



SPRING 2025

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New Trustee
William McDonald
Board of Trustees

PROSPECT HEIGHTS
2025
COMMUNITY DAY
June 7, 2025 | 9am - 12noon
and Lions Club Pancake Breakfast

10-14 E. Camp McDonald Road
(between the Fire and Police Stations)

- ✓ Fire and Police Stations Tours
- ✓ Public Works Equipment Display
- ✓ Children Activities & Clown
- ✓ Lions Club Breakfast \$5/person
- ✓ Raffle

Learn more about the agencies in your community that serves you!

For more information, please contact
Lloyd Austin, Deputy Clerk, City of Prospect Heights
Laustin@prospect-heights.org | 847-398-6070 ext 251

On June 7th the entire Prospect Heights community will host the annual "Community Days". This event, held the first Saturday in June, will showcase every organization within Prospect Heights and allow families to meet the staff and learn about all the programs available from the different agencies.

There will be an emphasis on making this an family event with plenty for the children to explore and have fun! The P.H Lions club will be hosting a pancake breakfast during this event so be sure to come hungry. ***We look forward to seeing you there!***

Message From the Fire Chief Drew Smith



As we enter May, hopefully the cold weather and heavy snow will be behind us as we await warmer weather. As for things at the firehouse, waiting for the weather to improve isn't an option. Planning and preparing are constant. We never know when an emergency will strike so we must do what we can to be prepared.

Last fall we reached a new agreement (contract) with our firefighters' union. We were able to meet many of their requests. It was an amicable negotiation that occurred without lawyers for either side in the room. Many of their requests were reasonable but we simply cannot afford to provide everything they would like. Our small organization must compete with larger fire departments in larger communities that can create larger revenue streams and pay higher wages. We now offer a very competitive wage, one that we feel is above average but not in the top tier. Our residents currently pay significant property taxes, and we feel we are good stewards of their money. We aim to remain so. The current agreement lasts until December 31, 2027.

Our Board of Fire Commissioners oversees the hiring, promotion and discipline of our full time firefighters. They are currently conducting a process to select three new firefighters to fill vacancies. The vacancies are the result of new positions created a few years ago. Since our wages were lower, we have had trouble attracting then retaining new full time people. I am optimistic that we will find three quality firefighter-paramedics from this current process and have them start work this spring.

A formal Oath of Office ceremony was held January 7, 2025. Kelly Cossman was promoted to the rank of Deputy Fire Chief. Jason Hardy was promoted to the rank of Battalion Chief. Doug Golonka and Cesar Canchola were each promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. The promotions are part of the District's succession management strategy. With the retirement of the current deputy chief and fire chief in late 2025 and 2026, a period of mentoring a new deputy chief is essential. I have been with the PHFPD since 1981. Combined with the current deputy chief, we possess over 80 years of institutional knowledge that isn't easily transferred. We've been building systems for the past few years to do so but now has come the time to be intentional and purposeful in the knowledge and ability transfer.

In a previous newsletter I stated we ordered two new ambulances, and that delivery would not be until 2026. That remains the case. Currently we are told they remain scheduled for production later this year and we should hopefully take delivery in mid-2025. This hasn't changed since the order was placed and all ambulance manufacturers are under similar delays that started during COVID and remain for a variety of reasons.

Much of our current efforts are focused on the needed firehouse renovations. We have been working with our architect, construction manager, internal committee, and the city building department to address requirements. We are land-locked on a site slightly over one-half acre and parking and stormwater management are a challenge, but we will find a solution and stay within budget. We asked taxpayers for a certain amount of money, and they approved our request. We will not spend more than that as we do not have it. Our architect hopes to have the actual work started by Fall.

When construction work begins on our Camp McDonald Road firehouse, we will need to move out. Staying in the building during construction will prolong the work and add significant cost. During that time, we plan to have all our firefighters and paramedics at our other firehouse on Wolf Road. We attempted to find location to use as a temporary firehouse but were unable to do so. The time it takes to respond to areas west of Schoenbeck Road may slightly increase but we have had discussion with neighboring fire departments who agree to help us out during our construction when their firehouse is closer.

Welcome Aboard, Jason Noga!

