

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Fire Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Amendment to Township Code Chapter 51, Alarms

Prepared By: Charles J. McGarvey, Sr., Chief Fire Officer / Fire Marshal

Date: January 15, 2020

I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:

Approval to authorize the Township Secretary to advertise notice of intent to adopt an Ordinance to amend the Code of the Township of Lower Merion, Chapter 51, Alarms, to provide a definition for Alarm Verification Feature and to require that as of July 1, 2020 all residential alarm systems must be equipped with such feature; to require that all commercial alarm systems be UL certified and installed by a certified alarm company; to require that all alarm systems be annually inspected; and to require that the annual inspection report for commercial systems be provided to the Lower Merion Fire Department within 30 days following the inspection.

II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:

False and needless fire alarms continue to have a detrimental impact on our fire service. This code chapter is proposed to be amended in order to include a definition of and requirement for alarm verification features in residential alarms, to require that all commercial alarms be UL Certified and installed by a certified alarm company, and to require the annual inspection of all commercial fire alarm systems, with inspection reports to be provided to the Fire Department Office within 30 days of completion.

III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):

The Code of the Township of Lower Merion, Chapter 51 Alarms, is in place currently, however it is believed that the more stringent requirements provided within this ordinance will further curtail false fire alarm activations.

IV. Other Relevant Background Information:

Chapter 51 Alarms was replaced in its entirety in 2016. While the 2016 alterations prevented an increase in false alarm statistics, while the number of active monitored fire alarm systems multiplied significantly, further modifications to this Chapter of the Code seek to actively reduce the number of false fire alarms to achieve the intended outcome of the 2016 revision.

V. Impact On Township Finances:
No impact on Township finances is expected.

VI. Staff Recommendation:
It is recommended the Board of Commissioners authorize advertisement of this ordinance.