These funds are available for the community to gather and use to support and enhance our medical program. At no time will you, as a resident, be expected to pay any out of pocket expenses for our services. It is our goal to simply take advantage of funds that are already available for our use. Once again, how you are medically treated and transported will remain the same as it is today. You will see no changes in our response or your treatment.

Our crews are trained to provide the highest level of care and treatment possible in a non-hospital setting. They will quickly assess your medical condition, start the appropriate treatment and transport you to the hospital, if necessary. Again, this will not change with EMS billing. Our crews will transport you to the hospital of your choice, in most cases. There can be exception to this if the crew believes it is medically necessary to transport you to a specific medical facility. When and where you are transported is determined by your medical needs and will not change when we start billing for medical transportation.

The only thing that will change with EMS billing is that our crews will gather some additional information while they are filling out their medical report. This will include some basic insurance information that our billing processors will need to bill your insurance. At no time will gathering insurance information take priority over your medical treatment.

Our number one concern and priority is to provide you with the highest level of medical care possible. This has always been our goal and will continue to be our goal into the future. 🌱 *Dave Long, Norwich Township Fire Chief*

CHIEF LONG COMPLETES OHIO FIRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM



On April 24, Norwich Township Fire Chief Dave Long graduated from the Ohio Fire Executive (OFE) program. OFE is an executive development program created and administered by the Ohio Fire & Emergency Services Foundation under the auspices of the Ohio Fire Chiefs' Association. Through five intense 4-day sessions over three years, participants enhance and refine their leadership skills and expand their ability to manage their department in a more effective and efficient manner. In addition, Chief Long was honored by his classmates by being selected as class speaker for the graduation ceremonies.

Congratulations to Chief Long on his notable achievement! 

SCHIRTZINGER ROAD PROJECT UPDATE

At a special meeting that the Board of Trustees held on April 13, representatives of the Franklin County Engineer's Office reported that the need for a more in-depth examination of drainage issues in the Schirtzinger Road area will likely delay any road improvements until the 2010 construction season. However, construction of a retaining wall on the south side of the roadway can be completed this year. Construction of the wall is expected to begin sometime in mid-summer. The roadway will need to be closed for a short period of time and residents will be notified of this closure in advance.

At their regular meeting on April 20, the Board approved cooperative agreements with the Franklin County Engineer's Office for the two projects (retaining wall construction and drainage/roadway improvements). The agreements specify that the Franklin County Engineer's Office will provide design and engineering services to Norwich Township at no cost, while the Township will be responsible to pay for all construction costs. Another public involvement meeting is planned in the future when the drainage/roadway improvement plans are more complete. There will be no assessments or tax increases to fund these projects. 

HELP US KEEP OUR STREAMS AND RIVERS CLEAN!

For the past several years, Norwich Township has been working closely with the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District to gain compliance with stringent new EPA regulations on the management of storm water. The intent of the new regulations is to prevent degrading or toxic materials from entering our streams and rivers.

Two of the more critical elements of the program are public education and public involvement/participation on the impact of routine daily activities on the management of storm water runoff. For instance, harmful substances can enter our waterways from lawn fertilization or even washing cars. Residents need to be aware that the water that enters your ditch or catch basin will eventually enter a nearby stream or river. If that water contains contaminants like soap, oil, or chemicals, these substances can harm fish or other wildlife and even enter our drinking water.

So, what can you do to help? Get involved! If you are a volunteer for a youth group or community service organization, maybe your next service project could be a stream-side cleanup, a tree planting, anti-litter campaign, or some other activity that will enhance public awareness and improve our local natural environment.

We all benefit from clean and healthy streams and rivers. You can help both Norwich Township and the natural world by getting involved. For more information, call Township Administrator Wayne Warner at (614) 876-7694 or Mary Ann Brouillette at Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District at (614) 486-9613. 



Norwich Township
5181 Northwest Parkway
Hilliard, Ohio 43026
(614) 876-7694

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ORC 9.03 Allows for Public Funds to be used for newsletters

STANDARDS FOR OPEN BURNING IN NORWICH TOWNSHIP, BROWN TOWNSHIP, AND THE CITY OF HILLIARD

Open Burning Permits for recreational fires, campfires, and outdoor fireplaces are not required. The provisions are that these fires must be fueled by clean seasoned firewood, natural gas or its equivalent. Total fuel areas must also be no larger than 3' in diameter and less than 2' in height. The location for these types of open burning shall not be less than 25' from any structure and provisions must be made to keep the fire from spreading. Fires in approved containers (i.e. chiminea, fire bowls, and metal fire pits) shall not be less than 15' from any structure.

A permit for open burning in Norwich Township, Brown Township, and the City of Hilliard must still be obtained for bon fires whose area will be greater than the above parameters. However, the area of these fires can still be no greater than 5' in diameter and 5' in height. These fires shall not be conducted within 50' of any structure and provisions must be made to keep the fire from spreading. Permit applications can be picked up at any Norwich Township Fire Department. Completed applications must be returned to Station 81 located at 5181 Northwest Parkway five days prior to the open burn. Permits are processed during normal business hours only (8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday thru Friday). If an application is received less than five days prior to the day of the open burn, the applicant will be assessed a fee of \$5.00.

Some open burning is still forbidden. Open burning that is offensive or objectionable due to smoke or odor emissions when atmospheric conditions or local circumstances make such fires hazardous is prohibited. The code official is authorized to order the permit holder or the fire department to extinguish any open burning that creates or adds to a hazardous or objectionable situation.

Under Ohio law, there are certain materials which **may not** be burned anywhere in the state at any time. These items include garbage (any wastes created in the process of handling, preparing, cooking or consuming food), materials containing rubber, grease and asphalt or made from petroleum, such as tires, cars and auto parts, plastics or plastic-coated wire, or dead animals. Open burning is not allowed when air pollution warnings are in effect. Fires cannot obscure visibility for roadways, railroad tracks or airways. No waste generated off premises may be burned.

The Ohio EPA has the authority to enforce open burning laws. Illegal open burning can result in substantial penalties. If you have any questions, please contact the local EPA district office at (800) 686-6330 or visit their website at www.epa.oh.us. In addition, you may contact the Norwich Township Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 876-7694. 🌱