



# Hamburg Township Public Safety Department



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*RICHARD DUFFANY, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY*

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TO: Hamburg Township Board  
FROM: Chief Richard Duffany  
DATE: January 5, 2026  
RE: Public Safety Department Update

On June 21, 2022, the Township Board unanimously passed a resolution creating the Hamburg Township Public Safety Department. As articulated in the resolution, the goal was “to provide maximum efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of public safety services” to the residents through a consolidated department. On two occasions recently, one member of the Board has publicly called for an evaluation of the Township’s Public Safety model to specifically see if we are meeting that goal.

On June 11, 2024, I provided the Township Board with an update of the department’s activities as we approached the two-year anniversary of the creation of the Public Safety Department. As I indicated in the introduction of that memo, it was my belief that the update would be extremely illustrative and should clearly demonstrate that we were achieving the goal set out by the Board when it created the Public Safety Department. I feel that the substantive aspects that I highlighted in that memo are relevant to refute any claim that the Public Safety Department is not operating at peak efficiency. As such, I have updated and added information contained in that original memo and I am submitting it to the Township Board for review to provide context for any discussion regarding the department.

## Public Safety Drone Team

On January 23, 2024, the Hamburg Township Public Safety Drone Team received official notification that the team had earned *Unmanned Aircraft Systems* validation status from the Michigan Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) following FEMA Type 1 requirements. This was a significant accomplishment as the team became only the fourth team in the entire state of Michigan to receive this designation as a MABAS Drone Company and the first team comprising of members from a single agency.

The Drone Team is the epitome of the benefits that a combined department can provide as the team is made up of 4 firefighters and 4 police officers working under a single command structure and a single department SOP. Additionally, the costs of the aircraft and related equipment are shared between the police and fire budgets making the program far more affordable and sustainable than if it was only funded by one budget.



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The Drone Team is a great resource for the community and has been successfully utilized numerous times to search for missing persons, assist in police operations and provide over watch for many public safety events. In addition, our drone team has developed a reputation as being one of the top teams in the region and has been called on by numerous other jurisdictions to provide drone assistance including being sent in April of 2025 to northern Michigan to assist the state in mapping the damage from the historic ice storm.

## **Public Safety Park Ranger Program**

The Public Safety Park Ranger program began in the summer of 2022. The program has been a huge success as the Park Rangers have provided the desired presence in the parks, assisted greatly with large events at Bennett Park and have developed a rapport with many of the regular users of park facilities. We have received much positive community feedback about this program and have expanded it from the original 2 seasonal Park Ranger positions to 3 permanent part-time positions. Again, the program is run under a single command structure and under a single department SOP while at the same receiving training and taking part in both police and fire activities.

## **Public Safety Emergency Operations and Training Center**

As you are aware, the department was able to save over \$500,000 by making the decision to refurbish Tanker 12 (instead of purchasing a new truck at a cost of \$750,000). During FY 23/24, we utilized a portion of these savings to build and outfit a professional Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Fire Station 11. The Township's previously designated EOC was a small conference room in Fire Station 12 with inadequate space and insufficient I.T. capabilities.

## **Public Safety Capital Improvements**

Since the creation of the Public Safety Department, we have successfully overseen major improvements to all three public safety buildings. This includes the Police Station expansion, the complete refurbishment of Station 11, the addition of sleeping quarters at Station 12, and the completion of the 64 ADA upgrades to both Fire buildings. I would note that the Police Station expansion was made far more smoother due to the cooperation of both police and fire personnel and the Public Safety command structure as police operations had to be moved to Station 12 for several months during construction.

## **Public Safety Standard Operating Procedures**

One major positive to come out of the creation of the Public Safety Department has been the standardization of all department Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Both police and fire personnel now operate under the same set of policies and procedures. Issues concerning a wide



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array of topics applicable to both police and fire personnel including discipline, citizen complaints, promotions, employee injuries, department cash accounts, FOIA, media relations and responses to medical scenes are now handled in a consistent manner. That is, similar issues involving police and fire personnel are no longer handled differently. As indicated earlier, it is also more efficient to operate certain joint ventures (such as the Drone Team and Park Ranger program) under a single command structure and single department SOP.

## **Police and Fire State Certifications**

Since the inception of the Public Safety Department, both the police and fire divisions have demonstrated exceptional proficiency in obtaining or maintaining various state certifications.

