

# Comprehensive Fire Assessment Study Wellsville Fire Company

## Follow Up – PHASE II

### FINAL REPORT

Prepared for: Warrington Township



Scott K Ryno, Consultant

July 19, 2023



### **Scope of Work:**

1. Review call volume data presented and clarify assist police department or fire police responses. Provide a break down of the call volume and responses that 1) includes and 2) excludes the responses with this nature code excluded.
2. Review the total Fire Company budget for the past 3 years and provide a break down of mission critical items to operate the Fire Company and provide services to the community.
3. Develop a capital improvement plan for fire apparatus that includes the projected needs of the community for the next 5 years and the approximate replacement cost associated with the proposed plan.
4. Survey neighboring municipalities to determine the level of funding provided for fire company operations and if there are restrictions imposed on the funding that is provided by the municipality.

### **NOTE:**

Some information (initial call volume data and apparatus information) from the initial report is contained within this document for reference material. The document will provide additional information in those respective areas as outlined in the requested scope of work.



### **Project Timeline and Activities:**

1. Consultant received all requested information from the President, Treasurer and Fire Chief of Wellsville Fire Company in a timely manner, without hesitation. The 2022 financial statements and associated information were at the accountant's office for completion of the IRS 990 and not available for review at the time of this project.
2. A follow up meeting was held at Wellsville Fire Company with the President, Treasurer and Fire Chief to discuss the expanded scope of work, request additional information and answer any questions as that pertained to the project.
3. Various e-mail and phone correspondence with Wellsville Fire Company and members of Warrington Township.
4. Initial contact to all neighboring municipalities to request financial support data and then two additional follow up requests.

**Staffing and Call Volume: UPDATED!**

1. Based on the data reviewed for a three-year period (2019, 2020 and 2021) the statistics are as follows:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>TOTAL CALLS</b>	<b>AUTOMATIC/ MUTUAL AID PROVIDED</b>
2019	349	184
Note:	184 calls (53.73%) occurred during the hours of 0700-1700 <b>156 calls were for Fire Police and 95 were in Carroll Township – 193 were “Fire” calls for the year.</b>	
2020	352	152
Note:	190 calls (61.5%) occurred during the hours of 0700-1700 <b>114 calls were for Fire Police and 83 were in Carroll Township – 238 were “Fire” calls for the year.</b>	
2021	413	143
Note:	210 calls (59.13%) occurred during the hours of 0700-1700 <b>148 calls were for Fire Police with and 94 were in Carroll Township – 265 were “Fire” calls for the year.</b>	

2. The overall call volume continues to rise with the following notable items:
  - a. Automatic and Mutual Aid Responses encompass over 50% of the volume.
    - i. This number is significantly affected by Fire Police responses and requests primarily into Carroll Township.
  - b. Each year, the statistics indicate that 50% of the call volume or request for service arrive between the hours of 0700-1700.
3. Data and response records indicate that available daytime staffing is low and dependent on volunteer work schedules or the potential of a volunteer leaving their employment to respond. There is no guarantee an apparatus operator (driver) will be available at certain times of the day, primarily daylight hours.
4. The volunteer personnel continue to staff the responses 24/7/365 and while total personnel count varies and will continue to be a threat to maintain, the organization is making the responses and providing adequate services to the community and responding in what would be considered an acceptable time frame for a rural volunteer fire company.
5. The current staffing model is 100% volunteer and is dependent on home responders.



**Staffing and Call Volume Continued: UPDATED!**

2022 – Total Call Volume for the Year = 367

Municipality Break Down as Follows:

Wellsville Borough	6	
Warrington Township	118	
Washington Township	27	
Carroll Township	123	
Dillsburg Borough	10	
Franklin Township	20	
Franklinton Borough	10	
Monaghan Township	9	
Dover Township	13	
Dover Borough	8	
Fairview Township	6	
Newberry Township	1	
Lewisberry Borough	1	
Conewago Township	2	
West Manchester Township	5	
Reading Township	2	
Latimore Township	1	
Jackson Township	1	
Monroe Township	1	
Upper Allen Township	1	
Harford County MD	1	
Manchester Township	1	
Total Fire Police Calls:	170	(46.5% of the overall dispatched incidents)
**Carroll Township Total**	113	(31% of the overall dispatched incidents)

There were 367 total dispatches and if you subtract the fire police only dispatches that number is then 197 fire dispatches, which equates to .54 calls per day on average or less than 1 dispatched incident per day.

