

The Borough of West Mayfield



Fire Service Review Committee

Final Report & Recommendations to Council
and the Citizens of the Borough of West Mayfield

September 12, 2024

Executive Summary

Reason For This Review

In recent years since the COVID-19 Pandemic, a groundswell of citizens have increasingly expressed serious concerns about the competency and viability of the borough's current fire service provider—the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department (WMVFD). A search of Council meeting minutes reveals numerous instances of citizens articulating their concerns to Council. Perhaps the most remarkable discussion about the borough's fire service came about on February 11, 2022 when Council entertained a proposal from the City of Beaver Falls Fire Department regarding outsourcing the fire service. This meeting pulled into sharp focus many profound and contentious disagreements among citizens, officers and members of the WMVFD, and elected officials as to the competency and viability of the WMVFD—dissensions that still exist today:

First, citizens are concerned about the quality and effectiveness of fire department leadership, able-bodied staffing, job performance, and overall readiness to provide essential and necessary firefighting and emergency response services to the borough, as well as to surrounding communities as per mutual aid obligations.

Second, citizens are concerned about the fire department's financial stability and sustainability, matters that directly impact the fire department's mission and operational readiness.

Third, citizens are frustrated over the fire department's lack of transparency and openness regarding the use of taxpayer-provided financial and in-kind support. Additionally, there has been a lack of meaningful and consistent reporting to Council regarding fire-related incidents and service calls within and outside the borough, as well as a lack of reporting about staff qualifications, training and certifications, and overall fire service readiness.

And fourth, citizens have expressed dismay over an intensifying atmosphere of personal rancor and acrimony between some members of the fire department and the community—a situation adversely affecting community goodwill and comity.

On February 8, 2023, Council unanimously voted to create the Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC) to explore these matters.

Scope of Inquiry



The FSRC quickly learned that these issues extend beyond the fire department; they are symptomatic of broader concerns within our overall public safety program, made up of complicated factors with many interconnected and interrelated variables impacting the quality of our community's fire related public safety: community opinions, values, attitudes, experiences, and knowledge; local government ordinances, oversight and accountability practices, municipal support and budgeting; current firefighting trends and practices, standards of readiness, performance standards, mutual aid and intergovernmental agreements, and working relationships among emergency responders within our fire service ecosystem.

We frame this constellation of variables within the useful concept of *fire prevention and fire protection*, which we use throughout our report.

Research & Fact-Finding

The FSRC limited its scope of inquiry to four relevant areas: Community, Fire Service Ecosystem, Local Government, and Current Fire Service Provider. We conducted extensive, systematic research and fact-finding guided by our four areas of inquiry. We depended heavily on public records research and Right-To-Know Law (RTKL) requests to obtain official information from federal, state, and local agencies. We also relied on published news sources, a public survey, community listening activities, interviews with various local fire service professionals and experts, and a hearing-type activity with local government officials.

To fulfill our goal of transparency, we continually published our research and findings—and other relevant source material and citations—to our web page on the borough's official website, which has been universally accessible to citizens, borough officials, and officers of the fire service.

Recommendations

At the outset, the FSRC committed itself to create a set of remedial recommendations to Council supported by our research and fact-finding. The committee formulated 36 recommendations distributed across nine subject areas:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Call to Action | 5. Public Safety Leadership |
| 2. Public Safety Strategic Plan | 6. Public Safety-Fire Reporting & Readiness |
| 3. Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program | 7. Budget & Fiscal Management |
| 4. Ordinances | 8. Fire Service |
| | 9. Community |

Each recommendation has been unanimously ratified by the committee, and we stand firmly behind their rational appropriateness and practical necessity. However, not all recommendations are of equal weight and priority. Some recommendations are very time sensitive due to logistical, legal, legislative, and budgetary concerns. Other recommendations—no less important—are more long-term, strategic formulations.

The recommendation most likely to be contentious and disputed is our suggestion to decertify the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department (i.e., to remove it as our officially designated municipal fire service). We fully expect that some in our community will categorically reject this recommendation without consideration of our research and findings. However, we also expect that many in our community will want to deliberate thoughtfully over this recommendation. Our report should be helpful.

Furthermore, although our recommendation advises Council to outsource fire service protection, the committee agreed that it is beyond our scope to recommend any particular fire service provider(s) to fulfill this need. We recognize and respect Council's right to make this decision in consideration of all available options and in the best interest of the community.

FSRC Report to Council

We are pleased to have carried out our mission with focus, clarity, due diligence, and integrity. We have achieved our stated goals and objectives, on time and as scheduled. And as demonstrated throughout our report, the FSRC maintained a commitment to its guiding principles. This report is:

- **Inclusive.** We considered the voices and views of our community, municipal neighbors, and local government officials. The committee openly invited all viewpoints and perspectives about fire prevention and fire protection matters to be shared through our inquiry process. The WMVFD is represented in this report as well, although vicariously and in absentia.

- **Comprehensive.** We provided at times more diligence than necessary to achieve certain research objectives. However, these extra efforts reveal that our community's fire prevention and fire protection needs and concerns are complicated, as well as interconnected and interrelated to our municipal neighbors' public safety needs and concerns.
- **Evidential.** We relied on documented observations and factual information presented in the public record, such as surveys, independent audit reports, and financial records. We chose not to entertain unsubstantiated claims, unsupported opinions, and hearsay.
- **Conclusive.** We took a problem-solving approach regarding the many public safety deficiencies and weaknesses we've identified.
- **Practical.** Our recommendations are reasonable solutions, providing our elected leaders with a clear pathway toward transformational and structural change preparing our community for current and future public safety challenges.
- **Public.** This report is a matter of public record.

Call to Action

As the legendary Fire Chief Alan Brunacini of Phoenix, Arizona reminds us, there are two things hated among firefighters and public safety officials: change and the way things are. But national fire training expert Chief Jacob McAfee of Fresno, California warns us, "It is reckless and irresponsible for leaders and organizations not to be ready for that change. No matter where you are in the fire service, eventually, change finds you."

And so it has. The work of the West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee is about the future of public safety in our community. It is about necessary change and improvement.

With this report, we provide Council with sufficient information justifying real transformation and structural change that comprehensively improves our municipal fire prevention and fire protection program.

We strongly encourage the Mayor, Council, municipal officers, fire service officers, emergency management coordinators, and all citizens to read this report in its entirety and to give it serious consideration.

The topics discussed herein pertain directly to the protection of life and property within the Borough of West Mayfield, as well as our municipal neighbors.

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Committee Overview

Creation & Mandate

On February 8, 2023, Council unanimously voted to create the Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC):

President Tate recommended a fire committee to oversee the Fire Dept, review the workings, fires and trainings, etc... and monthly reporting to the council. This committee will consist of 3 from the council, the fire dept, and 6 from residents. Motion on table by Jeff, 2nd by Jake. approved.

Bill Heaton: Yes

Jason Heaton: Yes

Janet Helbig: Yes

Lou Little: Yes

Jeffrey Seybert: Yes

Bob Tate: Yes

Jacob Tate: Yes

The committee was designated to be ad-hoc (temporary) for the specific purpose of reviewing the competence, readiness, and fiscal soundness of the borough's current fire service, and to make recommendations to Council based on these findings.

Membership

Immediately after the motion, Council President Bob Tate acted upon his authority to begin seating select committee members to include no more than three (3) members of Council who were not associated with the fire service (to avoid quorum issues and conflicts of interest), at least three (3) citizens of the borough, and at least three (3) representatives of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department (who were not Council members to avoid conflicts of interest). Each of these groups would be represented by a co-chair. The committee's final roster included ten members:

Citizens Representation

Kevin Farkas (citizen co-chair), Jan Johnston-Szopo, Janet Jurich Pico, Bob Kaib, Tracy Popovich, Sue Wood

Council/Municipal Representation

Janet Helbig (Council co-chair), Jeff Seybert; Licia Cogley, Mayor; Bob Tate (ex-officio)

WMVFD Representation

None

The officers of the WMVFD chose not to participate with the committee. Here is a timeline of our good faith outreach efforts:

- On February 15, 2024, citizen co-chair Kevin Farkas sent an informal invitation seeking WMVFD representation to Fire Chief Lou Little, c/o WMVFD Secretary Mike Caler.
- As of March 7th (three weeks later), having not received a response from the WMVFD the FSRC sent Fire Chief Lou Little a formal letter again requesting their representation on the committee.
- As of March 14, still having not received a response from the WMVFD, Mr. Farkas made a direct, in-person request at a Council meeting to Fire Chief Lou Little for WMVFD representation on the FSRC.
- On March 16, WMVFD Secretary Mike Caler submitted nominations for FSRC representation: Michael Caler, Wendy Harker, Jamie Hoskinson. However, the WMVFD objected to Council president Tate's presence on the committee as a conflict of interest. The fire department also noted that their representatives could not meet with the FSRC "until after May[,] 2 of us bowl on Thursdays." And finally the WMVFD stated that they "should have some input into what citizens will be on this committee. It can't be the ones that are just against the fire department."
- On March 20, the FSRC responded to the fire department officers' objections stating that the committee unanimously rejected their grievances and agreed to stay the course as decided at the steering meeting (which the fire department officers were invited to attend).
- After the fire department officers' bowling commitments in May through the writing of this report, despite our standing invitation to join the FSRC, the committee still had not heard from WMVFD representatives.

Regrettably, the record shows that the officers of the WMVFD chose to have neither a voice nor vote on the Fire Service Review Committee. We can't comment on their motivation, but given the seriousness of our task their deliberate non-cooperation demonstrates remarkably poor judgment and unprofessionalism, if not contempt toward the will of Council and the citizens of the borough.

FSRC Guidelines

On March 7, 2024, the FSRC held its first in-person "steering" meeting to ratify a number of operational guidelines, such as committee goals, objectives, timeline, and activities.

Accountability & Reporting

The committee affirmed that it would be accountable to the president of Council, as are all other Council committees. However, from the outset we agreed that our committee should operate

consistent with the principles of *good governance*. We wanted our work to be as open and transparent as possible, sharing information on the internet about committee goals, objectives, activities, research, fact-findings, correspondence, and other relevant information. The committee posted this disclaimer:

The FSRC page is a working project made public to promote open government, transparency, accuracy, and community engagement. The information appearing here is under constant revision. Some typographical errors may exist. Please bring any factual errors on this page to the attention of the committee. Only the committee's final report to Council (scheduled for the fall of 2024) should be considered official and binding.

The FSRC promoted internal communication and awareness among its members through regularly emailed *FSRC Friday Updates*. Additionally, the committee held in-person working meetings on the first Thursday of each month to review our progress, discuss findings, and to plan for upcoming activities. This meeting date also gave us an opportunity to prepare for our monthly report to Council.

Each month we provide progress reports to Council, keeping elected officials and the public informed about our activities. In some instances, we used this opportunity to formally “go on the record” regarding certain requests for information.

And finally, the FSRC agreed to present Council with a final report of findings and recommendations to Council no later than September 2024.

Goals

To guide our committee toward expected outcomes, we defined a set of meaningful goals:

1. FSRC seeks to understand the borough's legislative, financial, and legal duties of oversight, obligation, and responsibility regarding the fire service and other fire prevention and fire protection matters.
2. FRSC seeks to understand the organizational and operational status of our current fire service and overall fire prevention and fire protection program, including 1) competency and readiness of the fire service; 2) ISO Public Protection Classification and the condition of borough's fire protection infrastructure (e.g., fire hydrants); 3) public education efforts regarding fire prevention and fire protection; 4) types and levels of municipal financial and in-kind support for fire prevention and fire protection services and programs.
3. FRSC seeks to understand the current fire service ecosystem (i.e., current attitudes toward public service, professional developments and trends, and working relationships between and among our neighboring municipal fire services).
4. FRSC seeks to understand community attitudes and opinions toward our current fire service and local government regarding fire prevention and fire protection issues.
5. FRSC seeks to use its findings of fact to inform recommendations for improving the future of the borough's entire fire prevention and fire protection program.

Objectives

To provide practical assistance in achieving our goals, we defined a set of objectives:

1. To form a working committee with representation from Council, citizens, and the WMVFD.
2. To create a publicly available FSRC webpage to share findings (research, data) and recommendations.
3. To hold monthly FSRC work-meetings.
4. To provide Council with monthly FSRC updates.
5. To hold a series of listening events or meetings with various interests and concerns.
6. To deliver to Council a written report detailing FSRC's findings and recommendations.

Timeline & Activities

At our steering meeting in March, FSRC members unanimously agreed to set and follow a firm project management action calendar to help us manage our ambitious schedule. We are pleased to say that throughout our seven month tenure, the FSRC stayed on track and on schedule.

FSRC Action Calendar:

February: FSRC Formation
March: Steering and Planning
April: Focus on Citizens
May: Focus on Fire Service Ecosystem
June: Focus on Local Government
July: Focus on West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department
August: FSRC Report Preparation
September: FSRC Report Delivered to Council

See appendix for the [FSRC Gazette](#) (list of activities).



FSRC Online

Since February 29, 2024, the committee has used [FSRC Online](#) to centralize and publicly share its on-going work. *FSRC Online* has provided news and updates about the committee and its fact-finding. It also made available a wide range of supporting information related to fire prevention and fire protection topics. The specific goals of *FSRC Online* were to help organize the committee, promote open government and transparency, ensure accuracy of research and documentation, and to encourage community engagement. Most important, *FSRC Online* provided West Mayfield’s local government officials, fire service staff, and citizens with a measure of accountability and assurance that the committee was carrying out its duties and obligations.

West Mayfield Borough

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Borough of West Mayfield

Fire Service Review Committee

Local Government

Fire Service Provider

Fire Service Ecosystem

Community

Budget & Finance

Archive

Program Note

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Committee Gazette (Activities)

Timeline

Committee Members

Background

Mandate

Authority, Reporting, Accountability

Mission, Goals, Objectives

Areas of Inquiry

Community

Our first inquiry focused on the community. The FSRC wanted to better understand current and prevailing attitudes and opinions about a wide range of fire prevention and fire protection topics, such as local government's management of public safety, observations about the firefighting capabilities of our neighboring municipalities, and indications of public faith and trust in our current fire service provider. The FSRC achieved these goals and objectives through public listening events and a community survey.

At the end of this section, the FSRC provides a set of conclusions regarding our Community inquiry.

In many ways, this study is a reaction to an intensifying wave of citizens' questions and concerns about the fire service beginning in 2021. A review of citizens' comments memorialized in Council meeting minutes (official public records) demonstrates a range of issues. It is important to recognize these comments in the public record, as they provide evidence that Council members and officers of the fire department were made aware of citizens' issues. Official responses to these concerns are beyond the scope of this section of the report; they can be found elsewhere in this document ([see Appendix](#)). Below are excerpts of citizen concerns documented in Council meeting minutes:

August 12, 2021 - A citizen raised concerns about WMVFD's alleged mismanagement of the Community Park rental concession and wondered if the proceeds from the concession are being properly used by the fire department. The minutes state: "Arguments continued and it was finally stated [by Fire Chief Lou Little, also a member of Council] that this is not borough business, and should be brought up at the fire department meetings, not borough Council meetings. At this point, Mrs. McNeely, Council member got up and exited the meeting."

Another concerned citizen "asked why personal equipment is parked in the fire department parking lot when it is borough property. The department leases the property from the borough. Tempers continued to rise and the Mayor asked that everyone keep their tempers in check. Ms. Harker finally used the gavel to return order to the meeting."

September 9, 2021 - A citizen again raised concerns about WMVFD's alleged mismanagement of the Community Park rental concession. The citizen "asked why the fire department was renting out the shelters since the park is owned by the borough. The borough turned it over to the fire department so they could earn some money."

November 11, 2021 - A citizen "was present to voice concern over the item on the agenda to create a 1 mill tax to borough property owners to generate funds for the volunteer fire department . . . She feels that the department gave up on fundraising since there were no more breakfasts, no more bingo . . . and bingo. She was also concerned about the number of fire

department people on Council being a conflict of interest where any votes were concerned . . . The lack of members raised a question about the ability to answer fire calls.

There was also a question asked about just contracting out service to another department like Beaver Falls and disbanding our department completely since there were so few members and they were having difficulty getting new members.

Another citizen “asked if the 10 volunteer firefighters were certified and they are not. She would like to see a report of their expenditures from the fire department.

A citizen stated that he “does not want to see taxes raised to help the fire department and said that we should put it out for bid. There are grants available to fire departments. . . . the fire department should provide a copy of their audit to the borough.”

Another citizen said that he was “in opposition of a [fire] tax increase. It should only be used as a last resort . . . [he] suggested that the department ask Council for more money as another option.”

Yet another citizen “also voiced concern over the fire tax because he owns a lot of property in the borough.”

A citizen “asked if citizens were permitted to attend a fire department meeting to get information. They can.”

A citizen “offered some suggestions for the fire department obtaining help – could they do robot calls or something? Everyone needs to be involved.”

A citizen “requested a list of fire department members.”

December 9, 2021 - A concerned citizen “again asked how many volunteer firefighters there were and are they certified as fire fighter one . . . She asked how many fire calls they answered in a year and the response was that they didn’t have that information on hand . . . She is still waiting to see a report of their expenditures from the fire department . . . She also asked how much gas the department uses that is provided by the borough.” This citizen “feels that our department should close and contract services from Beaver Falls because we need to look out for the safety of our residents.”

Another citizen “was present also to voice the same concerns . . . requesting the names of all members; the number of fire calls and a full expenditure account. She agrees that we should contract our services from Beaver Falls.”

A citizen stated that he “also does not want to see a tax increase or the addition of a fire tax to keep the fire department going.”

A citizen asked if “other fire departments have been approached to contract services?”

A citizen “voiced concern about the fire department. They are in dire need, why can’t we come up with some way to help them. He said the fire department does a very good job and we should be able to take money from the General Fund to keep them going [so] give them the money they need.”

A citizen “suggested that if the citizens knew what was being planned, they might be more willing to help with fund raisers. She feels that help would be available if the residents knew what was going on.”

A citizen “noted that many of the volunteers have left West Mayfield and gone to Chippewa and other departments . . . It was also suggested that we should give the department a year to see if they are sincere in trying to make the department work for the residents of West Mayfield.”

A citizen “would like to have a representative from Beaver Falls available at the next meeting to ask questions. She also wants the information requested from our department available at that meeting.”

February 10, 2022 - A citizen “had questions for Chief Stowe regarding the [proposed outsourced] services of Beaver Falls. She questioned if residents were charged for responding to a call . . . She also asked about the grade certification for insurance.”

A citizen asked Chief Stowe “if staff would need to be increased if Beaver Falls took over.”

A citizen asked Chief Stowe if “the proposal included 24/7 availability.”

A citizen asked “what the borough Council provided for the fire department . . . She also asked about grants . . . [and] why the department did not apply for a grant this year . . . She asked also about the number of fire fighter ones that the volunteer department has . . . She feels that our volunteer department is not the same caliber as Beaver Falls and also reminded our members that if they went to Beaver Falls they would be paid.”

A citizen “asked Council to consider giving the Fire Department the additional \$5000 it requested to tide them over for this year.”

A citizen “asked Chief Stowe if Council decided to help the fire department this year, could we still come to you in the future[?]”

June 9, 2023 - Councilmember J. Tate “asked about the park shelter rentals and why they are cash only. It was explained that too many people were writing bad checks. The deposits are returned in cash to the renter if the shelter has been properly taken care of. He would like to see the contracts reviewed and a waiver needs to be signed by all park rentals. Mr. Budicak will write up a waiver.”

July 13, 2023 - Councilmember M. McNeely “asked how many firefighter 1’s the fire department has . . . She wanted to know if there was anyone who was trained in saving people . . . Michelle said that it would be good if the fire department could get out there and explain what they do because our residents don’t really know how our fire department works.”

January 2, 2024 - Councilmember B. Tate “asked how the fire department spent money donated by Council.”

February 8m 2024 - A citizen questioned the Fire Dept as to why they need to drive the Fire Bus to the meetings, and use the fuel that the borough supplies? [Fire Chief] Lou Little stated: “I told them to!”

A citizen asked “why the Borough funds [an] Organization [that] fails an audit? The Fire Dept. is embarrassing.”

A citizen “again questioned about the Fire Dept and all the women wanting to assist with Ladies Auxiliary.”

The FSRC wanted to hear directly from borough residents and taxpayers (past and present) regarding matters of fire prevention & fire protection. We welcomed thoughtful comments, opinions, and accounts of experiences with local government, the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, and neighboring municipalities' fire services.

Public Listening Events

To achieve this goal, the FSRC held three public events or “listening sessions” to give citizens a chance to learn about FSRC’s work and to converse with the committee. In total, the committee devoted fourteen hours of direct contact time with dozens of citizens to hear their thoughts and concerns about fire prevention and fire protection matters in the borough.

Tuesday, April 23, 2024, the FSRC set up a table on the public sidewalk near the WMVFD to hand out flyers and written surveys to residents going to and from the voting poll at the fire station.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024, the FSRC held a public listening session in Council chambers from 5pm to 8pm.

Saturday, April 27, 2024 the FSRC held another public listening session in Council chambers from 9am to noon.

We would summarize our conversations with citizens as consistent with those concerns expressed in Council meeting minutes or revealed in our community survey (below). It was a comfort to most citizens having a community-based fire department, but most were fearful that the WMVFD was incapable of providing a sufficient level of emergency response services needed if there were to be a

serious incident, such as a house fire. Most people agreed that the WMVFD would be capable of handling less-serious incidents such as small brush fires, downed trees, or traffic control.

Most citizens had a sense that WMVFD was understaffed and probably struggling for money. Many people wondered why the WMVFD did not hold fundraisers like they used to (e.g., breakfasts, bingo). Most people told us that they would like to support the fire department financially, but a minority adamantly said that they would not support the WMVFD.

We confirmed that a third of citizens don't know much about how the fire department operates. Also, far fewer citizens knew much about our municipal fire-related ordinances or the way in which the borough supports the fire department financially. In fact, most people seem to believe that the borough owns and operates the WMVFD, including the fire station building, apparatus, and other materiel. Moreover, most citizens had very little understanding of the West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association and how it supports the WMVFD.

And finally, some citizens (mostly older, long-time residents) expressed a strong sense of nostalgia for the WMVFD. They lamented any notion that the fire department might not be able to sustain itself. To them, the prospect of "losing the fire department" was a sad sign of the times. However, a majority of residents did not express this same regret. To them, their main concern was having the most capable and ready team of firefighters show up at their door in a life and death emergency. As a post script, a surprising number of citizens said they'd be willing to pay more for such a fire service.

Community Survey

Another community outreach tool we used was a detailed survey (see [Appendix](#)), which was made available online and in print form. The survey could be downloaded and printed from FSRC Online.

Through this survey, we wanted to hear directly from borough residents and taxpayers (past and present). We welcomed thoughtful comments, opinions, and accounts of experiences with local government, the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, neighboring municipalities' fire services, and citizens' rights and obligations regarding fire prevention & fire protection matters. We made it clear that the FSRC would not censor responses. All comments will be preserved as part of the public record. However, when presenting our findings to the public we may use editorial discretion to curtail redundant, irrelevant, or inappropriate comments.

We did not accept anonymous surveys so that we might be able to follow up with you if necessary for clarification or additional information regarding your comments. However, respondents could request that their names not be revealed publicly in our findings. Approximately 61% of participants did not want to be publicly identified.

Methodology

The FSRC chose not to do random sampling because of logistical barriers. Based on census data, the N for such a target population (adult residents of the borough) would have been about 280 to ensure

results with 95% confidence and 5% margin of error. Reaching this number of participants within our operational timeframe was beyond our capacity.

Instead, the committee chose non-probability sampling. We wanted to give every eligible resident an opportunity to complete a survey. As a practical matter we understood that the sample population would be smaller and self-selecting, but we believe this method to be more democratic, giving everyone a chance to complete a survey.

The survey itself can best be described as a public opinion survey. It included a mix of structured and open-ended questions. The results are subjective, of course, and understanding "why" people hold such opinions was not within the scope of this project. Nonetheless, we believe the survey results are highly informative, offering a serious indictment against our fire prevention and fire protection program, the fire service, and our public officials charged with ensuring public safety in our community.

Survey Results: n = 50

Respondents by Streets:

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. 37th St Ext (7) | 7. Jean St (3) | 13. W. 3rd Ave (3) |
| 2. Ann St | 8. Knape St | 14. W. 4th Ave |
| 3. Boyd Ave (2) | 9. Lenox Ave | 15. W. 5th Ave (7) |
| 4. Brook St | 10. Matilda St (2) | 16. W. 6th Ave (3) |
| 5. High St | 11. Ross Ave | 17. W. 8th Ave (6) |
| 6. High St Ext | 12. Short St (2) | |

Topics

Borough Ordinances: Fire Prevention & Fire Protection

Finding: A majority of citizens (57%) think the current ordinances are outdated and insufficient.

Council Authority: Oversight of the fire service

Finding: A majority of citizens (59%) think Council does not have enough authority and oversight of the fire service.

Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD

Finding: 43% of citizens think taxpayers provide enough sustaining support to the WMVFD, while 14% feel that the borough should provide more support. A majority of respondents (45%) admit that they don't know what is an appropriate amount of taxpayer support to sustain the WMVFD.

Fire Prevention: Public education and community outreach efforts

Finding: A majority of citizens (56%) think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community.

Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability

Finding: A super majority of citizens (72%) think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD.

Community Support: Financial donations, participation in fundraising efforts

Finding: While a majority of citizens (61%) say they sometimes support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts, nearly a third surveyed stated that they do not or will not support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts.

