**To: Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association**

**From: Stephen Wantz: Republican Nominee Commissioner District 1**

**Officers and members:**

**First of all, thank you very much for the opportunity you have provided for the candidates to respond to your issues and associated questions. As you know, I felt it was extremely important to become more involved in our government when I was serving as vice-president by identifying the vision and mission of where we need to be in the future. Then President Leon Fleming agreed, and we began to become more visible. When I assumed the role of President, I felt it very important to put us front and center, to address our critical needs, and instituted the quarterly meetings with the sitting commissioners. I still believe this is extremely important and am proud of your organization for continuing this invaluable process. Many of the inquiries you have today are the very issues we were addressing then and it is vital you continue to remain visible. I am also of the belief that VESA should be much more vocal during the election cycle, much the same as our police, teachers, realtors etc. Showing support for those candidates who are bringing public safety to the forefront can only lead to a positive working relationship. As we continue to be challenged by manpower, operating costs, equipment costs and many more issues, VESA should be much more visible to ensure candidates who will support public safety, are elected.**

**I have had the honor to be a volunteer firefighter for 39 years and realize the importance in maintaining this valuable asset to our county. I was honored to be asked by Commissioner Doug Howard to serve as a public safety representative on Carroll 2030, a group of community leaders planning for the future. Many in that group listed fire and emergency medical services as one of the most important future needs. During our 2030 work we identified that Carroll County should be a combination system in the future and certainly by the year 2030. We are currently a volunteer system supported by paid staff. In 2030, a paid system supported by volunteers. But, how do we get there. It is going to take considerable soul searching, hard work, and communication (working together) to move to a 24/7 system. I would suggest a county billing system, where VESA employees are put in place to do the billing for all EMS units. This would be a first step in establishing a county wide medical services system and would alleviate a huge amount of work required by volunteers. I would suspect VESA staff handling this would also increase the return on billing. I also believe a study needs to be conducted on the number of staffed units needed as opposed to the number of calls handled. This would be the first step in identifying the specific location of units, and the number of units needed to include response time, hospital travel time etc. While I applaud the efforts of the EMS 24/7 committee, it was clear there was quite a divide when the vote was 8-6 to present the results to the county. It is essential to get everyone on the same page and the above initial steps will certainly help.**

**LOSAP is a very important tool, if not the most important, when discussing recruitment and retention. I lobbied hard to get an increase and we did see some success with additional monies being put into the fund. As a commissioner I will continue to make sure the comptroller’s office reviews the fund and will also make sure funds continue to be put into the system to retain its solvency.**

**A county life safety work force is certainly an excellent idea for the future. Working hand in hand with permits and inspections and the state fire marshal’s office, will ensure our citizens are living, working and playing in a safe environment. If a positive economic atmosphere allows I can foresee this being a division of our permits and inspection office. Inspectors could be in the process from the beginning and would include inspection throughout the permit process and include follow up inspections. Grant money would quite possibly be available for these positions as they would essentially be an arm of the state fire marshal's office. They could also be used to annually inspect our, very important, underground tanks.**

**I am very proud to have been a part of the new public safety training center which will be essential in the future of our fire and EMS in Carroll County. We must continue to stress the importance of our volunteer fire companies to ensure our hubs of the communities remain. This new training center is a giant part of this. Providing an impressive state of the art facility is critically important. Affordable housing, tax incentives, educational opportunities utilizing our training center and community college should also be talked about as we move into the coming years. It is going to take the vision of VESA personnel working hand in hand with county officials to ensure our volunteer system remains viable in the coming years. The proud heritage of our volunteer fire companies depends on it. The volunteer fire company allowed me to experience the greatest tradition on earth.**

**Thank you very much and I very much look forward to working with all of you in the future.**

**Stephen Wantz**

**Republican Nominee Commissioner District 1**