

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 984

(Carroll County Delegation)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Carroll County - Volunteer Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services

This bill authorizes the Carroll County Commissioners to establish an entity or body for the purpose of administering the county's affairs relating to fire, rescue, and emergency medical services and associated activities while maintaining the volunteer emergency services. If the county commissioners elect to do this, they must also establish an Emergency Services Advisory Council to provide the county commissioners with recommendations regarding the operations of fire suppression, emergency medical, and haz-mat services in the county.

In addition, the bill requires the Carroll County Commissioners to distribute specified funds to rescue and emergency medical services (EMS) companies in addition to volunteer fire companies, subject to a plan adopted by the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association and approved by the county commissioners. The Carroll County Commissioners are also required to make specified length of service payments to specified emergency responders in the same manner as payments are currently made to volunteer firemen.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Carroll County operations and finances are not directly affected. Funding for fire and EMS will continue.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Each year the Carroll County Commissioners must levy and collect from the assessable property in Carroll County a sum of money that is needed for the county commissioners to distribute and pay to the volunteer fire companies in the county for the support, maintenance, equipment (including ambulances), and operation of the volunteer fire companies. The sum of money authorized must be proportioned and distributed among the volunteer fire companies pursuant to a plan adopted by the executive committee of the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association and approved by the county commissioners.

The Carroll County Commissioners must provide service award payments from a special fund to eligible volunteer firemen as certified by the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association. The special fund must be established as an endowment. The payments must be made to those individuals who have met the adopted plan requirements as approved by the county commissioners. The service award payments may be made monthly by the county directly to eligible recipients.

Any provisions of law that limit the type of investments that may be made of county funds or that limits or places conditions on the deposit of county funds do not apply to the deposit and investment of money into the length of service special fund.

Background: There are 14 volunteer fire companies that are members of the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association. They include:

- Mount Airy Volunteer Fire Company;
- Hampstead Volunteer Fire Engine and Hose Company #1;
- Westminster Fire Engine and Hose Company #1;
- Manchester Volunteer Fire Company;
- Taneytown Volunteer Fire Company;
- Pleasant Valley Community Fire Company;
- Lineboro Volunteer Fire Department;
- Union Bridge Fire Company;
- Reese Volunteer Fire Company;
- New Windsor Fire Department;
- Harney Volunteer Fire Company;
- Sykesville Freedom District Fire Department;
- Gamber & Community Fire Company; and
- Winfield Community Volunteer Fire Department.

Carroll County reports that all of these volunteer fire companies also provide EMS, except for the Harney Volunteer Fire Company.

Local Fiscal Effect: The Carroll County fiscal 2018 budget includes \$13.2 million for fire and EMS services including: \$4.4 million for EMS 24/7 Services; \$0.2 million for Length of Service Awards Program; \$8.3 million for the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association; and \$0.3 million for volunteer recruitment and retention.

It is assumed that because all but one of the volunteer companies in Carroll County currently provide EMS, funding for fire services and EMS will continue, subject to budget approval by the county commissioners. To the extent an advisory council is established, funding for fire and EMS may be altered. However, any change in funding would also be subject to approval by the county commissioners.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 542 (Carroll County Senators) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Carroll County; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Michael Sanelli

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510