- **Police Accreditation** – On April 5, 2024, assessors from the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission concluded their onsite review of our department which was the culmination of a 3-year accreditation process. The assessors recommended that our department receive status as an Accredited Agency and we officially became an accredited law enforcement agency on June 18, 2024. While receiving accreditation status is a major accomplishment in of itself (as only about 15% of police departments in the state were accredited at that time), we received the recommendation with no corrections required. In other words, we were found to be in 100% compliance with all accreditation standards and proofs. We were told that this was an “exceedingly rare” accomplishment.
- **LEIN Audit (Police)** – In 2023, the Michigan State Police (MSP) conducted a full Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN) audit of the department which occurs every three years. The MSP LEIN auditor reviewed 86 mandatory requirements. Not only did we successfully pass the audit after the first review, which itself is a nice accomplishment, but we passed the audit with a 100 % compliance rate (86 for 86). This is also a rare accomplishment.
- **Agency EMS Inspection (Fire)** – In 2023, 2024 and 2025 the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) conducted their annual Agency EMS inspections. The audits reviewed 31 stringent regulatory standards which are required to be met in order for the department to provide Emergency Medical Services. Again, not only did the department pass all three audits but it passed them all with a 100 % compliance rate.

## **Commercial Building Inspections**

In 2023, the department achieved an annual commercial building fire inspection rate of 100%. Meaning, every commercial building in the Township was inspected by fire personnel to ensure compliance with applicable fire codes. That was the first time in over 5 years that we achieved a



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100% inspection rate and is directly attributable to the new Public Safety command structure. This 100% inspection rate was repeated again in 2024 and 2025.

## Fire Command Development

One of the first priorities that Deputy Director Newton and I discussed upon his arrival was the professional development of our full-time Fire Captains, from an operational standpoint and a managerial/leadership standpoint. Operationally, the Captains had been limited in their roles as incident commanders prior to the formation of the Public Safety Department. Subsequently, the Captains have been given a much greater role in on-scene command and have gained the much-needed knowledge, experience and confidence to become proficient incident commanders.

Developing the managerial and leadership skills of our Captains, and of all company officers, has been more of a challenge as the fire service is extremely limited in terms of the number of available training opportunities that focus on the managerial part of the job. To address this challenge, the department has hosted multiple sessions with an outside instructor to help facilitate better leadership skills and communications between supervisors and subordinates.

In addition, our department was the driving force behind the creation of a two-day “Fire Command Officers Supervisory Training” seminar hosted in Mount Pleasant and attended by all our Captains in 2024. Deputy Fire Chief Zernick had the honor of being on the 5-person *Panel of Fire Chiefs* for the seminar which was attended by over 70 Fire Command officers from around the state. Several of our Lieutenants attended this training in 2025.

During this time, two of our Captains (Capt. Lawver and Capt. Steinaway) graduated from Eastern Michigan University’s School of Fire Staff and Command and two other command officers (DC Zernick and Capt. Yost) earned their Master’s Degrees from Cleary University.

## Community Engagement

Since the Public Safety Department came into existence, we have taken many concrete steps to enhance and foster positive interactions with residents and community groups.

- **Community Services Sergeant** – In February of 2024 we created the full-time position of Community Services Sergeant to be the point person in the department to coordinate our community outreach programs and respond to community events. This paid notable dividends almost immediately as evidenced by a Public Safety HOA forum hosted by the department. Police and fire personnel engaged with over 50 HOA representatives from neighborhoods from around the Township. We received overwhelming positive feedback from those in attendance and we plan on holding more similar events. Again, having a



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primary point of contact for the department not only is more efficient for outside organizations and residents planning community events within the Township but is also more effective from a Township perspective as there is one point person who can represent and coordinate all police, fire and civilian personnel.

- **Social Media** – One of the first things we did upon establishment of the Public Safety Department was to make a concerted effort to expand our reach to the public through social media platforms. We consolidated the separate police and fire Facebook pages into a single Public Safety Facebook page and we launched a Public Safety Instagram account to target a younger demographic. Both platforms have been huge successes and we have received much positive feedback from the community regarding our expanded content. We now have over 6,100 followers on Facebook and in the past year alone we have had over 1.5 million page views.
- **Community Risk Reduction Firefighters** – In January of 2023, the department initiated a *Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Firefighter* program whereby Hamburg Township firefighters, who no longer could maintain the capability of an operational firefighter for a variety of reasons, had the opportunity to stay on with the department in a non-operational role. One of the primary responsibilities of the CRR firefighter position is to engage in fire prevention and community outreach programs. To illustrate the positive impact that this position has had on the department, I would point out that the CRR position has installed over 350 smoke detectors in 113 homes in the township in the past 3 years. This has freed up the duty crews, who handled these installations in the past, to engage in many other tasks and has benefited the residents as we can provide a much more efficient and timely response to requests for this service.

## Crime Statistics

The safety of our community is obviously a top priority for the Public Safety Department and we have maintained our exceptionally low crime rate and high crime clearance rate. Hamburg Township was once again rated in various rating platforms as one of Michigan's Top 5 safest communities for 2025. This is according to the most recent ratings released this past spring. Additionally, 2024 (latest available data) marked the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year that our department has had a crime clearance rate well above the state average. In fact, our crime clearance rate reached an all-time high for our department in 2024 at an outstanding 63.3% clearance rate. For comparison, the average for all agencies in the state in 2024 was 35.2%.



