



Ohio Revised Code

Section 505.37 Fire protection services.

Effective: January 1, 2026

Legislation: House Bill 96

(A) The board of township trustees may establish all necessary rules to guard against the occurrence of fires and to protect the property and lives of the citizens against damage and accidents, and may purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, or otherwise provide any fire apparatus, mechanical resuscitators, underwater rescue and recovery equipment, or other fire equipment, appliances, materials, fire hydrants, and water supply for fire-fighting and fire and rescue purposes that seems advisable to the board. The board shall provide for the care and maintenance of such fire equipment, and, for these purposes, may purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, or construct and maintain necessary buildings, and it may establish and maintain lines of fire-alarm communications within the limits of the township. The board may employ one or more persons to maintain and operate such fire equipment, or it may enter into an agreement with a volunteer fire company for the use and operation of the equipment. The board may compensate the members of a volunteer fire company on any basis and in any amount that it considers equitable.

When the estimated cost to purchase fire apparatus, mechanical resuscitators, underwater rescue and recovery equipment, or other fire equipment, appliances, materials, fire hydrants, buildings, or fire-alarm communications equipment or services exceeds the amount specified in section 9.17 of the Revised Code, the contract shall be let by competitive bidding. No purchase or other transaction subject to this section shall be divided into component parts in order to avoid the requirements of this section. When competitive bidding is required, the board shall advertise once a week for not less than two consecutive weeks using at least one of the following methods:

- (1) In the print or digital edition of a newspaper of general circulation within the township;
- (2) On the official public notice web site established under section 125.182 of the Revised Code;
- (3) On the web site and social media account of the township.

The board may also cause notice to be inserted in trade papers or other publications designated by it



or to be distributed by electronic means, including posting the notice on the board's internet web site.

The advertisement shall include the time, date, and place where the clerk of the township, or the clerk's designee, will read bids publicly. The time, date, and place of bid openings may be extended to a later date by the board of township trustees, provided that written or oral notice of the change shall be given to all persons who have received or requested specifications not later than ninety-six hours prior to the original time and date fixed for the opening. The board may reject all the bids or accept the lowest and best bid, provided that the successful bidder meets the requirements of section 153.54 of the Revised Code when the contract is for the construction, demolition, alteration, repair, or reconstruction of an improvement.

(B) The boards of township trustees of any two or more townships, or the legislative authorities of any two or more political subdivisions, or any combination of these, may, through joint action, unite in the joint purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, maintenance, use, and operation of fire equipment described in division (A) of this section, or for any other purpose designated in sections 505.37 to 505.42 of the Revised Code, and may prorate the expense of the joint action on any terms that are mutually agreed upon.

(C) The board of township trustees of any township may, by resolution, whenever it is expedient and necessary to guard against the occurrence of fires or to protect the property and lives of the citizens against damages resulting from their occurrence, create a fire district of any portions of the township that it considers necessary. The board may purchase, lease, lease with an option to purchase, or otherwise provide any fire apparatus, mechanical resuscitators, underwater rescue and recovery equipment, or other fire equipment, appliances, materials, fire hydrants, and water supply for fire-fighting and fire and rescue purposes, or may contract for the fire protection for the fire district as provided in section 9.60 of the Revised Code. The fire district so created shall be given a separate name by which it shall be known.

Additional unincorporated territory of the township may be added to a fire district upon the board's adoption of a resolution authorizing the addition. A municipal corporation, or a portion of a municipal corporation, that is within or adjoining the township may be added to a fire district upon the board's adoption of a resolution authorizing the addition and the municipal legislative authority's



adoption of a resolution or ordinance requesting the addition of the municipal corporation or a portion of the municipal corporation to the fire district.

If the township fire district imposes a tax, additional unincorporated territory of the township or a municipal corporation or a portion of a municipal corporation that is within or adjoining the township shall become part of the fire district only after all of the following have occurred:

- (1) Adoption by the board of township trustees of a resolution approving the expansion of the territorial limits of the district and, if the resolution proposes to add a municipal corporation or a portion of a municipal corporation, adoption by the municipal legislative authority of a resolution or ordinance requesting the addition of the municipal corporation or a portion of the municipal corporation to the district;
- (2) Adoption by the board of township trustees of a resolution recommending the extension of the tax to the additional territory;
- (3) The board requests and obtains from the county auditor the information required for a tax levy under section 5705.03 of the Revised Code, in the manner prescribed in that section, except that the levy's annual collections shall be estimated assuming that the additional territory has been added to the fire district.
- (4) Approval of the tax by the electors of the territory proposed for addition to the district.

Each resolution of the board adopted under division (C)(2) of this section shall state the name of the fire district, a description of the territory to be added, the rate, expressed in mills for each one dollar of taxable value, the effective rate, expressed in dollars for each one hundred thousand dollars of the county auditor's market value, and termination date of the tax, which shall be the rate, effective rate, and termination date of the tax currently in effect in the fire district.