Community Confidence: Community trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD to fulfill its mission

Finding: Another super majority of citizens (69%) think the community has lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD.

Future of Borough Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program

Finding: A super majority of citizens (94%) think the borough's current fire prevention & fire protection program is insufficient and must be updated and modernized.

WMVFD Leadership – Qualifications, managerial competence, job performance

Finding: A super majority of citizens surveyed (73%) think the WMVFD leadership team is not sufficiently qualified, competent, and/or able-bodied.

WMVFD Firefighting Staff – Qualifications, training, and job performance

Finding: A super majority of citizens surveyed (67%) think the WMVFD firefighting staff is not sufficiently qualified, trained, and/or able-bodied.

Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability

Finding: A super majority of citizens (72%) think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD.

Future of the Fire Service

Finding: A super majority of citizens (90%) are split over whether the borough and WMVFD should create a fire service corrective action plan or the borough should decertify WMVFD and outsource its fire service needs.

Other Findings:

- 12% of respondents to our community survey indicated they were current or former firefighters with another fire department. 4% had experience serving with the WMVFD.
- 17% of respondents indicated that within the last decade they have called for and received emergency help from the fire service.

- 90% of respondents currently live in the borough. 10% are former residents.
- Across the survey and during our conversations with borough citizens, nearly a third admitted to not knowing enough about our fire protection and fire prevention program, including the fire service, to answer questions meaningfully. This suggests a concerning lack of public education and civic knowledge regarding fire prevention and fire protection issues in our community.
- A majority of citizens we've contacted hold negative opinions about our fire prevention and fire protection program; moreover, we would characterize their mood as sad, disgust, and frustration that our fire-related public safety program has been so poorly managed by Council and the officers of the fire service.
- Perhaps the most significant feeling we've uncovered in our community is a fear that our current fire service is incapable of responding to emergencies with efficiency, competency, a sufficient level of material readiness, and a crew of able-bodied firefighters.

Open Comments:

Note: The following comments have been edited for legibility and clarity. Some comments have not been included here because of redundancy.

Borough Government: Open comments regarding our elected officials' duties, obligations, and past or present performance providing citizens with fire prevention & fire protection services

- *I definitely feel the Police contracts also need to be reviewed and would like to see specifics of how those decisions are made. How many speed citations are written in the Boro, what are we getting for our investment.*
- *I would like to see the elected officials and WMVFD work together as a cohesive unit to inform the community of the strengths and weaknesses in both the services.*
- *What does Borough involvement in fire prevention entail?*
- *A lot of mixed emotions on this question, since our past elected officials were all fire department affiliates. To me it was a conflict of interest. They ran it the way they wanted things to operate. Hoping with our new elected officials, that we find new ways to make the fire department, Council and Borough residents work towards the greater good for our community.*
- *I'm not involved with the going's on of the borough to answer.*
- *Good that they created a group to evaluate the FD and give objective evaluation of the functionality and where this community would best be served.*
- *Recent changes in officials are promising with visible efforts and community engagement.*

- *Borough government needs to be more involved. Fire dept should have to report monthly to Council. Information is not shared and I don't ever remember any fire prevention education offered in the borough.*
- *Our Council is doing all they can, but fire department will not cooperate in any way.*
- *U have the wrong people.*
- *More outreach to community.*
- *Do something positive.*
- *For many years Council, even when I served on Council and as mayor, has not paid attention to these issues. Our ordinances need to be updated and there needs to be more control over the fire department's use of tax money. Council should also demand better reports each month. And if the fire department doesn't like these demands and refuses to cooperate, Council should decertify the department. In fact, Council should look into going with Beaver Falls as our new fire department.*
- *My impression, having attended borough Council meetings and one WMVFD meeting, is that there is a definite rift between the Council/community and the fire department. It seems that Council is satisfied with the lack of answers and accountability of the fire department and at the WMVFD meeting I attended, they're the ones that seemed to have an "us versus them" attitude rather than take a "how can we better serve the community" approach. Sadly, Mr. Little and Ms. Harker, as Council members at the time, seemed to foster and encourage the "us vs. them" attitude. Given that we are looking at life-and-death situations, that attitude seems counter-productive.*
- *There changes that need made to the fire department.*
- *We don't get the complete or correct info from borough Council!!!*
- *I don't believe the boro Council receives the correct or complete information needed to provide to the citizens.*
- *I think it has always been easy to not question anything. Our Council needs to be accountable for the services, or lack thereof fire protection.*
- *I'm thinking that the Boro Gov. could probably do something differently.*
- *I don't know enough about this.*

West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department: Open comments regarding the fire department's duties, obligations, and past or present performance providing citizens with fire prevention & fire protection services

- *Unfortunately I don't believe our department is going above or beyond what's expected of them. The politics within the department is overwhelming and prevents new members from joining.*
- *Department seems incompetent. If paperwork is behind or non-existent, who, what, or why is money not accounted for. We must look into regional fire companies. If mutual aid agreement basically combine these services on fire calls, what is the need to maintain a Social Club made up of non residents of the boro?*
- *Again, transparency would be appreciated. I am aware of the lack of volunteers and it is a concern as to the length of time it would take to have a sufficient crew to fight a fire.*
- *They are not adequately trained and we have been told that they cannot enter your home to save you because they are not certified. If they aren't going to get certified, then why not have a different department take over coverage? We have to wait on them anyway.*
- *One thing that has caught my attention more than once is why would any member of the fire department be smoking in a fire truck. To me this is a problem and is not something that should be permitted.*
- *From what I have seen the fire department does not want to work with the Boro on anything. This leaves a lot of negativity in our community. And it's embarrassing to West Mayfield residents.*
- *I was out to eat at the Back Door Tavern not long ago and the Chippewa Fire department was working there to get donations for their fire department. I was impressed.*
- *This department needs more firefighters but understand this is the plight of many departments.*
- *Our fire department needs new blood, new leadership to obtain new members. New leadership and the hope to gain new members will improve relationships within the borough citizens.*
- *I am concerned about the department's ethics and attitude towards others in the community. I do not see efforts to cooperate with Council or the community. I'm concerned about equipment maintenance, training, and volunteers who may be unable or unwilling to climb ladders or wear masks. If money earmarked for fire services or hall rentals has been used for personal financial gain, I want to know. Full disclosure of financial records. Are they truly prepared to respond in full force if my house is on fire? Also, anyone who forces other volunteers, trying to help our borough, to set up a tent at a neighbor's house outside and run a generator instead of being allowed to use the hall because they have a grudge needs to GO.*

- *West Mayfield should join the Beaver Falls Regional Fire Service. No one wants to volunteer anymore, all kids want to do is play video games. It's amazing when driving through the borough how many kids are truly here. That seems to be the only time you see them.*
- *If members are afraid of heights (climbing ladders) or are claustrophobic (unable to wear breathing apparatus) I'm not convinced they could save my life if necessary.*
- *I feel the fire department is not able to protect our residents if we have a fire. They need to be upfront about their certifications and give that information to Council.*
- *No comment.*
- *Doing a ok job but could be better we may need them as a backup I am sure.*
- *More outreach to citizens, children.*
- *Numerous times asked to see qualifications and no response.*
- *Talk about outsourcing or making our department better.*
- *The fire department is poorly run. They think they can do whatever they want to do in the borough and not answer to anyone, especially Council. It is not well respected by other fire departments, either.*
- *My experience in the community is limited to 2 years. However, having lived in other municipalities and having seen other fire departments in action, I would doubt that more than one of our current fire persons would be capable of suiting up and handling equipment, much less actually fighting the fire and rescuing people from a building.*
- *I don't think they do enough to sustain their financial obligations such as fund raising.*
- *Not qualified enough to fight fires. I offered for them to burn a house down for practice and they never came through because I found they had no one trained to go into a building.*
- *I don't think the WMVFD has the manpower or the resources to serve the borough.*
- *I don't believe the WMVFD has qualified manpower or resources. We have asked them numerous times to supply a list of firefighters and their qualifications, and they refuse to do so.*
- *I have been told that it's the current leadership who drive away volunteers.*
- *Definitely needs some updates.*

- *I wonder what the results of an audit would be. I don't know much about our fire department.*
- *A detailed WMVFD investigation is called for, re ethics and financial issues. It's called for ASAP by the State of PA and the IRS.*
- *I don't know enough about this.*
- *There should be an age limit on firefighters and should have to pass a physical and firefighter test each year.*

Neighboring Fire Services: Open Comments regarding neighboring municipalities' fire prevention & fire protection services to their communities

- *Many of our neighboring communities have well staffed and organized departments. They seem to have a lot of pride and really put their citizens' needs first.*
- *It seems that surrounding fire departments get along and they work together with their Council and members of the community, I don't think our fire department does this. Which is unacceptable in my eyes. The fire department shuts everyone out from using the fire hall and we should work as one and not be divided. Way back, I remember the fire department always welcomed auxiliary help. The fire department does not want anyone's help. They don't welcome anyone and shut everyone out. This is a red flag to me. What are they hiding?*
- *We absolutely need mutual aid from our neighbors. I think they are doing a good job.*
- *Open relations with all neighboring fire departments is a must. Due to the current WMVFD members' qualifications in fire rescue and the safety of West Mayfield Citizens, I personally do not feel confident that members of our fire department could save me or a member of my family if a life threatening situation arose. I feel that the closest fire department should be welcomed to come to the aid of West Mayfield Citizens.*
- *I don't see neighboring communities posting concerns with their fire departments like we have here. Why is that?*
- *Neighboring municipalities are trained & certified and are more capable if needed.*
- *I would like to see Beaver Falls Fire Department take care of our borough.*
- *Combine activities with neighboring communities.*
- *Other neighboring communities are in sync.*
- *Beaver Falls F.D. would benefit the Boro.*

- *They always seem to help out with fires. People like that.*
- *Beaver Falls and Chippewa are the best fire departments around us, and the biggest and best trained. Big Beaver is a very good fire department, too. It's a good thing we have these departments to help us as mutual aid.*
- *I have only witnessed one incident in my 2 years here and I was impressed with the response from Beaver Falls FD and White Township volunteers.*
- *Neighboring departments have more updated equipment and more qualified firefighters to be able to handle the needs of our community.*
- *They have more updated equipment and more qualified staff.*
- *I feel we would be much better off by going with Beaver Falls Fire Dept.*
- *I think we should look into going with another fire service such as Beaver Falls Fire Dept.*
- *Don't know enough to comment.*
- *Superior to ours.*
- *We thought all the neighboring fire services worked together.*
- *Neighboring departments do a lot better job. Faster Response.*

Citizens: Open Comments regarding citizens' rights & responsibilities, duties & obligations, and past or present involvement in fire prevention & fire protection matters

- *Time to consolidate.*
- *Don't know enough.*
- *I feel Citizens as I am would gladly support this fire department if they would only reach out and let the community in. What I mean, reactivate the women's auxiliary, involve the community with setting up fundraisers. Stop only having 1 individual make decisions concerning fundraisers.*
- *I have previously offered in writing on one of my donations to volunteer to help the fire dept with anything computer/print/design related. No one ever reached out. Perhaps they are not in need of any of that, but from all I've heard, they won't work with anyone outside their inner circle. I am willing to pay a few more dollars in taxes to have the peace of mind that someone will be here to save my family and house, to the best of their ability, should a fire occur.*

- *No one wants to volunteer. Kids want to make a million doing the least amount possible.*
- *Fire department does not want citizens to know their finances and they do not work with local groups who have the betterment of the borough in mind.*
- *Our fire department declined all help to join the women's auxiliary, why?*
- *Open up and be more friendly with your citizens and community and open the auxiliary.*
- *We have offered to help.*
- *Don't give up what you're fighting for.*
- *Over the years citizens have not shown much interest in the borough's overall fire service concerns, except for the fire department. It seems like the fire department has become less concerned with the community. The fire department offers nothing to the community like we used to do for the kids about fire safety. It's no wonder the community doesn't support the fundraisers like they used to.*
- *If my life and the lives of my neighbors and loved ones depend on the response to an emergency, I want to be confident that my local response team is up to the task. And secondary to that, I would like to feel like the WMVFD and the Council/community aren't at odds with each other when the issue is life-or-death. Pettiness simply is not appropriate when lives are at stake.*
- *Citizens have the right to have qualified protection services available.*
- *It's been too long that the leadership of both the Council and the WMVFD have gone unchecked. It's time to answer to the citizens.*
- *The citizens should know exactly how much money the WMVFD receives from the boro because that is the taxpayers money and how it is used. They also need to be transparent because they are not at this time.*
- *It's time that we demand both our local government and the fire department that the taxpayers subsidize both do their jobs.*
- *I think we should know what's going on.*

Additional Comments: Please provide any additional comments regarding any aspect of the borough's fire prevention & fire protection program, your personal experiences, thoughts for improving fire-related public safety in the borough, and/or feedback about this survey

- *I would love to see the West Mayfield fire department succeed! There are a few members that could get the department where it needs to be but unfortunately won't get ahead due to poor politics.*
- *Keep the eye towards the future of the Boro. How long will we be able to survive without becoming a forgotten name on a leftover map. How long before this Boro's financial decisions lead to insolvency and absorption into another municipality. Don't mortgage the Boros' future.*
- *WMVFD is too closed off from its own Community. It's time for a change.*
- *I know, in the past, they were always the first to respond when Medic Rescue was called to a home.*
- *My concern is if my house would catch fire, would West Mayfield be able to put out the fire? I would have to say no, we do not have any young blood in the fire department. Very concerned about this.*
- *Truly I feel new leadership will aid in a new growth of new memberships. A change to make it better is required.*
- *Due to my digestive disorder, I don't leave my house often, but I will follow along on fb for updates and news as this debate progresses. Thank you*
- *Unless the fire department becomes more transparent and works with the community, not against it, I would be in favor of coverage by a more qualified department. Survey was a great idea. It helps to involve the community and will also provide them with some much needed info on issues within the borough.*
- *Stop being so negative on Facebook, act professional.*
- *Move forward, keep up with the times. Get some youth blood in there.*
- *Hope this helps!*
- *I served in the fire dept. since the 1960s. I held every position including chief. I also spent many years working fundraisers. But the community has changed. All communities have changed. Little volunteer fire departments like West Mayfield can no longer survive today. Today we need firefighters who are well trained and able to do the job. Firefighting is very technical today and we need firefighters who know what they are doing. I think it is time to close down the fire department and go with Beaver Falls for the good of the entire community. If we have to add a fire tax to support this, so be it. I will gladly pay my fair share.*
- *Fire safety awareness and prevention are extremely important in any community. I haven't observed anything resembling that in our community in the 2 years that I've been here.*

- *I feel the WMVFD needs to be more open with the citizens. The answer to everything is not “come to a fire dept meeting.”*
- *I think the WMVFD in past years to present have gone without anyone to answer to. Now that citizens are more involved and questioning things, the WMVFD does not like it.*
- *I always ask if our firefighters are certified and exactly what they are able to do at a house fire, and are they capable of helping save lives in the event of someone being trapped in a fire.*
- *Just moved here]. Not enough to say.*
- *I think they should post information and let people know what’s going on in this community.*
- *Shouldn't the fire report be read at the Council meeting like the police report? What did the fire dept. do with the \$ from the railroad?*

FSRC Conclusions

The results of our community inquiry overwhelmingly support these key conclusions:

1. Citizens are very concerned about fire prevention and fire protection.
2. Citizens are frustrated with Council’s lack of oversight and authority over the fire service.
3. Citizens are calling for improvements to our community’s fire prevention and fire protection program.
4. Citizens have lost faith and confidence in the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, especially its leadership and staff capabilities.
5. Citizens are leaning toward removing and replacing the WMVFD as our current fire service provider.
6. Across the survey and during our conversations with borough citizens, nearly a third to one half admitted to not knowing enough about our fire protection and fire prevention program, including the fire service, to answer questions meaningfully. This suggests a concerning lack of public education and civic knowledge regarding fire prevention and fire protection issues in our community.
7. A majority of citizens we’ve encountered hold negative opinions about our fire prevention and fire protection program; moreover, we would characterize their mood as sad, disgust, and frustration that our fire-related public safety program has been so poorly managed by Council and the officers of the fire service.



Fire Service Ecosystem

The FSRC's second area of inquiry focused on our fire service ecosystem. To provide our study with context, it was important for us to better understand our municipal public safety surroundings; however, our inquiry was never meant to be an exhaustive study of municipal fire prevention and fire protection programs. Instead, we gathered information and data available from public records and publicly available sources such as fire department websites and social media platforms. However, the FSRC gathered its most insightful and useful information about our fire service ecosystem from interviews with various neighboring municipal fire officials.

At the end of this section, the FSRC provides a set of conclusions regarding our fire service ecosystem inquiry.

Our local Fire Service Ecosystem represents neighboring municipal fire departments that provide mutual aid to the borough on a regular basis or as necessary depending on the nature of emergencies.

The FSRC decided that it was important for us to get a sense of contrasts/comparisons or continuities/contradictions between West Mayfield and neighboring fire departments. We understand that each municipality's fire prevention and fire protection program is different, suited to the particular needs of their community. There are different economies of scale, as well as geographical and population differences. Some communities are more urban, others more rural, and some face firefighting challenges far different than our borough (e.g., heavy industries or large commercial structures and activities).

However, we must recognize that regardless of these differences the long-standing principle of "mutual aid" among fire departments necessitates a response from any or all of our surrounding fire services to manage emergency situations that arise in our respective communities. A fire department's operational readiness and ability to provide effective mutual aid can be measured by the quality of its command structure, able-bodied staff, training and qualifications, condition of apparatus and gear, and response time. Good working relationships and the ability to carry out effective communication between and among municipal fire departments matter, too.

The FSRC reached out to the leadership of our neighboring fire service providers to better understand these variables. We wanted to know their thoughts about the following:

- Effective leadership, rigorous training, expectations of qualifications/certifications.
- Standard operating procedures and criteria for job performance.
- Recruitment & retention of first responders, especially from within the community.
- Community engagement (through fire safety education programming, participation in social/civic activities).
- Financial support through community fundraising, governmental/corporate grants, municipal funding from taxpayers.

- Professional-level working relationships with local government, other fire departments and mutual aid.
- Thoughts about the future of local volunteer fire departments.
- Proactive planning and preparation for future challenges within the fire service.

Some of this information (especially quantitative data) we gathered through our own public records research. This inquiry was never meant to be a comprehensive, comparative “deep dive” examination of the operations of neighboring fire service providers. However, we do provide some comparative data in this report (see [Appendix](#)):

- 2020-2023 Incident Reporting
- 2022 Municipal Spending on Fire Services
- State Fire Commissioner Support
- ISO PPC Ratings
- Nonprofit Status

Note: The FSRC makes no judgment about this data. We present it here for informational purposes.

Our most salient findings of this inquiry came from our in-person, open-ended conversations with fire department leaders. Synopses of these conversations are presented here.

FSRC Conversations with Local Fire Departments

Big Beaver Borough

On May 28, FSRC met for two hours with Chief Adam Crepp at the Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Department (BBVFD). Chief Crepp stated that his department places emphasis on effective leadership, training, qualifications, and certifications. All officers have advanced certifications. All FFs have essentials and FF1 credentials. Staff undergoes 4-6 hours of training a month. When it comes to fighting structural fires, no FF is permitted to that type of fire without a specialized certification. All have Hazardous Materials Awareness certification.

When it comes to standards of operations and job performance, it's absolutely essential for a FD to have standard operating procedures (SOPs) and to train staff to these SOPs. Chief Crepp was clear, fire departments that do not have such standards and training cannot be trusted. They are unsafe.

Firefighters are usually very upfront and honest about their physical abilities and readiness to handle calls. It is unthinkable for a firefighter to put themselves or others into harm's way by not recognizing that they are not able-bodied.

When it comes to recruitment & retention of first responders, BBVFD struggles to find and retain staff just like every other department. As volunteers, the fire department is always understaffed during daytime hours.

BBVFD has a good working relationship with their community. It does a considerable amount of fire safety public education. It partners with the community and other local fire departments to hold several fundraising events throughout the year. However, Chief Crepp stated that relatively small levels of community financial support is his least concern. Small fundraisers will never be enough to adequately fund the needs of a modern day fire department. BBVFD is a registered 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit.

The fire department has a Facebook page, but no website.

Chief Crepp and the BBVFD have a good working relationship with municipal Council. Big Beaver Borough manages fire department matters within its Public Health and Safety Committee. Each month the Fire Chief turns in a "professional report" detailing calls, training, and finances. No current firefighters are members of Council.

Big Beaver is 18 sq. miles. Only half of the borough has hydrant coverage. There is an annual fire hydrant audit and fire hydrant tax assessment. Beaver Falls Fire Department is listed as automatic mutual aid for Big Beaver in part because BBVFD specializes in tanker services and water hauling. BBVFD does not have the type of Engine and rescue apparatus that Beaver Falls can supply. BBVFD does not have WMVFD on its mutual aid box call list, but they will request WMVFD if needed. This rarely happens.

Fire Chief Crepp stated that BBVFD and the borough are resolutely moving forward with plans to develop a regional fire district with New Galilee Borough, Koppel Borough, Eastvale Borough, and the City of Beaver Falls. Chief Crepp has the support from borough Council, especially Council President Michelle Joy who is actively involved in negotiating the Fire District organization process. Big Beaver is consulting with the state's Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to help with the process. There are government monies available for moving in the direction of a fire district. A fire tax will be necessary to support a fire district, but calculations suggest that residents in all participating municipalities will end up paying relatively similar millage rates. In other words, on a per capita basis, one community will not end up paying more than others to support the fire district. In our conversation, we learned that Chippewa and Darlington volunteer fire departments have decided not to participate in the fire district plan at this time.

City of Beaver Falls

On June 5, 2024, the FSRC and citizen Nora Soos met with Fire Chief Mark Stowe and Captain Crawford at the Beaver Falls Fire Department. Our conversation focused on the quality of fire service provided by Beaver Falls FD to its community, and the services it is able to provide other municipalities.

The BFFD is a "hybrid" organization, having both paid professional and volunteer staff. Both cadres are held to industry standard professional-level firefighting qualifications. A critical emergency service provided by the VFFD is medical Quick Response Service (QRS). BFFD's medical staff are trained and certified at the paramedic level, permitting them to administer

medications and to use advanced medical life saving equipment—that is carried on board their QRS vehicles.

Chief Stowe is clear: providing fire and QRS protection to citizens is their top priority. All other services are important and value-added, but secondary to their mission. BFFD does provide fire prevention public education, participates in community social events, assists with traffic control, and provides other emergency-related ancillary services as necessary. Chief Stowe and his staff also advise surrounding municipalities regarding fire prevention and fire protection ordinances and other FPFP matters such as fire codes and fire safety inspections.

BFFD would be able to provide seamless, full fire service coverage to West Mayfield at any time should the borough decide to outsource its coverage. Such direct contracted services with the City of Beaver Falls would be available in the near term to give the borough the time it might need to fully review the terms and conditions of joining the developing Beaver Falls Fire District.

Homewood Borough

On May 31, 2024, FSRC met with Fire Chief Alan DeSanzo of the Homewood Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD). We had a very informative conversation about the most critical issue for their department: staffing. HVFD can not get enough community volunteers to become firefighters. And their current staff, which is just a few individuals, is “aging out” as first responders. This factor, more than any other, is driving the department toward joining the developing fire district with Big Beaver, Beaver Falls, and Koppel.

The second greatest issue for the HVFD is an inability to replace its current firefighting apparatus as required by current standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Not only are these standards recognized by industry professionals, but the Commonwealth (and the fire insurance industry) considers these standards when it comes to funding local fire services. The condition of apparatus also affects the community’s ISO Public Protection Classification (fire insurance rating). In other words, local fire departments are increasingly held to account by NFPA, OSHA, and insurance industry standards when it comes to fire trucks and other fire fighting equipment.

Fire Chief DeSanzo (as well as Big Beaver Fire Chief Crepp) admitted that no amount of local fundraising (e.g., sausage breakfasts, bingo, fish fries, etc.) will be able to fund the necessary upgrades to firefighting apparatus in their departments. Most other local fire departments face this issue as well, he said.

Chief DeSanzo recognizes that HVFD will not and cannot sustain itself under these current staffing and apparatus deficits, and he sees no hope in the future except for outside help. Therefore, HVFD and borough leadership are moving toward joining the developing fire district. Admittedly, there are many legal and logistical details to work out, such as the disposition and use of the HVFD fire station and equipment within the district.

Also, the community and local government will almost certainly have to induce a fire tax to support the fire district. The residents of Big Beaver, Koppel, and Beaver Falls are also facing this reality. However, a tax structure or other funding scheme to support a fire district will have to be negotiated among the participating communities.

And finally, Chief DeSanzo recognizes that joining a fire district also brings with it the benefit of QRS to provide medical assistance. Chief DeSanzo echoed what we've been hearing from other sources about the severe availability crisis among EMT services, with wait times routinely exceeding an hour or more. Oftentimes, EMT crews are dispatched to Beaver Valley from as far away as New Castle, Cranberry, and Negley, Ohio.

Koppel Borough

On June 4, 2024, FSRC attended a fire district presentation by BFFD Chief Mark Stowe at the Koppel Council meeting. Council first received a presentation about the fire district in February 2024, but it asked if Chief Stowe could return with more financial information.

