

Regional Fire Services Study

for

Fleetwood Borough and Richmond Township
Berks County, Pennsylvania

August 7, 2025

**GOVERNOR'S CENTER FOR
LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES**
Scott R. Little
DCED Fire Peer Consultant



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**The following slides are a
SUMMARY OF THE WRITTEN
REPORT that was completed and
provided to Fleetwood Borough and
Richmond Township.**

**They show the most important data
and other information regarding the
recommendations of fire rescue
service delivery for this area.**

Regional Maps and Statistics

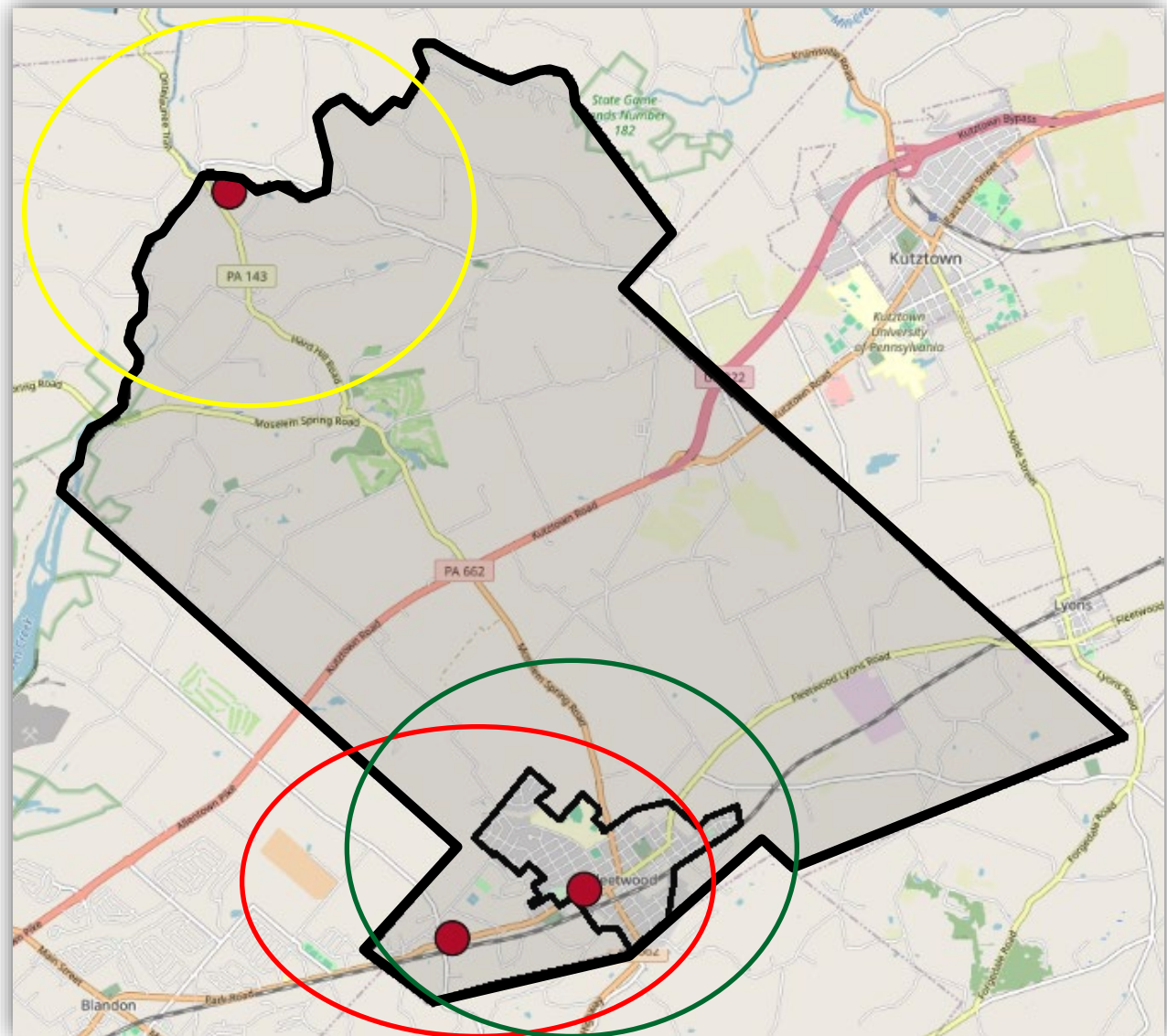
Map of Fleetwood Borough & Richmond Township

● Locations of –
Fleetwood Fire Company
Virginville Fire Company
Walnuttown Fire Company

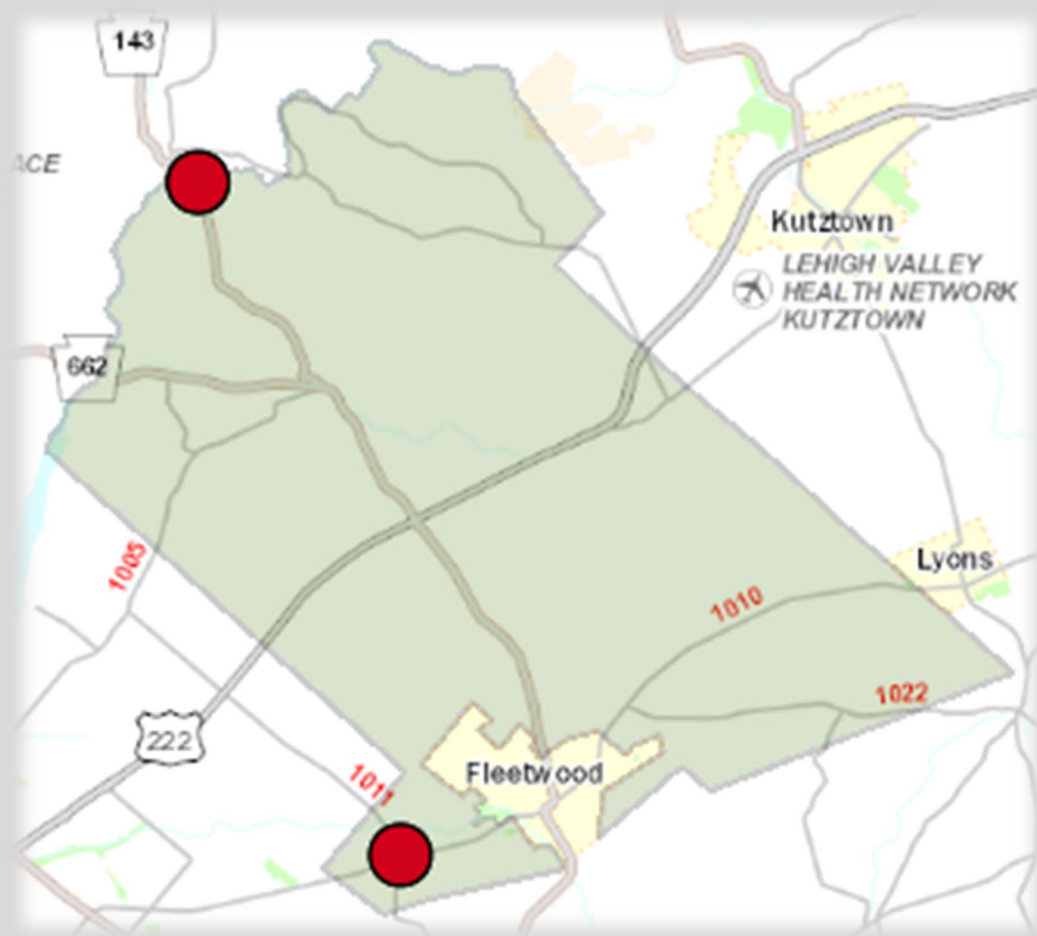
Combined Area –
24.81 Square Miles

Combined Population –
7,718 Persons

Combined Fire Apparatus –
Aerial – 2
Engine – 3
Rescue – 3
Tanker – 2
Utility/Duty Officer – 3
Brush – 3
Traffic – 2
Total – 18