The 3-year average indicates that 58.12% of the time the dispatch occurs during the hours of Monday through Friday from 0700-1700. Therefore, based on 2022 data and the 3-year average, a total of 114 calls would have been daytime responses.

**Assess the Current Apparatus Compliment:**

1. The current apparatus has and continues to be well maintained by the volunteers, as well as through the usage of outside professional maintenance facilities. There are maintenance records in place.
2. The current apparatus compliment has an average age of 21.5 years:
  - a . 1990 Brush Truck      32 years
  - b . 1997 Engine            25 years
  - c . 2003 Rescue            19 years
  - d . 2012 Tanker            10 years
3. The Fire Company also operates a Utility Vehicle along with Boats and Trailers.
4. The leadership team is currently working on the replacement of one primary piece of fire apparatus.
5. Consideration will need to be given to the fact that apparatus manufacturers are currently quoting time frames in excess of 2 years to order and receive a new piece of fire apparatus. Also, apparatus pricing has continued to see record high increases across the market.



## **Apparatus Replacement Plan – the next 5 years: NEW!**

1. The organization has ordered a new E-One Typhoon eMax Rescue Pumper to replace the current 2003 Rescue. The following are the highlights of the vehicle:
  - a. Cyclone Extended Cab (80") with 20" Vista Roof
  - b. Cummins X12 500HP with Jake Brake
  - c. 1750 GPM Hale QMAX-XS Pump
  - d. 760 Gallon Water Tank
  - e. 2001 FoamPro Foam System with 20 Gallon Integral "A" Foam Tank

NOTES: the above vehicle design is well thought out and will serve the township well in a multi-functional capacity. The vehicle has a larger pump capacity for rural water supply and a larger tank capacity for a rescue/engine. As well, the vehicle is designed for rescue capabilities and responses. So, this vehicle will have operational value and will make sense for the coverage area and projected call volume and manpower for the township. At present, the life of this vehicle should see 20-25 years based on current volumes.

2. The current 2012 tanker will not need replaced in the 5-year apparatus plan and should be looked at in a 10-year plan.
3. The current 1997 Freightliner Engine will be 26 years old, however; with the addition of a new Rescue/Engine and the 2012 Tanker I believe you can extend the replacement of this vehicle beyond the 5 year mark. Yes, the vehicle will then be 30+ years old, however; based on overall call volume the vehicle will still be usable and there will still be 2 additional front-line units with water capabilities. The items to consider though are the following:
  - a. Presently, the fire apparatus industry is experiencing unprecedented delivery times (2-3 years in some cases) as well as significant price increases. Today, an Engine replacement can easily approach \$900,000 depending on the manufacturer and specifications.
4. I would recommend this be revisited on an annual basis as to the status of the market and the current condition (maintenance, etc.) of the 1997 Engine so it can be determined at what point a replacement should begin to be considered.
5. The 1990 Chevrolet 2500HD Brush Truck has a few unique challenges to consider. There is a need for this vehicle in the rural area (smaller and 4x4), however the volume of calls this vehicle responds to is not significant. Therefore, I would only consider replacement when the cost benefit becomes counterproductive from a maintenance and repair standpoint. Again, this should be discussed and considered on an annual basis for a maintenance and usage update from the Fire Company.



## **Apparatus Replacement Plan Summary – NEW!**

The current fleet of fire/rescue suppression units is adequate for the Township as it pertains to geography, business and industry, roadways, infrastructure and call volume. By maintaining an Engine, Rescue/Engine and Tanker it provides built in back up with the Rescue/Engine able to provide fire suppression services should the Engine be out of service or unavailable for any reason.