Jason Noga has begun to serve the Prospect Heights Fire Protection District as a full-time firefighter-paramedic. Jason has worked for the PHFPD for over ten years in a part-time capacity. At the first of the year Jason accepted a full-time position with us. His experience and expertise allow him to perform all the required duties without the need for an orientation period. Jason has prior full time experience with the Highwood and Highland Park fire departments and is a veteran of the U.S. Navy. We are excited to have him join our team full time and look forward to the value he brings to our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Drew Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Drew Smith
Fire Chief

Fire Chief's Summary Report for 2024

Call Stats

2,603 total
1,861 EMS

742 fire
111 reported structure fires
18 confirmed structure fires

20 vehicle entrapments
30 cardiac arrests
167 persons fell

638 mutual aid given
247 mutual aid received
392 overlapping calls

249 second ambulance calls

192 used both PH ambulances
103 used mutual aid ambulances

Assisted Living Calls

Year	Calls	% of Total
2020	268	12
2021	182	8
2022	272	10
2023	238	9
2024	157	6

Calls per Vehicle

A9	Truck	Tanker	STA. 9
1072	757	68	1897
A39	Squad	STA.39	
727	581	1308	

Looking Back Five-Years

Year				
2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Calls Each Year				
2197	2415	2722	2718	2603

Budget

- Capital reserve at \$2. Million
- Ambulance billing \$835,439 (119% over)
- GEMT revenue \$164,000 (264%) greater than expected

Notable Goals

- New Union Contract
- Firehouse Renovation planning begun
- New Radios and Turnout Gear purchased

Staffing & Promotions

BC Cossman to Deputy Chief
LT Hardy to Battalion Chief

FF Canchola to Lieutenant

FF Golonka to Lieutenant

Station 39 closed 12 days, zero days in last quarter

Operated at minimum staffing 229 of 365 days (63%)

One day with less than minimum staffing

Training Stats

	Events	Hours
Totals	7698	8708
Per Member	241	272

Training Highlights

- Truck 9 placed in service
- Courage Under Fire Workshop
- Aircraft FF Course held
- Blue Card incident command course held

Smoke Alarms Save Lives!

These are words we believe in and promote vigorously. For more than 40 years, that's been the message. More recently we've promoted "Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery" asking people to replace their smoke alarm batteries twice a year. In reality, many people just forget to change those batteries until they chirp. And then, some folks just take the battery out of the chirping smoke alarm with good intentions to replace it but never do. Smoke alarms should also be replaced every 10 years. In an effort to ensure working smoke alarms with less required human effort the State of Illinois passed the 10-Year Smoke Alarm Act. These new smoke alarms require no battery change in ten years and are not susceptible to tampering.

Any new Smoke Alarm purchased by a citizen should be a Smoke Alarm with a "10 - year" battery sealed inside the unit. These smoke alarms are mandatory under state law after January 1, 2023. When purchasing, ensure the smoke alarm is certified by UL (formerly Underwriters Laboratories) or a similar organization. State law requires and we agree that you should have smoke alarms near every bedroom and on every level of the home. If help is needed, the PHFD will install as many battery-powered alarms as a homeowner purchases. For those with limited income, we are able to supply these smoke alarms to you at no cost.

Please call us for ANY assistance in getting your smoke detectors installed or checked. We believe this is that one device that will be there 24 hours a day to alert you and your family in the event of smoke or fire.

A true life saver no one should live without!



Community Connect Safety Program

As you may have heard, we have been working with technology partner First Due to release a new public safety program for Prospect Heights. The program is called Community Connect and it allows the residents and businesses in Prospect Heights to share valuable life safety information with our department. Residents/Businesses can provide details about their home, family, children, pets, medical/functional needs and more, so that when First Responders are dispatched to an emergency at that residence, they have the most information possible before arriving on scene.

This is an incredible program for our community and will allow us to keep Prospect Heights much safer, but in order to run a successful program we need the involvement and engagement of all residents, families, businesses and homeowners.

You can find more information about Prospect Heights Community Connect here: www.phfire.com and click on the Community Connect button.

The program is called Community Connect and it allows you to share life safety information about your home, family, pets, and more with Prospect Heights Fire Protection District so that if First Responders are ever dispatched to an emergency at your home or business, they have the most information as possible before arriving on scene. To register your household, go to our website, www.phfire.com and click the button Community Connect.

