

Please

Ren Cawley  
RAVE COX

✓ Dennis lavender

SEE MASON

✓ Cheyenne Wells

Kurt Grayley

Gwendolyn Camp

Debra Camp

✓ Tim Phipps

Angie Cooperider

Chynise Wells

Elaine Moore

Bob Sands

Tammy Sands

✓ Dale Factor

✓ Andy Patterson

~~Debra~~

heavenly well

Chynise Wells

Sign in  
Please ✓ To Talk  
?

✓ Bayden Chandler  
✓ Teresa Forson  
✓ Terry Forson  
✓ Jason Mitchell  
✓ Ayed Shore  
✓ Aaron MacIntie  
✓ Jon Simon  
✓ Vann Michrish  
✓ Pete Sands  
✓ Bob Sands  
✓ Chris Ferris  
✓ Tammy Sands  
✓ Nash Ours  
✓ Kyle Sands  
✓ Mike Tolliver  
✓ Leah Tolliver  
✓ Stacie Ours  
✓ Jennifer Wussler  
✓ Terry Forson  
✓ Lindsay Beauf



**Kelly Williams Tolliver**

606.913.3161 ext. 2576

## To The Residents of Thorn Township

As volunteers/employees of the Thorn Township Fire Department we have endured countless setbacks at the hands of the Thorn Township Trustees. We have operated without the support of the Board of Trustees, proper equipment, and limited support resources. If we are to move forward and provide the citizens of Thorn Township with the quality of service that you deserve and pay for, we feel that it is important to keep you informed with what is going on within the Township, more specifically with the Board of Trustees.

For the last several years the department has been staffed with an EMS crew of two individuals, Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM until 7:00 PM. We have tried unsuccessfully for the last year and half to extend these days to include weekends. With a dwindling volunteer force, stricter demands on training, and a growing community we miss many runs on the weekends, thus causing a delay in response times because personnel from surrounding departments are called to assist. We have taken this to the Trustees on several occasions, we have looked into the cost of adding weekend hours (last year the department carried over approximately \$450k) as well as other solutions (such as an on call rotation for the volunteers). To this point the Trustees have declined to act. At the most recent trustees meeting the Trustees proposed a \$1.00 an hour pay increase for the Fire Department employees. The Fire Chief and The Assistant Fire Chief countered this proposal and asked to add weekend hours instead of the pay increase. The Trustees turned us down on this proposal and approved the pay increase. Several of our volunteers work part time jobs at surrounding departments or for other part time employers on the weekends. This decreases our already thin volunteer staff. These volunteers have expressed the interest to work weekends at the Thorn Township Fire Department. We have also had several employees leave the department because we do not offer weekend hours.

The Chief's position has been filled over 10 times in the last 20 years. During the last Trustees meeting the Fire Chief was placed on six months' probation for the 4th time. The reason for this continued extension is because the Chief failed to demote an Officer and because of an insurance stipulation. The Chief did not demote the Officer because the demotion was not within the guidelines of the Thorn Township Employee Handbook (approved by the Board of Trustees on August 8th 2012 and amended January 21st 2013) the Officer had not been placed on any disciplinary action, has the appropriate qualifications per the Ohio Revised Code, and the department guidelines. Per the Township Employee Handbook – Any employee who is on probation can be dismissed at any time without cause and there is no appeal process. The decision to once again extend the Chief's probation continues to leave the department in limbo and prevents us from moving forward. This is not the first time that the Board of Trustees has tried to strong arm the fire department. Several volunteers have had to endure mistreatment and slanderous comments at the hands of the Trustees. They have removed or tried to remove several volunteers/employees from the department based on false allegations and they had not received any disciplinary actions regarding any of the accusations. Nor have the trustees made an attempt to adequately investigate or question any of the employees. At one point the Trustees removed an

employee after the previous board of Trustees had cleared the individual of any wrong doing and verified that the employee met the requirements of the Ohio Revised Code. The Perry County District Attorney was contacted and he informed the Board to reinstate the employee immediately. The Board then made the decision to hire a lawyer to try to remove the individual. This went on for well over a year, until the employee had had enough of the mistreatment and the strain on family and the fire department. The law firm hired by the trustees was paid for directly out of fire department funds that come from the Fire and EMS levies that are meant to provide Fire and EMS protection to the Township. Several Thorn Township residents are Firefighters and choose not to volunteer or work at the Thorn Township Fire Department because of the relationship with the Trustees. Why do the Trustees insist on trying to remove dedicated volunteers/employees?

The Township Insurance Policy has a stipulation that prefers anyone driving township vehicles to be over 23 years of age. The Fire Chief did extensive research on this, contacting other departments (who did not have this requirement) as well as getting quotes from other insurance companies. The trustees would not entertain an insurance change. Professional departments hire personnel under the age of 23 every day and do not have these restrictions. Fire fighters go through drivers training once a year to meet state requirements. Does it matter the age of the person driving the vehicle as long as they are trained to help you and your family in a time of crisis?

The department has operated without a second Engine/Rescue for the last five years. This directly affects residents' insurance rates. After five years the Trustees finally approved a second truck. Many times our department is called out to assist other departments on large emergencies. With only one Engine/Rescue we leave the township at risk when that vehicle is out of the township assisting other departments. All departments in the surrounding area operate with at least 2 Engine/Rescues. Our current Rescue is a 2000 model year the standard for replacement is 10 years – 15 years max. The department's tanker is a 92' model year, we have spent a lot of money trying to keep this outdated truck serviceable. More than one department within Perry County has turned over their entire Fire Fleet since we have ordered a New Fire Truck. Many of the tools and gear we use are outdated and in very poor condition, putting our safety and yours in jeopardy. Several times we have been told by the Trustees that all we want to do is spend money. Most of the new equipment we have purchased has come from Federal and State grants, the Fire Department must apply for. The new medic was purchased with a donation made by a resident of Thorn Township. Again we carried over approximately \$450k.

As a department we have stood by and let the Board of Trustees slander, mistreat, and manipulate this department for too long. The Trustees continue to put their personal vendettas and agendas over our safety and the safety of the residents of Thorn Township. We encourage you to go to the township website where you can read the minutes of the Trustees Meetings, dating back to 2010. The next Trustees meeting is February 11th at 6:30 PM. We would like to move our community forward and can only do this with your support. The Fire Department needs to maintain the stability that it currently has and can only do that with the Chief being appointed, allowed to lead his employees, and operate off of a consistent budget. This community cannot afford to lose any more dedicated people.

The Employees and Volunteers of the Thorn Township Fire Department