

Fire Services Study

Fleetwood Borough and Richmond Township
Berks County, PA

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Pennsylvania
Department of Community
& Economic Development
Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Governor's Center for
Local Government Services

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Executive Summary

Background

The Governor's Center for Local Government Services (GCLGS) received Letters of Intent by Richmond Township and Fleetwood Borough to conduct a fire services study for Community Fire Company of Virginville, Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company, and Walnuttown Fire Company. This project included completing significant research and data collection which occurred in the winter of 2024 and spring of 2025. The GCLGS lead fire peer consultant conducted the necessary field work related to this project and subsequently completed this report. GCLGS is pleased to submit this document to the participating municipalities and fire companies for use as a public safety-planning document to meet future fire service delivery benchmarks.

Purpose

Municipalities have an obligation to their citizens that includes periodically reviewing the fire service that they are responsible to deliver under the municipal laws of the Commonwealth. The purpose should be to make sure that fire protection is being delivered with the needed resources, operational efficiencies, and management oversight that citizens expectations are met.

Methodology Used

To better understand the municipalities, elected officials, community leaders, and fire company members multiple meetings, roads tours, site visits, and data collection meetings were held.

Overview

In depth reviews were conducted on the following areas during data collection and assessment.

- Funding/Fundraising/Foreign Fire Insurance/Grant Sources
- Recruitment/Retention Efforts
- Fire Apparatus/Equipment
- Response Times/Apparatus Staffing
- Training/Qualifications
- Fire Station Locations/Facilities
- Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines
- Incident Response Types

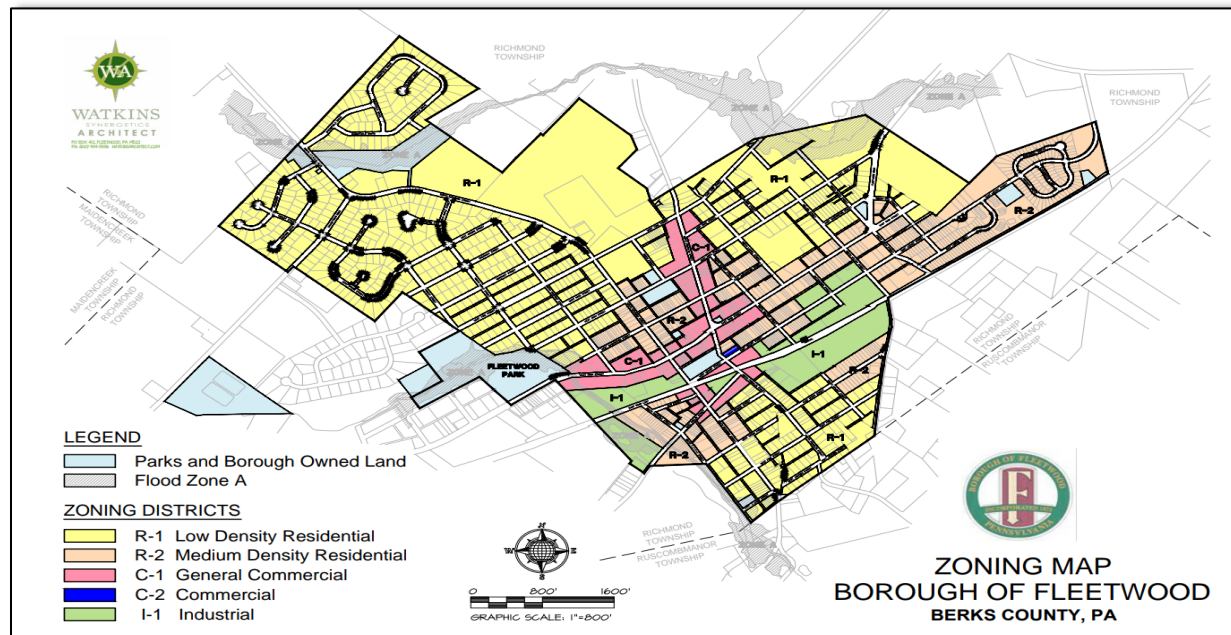
Recommendations

Throughout this report, an evaluation and analysis of each municipality and respective fire company was reviewed based on their supply of requested data. The leadership and members of each organization should be commended for their proactive approach and requesting a fire services study. These actions and intentional conversation throughout the process demonstrates the willingness to continuous improvement while being focused on efficiency, effectiveness, and the safety of the public. Where appropriate, the report makes recommendations for consideration and implementation steps.

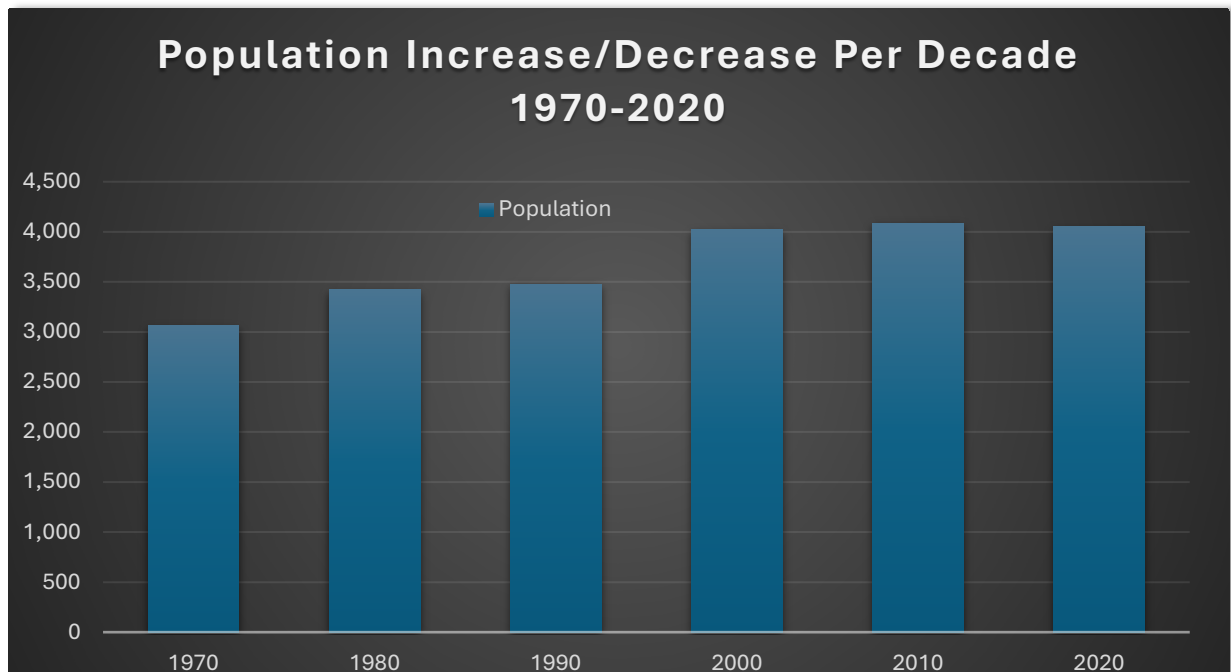
Municipal Overview

Fleetwood Borough, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Located northeast of the center of Berks County and is bordered on the east, west, and north by Richmond Township and on its short southern edge by Ruscombmanor Township. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the borough has a total area of 1.0 square mile.



Historical Population Data



Fleetwood Borough Annual Budget Data

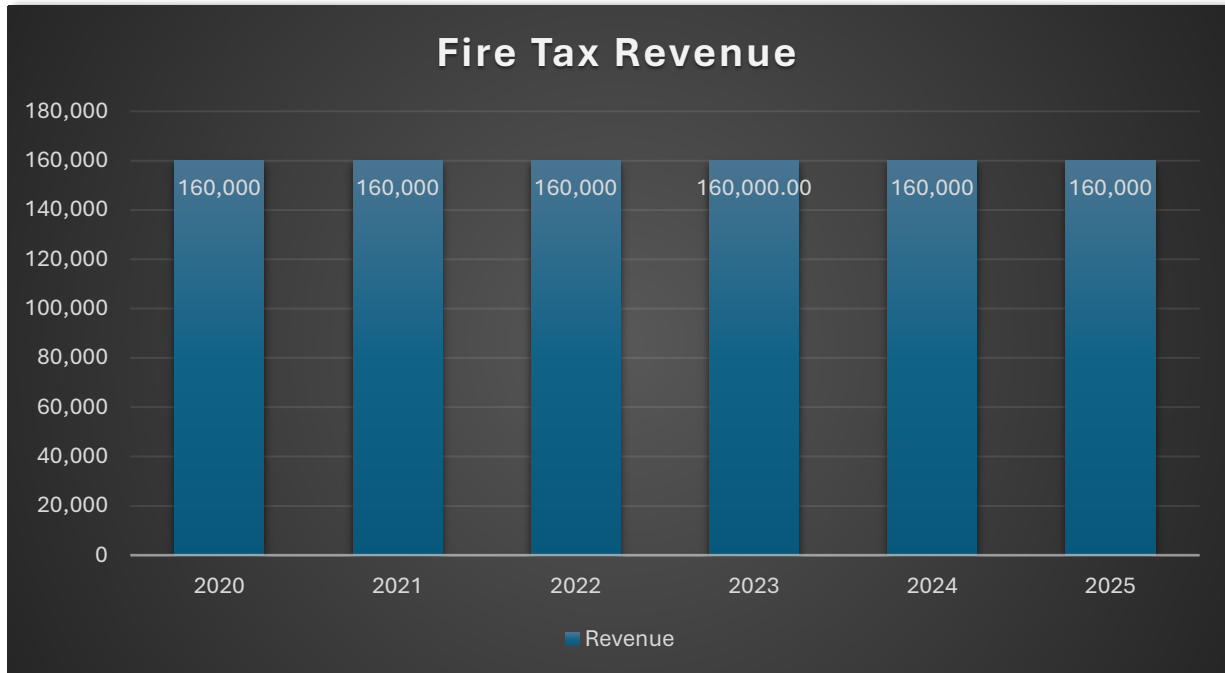
General Operating Budget \$3,399,818.20

Real Estate Assessed Value: \$159,167.40

Real Estate Tax Rate (Millage): 7.45%

Earned Income Tax Rate: 1.00%

Fire Tax Rate (Millage): 1.00%



Fire Service

Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company is an all-volunteer agency that provides fire, rescue, and QRS services to Fleetwood Borough and surrounding areas.

Emergency Medical Services

Advanced/Basic Life Support is provided by Penn State Life Lion EMS through a contract with Fleetwood Borough.

Other

Fleetwood Borough residents are afforded a full-service of municipal funded departments that includes administrative, police, and public works.

Public Protection Classification (PPC) Class 4 as of 2024.

Located northeast of the center of Berks County and is bordered on the north by Greenwich Township, northeast by Maxatawny Township, southwest by Rockland Township, south by Ruscombmanor Township, south by Fleetwood Borough, southwest by Maiden Creek Township, west by Ontelaunee Township, and the west by Perry Township. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the township has a total area of 23.81 square mile.



Richmond Township Annual Budget Data

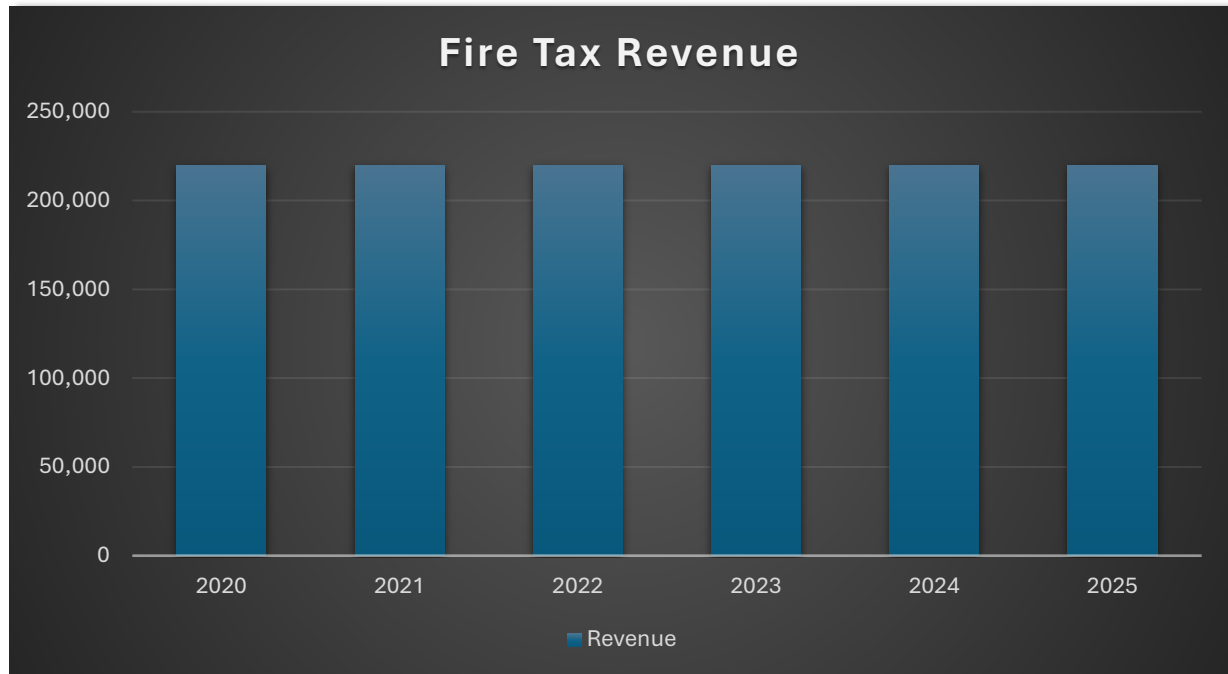
General Operating Budget \$1,876,710.00

Real Estate Assessed Value: \$225,500.00

Real Estate Tax Rate (Millage): 2.5%

Earned Income Tax Rate: 0.50%

Fire Tax Rate (Millage): 1.00%



Fire Service

Richmond Township is covered by two (2) all-volunteer fire companies. Community Fire Company of Virginville and Walnuttown Fire Company.