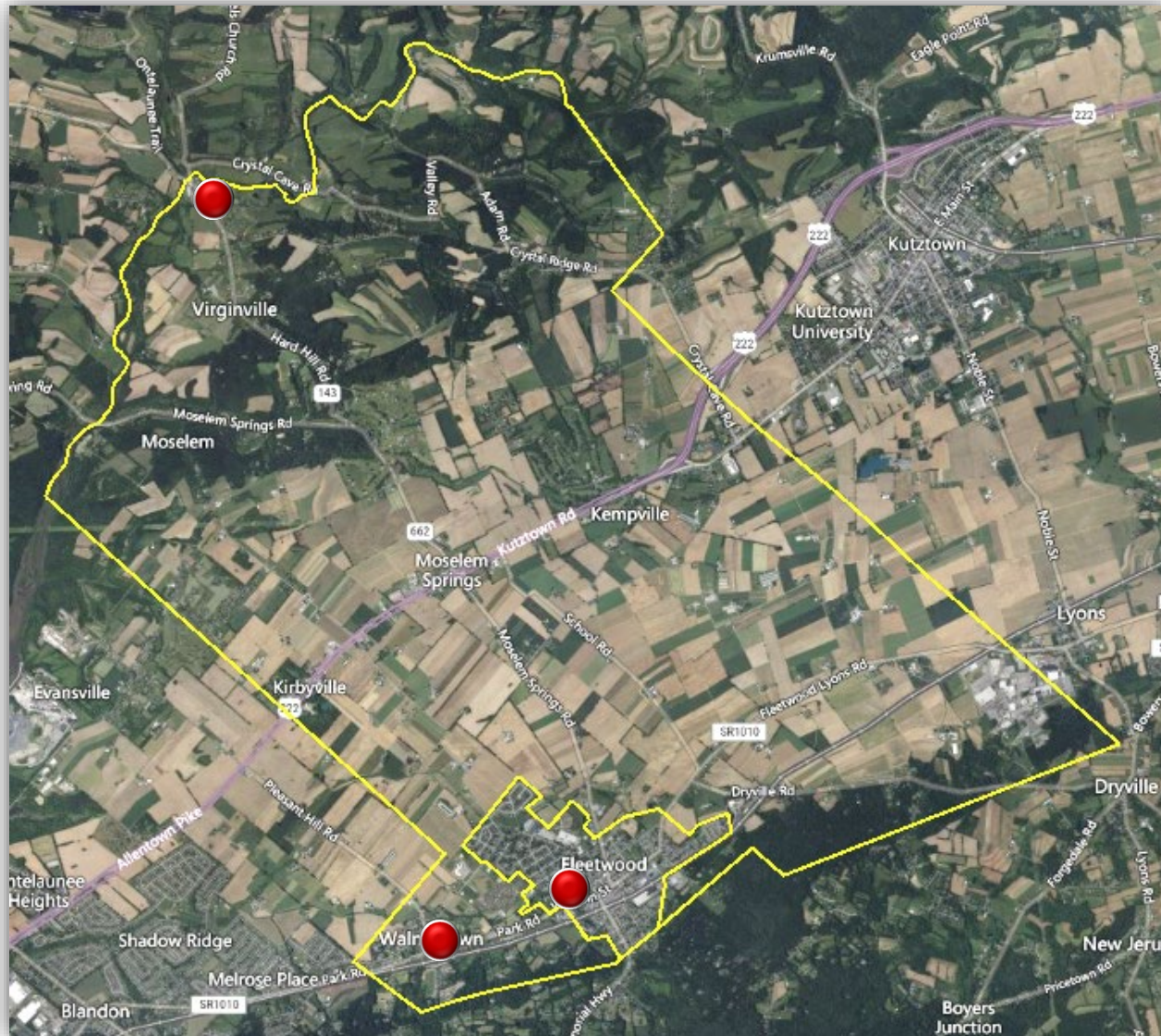


Richmond Township
23.81 Square Miles
3,617 Population



Fleetwood Borough
1 Square Mile
4,101 Population

Map of Fleetwood Borough & Richmond Township



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Fleetwood Borough Annual Budget Data

