

**A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY  
LEGISLATORS BRUSO, SAVAGE, BASKIN, MILLER-WILLIAMS, HARDWICK AND  
MEYERS**

**Re: Urging Coordination between Local Governments and Erie County Water Authority on Color Coding Fire Hydrants to Assist Firefighters**

**WHEREAS**, in September 2018, a fire at a home in Lancaster erupted, and when volunteer firefighters from the Bowmansville fire company arrived to fight the fire, they experienced low water pressure at a fire hydrant nearby, compelling them to connect to a fire hydrant some distance away, in order to access sufficient water pressure; and

**WHEREAS**, a water main, 6 inches in diameter installed in 1929 fed the hydrant in question; and

**WHEREAS**, Town of Lancaster officials responded by updating the Town's master plan, instituting a one-year rezoning moratorium, and starting a town-wide project to replace aging water lines; and

**WHEREAS**, one issue stated by fire officials and town officials is the need to replace water lines with larger sized lines by "upsizing" the water lines to allow for more water pressure and volume; and

**WHEREAS**, the Erie County Water Authority, which provides water to Lancaster and leases the hydrants from the Town, stated that it was investigating the low pressure issue; and

**WHEREAS**, Robert Lichenthal, the deputy director of the authority, stated "To be clear, it's not really a fire hydrant issue. The hydrants worked appropriately. What it became was a combined water supply issue"; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Lichenthal stated to WGRZ-TV: "We take that seriously and the demands of this fire were such that it outstripped the capacity of a six inch main. . . We will take a look at having conversations with the Town of Lancaster, with emergency services for the future and we'll take a look to see what improvements can be made"; and

**WHEREAS**, one of the first challenges that firefighters face when they arrive at a fire is finding a suitable water source that provides enough water for the type of fire they are fighting and there are formulas used by firefighters that will tell them approximately how much water is needed to fight a given fire; and

**WHEREAS**, in some locations, fire hydrants are color coded to indicate how much water a particular hydrant will provide to give guidance to the first responders, with water supply for firefighting often rated in gallons per minute (GPM); and

**WHEREAS**, due to the numerous different supply systems throughout the United States, there can be a wide range of available water supply, from 500 GPM or less to over 2500 GPM; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) recommends that fire departments and water districts follow a set standard of color-coding referred to as NFPA 291, which says fire hydrants using public water supply systems should be painted chrome yellow, and their tops and caps should indicate the available GPM, with hydrants below 500 GPM being painted red, 500-999 GPM, painted orange, 1000-1499 GPM painted green, and 1500 GPM or higher painted blue; and

**WHEREAS**, GPM is only one of two factors of water supply, with the other measurement being pressure, rated in pounds per square inch (PSI); and

**WHEREAS**, many different municipalities create their own hydrant color coding for their specific situations; and

**WHEREAS**, while the Town of Lancaster works on replacing water lines and hydrants, one possible solution for assisting with adequate fire protection in Lancaster and in other communities could be to color-code fire hydrants, to reflect the size of the water main serving the hydrant and in so doing, to help guide firefighters to understand the size of the water lines.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Erie County Legislature expresses its support for efforts by the Erie County Water Authority to work with its local government partners to study the color-coding of fire hydrants to help guide local firefighters concerning the pressure in, and size of the water lines serving the hydrants; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that this Honorable Body hereby urges the ECWA, in conjunction with other municipal stakeholders, to conduct a study of all fire hydrant waterlines to determine the need for, and cost of, replacing any hydrants that may be outdated; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to town supervisors in Erie County, the Erie County Water Authority, and the Commissioner of the Erie County Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.

**Fiscal Impact:** None for this resolution.