EMS

Advanced/Basic Life Support is provided by Penn State Life Lion EMS which is housed through a lease agreement with Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company.

Other

Richmond Township residents are afforded a full service of municipally funded departments that includes administrative and public works. Police protection is contracted with Fleetwood Borough Police Department.

Public Protection Classification (PPC) Class 9 as of 2024.

Public Protection Classification (PPC) Program

To help establish appropriate fire insurance premiums for residential and commercial properties, insurance companies need reliable, up-to-date information about a community's fire-protection services. ISO provides that information through the Public Protection Classification (PPC®) program.

They collect information on municipal fire-protection efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, PPC analyzes the relevant data using their Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS). They then assign a Public Protection Classification from 1 to 10. Class 1 generally represents superior property fire protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program doesn't meet their minimum criteria.

By classifying communities' ability to suppress fires, they help the communities evaluate their public fire-protection services. The program provides an objective, countrywide standard that helps fire departments in planning and budgeting for facilities, equipment, and training. And by securing lower fire insurance premiums for communities with better public protection, the PPC program provides incentives and rewards for communities that choose to improve their firefighting services.

PPC has extensive information on more than 40,000 fire-response jurisdictions.

Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) Overview

The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is a manual containing the criteria we use in reviewing the fire prevention and fire suppression capabilities of individual communities or fire protection areas. The schedule measures the major elements of a community's fire protection system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification (PPC®).

The FSRS employs nationally accepted standards developed by such organizations as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the American Water Works Association (AWWA), and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International. When those organizations update their standards, the evaluation changes as well. The PPC program always provides a useful benchmark that helps fire departments and other public officials measure the effectiveness of their efforts and plan improvements.

The FSRS lists a large number of items (facilities and practices) that a community should have to fight fires effectively. The schedule is performance based and assigns credit points for each item. Using the credit points and various formulas, we calculate a total score on a scale of 0 to 105.5.

To receive certain PPC ratings, a community must meet minimum criteria. After a community meets those criteria, the PPC rating depends on the community's score on the point scale.

Scores and PPC Ratings

The FSRS considers three main areas of a community's fire suppression system: emergency communications, fire department (including operational considerations), and water supply. In

addition, it includes a Community Risk Reduction section that recognizes community efforts to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation.

Volunteer Fire Service

Historical Review

Volunteer firefighters are summoned to a wide array of emergencies across the country every day including fires, emergency medical incidents, vehicle accidents, terrorist and active shooter events, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, high-angle and confined space emergencies, and other public service calls. The public relies on the volunteer emergency services to be their first line of defense in these emergencies. Volunteers spend an enormous amount of time training to prepare for these emergencies.

Today, volunteers comprise 65% of firefighters in the United States. The time donated by volunteer firefighters saves municipalities across the country an estimated \$46.9 billion dollars per year. The cost savings provided by fire service volunteers is tremendous. For many communities, transitioning to a career staffing model is not feasible.

Many local volunteer fire departments are struggling to meet staffing needs. The number of volunteer firefighters in the U.S. reached a low in 2020. At the same time, call volume has more than tripled in the last 35 years, due in large part to the increase in emergency medical calls. Major factors contributing to recruitment challenges include increased time demands, more rigorous training requirements, and the proliferation of two-income families whose members do not have time to volunteer. Fire departments today are also expected to provide a wide range of services and multi-hazard response, creating further challenges for resource constrained departments.

Community leaders need to ask these questions:

- Are we duplicating equipment and service?
- Are we placing a higher emphasis on competent trained firefighters to answer the call or demand more hours to fundraising?
- Are we treating our greatest asset, our volunteers with a balanced work/life balance?

Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Time Demand	Changes in Sociological Conditions
Training Requirements	Nature of the Business Changed
Increasing Call Volume	Federal Regulations
Leadership Problems	Higher Cost of Living
Aging Community	Internal Conflict

Due to these challenges, cooperation among communities is essential to blend together across defined municipal boundaries. Every day, mutual aid is provided and received for fires, vehicle crashes, medical emergencies, and a variety of other calls for citizens in need of a rapid, caring response. According to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Handbook published by the

Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development, municipalities are not walls or barricades.

It has been proven that cooperation will lead to better efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of services. As communities grow, so does the need for new and expanded services. Citizens will expect more from their government and fire department. Cooperation is the future: the question is whether it is in your department's future. How to make cooperation work?

1. Inclusive and Intentional from the start
2. Involve members and leaders of the fire company
3. Involve community members
4. Involve elected officials and municipal staff

It is essential to communicate effectively. If members of the process are not kept informed, decisions will be made on assumptions rather than facts. To maintain a cooperative spirit, it is important to be proactive, flexible, patient, and to think what is the best for the community.

Departments are finding it difficult to attract younger members due to a range of reasons, including increased demands on people's time, longer commuting distances to and from work, the prevalence of two-income households, and increased training requirements.

Age Profile of Firefighters by Community Size, 1987 ⁷

**Mostly volunteer firefighters*

SIZE OF COMMUNITY	% UNDER AGE 30	% AGE 30-39	% AGE 40-49	% AGE 50 & UP
10,000-24,999	33.0%	33.8%	20.6%	12.6%
5,000-9,999	35.8%	32.4%	19.1%	12.7%
2,500-4,999	34.6%	32.5%	19.3%	13.6%
Under 2,500	29.7%	33.5%	20.9%	15.9%

Age Profile of Firefighters by Community Size, 2020 ⁸

**Mostly volunteer firefighters*

SIZE OF COMMUNITY	% UNDER AGE 30	% AGE 30-39	% AGE 40-49	% AGE 50 & UP
10,000-24,999	26%	29%	24%	20%
5,000-9,999	30%	27%	20%	23%
2,500-4,999	28%	25%	20%	27%
Under 2,500	22%	23%	20%	34%

Small communities (populations under 10,000) across the U.S. are typically protected by all volunteer departments. In some cases, however, these communities have hired a few paid firefighters to assist. Mid-sized communities (populations between 10,000 and 100,000) are typically served by departments that use a combination of volunteer and paid firefighters. Large communities (populations over 100,000) are most often protected by combination paid and volunteer departments that consist of primarily paid staff. There are few strictly paid fire departments in the U.S., but those that exist are primarily found in very urban areas.

There is no national average of the amount of time a volunteer firefighter gives to his or her community. Volunteering in the fire and EMS service, however, is one of the most demanding volunteer activities today. Time commitments include operational responses (often at a

moment's notice), training, fundraising, vehicle and station maintenance, and various administrative duties.

The General Assembly in Pennsylvania commissioned Senate Resolution 6 report to provide legislative initiatives to address the volunteer crisis throughout the Commonwealth.

The six areas for recommendations included:

- Emergency Medical Services
- Government Support
- Innovation
- Recruiting and Retention
- Regulations and Codes
- Trainings and Operations

Local communities must focus on the service being provided and how the local authority having jurisdiction can answer the following questions.

- What do I need to protect the community?
- What are the economic benefits?
- How much will it cost?
- What are my funding sources?
- How do I deliver these services?

At the local level, the elected officials should review and align with these priorities:

- Emphasize the importance of local support for this basic community service
- Provide appropriate levels of funding for necessary equipment and training
- Engage in strategic planning processes with local first responders to address long-term sustainability
- Use of mutual aid to offset service and technical deficiencies
- Use of uniform incident management system
- Use of performance measurements to measure and analyze response times, firefighting effectiveness, training, and retention rates of volunteer fire companies

**Career and Volunteer Firefighters in the U.S. by
Population Protected, 2020 ⁹**

POPULATION PROTECTED	CAREER	VOLUNTEER	TOTAL
1,000,000 or more	35,600	1,900	37,500
500,000 to 999,999	41,400	5,100	46,500
250,000 to 499,999	28,200	800	29,000
100,000 to 249,999	55,500	3,200	58,700
50,000 to 99,999	45,900	7,400	53,300
25,000 to 49,999	50,500	15,200	65,700
10,000 to 24,999	58,400	56,600	115,000
5,000 to 9,999	27,900	89,000	116,900
2,500 to 4,999	11,100	169,800	180,900
Under 2,500	9,800	327,700	337,500
	364,300	676,900	1,041,200

* Senate Resolution 6 Commission, Report to the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, (January 2017).

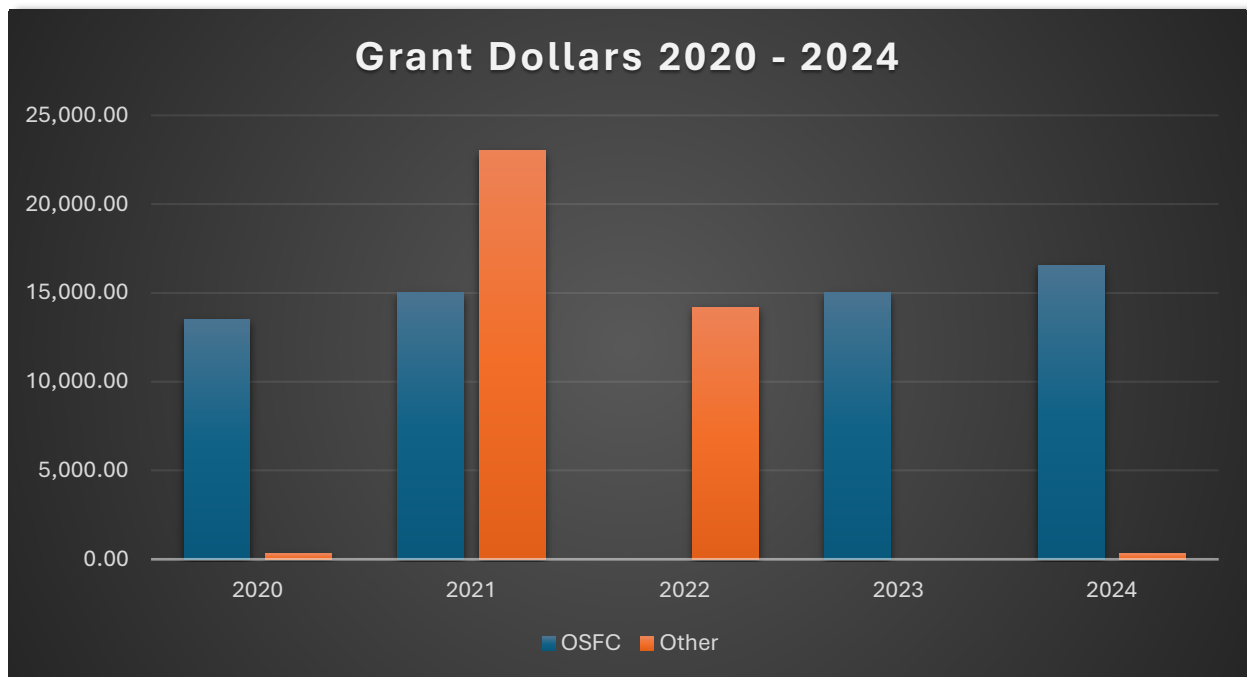
Fleetwood Fire Company Overview

The company operates out of one station that primarily provides fire, rescue, and QRS services to over 1,200 homes, three schools and seven churches.