Chief Stowe presented Koppel Council with a specific breakdown of financial obligations, including a .33 mil fire tax increase each year for 3 years. A Council member had concerns that savings to the municipality (e.g., fire service costs) by joining the fire district would be offset by tax increases. Chief Stowe reframed the question this way: fire service costs are already rising for every municipality, exponentially. Support for the fire district mitigates and more evenly distributes these costs among all members. In return, municipalities in the fire district will actually see improvements in services, from staffing, response times, better trained and equipped first responders. Medical Quick Response Service (QRS) is a value-added benefit of the fire district, especially when our local EMT/ambulance services are critically understaffed.

The Koppel Volunteer Fire Department is fully in support of joining the fire district, but Council wanted to hold a town hall meeting in July for citizens to learn more about the fire district and to voice their concerns. Note: On July 2, 2024, Koppel Council voted unanimously to join the Beaver Falls Fire District.

New Brighton Borough

On June 10, 2024, the FSRC met for three hours with Deputy Fire Chief Paul Bock and Assistant Fire Chief and fire department President Eric Bock at their station house. At the initiation of Daugherty Township, DTVFD and NBVFD are in the process of merging. Both municipalities realize that this is an arrangement of necessity, not convenience. At this time, neighboring Pulaski Township has not committed itself to this union because of issues surrounding organizational identity and control over its own resources. Daugherty Twp. and New Brighton have jointly hired a consultant (former Fire Chief of Mt. Lebanon) to negotiate the merger.

Both Eric and Paul Bock are long-time members of the fire service, and both stressed the importance of having a healthy culture of respect and trust within the fire service. NBVFD emphasizes social cohesion among its members. This healthy organizational culture extends

outside the department and into the community. The department has a very good relationship with the community. The fire department helps with several charitable activities, many of which have nothing to do with the fire department, such as food drives or benefit dinners.

The reputation of the fire department is critical, not only within the department but on behalf of borough government and the community. Within the local fire service ecosystem, NBVFD has worked hard to represent themselves with professionalism, competence, discipline, and mutual cooperation. However, in their opinion some local fire departments do not reciprocate. These departments, which they did not name, tend to abuse the mutual aid system, relying on other departments to compensate for their shortcomings. "Some local departments just assume that others will bail them out," said Erick Bock, "That's just not how the system was designed. To take advantage of other fire departments is just not fair."

Instead of relying on traditional mutual aid agreements, NBVFD prefers negotiated intergovernmental cooperative agreements, where the terms and conditions of mutual aid are specified, expectations are communicated, and mutual aid assistance is more balanced.

The NBVFD has a very good working relationship with its local government. Transparency is essential when dealing with Council, says Eric Bock, who is also Daugherty Township's business manager. The fire department shares a lot of organization information with Council, such as financial records, operational activities, training records, and qualification readiness reports. In return, Council invites the fire department to work together on a budget that best addresses their organizational needs. One innovative collaborative program paid for by Council but administered by the fire department incentivizes firefighters to keep up with training, meetings, and responses to fire calls. For those firefighters with demonstrated professionalism, initiative and drive, there's a sizable financial reward distributed twice a year. Merit is part of their organizational culture.

Like every other fire service we've spoken with, the New Brighton Volunteer Fire Department is leaning into the future. They are doing so with the support of their local government, community, and like minded leaders within the local fire service ecosystem. "For decades most municipalities in our region—all over, in fact—have ignored problems facing volunteer fire departments," Paul Bock stated. "Sure, we all have money and staffing problems. But firefighting today is much more technically challenging and more dangerous because of the toxic chemicals and highly combustible materials used in home construction and other buildings."

Eric Bock added, "Years ago complete flashovers used to take on average about thirty minutes for everything in a room to totally combust. Now flashovers can happen in five or ten minutes. This is why we need fire departments that can respond as quickly as possible with the best apparatus and protective gear, and we need crews that are well trained and qualified. Anything less is a disaster waiting to happen."

Patterson Heights Borough

On June 5, 2024, FSRC met with Fire Chief Jason Medlin and five members of the PHVFD. In response to our contact survey prior to our meeting, Chief Medlin made this comment:

Before the fire service study, I contacted WMVFD to explore opportunities for collaboration. Since then, we have updated the box alarms and scheduled joint training sessions. I believe WMVFD can be a valuable asset to the area, and I am committed to continuing our work and collaboration with them in the future.

Chief Medlin is leading his department toward impressive improvements as a fire service and organization within the community. They were able to improve their PPC rating (i.e., ISO fire insurance rating) from 5 to 4. The department recently became a 501(s)(3), which opens up many new funding opportunities. The PHVFD has been working closely with borough Council to become QRS certified, enabling it to provide EMT services within the borough and through mutual aid to surrounding communities.

And in January of this year the fire department attained Bronze Level Status from the Office of the State Fire Commissioner, signifying that at least 50% of their staff are Pro-Board Firefighter I certified.

PHVFD is actively creating consistent joint training exercises with neighboring communities Patterson Twp VFD, White Twp VFD, and West Mayfield VFD. Chief Medlin confirmed that these four agencies have created a unified mutual aid emergency response alliance. All 4 departments are automatically called out to respond to emergencies in any of these municipalities.

Chief Medlin stated that the department has a very good working relationship with its local government. One of the FD members at our meeting is a sitting Council member. Each month, Chief Medlin ensures that a fire report is provided to Council and read into the record, appearing in the Council meeting minutes. However, members explained that their relationship with borough Council has not always been collegial. The relationship seems to have changed when certain elected officials left office.

PHVFD also stated that it has a good relationship with the community; citizens are generally supportive, but far too many people do not take an active interest in the fire department. Community volunteerism is very low, but this is similar to other municipalities.

Overall, Chief Medlin and his staff squarely recognize that they are a small community fire service that is understaffed and under-resourced like most others. The Chief takes a practical approach, understanding that they can and will make the most of available resources. Their equipment and apparatus may be aging, but they are committed to maintaining and extending its service life as long as it enables them to fulfill their mission.

However, along with every other fire service we've talked with so far PHVFD leadership recognizes that they have to lean into the future. Their fire service must change with the times. Technical upgrades are necessary. They can't ignore standards that are becoming increasingly professionalized and mandated. However, Chief Medlin and his FF staff reminded us that

changes will take time and considerable effort. Local governments and citizens need to be supportive of their fire departments, encourage respectful dialogue instead of focusing on faults, blame, accusations, and creating rancor.

Finally, we should recognize something remarkable from our conversation. The PHVFD staff expressed a deeply felt sense of duty, honor, commitment, and responsibility toward public service. Undoubtedly, this is part of the firefighters' creed, and we should acknowledge, value, and be thankful for it. We citizens benefit from their commitment to service, but so do fellow firefighters in the line of duty. "It doesn't matter what station number or name is on the back of your suit," said one PHVFD with over 40 years of service, "We're going to look after each other."

Note: On August 8, 2024, PHVFD became QRS certified.

FSRC Conclusions

The results of our fire service ecosystem inquiry overwhelmingly support these key conclusions:

1. Most of our neighboring fire service leaders are gravely concerned about the many evolving and intensifying challenges facing firefighters and emergency response professionals today.
2. Today's firefighting challenges pose increased risks to citizens' lives and property, as well as a new set of dangerous health and safety risks to first responders.
3. Rising to these challenges, our fire service ecosystem is undergoing fundamental transformation. Most fire service commanders (as well as their municipal leaders) are leaning into the future, proactively trying to meet these challenges of today—and the future.
4. Most fire service leaders are actively addressing a need for staffing that is better trained and qualified, more available, and more responsive within their communities.
5. Most fire service leaders are actively addressing a need to upgrade and modernize firefighting apparatus and equipment.
6. Although local fundraising is still important for fire departments, to meet critical needs and sustainability fire services must find external and more robust sources of support.
7. Most fire service leaders view their fire departments as a public service, and they're willing to work cooperatively and in partnership with their municipal leaders to provide the best possible emergency response capabilities.
8. Most fire service leaders are recognizing a need for structural change within the fire service ecosystem toward more effective intergovernmental cooperation agreements, increased resource sharing, intensified cross training, implementation of strategic emergency response protocols and standard operating procedures.
9. Some local fire departments have started formal unification of fire services (i.e., fire district).



Local Government

The FSRC's third area of inquiry focused on local government. We wanted to better understand the inner-workings of our municipal fire prevention and fire protection program, including public safety leadership, legislative and legal authority, duties and obligations, oversight and accountability, and fire-related ordinances and regulations.

We also wanted to review the formal fire service agreement between the municipality and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and any emergency response mutual aid agreements between the borough and neighboring municipalities. We obtained and reviewed West Mayfield's ISO Public Protection Classification rating, which assesses and evaluates the borough's overall firefighting capability and readiness (including our fire hydrant system and fire safety public education).

And finally, the FSRC wanted a complete accounting of municipal (i.e., taxpayers) financial and in-kind support for the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and other municipal fire prevention and fire protection expenditures.

Our research and fact-finding drew heavily upon public records such as municipal budgets, municipal annual financial audits, council meeting minutes, and RTKL requests for documents and information. To better help us understand these topics in more detail, the committee also held an FSRC Local Government meeting with elected officials and appointed officers of the borough. During June 2024, we invited the Mayor, Councilmembers, the Secretary-Treasurer, Code Enforcement officers, Solicitor, and the borough's Tax-Collector to a public meeting to answer a set of well defined questions (see [Appendix](#)). Unfortunately, several municipal officials did not attend our information-gathering session; those absent included all members of Council's Fire & Police Committee, the Chair of Finance & Litigation Committee, Solicitor, and the borough's Secretary-Treasurer. Of those non participating officials, only Councilmember Bill Heaton provided a written response to our Local Government inquiry (see [Appendix](#)).

At the end of this section, the FSRC provides a set of conclusions regarding our Local Government inquiry.

Authority of Council

By authority of Pennsylvania statutes and the Pennsylvania Borough Code, Council has executive power over municipal matters, including the provision of public safety and fire service protection for citizens. For reference, we cite the following:

Borough Code § 1202. Specific powers. The powers of the borough shall be vested in the council. In the exercise of any specific powers involving the enactment of an ordinance or the making of any regulation, restriction or prohibition, the borough may provide for enforcement and penalties for violations. The specific powers of the borough shall include the following:

(15) To adopt and enforce a construction code, a property maintenance code and a fire prevention code and exercise any additional reserved powers pursuant to Chapter 32A (relating to uniform construction code, property maintenance code and reserved powers).

(24) To enter into agreements with other political subdivisions, in accordance with existing laws, in making joint purchases of materials, supplies or equipment and in performing governmental powers, duties and functions and in carrying into effect provisions of 53 Pa.C.S. Ch. 23 Subch. A (relating to intergovernmental cooperation), and agreements with the proper authorities of municipal corporations, regional police or fire forces or other public safety or governmental entities created by two or more municipal corporations under 53 Pa.C.S. Ch. 23 Subch. A, either for mutual aid or assistance in police and fire protection or any other public safety services, or for the furnishing to or receiving from the municipal corporations or governmental entities police and fire protection or any other public safety services, and to make appropriations for public safety services. In connection with agreements for police or fire protection or any other public safety services, it shall not be necessary to advertise for bids or receive bonds as required for contracts under existing law. When an agreement has been entered into, the police, firefighters, fire police or any other public safety services of the employing municipal corporation or governmental entity shall have the powers and authority conferred by law on police, firefighters, fire police or any other public safety services in the territory of the municipal corporation which has contracted to secure the service.

(25) To make contracts of insurance, with any mutual or other fire insurance company, association or exchange, duly authorized by law to transact insurance business in this Commonwealth, on any building or property owned or leased by the borough.

(26) To provide for other insurance as follows:

(i) To appropriate an amount as may be necessary to secure insurance or compensation in accordance with Article VI of the act of June 2, 1915 (P.L.736, No.338), known as the Workers' Compensation Act, for:

(A) volunteer firefighters of companies duly recognized by the borough, by motion or resolution, killed or injured while going to, returning from or attending fires or while performing their duties as special fire police; and

35) To purchase or contribute to the purchase of fire engines and fire apparatus, boats, rescue and lifesaving equipment and supplies for the use of the borough for fire, rescue and lifesaving services, including community ambulance service, and to appropriate money for fire companies and rescue units located within the borough, including for the construction, repair and maintenance of buildings for fire companies and rescue units, and to acquire land for those purposes. Appropriations may include funds to establish, equip, maintain and operate lawfully organized or incorporated fire training schools within the county or regional firefighters' associations or an entity created pursuant to 53 Pa.C.S. Ch. 23 Subch. A for the purpose of giving instruction and practical training in the prevention, control and fighting of fire and related fire department emergencies to the members of fire departments and volunteer fire companies in any municipal corporation within this Commonwealth. Annual appropriations may also be

made to an ambulance service, or council may enter into contracts for use in providing community ambulance service.

(56) To ensure that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the borough by the means and to the extent determined by the borough, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services. The borough shall consult with fire and emergency medical services providers to discuss the emergency services needs of the borough. The borough shall require any emergency services organization receiving borough funds to provide to the borough an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before the borough may consider budgeting additional funding to the organization.

§ 1203. Reserved powers.

The council may make and adopt all ordinances, bylaws, rules and regulations not inconsistent with or restrained by the Constitution of Pennsylvania and laws of this Commonwealth as may be expedient or necessary for the proper management, care and control of the borough and its finances and the maintenance of peace, good government, safety and welfare of the borough and its trade, commerce and manufactures

Public Safety Leadership

While Council has ultimate responsibility for public safety, it is fitting to ask which public officials are specifically in charge of public safety, responsible for carrying out the duties and obligations of the borough's fire prevention and fire protection program.

There are many references to public safety duties and obligations found throughout Pa state statutes; the Borough Code; borough ordinances, council resolutions and motions; customs and practices, and intergovernmental agreements (e.g., Emergency Management, mutual aid). However, it is unclear as to which local government officials are explicitly in charge of carrying out such duties and obligations.

Fire Department Leadership

While Chapter 248 (Volunteer Fire Department) of borough ordinances generally defines the "duties of firemen," a public safety leadership role is actually defined in Chapter 1604 (Fire Prevention Code):

This chapter and the Code hereby adopted shall be enforced by the Volunteer Fire Department of the Borough. A report of the Volunteer Fire Department shall be made annually by the Chief and transmitted to Council. It shall contain all proceedings under this chapter and the Code hereby adopted, with such statistics as the Chief may wish to include therein. The Chief shall also recommend any amendments to this chapter which, in his judgment, are desirable. (Sect. 1604.02)

Council Leadership

While borough ordinances give the Fire Chief oversight and authority over the Fire Code and other matters as authorized by Council (e.g., the Open Burning Ordinance), the question arises as to which

local government entity provides oversight and authority over the “Volunteer Fire Department of the Borough” in particular and fire protection and fire prevention matters in general?

Given that the borough has no designated “public safety officer,” nor does it explicitly task the Fire Chief with this role, it is our estimation that leadership, oversight, and authority responsibility over all fire prevention and fire protection matters rests with Council’s Fire & Police Committee. The current committee consists of Lou Little (chair), Bill Heaton, and Jason Heaton.

Oversight and Accountability

Council’s primary method of providing oversight and accountability of fire prevention and fire protection matters is its Fire & Police Committee. Conventionally, the President of Council appoints three councilmembers to this committee. One member serves as the committee chair. Our research shows that the Fire & Police Committee lacks any formal description. There is no stated mission or defined goals and objectives. The committee chair and members lack any defined duties and obligations. Moreover, Council has set no formal standards of committee reporting of public safety activities, issues and concerns, budgetary/fiscal matters, or public safety readiness.

The FSRC notes that for many years members of the Fire & Police Committee have also been members of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. In fact, the current committee chair (Lou Little) is also the Fire Chief. Committee member Bill Heaton is a “Life Member” of the fire department. Committee member Jason Heaton is an active member of the fire department.

The FSRC finds that a disturbing conflict of interest exists in having Fire & Police Committee members tasked with providing oversight and accountability for the same organization they also operate, manage, and receive/expend public funds.

Public Safety Reporting

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of local government oversight and accountability is the public sharing of information. Such public reporting is the cornerstone of good governance. However, Council has set no formal standards of reporting for the Fire & Police Committee, such as conveying public safety activities, issues and concerns, budgetary/fiscal matters, or public safety readiness. It appears that Council’s only expectation of reporting is that the Fire & Police Committee provides a report at monthly Council meetings.

However, a review of Council meeting minutes between July 2019 and July 2024 reveals that more than 59% of the time the Fire & Police Committee failed to provide any report to Council. Moreover, these reports fail to provide any meaningful sense of the borough’s fire prevention and fire protection readiness.

Here is a verbatim record of Fire & Police Committee reporting:

2024-07 Report given (minutes not yet official)

2024-07 Fire & Police - Lou Little – Fire Calls – Accident on Steffin Hill with Station 44. DOA Lift assist with medic rescue. Our fire department was selected by 93.7 The Fan out of Pittsburgh. We are 1 of 50 Volunteer Fire Departments to receive funds from the 5 alarm marathon they held at Green tree VFD.

2024-06 Fire & Police - Lou Little – Fire Calls – Accident on Steffin Hill with Station 44. DOA Lift assist with medic rescue. Our fire department was selected by 93.7 The Fan out of Pittsburgh. We are 1 of 50 Volunteer Fire Departments to receive funds from the 5 alarm marathon they held at Green tree VFD.

2024-05 Lou – fire report handed in. Fire Calls answered: Report generated on 5/7/2024, Incident #2024-08, 3/1/2024, Patterson Ave. & W. 3rd St., Landing Zone, Incident #2024-9, 3/15/2024, 1000 Patterson Ave, Trees, Wires, & Transformer down, Incident #2024-10, 3/21/2024, Pulaski Two, Rehab assignment, Incident #2024-11, 4/7/2024, Sylvan Ridge Apts, Washer on Fire, Incident #2024-12, 4/7/2024, 24th Ave, CO Call, Incident #2024-13, 4/13/2024, 113 Boyd, CO Call. He [Mr. Little] would like barriers on top of creek to avoid a car accident from going into creek. [Note: The written report was not discussed, nor read into the record.]

2024-04 Fire & Police - Lou Little – None (not present at meeting)

2024-03 Fire & Police - Lou Little provided a report of the fire department activity [not read into the record] and it will be more detailed next month since this is something new and he's still trying to get everything set up. The fire department car cruise is scheduled for August 10th; a battle of the boroughs fire departments at the park in being planned.

2024-02 No Fire Dept. Report. [Note: West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department receives \$13,062 from the same grant, but it is not reported to council.]

2024-01 Mr. Bob Tate asked how the fire department spent money donated by council. Mr. Little responded that they used the money for the purchase of gear, paying the bills and making repairs. The fire department squad was destroyed by chemicals when taken to the train derailment in East Palestine. [Note: No annual fire department report given at Council meeting or read into the public record. 2023 Fire Dept. report obtained via RTKL request]

2023-12 Fire & Police- Ms. Harker-none

2023-11 Fire & Police- Ms. Harker-none

2023-10 Fire & Police- Ms. Harker-none

2023-09 Fire & Police – Halloween Trick or Treat will be on Tuesday, October 31 from six until seven thirty.

2023-08 Fire & Police – none

2023-07 Fire & Police – the fire department chain saw does not work and needs fixed. Lou said to have it sharpened.

2023-06 No Fire Report

2023-05 No Fire Report

2023-04 Fire & Police – the four firefighters who were there [at EP train derailment incident] have to have bloodwork, urine tests and physicals every month. There is a lot of paperwork involved.

2023-03 Fire & Police – the vehicles that were taken to the train derailment in East Palestine(squad truck and bus)have to be inspected and cleaned from top to bottom; all gear needs to be replaced. The four firefighters who were there have to have bloodwork and physicals. There is a lot of paperwork involved.

2023-02 Fire & Police –Little advised that the VFD Ladies Aux would NOT be doing a bake sale during the upcoming My primary election so the Centennial Cmte would be able to do so. He also said that the Beaver County Fire Police would be willing to assist with traffic control for the Centennial Celebration at the Park in August for a \$400 donation to the Beaver County Fire Police.

2023-01 Fire & Police – Year-end report – engine #1 481 gal. fuel, engine #2 66 gal. fuel; Squad – 219 gal. fuel; 128 gal. diesel. Five members are taking the fire fighter 1 exam.

2022-12 BLANK

2022-11 BLANK

2022-10 Fire & Police – Ms. Harker ISO insurance required all kinds of records and we were given a top rating after the records were reviewed. Halloween Trick-or Treat will be October 31 from 6 until 7:30.

2022-09 Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – none

2022-08 She [Ms. Harker] requested a letter that she can give to Representative Marshall to obtain new flags for the Vets's Memorial, Playground, Borough Building & Fire Department.

2022-07 Fire & Police – none

2022-06 Fire & Police – none

2022-05 [No council meeting held this month]

2022-04 Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – The ISO insurance inspection has been complete and the fire department received a rating of 6. In order to get a higher rating you must have paid fire fighters. The borough needs to adopt an international fire code and adopt an ordinance for it

2022-03 Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – everything is good at the fire department. She is getting information requested by ISO insurance. All fire calls are answered promptly.

2022-02 Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – open discussion fire department.

2022-01 Fire and Police – none. [Note: No annual fire department report, which is usually provided in January for the preceding year]

2021-12 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker none

2021-11 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker reported that the fire police helped with the Veteran's Day Parade and a funeral.

2021-10 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-09 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-08 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-07 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-06 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-05 Police and Fire – [Ms. Harker] She gave Mrs. Lansberry the fire department roster requested by the insurance company. The fire department has been checking fire hydrants and some of them are too tight and can't be opened. A letter was received by the fire department from Todd Rebich. According to a Times article, there are plans to build a crematorium on Ingrich Road.

2021-04 BLANK

2021-03 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-02 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2021-01 Fire and Police Ms. Harker gave a year-end report on the fire department. There were 67 fire calls answered by the fire department. Engine 1 - 326 miles, Engine 3 - 49 miles and the Squad 168 miles. A total of 108 gallons of fuel were used.

2020-12 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2020-11 Fire and Police - Ms. Harker reported that due to the inclement weather there were very few trick-or-treaters out on Halloween . . . Ms. Harker reported the fire department decided at its meeting to schedule Santa passing out candy to borough children for December 19th beginning at noon. Because of the COVID pandemic there will be no borough Christmas party this year. After a discussion, it was decided to increase the treats that are put in the bags for Santa to deliver to make Christmas a little better for our borough children since there will be no Christmas party . . . There have also been reports of . . . kids in the fire department parking lot at 3 in the morning. Police have been notified.

2020-10 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2020-09 [No council meeting held this month]

2020-08 [No council meeting held this month]

2020-07 Ms. Harker discussed the problem with the dogs using the fire hall parking lot as a bathroom area and the owners are not cleaning it up.

2020-06 Ms. Harker reported that a number of people are burning brush and said they are allowed to. Any complaints received about burning will be directed to the fire department –they will put out the fire and the police will be called.

2020-05 [No council meeting held this month]

2020-04 [No council meeting held this month]

2020-03 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2020-02 Fire and police - Ms. harker reported that there were 78 fire calls answered in 2019. Engine 1 logged 412 miles, the squad vehicle 97 miles and Engine 320 miles. The fire department used 151 gallons of fuel.

2020-01 Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2019-12 Ms. Harker reported that the fire department was called out at 1 a.m. for a flooding problem beginning at the Vets Club that continued down Patterson Avenue and flooded the tunnel. It seems that a beaver dam let loose. The tunnel had to be closed and the road patched and re-opened today. The manhole was also blown out.

2019-11 Fire & Police –Ms. Harker reported an accident on 37thStreet and that Halloween Trick or Treat was good.

2019-10 Fire and Police –Lou Little for Wendy Harker–Trick or Treat for West Mayfield will be on Thursday, October 31 from 6 until 7:30

2019-09 Ms. Harker reported that the fire department needed to purchase three batteries and a switch for the fire truck. The price is \$519.77. They used the borough's Auto Zone account and will reimburse them for \$519.77

2019-08 Ms. Harker reported that the fire department answered 54 fire calls. There was a tractor trailer that jackknifed on 43rd Street with some damage to property. The driver was cited. The department also flushed out and unclogged sewers from Boyd Avenue to Patterson Avenue and also High Street Extension.

2019-07 BLANK

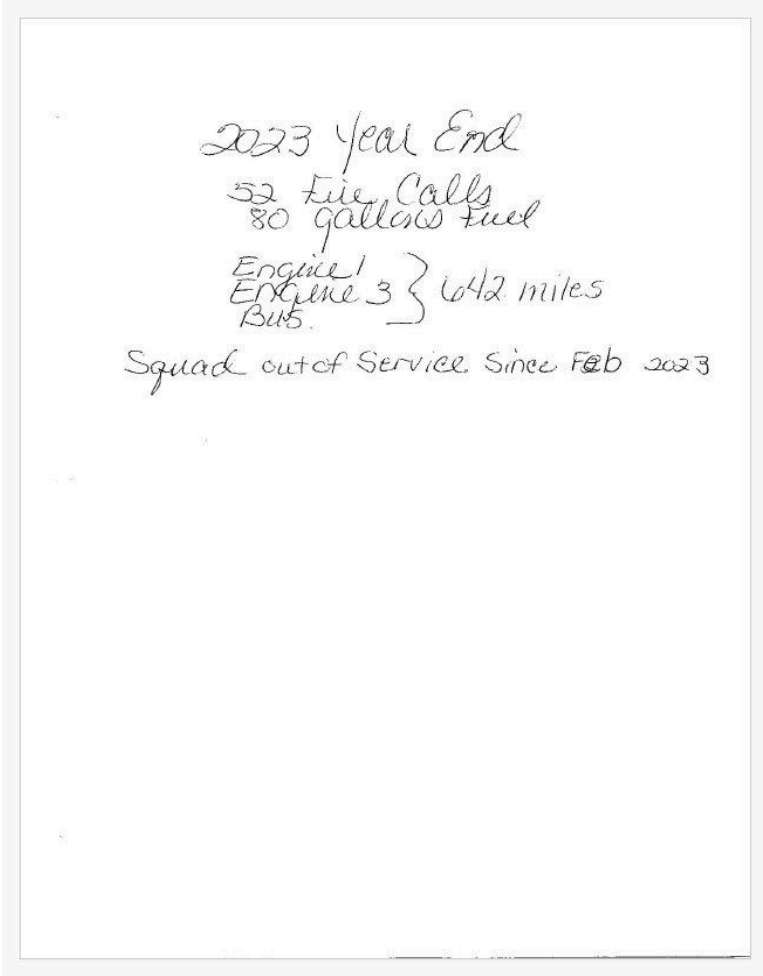
Annual Fire Department Report

As previously mentioned, Council has no official requirements or standards for monthly reporting from the Fire & Police Committee. However, by ordinance, "A report of the Volunteer Fire Department shall be made annually by the Chief and transmitted to Council. It shall contain all proceedings under this chapter and the Code hereby adopted, with such statistics as the Chief may wish to include therein." (Sect. 1604.02).