The tanker is a necessary vehicle due to the rural nature of the Township and allows for adequate water to be available quickly on the initial structure response until the arrival of automatic aid with additional Tankers or the ability to establish an alternate water supply.

The brush truck is necessary due to the rural nature of the Township and the necessity to have 4x4 capabilities for certain firefighting applications as well as in the event of inclement weather conditions.

The Rescue/Engine is on order, therefore that vehicle is already in progress for replacement.

The next apparatus focus should be on the Engine as it's a 1997, however; I believe barring any major maintenance challenges that vehicle can be maintained for an additional 5 years or more based on the current call volume and response area.

The brush truck will need to be continually monitored for usable service life as it's a 1990, however; it doesn't respond to a significant volume of calls. Therefore, if it remains in usable condition and the maintenance costs do not exceed a reasonable cost, I would continue to utilize the vehicle.

There should be an annual update from the fire company leadership to the municipality of the status (maintenance and otherwise) of the 1997 Engine and 1990 Brush Truck to ensure there is no need to alter the plan based on performance or changes throughout the year.



**Recommendations:**

1. Continue to work with the leadership of the Fire Company to implement the part-time career staff driver operator program as proposed. The call volume review as well as the draft plan presented by the Fire Company leadership provides a good starting point operationally and financially for the program to insure adequate fire protection for the citizens:
  - a. 16 hours per day of coverage x 5 days per week resulting in a total cost of \$1,200.00 per week or \$62,400.00 per year + worker's compensation insurance for a total proposed cost of \$89, 216 per year.
    - i. \$245 per day over the course of a year for a combined volunteer and career staffed fire department to provide fire protection – personnel costs.
    - ii. 2010 census indicates 4,638 township residents /4,552 or .4% increase for 2020 census numbers.
      1. For as little as \$.05 per day/per resident the Township can improve fire protection services with the addition of part-time career driver/operators.
2. It is recommended that that Township discuss and plan for future financial support for Wellsville Fire Company in the amount equal to .5 mills of tax revenue or approximately \$165,000.00 per year. The proposed budget would be as follows:

a. Apparatus Replacement Fund	\$60,000.00
b. Insurance Premiums	\$19,000.00
c. Capital Improvement (Building & Apparatus)	\$15,000.00
d. Part-Time Career Apparatus Operators	\$71,000.00

**NOTES:**

The above will be necessary to support current and future apparatus purchases and would allow for \$5,000.00 per month (\$60,000.00 per year) in debt service payments for apparatus procurement.

The necessity to maintain the current facility as well as perform upgrades to current apparatus only serves to further protect those assets and keep them viable for additional years.

The budget for the part-time career apparatus operators will need to be reviewed on an annual basis as costs will continue to increase. This number will need to be increased to account for employee raises, additional hours and the rise in insurance (worker's compensation) costs. The Township should expect and plan for this line item to increase 3-5% on an annual basis.



## **Financial Review – UPDATE!**

The goal of the review is to look at 3 years of historical financial data and analyze the income versus expenses and then determine the “mission critical” items that are necessary to ensure fire company operations.

Based on the 2023 budget request from the fire company to the township, the requested funds were to be utilized toward the following: Truck/Apparatus Fund, General Fund (insurance Payment), and Special Projects (Lighting Upgrade to 2012 Tanker).

In 2022, the fire company completed capital projects that totaled \$121,595 from their own funds that included building infrastructure upgrades as well as several projects/items that support fundraising efforts, namely the carnival. In 2023, the fire company budgeted capital improvement projects that would total \$84,000 with the most notable item being a projected \$60,000 expense to upgrade lighting for the carnival grounds.

In addition to the above capital improvements, the fire company also reported a truck fund balance of \$96,445.34 of their own funds as of 10/20/2022.

Items that would be mission critical to the operation of the fire company would be career staffing (if volunteers are unable to staff 24/7), insurance (vehicle, facility, liability and worker’s compensation), fuel, apparatus maintenance and debt service for apparatus procurement/replacement.