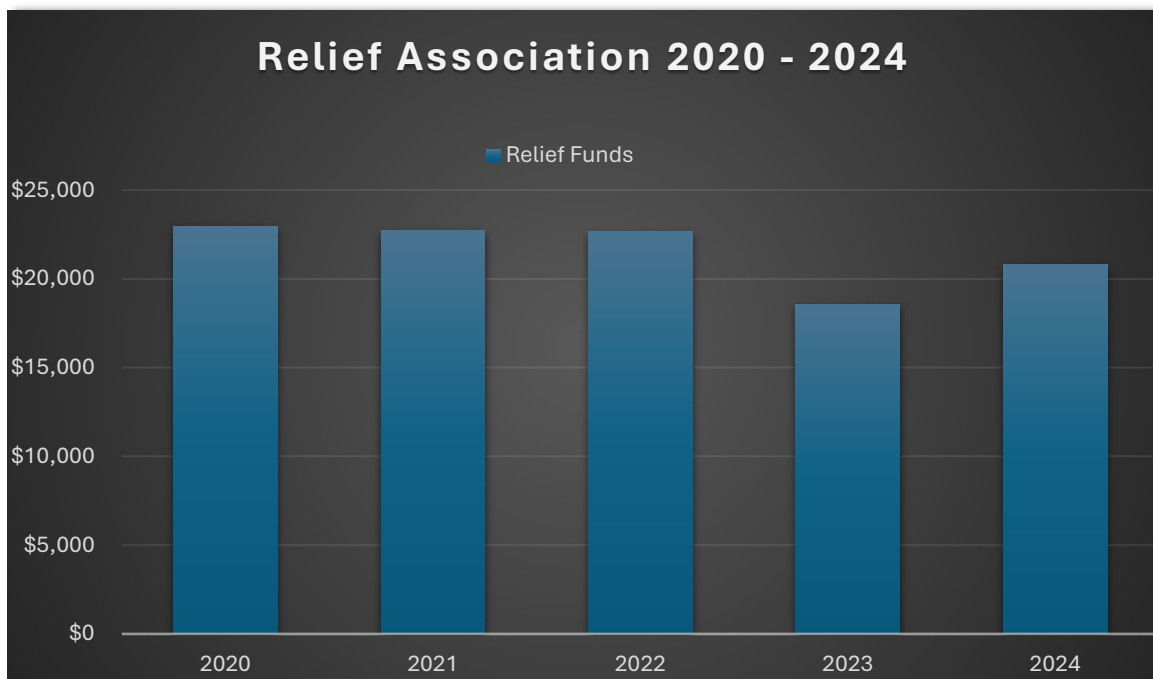
Funding Sources

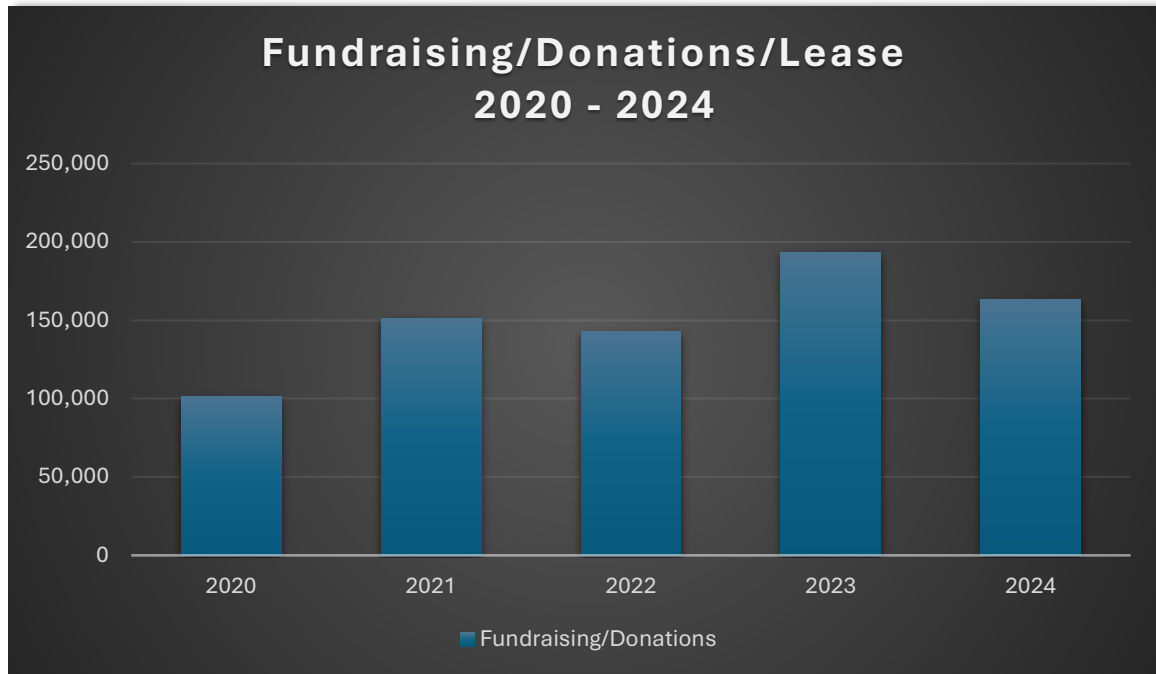
Municipal (Fire Tax)	Fixed % Tax by Ordinance
Foreign Fire Insurance (Relief)	Fixed % by State Funding Formula
Grants (MAP, OSFC, AFG, SAFER)	Based on State/Federal Budget Allocations
Direct Mailing	
Fundraising/Donations	Varies Based on Fire Company Members Participation

The importance of funding for volunteer fire companies cannot be overstated. These brave men and women volunteer their time and risk their lives to protect your communities deserve the resources necessary to fulfill their vital mission. Funding provides the financial support needed to acquire fire apparatus, maintain facilities, provide training, and carry out the essential functions to remain operational. Proper funding ensures that the volunteer fire company can remain the backbone of emergency response in your community.



FEMA and AFG have been extremely helpful sources of funding for major purchases like Radios in 2012 (\$40,000), SCBA's in 2013 (\$113,525), PPE in 2017 (\$126,463.00). Since 2004, Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company has received over \$776,067.64 in grant funding.

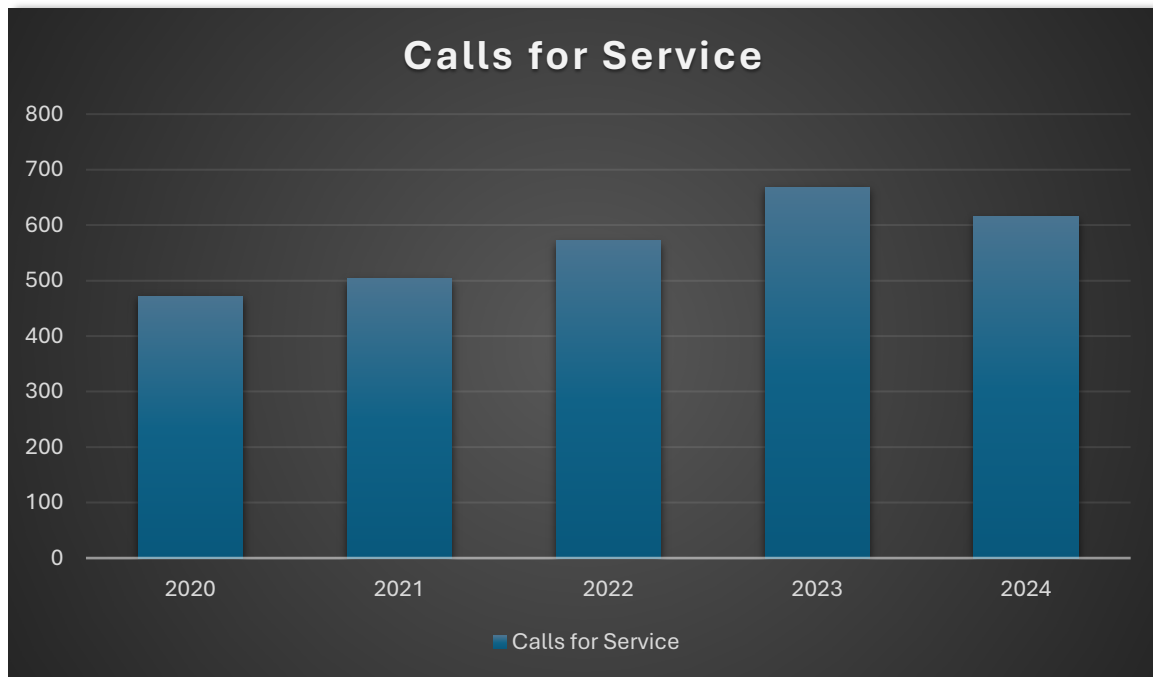




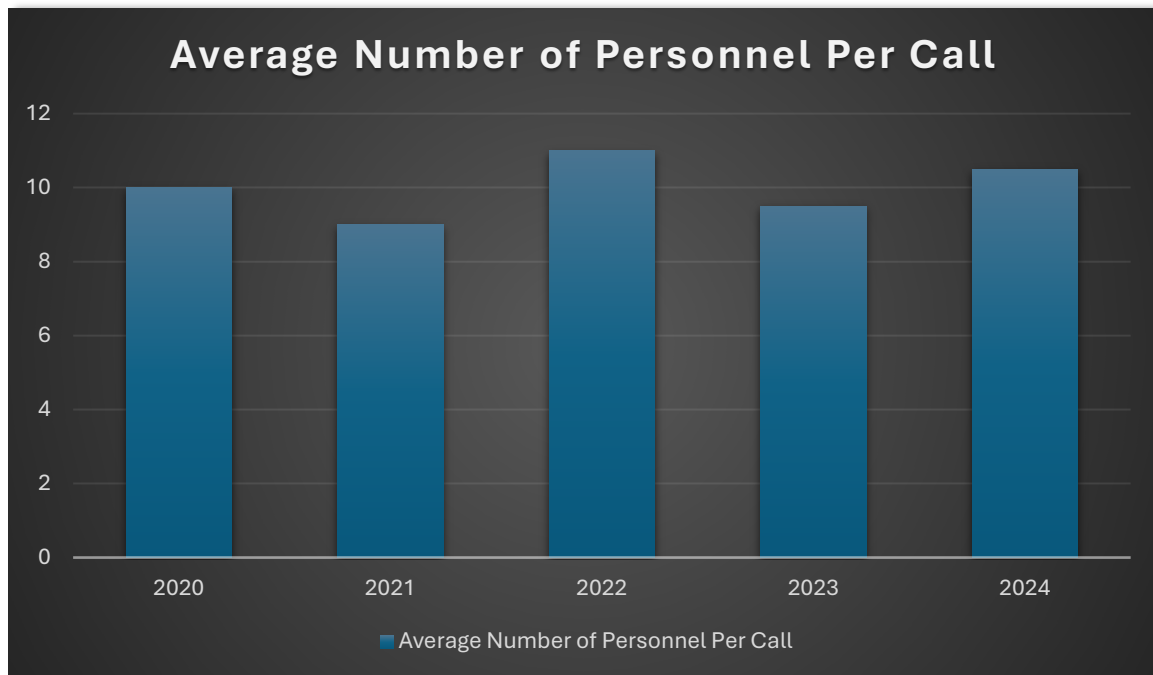
Recommendation 1

- Opportunity to third-party direct mailing would give the fire company an opportunity to reach out to everyone in the community with a newsletter highlighting important information and showcasing the great work being done in the community. Residents would have an opportunity to donate above and beyond current levels.
- Opportunity to explore with Borough officials on a fire tax increase.
- Explore regional opportunities to include merger, consolidation, or intergovernmental cooperation agreements.
- Meet with state officials to explore grant opportunities (Pennsylvania First Responders Funding & Resource Guide).

Total Calls for Service 2020-2024



Average Number of Responders Per Call



Fire Apparatus



Type	Mileage	Year	Condition	Maint Cost - Avg	Replacement Year	Additional Comments	Total Points
Aerial	0	2027				Replaces 2003 ALF / LTI	
Engine/Rescue	22,578	2015	Excellent	<\$5,000	2035	Replacement cost estimate \$2 million	11
Rescue	5,709	2021	Excellent	<\$5,000	2041	Replacement cost estimate \$2.5 million	9
Brush	23,000	2008	Very Good	<\$5,000	2039	Replacement cost estimate \$250,000	12
Utility	20,000	2014	Very Good	<\$5,000	2030	Replacement cost estimate \$75,000	8
Traffic Unit	24,580	2009	Good	<\$5,000	2030	Replacement cost estimate \$100,000	13

**Currently no plans in plan for future apparatus replacement beyond the 2027 delivery of new aerial ladder truck.*

**Sale of 2003 American LaFrance ladder truck will assist with financial support of new aerial.*

Vehicle Replacement Criteria Scoring Sheet

American Public Works Association (APWA) outlines the criteria for vehicle replacement to include the following factors. The higher the score, the more likely the vehicle needs to be replaced.

Points	1	2	3	4	5
Reliability	Always		Sometimes		Never
Vehicle Age	<6	7-9	10-12	13-15	>15
Vehicle Mileage	<30	30-49	50-69	70-99	>100
Annual Maintenance Cost	<5000	10,000-14,999	15,000-19,999	20,000-24,999	>25,000
Vehicle Use	Standard	4-Wheel	Single Purpose	Medium Duty	Special Built/Purpose

Recommendation 2

- The financial position of Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company allows them to purchase apparatus when needed. In the near future, look at overall apparatus within the immediate area to reduce duplication of effort/service.
- Research refurbishment options to reduce overall cost in the future. This option can extend the lifespan and functionality at half the cost of new custom fire apparatus.
- The offset cost for new apparatus can be achieved through selling of older apparatus.
- Establish a long-term apparatus replacement plan in conjunction with immediate area agencies to reduce duplication of effort/service.

Firefighting Equipment

Equipment	Condition	Replacement Plan	Funding Source
PPE	Very Good	4 sets per year starting in 2026	Grants
Rescue Tools	Excellent	As needed	General Budget
TIC	Very Good	As needed	Relief Association
Fire Hose	Very Good	Tested every two years, replace as needed based on test	General Budget
SCBA	Good	Replace 42 cylinders in 2030	General Budget

**Fire apparatus is equipped with up-to-date equipment including technical rescue capabilities.*

Recommendation 3

- Continuing the replacement plan and cycle for critical equipment outlined by National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- Work with other departments in the immediate area to address equipment needs to reduce duplication of effort/service.

Fire Station Location and Condition

The 2-story fire station was built in 1982 and presents normal wear of a 40+ year old facility. Several upgrades occurred in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to the facility.