Fleetwood Borough Annual Budget Data

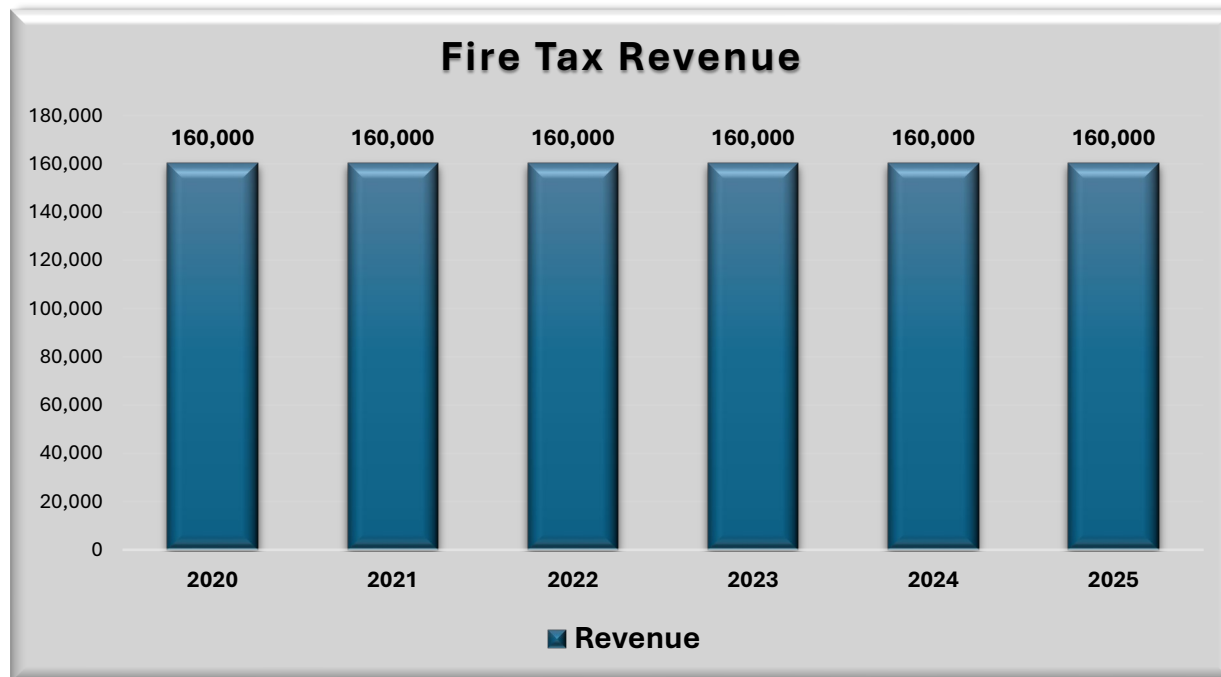
General Operating Budget \$3,399,818.20

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%



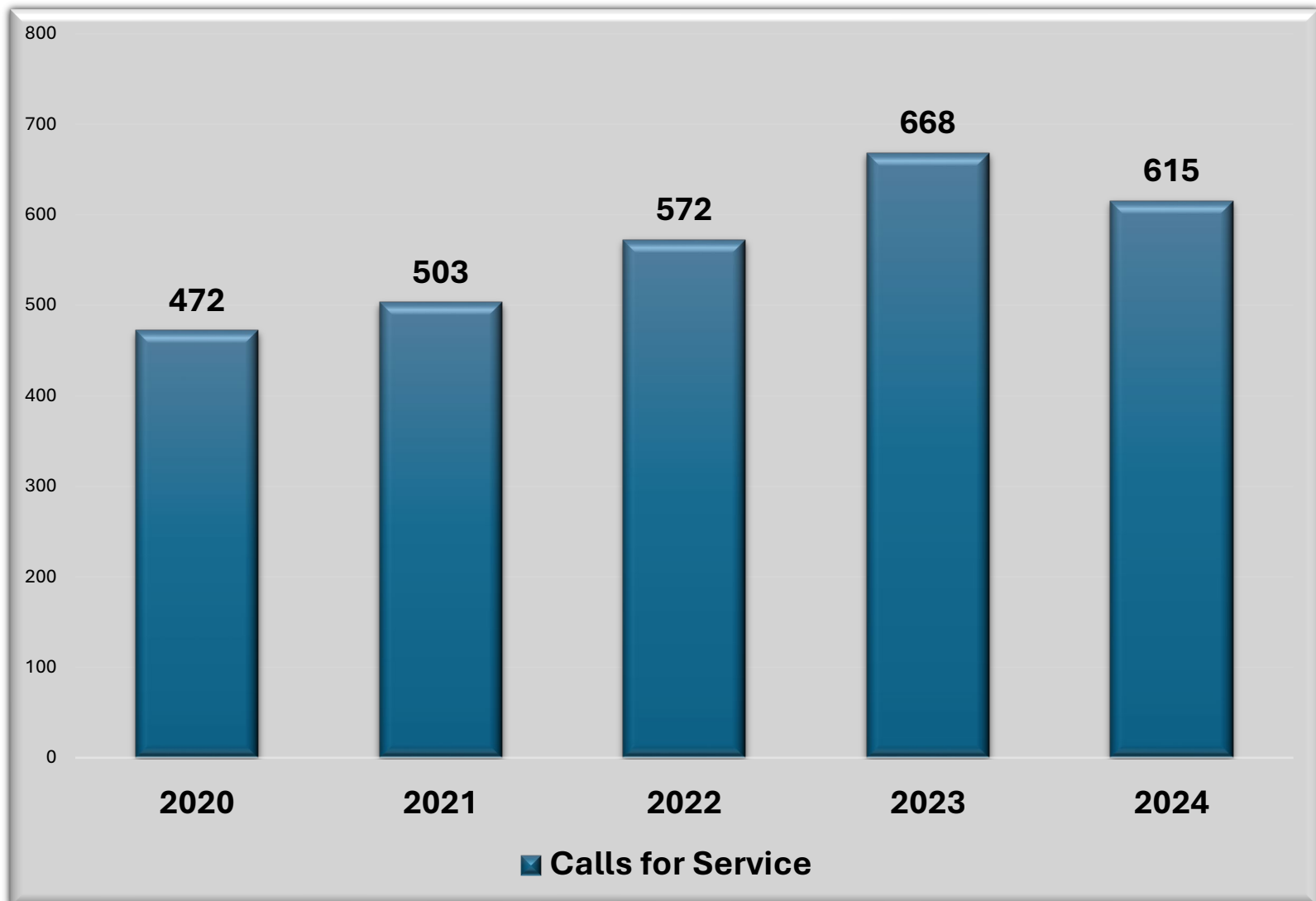
Fleetwood Fire Company Apparatus



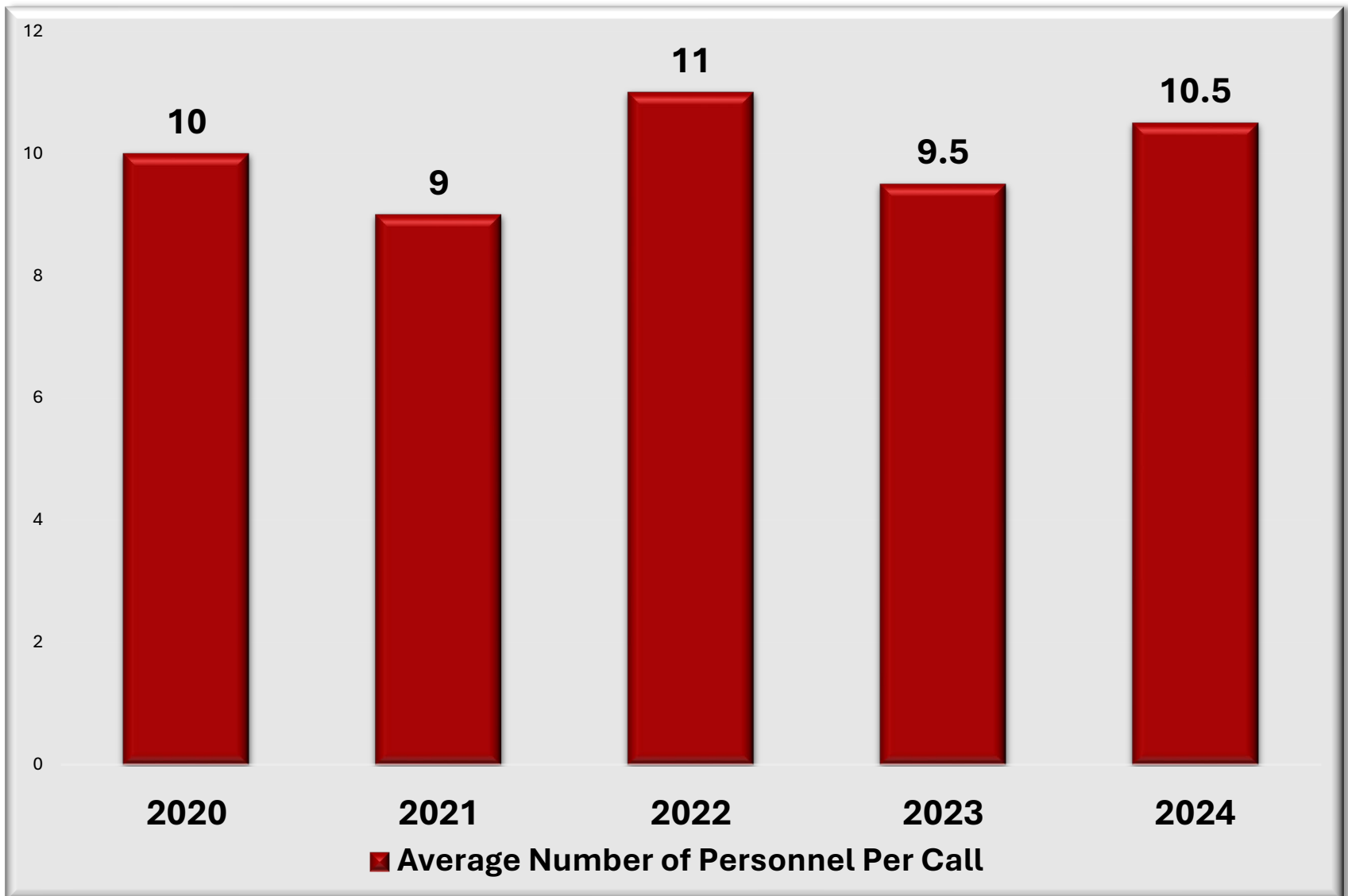
Fleetwood Fire Company Apparatus List (6)

Type	Mileage	Year	Condition	Maintenance Cost Average	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

Fleetwood Fire Company Calls for Service



Fleetwood Fire Company Average Personnel per Call



Recommendations for Fleetwood Fire Company

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).**

Recommendations for Fleetwood Fire Company

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 long-term apparatus replacement plan in conjunction with immediate area agencies to reduce duplication of effort/service.**

Recommendations for Fleetwood Fire Company

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 and bulk purchasing.**
- **These replacement plans should require conversation with elected officials for approval.**

Recommendations for Fleetwood Fire Company

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 elected officials.**
- **Start conversation with elected officials and Penn State Health EMS on relocation of EMS transport units due to limited floor space for current fleet of vehicles and personnel.**
- **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 responding members trying to avoid moving apparatus**

Recommendations for Fleetwood Fire Company

Recommendation 5 (Engine Company Response)

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

Recommendation 6 (Special Service Response)

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

Recommendations for Fleetwood Fire Company

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.**

Conclusion for the Fleetwood Fire Company

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.

