

***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**LEBANON TOWNSHIP
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

JULY 7, 2015

Mayor Thomas McKee reported the Township of Lebanon today received a copy of the Comptroller's Report regarding the Length of Service Award Program ("LOSAP"). Mayor McKee stated: "I am glad this long and somewhat troublesome process is now over and the Township can move forward with clearing up the misunderstandings surrounding the application of a very confusing law; we want get back to the important business of helping the Lebanon Township Volunteer Fire Department do what it does best, which is fight fires and rescue people in trouble". McKee continued: "We know mistakes were made, but our guys and gals are fire fighters, not accountants, so they have our support 100%"

The Comptroller's office concluded that LOSAP programs across the state have not always been uniformly applied. McKee noted the Township became aware of this problem in 2012 and immediately began investigating. After consultation with representatives of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the Township hired a special auditor recommended by the State, Gary J. Vinci, CPA, of Lerch, Vinci & Higgins, LLP, Fairlawn, New Jersey to conduct a thorough investigation. Mr. Vinci concluded there was some confusion in the application of the LOSAP program by the Lebanon Township Volunteer Fire Department. He identified a number of issues to be rectified.

The Township Auditor was asked to review the Vinci Report and make recommendations. In addition, the Township suspended LOSAP contributions while the Comptroller's Office performed its investigation. The Township knew the Comptroller's Office would pinpoint areas of needed improvement without the Township incurring unnecessary professional fees. Now that the Comptroller's office has finished its investigation, the Township will move forward to correct the problems identified.

McKee pointed out that at all times volunteers tried to apply a somewhat complicated law in a fair fashion. Over the years members of the Fire Department applied their understanding of the law in a good faith manner with the goal of rewarding those members who have shown extraordinary efforts in serving the citizens of Lebanon Township. While they did not do it perfectly, the Mayor pointed out that always did in a way they thought was fair and rewarded hardworking members.

The Mayor said while the Township appreciates the efforts of the Comptroller's office and its desire to make sure the law is properly applied, he believes the Fire Department and its members have been unfairly tarnished in this process. Mayor McKee said: "I really hope that the accusations in this report don't discourage our volunteers; our Township would be devastated if our volunteer firemen didn't show up. LOSAP was meant to help attract and maintain volunteers; we don't want it to cause the opposite effect.

The Mayor believes the Township Committee fully supports LOSAP and feels it is an appropriate acknowledgment of the tremendous benefits the Lebanon Township Volunteer Fire Department provides Township residents. The Mayor pledged to work with the Committee to correct any issues so that Lebanon Township can continue to enjoy the benefits of one of the finest fire companies in the state.

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