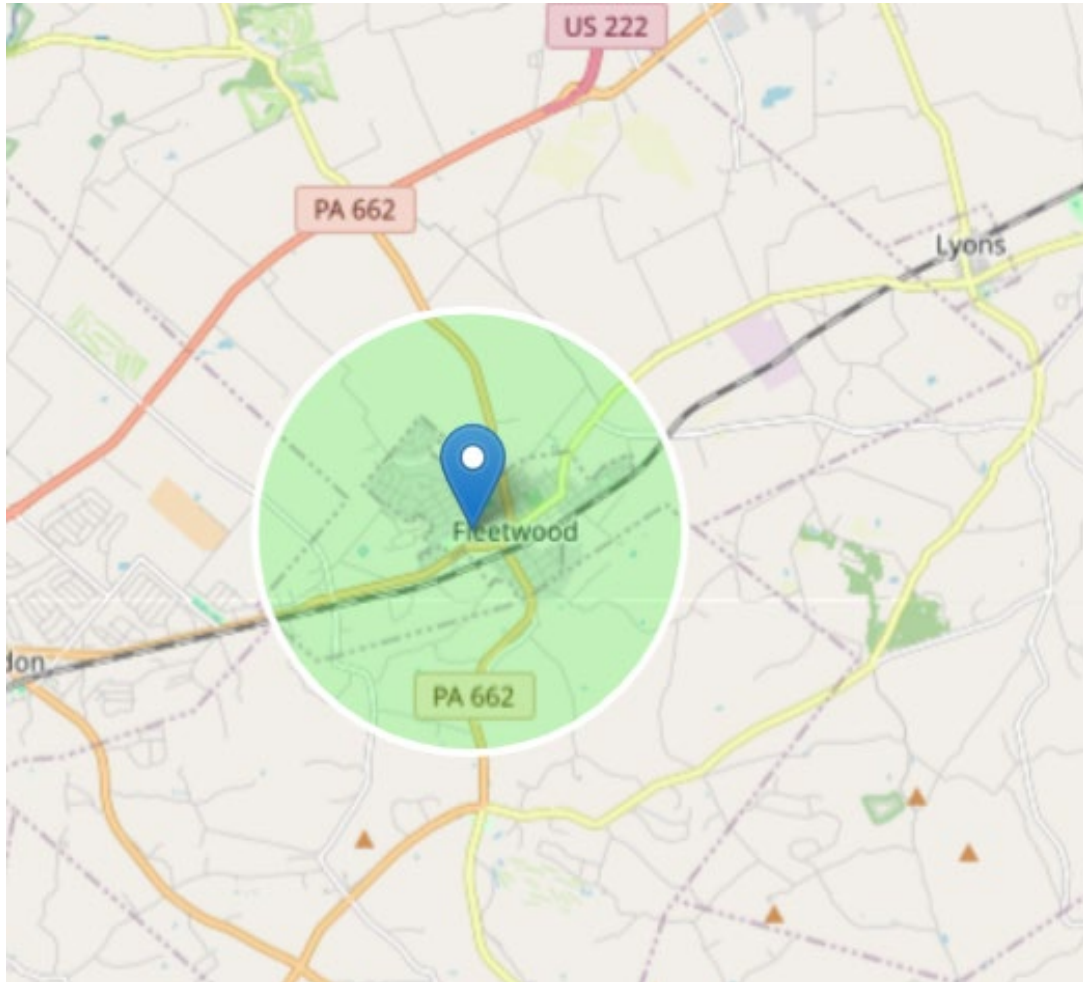
Year	Building Maintenance Cost
2024	\$15,615
2023	\$17,248
2022	\$20,605
2021	\$18,808
2020	\$17,442

Recommendation 4

- Currently, Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company is in need of a new roof, front apron repairs, interior updates, and apparatus space.
- Work to establish a long-range capital improvement plan to address needs that is supported by the Borough.
- Start conversation with Borough officials and Penn State Health EMS on relocation of EMS transport units due to limited floor space for current fleet of vehicles.
- Freeing up critical space throughout the building will enable future expansion of fire rescue personnel for live-in program, paid on call program, duty crew program, paid personnel, etc.
- Safety concerns are noted in the current fire apparatus bays where pinch points could occur for active members trying to avoid moving apparatus.

Fire Station and Box Areas

The standard has always been to evaluate the distribution of fire resources through the community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company and 2.5 miles for a ladder/special services company.



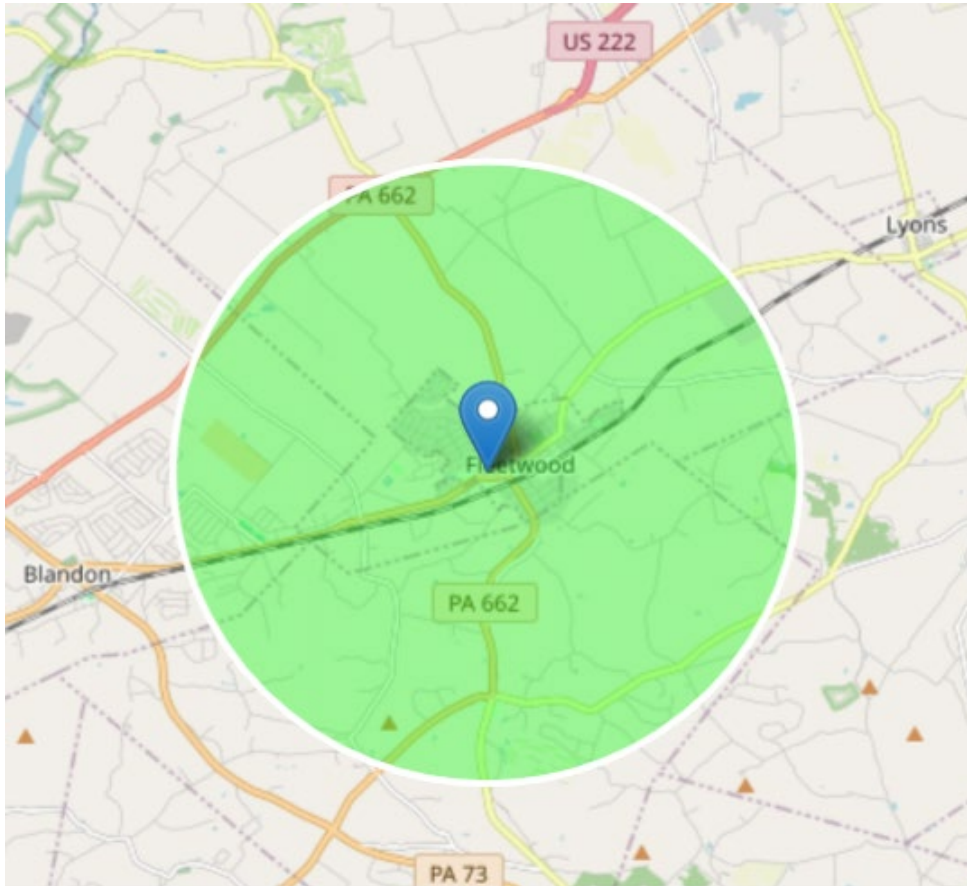
The presentation above is a 1.5-mile radius of the engine company.

Recommendation 5

- Work with area agencies on immediate response to emergency situations based on closest appropriate resources and trained personnel to mitigate the situation.
- Work with mutual aid agencies on standardization of resource allocation to a dispatched emergency.

Fire Station and Box Areas

The standard has always been to evaluate the distribution of fire resources through the community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company and 2.5 miles for a ladder/special services company.



The presentation above is a 2.5-mile radius of the ladder truck company.

Recommendation 6

- Work with area agencies on immediate response to emergency situations based on closest appropriate resources and trained personnel to mitigate the situation.
- Work with mutual aid agencies on standardization of resource allocation to a dispatched emergency.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment of New Members

Year	Active (911 Responder)	Social (Fundraising/Admin)
2020	3	0
2021	3	0
2022	2	1
2023	3	10
2024	4	2

Total Number of Members

Year	Active (911 Responder)	Social (Fundraising/Admin)
2020	38	19
2021	40	19
2022	37	18
2023	37	14
2024	41	20

911 Responders

Rank	Qualifications Requirement	Comments
Fire Chief	Minimum of Essentials of Firefighting, Incident Command, Pump Operations, Rescue Operations, Emergency Responder or higher, and served at least one (1) year as a Lieutenant or Captain.	Outlined in the 2017 By-Laws
Deputy Chief	Minimum of Fire Fighter I	
Assistant Chief	Minimum of Fire Fighter I	

Department Training Plan

A department training plan is developed for the year and structured in a way that meets the annual skills and proficiency testing of active members.

Standard Operating Guidelines/Procedures

Standard Operating Guidelines are reviewed on a regular basis by the Fire Chief and officers to ensure day-to-day expectations for operational effectiveness are maintained by all members.

Recommendation 7

- Update training requirements for Fire Officers to meet NFPA 1021, Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.
- Update 2017 By-Laws, Article 12 Qualifications for Fire Officers and Article 13 Duties of Chief Officers to include, at a minimum, an annual review of Standard Operating Guidelines.
- Continue with the structured annual training plan.

Opportunities and Concerns (verbatim from in-person interviews)

Top Needs:

- Ways to fund better. Our fundraising can cease at any time. Currently our fundraising brings in more than taxes. We cannot overtax our population. Our community normally supports us in all we do but there will be a line we cannot cross.
- Developing a stronger Fire Officer base. We have good Fire Officers but some lack in effort/initiative.
- Future needs for part-time daytime Fire Apparatus Driver/Operators.
- Combining departments to increase funding as well as reduce duplication of equipment and save funds by reducing insurance, and workers compensation. The savings of this could go towards daytime drivers to enhance responses for both Township and Borough.
- Training roof simulator – we have the space and borough approval just need to acquire materials and build.

Top Strengths:

- Personnel. Fortunate with active responders and auxiliary membership. Because of this, fire trucks are dispatched to more and more places to assist.
- Budget and purchasing power. Financial position allows us to pursue getting equipment for personnel that will assist them in performing in their jobs.
- Auxiliary personnel. Family-oriented group that come out to help with fundraising.
- Training. We outpace most fire departments around us, with weekly training and a training plan that schedules training events out months ahead of time.

Top Weaknesses:

- We should have looked at starting this type of process sooner. Our membership, years ago, saw nothing wrong with pursuing this type of talk. Other agencies want nothing to do with it.
- Not getting enough motivation from some of the personnel.
- Lack of succession planning for both executive and emergency services.
- Being able to continue to function in the next 10, 20, or 30 years without making serious decisions about consolidation.

Conclusion for Fleetwood Borough

Fleetwood Borough funds Fire Protection with Tax Millage Rates under the Pennsylvania Borough Code. The fire company is funded by annual allocations from the Borough's Fire Tax Millage, the Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association fund, and occasional state and federal grants, various fundraising efforts, and facility rental agreements.

With the major concern of not having support personnel to do fundraising in the future, more demands will be placed on active personnel that will need to balance fundraising, training, emergency response, work, and family. The Borough should consider looking at increasing revenue through the Fire Tax at the appropriate millage as to achieve the proper level of investment for Fire Protection.

Fleetwood Volunteer Fire Company is a well-disciplined organization that is highly trained to meet the demands placed upon them. The company has shown several best practices that should be acknowledged publicly:

- ❖ Participating Department Recognized by Office of State Fire Commissioner, one of only four in Berks County. The voluntary firefighter certification program is a legislatively mandated system by Act 1995-61. Commonwealth emergency responders have an opportunity to participate in and be recognized as a certified fire professional at various levels in accordance with nationally recognized and sanctioned Professional Qualification standards.
- ❖ In-process for recertification of PA Department of Health Voluntary Rescue Service Recognition.
- ❖ Utilizing a cost recovery process on services rendered and/or materials used on specific call types.
- ❖ All fire apparatus is inspected and certified by the PA Department of Health.
- ❖ Firefighter cancer reduction initiatives are in place (gear washer, 2nd set of Personnel Protective Equipment, and apparatus exhaust system),
- ❖ All commercial buildings within the first-due response area are pre-planned,
- ❖ Recruitment and Retention of members through incentive payout programs based on attendance at responses, fundraising, training, meetings, and other public education events.

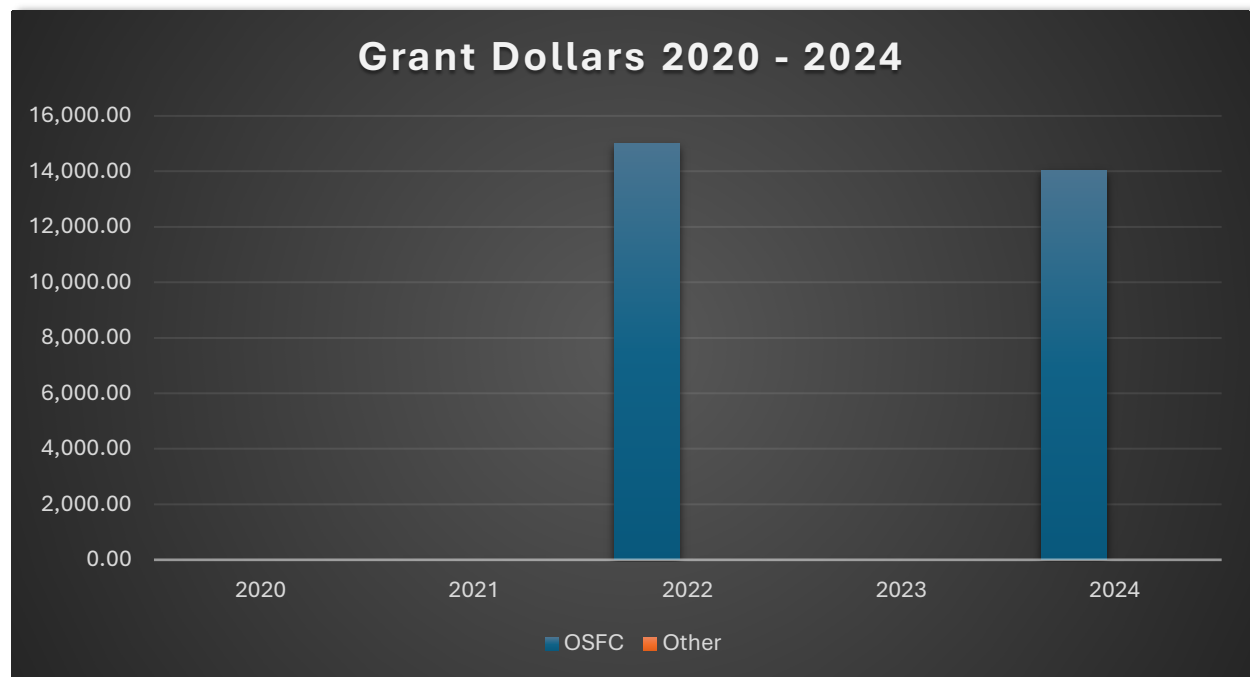
Virginville Community Fire Company Overview

The company operates out of one station that primarily provides fire, rescue, and QRS services to a primary wooden rural area of Richmond Township, Perry, Greenwich, and Windsor.