Here is a verbatim record of Annual Fire Department Reporting to Council sourced from meeting minutes (2019-2023). These reports, if provided at all, lack substantive information or usefulness similar to the monthly Fire & Police Committee Reports:

2024-01 [Note: No annual fire department report given at Council meeting or read into the public record. 2023 Fire Dept. report obtained via RTKL request, see below)]

2023-01 Fire & Police – Year-end report – engine #1 481 gal. fuel, engine #2 66 gal. fuel; Squad – 219 gal. fuel; 128 gal. diesel. Five members are taking the fire fighter 1 exam.



2023 Year End
52 Fire Calls
80 gallons Fuel
Engine 1
Engine 3 } 642 miles
BUS.
Squad out of Service Since Feb 2023

2022-01 [Note: No annual fire department report, which is usually provided in January for the preceding year]

2021-01 Fire and Police Ms. Harker gave a year-end report on the fire department. There were 67 fire calls answered by the fire department. Engine 1 - 326 miles, Engine 3 - 49 miles and the Squad 168 miles. A total of 108 gallons of fuel were used.

2020-02 Fire and police - Ms. harker reported that there were 78 fire calls answered in 2019. Engine 1 logged 412 miles, the squad vehicle 97 miles and Engine 320 miles. The fire department used 151 gallons of fuel

The FSRC finds reporting from both the Fire & Police Committee and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department to be unacceptably irregular, inadequate, and lacking substantive usefulness regarding public safety.

We reiterate the finding that it has been Council's common practice to appoint WMVFD members to sit on the Fire & Police Committee, leading to a crossbred level of substandard oversight and accountability reporting. However, the public record shows that no members of council, especially the President of Council to whom these reports are delivered, have formally raised concerns about inadequacy of oversight and accountability reporting from the Fire & Police Committee and the WMVFD.

The FSRC finds Council's ongoing negligent indifference toward these public safety reports to be very alarming.

Public/Community Communications

The FSRC was interested in the borough's public/community communications capabilities regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters. Here are our findings:

Internet/website: The borough has an official website. This enables the borough to provide universally accessible communication to anyone on the internet regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters. There is a dedicated page for "Emergency" information, including emergency news, emergency management announcements, emergency contact information, and maps of the borough. As requested by the borough's Emergency Management Coordinator, the website administrator creates special website posts (categorized as "public safety") regarding current emergency-related news and announcements.

Although contact information for the WMVFD exists on the borough's website, there is no dedicated page for the fire department or fire prevention and fire protection matters, nor was the website administrator ever asked by Council or the fire department to create one. However, as requested by the fire department or through the website administrators own initiative special website posts (categorized as "fire department news") have been created regarding current WMVFD news or fire safety and fire protection announcements. Since 2012, there have been

more than 70 posts of this type on the borough's website; however, they have been infrequent, sporadic, and not part of any coordinated public safety education program. Examples of the WMVFD promotional and fire safety posts include:

- Reserve Your Park Shelter Rental Today!
- All-U-Can-Eat Breakfast (more than 50 posts)
- Fire Department Benefit Concert
- Fire Dept. Increases Social Hall Rental Rates in 2024
- Fire Fighters Needed
- Fire Prevention Week: Cooking Safety
- Fire Prevention Week: Escape Planning
- Fire Prevention Week: Microwave Oven Safety
- Fire Prevention Week: Scald Prevention
- Fire Prevention Week: Smoke Alarms
- Santa Comes to West Mayfield!
- Support Our Local Firefighters
- The West Mayfield Fire Department is looking for 1st responders
- Think Fire Safety!
- West Mayfield Community Halloween Night (WMVFD safety patrols)
- West Mayfield Emergency Response Tip: Cold Weather Fire Safety

Social media platform: The borough has only one social media platform: "West Mayfield Borough, PA" is hosted on Facebook (category: public & government service, page ID: 302592403172589, creation date: August 6, 2012). The social media page occasionally posts fire prevention and fire protection news, but these efforts are infrequent, sporadic, and not part of any coordinated public safety education program.

Newsletter: The borough has no municipal newsletter.

Public Fire Safety Education Programming: The borough offers no fire safety education programming by way of any communication platform, except for an occasional fire safety post by the administrator placed on the website or social media page.

Public Reporting: The FSRC considers public reporting at Council meetings to be a very important communication channel for fire prevention and fire protection information. However, as we have noted elsewhere in this report neither fire department officers nor members of Council's Fire & Police Committee use these opportunities to provide substantive news and updates about fire prevention and fire protection.

Ordinances

Currently there are only three known ordinances related to fire prevention and fire protection. Other fire-related ordinances, resolutions, and motions may exist, but the borough lacks a searchable index of all local laws and legislation.

Part 2 Administrative, Chapter 2, Chapter 248: Volunteer Fire Department

- The ordinance is responsible for defining “duties of firemen” in the context of eligibility for “Workmen’s Compensation” insurance coverage.
- This section originated as “Ord. 92, passed 6-1-42” and stood as part of the recodified ordinances of 1976.

Part 16: Fire Prevention Code

- The ordinance responsible for designating a Fire Prevention Code and concomitant duties of the Fire Chief.
- It was last revised in 1970.
- It contains outdated reference to the American Insurance Association Fire Prevention Code.

Ordinance 101019 Open Burning

- This 2019 ordinance prohibits open burning in the borough & repeals original ordinance Chapter 660 Open Burning)

The FSRC has noted the following deficiencies with current borough ordinances as they relate to fire prevention and fire protection matters:

- Current ordinances are old, outdated
- Current ordinances are not unified, coherent, and comprehensive regarding modern fire prevention and fire protection matters
- Current ordinances do not provide for comprehensive public safety and FPPF strategic planning
- Current ordinances do not define and mandate Council's oversight authority and duties regarding public safety leadership and reporting
- Current ordinances do not define and mandate Council's fiduciary duties, including defining a public safety budget & appropriations process
- Current ordinances do not mandate a Fire Service Agreement, defining the legal, financial, and operational relationship between the municipality and its designated fire service (and Firemen's Relief Association)
- Current ordinances do not mandate and describe Council's oversight authority over public safety intergovernmental cooperation agreements, mutual aid agreements, Special Fire Police
- Current ordinances do not contain Act 93 Fire Escrow ordinance

- Current ordinances do not recognize and mandate the International Fire Code, as recommended by the ISO PPC audit
- Current ordinances do not incorporate the Burning Ban Ordinance and other “quality of life” regulations

The FSRC believes legislative deficiencies directly contribute to insufficient public safety strategic planning, low informational awareness, poor leadership decisions, administrative and financial mismanagement, and ineffective public safety performance and readiness.

Municipal Fire Service Agreement

The FSRC finds that no written Fire Service Agreement exists between the municipality and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department.

Through a RTKL request, we asked: Is there a formal agreement between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department defining the terms and conditions, duties and obligations of each party?

The FSRC was startled to learn that the Office of Borough Secretary-Treasurer has no documentation establishing or defining the current relationship between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry stated:

As to any information that I have on the fire department, I am afraid that the only thing I have on record is what is found in our codified ordinances. Unfortunately when I took over the position of secretary from Mr. Joseph Orosz, I didn't receive all of the records that I should have. I was given a filing cabinet with records and some old minutes books and that is all that I received. Some of the records that I had, I stored in the loft above the garage. At some point, Tommy Orosz, without authorization from anyone on council, decided to burn everything that was in the loft so any of my records that were in the loft were destroyed. (Source: FSRC email correspondence, March 13, 2024)

We recognize that it is not uncommon for parties to execute business agreements that are not in writing. However, even if parties agree “this is how it’s always been done,” the potential liability and risk exposure is very high without a clear understanding of the parties’ responsibilities and obligations under the contract’s terms and conditions.

The FSRC contends that without delay Council must require a formal written fire service agreement between the municipality and its current fire service provider.

Mutual Aid Agreements

Since 1989, the Borough of West Mayfield and all other municipalities in Beaver County have operated under a county-wide mutual aid agreement, sharing fire service and other emergency management

resources as necessary. During the July 2023 council meeting, Fire Chief Lou Little stated that he “works with five departments as mutual aid so there is always availability of firemen to answer calls.” During June 2024, Patterson Heights Borough Fire Chief Jason Medlin confirmed that the fire services of West Mayfield, White Township, Patterson Township, and Patterson Heights Borough had created a unified mutual aid emergency response alliance. All 4 departments are automatically called out to respond to emergencies in any of these municipalities.

During FSRC’s Local Government inquiry, we established that Council had no knowledge of this mutual aid agreement before the fact, had no role in negotiating its terms and conditions, nor did it ratify this new mutual aid agreement obligating the borough’s fire service resources. Because Council was not party to the creation of this mutual aid agreement, it did not have an opportunity to assess any potentially adverse operational or financial impacts upon the borough.

The FSRC questions if WMVFD unilaterally superseded its authority by entering into the automatic mutual aid agreement with three neighboring municipalities, effectively usurping Council’s authority under Borough Code §1202(24) to enter into intergovernmental agreements for fire services with other political subdivisions. Council already maintains a congruent right to formulate and ratify mutual aid agreements with respect to Emergency Management under Pa Title 35 §7504.

Locally, some municipalities such as Vanport Township, Hopewell Township, Potter Township have codified processes by which their communities may enter into intergovernmental fire service mutual aid agreements with other communities.

ISO Public Protection Classification Rating

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) evaluates public fire-protection services and classifies a community’s ability to suppress fires. ISO’s PPC program evaluates communities according to a uniform set of criteria, incorporating nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and the American Water Works Association. The Public Protection Classification review helps communities and their fire departments plan and budget for facilities, equipment, training, and fire safety public education needs.

A review of Council meeting minutes from March, April, and October 2022 reveals references to the borough’s most recent PPC audit:

- *March 10, 2022: “Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – everything is good at the fire department. She is getting information requested by ISO insurance.”*
- *April 14, 2022: “Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – The ISO insurance inspection has been complete and the fire department received a rating of 6. In order to get a higher rating you must have paid fire fighters. The borough needs to adopt an international fire code and adopt an ordinance for it.”*
- *October 13, 2022: “Fire & Police – Ms. Harker ISO insurance required all kinds of records and we were given a top rating after the records were reviewed.”*

Note: Based on ISO PPC documentation and the actual West Mayfield PPC audit results, we find the statement, “In order to get a higher rating you must have paid fire fighters,” to be false. Regarding the statement, “. . . we were given a top rating after the records were reviewed,” we find this to be false.

During March 2024, the FSRC requested a true and complete copy of the latest ISO PPC report from Fire Chief Lou Little. It became clear after a month that Fire Chief Little would not be forthcoming with the report, so the FSRC (with the formal assistance of the Mayor and the President of Council) requested and received a copy of the ISO PPC report from the organization that conducted the audit, Verisk. (A summary of West Mayfield’s PPC audit will be discussed below.)

At FSRC’s Local Government meeting, we asked borough officials if Council had ever requested or been provided with a copy of the ISO PPC audit report from the WMVFD or the Insurance Service Organization (Verisk). The answer was no. In fact, no borough official ever recalled seeing the actual report. Council was never briefed in detail by the Fire & Police Committee or the WMVFD about the report and its known public safety concerns and deficiencies. The FSRC notes that at our Local Government meeting, no representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present to answer our specific questions about the ISO PPC report. Moreover, these public safety officials were not present to discuss a possible corrective action plan to improve upon the ISO report’s shortcomings and weaknesses.

Summary of PPC Review for West Mayfield

Source: (PPC™) Summary Report,
West Mayfield, Pa, Prepared by
Insurance Services Office, Inc.,
Report Created April 16, 2024

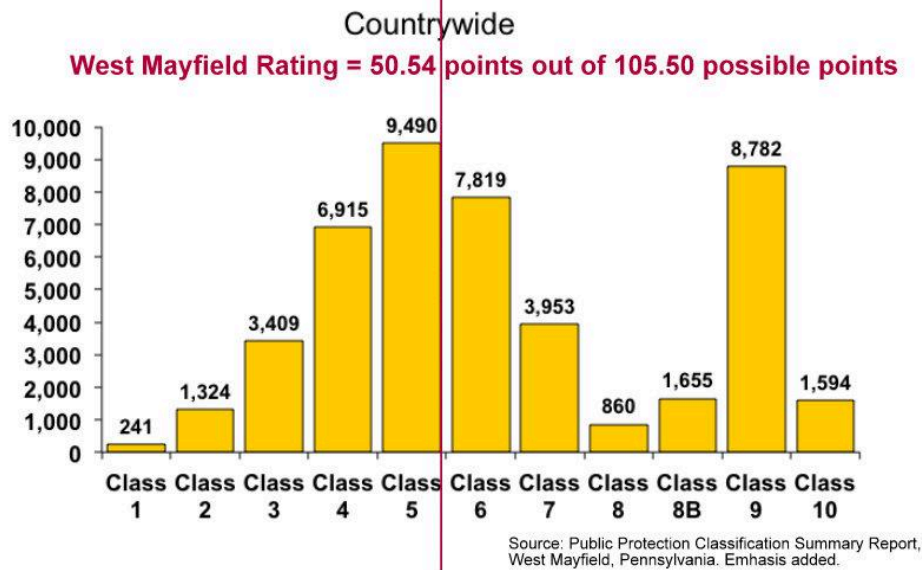
Summary of PPC Review for West Mayfield

FSRS Item	Earned Credit	Credit Available
Emergency Communications		
414. Credit for Emergency Reporting	2.55	3
422. Credit for Telecommunicators	4.00	4
432. Credit for Dispatch Circuits	2.91	3
440. Credit for Emergency Communications	9.46	10
Fire Department		
513. Credit for Engine Companies	4.41	6
523. Credit for Reserve Pumpers	0.09	0.5
532. Credit for Pumper Capacity	3.00	3
549. Credit for Ladder Service	0.61	4
553. Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks	0.25	0.5
561. Credit for Deployment Analysis	5.62	10
571. Credit for Company Personnel	1.59	15
581. Credit for Training	1.08	9
730. Credit for Operational Considerations	1.00	2
590. Credit for Fire Department	17.65	50
Water Supply		
616. Credit for Supply System	23.44	30
621. Credit for Hydrants	3.00	3
631. Credit for Inspection and Flow Testing	4.00	7
640. Credit for Water Supply	30.44	40
Divergence	-8.16	—
1050. Community Risk Reduction	1.15	5.50
Total Credit	50.54	105.5

Final Community Classification = 05/5X

Distribution of PPC Grades

The 2017 published countrywide distribution of communities by the PPC grade is as follows:



The current ISO PPC report shows West Mayfield's PPC rating is Class 5, which is considered average on a scale from 1 (best) to 10 (worst). A rating of 5 is both the median and most common rating fire departments received. In general, urban areas tend to have better PPC scores than rural areas, as urban fire departments are closer together and often receive better funding. However, our community scored 50.54 out of 105.5 possible points, placing it near the below average classification.

The ISO PPC rating is based on five main criteria:

- 50% comes from the quality of our local fire department, including staffing levels, training, and proximity of the firehouse.
- 40% comes from the availability of water supply, including the prevalence of fire hydrants and how much water is available for putting out fires.
- 10% comes from the quality of our area's emergency communication systems (911).
- An extra 5.5% comes from community outreach, including fire prevention and safety courses.
- Proximity to the nearest fire station (generally less than 5 driving miles from the nearest fire station is acceptable).

As we can see from the report summary (see below), West Mayfield's emergency communications capabilities (95% of scale) and fire hydrant water supply system (76% of scale) scored well. However, our weakest scores (suggesting serious deficiencies) are associated with the WMVFD (scoring just 35% of scale) and the community's risk reduction efforts (scoring just 21% of scale).

Of particular note, we draw attention to the WMVFD's very low "Credit for Training" score (1.08 out of 9 points). Our research shows that according to state mandated auditing between 2012-2022, the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association spent just 6.6% of its "fire services" funding on training—a total of \$3,097 over 11 years. On average, this amounts to just \$282/year devoted to training. This small amount of WMVFRA support dedicated to training firefighters is even less significant considering the organization's total spending of \$77,673 between 2012-2022.

When it comes to the responsibility of Council and the WMVFD to ensure public safety readiness and to mitigate fire risks to life and property, the FSRC wonders why the ISO PPC audit findings have not been discussed and debated publicly, leaving the possibility for corrective action off the table. We again raise concerns about improper public safety oversight and accountability when fire department members also serve on Council's Fire & Police Committee.

Local government's missed opportunity for improving public safety and lowering fire insurance costs is as unconscionable as it is astounding. As the ISO auditors make it clear to whomever reads the first page of West Mayfield's ISO PPC report:

A community's investment in fire mitigation is a proven and reliable predictor of future fire losses. Statistical data on insurance losses bears out the relationship between excellent fire protection – as measured by the PPC program – and low fire losses . . . In general, the price of fire insurance in a community with a good PPC grade is substantially lower than in a community with a poor PPC grade, assuming all other factors are equal.

Special Fire Police

During July 2024, the WMVFD submitted to the borough a roster of active members who are designated "Beaver County Fire Police." We take it to mean that fire department leadership considers these members designated as Beaver County Fire Police to be official "Special Fire Police Officers" representing and acting on behalf of the WMVFD, and therefore accorded all rights, privileges, and benefits as such.

The FSRC contends that so-called "Beaver County Fire Police" officers are not lawful surrogates that may act in the stead of "West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department Special Fire Police Officers" duly confirmed by the Borough of West Mayfield.

The Pennsylvania Fire Police Association states:

A Pennsylvania Special Fire Police Officer is a member of a volunteer fire company empowered by the municipality to handle emergency situations throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We are trained to address those situations and difficulties the public faces in encountering them. [Emphasis added]

Legally, the matter of special fire police is addressed in Pa CS Title 35, Chapter 74 Volunteer Firefighters, Subchapter D Special Fire Police. Section 7433 of this statute states that "An entity under

section 7431 (relating to scope of subchapter) may nominate any of its members as special fire police.” However, Section 7434 of this same statute mandates the legally required municipal confirmation process of special fire police: “Special fire police nominated under this subchapter shall, before they enter upon their duties, be confirmed by the mayor of the city, the mayor of the borough or town, the chairman of the board of commissioners or supervisors of the township or the chief executive officer of a home rule municipality, as the case may be.”

Special Fire Police Officers hold significant power. Section 7435 of the statute states:

When confirmed and sworn and displaying a badge of authority, special fire police shall have full power to regulate traffic and keep crowds under control at or in the vicinity of any fire on which their companies are in attendance and to exercise other police powers necessary to facilitate and prevent interference with the work of firemen in extinguishing fires. They shall also have the police powers necessary to perform their duties when functioning as special fire police at any function, event or parade conducted by and under the auspices of a volunteer fire company, or another event, function or parade conducted by an organization other than a volunteer fire company, provided that the request to perform these duties is made by the governing body of the city, borough, town, township or home rule municipality in which the event will be conducted, or when accidents, floods or any other emergencies require performance of traffic-control and crowd-control duties. The duties may be performed without prior request from the governing body until the arrival of proper State, city, borough, town, township or home rule municipality police authority and thereafter subject to direction of the police authority until the emergency no longer exists. A person functioning as special fire police and performing a duty under any of the conditions in this subsection shall be deemed to be performing the duties of his employment.(b) Identification.--Fire police performing the duties under this subchapter shall be identifiable by, at minimum, the wearing of a distinctive armband, hat, uniform or insignia.

It was unclear to the FSRC if any of WMVFD’s designated Special Fire Police Officers had, in fact, been duly confirmed (taken an oath of office) by the Mayor of West Mayfield—as required by state law. The FSRC submitted a RTKL request seeking “any records documenting or information pertaining to members of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department nominated and confirmed by the Mayor (or any other elected borough official) to be Special Fire Police Officers.” Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry responded:

Regarding the members of the fire department who are special fire police officers - the members who are fire police are Beaver County Fire Police and were not confirmed by either the mayor or any other council member.

We note that in previous discussions of this matter at Council meetings WMVFD Chief Little emphatically stated that the Mayor had no authority to swear in Special Fire Police. Moreover, the WMVFD contends that sworn members of the Beaver County Fire Police (a non-governmental nonprofit organization) are considered bona fide Special Fire Police Officers.

Based on a full reading of Pa CS Title 35, Chapter 74 Volunteer Firefighters, Subchapter D Special Fire Police, and in consideration of the facts, the FSRC contends that the WMVFD's assumptions are incorrect. Moreover, without proper credentialing of Special Fire Police Officers the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, the Borough of West Mayfield, and taxpayers carry some level of legal and financial risk exposure (e.g., Special Fire Police are insured by the borough's liability and workers compensation insurance policies).

Infrastructure

Fire Hydrant Water System

Unlike other municipalities, the Borough of West Mayfield does not own and manage public safety infrastructure, such as fire houses or training facilities. However, we note that the borough's fire hydrant water system is an essential municipal public safety infrastructure asset. Fire hydrants exist for one purpose, to aid in fire suppression. In fact, "water supply" is the ISO PPC audit's second most critical area of concern predicting "a community's ability to suppress fires."

Our findings show that the borough has 38 fire hydrants, each tested and maintained by the Beaver Falls Water Authority which charges the borough \$100/hydrant or \$3,800 annually.

Note: In May 2024, FSRC requested and received multi-year fire hydrant data from Beaver Falls Water Authority. The 2022 BFWA Hydrant testing and maintenance report is included in this review (see [Appendix](#)). The cost of testing and maintaining the borough's fire hydrant water system is a bona fide fire-related public safety expenditure. We did find that "Hydrant Service" is factored into the annual municipal budget under "public works/water system." However, we also found that very little attention is given to the municipal fire hydrant water system as a public safety concern. In other words, neither the Fire & Police Committee nor the WMVFD make regular status reports regarding the condition and readiness of the municipal fire hydrant system.

The ISO PPC audit rated our water system 30.44 out of 40 possible points, showing deficiencies such as irregular and weak water flow capacity among all the hydrants and infrequency of inspections. If our fire hydrant system were an object of concern for our Fire & Police Committee, we would expect these noted deficiencies with our vital fire hydrant system to be part of a public safety corrective action. They are not. Despite these deficiencies being known to the WMVFD and fire department members who also sit on Council's Fire & Police Committee, this public safety concern has not been addressed.

Leased Parking Lot

The only other noted infrastructure concern of the borough is the parcel of land currently used by the WMVFD as a parking lot. This property is owned by the borough, but leased to the fire department for \$1/year. This property has an assessed value of \$39,600. It is exempt from real estate property taxes. As currently used by the WMVFD, this land is a public safety infrastructure asset used for vehicle and equipment storage, as well as a location for some training activities.

The FSRC submitted a RTKL request seeking to obtain the lease agreement currently in effect between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department regarding the "parking lot" behind the fire station (i.e., the .25 acre plot #57 ED PL, PARID: 520020116000)." Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry responded:

I was unable to find any lease agreement between the borough and the fire department. As long as I have been the secretary/treasurer, the annual rental has been \$1.00. I am afraid that the agreement was made before my appointment and was never included in the records that I received from Mr. Joseph Orosz. I also reached out to the fire department to see if there was a lease agreement. I spoke to several members and the general consensus is that there was a verbal agreement between the fire department and borough council members granting the department the right to lease the "parking lot" for 100 years for \$1.00 per year. Unfortunately no one was able to give me a date of this verbal agreement because they were not members at the time.

The FSRC recognizes Council's prerogative to offer this land to benefit the WMVFD. Also, we take no issue with the stated rental price of \$1/year. However, we do raise a concern that no written lease agreement exists between the borough and the WMVFD. Without a written agreement specifying terms and conditions, the municipality exposes itself to unnecessary legal and financial risk.

Moreover, our reading of Pa CS 68 Real and Personal Property (aka Statute of Frauds Act) dictates that this real estate agreement, regardless of how long it has been executed as an oral agreement, is not legally valid unless it is in writing.

Public Education - Fire Safety & Fire Prevention

An essential part of the ISO PPC audit's assessment of "community risk reduction" is public fire safety education. This includes an evaluation of public fire safety education personnel training and qualifications, as well as public fire safety education programs. According to the audit, for Community Risk Reduction, West Mayfield scored just 1.15 out of a possible 5 points. For Public Safety Fire Education, West Mayfield scored 5 out of 40 possible points.