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## Fire Administration

While it was my intent to provide the Board with primarily objective data in this memo, I would be remiss if I didn't point out one of the most noticeable improvements, from my perspective, since the establishment of the Public Safety Department which cannot be quantified. Namely, the carrying out of the administrative functions by the chief command officer in a professional and proficient manner.

Deputy Director Newton was brought in to help facilitate the transition of the Fire Department to the Public Safety model and bring much-needed administrative stability and competency in the carrying out of the administrative responsibilities of the position. In the past 3 years, the department has addressed and resolved several employment-related matters with fire personnel involving disciplinary issues, job-related injuries, training, leaves of absences, scheduling, and a whole host of inter-personal matters that arise with employee relations. This has occurred without any adverse consequences for the department or Township. Also, during this time the number of complaints that I have received, directly and indirectly, regarding issues with lack of communication within the department, favoritism, and low morale has plummeted.

## Fire Department Growth

Under the current Public Safety structure, the Fire Department has seen significant growth in terms of personnel and coverage as the number of full-time fire personnel has doubled from 6 to 12 and both fire houses are now staffed 24/7. Implementation of this growth took an enormous amount of planning and execution ranging from all the work that went into developing an operational strategy to present for the 2024 Fire millage request, to all the promotional examination processes that were required in order to implement this plan. The end result is that this growth has been managed effectively without any issues and the residents are now receiving a more reliable fire response from our 2-station response plan, especially during multiple call scenarios which annually make up over 20% of the calls for service.

## Fire Operations

The biggest concern regarding going to the Public Safety model was the effect that consolidation would have on the operational functions of the Fire Department. That is, would the residents suffer from a lower quality fire response, especially if we did not have an "operational Fire Chief." While I doubt I can ever convince those who oppose the Public Safety Department concept on philosophical grounds, I can provide the Board with some objective facts.



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In the over 3 years under the Public Safety structure, fire personnel have responded to 6,727 calls for service. Of these calls, over 150 were what one Board member once called “real fire calls.” That is, calls where fire or smoke were actually present such as structure fires, shed fires, grass fires, electrical fires and smoke in homes.

The department has continued with its high level of response to these calls with no drop off in the quality of our service. This is especially true for the actual fire calls where I have received positive feedback, both internally and externally, about the quality of our on-scene incident commanders. Deputy Chief Zernick, who is the department’s operational chief officer, and the 4 full-time Captains have been allowed to develop and have more than demonstrated that they are quite capable of running fire scenes at a high level of proficiency and competency.

Having a cadre of fire command personnel experienced in on-scene command has proven to be a far more effective use of our human resources and provides more reliably in command coverage to the community than relying on the availability and response of a single operational chief. The Public Safety model has allowed fire professionals to capably execute the operational functions of the fire service while at the same time ensuring that the extremely important administrative and managerial functions are handled in an expert manner as well.

## Operational Scope

Finally, to provide some perspective to assess the effectiveness of the Public Safety Department, I think the overall operational scope of the department should be considered. With 32 full-time employees and over 60 total employees, the Public Safety Department has more employees than the rest of the Township combined even if you include the contract personnel for the Assessing Department and the Library staff. In order to carry out the wide array of responsibilities that the department is tasked with, the Public Safety Department has 159 Board-approved SOPs, which is more than the combined number of procedures contained in the Hamburg Township Employee Handbook and Administrative Policies & Procedures Manual used to manage the Township. The point being, the Public Safety Department is a large organization tasked with the extremely important mission of providing police, fire, emergency medical services and emergency management administration. Since its inception, the department as a whole has handled in excess of 21,000 calls for service from the public and has fulfilled every one of our operational and administrative responsibilities as highlighted in this memo. All this has been accomplished over the past 3-plus years with little or no complaints from the residents, no labor/personnel issues (i.e., grievances, lawsuits, etc.) or no other significant issues which could be construed as reflecting negatively on the performance of the department or its management. This could not be done



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without an effective and functional organizational structure in place. I have attached a copy of the department's organizational chart.

## Conclusion

As I have illustrated, we have accomplished a lot in the past 3-plus years both collectively as a department and individually as police and fire divisions. In my opinion, based upon the evidence that I have provided, any objective evaluation of the department will show that we have met or exceeded the primary goal of the Board in establishing the Public Safety Department. More importantly, the residents of Hamburg Township are receiving exceptional police, fire and medical services and we are managing these services in a demonstrably more effective and efficient manner than the years preceding the establishment of the department. In short, the Public Safety Department model is working in Hamburg Township.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Duffany".

Chief Richard Duffany  
Director of Public Safety

## Hamburg Township Public Safety Department Organizational Chart