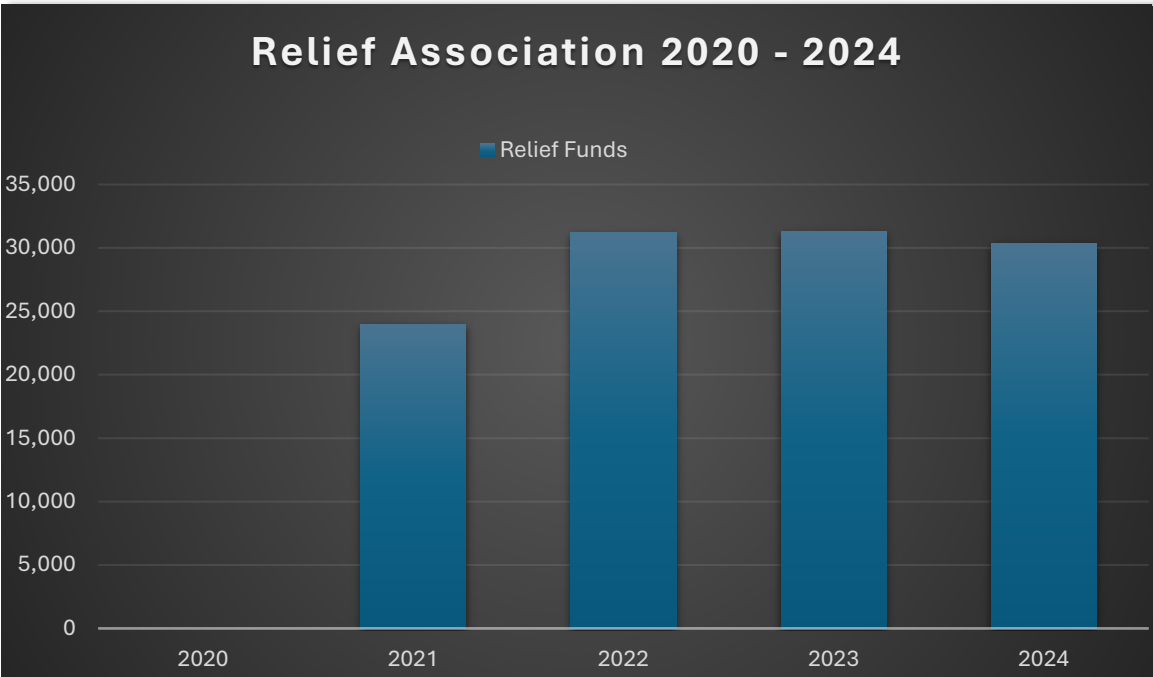
Funding Sources

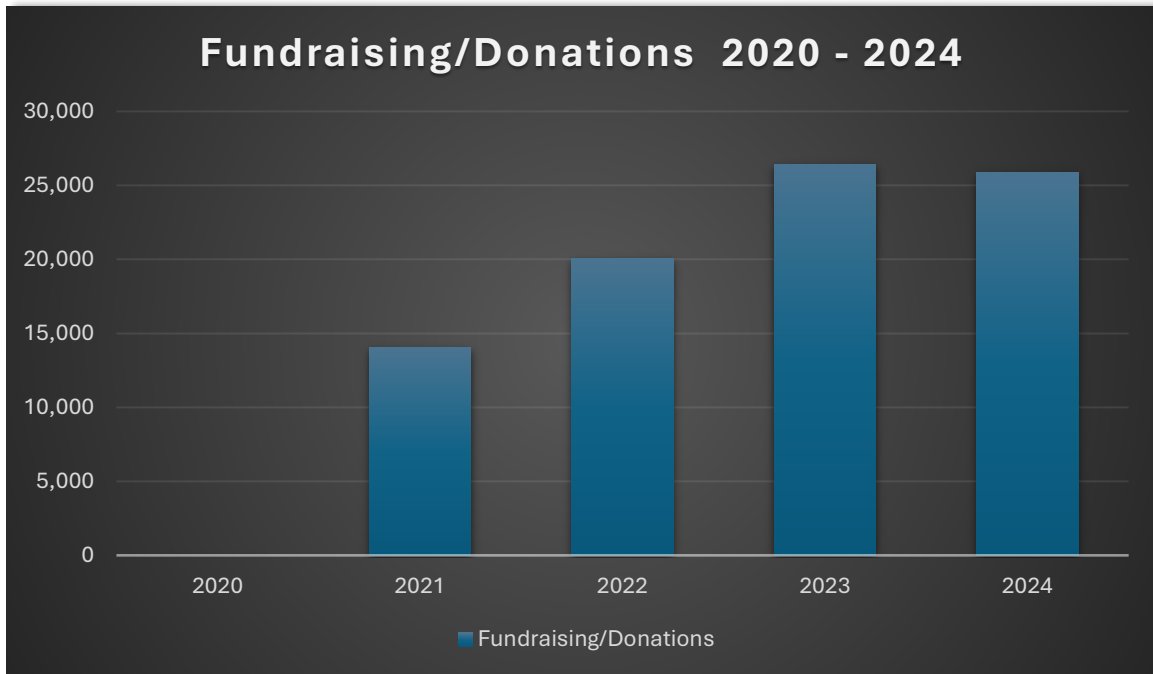
Municipal (Fire Tax)	Fixed % Tax by Ordinance
Foreign Fire Insurance (Relief)	Fixed % by State Funding Formula
Grants (MAP, OSFC, AFG, SAFER)	Based on State/Federal Budget Allocations
Direct Mailing	
Fundraising/Donations	Varies Based on Fire Company Members Participation

The importance of funding for volunteer fire companies cannot be overstated. These brave men and women volunteer their time and risk their lives to protect your communities deserve the resources necessary to fulfill their vital mission. Funding provided the financial support needed to acquire fire apparatus, maintain facilities, provide training, and carry out the essential functions to remain operational. Proper funding ensures that the volunteer fire company can remain the backbone of emergency response in your community.



FEMA and AFG have been extremely helpful sources of funding for major purchases like PPE in 2017 (\$52,097), Rescue Tools in 2018 (\$18,000), and SCBA's in 2019 (\$142,112). Since 2017, Community Fire Company of Virginville has received over \$212,209 in federal grant funding.

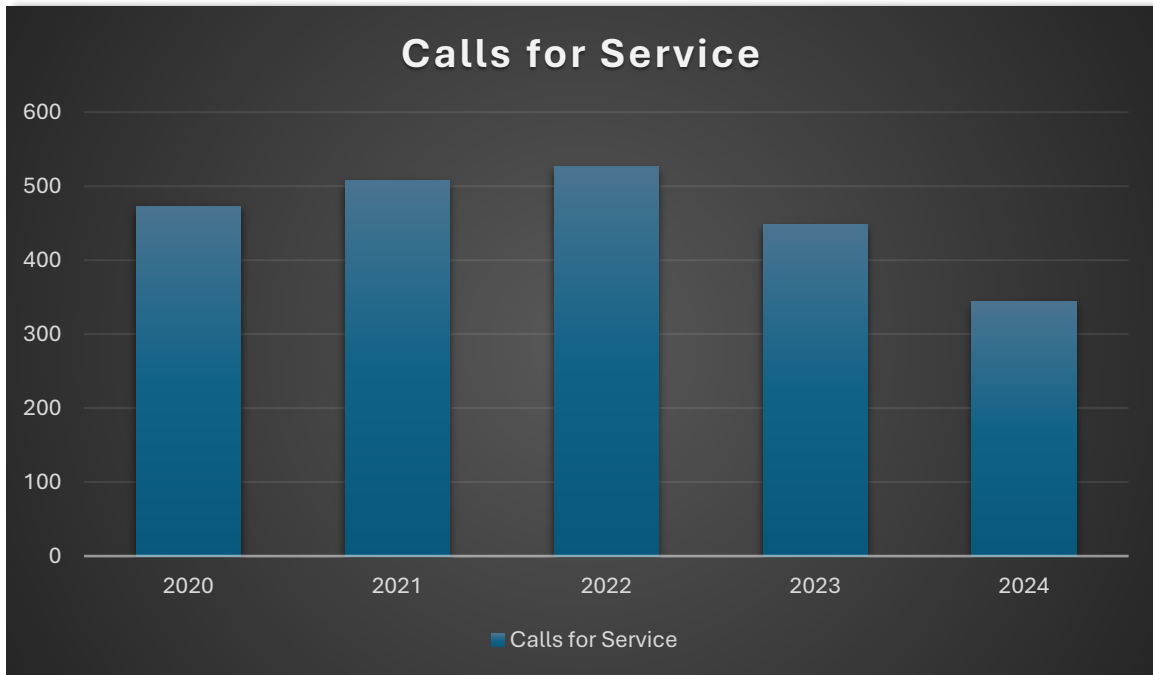




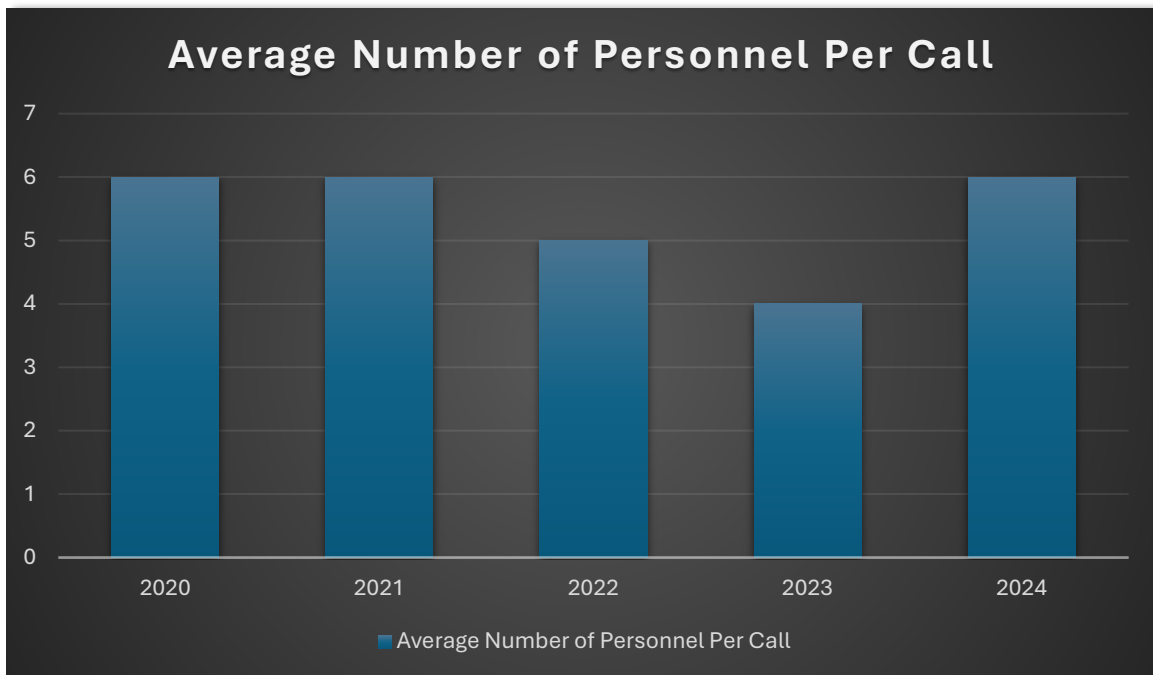
Recommendation 1

- Opportunity to third-party direct mailing would give the fire company an opportunity to reach out to everyone in the community with a newsletter highlighting important information and showcasing the great work being done in the community. Residents would have an opportunity to donate above current opportunities.
- Opportunity to explore with Township officials on a fire tax increase.
- Meet with state officials to explore grant opportunities (Pennsylvania First Responders Funding & Resource Guide).

