



VISTA FIRE DEPARTMENT

377 SMITH RIDGE ROAD
South Salem, NY 10590

Jeffrey M. Peck
Chief of Department

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Dear Lewisboro Supervisor Gonçalves and Town Board Members,

On behalf of the Vista Volunteer Fire Department, I am advocating for eligibility of volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers for the property tax exemption to be 2 years of service.

Our rationale for this position is not self-serving, rather it is in response to the historic and alarming decline in recruitment and retention of our volunteer fire department. This concerning trend is not only in the Town of Lewisboro or Westchester County, but in the State of New York as a whole. We believe that a 2 year eligibility requirement for the property tax exemption will be an incentive for potential new members. This in turn, will allow our volunteer first responder agencies to handle both Fire & EMS response to related incidents. In addition, the tax exemption eligibility likely improves member retention.

For full transparency, the number of members in our Department that are property tax owners, meet our active membership requirement, and would benefit from the property tax exemption after 5 years or more of eligibility is 16. The number of members in our Department that are property tax owners, meet our active membership requirement, and would benefit from the property tax exemption after 2 years or more of eligibility is 20. While the initial reaction to this data may be to assess the cost difference of the two, this means four additional active volunteers who will remain within the department to respond to calls when our community is in most need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Vista Volunteer Fire Department,

Chief Jeffrey M. Peck