



3256 Levans Road Coplay, PA 18037

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[www.northwhitehall.org](http://www.northwhitehall.org)

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## MEDIA ADVISORY

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### NEW FIRE TAX IN NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

Lehigh Valley, PA, 11/25/2024 – During the 2025 budget process, Township management and the Board of Supervisors deliberated for several months on the best way to maximize services for residents while also planning for the future capital needs of the Township. Over the next decade, the Township will need to address our aging infrastructure while dealing with an influx of development as we are experiencing the ‘suburban sprawl’ with both residential and commercial development. Still, the primary focus and concern of township leadership is safety!

Fire companies are tasked with more than just fire suppression and are often the first on the scene for a variety of hazards and emergency incidents across the township. The Township continues to operate utilizing volunteer fire departments, which have saved the taxpayers from an unquantifiable tax burden over the last five decades. The fire companies have also saved residents from increased homeowners insurance rates. The ratings supplied by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) add a premium to properties not located near an operational fire department.

Our Township fire companies have seen a steady rise in call volumes equivalent to a ten percent annual increase over the last five years. As you can imagine, the costs associated with the equipment, vehicles, and infrastructure for our local fire companies continues to rise at a dramatic rate too. Lehigh County will be upgrading its emergency radio system, which means the Township is faced with radio replacement costs upwards of \$1,000,000 to become compatible with this new system. This is affecting all townships across Lehigh County. Our local fire companies also anticipate \$4,000,000 in capital needs for fire suppression equipment over the next 5-10 years. After deliberations and testimony from our fire companies, the Board has concluded that the funding model in place for our front-line emergency responders is unsustainable both short and long term.

Therefore, as part of the 2025 budget the Township has approved a new Fire Tax. The revenues from this tax will be dedicated solely to fire company operations, to dedicate funds to a fire equipment capital reserve account, to pay for the radio system upgrade, and to staff a new fire commissioner position who will not only help fight fires, but also oversee an inspection program designed to prevent fire hazards. The fire tax is an additional 0.45 mill property tax increase. This will raise over \$700,000 annually to achieve our long-term obligation of providing affordable fire protection and will cost the median household about \$106.00 per year.

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Supervisors:  
Alfred Geosits  
Dennis Klusaritz  
Ronald J. Heintzelman



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In the 2025 budget, the Township will also increase the general property tax 0.15 mills which will result in an additional \$250,000 in additional General Fund revenue. NWT plans to use the additional revenue to offset increasing operational mandates and to address the aging infrastructure and Capital needs of our township. This increase will cost the median household about \$35.00 more in property taxes per year.

NWT has not raised its property tax rate in well over a decade although our operating costs (vehicles, parts, gasoline, labor, equipment, etc.) have all significantly risen in cost. While we have seen the need for a Fire Tax over the last few years, township leadership worked diligently to maintain the tax rate during the Covid pandemic as this was a financially uncertain time for everyone. While the decision to increase taxes is a difficult one, sometimes it is necessary to provide adequate public safety for residents. Thus, township management and the Board of Supervisors have concluded that not implementing a tax increase to ensure public safety and the long-term needs of the residents would constitute an abandonment of our duty to act in your best interest. We appreciate everyone's understanding of this difficult decision and look forward to providing the best service possible to our residents!

More details can be found on the Township's budget page at [www.northwhitehall.org/budgets](http://www.northwhitehall.org/budgets).

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