Total Calls for Service 2020-2024



Average Number of Responders Per Call



Fire Apparatus



Type	Mileage	Year	Condition	Maint Cost - Avg	Replacement Year	Additional Comments	Total Points
Aerial	14,000	2016	Excellent	<\$5,000	2036	Replacement cost estimate \$2.5 million	10
Tanker	22,000	2008	Very Good	<\$5,000	2028	Replacement cost estimate \$1.5 million	12
Rescue	23,000	2008	Very Good	<\$5,000	2028	Replacement cost estimate \$2.2 million	12
Brush Utility	80,000	2017	Very Good	<\$5,000	2037	Replacement cost estimate \$250,000	10
Traffic Unit	88,000	2003	Good	<\$5,000	2033	Replacement cost estimate \$100,000	15

**Currently no plans in plan for future apparatus replacement.*

Vehicle Replacement Criteria Scoring Sheet

American Public Works Association (APWA) outlines the criteria for vehicle replacement to include the following factors. The higher the score, the more likely the vehicle needs to be replaced.

Points	1	2	3	4	5
Reliability	Always		Sometimes		Never
Vehicle Age	<6	7-9	10-12	13-15	>15
Vehicle Mileage	<30	30-49	50-69	70-99	>100
Annual Maintenance Cost	<5000	10,000-14,999	15,000-19,999	20,000-24,999	>25,000
Vehicle Use	Standard	4-Wheel	Single Purpose	Medium Duty	Special Built/Purpose

Recommendation 2

- Research refurbishment options of fire apparatus to reduce overall cost. This option can extend the lifespan and functionality at half the cost of new custom fire apparatus.
- The offset cost for new apparatus can be achieved through selling older apparatus.
- Establish a long-term apparatus replacement plan in conjunction with immediate area agencies to reduce duplication of effort/service.

Firefighting Equipment

Equipment	Condition	Replacement Plan	Funding Source
PPE	Very Good	All PPE is 2018 or newer	Grants
Rescue Tools	Excellent	As needed	General Budget
TIC	Very Good	As needed	Relief Association
Fire Hose	Very Good	Tested every two years, replace as needed based on test	General Budget
SCBA	Good	Replace as needed	General Budget

*Fire apparatus is equipped with up-to-date equipment including technical rescue capabilities.

Recommendation 3

- Continuing the replacement plan and cycle for critical equipment based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- Work with other departments in the immediate area to address equipment needs to reduce duplication of effort/service.

Fire Station Location and Condition

The 1-story fire station presents normal wear but is under renovations in the social hall area to increase revenue through rentals.

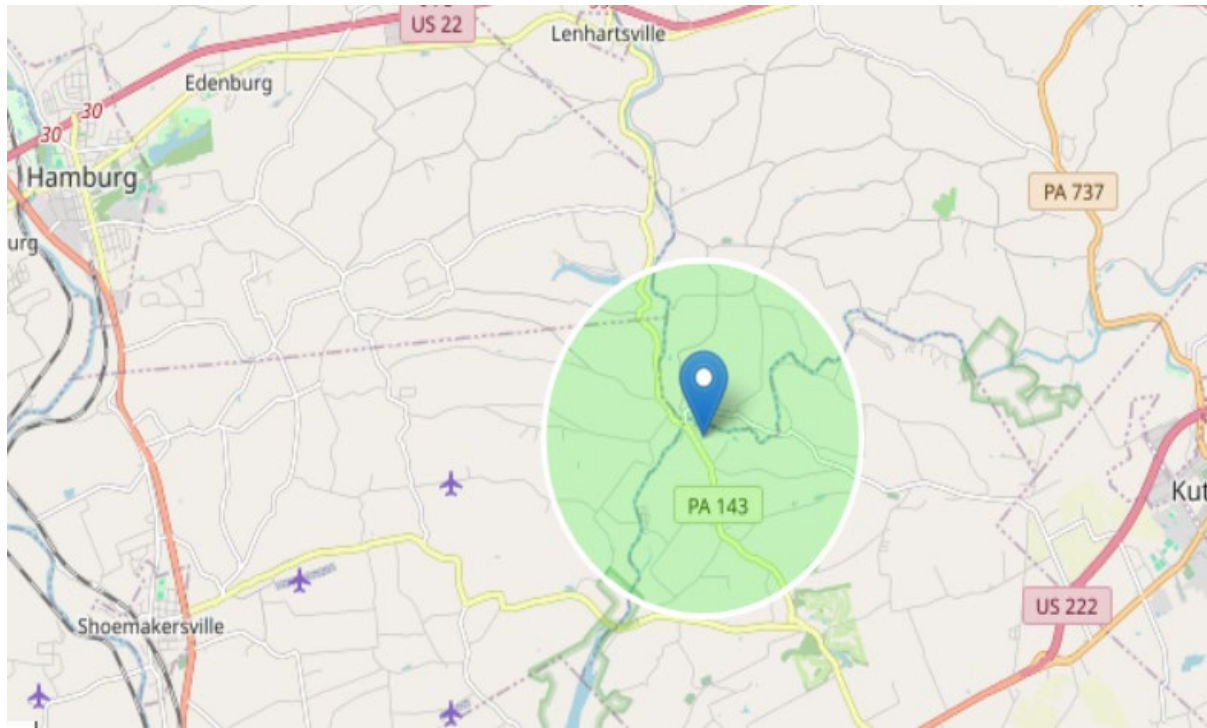
Year	Building Maintenance Cost
2024	\$78,383.89
2023	\$135,861.16
2022	\$107,561.37
2021	\$42,914.37

Recommendation 4

- Continue with future planning for increased revenue opportunities.
 - Recently remodeled social hall
 - Long-term revenue with land/cell tower
 - Ownership of 10-acres of land

Fire Station and Box Areas

The standard has always been to evaluate the distribution of fire resources through the community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company and 2.5 miles for a ladder/special services company.



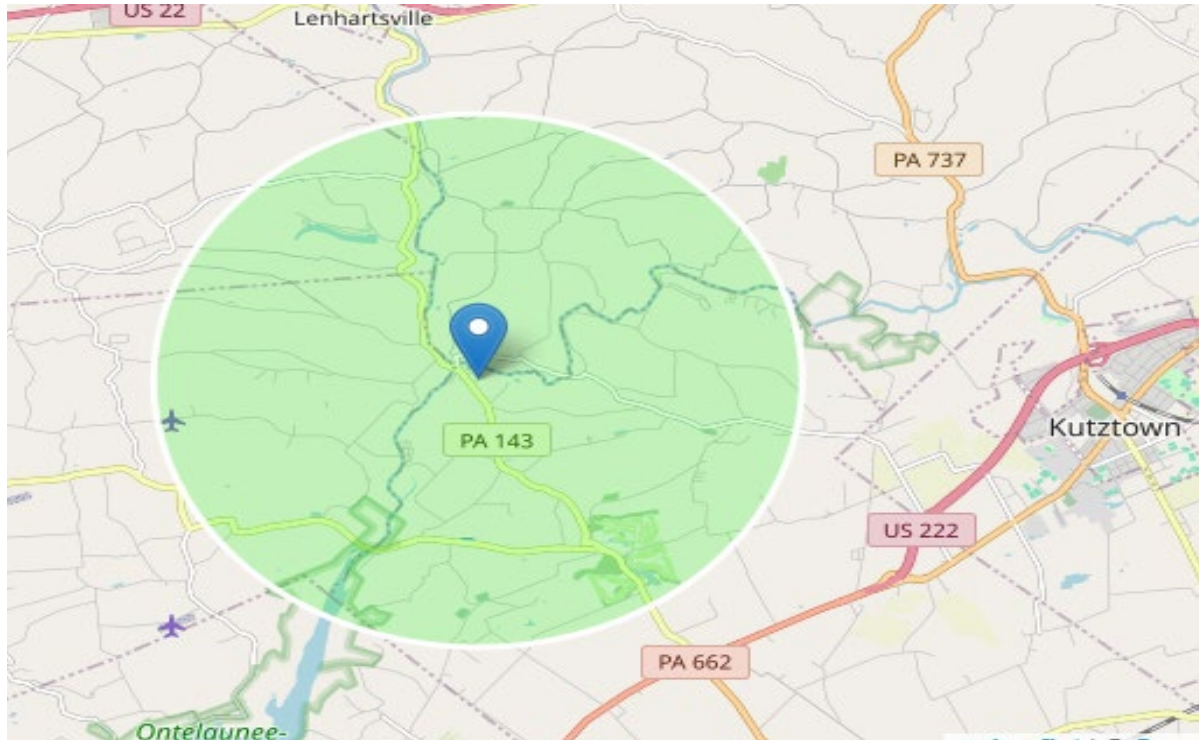
The presentation above is a 1.5-mile radius of the engine company.

Recommendation 5

- Work with area agencies on immediate response to emergency situations based on closest appropriate resources and trained personnel to mitigate the situation.
- Work with mutual aid agencies on standardization of resource allocation to a dispatched emergency.

Fire Station and Box Areas

The standard has always been to evaluate the distribution of fire resources through the community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company and 2.5 miles for a ladder/special services company.



The presentation above is a 2.5-mile radius of the ladder truck company.

Recommendation 6

- Work with area agencies on immediate response to emergency situations based on closest appropriate resources and trained personnel to mitigate the situation.
- Work with mutual aid agencies on standardization of resource allocation to a dispatched emergency.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment of New Members (Data Collection Doesn't Specify)

Year	Active (911 Responder)	Social (Fundraising/Admin)	Total New Members
2020			4
2021			4
2022			2
2023			12
2024			6

Total Number of Members (Data Collection Doesn't Specify)

Year	Active (911 Responder)	Social (Fundraising/Admin)	Total Membership
2020			120
2021			146
2022			141
2023			147
2024			130

Rank	Qualifications Requirement	Comments
Fire Chief	Minimum of Fire Fighter I	Fire Chief appoints Line Officers
Deputy Chief		
Assistant Chief		

Department Training Plan

A department training plan is developed for members and weekly training occurs on a variety of topics. All members are encouraged to go to training courses but are not required. A large portion of firefighting training is conducted in-house and approved to complete fireground tasks based on internal procedures.

Standard Operating Guidelines/Procedures

Standard Operating Guidelines are reviewed on a regular basis by the Fire Chief and officers to ensure day-to-day expectations for operational effectiveness are maintained by all members.

Recommendation 7

- Develop and implement a training grid that outlines positions and requirements.
- Continue with weekday and weekend training for membership to gain experience.

Opportunities and Concerns (verbatim from in-person interviews)

Top Needs:

- Funding. Township allotment pays for the Ladder Truck loan each year.

Top Strengths:

- Personnel. Good group of members volunteering to serve their community.

Top Weaknesses:

- We understand the Pennsylvania volunteer fire service is declining.
- Open to ideas for the future.

Conclusion for Virginville Community Fire Company

Richmond Township funds Fire Protection with Tax Millage Rates based on the Township Code. The fire company is funded by annual allocations from the Township Fire Tax Millage, and occasional state and federal grants, various fundraising efforts, facility rental agreements, and land lease agreements.

Much like Fleetwood Borough, Richmond Township is faced with municipal challenges that require a balance and investment for the level of Fire Protection that they want to see. The volunteer fire service challenges are not unique to just one specific community, every community in Pennsylvania is facing the same challenges and figuring out that working together and sharing resources is a must moving forward. The Township should explore ways to assist with future purchasing needs for the Community Fire Company of Virginville.

Community Fire Company of Virginville is an established organization that meets the demands placed upon them. The company has shown several best practices that should be acknowledged publicly:

- ❖ Utilizing a cost recovery process on services rendered and/or materials used on specific call types.
- ❖ Firefighter cancer reduction initiatives are in place (gear washer, 2nd set of Personnel Protective Equipment, and apparatus exhaust system).

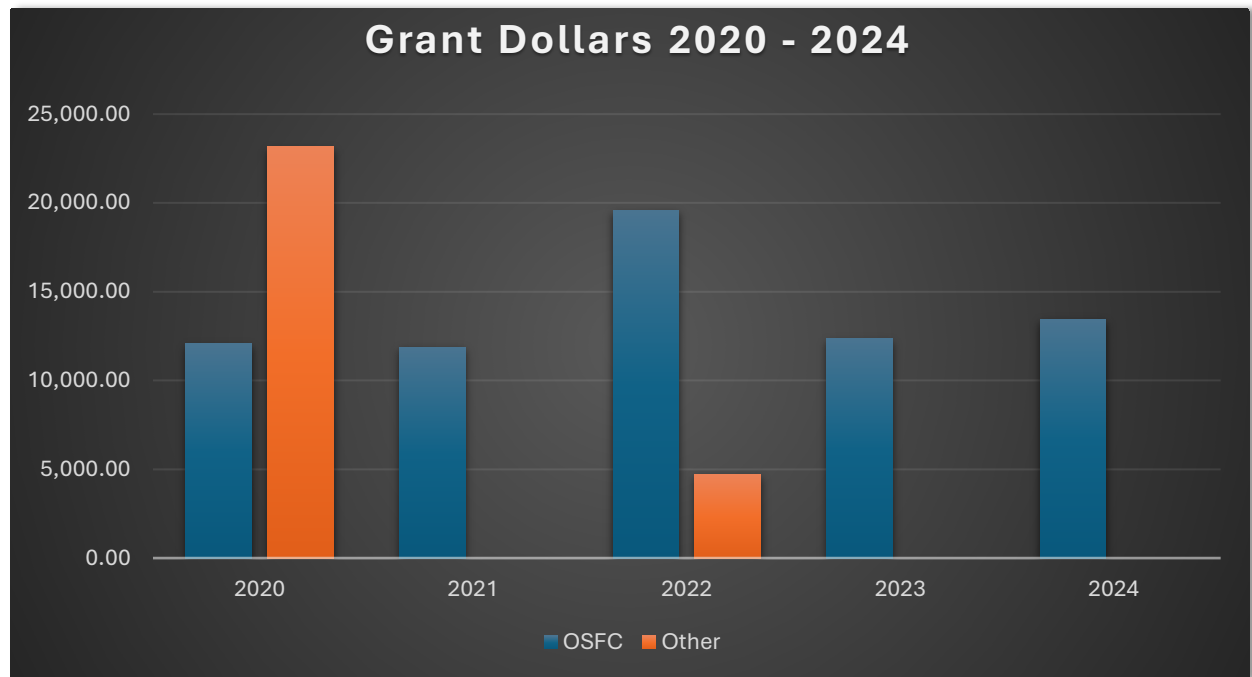
Walnuttown Fire Company Overview

The company operates out of one station that primarily provides fire, rescue, and QRS services to a primary rural area of Richmond Township.