By any measure, this finding is an unequivocal public safety failure. Although the ISO PPC audit considers community risk reduction to be the responsibility of fire departments, the FSRC contends that municipal officials also share this responsibility—and blame if their communities lack sufficient public fire safety programming.

Currently, neither Council nor the WMVFD provide for any fire safety public education programming for the community.

Our Community Survey asked about "Fire Prevention: Public education and community outreach efforts." A majority of citizens (54%) think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community.

In his written response to this finding, Councilmember Bill Heaton (also a member of the Fire & Police Committee, former Fire Chief, and Life Member of the WMVFD) stated:

While I agree that public education could improve. Where is the FD to get the funds to support this education program?

FSRC citizen co-chair Kevin Farkas responded:

It's a fair question . . . we will be asking if council has ever offered a grant to the WMVFD for the express purposes of fire safety public education? Perhaps I've missed something, but I don't see any evidence of this in the public record. Moreover, I see no evidence in the public record demonstrating that the WMVFD has ever asked council for such monies for this purpose--not \$1,000, not \$100, not \$10 to be spent on fire prevention safety. When FSRC focuses on the WMVFD . . . there will be a chance for leadership to explain why they've never asked for such monies, but they have asked council for hundreds of dollars to buy candy that Santa hands out to children each December. We will also ask if WMVFD Santa has ever handed out some kids-oriented fire safety materials (e.g., inexpensive small coloring books, stickers, posters, booklets, etc.) along with their candy treat bags, courtesy of our local government.

Unfortunately, neither Councilmember Bill Heaton nor other members of Council's Fire & Police Committee attended FSRC's Local Government meeting where our specific questions for borough officials included:

Is there any public record, such as motions, resolutions, or discussions in Council meeting minutes that demonstrate Council's commitment to fire safety public education? The FSRC can find no such evidence.

Does the borough have a designated public safety spokesperson or communications coordinator for such purposes? The FSRC can find no such evidence.

Citing evidence of West Mayfield's extremely poor community risk reduction efforts—as found in the ISO PPC audit, lacking in local government, and confirmed by community opinion—the FSRC underscores a dire need for municipal-directed and funded fire safety public education.

Regional Fire Study - Refusal to Participate

During May 2021, Council had an opportunity to participate in an in-depth regional fire study, which was voluntary, nonbinding, and without cost to the municipality. However, the Pa Department of Community & Economic Development (the study's authoring agency) required Council to provide a formal "letter of intent" authorizing the municipality's participation in the study. According to Council meeting minutes:

Mr. Dan Woodske, a supervisor with Chippewa Township was present to discuss a study that the township is looking into. It is a study with the state that will provide assistance to the

service to residents provided by the fire departments. A letter of intent to join the study is necessary and a resolution would have to be passed to implement the program if it is adopted. Ms. Harker asked if it was a study to form a regional fire department.

[Ms. Harker stated] This had been discussed previously regarding police protection and it is something that doesn't work well for us. Mr. Heaton asked about the cost to be involved. We would not be required to be a part of it once the study has been completed. His only request right now is for joining the study. No decision was made at this time but West Mayfield is not interested in participating.

Council members present at the meeting were President Bill Heaton, Lou Little, Wendy Harker, Bruce Harris, Eli Kosanovich, and Michele McNeely. Monica Sepp was not present. We note that councilmembers Heaton, Little, Harker, Harris, and Kosanovich were also members of the WMVFD at this time.

We underscore the fact that Council refused to participate in the regionalization study without entertaining a proper and formal motion, discussion, or vote on the matter. As such, citizens were not given a chance to ask questions or voice their views regarding what might be gained by participating in the Regionalization Study.

In reading the study, which was released in March of 2023, we conclude that Council and citizens could have benefited greatly by participating in the Regionalization Study, which analyzed and evaluated a wide range of fire service strengths, weaknesses, competencies, and capacities of the fire departments and municipalities who did participate in the study. As the report explains:

The City of Beaver Falls, Big Beaver Borough, Chippewa Township, Darlington Township, and Patterson Township requested technical assistance from the Department of Community and Economic Development, Governor's Center for Local Government Services, to carry out a feasibility study for a regionalization of the fire service . . . The main objective of all interviewed was to prepare for the future with the increase in call volume and expenses, coupled with the decline of volunteer personnel.

The procedures used to conduct this study included a review of fire service literature including journal articles, national standards, ISO ratings, best management practices, and other various manuals and information available via the Internet. In addition to the initial meeting to develop a scope of services, the consultant visited each fire department and interviewed the chief officers.

Throughout the study, the fire departments were requested to provide specific information related to workload, policies and procedures, practices of each service provider, and staffing. For comparison purposes, the consultant relied on benchmarks and "best practices" developed by the:

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - The National Fire Protection Association is an organization that develops, publishes, and disseminates timely consensus standards covering all areas of fire safety. These NFPA standards have been adopted by numerous state and federal authorities, giving them the force of law. In Pennsylvania, NFPA standards are recognized as voluntary consensus standards.

Insurance Services Office (ISO) - The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is a manual containing the criteria ISO uses in reviewing the firefighting capabilities of individual communities. The schedule measures the major elements of a community's fire-suppression system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification (PPCTM). For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the information provided by the fire departments and their officials is accurate and complete.

The intent of this report is to improve the organization, operations, deployment, and management of the fire departments. The primary focus of this report is the future of fire service delivery to the residents of the municipalities involved.

We conclude that Council's disinterest in the Regionalization Study was a serious error in judgment regarding public safety. At least, Council should have brought the matter to a formal vote after hearing the views of citizens. Instead, Council's actions appear to have reinforced negative community sentiment that Council is run by a cabal of self-interested fire department members.

Misuse of Dyed Diesel Fuel

At the April 11, 2024 Council meeting, the issue of misusing dyed diesel fuel in WMVFD vehicles was addressed:

President Bob Tate reported that he had spoken with Mark Stowe at the Beaver Falls fire department. Off-road diesel should not be used in fire trucks. The fire department should go to Sheetz to buy diesel fuel and turn in the receipts to the borough.

Until April 2024, WMVFD had been using diesel fuel from the borough's diesel stores. Council ended its direct in-kind diesel support to the WMVFD because the borough's diesel is the dyed, off-road type. WMVFD may still purchase diesel and present receipts to the borough for reimbursement.

Users of dyed diesel fuel do not pay liquid fuels taxes. According to Pa 75 CS § 9019(c), dyed diesel fuel is not to be used on public highways. These fuels are commonly used in construction and farm equipment and other machinery typically not used or permitted on roadways. Emergency vehicles such as fire trucks used on roadways are not exempt; they must not use dyed diesel fuel. However, according to the Pa Department of Revenue:

The PA Liquid Fuels and Fuels Tax, under section 9017(b)(2), allows volunteer fire, rescue and ambulance squads to petition Board of Finance & Revenue, located in the Department of the Treasury, for a refund of the tax paid on fuel consumed in such operations. Petitions must be

filed for the year ended June 30 by the following September 30 in accordance with Department Regulation found at 61 Pa. Code 315.6.

In order to claim the refund, volunteer fire companies and ambulance squads must register and receive an account number from the Treasury Department. Once the company registers, it will each year automatically receive the forms to claim their refund.

The FSRC is not aware of any such petitions for fuel tax refunds filed by the WMVFD, either before or since April 11, 2024—the date Council explicitly prohibited the fire department from using the borough's dyed diesel stores in its fire department road vehicles. There is nothing in the public record regarding this fuel tax rebate, which could yield cost savings for the fire department and/or the municipality who would otherwise, we presume, pay retail rates for diesel fuel—costing taxpayers unnecessarily.

Moreover, the FSRC points out that at the April 11, 2024 Council meeting, it became publicly known that the officers of the WMVFD and Councilmember Bill Heaton (member of Council's Fire & Police Committee and member of the WMVFD) had prior knowledge that the borough's dyed diesel fuel was being used in fire department road vehicles and that this use was not permitted under law.

Although the official meeting minutes do not document the following exchange, an audio recording of the April 11, 2024 Council meeting obtained by Concerned Citizens of West Mayfield memorializes this finding:

Council President Bob Tate: It was brought up to my attention, the fire department . . . our diesel fuel is off road.

Councilmember Bill Heaton: Yep.

Council President Bob Tate: It's not allowed to be in . . .

Councilmember Bill Heaton: Well it's not supposed to be anyway.

Council President Bob Tate: Yeah

Councilmember Bill Heaton: They've been using that for years, ever since I've been in the fire department.

Council President Bob Tate: Right. I just, I just heard that, and I knew that. I mean, I knew that you guys have been getting it back here, but I never realized that it was off-road fuel. So we're going to have to, we're going to have to stop that, and you guys are going to have to . . .

Councilmember Bill Heaton: I knew that was coming.

Council President Bob Tate: . . . get your fuel from . . .

Councilmember Bill Heaton: I knew that was coming.

Council President Bob Tate: Why is that?

Councilmember Bill Heaton: 'Cause I knew it was coming. I told them guys wait until they find out about the fuel and they're gonna stop that, too.

Council President Bob Tate: Well, we're not stopping it. I just, you're just gonna have to get your receipt and give it to Pat. Go down to Sheetz. It's illegal.

Councilmember Bill Heaton: That's gonna be expensive.

Council President Bob Tate: Well, you're only using 80 gallons a year. How many, how . . . you're not, you're not going to be . . .

Councilmember Bill Heaton: Well, that's fine. I'll tell 'em. I'll pass the word.

Council President Bob Tate: I mean, it was brought up to me and I'm, I . . .

Councilmember Bill Heaton: Yeah, I know who brought it.

Council President Bob Tate: But ah, it's illegal, so.

It is not within the scope of the FSRC's mission to render a legal opinion on this matter, nor are we qualified. However, the factual record would seem to support an allegation that certain municipal public safety officials willfully and knowingly misused taxpayers' resources.

Suppressing Public Safety Concerns Regarding WMVFD Competency

On April 4, 2022, Fire Chief Mark Stowe of the Beaver Falls Fire Department sent a letter of dire concern to Council President Lou Little (et. al.) describing numerous issues regarding the management of a house fire incident that took place in the Borough on April 1, 2022 (see [Appendix](#)).

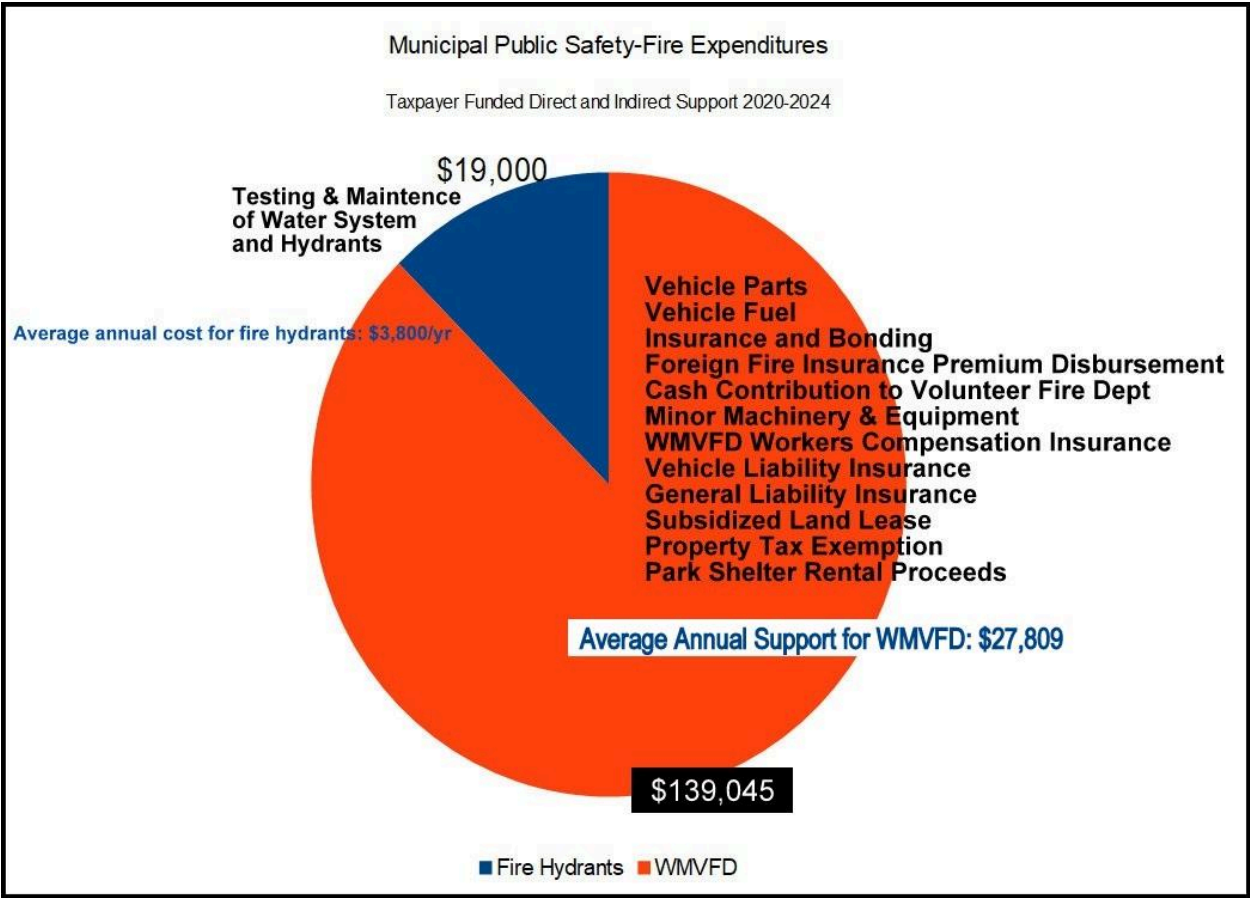
The FSRC does not have the expertise to address the technical concerns raised by Fire Chief Stowe, however, as a career fire service professional we take his issues at face value; to say the least, they are disturbing.

A search of Council meeting minutes shows that Council President Lou Little (also Fire Chief of the WMVFD) never brought Chief Stowe's letter to the attention of Council for a public safety discussion. Moreover, Wendy Harker (Chair of the Fire & Police Committee, Asst. Fire Chief of WMVFD) failed to bring this letter to the attention of Council.

It is reasonable for the FSRC to assume that Council President Lou Little and Fire & Police Chair Wendy Harker purposefully withheld Fire Chief Stowe's letter of concern from public view (and scrutiny). Additionally, we cannot explain why other Borough officials on the recipient list also failed to bring this letter to the attention of Council and the public.

Municipal Support

The FSRC examined municipal support for fire prevention and fire protection by examining financial records and fiscal practices. In particular, we focused on items commonly categorized as “Public Safety-Fire” expenditures. However, we found that some bonafide FPFP expenditures were not categorized as such. Examples include costs for the borough’s fire hydrant water supply system, workers compensation insurance costs for WMVFD staff, and liability insurance for fire department vehicles. We included these heretofore “hidden” expenditures in our financial analysis—which generally provided a five-year lookback (2020-2024) using public records.



Overview: Budgeted vs Actual Spending for Fire Prevention & Fire Protection

WMVFD: Vehicle Parts

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 0.00	\$ 441.00
2021	\$ 0.00	unknown
2022	\$ 0.00	unknown
2023	\$ 0.00	unknown

2024	\$ 0.00	TBD (YTD)
Total	\$ 0.0	\$ 441.00

WMVFD: Vehicle Fuel – Gasoline

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 300.00	\$ 0.00
2021	\$ 300.00	\$ 0.00
2022	\$ 150.00	\$ 106.00
2023	\$ 150.00	\$ 49.00
2024	\$ 150.00	\$ 481.00 (YTD)*
Total	\$ 1,050.00	\$ 636.00*

*Note: Updated September 19, 2024. Municipal diesel fuel reimbursement to WMVFD: \$480.77 (Aug)

WMVFD: Insurance and Bonding

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 5,561.00
2021	\$ 5,600.00	\$ 5,747.00
2022	\$ 5,800.00	\$ 5,960.00
2023	\$ 6,140.00	\$ 6,188.00
2024	\$ 6,300.00	\$ 6,365.00 (YTD)
Total	\$ 29,340.00	\$ 29,821.00

WMVFD: Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Distribution

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 4,900.00	\$ 5,138.00
2021	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,646.00
2022	\$ 4,600.00	\$ 5,529.00
2023	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 5,596.00
2024	\$ 5,500.00	\$5,674.00 (updated 2024-09-20)
Total	\$ 25,400.00	\$ 26,583.00

WMVFD: Cash Contribution to Volunteer Fire Dept

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00
2021	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00
2022	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
2023	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
2024	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,500.00 (YTD)
Total	\$ 30,500.00	\$ 30,500.00

WMVFD: Minor Machinery & Equipment

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
2021	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 0.00
2022	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,500.00

2023	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 0.00
2024	\$ 1,500.00	TBD (YTD)
Total	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 3,000.00

WMVFD: Fire Dept. Workers Compensation Insurance

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	unknown	\$ 6,957.00
2021	unknown	\$ 7,717.00
2022	unknown	\$ 7,818.00
2023	unknown	\$ 9,398.00
2024	unknown	\$ 9,717.00 (YTD)
Total	unknown	\$ 41,607.00

WMVFD Vehicle Liability Insurance

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	unknown	\$ 1,094.00
2021	unknown	\$ 1,108.00
2022	unknown	\$ 878.00
2023	unknown	\$ 923.00
2024	unknown	\$ 972.00 (YTD)
Total	unknown	\$ 4,975.00

WMVFD General Liability Insurance

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	unknown	\$ 383.00
2021	unknown	\$ 388.00
2022	unknown	\$ 392.00
2023	unknown	\$ 390.00
2024	unknown	\$ 390.00 (YTD)
Total	unknown	\$ 1,943.00

Municipal: Water System / Fire Hydrants

Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 3,800.00
2021	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 3,800.00
2022	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 3,800.00
2023	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 3,800.00
2024	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 3,800.00 (YTD)
Total	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 19,000.00

5 Year Municipal Expenditures for Public Safety-Fire

	WMVFD	WMVFD	TOTAL	TOTAL
Year	Budgeted	Actual Spending	Budgeted	Actual Spending
2020	\$ 15,700.00	\$ 24,217.00	\$ 19,500.00	\$ 28,017.00

2021	\$ 15,900.00	\$ 23,106.00	\$ 19,700.00	\$ 26,906.00
2022	\$ 20,550.00	\$ 32,177.00	\$ 24,350.00	\$ 35,977.00
2023	\$ 23,190.00	\$ 32,446.00	\$ 26,990.00	\$ 36,246.00
<u>2024</u>	<u>\$ 16,950.00</u>	<u>\$ 27,099.00(YTD)*</u>	<u>\$ 20,750.00</u>	<u>\$ 30,899.00(YTD)*</u>
Total	\$92,290.00	\$ 139,045.00*	\$ 111,290.00	\$158,045.00*

Note: *Updated 2024-09-20. Between 2020-2024(YTD), there is a 40% difference between what the borough budgeted in support for the WMVFD (as per line items listed under “Public Safety-Fire”) and what it actually spent.

Explanation of Public Safety-Fire Expenditures

Vehicle Parts

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council’s discretion.

Vehicle Fuel – Gasoline

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council’s discretion.

Of all the Public Safety-Fire expenditures reviewed by the FSRC, the vehicle fuel subsidy is the most problematic in terms of accounting. We have identified the following issues:

- The fuel subsidy is incorrectly labeled; it is for both gasoline and diesel fuel (which was usually taken directly from municipal stores at the borough maintenance facility).
- The borough’s fuel allocation to the WMVFD is budgeted as a dollar amount (e.g., \$300/yr, \$150/yr), but WMVFD reports fuel usage in terms of gallons used. Without knowing the price per gallon for gasoline or diesel fuel, it is impossible to determine what this fuel subsidy is actually costing taxpayers.
- The WMVFD does not report fuel usage on a monthly basis. This information (expressed as gallons used) is usually provided in the fire department’s annual report to Council, but these reports are inconsistent, irregular, incomplete, and sometimes the WMVFD provides no report to Council.
- If and when provided, WMVFD fuel usage reporting is inconsistent with verifiable financial records. For example, in 2022 the borough budgeted \$150 for “Vehicle Fuel-Gasoline.” Actual spending data show that the fire department was only reimbursed \$106 for fuel usage that year (borough check #2183 to "West Mayfield Fire Department" for "Reimburse for Gasoline [budget allowance])." However, the WMVFD’s 2022 year-end report shows they used 766 gallons of gasoline and 128 gallons of diesel fuel. Using historical fuel industry data for Beaver County, Pa. the average price of gasoline was \$4.03 per gallon in 2022. The average price of diesel fuel was \$6.53 per gallon. Therefore, we can estimate the monetary value of fuel used by the

WMVFD to be \$3,923 (\$3,087/gasoline, \$836/diesel). This amount far exceeds the 2020 budgeted amount of \$150 and the 2020 reimbursement amount to the fire department of \$106. Moreover, a review of Council meeting minutes shows that the peculiar bookkeeping around this public safety expenditure escaped the attention of the Borough Secretary-Treasurer, the Finance & Litigation Committee, the Fire & Police Committee, and all of Council. As such, it is impossible to know if the bizarre 2022 fuel usage/expenditure reporting for the fire department can be explained by poor accounting practices, a lack of oversight controls, and/or the misappropriation of municipal resources (i.e., theft).

- A review of municipal financial records between 2020-2024 for the WMVFD fuel allocation raises further doubt that the accounting is true, correct, or meaningful. We get some understanding and insight as to why from Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry. In her response to the FSRC's RTKL request seeking actual spending for the WMVFD municipal fuel allotment, Ms. Lansberry stated:

For 2020: \$0.00 (these figures are as documented in my 2020 General Fund ledger.) It is possible that receipts were not turned in to me properly. All Sheetz receipts are to list what the purchase was for and I show none for the fire department. It is not my responsibility to determine what the fuel was used for and if it's not properly noted, it does not get credited to the proper account. I have requested numerous time to include which code should be used.

For 2021: The 2021 ledger lists no expenditures by the fire department. It is possible that receipts were not turned in to me properly. All Sheetz receipts are to list what the purchase was for and I show none for the fire department. It is not my responsibility to determine what the fuel was used for and if it's not properly noted, it does not get credited to the proper account. I have requested numerous time to include which code should be used.

For 2022: As previously noted, it is not my responsibility to determine which account was used for fuel at Sheetz.

For 2023: [\$106 Is this the actual expenditure for 2022?] Yes it was. As previously noted, it is not my responsibility to determine which account was used for fuel at Sheetz.

For 2024: Because the department is no longer able to use the diesel fuel from the borough's tank, the expenditure has been increased profoundly: \$376.11 YTD for diesel fuel purchased at Sheetz. This amount and any future expenditures will have to be reimbursed to the fire department.

Note: Council meeting minutes for April 2024 state, "President Bob Tate reported that he had spoken with Mark Stowe at the Beaver Falls fire department. Off-road diesel should not be

used in fire trucks. The fire department should go to Sheetz to buy diesel fuel and turn in the receipts to the borough.”

We point out that for 2024 Council only budgeted \$150 for the fire department’s annual fuel allotment; by mid year (July) the fire department had exceeded this budget limit. Moreover, in the public record we find no advisory from the Borough Secretary-Treasurer, the Finance & Litigation Committee, or the Fire & Police Committee alerting Council that the WMVFD had already exceeded this budget item by 250%. By year’s end, it is conceivable that the WMVFD could exceed its budgeted allotment by 500%, costing taxpayers far more than what had been expected.

Insurance and Bonding

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council’s discretion.

The borough provides "insurance & bonding" protection for the WMVFD through the insurance carrier, Volunteer Firemen's Insurance Services (VFIS), specializing in emergency service organizations. In response to a RTKL request regarding the borough's obligation to provide liability insurance for the WMVFD, the Borough Secretary-Treasurer stated:

I do not have the answer to that question - are we obligated to provide liability insurance? I have gone through my records and found nothing to document such an obligation. If there was such an obligation, the ordinance or any documentation was either not handed down to me by the previous secretary or it was in the boxes of files that were stored in the loft of the garage and burned by a borough employee without our permission to do so.

However, an answer to whether the borough is obligated to provide insurance and bonding benefits to the WMVFD is likely found in Pa CS Title 35 Volunteer Firefighters, Section 7403 Insurance and compensation:

A city, borough or township may expend out of the public funds of the municipality an amount necessary to secure insurance or compensation for volunteer firemen killed or injured while going to, returning from or attending fires in the municipality or territory adjacent thereto.
[Emphasis added].

Therefore, such an expenditure is discretionary but not obligatory by statute such as the required workers compensation insurance coverage for firefighters.

Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Tax Distribution

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax fund (administered by the State Auditor General) but passed on to the West Mayfield Firemen’s Relief Association. This benefit/expenditure is not at Council’s discretion.

"Foreign fire insurance" refers to fire insurance purchased by Pennsylvania residents from a company that is not incorporated in the state. The tax funds Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations (VFRAs), which use the money to pay for insurance to protect volunteer firefighters, buy fire equipment, and cover training expenses. The tax is distributed to municipalities based on the proportion of fire protection services provided by paid and volunteer firefighters. Municipalities that are only served by volunteer firefighters receive the tax, which they then pay to the fire department's relief association fund (i.e., a passthrough of earmarked monies). As of April 15, 2024, Pennsylvania imposes a 2% gross premiums tax on foreign fire insurance companies for business conducted in the state.

Technically, foreign fire insurance tax distributions are not municipal expenditures from the General Fund, however typical municipal budgeting and accounting conventions treat it as such. In our view, this practice is misleading and incorrect.