The board of trustees shall certify each resolution adopted under division (C)(2) of this section and the county auditor's certification under division (C)(3) of this section to the board of elections in accordance with section 5705.19 of the Revised Code. The election required under division (C)(4) of this section shall be held, canvassed, and certified in the manner provided for the submission of tax



levies under section 5705.25 of the Revised Code, except that the question appearing on the ballot shall read:

"Shall the territory within _____ (description of the proposed territory to be added) be added to _____ (name) fire district, and a property tax, that the county auditor estimates will collect \$_____ annually, at a rate not exceeding _____ mills for each \$1 of taxable value, which amounts to \$_____ (here insert effective rate) for each \$100,000 of the county auditor's market value, be in effect for _____ (here insert the number of years the tax is to be in effect or "a continuing period of time," as applicable)?"

If the question is approved by at least a majority of the electors voting on it, the joinder shall be effective as of the first day of July of the year following approval, and on that date, the township fire district tax shall be extended to the taxable property within the territory that has been added. If the territory that has been added is a municipal corporation or portion thereof and if it had adopted a tax levy for fire purposes, the levy is terminated on the effective date of the joinder in the area of the municipal corporation added to the district.

Any municipal corporation may withdraw from a township fire district created under division (C) of this section by the adoption by the municipal legislative authority of a resolution or ordinance ordering withdrawal. On the first day of July of the year following the adoption of the resolution or ordinance of withdrawal, the withdrawing municipal corporation or the portion thereof ceases to be a part of the district, and the power of the fire district to levy a tax upon taxable property in the withdrawing municipal corporation or the portion thereof terminates, except that the fire district shall continue to levy and collect taxes for the payment of indebtedness within the territory of the fire district as it was composed at the time the indebtedness was incurred.

Upon the withdrawal of any municipal corporation from a township fire district created under division (C) of this section, the county auditor shall ascertain, apportion, and order a division of the funds on hand, moneys and taxes in the process of collection except for taxes levied for the payment of indebtedness, credits, and real and personal property, either in money or in kind, on the basis of the valuation of the respective tax duplicates of the withdrawing municipal corporation and the remaining territory of the fire district.



A board of township trustees may remove unincorporated territory of the township from the fire district upon the adoption of a resolution authorizing the removal. On the first day of July of the year following the adoption of the resolution, the unincorporated township territory described in the resolution ceases to be a part of the district, and the power of the fire district to levy a tax upon taxable property in that territory terminates, except that the fire district shall continue to levy and collect taxes for the payment of indebtedness within the territory of the fire district as it was composed at the time the indebtedness was incurred.

As used in this section, "the county auditor's market value" and "effective rate" have the same meanings as in section 5705.01 of the Revised Code.

(D) The board of township trustees of any township, the board of fire district trustees of a fire district created under section 505.371 of the Revised Code, or the legislative authority of any municipal corporation may purchase, lease, or lease with an option to purchase the necessary fire equipment described in division (A) of this section, buildings, and sites for the township, fire district, or municipal corporation and issue securities for that purpose with maximum maturities as provided in section 133.20 of the Revised Code. The board of township trustees, board of fire district trustees, or legislative authority may also construct any buildings necessary to house fire equipment and issue securities for that purpose with maximum maturities as provided in section 133.20 of the Revised Code.

The board of township trustees, board of fire district trustees, or legislative authority may issue the securities of the township, fire district, or municipal corporation, signed by the board or designated officer of the municipal corporation and attested by the signature of the township fiscal officer, fire district clerk, or municipal clerk, covering any deferred payments and payable at the times provided, which securities shall bear interest not to exceed the rate determined as provided in section 9.95 of the Revised Code, and shall not be subject to Chapter 133. of the Revised Code. The legislation authorizing the issuance of the securities shall provide for levying and collecting annually by taxation, amounts sufficient to pay the interest on and principal of the securities. The securities shall be offered for sale on the open market or given to the vendor or contractor if no sale is made.

Section 505.40 of the Revised Code does not apply to any securities issued, or any lease with an option to purchase entered into, in accordance with this division.



(E) A board of township trustees of any township or a board of fire district trustees of a fire district created under section 505.371 of the Revised Code may purchase a policy or policies of liability insurance for the officers, employees, and appointees of the fire department, fire district, or joint fire district governed by the board that includes personal injury liability coverage as to the civil liability of those officers, employees, and appointees for false arrest, detention, or imprisonment, malicious prosecution, libel, slander, defamation or other violation of the right of privacy, wrongful entry or eviction, or other invasion of the right of private occupancy, arising out of the performance of their duties.

When a board of township trustees cannot, by deed of gift or by purchase and upon terms it considers reasonable, procure land for a township fire station that is needed in order to respond in reasonable time to a fire or medical emergency, the board may appropriate land for that purpose under sections 163.01 to 163.22 of the Revised Code. If it is necessary to acquire additional adjacent land for enlarging or improving the fire station, the board may purchase, appropriate, or accept a deed of gift for the land for these purposes.

(F) As used in this division, "emergency medical service organization" has the same meaning as in section 4766.01 of the Revised Code.

A board of township trustees, by adoption of an appropriate resolution, may choose to have the state board of emergency medical, fire, and transportation services license any emergency medical service organization it operates. If the board adopts such a resolution, Chapter 4766. of the Revised Code, except for sections 4766.06 and 4766.99 of the Revised Code, applies to the organization. All rules adopted under the applicable sections of that chapter also apply to the organization. A board of township trustees, by adoption of an appropriate resolution, may remove its emergency medical service organization from the jurisdiction of the state board of emergency medical, fire, and transportation services.