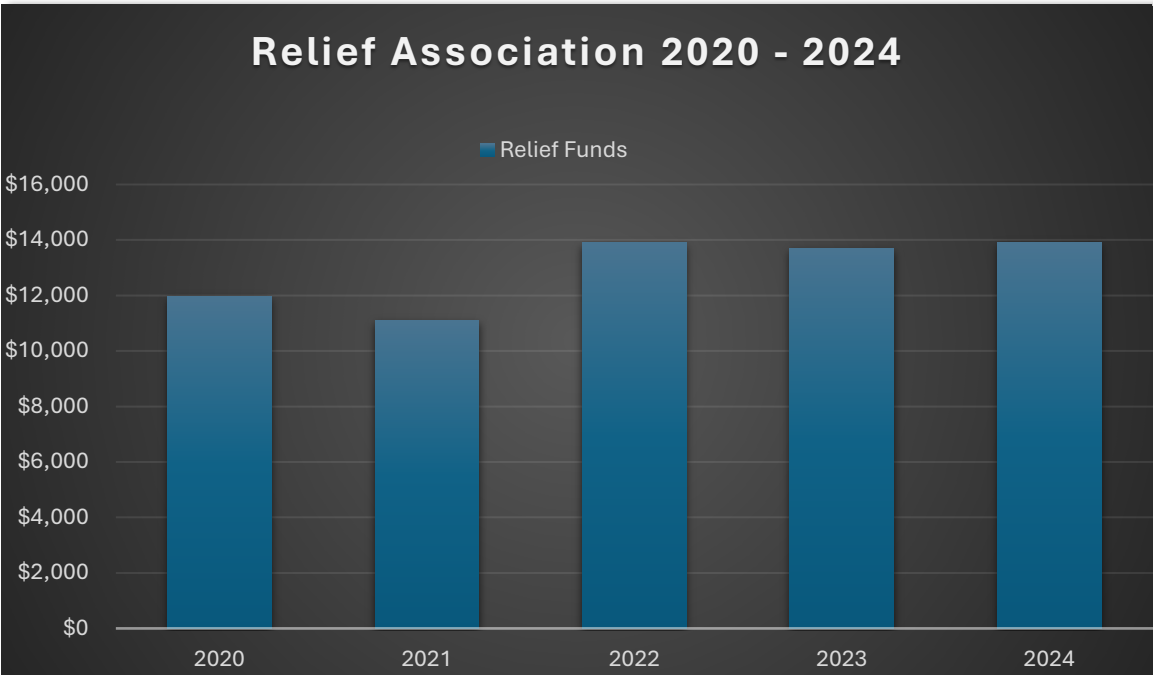
Funding Sources

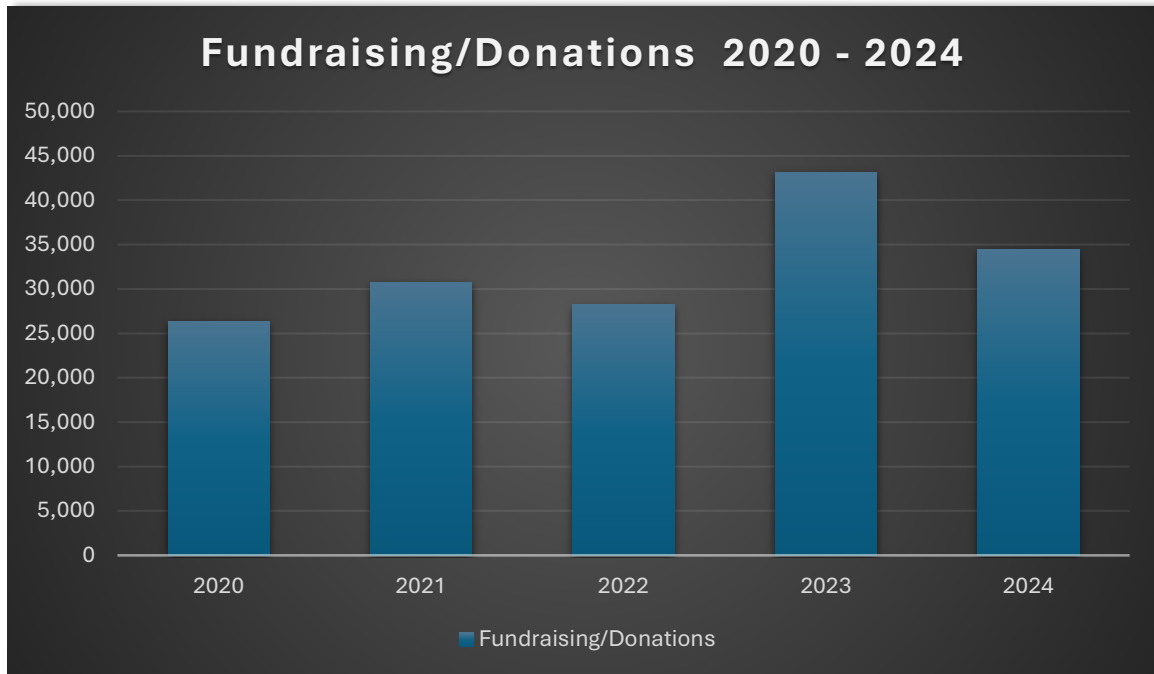
Municipal (Fire Tax)	Fixed % Tax by Ordinance
Foreign Fire Insurance (Relief)	Fixed % by State Funding Formula
Grants (MAP, OSFC, AFG, SAFER)	Based on State/Federal Budget Allocations
Direct Mailing	
Fundraising/Donations	Varies Based on Fire Company Members Participation

The importance of funding for volunteer fire companies cannot be overstated. These brave men and women volunteer their time and risk their lives to protect your communities deserve the resources necessary to fulfill their vital mission. Funding provided the financial support needed to acquire fire apparatus, maintain facilities, provide training, and carry out the essential functions to remain operational. Proper funding ensures that the volunteer fire company can remain the backbone of emergency response in your community.



Grants have been extremely helpful to fund major purchases like PPE, Rescue Tools, SCBA's, and forestry equipment to name a few.

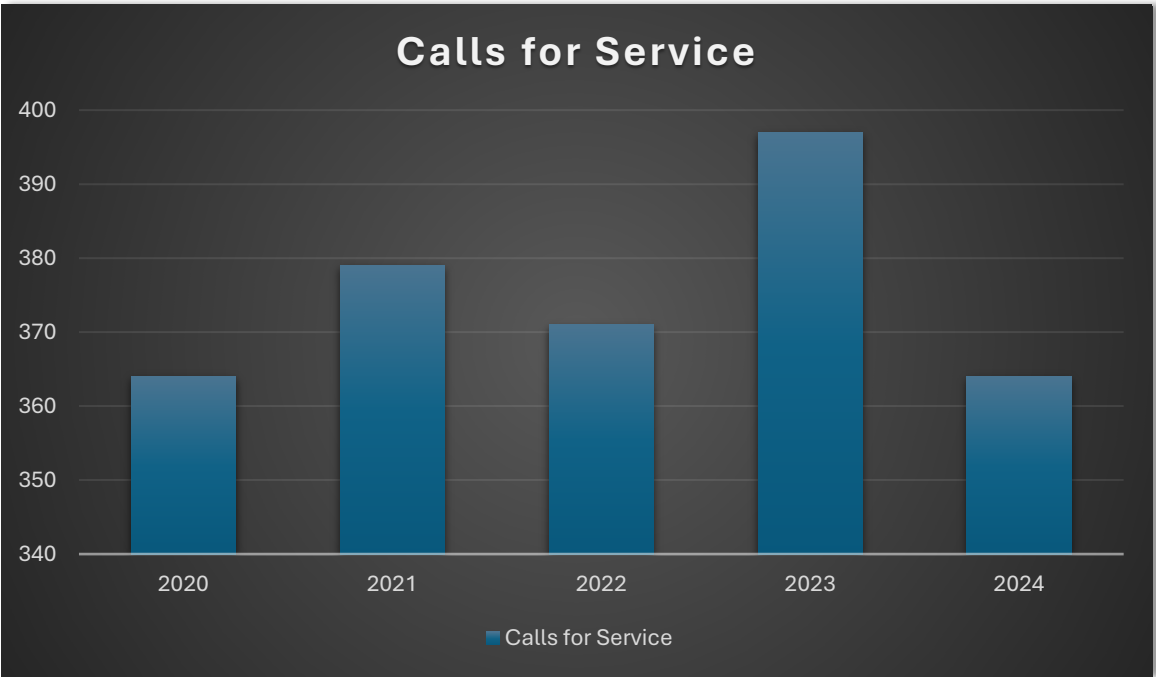




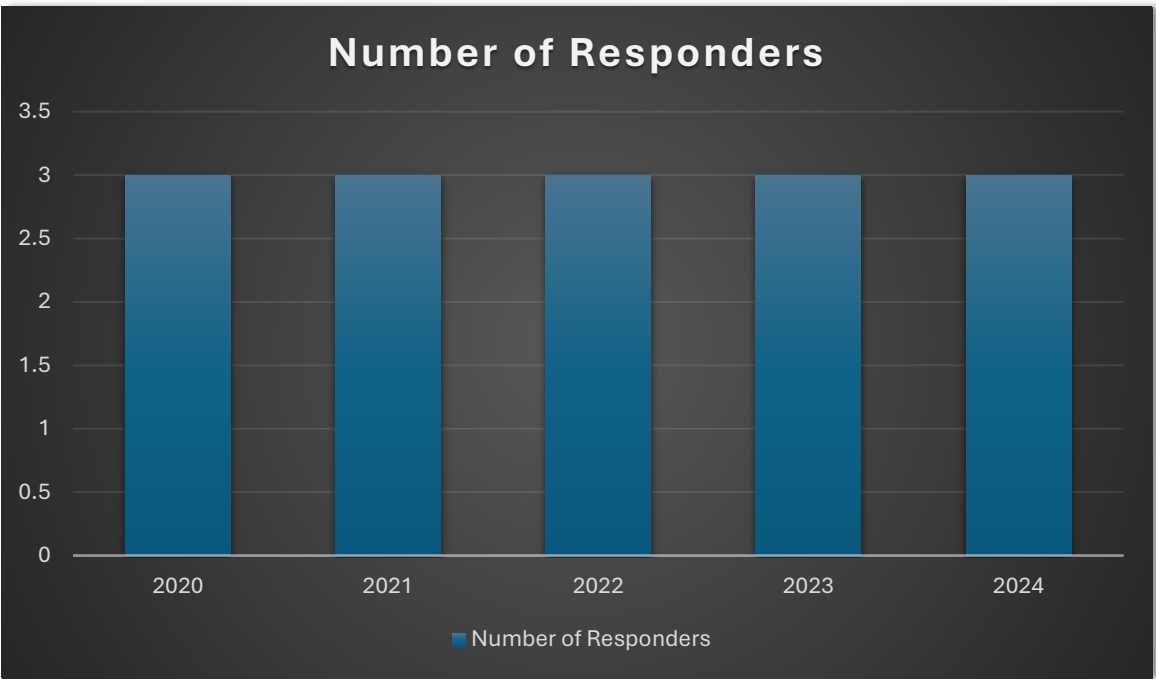
Recommendation 1

- Opportunity to third-party direct mailing would give the fire company an opportunity to reach out to everyone in the community with a newsletter highlighting important information and showcasing the great work being done in the community. Residents would have an opportunity to donate above current opportunities.
- Opportunity to explore with Township officials on a fire tax increase.
- Meet with state officials to explore grant opportunities (Pennsylvania First Responders Funding & Resource Guide).

Total Calls for Service 2020-2024



Average Number of Responders Per Call



Fire Apparatus



Type	Mileage	Year	Condition	Maint Cost - Avg	Replacement Year	Additional Comments	Total Points
Engine Rescue	4,064	2023	Excellent	<\$5,000	2043	Replacement cost estimate \$2.5 million	9
Tanker	4,727	2022	Excellent	<\$5,000	2042	Replacement cost estimate \$1.5 million	9
Utility Pick Up	23,902	2019	Very Good	<\$5,000	2039	Replacement cost estimate \$75,000	6
Rescue	21,658	2007	Very Good	<\$5,000	2027	Replacement cost estimate \$1.5 million	13
Brush	89,627	2004	Fair	<\$5,000	2024	Replacement cost estimate \$250,000	16
Engine Rescue	19,455	2002	Fair	<\$5,000	2022	Replacement cost estimate \$2.5 million	13

**Currently there are no plans for future apparatus replacement over the next 10 years.*

Vehicle Replacement Criteria Scoring Sheet

American Public Works Association (APWA) outlines the criteria for vehicle replacement to include the following factors. The higher the score, the more likely the vehicle needs to be replaced.