Conclusion for the Fleetwood Fire Company (Cont'd)

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.**

Richmond Township Annual Budget Data

Richmond Township Annual Budget Data

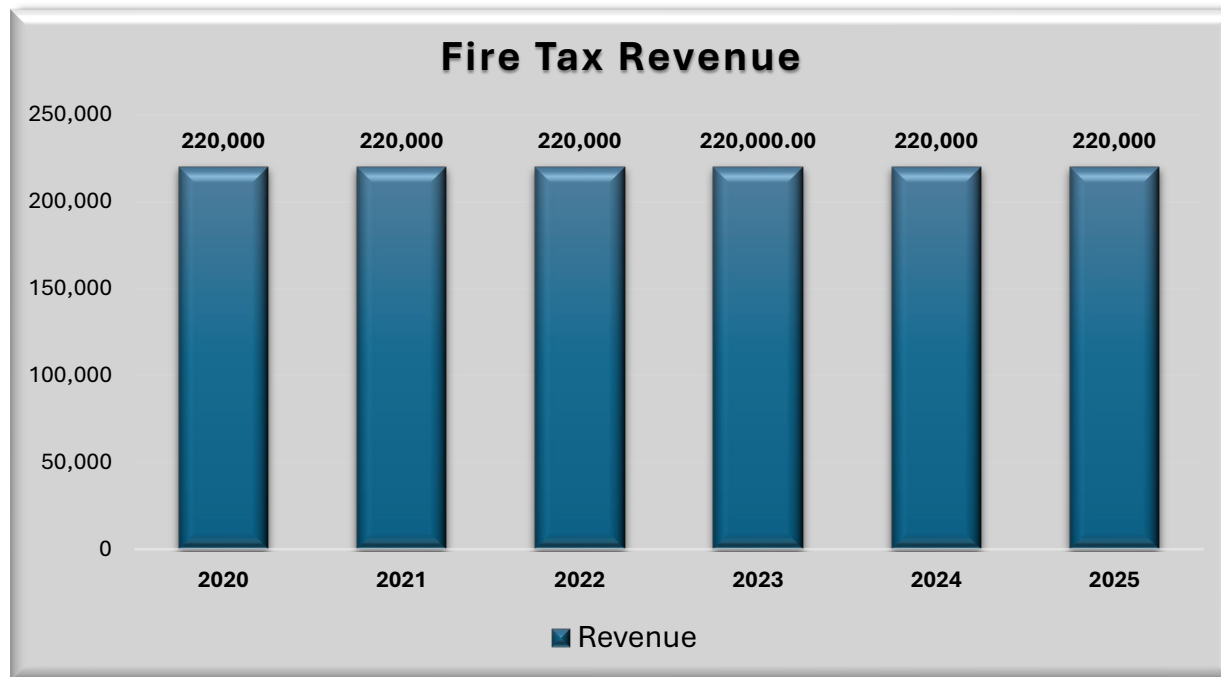
General Operating Budget \$1,876,710.00

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%



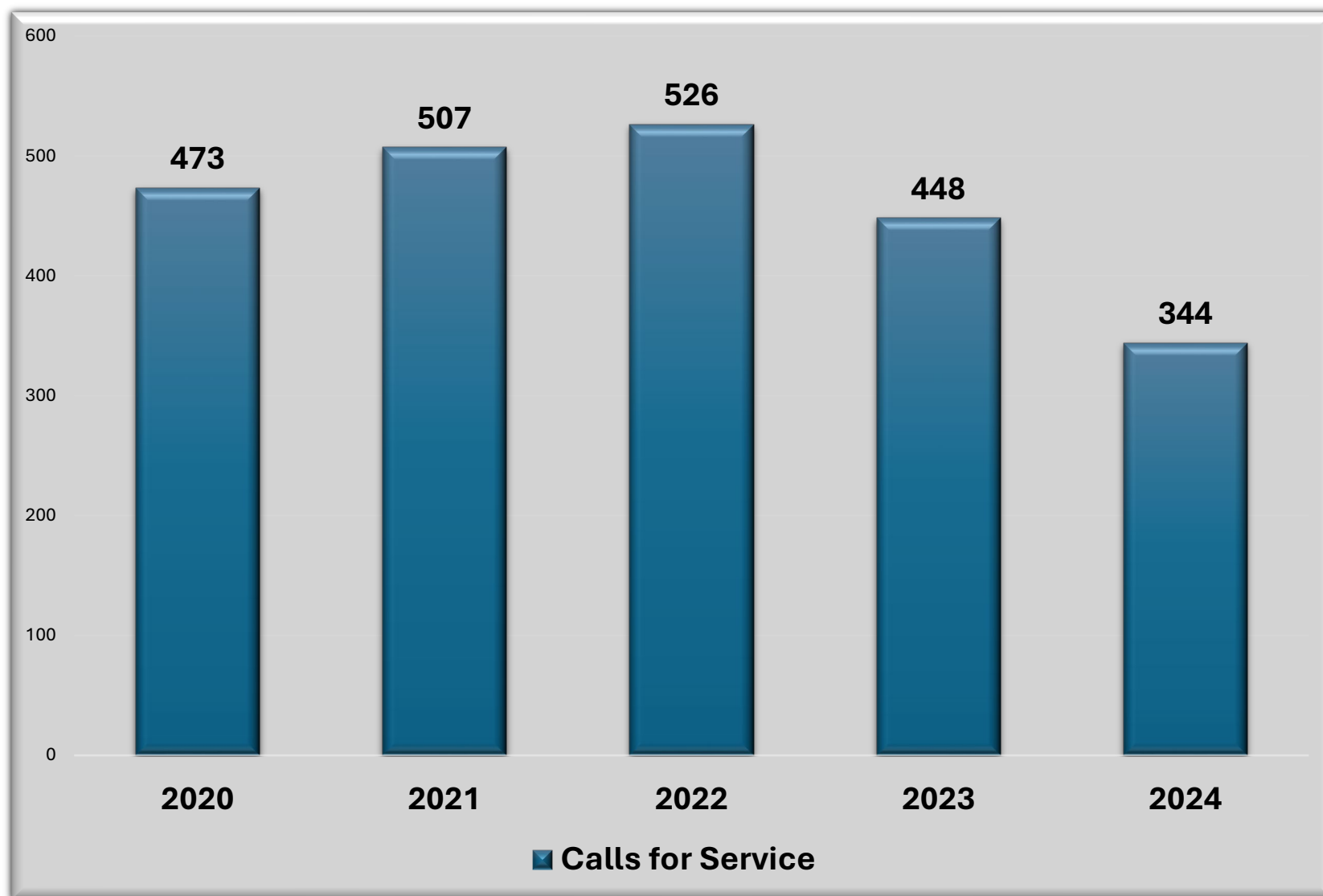
Virginville Fire Company Apparatus



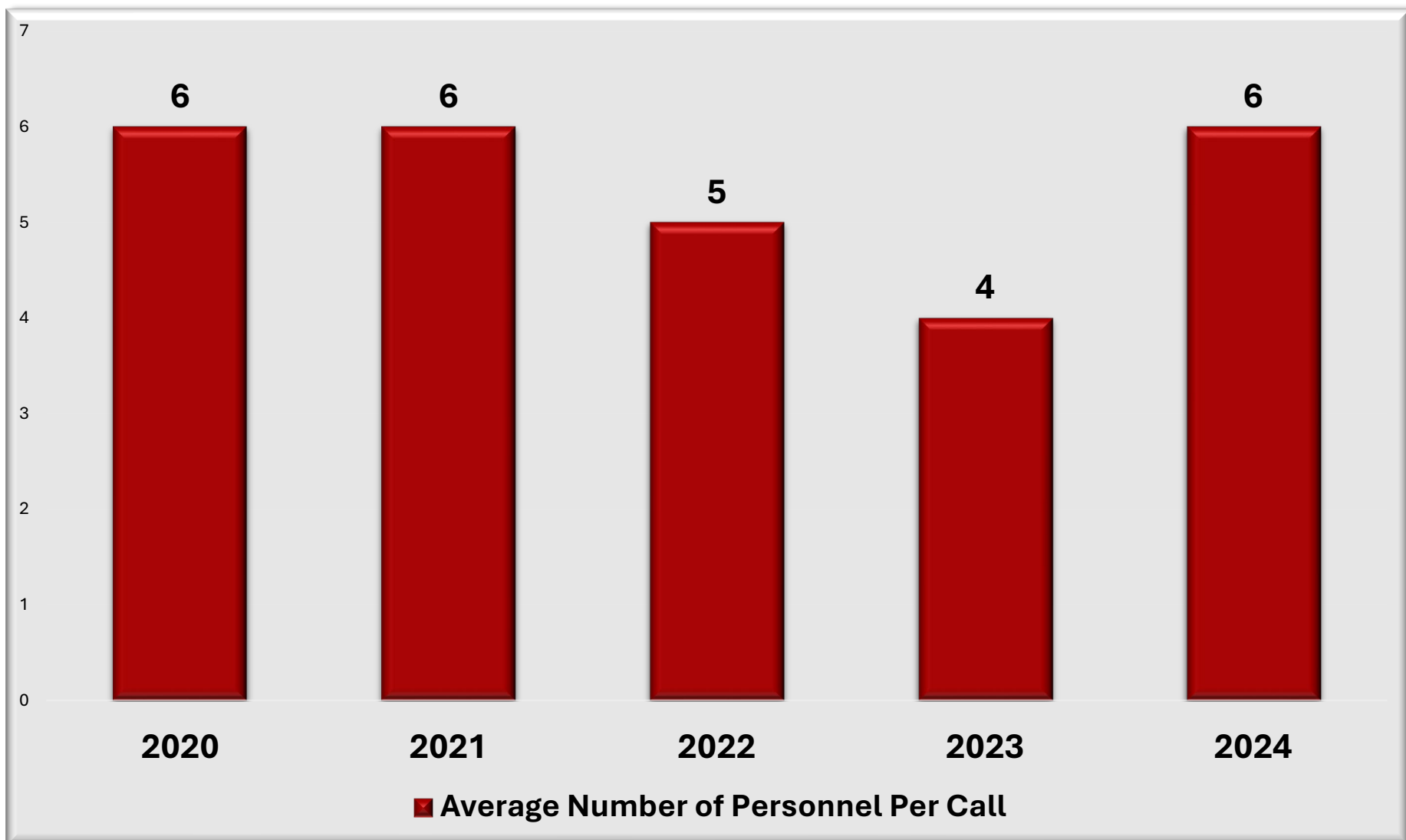
Virginville Fire Company Apparatus List (5)

Type	Mileage	Year	Condition	Maintenance Cost Average	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

Virginville Fire Company Calls for Service



Virginville Fire Company Average Personnel per Call



Recommendations for Virginville Fire Company

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).**

Recommendations for Virginville Fire Company

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.**

Recommendations for Virginville Fire Company

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.

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

Recommendations for Virginville Fire Company

Recommendation 5 (Engine Company Response)

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

Recommendation 6 (Special Service Response)

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

Recommendations for Virginville Fire Company

Recommendation 7

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

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 the Virginville 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, the Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association fund, 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 through apparatus replacement plan to reduce duplication of service.