Foreign Fire Insurance Premium Funding for WMVFD (2006-2023)
(Sources: WMVFR Audits, Municipal Financial Audits)

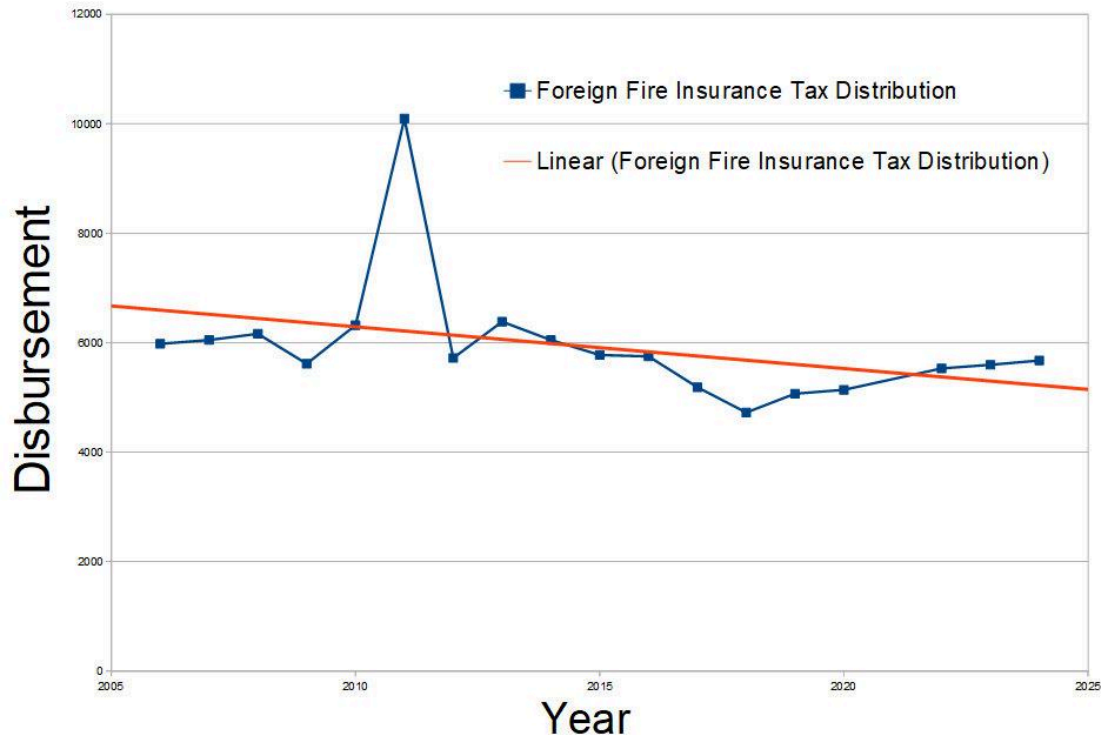
2024: \$ 5,674 (updated 2024-09-20)	2018: \$ 4,723	2012: \$ 5,720
2023: \$ 5,596	2017: \$ 5,185	2011: \$ 10,095
2022: \$ 5,529	2016: \$ 5,749	2010: \$ 6,319
2021: \$ 4,646	2015: \$ 5,775	2009: \$ 5,614
2020: \$ 5,138	2014: \$ 6,049	2008: \$ 6,162
2019: \$ 5,067	2013: \$ 6,383	2007: \$ 6,048
		2006: \$ 5,979

19 year total: \$105,855. Yearly Average: \$5,571 (updated 2024-09-20)

The graph below shows a downward trend of Foreign Fire Insurance funding over 18 years. The overall decrease in this funding source should be a concern for borough officials, but this funding source itself, which is guaranteed by state statute, is not threatened.

Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Disbursements (State Aid)

Annual Disbursements to WMVFD: 2006 to 2024



Cash Contribution to Volunteer Fire Dept

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council's discretion.

The Borough of West Mayfield grants an annual cash award to the WMVFD. This amount is typically \$3,500, but it has varied. This expenditure is reflected in the Public Safety-Fire budget and municipal annual financial audit. However, find no evidence that grant from taxpayers has ever been formulated using objective criteria such as demonstrable need. Moreover, we also find that Council has never stipulated conditions regarding these funds, such as spending restrictions or accountability reporting requirements.

Minor Machinery & Equipment

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council's discretion.

Fire Dept. Workers Compensation Insurance

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is not at Council's discretion.

Only qualified WMVFD members are eligible for workers compensation insurance coverage according to borough ordinance Chapter 248 Volunteer Fire Department, Sect. 248.01 Duties of firemen; workmen's compensation and Pa CS Title 77 P.S. Workers' Compensation §1031:

(a) In addition to those persons included within the definition of the word "employee" as defined in section 104, 1 "employee" shall also include:

(1) members of volunteer fire departments or volunteer fire companies, including any paid fireman who is a member of a volunteer fire company and performs the services of a volunteer fireman during off-duty hours, who shall be entitled to receive compensation in case of injuries received while actively engaged as firemen or while going to or returning from a fire which the fire company or fire department attended including travel from and the direct return to a fireman's home, place of business or other place where he shall have been when he received the call or alarm or while participating in instruction fire drills in which the fire department or fire company shall have participated or while repairing or doing other work about or on the fire apparatus or buildings and grounds of the fire company or fire department upon the authorization of the chief of the fire company or fire department or other person in charge or while answering any emergency calls for any purpose or while riding upon the fire apparatus which is owned or used by the fire company or fire department or while performing any other duties of such fire company or fire department as authorized by the municipality or while performing duties imposed by section 15, act of April 27, 1927 (P.L. 465, No. 299), 2 referred to as the Fire and Panic Act;

(f) The term "members of volunteer fire departments or volunteer fire companies" when used in this article shall mean any of the following:

- (1) An active volunteer firefighter who responds to emergency calls.*
- (2) An individual appointed as special fire police under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 74 Subch. D 5 (relating to special fire police).*
- (3) An officer or director of a volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company.*
- (4) A participating member of a volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company who provides necessary operational support to the volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company but does not respond to emergency calls. Operational support includes maintaining the station and equipment, acting as trustee, organizing fundraisers, providing information technology support and assisting with recruitment and other administrative tasks, if the operational support activity is conducted on a regular basis for the benefit of a volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company as approved at the beginning of each policy year by the authority, organization or municipality purchasing workers' compensation insurance for the volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company.*

The term does not include a social member of a volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company.

(h) The term “social member” of a volunteer fire department, volunteer fire company or volunteer ambulance corps when used in this article shall mean a member of the organization whose class of membership is social in nature and is primarily intended to facilitate fraternization with other members of the organization or access to social amenities and social events offered by the organization, whether or not the member occasionally provides unpaid operational support to the organization.

On July 19, 2024, the FSRC submitted a RTKL request for the 2024-2025 WMVFD workers compensation insurance eligibility roster. According to information we received from the Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry, there have been no WMVFD workers compensation claims filed between the years 2020-2024(YTD).

The following fire department members were submitted to the borough for taxpayer funded workers compensation insurance coverage:

- Lou Little (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Wendy Harker (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Imogene Harker (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Scott Maxwell (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Matthew Starr (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Denise Sabella (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Ray Evans Sr. (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Jamie Hoskinson (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Ray Evans Jr. (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Hayden Boniphant (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Matt Drabick (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Jason Heaton (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Michael Caler (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Eli Kosanovich (WMVFD Admin Support)

Each member's eligibility status has not been tested using fire department incident activity logs, training records, volunteer logs, or other such documentation. Therefore, we cannot confirm the statutory eligibility of the WMVFD roster, i.e., that each named person is an active volunteer firefighter who responds to emergency calls, appointed as special fire police under 35 Pa.C.S. Ch. 74 Subch. D 5, an officer or director of a volunteer fire department, or a participating member of a volunteer fire department who provides necessary operational support to the volunteer fire department or volunteer fire company but does not respond to emergency calls.

As such, we take the legitimacy of the WMVFD roster at face value, mindful that according to the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, it is a crime to misclassify job classifications for the purpose of workers compensation insurance coverage.

[Vehicle Liability Insurance](#)

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council's discretion.

On July 11, 2024, B. J. Gianguillo, President H.A. Thompson, stated that the borough pays for liability (no collision) insurance coverage for fire department vehicles. At the July Council meeting, Mr. Gianguillo updated the list of fire department vehicles covered with liability insurance (no collision) by H.A. Thompson company:

- 1971 LaFrance Pumper
- 1996 International Engine
- 2012 E450 Rehab Bus
- 2000 Command Vehicle Pick Up (added)
- 1989 Ford Squad (removed)

We note that Mr. Gianguillo recommended raising deductibles to save the borough money. The FSRC also wonders how the borough might also save money by regularly reviewing insurance needs/coverage and obtaining comparative price quotes from other insurance carriers.

The FSRC submitted a RTKL request for a cost breakdown of Fire Apparatus (Vehicle) Insurance premiums for the years 2020-2024. These data are in the spending tables above.

[General Liability Insurance](#)

This taxpayer-funded expenditure only benefits the WMVFD. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This benefit/expenditure is at Council's discretion.

The FSRC submitted a RTKL request for a cost breakdown of insurance premiums paid by the borough on behalf of the WMVFD for the years 2020-2024. We were unaware of this liability coverage. These data are in the spending tables above.

[Subsidized Property Lease](#)

This lease of tax-payer owned property is a value-added benefit to the WMVFD. It is a quasi-expenditure of the borough. This benefit/expenditure is at Council's discretion.

[Property Tax Exemption](#)

The local property tax exemption is a value-added benefit to the WMVFD. It is a quasi-expenditure of the borough. This benefit/expenditure is not at Council's discretionary.

[Proceeds from Community Park Shelter Rental Concession](#)

The park shelter rental concession is a value-added benefit to the WMVFD. It is a quasi-expenditure of the borough. This benefit/expenditure is at Council's discretion.

For many years the borough has granted the park shelter rental concession to the WMVFD; all proceeds derived from shelter rentals would be kept by the fire department. A search of Council

meeting minutes shows that the WMVFD has never provided Council with a financial report or any indication as to how the fire service benefitted from the proceeds generated from the tax-payer owned community park. The record also shows that Council has never required the fire department to produce an accountability report. Note: as of February 2024, Council rescinded the agreement (which was not in writing) and awarded the concession to the Parks and Recreation Board.

[Water System / Fire Hydrants](#)

This taxpayer-funded expenditure benefits the entire municipality. Funds are sourced from the municipal General Fund. This expenditure is not discretionary.

FSRC Local Government Meeting

On June 19, 2024, FSRC held a public meeting with elected and appointed borough officials to field questions regarding the role of local government in fire prevention and fire protection matters. Here we present a full account of this public meeting and our findings.

There were 17 in attendance at this meeting, including committee members, citizens, and the following borough officials:

- Mayor Licia Cogley
- Council President Bob Tate
- Councilmember Jacob Tate
- Councilmember Janet Helbig
- Councilmember Jeffrey Seybert
- Code Enforcement Officer Tina Lampus
- Tax Collector Kathy Brewer

The following officials did not attend the FSRC Local Government meeting:

- Councilmember Bill Heaton (Fire & Police Committee, Emergency Management Coordinator)
- Councilmember Jason Heaton (Fire & Police Committee)
- Councilmember Lou Little (Chair, Fire & Police Committee, WMVFD Fire Chief)
- Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry
- Solicitor Joe Budicak

In our invitation letter (see [Appendix](#)), we stated that the purpose of this meeting is to further our fact-finding efforts and to better understand issues regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters pertaining to local government. Our local government inquiry is focused on the following areas:

Leadership	ISO Public Protection Classification
Legislative & Legal Authority	Infrastructure
Duties & Obligations	Special Fire Police
Oversight & Accountability	Workers Compensation Insurance
Ordinances & Regulations	Municipal Financial & In-Kind Support
Fire Service & Mutual Aid Agreements	Emergency Management Integration

Civic Engagement & Public Education

We also stipulated that the meeting would be open to the public; participation was voluntary, but attendance would be noted; and because our focus is on fact-finding, there would be no open discussions or debating apart from the scope of our program. We also noted that the meeting was not to be considered a regular or special Council meeting; there would be no deliberating agency business or taking official action (voting) on any issue.

Based on our research, the FSRC committee developed a specific list of questions for borough officials. As a professional courtesy, we sent all officials a list of questions and topics in advance of the meeting (see Appendix). The FSRC also advised officials that they might find it helpful and informative to review our current research regarding local government and other areas of inquiry. We encouraged their comments regarding the accuracy and completeness of any information we've documented at [FSRC Online](#).

We note that of the borough officials who did not attend FSRC's Local Government Meeting, Councilmember Bill Heaton is the only government official to provide a written response to our inquiry (see [Appendix](#)). Councilmember Bill Heaton is a long-time member of Council's Fire & Police Committee. He is also the West Mayfield Emergency Management Coordinator. Moreover, Mr. Heaton is a 38-year veteran of the WMVFD, former Fire Chief, and current Life Member. We think it is important to include Councilmember Heaton's emailed remarks (along with commentary by FSRC citizen co-chair Kevin Farkas) as Mr. Heaton's comments are useful in FSRC's preponderance of the evidence.

The following is a summary of findings from the FSRC Local Government Meeting:

Borough Ordinances

Does Council have any comprehensive plan to update and recodify borough ordinances, especially those related to public safety? If so, what would be the timeline?

Finding: Currently, Council does not have a comprehensive plan or timeline to recodify borough ordinances.

Would the Ordinance Committee manage a recodification project?

Finding: The Ordinance Committee seems to be the appropriate body to manage recodification. Many others would have to be involved as well.

What recommended changes or amendments to the public safety ordinances would be favored by the Fire & Police Committee?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question.

What recommended changes or amendments to the public safety ordinances would be favored by other Council members, other committees, and other borough officials such as the Emergency Management Coordinator, Code Enforcement team, Fire Chief?

Finding: Neither the Emergency Management Coordinator (Bill Heaton, also a sitting member of the Fire & Police Committee) nor the WMVFD Fire Chief (Lou Little, also the chair of the Fire & Police Committee) was present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Those present were unsure of what specific changes or amendments are needed, but all agreed that the borough's ordinances do need to be updated, especially those concerning public safety.

Fire Service Agreement

Does any borough official or officer of the fire service know of and have access to a written service agreement between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department?

Finding: No officer of the fire service was present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No official present was aware of any written service agreement between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department.

As per a public records request, the Office of Borough Secretary-Treasurer has no documentation establishing or defining the current relationship between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry stated, "As to any information that I have on the fire department, I am afraid that the only thing I have on record is what is found in our codified ordinances. Unfortunately when I took over the position of secretary from Mr. Joseph Orosz, I didn't receive all of the records that I should have. I was given a filing cabinet with records and some old minutes books and that is all that I received. Some of the records that I had, I stored in the loft above the garage. At some point, Tommy Orosz, without authorization from anyone on Council, decided to burn everything that was in the loft so any of my records that were in the loft were destroyed." (Source: FSRC email correspondence, March 13, 2024).

If currently no written fire service agreement exists defining the legal terms, conditions, operational duties, and financial obligations of the working relationship between the municipality and the WMVFD, would the Solicitor recommend the drafting of such a contract?

Finding: The Solicitor was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question.

Mutual Aid Agreements

Has Council vetted (read, reviewed, and approved) any specific mutual aid agreements created by or entered into by WMVFD and other municipal fire services?

Finding: No official present has ever read, reviewed, and approved any specific mutual aid agreements created by or entered into by WMVFD and other municipal fire services.

Are the Fire and Police and Finance & Litigation Committees aware of any such agreements?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. The chair of the Finance & Litigation Committee (Jason Heaton) and member Lou Little were not present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Committee member Janet Helbig stated that she was not aware of any mutual aid agreements coming before the committee.

Is the Solicitor aware of any such mutual aid agreements? If so, are these agreements legal and proper?

Finding: The Solicitor was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question.

Real Estate

Regarding borough owned property plot #57 (PARID: 520020116000) currently used as WMVFD's rear parking lot, is there a lease agreement between the borough and the WMVFD?

Finding: No official present at the meeting had ever read, reviewed, and approved any lease agreement regarding this parcel of land.

Fire Prevention Code

Has Council taken any legislative action regarding the 2022 fire department and ISO insurance inspection recommendation to adopt an international fire code?

Finding: No official present at the meeting was aware of any action taken regarding the 2022 recommendation to adopt an international fire code.

Does the Fire & Police Committee work with the fire service provider to regularly review and update if necessary the borough's Fire Prevention Code?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No official present had any knowledge of such reviews, but it was generally agreed that these reviews should be conducted on a regular basis.

Currently, what fire prevention code is used by the borough's code enforcement team?

Finding: The borough's code and zoning enforcement team relies upon the UCC, borough ordinances, the Pa Borough Code (C.S. Title 8), and other applicable state statutes and regulations as related to fire prevention. Zoning Enforcement Officer Tina Lampus informed the committee that Borough Ordinance Chapter 1604 designates the American Insurance Association Fire Prevention Code (1970).

ISO Public Protection Classification

Does the borough require from the WMVFD or the insurance organization (Verisk) a current, complete, and unabridged copy of the ISO PPC report?

Finding: Council does not request to receive a true copy of the ISO PPC report provided to the WMVFD. No official present had ever seen this report. No one present recalled hearing a summary report of the ISO audit from the Fire & Police Committee (see March, April, October 2022 Council meeting minutes).

Has the Fire & Police Committee ever reviewed and evaluated the ISO PPC report, communicated these findings to Council, and offered corrective action plans to improve upon the report's shortcomings and weaknesses?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No official present recalls any discussion about a corrective action plan to improve upon the ISO report's shortcomings and weaknesses.

Municipal Leadership, Authority, Oversight Duties - Council's Fire & Police Committee

Is there a formal, written committee description that defines mission and scope, powers, duties, and obligations of the Fire & Police Committee?

Finding: Council does not have a written committee description that defines mission and scope, powers, duties, and obligations of the Fire & Police Committee. No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question.

What are the qualifications of Council members serving on the Fire & Police Committee, especially the chair?

Finding: Council does not have any stated qualifications for anyone serving on the Fire & Police Committee. No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question.

What are the specific duties and responsibilities of the Fire & Police Committee chair?

Finding: Council does not have any defined specific duties and responsibilities of the Fire & Police Committee chair? No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Is it permissible for citizen representatives to serve on the Fire & Police Committee?

Finding: No official present opposed the idea of citizen representatives serving on the Fire & Police Committee. However, the Solicitor would have to provide legal counsel as to

permissibility. No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Professional Reports & Confirmation of Public Safety Readiness

Does Council have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for monthly Fire & Police Committee reports?

Finding: Council does not have any written policy regarding requirements and expectations for monthly Fire & Police Committee reports. No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Beyond the ordinance requirement for a mandatory annual report of the Volunteer Fire Department to Council, does Council have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for the annual fire department report?

Finding: Council does not have any written policy regarding requirements and expectations for annual fire department reports. No officer of the fire service was present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Does Council have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for monthly and annual Emergency Management reports?

Finding: Council does not have any written policy regarding requirements and expectations for monthly and annual Emergency Management reports. The Emergency Management Coordinator (Bill Heaton) was not present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Public Education & Communication

Is there any public record, such as motions, resolutions, or discussions in Council meeting minutes that demonstrate Council's commitment to fire safety public education?

Finding: No official present is aware of any legislative initiatives or commitments to fire safety public education.

Does the borough have a designated public safety spokesperson or communications coordinator for such purposes?

Finding: There was general consensus that in times of emergency, the Mayor, Council president, and the Emergency Management Coordinator would speak on behalf of the borough. Kevin Farkas (borough website and social media administration) stated that no borough official has ever asked for administrative access (e.g., credentials) to the official website or Facebook page.

Confirmation of West Mayfield Special Fire Police

For those WMVFD members currently serving as special fire police, does the borough have a record of confirmation(s) by the current Mayor or past Mayors?

Finding: Mayor Cogley has never confirmed WMVFD special fire police officers. No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Budget & Finances - Budgeting Process - Appropriations

How does the borough assess, evaluate, and prioritize identified, need-based financial and in-kind support for our fire protection and fire service needs?

Finding: Council mostly relies on the advice and financial data provided by the borough Secretary-Treasurer. Council does not have a budget committee, nor is there an appointed elected official to oversee the budget process. Neither the Finance & Litigation Committee chair (Jason Heaton) nor the borough Secretary-Treasurer (Pat Lansberry) was present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Does the Fire and Police Committee (or any other public safety representative in local government) work with other borough officials and/or the fire service to request a listing of needs based on documentary evidence (e.g., financial records, invoices, receipts, cost increase notices, inflationary projections) that help justify appropriations requests?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No officers of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department were present to comment on this question.

Does the borough budget section for "Public Safety-Fire" accurately categorize and account for (itemize) all fire prevention and fire protection needs?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No officers of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department were present to comment on this question. Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to comment on this question. No officials present at the meeting felt they had a sufficient understanding of the borough's fire safety needs to answer this question.

The municipal budget does not itemize the cost of workers compensation insurance for volunteer fire department staff, which costs taxpayers about \$7,000 per year (as noted in Council meeting minutes, February 2022). Why is this specific support for the fire service not noted (itemized) in the Public Safety-Fire section of the budget?

Finding: Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question. FSRC noted that White Township does itemize its fire department workers compensation expenditure.

Based on fire department reporting in the public record, the borough's budgeted cash value of fuel provisioned in support of the fire department appears to be grossly and consistently miscalculated between 2020-2024. How can this be explained?

Finding: Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No official present could offer an explanation for these figures. However, all agreed that Council's annual \$150 budget allocation to the WMVFD for both diesel and gasoline fuel seems much too low and unrealistic.

Budget Construction

When do borough officials begin the process of deliberating and drafting the annual municipal budget?

Finding: For members of Council, the process begins with the budget workshop in November of each year. Some felt that the borough should allow for at least 90 days to construct a budget, perhaps starting in September of each year if not sooner. Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Is there a budget committee that directs the borough secretary in drafting the annual municipal budget?

Finding: Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question. The chair of the Finance & Litigation Committee (Jason Heaton) was not present at the meeting to comment on this question. No official present was aware of any process by which Council committees direct the borough-secretary in constructing the budget.

What role does the Finance & Litigation Committee play in formulating the budget?

Finding: The chair of the Finance & Litigation Committee (Jason Heaton) was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to comment on this question.

What role does the Fire & Police Committee play in formulating the public safety budget?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to comment on this question. No officers of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department were present to comment on this question.

How are budget figures calculated (e.g., based on multi-year actual spending trends, documented needs, invoicing, contract agreements)?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to comment on this question. No officers of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department were present to comment on this question. Officials at the meeting indicated that the use of multi-year actual spending data (e.g., a 3-5 year lookback) or fiscal trend analysis is not part of the budgeting process.

Where can actual spending data be found?

Finding: Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Some actual spending data can be found in the municipal annual financial audits (currently available up to 2022) and through monthly financial reports. However, both sources are not very specific, making it difficult to analyze and evaluate the accuracy of financial budgeting practices. Because actual data is not readily known, no officials present at the meeting had an understanding of the accuracy of budgeted vs actual amounts for Public Safety-Fire expenditures.

How can this fiscal data be made readily accessible to the public?

Finding: Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to answer this specific question.

Budget Forecasting

With respect to near and long-term future support for fire prevention and fire protection needs and trends, who is responsible for calculating these figures and conveying this information to Council and the public?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. No officers of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department were present to comment on this question. However, officials present at the meeting indicated that the public safety-fire budget must be based on demonstrated need and supporting documentation.

Should the Fire & Police Committee be tasked with this duty?

Finding: No representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. Officials present at the meeting indicated that the Fire & Police Committee should be responsible for determining the borough's public safety budget.

What role would the Finance & Litigation Committee play in preparing for these future budgetary needs?

Finding: Neither Finance & Litigation Committee chair Jason Heaton nor member Lou Little were present at the meeting to answer this specific question. However, committee member Janet Helbig was present and fully supported the idea of the Finance & Litigation Committee taking on central responsibility for the municipal budget process, working with the Fire & Police Committee to determine public safety needs. N representatives of the Fire & Police Committee (Lou Little, Bill Heaton, Jason Heaton) were present at the meeting to comment on this question. Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry was not present at the meeting to comment on this question.

Tax Base

Fire Tax - Given the current tax base of the borough, what would be the estimated revenue generated by various millage rates?

Finding: Tax Collector Kathy Brewer estimated that a millage fire tax based on current property values might generate the following amounts per year. She cautioned that there is a portion of property taxes that go uncollected, so any estimated revenue based on property tax rolls will be somewhat less than these amounts.

Estimated fire tax millage rates

- $\frac{1}{3}$ mill = \$5,706 est. annual revenue for fire protection
- $\frac{1}{2}$ mill = \$8,446
- $\frac{3}{4}$ mill = \$12,970
- 1 mill = \$17,293

What would be the estimated tax burden on residents and businesses for the above tax millages?

Finding: Tax Collector Kathy Brewer noted that this is a difficult question to answer. The notion of “burden” is quite subjective as everyone’s wealth status is different, and estimating tax burden on individuals depends on many factors, such as differing property values, number of properties owned in the borough, etc. However, given the most current 2024 real estate data (e.g., total valuation of taxable properties, total number of taxable properties), residents might expect to pay between \$24 – \$121 per year to support a 1 mill fire tax—progressive amounts that for some residents would be far less expensive than the fixed monthly or annual “public safety capital fund” or “fire protection assessment” fees charged by some of our municipal neighbors.