At present, the proposed \$165,000 annual contribution encompasses the above areas with the addition of \$15,000 that is earmarked as capital improvement (building and apparatus). I believe this is very reasonable for the Township to consider based on the monies that the fire company is contributing for the same purposes. The issue becomes fundraising initiatives and expense and the monies that those efforts contribute to the overall budget. The example would be \$60,000 for lighting could certainly be considered non-mission critical, however; if those infrastructure upgrades do not continue to happen then it will affect the ability to fundraise that will have a negative impact on the income side of the budget.

I believe the volunteers have managed the finances in a prudent manner over the 3-year period that was reviewed and are managing the income versus expense ratio in an acceptable manner while balancing the need to perform upgrades and replace equipment.

The proposed \$165,000 annual contribution (including staffing) will allow for mission critical fire company operations while also “supporting” necessary upgrades to support the volunteer fundraising and associated activities.

## **Neighboring Municipalities – Financial Support:**

Franklin Township – Pamela Williams, Secretary/Treasurer

- Provide a “donation” in 2 bi-annual payments to their one fire company.
- Also have assisted with truck payments that will be paid off the end of the year.
- Last year, provided an “extra donation” towards paying one full-time position for staffing the fire company.
- For 2023, the Township has increased their donation.
- Beginning in 2024, the Township is implementing an additional amount/increase to the real estate tax that will be kept in a separate account and designated for the fire company.
- Pay a portion of the worker’s compensation insurance.

Dover Township – Laurel Oswalt, Township Manager

- The Township provides .165 mill of 1.3 mills of real estate collected to Dover Township Volunteer Fire Department.
  - In 2022, this amounted to \$190, 565.
- The funds are utilized for: supplies and equipment, fuel, maintenance, property insurance, worker’s compensation, repairs to equipment, administrative assistance, and debt for fire apparatus loans.
- Firemen’s Relief funds allotted in 2022 totaled \$129,578.

Franklinton Borough – Pam Errington, Secretary/Treasurer

- \$4,000 per year

Dillsburg Borough – Laura Kauffman, Borough Manager

- \$104,868 per year

Carroll Township – Brandon Slatt, Township Manager

- The Township has enacted a fire tax to support the fire services.
  - In 2023, the rate was .590 mill or \$0.059 per \$100.00.
  - A copy of the resolution (2022-17) was provided and is included.

Washington Township – Diane Deardorff, Township Secretary

- \$5,000 per year to Wellsville Fire Company as well as 2 other fire companies.

Fairview Township – Donald Martin III, Township Manager

- Utilized LST tax funds to support the fire company.
- Provided a complete budget - \$395,442 for 2023 (attached)



## **Closing Comments:**

- 1 . As a follow up to the original report, it is still my belief and recommendation that the collective Fire Company and Township “partners” should establish a recruitment and retention program that provides a focus in this area. This could include applying for Federal SAFER grant funds for this purpose.
  
- 2 . As previously noted, the stakeholders (Fire Company and Township) would benefit from a strategic planning process as the next step in the future of the fire service for Warrington Township and surrounding municipalities. This will include items such as:
  - a . Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
  - b . Leadership Progression Planning
  - c . Financial Planning
  - d . Capital Purchases – Apparatus and Facilities
  - e . The overall future of the fire/rescue protection services that are provided to include standard of cover and future staffing models.
  - f . Discussion and collaboration with automatic and mutual aid partners.

Thank you to the fire company leadership as well as Township staff and elected officials for your time and cooperation in this project. It is commendable that both parties are at the table having a discussion for the future, as not all entities are taking that important step. Through discussion, there will be awareness and then there will be planning that will result in adapting and changing for the future.

*“When the moment of truth arrives, the time for preparation has passed.”*

## **Consultant Contact Information:**

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## **Appendices**

A – Incident Statistics – 2022

B - Carroll Township – Resolution No. 2022-17