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).**

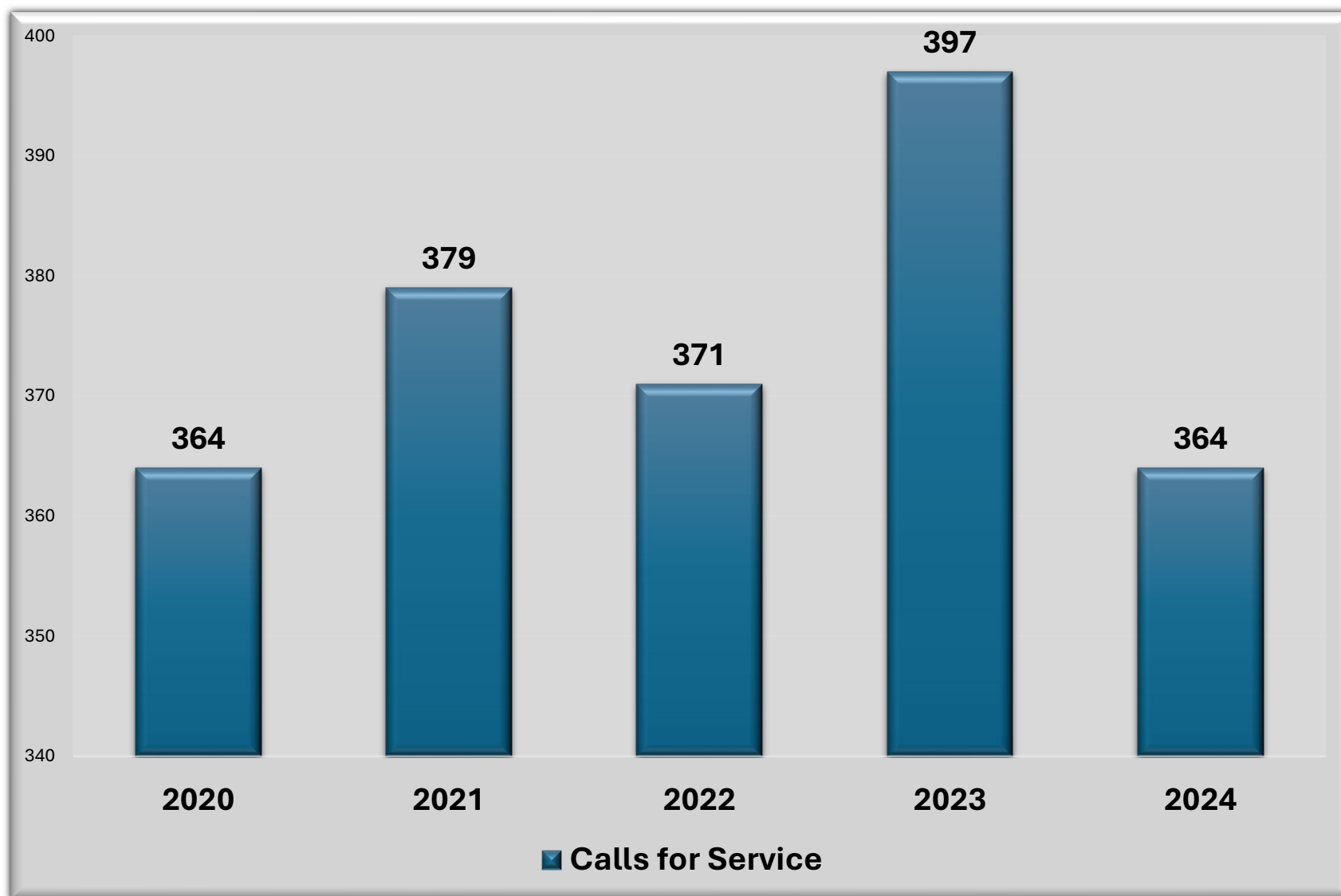
Walnuttown Fire Company Apparatus



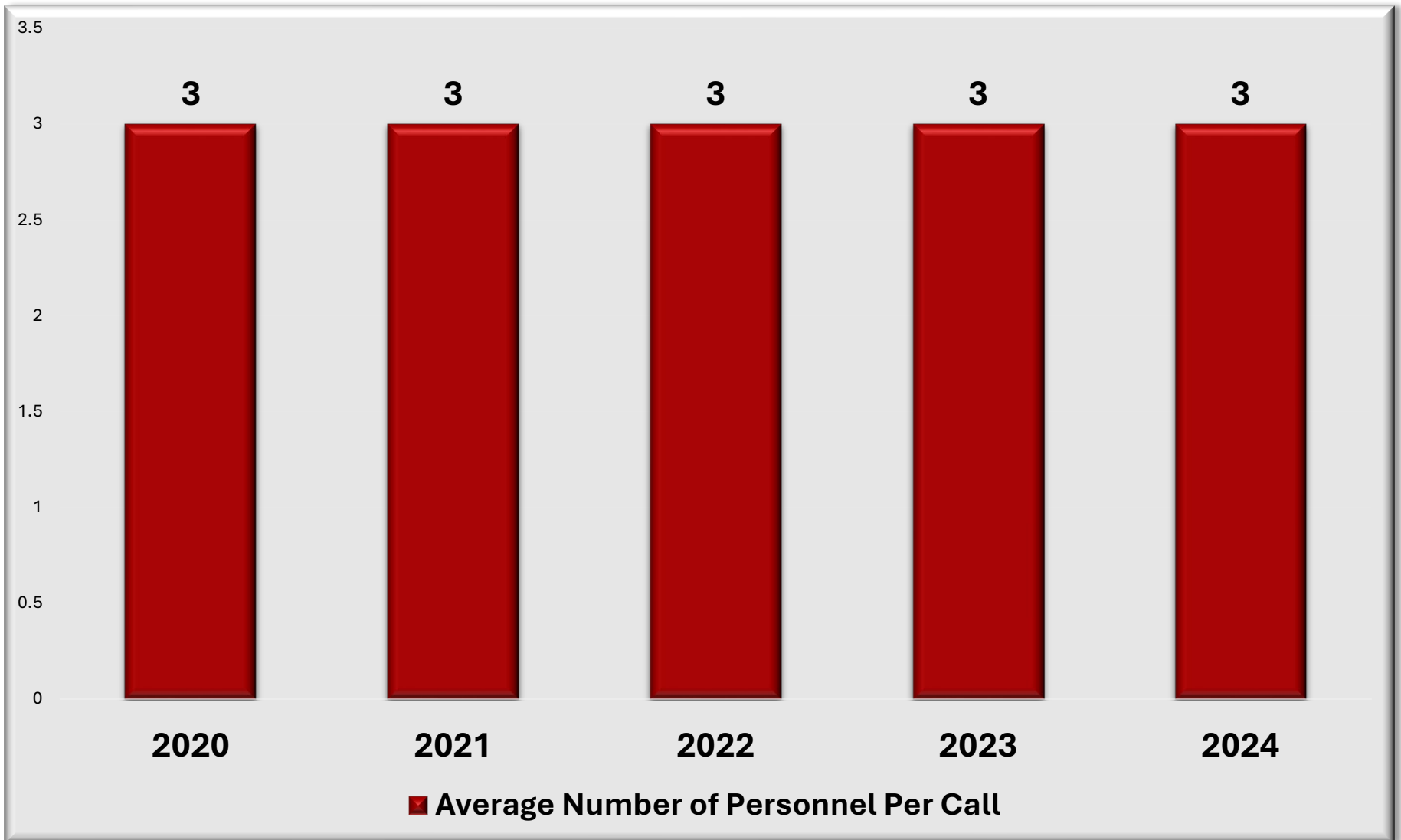
Walnuttown Fire Company Apparatus List (6)

Type	Mileage	Year	Condition	Maintenance Cost Average	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

Walnuttown Fire Company Calls for Service



Walnuttown Fire Company Average Personnel per Call



Recommendations for Walnuttown Fire Company

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).**

Recommendations for Walnuttown Fire Company

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 training capabilities.**
- **Explore and compare the current fleet of fire apparatus required when including mutual aid resources within the geographical area.**

Recommendations for Walnuttown Fire Company

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.

Recommendation 4

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

Recommendations for Walnuttown Fire Company

Recommendation 5 (Engine Company Response)

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

Recommendation 6 (Special Service Response)

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

Recommendations for Walnuttown Fire Company

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 for all members.

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 the 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, the Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association fund, 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, etc.)**
- ✓ **Joint Training (standardized training grid and certification levels)**
- ✓ **Municipal Strategic Planning (facilities, apparatus)**
- ✓ **Pre-Planning of high hazard facilities**
- ✓ **Bulk Purchasing, where appropriate**

NFPA Fire Response Information

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:

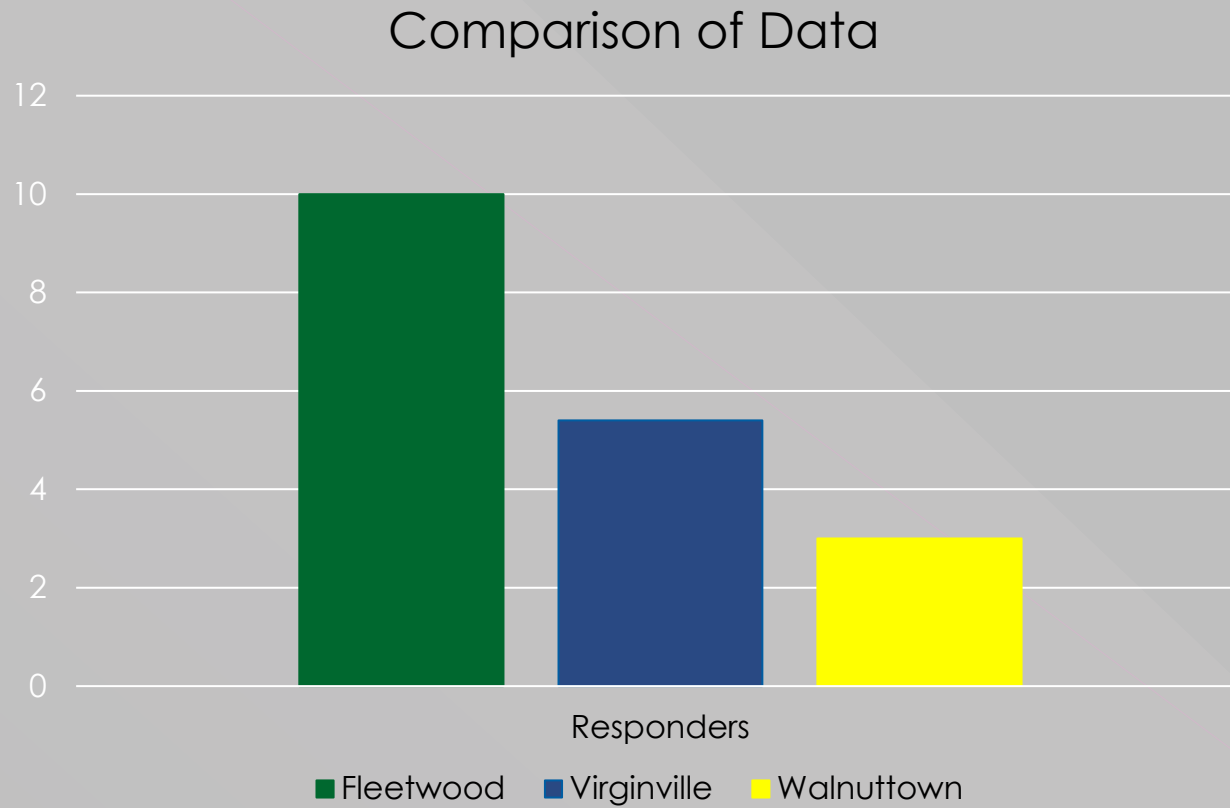
- ❖ **Lack of trained firefighters who are available and can be summoned in the event of a fire.**
- ❖ **Budget restraints.**

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.