Points	1	2	3	4	5
Reliability	Always		Sometimes		Never
Vehicle Age	<6	7-9	10-12	13-15	>15
Vehicle Mileage	<30	30-49	50-69	70-99	>100
Annual Maintenance Cost	<5000	10,000-14,999	15,000-19,999	20,000-24,999	>25,000
Vehicle Use	Standard	4-Wheel	Single Purpose	Medium Duty	Special Built/Purpose

Recommendation 2

- Research refurbishment options of fire apparatus to reduce overall cost. This option can extend the lifespan and functionality at half the cost of new custom fire apparatus.
- The offset cost for new apparatus can be achieved through selling older apparatus.
- Establish a long-term apparatus replacement plan in conjunction with immediate area agencies to reduce duplication of effort/service.
- Compare calls for service and apparatus responses versus number of volunteers responding and capabilities.
- Explore and compare the current fleet of fire apparatus required when including mutual aid resources within the geographical area,

Firefighting Equipment

Equipment	Condition	Replacement Plan	Funding Source
PPE	Very Good	All PPE is 2018 or newer	Blend of Grants General Budget Relief Association
Rescue Tools	Excellent	As needed	
TIC	Very Good	As needed	
Fire Hose	Very Good	Testing every other year	
SCBA	Fair	Honeywell has discontinued the current model in service	

*Fire apparatus is equipped with up-to-date equipment including technical rescue capabilities.

Recommendation 3

- Continuing the replacement plan and cycle for critical equipment as outlined by industry standards like the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- Work with other departments in the immediate area to address equipment needs to reduce duplication of effort/service.

Fire Station Location and Condition

The 1-story fire station presents normal wear and the need for firefighter health and safety upgrades.

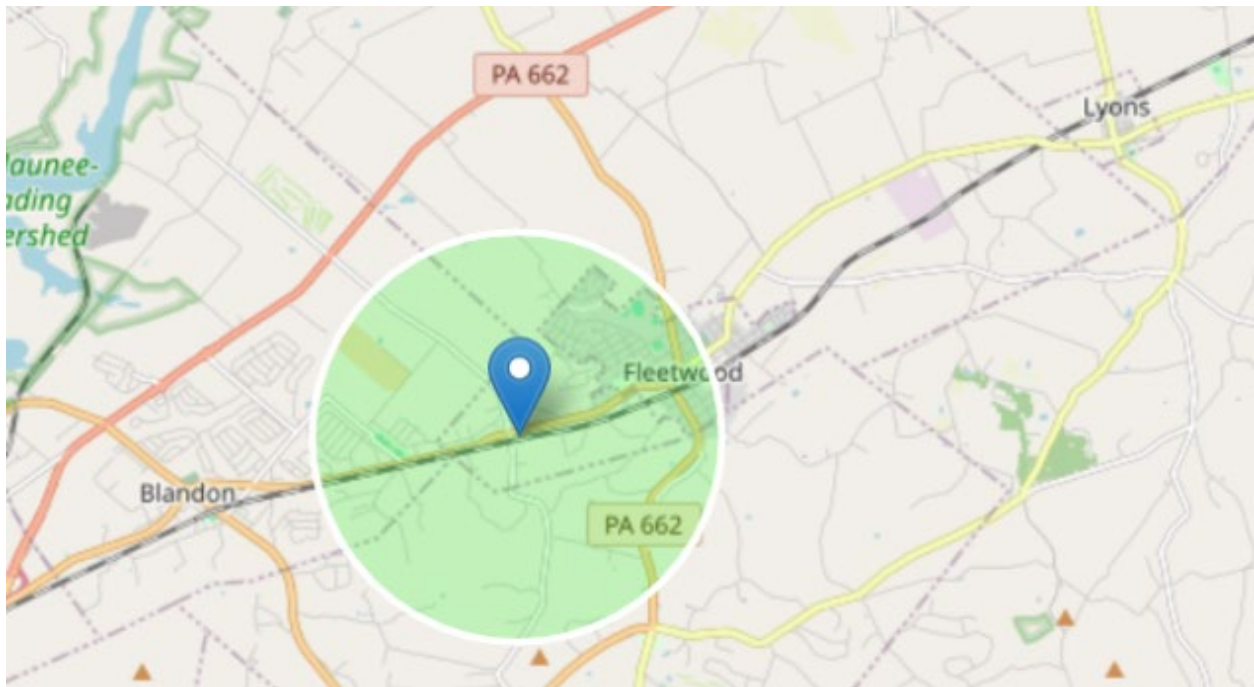
Year	Building Maintenance Cost
2024	\$20,000.00
2023	\$39,000.00
2022	\$33,000.00
2021	\$12,000.00
2020	\$8,000.00

Recommendation 4

- Recently, the social hall was remodeled for increased revenue opportunities.
- Health and Safety Improvement for Firefighters – add exhaust system for fire apparatus.
- Explore housing of EMS and increase revenue through this partnership.

Fire Station and Box Areas

The standard has always been to evaluate the distribution of fire resources through the community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company and 2.5 miles for a ladder/special services company.



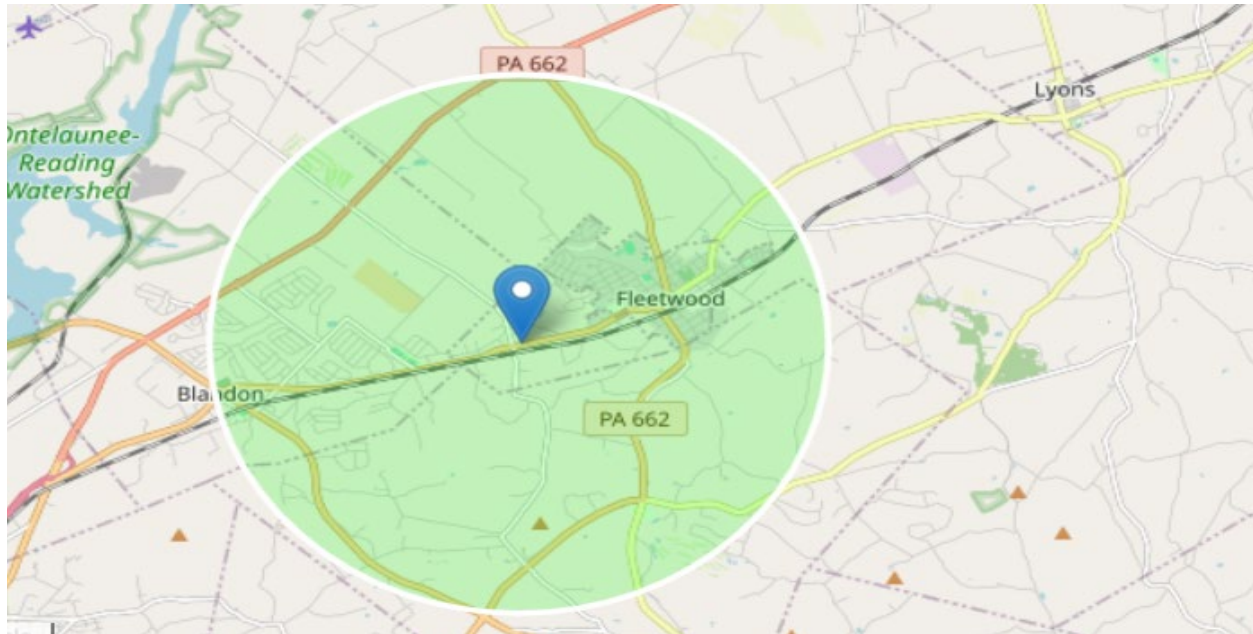
The presentation above is a 1.5-mile radius of the engine company.

Recommendation 5

- Work with area agencies on immediate response to emergency situations based on closest appropriate resources and trained personnel to mitigate the situation.
- Work with mutual aid agencies on standardization of resource allocation to a dispatched emergency.

Fire Station and Box Areas

The standard has always been to evaluate the distribution of fire resources through the community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company and 2.5 miles for a ladder/special services company.



The presentation above is a 2.5-mile radius of the rescue company.

Recommendation 6

- Work with area agencies on immediate response to emergency situations based on closest appropriate resources and trained personnel to mitigate the situation.
- Work with mutual aid agencies on standardization of resource allocation to a dispatched emergency.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment of New Members (Data Collection Doesn't Specify)

Year	Active (911 Responder)	Social (Fundraising/Admin)	Total New Members
2020	15	10	0
2021	15	10	0
2022	15	10	10
2023	15	10	6
2024	15	10	7

Total Number of Members (Data Collection Doesn't Specify)

Year	Active (911 Responder)	Social (Fundraising/Admin)	Total Membership
2020	15	10	25
2021	15	10	25
2022	15	10	25
2023	15	10	25
2024	15	10	25

Rank	Qualifications Requirement	Comments
Fire Chief	Member in good standing, minimum age of 25 and meets the active firefighting requirements per Constitution and By-Laws	
Line Officers	Appointed by Fire Chief, minimum age of 21 and meets the active firefighting requirements per Constitution and By-Laws	

Department Training Plan

A large portion of firefighting training is conducted in-house and approved to complete fireground tasks based on internal procedures and Fire Company By-Laws. Encourages firefighting training and sign offs to be a qualified interior is based on the in-house procedure.

Standard Operating Guidelines/Procedures

Standard Operating Guidelines are reviewed on a regular basis by the Fire Chief and officers to ensure day-to-day expectations for operational effectiveness are maintained by all members.

Recommendation 7

- Develop and implement a training grid that outlines positions and requirements.
- Continue to conduct in-house training and expand on the importance of certification training.

Opportunities and Concerns (verbatim from in-person interviews)

Top Needs:

- Funding. Township is good to us.
- No expectations from this peer assessment.
- Something has to happen at some point for future planning.
- Recruitment and retention are needed to continue providing a good quality service.
- This is a younger person's job – we are aging out.
- Open to ideas.

Top Strengths:

- Personnel. We have a good group of dedicated volunteers at 32.

Top Weaknesses:

- We understand the Pennsylvania volunteer fire service is declining.

Conclusion for Walnuttown Fire Company

Richmond Township funds Fire Protection with Tax Millage Rates based on the Township Code. The fire company is funded by annual allocations from the Township Fire Tax Millage, occasional state and federal grants, various fundraising efforts, and facility rental agreements.

Much like Fleetwood Borough, Richmond Township is faced with municipal challenges that require a balance and investment for the level of Fire Protection that they want to see. The volunteer fire service challenges are not unique to just one specific community, every community in Pennsylvania is facing the same challenges and figuring out that working together and sharing resources is a must moving forward. The Township should explore opportunities beyond municipal boundaries to address fire rescue delivery with three fire companies within 2.5 miles of Walnuttown Fire Company. Everyone must agree to work beyond municipal boundaries with the best interest of the community in mind.

Walnuttown Fire Company is an established organization that is facing a decline in volunteerism like so many organizations throughout the commonwealth. The company has shown several best practices that should be acknowledged publicly:

- ❖ In-station cascade filling station for use by neighboring agencies
- ❖ Working on second set of PPE for each active member

Collective Recommendations

- With the common municipal border, cooperation should occur between all fire companies with municipality support.
 - Recruitment and Retention (incentive programs, paid on call, paid staff)
 - Joint Training (standardized training grid and certification levels)
 - Municipal Strategic Planning (facilities, apparatus)
 - Pre-Planning of high hazard facilities
 - Bulk Purchasing, where appropriate

Mutual Aid Distance & Fire Apparatus Resources

From Fleetwood	Mileage	Apparatus Resources (Special Service)
Walnuttown	1.4	Rescue / Rescue Engine
Blandon	3.8	Ladder Truck
Lyons	4.0	Rescue Engine
Kutztown	5.6	Ladder Truck / Rescue Engine
Ruscombmanor	2.5	Rescue

From Virginville	Mileage	Apparatus Resources (Special Service)
Fleetwood	6.2	Ladder Truck / Rescue
Hamburg	7.0	Ladder Truck / Rescue Engine
Walnuttown	7.4	Rescue / Rescue Engine
Kutztown	6.7	Ladder Truck / Rescue Engine
Blandon	8.4	Ladder Truck / Rescue Engine
Kempton	8.9	Rescue
Shoemakersville	7.1	Rescue
Leesport	10.8	Rescue

From Walnuttown	Mileage	Apparatus Resources (Special Service)
Fleetwood	1.4	Ladder Truck / Rescue
Blandon	2.4	Ladder Truck
Ruscombmanor	2.5	Rescue
Muhlenberg	5.8	Ladder Truck / Rescue
Lyons	5.4	Rescue Engine

NFPA 1720 Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments.

NFPA recognizes the challenges volunteer departments face that include:

- ❖ Lack of trained firefighters who are available and can be summoned in the event of a fire.
- ❖ Budget restraints.

Personnel should be organized, so all teams have the apparatus and equipment needed for the fires or other emergencies they are responding to. These requirements vary based on the type of area the department must cover (also called the "demand zone") and the number of people per square mile within each area.

Demand Zone	Demographics	Firefighters to Respond	Response Time
Urban	More than 1,000 people per sq. mile	15	9
Suburban	500-1,000 people per sq. mile	10	10
Rural	Less than 500 people per sq. mile	6	14
Remote	Travel distance of 8 miles or more	4	Depends on travel distance
Special Risks	Determined by AHJ	Determined by AHJ	Determined by AHJ

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Notes