Tax Credit Incentives - Would there be any appreciable impact upon the borough’s property tax base (revenue) if the borough were to implement a tax credit incentive program for members of the volunteer fire department?

Finding: Tax Collector Kathy Brewer suggested that were the borough to adopt such a tax incentive program as obligated by state statutes, there would be so few eligible volunteer firefighters that the tax burden on the borough would be insignificant.

FSRC Conclusions

The results of our local government inquiry overwhelmingly support these key conclusions:

1. Council lacks strategic and practical awareness of fire prevention and fire protection matters.
2. Council does not require or support fire safety public education.
3. Council does not have a plan to improve West Mayfield's ISO PPC rating.
4. Council lacks meaningful, rigorous, and independent oversight and accountability controls regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters.
5. Council lacks meaningful, rigorous, and independent oversight and accountability controls regarding the borough's tax-payer funded fire service provider.
6. Council provides little professional guidance and expectations for public safety officials.
7. Council ignores conflicts of interest among elected officials also serving as members of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department.
8. The borough's ordinances regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters are old, outdated, incomplete, and ineffective.
9. Council lacks a coherent and rational budget and appropriations process regarding the proper funding of fire prevention and fire protection needs.
10. Council lacks a true and complete accounting and reconciliation of fire prevention and fire protection expenditures.
11. Council does not require any performance standards for its current service provider.
12. Council spends 88% of the borough's fire prevention and fire protection expenditures in support of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department.
13. Between 2020-2024(TYD), Council has expended on average \$26,653/yr on the WMVFD.
14. Note: Between 2020-2024(YTD), there is a 44% difference between what the borough budgeted in support for the WMVFD (as per line items listed under "Public Safety-Fire") and what it actually spent.
15. The only FPFP expenditure that is not fungible (replaceable through outsourcing or a change in vendor or service provider) is the municipal fire hydrant water system. All other FPFP goods/services, such as the fire service itself, can be replaced through outsourcing or alternative provisions.
16. Council has the legal and legislative authority—and the economic means—to decertify the current fire service provider and to outsource its fire service needs.



Current Fire Service

The FSRC's fourth and final area of inquiry focused on the borough's current fire service provider: West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. We declare at the beginning of this section that the officers of the fire service chose to not to cooperate with the Fire Service Review Committee.

In February 2024, citizen co-chair Kevin Farkas sent an informal invitation seeking WMVFD representation to Fire Chief Lou Little, c/o WMVFD Secretary Mike Caler. As of March 7th (three weeks later), having not received a response from the WMVFD the FSRC sent Fire Chief Lou Little a formal letter again requesting their representation on the committee. As of March 14, still having not received a response from the WMVFD, Mr. Farkas made a direct, in-person request at a Council meeting to Fire Chief Lou Little for WMVFD representation on the FSRC. On March 16, WMVFD Secretary Mike Caler submitted nominations for FSRC representation: Michael Caler, Wendy Harker, Jamie Hoskinson. However, at this time the WMVFD objected to Council president Tate's presence on the committee as a conflict of interest. The fire department also noted that their representatives could not meet with the FSRC "until after May 2 of us bowl on Thursdays." And finally the WMVFD stated that they "should have some input into what citizens will be on this committee. It can't be the ones that are just against the fire department." On March 20, the FSRC responded to the WMVFD's protestations stating that the committee reviewed but unanimously rejected their demands. The FSRC agreed to stay the course as decided at its March 7 steering meeting. Note: the FSRC invited WMVFD representatives to the steering meeting, but they did not attend. After May (and the end of WMVFD's stated bowling commitments) to date, despite our standing invitation to join the FSRC, we have not heard from WMVFD representatives.

In March 2024, the FSRC submitted an information request to the WMVFD. The WMVFD chose to ignore our request, which we submitted in writing and verbally (during a Council meeting).

In June 2024, representatives of the WMVFD, who also sit on Council's Fire & Police Committee, did not attend FSRC's Local Government meeting. Additionally, no representatives of the WMVFD attended this public meeting where we discussed fire department issues.

In July 2024, the FSRC submitted in writing and verbally (during a Council meeting) a request to meet with officers of the WMVFD and the West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association. We stipulated that the fire department could choose the date, time, and location for this meeting to be held before July 31, however, the FSRC clearly stated:

FSRC members unanimously stipulated that if we do not receive your RSVP by July 16, 2024, we will assume this to mean that your organizations have decided not to cooperate with the Fire Service Review Committee. We will therefore conclude this phase of inquiry and continue on with our report and recommendations to council and the citizens of West Mayfield.

Again, the officers of the WMVFD did not respond to the FSRC's invitation to participate in our review.

The FSRC laments not having WMVFD representation on our committee; we think the fire department could have provided Council and citizens with invaluable information and insight about fire prevention and fire protection matters. Moreover, by not cooperating with the FSRC the fire department deprived itself of the most significant opportunity to argue on its own behalf regarding the quality and competence of its leadership and staff, firefighting readiness and capabilities, and organizational and fiscal soundness.

In short, the Fire Service Review Committee cannot understand why the WMVFD would choose not to support and defend its own future viability and status as the borough's fire service provider. And finally, it is not our role to question motivations but if the fire department's non-cooperation with the FSRC has been an attempt to impune and delegitimize our proceedings, our only response is to stand by our research and findings of fact already in the public record.

A Community Center

For decades the fire department has been regarded as a beloved community institution, especially by older residents who fondly recall a bygone era when the organization provided citizens with both public safety service opportunities along with civic and recreational activities at the "fire hall," such as hosting elections, club meetings, bake sales, Christmas tree sales, holiday parties, bingo night, weddings, dances, community dinners, and celebratory banquets hosted by Council or the fire department itself.

"Back in the day" West Mayfield "firemen" had dress uniforms and participated in local parades and sports leagues. The basement of the fire hall had a well-stocked bar and often-used pool table, rivaling any social club in the area. But fire department members also hosted open houses for school children, mentored "Junior Firemen," and checked up on fire safety issues with local businesses and industries such as the Babcock & Wilcox Company—relationships that also netted the fire department generous financial donations and in-kind support (e.g., free machine shop repair work on the "fire whistle").

The WMVFD was organized by borough citizens in 1929 and officially chartered the following year. According to the 1968 Beaver Falls Area Centennial book:

Mainly because of lack of money and the depression, the company was disbanded. It was reorganized in April 1938. At this time, the treasury balance was \$146 and activities were begun to raise money for purchasing equipment. In August 1938, the first truck was purchased from Pulaski Township. Meetings were at Edwards School and later in the borough building. In 1939, a Ladies Auxiliary was organized. In 1940, it had raised sufficient money to purchase a tent, which was donated to the firemen. The tent was rented to various organizations during carnivals and street fairs and proved to be a good source of income.

Late in 1949, discussions were started regarding the building of a new station. After consultation with the auxiliary and council, an offer was made for a piece of land and financial aid from the auxiliary was promised. The new fire station was built and dedicated in 1952. In 1956, the company installed radios in the building and in the truck. All calls were received by

Beaver Falls base station. Prior to this, all fire calls were received by the West Gate office of the Babcock & Wilcox Co. Personnel there would activate the siren and see that the department had the correct location of the fire. West Mayfield became a member of Zone One, which consists of 14 fire departments. In 1956, the company obtained a new pumper for \$13,000. This addition gave the department two pieces of equipment. In 1958, a new addition was made to the fire station. Since that time, the Fire Department has purchased radio monitors for each fireman and other equipment necessary to update efficiency.

The Ladies Auxiliary to West Mayfield Fire Department was organized in February 1939 with Lila Dawson as president, Mary Stein, vice president, Pearl Hughes, secretary, and Flora Calhoun, treasurer. Meetings first were held in the borough building. They are now held at the fire hall. A charter was purchased in 1947 and the group has been instrumental in various fundraising programs. Community affairs, the annual banquet and the Christmas treat for neighborhood children are the group's major activities.

A significant share of citizens, especially our senior residents who experienced the fire department's "golden" years, lament the organization's diminished role as a community social and civic center. The Fire Service Review Committee does as well, however, our focus is not on the social hall, pancake breakfast fundraisers, parades, or intrapersonal relationships between the fire department and the community. We are less concerned about the fire hall than the engine house and the department's current firefighting capabilities and readiness. We firmly believe that when citizens dial 911 during an emergency, these are their first and foremost concerns as well.

Fire Service Authority

Histories of the borough mention the fire department's 1930 charter. The FSRC has not viewed this legal document, but its existence is taken at face value. We have no reason to believe that the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department is not a legally incorporated fire service organization in the Commonwealth. Based on other charters of that era, we assume there is defining language such as, "to support and maintain a fire engine, hook and ladder, and other fire fighting apparatus and hose company, for the control of fire and the protection of lives and property from fire in the Borough of West Mayfield, Beaver County, Pennsylvania." In FSRC's letter of inquiry to the WMVFD, we asked if the fire department had a copy of its incorporation charter. We have not received a response from the WMVFD.

Fire Service Agreement

As discussed in the Local Government section of this report, the FSRC has not been able to locate and review any official fire service agreement between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. The Borough Secretary-Treasurer has no such document on file. In FSRC's letter of inquiry to the WMVFD, we asked if the fire department had a copy of a fire service agreement. We have not received a response from the WMVFD.

Leadership & Staffing

In accordance with its bylaws, the membership of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department nominates and elects its leadership as it sees fit. On January 20, 2024, the WMVFD published the following list of newly elected organizational leadership (source: West Mayfield Fire Department Facebook page. Post since deleted). A search of Fire & Police Committee reporting shows that Council (and citizens) never received an update regarding this current slate of public safety leadership.

WMVFD Line Officers

- Fire Chief: Lou Little (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Asst. Fire Chief: Wendy Harker (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Captain: Jamie Hoskinson (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- 1st Lieutenant: Imogene Harker (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- 2nd Lieutenant: Scotty Maxwell (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Safety Officer: Michael Caler (WMVFD Firefighter)

WMVFD Administration

- President: Lou Little
- Vice President: Wendy Harker
- Treasurer: Eli Kosanovich (WMVFD Admin Support)
- Secretary: Michael Caler

WMVFD Rank & File

- Matthew Starr (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Denise Sabella (WMVFD Firefighter) (Beaver County Fire Police)
- Ray Evans Sr. (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Ray Evans Jr. (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Hayden Boniphant (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Matt Drabick (WMVFD Firefighter)
- Jason Heaton (WMVFD Firefighter)

Duties & Obligations

As per the borough secretary-treasurer, there is no written fire service agreement on record between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. Without a fire service agreement, the terms and conditions, duties and obligations of fire prevention and fire protection are unclear. However, absent any defining document describing official terms and conditions, duties, and obligations of this relationship, we might infer such details from other sources:

Borough Ordinances

Part 2 Administration Code, Chapter 204 Volunteer Fire Department

Section 248.01 Duties of Firemen; Workmen's Compensation

Volunteer firemen shall have the duties outlined in this section. For the purpose of the Workmen's Compensation Act, such firemen shall be considered to be in the employ

of the Borough and acting in the course of their employment if and when they are assisting or doing any of the following acts:

- (a) Going to or returning from a fire or fire alarm either within or outside the Borough;*
- (b) Performing rescue work, either of persons, animals or property, whether connected with fires, floods or other unusual circumstances;*
- (c) Performing acts of mercy or assistance in a conflagration, epidemic, fire, bombing, wreck, accident or any other unusual occurrence where public policy would require services in addition to those now in existence or services not provided for by the Borough at the present time;*
- (d) Performing those incidental duties usually performed by fire or police personnel when requested through proper channels by a taxpayer, excluding those set forth in subsections (a), (b) and (c) hereof, but including participation in exhibitions and the display of fire prevention techniques and equipment either within or outside the Borough; or*
- (e) Performing police duties of any kind, including traffic control, detection, protection and keeping of order. (Ord. 92. Passed 6-1-42.)*

Part 16 Fire Prevention Code

Section 1604.02 Enforcement; Annual Report; Amendments

This chapter and the Code hereby adopted shall be enforced by the Volunteer Fire Department of the Borough. A report of the Volunteer Fire Department shall be made annually by the Chief and transmitted to Council. It shall contain all proceedings under this chapter and the Code hereby adopted, with such statistics as the Chief may wish to include therein. The Chief shall also recommend any amendments to this chapter which, in his judgment, are desirable.

Section 1604.06 Modifications

The Chief of the Volunteer Fire Department shall have the power to modify any of the provisions of the Code hereby adopted upon application in writing by the owner or lessee, or his duly authorized agent, when there are practical difficulties in the way of carrying out the strict letter of the Code, provided that the spirit of the Code shall be observed, public safety secured and substantial justice done. The particulars of such modification, when granted or allowed, and the decision of the Chief thereon, shall be entered upon the records of the Department and a signed copy shall be furnished the applicant.

State Statutes: Pa CS Title 35, Chapter 74 Volunteer Firefighters

Section 7412. Fire service.

The service of organized groups of individuals, not only in training for and in active duty in the protection of the public against fire, but also in the training for and the performance of such other activities as are commonly undertaken by fire companies and their affiliated organizations, including, but not limited to, fire prevention, first aid, rescue and salvage, ambulance service, fire police work, radio communications, assistance at accidents, control of crowds both on the fire grounds and at occasions of public or general assembly, animal rescue, abatement of conditions due to storm, flood or general peril, abatement or removal of hazards to safety and participation in public celebrations, parades, demonstrations and fundraising campaigns.

Oversight & Reporting to Council

The FSRC recognizes that the officers of the WMVFD have the right to oversee and manage their organization as they see fit, presumably in accordance with all legal and professional standards required of volunteer fire departments in the Commonwealth. On April 24, 2024, Borough Solicitor Joe Budicak presented Council with a memorandum clarifying the fire department's autonomy (see [Appendix](#)):

While maybe everyone is not aware, it needs to be remembered that the Volunteer Fire Department is a separate entity unto itself, it is, I believe, a nonprofit organization. It is not owned or administered by the Borough . . . there is nothing in the Borough Code that would give counsel the power to become involved in the administration or management of a Volunteer Fire Department.

The FSRC does not know what internal policies the WMVFD has in place regarding reporting to Council about public safety activities, finances, or other fire department information. The WMVFD does provide Council with an annual "Year End Report" (as required by borough ordinance), but this information is infrequent and inconsistent. The most salient manner in which the fire department publicly shares information is through Council's Fire & Police Committee; all three committee members are also WMVFD members. We've already noted that the Fire & Police Committee has no written standards of reporting about the fire department.

WMVFD Staff, Experience, Credentials

Lou Little

Resident:	yes
Experience:	36 years in department
Role:	firefighter
Position:	fire chief
Credentials:	
Criminal Record Check	unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting	unknown / unverified
HAZMAT Certification	unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification	unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter II Certification	unknown / unverified

*Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) unknown / unverified**

**Although the Borough Secretary-Treasurer has no record on file, former Mayor Pau Farkas recalls confirming Mr. Little as a WMVFD Special Fire Police Officer. Date unknown.*

Wendy Harker

Resident: yes
Experience: 29 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: assistant fire chief
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting unknown / unverified
HAZMAT Certification: unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter II Certification unknown / unverified
*Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) unknown / unverified**

**Although the Borough Secretary-Treasurer has no record on file, former Mayor Paul Farkas recalls confirming Ms. Harker as a WMVFD Special Fire Police Officer. Date unknown.*

Imogene Harker

Resident: no
Experience: 11 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: first lieutenant
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting unknown / unverified
HAZMAT Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter II Certification unknown / unverified
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) unknown / unverified

Matthew Starr

Resident: no
Experience: 4 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: staff
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting unknown / unverified
HAZMAT Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification unknown / unverified

Fire Fighter II Certification *unknown / unverified*
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) *unknown / unverified*

Jamie Hoskinson

Resident: no
Experience: 3 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: captain
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check *unknown / unverified*
Essentials of Firefighting *unknown / unverified*
HAZMAT Certification *unknown / unverified*
Fire Fighter I Certification *unknown / unverified*
Fire Fighter II Certification *unknown / unverified*
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) *unknown / unverified*

Scotty Maxwell

Resident: no
Experience: 3 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: second lieutenant
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check *unknown / unverified*
Essentials of Firefighting *unknown / unverified*
HAZMAT Certification *unknown / unverified*
Fire Fighter I Certification *unknown / unverified*
Fire Fighter II Certification *unknown / unverified*
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) *unknown / unverified*

Denise Sabella

Resident: no
Experience: 3 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: staff
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check *unknown / unverified*
Essentials of Firefighting *unknown / unverified*
HAZMAT Certification *unknown / unverified*
Fire Fighter I Certification *unknown / unverified*
Fire Fighter II Certification *unknown / unverified*
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) *unknown / unverified*

Ray Evans Sr.

Resident: no

Experience: 3 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: staff
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting unknown / unverified
HAZMAT Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter II Certification unknown / unverified
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) unknown / unverified

Ray Evans Jr.

Resident: no
Experience: 3 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: staff
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting unknown / unverified
HAZMAT Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter II Certification unknown / unverified
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) unknown / unverified

Hayden Boniphant

Resident: no
Experience: 3 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: staff
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified
Essentials of Firefighting Completed: September 16, 2024 (BCFA)
HAZMAT Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter I Certification unknown / unverified
Fire Fighter II Certification unknown / unverified
Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD) unknown / unverified

Matt Drabick

Resident: no
Experience: 2 years in department
Role: firefighter
Position: staff
Credentials:
Criminal Record Check unknown / unverified

<i>Essentials of Firefighting</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>HAZMAT Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Fire Fighter I Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Fire Fighter II Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD)</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>

Michael Caler

Resident:	no
Experience:	2 years in department
Role:	firefighter
Position:	safety officer
Credentials:	
<i>Criminal Record Check</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Essentials of Firefighting</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>HAZMAT Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Fire Fighter I Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Fire Fighter II Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD)</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>

Jason Heaton

Resident:	yes
Experience:	<1 years in department
Role:	firefighter
Position:	staff
Credentials:	
<i>Criminal Record Check</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Essentials of Firefighting</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>HAZMAT Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Fire Fighter I Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Fire Fighter II Certification</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>
<i>Sworn Fire Police (WMVFD)</i>	<i>unknown / unverified</i>

Staffing Crisis

It is well established that for decades there has been a shortage of volunteer firefighters across the Commonwealth, throughout Beaver County, within our local fire service ecosystem, and inside the WMVFD—which shows a roster of 13 active first responders (as per its 2024 Workers Compensation Insurance list submitted to the borough).

The FSRC does not have the expertise to determine if this staffing level is sufficient, nor can we assess if current staff adequately fulfills all needed positions within the fire department. We also cannot verify if current staff is fully trained and properly equipped.

The ISO PPC audit “recognizes 0.00 on-duty personnel and an average of 3.00 on-call personnel responding on first alarm structure fires” (the most serious and deadly fire incidents). Overall, for

Company Personnel the auditors gave the WMVFD just 1.59 points out of a possible 15 points (11%). Granted, low scores in this area are to be expected among all volunteer fire departments such as the WMVFD. However, such staff-response shortcomings are not immutable; they can be remedied.

Recruitment & Retention: Efforts & Expenditures

Like other local fire departments, the officers of the WMVFD have made it known to the community that it needs volunteers. This plea is perpetual and ongoing. However, because there is very little formal reporting to Council by the fire department and the Fire & Police Committee, we are unable to assess the efficacy of the fire department's recruitment and retention efforts.

We find no evidence in the public record that the officers of the WMVFD have a strategic recruitment and retention plan to achieve realistic staffing goals. A search of the public records shows no evidence that the officers of the WMVFD have ever specifically requested municipal assistance to aid the fire department's volunteer recruitment and retention efforts. Similarly, members of Council's Fire and Police Committee, on behalf of the fire department, have never put forth a municipal-backed program to aid the fire department's volunteer recruitment and retention efforts (e.g., taxpayer funded program grants, municipal property tax reduction incentives, school tax reduction incentives, or other such special accommodations or benefits for volunteer firefighters).

The Pennsylvania Auditor General's *Management Guidelines for Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations* (2023) states that VFRAs may use monies: "To provide financial assistance for activities and materials needed to aid in the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters" (p. 2). However, a review of WMVFRA audits between 2006-2022 reveals no such stated expenditures for volunteer firefighter recruitment and retention.

Calling the Question

Volunteer fire departments (and their communities) are dealing with a very real and consequential shortage of volunteers. Fire industry professionals, researchers, and public policy experts have been studying this problem and offering a wide range of solutions. However, the prevailing consensus is that no single remedy exists that will magically solve the firefighter staffing crisis. Studies show that fire departments with the most success start with understanding their own specific challenges and issues affecting volunteer recruitment and retention.

Understanding context matters; therefore, we should ask why so few people are willing to become and remain members of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department?

Community is Not Responding

As cited elsewhere in this report, Fire & Police Committee member, former fire chief, and life member of the WMVFD Bill Heaton pleads, "If you want to change what's going on then join the dept. and change it to what you want." Elsewhere in a social media post, Mr. Heaton admonishes the community:

Instead of criticizing the FD I would request you join our FD and assist in making changes you think may be needed. It's easy to stand back and criticize, try getting involved to make it better. (Concerned Citizens of West Mayfield Facebook page, January 18, 2024)

Again, we note another instance where Mr. Heaton ascribes a certain level of blame to citizens:

While I agree that WM FD is small town FD, it handles every call that comes in. Yes, they have help from mutual aid, but that's because of poor membership support from our borough residents. If more residents would join, less mutual aid would be needed. (see Response by Councilmember Bill Heaton in [Appendix](#))

It is faulty circular logic to think, *if only more citizens would become volunteers, the fire department would not have a volunteer shortage*. In fact, an unintended consequence of framing the volunteer issue in this way unfairly scapegoats the community.

Volunteer Recruitment & Retention Efforts Are Failing

Admonishing citizens for not joining the fire department has been unproductive. Firefighting is a dangerous, physically demanding, technically skilled, and time consuming activity. Today, it is a hard fact that fewer people have the wherewithal (mentally, physically, economically) to become volunteer firefighters. No amount of wishful thinking is going to change this fact within the volunteer fire service.

For many years the WMVFD has endured a volunteer crisis. There is no evidence to suggest that the problem is getting better; it is getting worse. Moreover, neither the officers of the WMVFD nor Council have a credible or realistic plan to address what very well might be the fire department's most terminable condition.

Public/Community Communications

The FSRC was interested in the WMVFD's public/community communications capabilities regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters. Here are our findings:

ISO auditors reviewed and evaluated technical aspects of the fire department's emergency communications capabilities.

Ten percent of a community's overall score is based on how well the communications center receives and dispatches fire alarms. Our field representative evaluated:

- *Communications facilities provided for the general public to report structure fires*
- *Enhanced 9-1-1 Telephone Service including wireless*
- *Computer-aided dispatch (CAD) facilities*
- *Alarm receipt and processing at the communication center*
- *Training and certification of telecommunicators*
- *Facilities used to dispatch fire department companies to reported structure fires*

The audit rated this section 9.46 points out of 10 possible points, making “emergency communications” the highest scoring section of the audit.

Technical communications aside, the FSRC was interested in the fire department’s public/community communications capacity. Here are our findings:

Internet/website: The WMVFD does not have a website. This prevents the organization from providing universally accessible communication to anyone on the internet regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters.

Social media platform: The WMVFD has only one social media platform: “West Mayfield Fire Department” is hosted on Facebook (category: fire station, page ID: 107490432309479, creation date: April 1, 2023).

Newsletter: The WMVFD has no organizational newsletter.

Public Fire Safety Education Programming: The WMVFD offers no fire safety education programming through by way of any communication platform). We note that in this area the ISO PPC audit awarded just .28 points out of 2.2 possible points.

Fire Station Marquee: For a number of years there has been an illuminated digital marquee (sign) in front of the fire station. Messaging is often static and repetitive, but the FSRC has noted occasional postings about firefighter recruitment, fire department activities, and less frequently news about borough activities.

Public Reporting: The FSRC considers public reporting at Council meetings to be a very important communication channel. However, as we noted in our Local Government section neither fire department officers nor members of Council’s Fire & Police Committee provided regular, standardized, or substantive news and updates about the WMVFD. In fact, our review of Council meeting minutes between July 2019 and July 2024 reveals that the fire department’s year-end reporting to council (and the public) provided no analytical or evaluative framework regarding public safety news, events, issues, and emergency response readiness updates. On a monthly basis the Fire & Police Committee typically presented equally useless information regarding public safety news, events, issues, and emergency response readiness updates. In fact, 59% of the time the Fire & Police Committee failed to provide any report to Council (and citizens).

West Mayfield Borough Website: Although contact information for the WMVFD exists on the borough’s website, the fire department has no dedicated page on the borough website, nor has the website administrator ever asked by the fire department to create one. However, as requested by the fire department or through the website administrator’s own initiative special website posts (categorized as “fire department news”) have been created regarding current WMVFD news or fire safety and fire protection announcements. Since 2012, there have been

more than 70 posts of this type on the borough's website; however, these posts have been infrequent, sporadic, and not part of any coordinated public safety education program. Examples of WMVFD promotional and fire safety posts include:

Reserve Your Park Shelter Rental Today!
All-U-Can-Eat Breakfast (50+ posts)
Fire Department Benefit Concert
Fire Dept. Increases Social Hall Rental Rates in 2024
Fire Fighters Needed
Fire Prevention Week: Cooking Safety
Fire Prevention Week: Escape Planning
Fire Prevention Week: Microwave Oven Safety
Fire Prevention Week: Scald Prevention
Fire Prevention Week: Smoke Alarms
Santa Comes to West Mayfield
Support Our Local Firefighters
The West Mayfield Fire Department is looking for 1st responders
Think Fire Safety!
West Mayfield Community Halloween Night (WMVFD safety patrols)
West Mayfield Emergency Response Tip: Cold Weather Fire Safety

Incident Reporting

Publicly available information regarding incidents is accessible through the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System (PennFIRS). (See [Appendix](#) for a comparative view of reported incidents within our fire service ecosystem (Big Beaver, Beaver Falls, Chippewa, Darlington, Homewood, Koppel, New Brighton, Patterson Heights, Patterson Township, West Mayfield, and White Township).