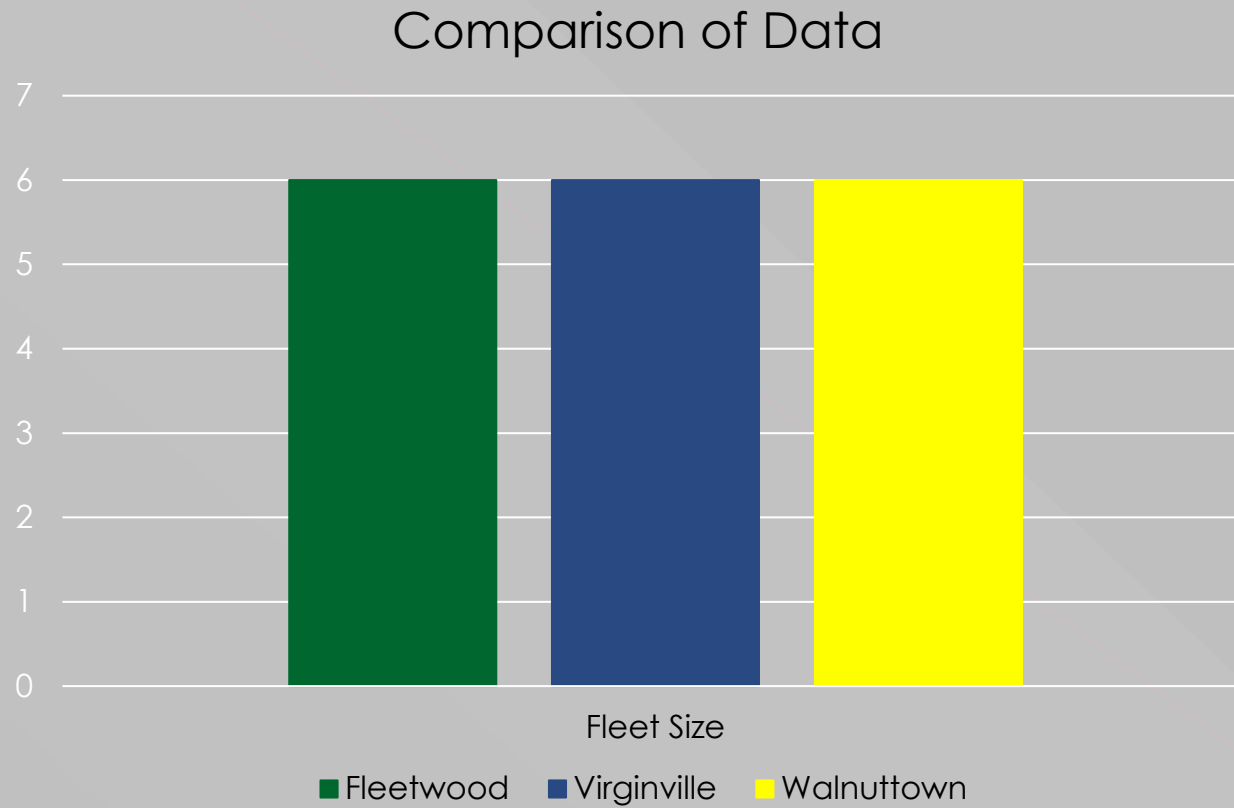
NFPA Fire Response Recommendations

Demand Zone	Demographics	Firefighters to Respond	Response Time
Urban (Fleetwood Borough)	More than 1,000 people per sq. mile	15	9
Suburban	500 - 1,000 people per sq. mile	10	10
Rural (Richmond Township)	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