Sharing information such as the below can be incredibly helpful for First Responders to know if they are dispatched to your home. Having this information inputted beforehand will allow them to customize their approach before they arrive on scene so they can best meet the specific needs of your home, business and family:

- Occupant & Contact Info
- Home Access/Details and Utilities
- Gate Code
- Pool/Basement
- Gas/Water Shut Off
- Medical & Functional Needs
- Where medicine is located
- How a person in the home reacts in a stressful situation
- If someone has mobility needs and will need assistance evacuating
- Pets
- Name of pet

- If the pet(s) have a hiding place
- If the pet(s) are dangerous or will attack strangers

Register for Community Connect Program

Protects Your Home:



Protects Your Business:



Community Connect is a secure platform and the information you provide will only be used by the Prospect Heights Fire Protection District at the time of dispatch for the purpose of better serving you during emergency situations. All logins and passwords are protected with bank-level encryption and security. If you're comfortable logging into your online bank, you'll be comfortable logging into Community Connect.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns or need further information. We are confident we will see a large increase in sign-ups and the word about the program will continue to spread throughout Prospect Heights, which will continue to engage our entire community and help us improve the safety in our community. Thank you for your involvement and engagement in this program.

Prospect Heights Community Connect

- 1 Create an Account**
Sign in for free and get started doing your part. It just takes your email, phone number and address.
- 2 Enter the Info that Matters Most**
Enter valuable information that can help us assist more effectively during an emergency.
- 3 Help your First Responders When Seconds Count**
That's it. Just keep us updated when things change overtime so we can always be prepared.

Go to: WWW.PHFIRE.COM Click on the Community Connect Button

Promotions

Over the next two years the PHFD will see the retirement of two senior officers, Deputy Chief Tim Jones and Fire Chief Drew Smith. Each has 40-plus years of experience with the PHFD and more than 25 years of experience in their current roles. To prepare for this loss of experience and institutional knowledge, we have embarked on a succession management plan by promoting a new deputy chief now. We will operate for most of 2025 with two deputy chiefs while we transition that role and prepare for a new fire chief later in 2026. On January 2 of this the new deputy chief was appointed. This also resulted in additional promotions to fill the vacancies created by each promotion.



New Deputy Chief KELLY COSSMAN

DC Cossman was previously a battalion chief for six years. He has 15 years' experience with the PHFD and additional experience serving with other fire departments. DC Cossman holds a master's degree and is certified by the State Fire Marshal as a Chief Fire Officer. He will now oversee the daily operations of the PHFD.



New Battalion Chief JASON HARDY.

BC Hardy was previously a lieutenant. His promotion fills the vacancy created by DC Cossman's promotion. This coming summer will mark 20 years' experience with the PHFD for him. BC Hardy holds a bachelor's degree and is certified by the State Fire Marshal as an Advanced Fire Officer. He will now oversee operations of one of our three shifts.



New Lieutenant DOUG GOLONKA

His promotion fills the vacancy created by BC Hardy's promotion. LT Golonka has served the PHFD since 1989. In 2022 LT Golonka transferred to full time employment with the PHFD. He is certified by the State Fire Marshal as a Fire Officer 1. He will now manage a crew on one of our three shifts.



New Lieutenant CESAR CANCHOLA

His promotion fills a vacancy created due to another member's absence. LT Canchola has served the PHFD since 2022. LT Canchola brings years of experience from another fire department. He is certified by the State Fire Marshal as a Fire Officer 2. He will now manage a crew on one of our three shifts.



Prospect Heights Fire District

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New Trustee Bill McDonald

We're pleased to welcome Bill McDonald as the newest member of the Prospect Heights Fire District Board of Trustees. Appointed by the Wheeling Township Board on February 25, 2025, Trustee McDonald brings a wealth of experience in finance and administration following a 40-year career with IBM.

We deeply appreciate community members who step up to serve, and we thank Trustee McDonald for his commitment. As part of the five-member appointed board, he will play a key role in setting the strategic direction of the Fire District and ensuring strong governance for the benefit of all residents.



PROSPECT HEIGHTS FIRE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES



James Rebecca
President



Shawn Clisham
Treasurer



Joseph Vertone
Secretary



Charles Ferguson
Trustee



William McDonald
Trustee