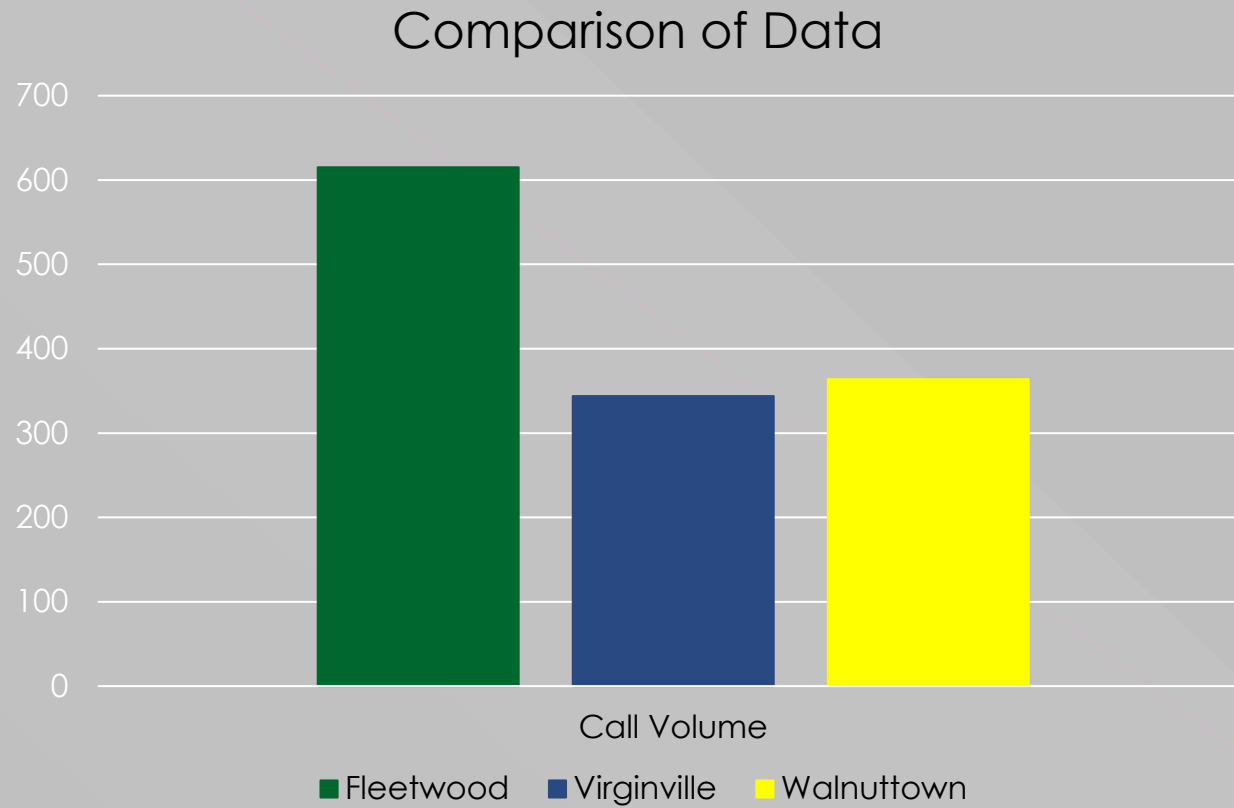
Comparison



Comparison

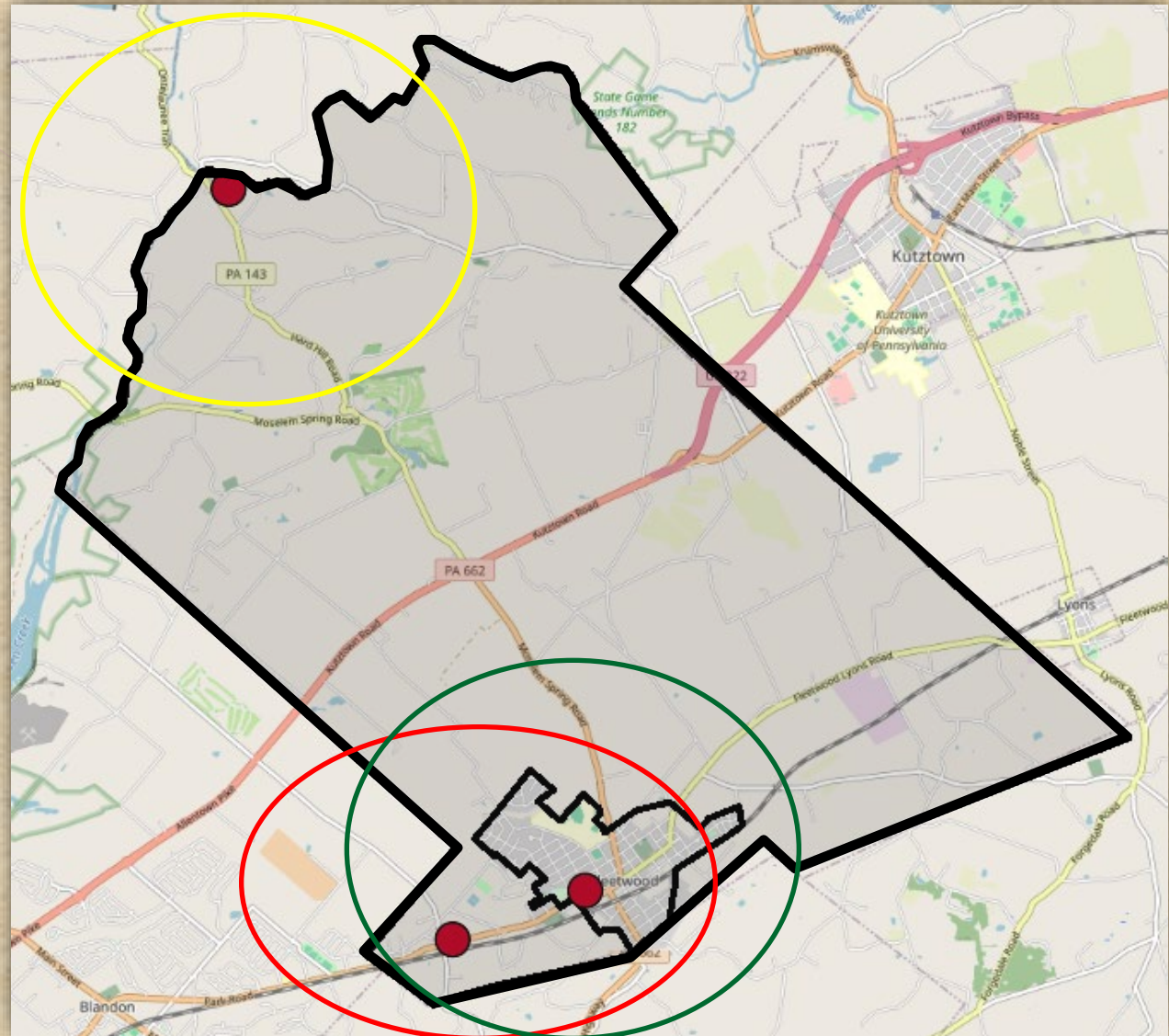


Comparison



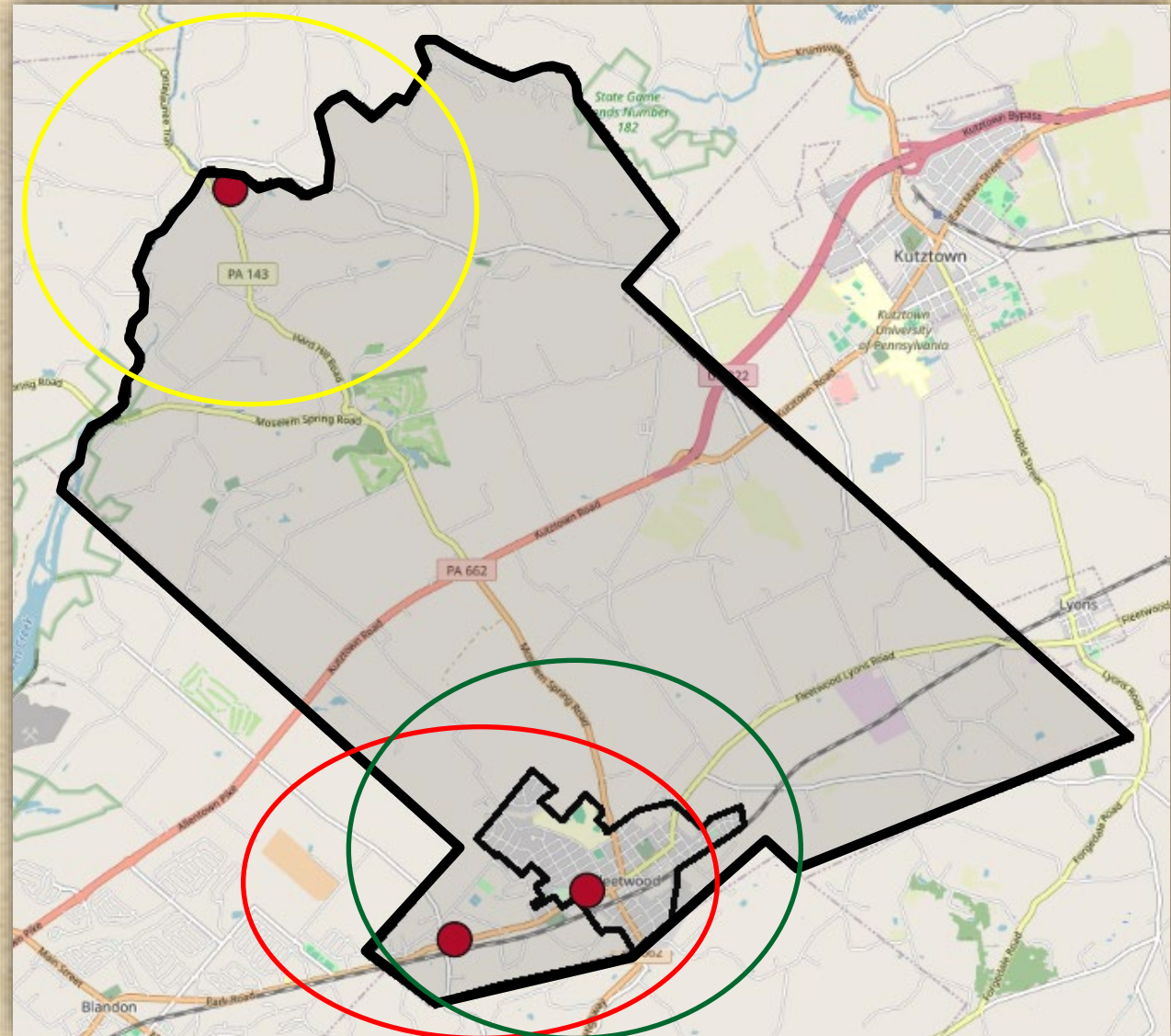
Verisk Public Protection Classification Program (PPC) formerly Insurance Services Office (ISO)

- **Impact on Insurance Rates:** The PPC program evaluates a community's fire protection services and assigns a classification from 1 to 10. A lower number generally indicates better fire protection and can lead to lower property insurance premiums for residents and businesses in that area.
- **PPC Class 9** – requires 1 pumper with at least 500 gallons of water to all reported first-alarm structure fires.
- **PPC Class 4** – properties are within 5 miles of a fire station; public water supply system with fire hydrants; automatic aid 24/7/365; requires at minimum 1 pumper and 1 ladder to meet criteria and within 2 ½ miles and the number of buildings with a needed flow over 3,500 gpm or 3 stories or more in height.



National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

- **NFPA recommends different types of fire apparatus based on community needs, focusing on factors like population, building heights, available water supply.**
- **Key apparatus types include pumpers, aerials and specialized vehicles like brush and rescue apparatus.**
- **The specific mix of apparatus should be tailored to the community's unique characteristics and the types of incidents it typically responds to.**



Fire Response – Mutual Aid

From Fleetwood:

1.1 Miles	Walnuttown
2.5 Miles	Ruscombmanor
3.8 Miles	Blandon
4.0 Miles	Lyons
5.6 Miles	Kutztown

From Virginville:

6.2 Miles	Fleetwood
6.7 Miles	Kutztown
7.0 Miles	Hamburg
7.1 Miles	Shoemakersville
7.4 Miles	Walnuttown

From Walnuttown:

1.1 Miles	Fleetwood
2.4 Miles	Blandon
2.5 Miles	Ruscombmanor
5.4 Miles	Lyons
5.8 Miles	Muhlenberg

Governor's Center for Local Government Services

For the future, 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 demanding more hours to fundraising?**
- **Are we treating our greatest asset, our volunteers with a well-adjusted work/life balance?**

The Department of Community
& Economic Development,
together with the Fire Consultant
Scott R. Little, would like to thank the
municipal and fire officials from the
participating municipalities for their
excellent cooperation and assistance in
the timely completion of this
regional fire services study.

Governor's Center for Local Government Services

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