WMVFD: Self reported incidents (PennFIRS)*

Year	Incidents
2017	42
2018	77
2019	70
2020**	65
2021	44
2022	55
2023	51
<u>2024</u>	<u>TBD</u>
Total	404
Yearly Avg.	58
Monthly. Avg.	4.8
Most Calls/Month	9
Least Calls/Month	1

*Updated November 9, 2024

**For the year 2020, PennFIRS provides information regarding activity status (and if aid was given by fire departments. During 2020, WMVFD reported 65 incidents, however it also reported the following:

- No Activity: 60 incidents (92.31%)
- Aid Given: 5 incidents (7.69%)

Qualitative incident data is useful for evaluation purposes regarding fire prevention and fire protection, but the PennFIRS system does not provide qualitative data for incidents, so there is no information regarding type of calls (within the borough or mutual aid), nature of calls (e.g., structural fire, motor vehicle accident, brush fire, rehab, fire policing), incident outcomes, time logs, resources used, etc.

The ISO PPC audit reviewed the WMVFD's incident records under "Operational Considerations," evaluating the fire department's standard operating procedures and incident management systems for emergency operations involving structure fires:

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 0 points out of a possible 50 points

Remarks: *The department should have established SOPs for fire department general emergency operations*

Incident Management Systems: 50 points out of a possible 50 points

Remarks: *The department should use an established incident management system (IMS)*

The FSRC considers fire service reporting at Council meetings to be a very important opportunity for the fire department to share information about fire prevention and fire protection activities (e.g., incidents) and readiness capabilities. However, as we have noted elsewhere in this report the fire department (including its members who also sit on Council's Fire & Police Committee) do not provide regular, standardized, and substantive incident reporting.

ISO PPC Rating

As discussed in the Local Government section of this report, the ISO PPC audit evaluates public fire-protection services and classifies a community's ability to suppress fires. ISO's PPC program evaluates communities according to a uniform set of criteria, incorporating nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and the American Water Works Association. The Public Protection Classification review helps communities and their fire departments plan and budget for facilities, equipment, training, and fire safety public education needs.

Currently, West Mayfield's ISO PPC rating is class 5 (which is considered average). However, 50% of the borough's ISO PPC rating is based on a review of the WMVFD, which includes an examination of equipment, staffing, training, geographic distribution of fire companies, operational considerations, and community risk reduction efforts.

The ISO auditors focused on a fire department's first alarm response and initial attack capabilities to minimize potential loss. Here is how the WMVFD was assessed:

• Engine Companies	4.10 (6 possible points, 68%)
• Reserve Pumpers	0.09 (.5 possible points, 18%)
• Pump Capacity	3.00 (3 possible points, 100%)
• Ladder/Service Companies	0.61 (4 possible points, 15%)
• Reserve Ladder/Service Trucks	0.25 (.5 possible points, 50%)
• Deployment Analysis	5.62 (10 possible points, 56%)
• Company Personnel	1.59 (15 possible points, 11%)
• Training	1.08 (9 possible points, 12%)
• Operational considerations	1.00 (2 possible points, 50%)
• Community Risk Reduction	1.15 (5.5 possible points, 21%)

Total WMVFD Public Protection Score: 17.65 out of 50 possible points (35%)

The FSRC does not have technical expertise (as compared to ISO PPC auditors) to analyze and evaluate the WMVFD's fire fighting capabilities and readiness, nor is it within FSRC's mission to debate such technical fire prevention and fire protection subjects. However, it is within FSRC's scope of research and fact-finding to present such technical information as we find it in the public record and elsewhere.

Mutual Aid Agreements

As stated in the Local Government section of this report, since 1989 the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and all other municipal fire services in Beaver County have operated under a county-wide mutual aid agreement, sharing fire service and other emergency management resources as necessary. During the July 2023 council meeting, Fire Chief Lou Little stated that he “works with five departments as mutual aid so there is always availability of firemen to answer calls.” During June 2024, Patterson Heights Borough Fire Chief Jason Medlin confirmed that the fire services of West Mayfield, White Township, Patterson Township, and Patterson Heights Borough had created a unified mutual aid emergency response alliance. All 4 departments are automatically called out to respond to emergencies in any of these municipalities.

As we know, a share of our community's ISO PPC rating is based on quantity and quality of fire protection provided through mutual aid, especially “automatic mutual aid” arrangements which bring (obligate) critical fire protection resources to the borough without delay on first call.

The FSRC can not verify if the WMVFD's current automatic aid agreement with White Township, Patterson Township, and Patterson Heights Borough helps or hinders the borough's ISO PPC rating. However, we assume this arrangement among peer volunteer fire departments would, in all likelihood, help improve the borough's fire protection classification, but to what extent we cannot say.

Whenever fire departments provide mutual aid to neighboring communities, there are costs. Although providing mutual aid is a critically necessary activity within our fire service ecosystem, resource expenditures include burdens on firefighting staffing, time service time on call, service time away from home communities, vehicle and equipment wear, and fuel usage.

As we have established in this report, most of WMVFD's resources are subsidized in whole or in part by borough taxpayers. Through long-standing practice (but without a written agreement), the borough provides both diesel and gasoline fuel for the WMVFD, either taken directly from the borough's own stores or through cash reimbursements made by the Borough Secretary-Treasurer. During 2022, the fire department reported to Council that it used 894 total gallons of fuel. That same year, WMVFD reported 55 incidents. By this we might conclude that each incident expended 16.25 gallons of fuel.

Of course, without detailed incident reporting documenting activities we cannot determine what percentage of incidents were within or outside the borough (mutual aid), exact location, services rendered, time on call, or actual fuel usage per call—all activities consuming taxpayer-funded resources. However, because the WMVFD provided this information as part of its legally mandated report to Council, we take the statements' truthfulness at face value, but we are skeptical.

And finally, during our conversations with neighboring fire services we frequently heard expressions of frustration with "some of these failing fire departments" that chronically and regularly rely on the fire service mutual aid system to compensate for their organization's lack of capabilities and readiness. "There's a lot of resentment toward some of these fire departments that won't help themselves," said one local fire chief. "We'll always help them out because that's what we do, and we appreciate whatever assistance they do provide, but they're actually taking advantage of the system."

To this point—which is a question of reciprocity—the FSRC wonders if and how the Borough of West Mayfield and the WMVFD are contributing a fair share of fire prevention and fire protection services toward our fire service ecosystem. In other words, are we giving back as much as we are receiving from our municipal neighbors?

WMVFD Property and Materiel

It is not FSRC's mission to review and account for the fire department's property and materiel. A prevalent misunderstanding among many borough citizens (including some current and former elected officials) is that the municipality owns the fire station (i.e., the engine house, fire apparatus, equipment, and the social hall). These items are neither owned nor controlled by the municipality; they are the legal property of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department or the West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association.

The FSRC is unaware of any agreement between the WMVFD, WMVFRA, and Council stipulating municipal ownership of any fire department equipment and materiel.

However, the property adjoining the WMVFD (currently used as a parking lot, .25 acre parcel ID 520020116000) is owned by the borough. The WMVFD claims that by oral agreement the borough has granted it the exclusive use of this land. (We discuss this topic in the Local Government section of this report).

Fire Service Strategic Plan

As mentioned in the introduction to the borough's ISO PPC review, auditors recognize "the dynamic and comprehensive duties of a community's fire service, and [understand] the complex decisions a community must make in planning and delivering emergency services." Considerations for the fire service include equipment, staffing, training, mutual aid agreements, operational considerations, and community risk reduction efforts. Strategically identifying, analyzing, and evaluating these and many other important public safety factors helps "communities, fire departments, and other public officials as they plan for, budget, and justify improvements."

Yet, according to research conducted by The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, only about 20% of fire departments in Pennsylvania have a strategic plan:

Having a written plan that outlines when to replace or upgrade apparatus or equipment can help fire companies better prepare for the future. Among companies with a strategic plan, the majority of plans addressed issues such as financial sustainability, the relationship with area municipalities, and recruitment and retention of firefighters. (Pennsylvania Fire Company Capacity, 2012 and 2019, 2020, p. 10).

We cannot verify that the WMVFD has a written fire service strategic plan. A search of public records (e.g., WMVFD year-end reports, Council Fire & Police Committee reports) provides no mention of a fire department strategic plan. (As previously mentioned in this report, the borough does not have a public safety strategic plan, which would include fire prevention and fire protection considerations).

Fire Service Operating Budget

According to research conducted by The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, "Contrary to what many people may believe, 60 percent of VFCs operate on budgets of less than \$100,000 . . . Many fire companies are struggling to survive at this level of funding as operating costs and capital costs continue to increase" (The Financial Fitness of Pennsylvania Volunteer Fire Companies, 2016, p. 5).

We assume, but cannot verify, that the WMVFD's operating budget is far less than \$100,000/year. A search of public records (e.g., WMVFD year-end reports, Council Fire & Police Committee reports) provides no mention of the fire department's annual operating budget.

This leads us to question Council's rationale for funding the WMVFD, which amounts to \$26,653/year on average between 2020-2024. We find no evidence in the public record that Council formulates appropriations based on the fire department's demonstrated need, as would be documented in a fire service operating budget. Not only does council have an obligation to provide adequate fire service protection for citizens, it has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that taxpayers' monies are spent appropriately and wisely. Without requiring the WMVFD to submit an annual operating budget for review, Council simply does not know if it is underfunding or overfunding the fire service.

Organizational Support (Non-Municipal)

It is not FSRC's mission to review the internal financial accounting and fundraising records of the fire service, except where such matters intersect with local government and taxpayer resources having the potential to impact fire prevention and fire protection. The FSRC detailed a wide range of municipal support for the WMVFD in the Local Government section of this report. However, a search of public records shows that the WMVFD also benefits from other financial sources:

Office of State Fire Commissioner (OSFC)

A search of Council meeting minutes shows no evidence that the fire department informed Council about these monies—information that Council may have considered during the Public Safety-Fire budget and appropriations process.

WMVFD: OSFC Grants*

Year	Award
April 2016	\$11,967(FCEMCG)
2017-2018	\$11,520 (FCEMCG)
2020-2021	\$11,520 (FCEMCG)
2021-2022	\$0.00 (FCEMCG)
2022-2023	\$12,106 (FCEMCG)
February 2024	\$13,061 (FCEMCG)
Total	\$60,174
Avg. Amount	\$12,034

*Updated November 9, 2024

Pa Department of Auditor General

Although Foreign Fire Insurance Grants given to fire departments are typically listed as General Fund expenditures in municipal budgets and annual financial audits, these are actually state grants administered by the Pa Department of Auditor General. Technically, these monies are “passed through” municipalities and given directly to Volunteer Firemen’s Relief Associations. The following is an account of such monies distributed to the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen’s Relief Association for the benefit of West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and its members. See below for a discussion about the WMVFRA.

WMVFD: Foreign Fire Insurance Grants

Year	Award
2012	\$5,720
2013	\$6,383
2014	\$6,049
2015	\$5,775
2016	\$5,749
2017	\$5,185
2018	\$4,723

2019	\$5,067
2020	\$5,138
2021	\$4,646
2022	\$5,529
2023	\$5,596
2024	\$5,500 (budget est)
Total	\$70,864
Yearly Avg.	\$5,451

Community Fundraising

The WMVFD is known to hold a variety of community fundraising activities. Public records do not show any fire department reporting to Council regarding WMVFD fundraising activities—information that Council may have considered during the Public Safety-Fire budget and appropriations process.

- Social Hall Rentals (ongoing)
- Park Shelter Concession (ongoing through Feb 2024)
- 2024 – Tip Board Raffles
- 2024 – Election Day Bake Sale
- 2023 – Tip Board Raffles
- 2023 – Car Cruise Fundraiser
- 2023 – Election Day Soup and Bake Sale
- 2023 – Breakfast Fundraisers
- 2022 – Breakfast Fundraisers
- 2019 – Breakfast Fundraisers
- 2019 – Car Cruise Fundraiser
- 2018 – Breakfast Fundraisers
- 2017 – Breakfast Fundraisers
- 2016 – Breakfast Fundraisers
- 2015 – Breakfast Fundraisers

Note: According to Fire Chief Lou Little, as of 2024 the WMVFD has suspended the Ladies Auxiliary support organization.

At the time of this report, the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department was not an incorporated tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organization; it cannot offer tax-deductible receipts to donors, nor is it eligible for a wide range of public and private philanthropic funding sources.

WMVFD: Annual Fundraising

Year	Amount Raised
2015	unreported / unknown
2016	unreported / unknown
2017	unreported / unknown
2018	unreported / unknown

2019	unreported / unknown
2020	unreported / unknown
2021	unreported / unknown
2022	unreported / unknown
2023	unreported / unknown
<u>2024</u>	<u>unreported / unknown</u>
Total	unreported / unknown
Yearly Avg.	unreported / unknown

West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield

It is not FSRC's mission to review the internal accounting and fundraising records of the West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association, except where such matters intersect with local government and taxpayer resources having the potential to impact fire prevention and fire protection. As Pennsylvania Auditor General Timothy DeFoor states, "Relief associations provide vital support to Pennsylvania's dedicated first responders. Our audits make sure state aid is used to equip and protect volunteer firefighters and the communities they serve."

According to the Auditor General's most recent audit of the WMFRA (December 2023), the organization was not following state laws related to the use of distributed state aid. These violations were related to the management of the funds and equipment, and they were serious enough to possibly affect future state aid awarded to the WMFRA, risking financial aid and support to the fire department and its firefighting capabilities and readiness:

COMPLIANCE AUDIT

West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield, Beaver County, Pennsylvania

*For the Period January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022
December 2023*

*Ms. Wendy Harker, President
West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's
Relief Association of West Mayfield
Beaver County*

We have conducted a compliance audit of the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield (relief association) for the period January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022. The audit was conducted pursuant to authority derived from Article VIII, Section 10 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; Section 403 of The Fiscal Code, 72 P.S. § 403; and the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association Act ("VFRA Act"), see 35 Pa.C.S. § 7418.

The objectives of the audit were:

1. To determine if the relief association took appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report.

2. To determine if the relief association complied with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds.

Our audit was limited to the areas related to the objectives identified above and was not, nor was it required to be, conducted in accordance with Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Relief association officers are responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls to provide reasonable assurance that the relief association's administration of state aid and accumulated relief association funds complies with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures, including the safeguarding of assets. Relief association officers are responsible for complying with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures. It is our responsibility to perform procedures to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to the extent necessary to satisfy the audit objectives. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our conclusions.

We were not able to obtain an independent confirmation of a portion of the cash balance directly from the financial institution. Therefore, while the relief association provided copies of bank statements that indicated that, as of December 31, 2022, the relief association had a cash balance of \$4,843, we were not able to verify a portion of this cash balance.

Based on our audit procedures, we conclude that, for the period January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2022:

- The relief association did not take appropriate corrective action to address the finding contained in our prior audit report, as detailed below, and discussed in the Status of Prior Finding section of this report.*
- Because of the significance of the matter described in Finding No. 1 below and discussed later in this report and the effects, if any, of the matter described in the preceding paragraph, the relief association did not, in all significant respects, comply with applicable state laws, contracts, bylaws, and administrative procedures as they relate to the receipt of state aid and the expenditure of relief association funds, collectively as a whole. Therefore, the relief association may be subject to the potential withholding of its upcoming state aid distribution, as discussed in the Potential Withhold of State Aid section of this report.*

*Finding No. 1 – Noncompliance With Prior Audit Recommendation –
Inappropriate Ownership Of Rescue Vehicle*

Finding No. 2 – Inadequate Signatory Authority For The Disbursement Of Funds

Finding No. 3 – Inadequate Minutes Of Meetings And Relief Association Bylaws

Finding No. 4 – Failure To Maintain A Complete And Accurate Equipment Roster

We are concerned by the number of findings noted and strongly encourage timely implementation of the recommendations noted in this audit report.

The contents of this report were discussed with the management of the relief association and, where appropriate, their responses have been included in the report. We would like to thank the relief association officials for the cooperation extended to us during the conduct of the audit.

*Timothy L. DeFoor
Auditor General
December 11, 2023*

Audit Distribution

The “distribution list” for this audit report includes WMFRA officers Wendy Harker, Denise Sabella, Michel Caler, and Ronald Sano. Also included is Borough Secretary-Treasurer Patricia Lansberry. However, a search of Council meeting minutes shows that Council was never informed about the audit and its serious ramifications potentially discontinuing state monies that support the borough’s fire prevention and fire protection capabilities and readiness.

WMVFRA Corrective Action

We assume that the Auditor General’s office is working with the WMVFRA to bring the organization into compliance, but we have found

WEST MAYFIELD VOLUNTEER FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF
WEST MAYFIELD
REPORT DISTRIBUTION LIST

This report was initially distributed to the following:

The Honorable Joshua D. Shapiro
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield Governing Body:

Ms. Wendy Harker
President

Ms. Denise Sabella
Vice President

Mr. Michael Caler
Secretary

Mr. Ronald Sano
Treasurer

A report was also distributed to the following municipality, which allocated foreign fire insurance tax monies to this relief association:

Ms. Patricia Lansberry
Secretary
West Mayfield Borough

This report is a matter of public record and is available online at www.PaAuditor.gov. Media questions about the report can be directed to the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General, Office of Communications, 229 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120; via email to: news@PaAuditor.gov.

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nothing in the public record (e.g., update reporting from Council's Fire & Police Committee or from WMVFRA officers) regarding corrective action, leaving Council unaware of the relief association's standing with the Auditor General.

Update: According to the Department of Auditor General (September 20, 2024), the WMVFRA will receive state aid for 2024 in the amount of \$5,674. The FSRC Final Report has been updated to include this amount.

WMFRA Income & Expenditures

In 2023, the Pa Department of the State Auditor General published a revised edition of its "Management Guidelines for Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations (VFRAs): A resource to help relief associations effectively manage state aid funds allocated by our department and distributed by municipal governments." This publication advises organizations such as the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association as to how they can spend state and local municipal aid monies to benefit the fire departments they support.

A review of four WMFRA audits (2012-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019, and 2020-2022) shows income and expenditures.

	Total Amounts	Average/Year
<u>Income</u>		
Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distributions	\$59,964	\$5,451
<u>Cash on Hand</u> (at end of audit year)	\$49,245	\$12,311
<u>Expenses</u>		
Total Benefit Services	\$25,038	\$2,276
• Insurance Premiums • Death Benefits • Tokens of sympathy & goodwill		
Total Fire Services	\$46,905	\$4,264
• Equipment purchased • Equipment maintenance • Training Expenses		
Total Administrative Services	\$5,562	\$506
• Bond premiums • Other administrative expenses • Miscellaneous administrative services		
Total WMVFRA Expenditures (2012-2022)	\$77,505	\$7,046

For expenditures and cash holdings per audit, see [Appendix](#).

Fire Service Expenditures

In terms of specific expenditures in support of “fire services,” the Auditor General’s reports refer to three broad areas in which the WMVFRA can make expenditures: equipment purchases, equipment maintenance, and training.

WMVFRA Support for Training

We underscore what the Auditor General states about the importance of firefighter training. It is an essential “fire services” expenditure for which VFRA's can spend state aid monies to improve the capability and readiness of volunteer fire departments--such as the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department. Here's an informative excerpt from the *Management Guidelines* about how public monies can be spent on training (p. 30):

Can relief association funds be used to pay for firefighter training classes?

Yes, an association may expend funds for travel, books, tuition, meals, lodging, and any other reasonable expenses incurred for non-credit college courses in firefighting and rescue techniques. First responder, first aid, and EMT training is also a permissible expenditure; however, the costs related to advanced life support (ALS) paramedic (EMT-P) are not authorized. All such expenditures must be approved at an association meeting.

Can the relief association pay for the development and cost of a website?

Yes, a relief association may develop a website to promote fire safety programs, training, and education, and to describe what a relief association can provide for members and the community. Cost for the website development may be paid from relief association funds. Relief associations will need to exercise sound judgment on how a website is developed and what kind of information will be displayed.

Can the relief association pay for subscriptions to firefighting magazines?

Yes, if the magazines are strictly related to fire service and will aid in promoting the safety and training of volunteer firefighters.

Can a CPR or rescue training manikin be purchased with relief association funds?

Yes, a CPR or rescue training manikin would be considered a training aid, provided it is utilized only to train relief association members in CPR and rescue techniques.

According to state mandated audits between 2012-2022, the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen’s Relief Association reported spending a total of \$77,673 on organizational expenses. Over these eleven years the WMVFRA reported spending \$46,905 for “fire services” (i.e, on equipment purchases, equipment

maintenance, or training). However, audit reporting shows that between 2012-2022 the WMVFRA only spent a total of \$3,097 on training (6.7% of fire services expenditures). On average this amounts to only \$282 spent on training per year.

The FSRC understands that VFRA support for training is likely to be only one of several funding sources helping to fulfill this important fire services need. Admittedly, the committee does not have expertise in this area, but on face value the WMVFRA's average spending of \$282/year on training appears to be an extreme under-investment. We might conclude that the fire department's extremely low ISO PPC training score (1.08 / 9.00 possible points or 12%) is a consequence of underinvesting in training:

Training Earned Credit Credit Available (p. 17)

A. Facilities, and Use = 0.00 / 35 possible points

For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 18 hours per year in structure fire related subjects as outlined in NFPA 1001.

B. Company Training = 1.61 / 25 possible points

For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 16 hours per month in structure fire related subjects as outlined in NFPA 1001.

C. Classes for Officers = 0.00 / 12 possible points

For maximum credit, each officer should be certified in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1021. Additionally, each officer should receive 12 hours of continuing education on or off site.

D. New Driver and Operator Training = 4.67 / 5 possible points

For maximum credit, each new driver and operator should receive 60 hours of driver/operator training per year in accordance with NFPA 1002 and NFPA 1451.

E. Existing Driver and Operator Training = 2.50 / 5 possible points

For maximum credit, each existing driver and operator should receive 12 hours of driver/operator training per year in accordance with NFPA 1002 and NFPA 1451.

F. Training on Hazardous Materials = 0.11 / 1 possible points

For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 6 hours of training for incidents involving hazardous materials in accordance with NFPA 472.

G. Recruit Training = 3.09 / 5 possible points

For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 240 hours of structure fire related training in accordance with NFPA 1001 within the first year of employment or tenure.

H. Pre-Fire Planning Inspections = 0.00 / 12 possible points

For maximum credit, pre-fire planning inspections of each commercial, industrial, institutional, and other similar type building (all buildings except 1-4 family dwellings) should be made annually by company members. Records of inspections should include up-to-date notes and sketches.

Public Education - Fire Safety & Fire Prevention

As referenced in the Community and Local Government sections of this report, a majority of citizens (54%) think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community. Moreover, the public record shows very little evidence of any public fire safety programming. The ISO PPC Audit confirms this.

However, a search of online sources shows that the WMVFD has participated in a public fire safety event in 2016, 2017, and 2019: Public Safety Day at Chippewa Home Depot. We also point out that this event was not held in our community, for our community.

FSRC Fire Service Meeting

A stated goal of the Fire Service Review Committee has been to meet with citizens, other municipal fire service representatives, local government officials, and officers of the borough's current fire service.

Since March, the FSRC planned to meet with fire department officials during July to conclude our fourth and final phase of inquiry. At our July 8 work meeting, the committee agreed without objection to let the fire department officials decide the date, time, and location of a meeting, as long as it was before July 31. The committee also agreed that the fire department had to RSVP by July 16.

On July 9, the FSRC sent a letter to WMVFD officials detailing the committee's request asking the officers to choose—at their convenience—the date, time, and location of a meeting, with an RSVP deadline of July 16. We note that as a professional courtesy the July 9 letter also enumerated all of our questions for the WMVFD and the WMFRA (see [Appendix](#)).

On July 10, WMVFD Secretary Mike Caler replied to our request stating that he would not be at the meeting and that two days was not enough time for the fire service officials to plan for the meeting. In response, we reiterated that fire department officials had the opportunity to choose the date, time, and location for our meeting before July 31, with an RSVP deadline of July 16.

On July 12, the FSRC repeated its request of the fire department during our report to Council. Fire Chief Lou Little stated that he had seen FSRC's letter and asked when FSRC wanted to meet. The committee again reiterated that fire department officials had the opportunity to choose the date, time, and location for our meeting before July 31, with an RSVP deadline of July 16.

By July 16, fire department officials failed to acknowledge the committee's firm RSVP deadline.

On July 24, Fire Chief Lou Little contacted the committee asking when the FSRC wanted to meet with fire department officials. We reiterated that since July 9 fire department officials had the opportunity to

choose the date, time, and location for the FSRC meeting as long as it was before July 31; fire department officials failed to provide such information. Moreover, we reiterated that the RSVP deadline of July 16 was clearly stated in writing in our original written correspondence of July 9, reiterated to Secretary Caler on July 10, and once again repeated at the Council meeting on July 11; fire department officials failed to respond. As a result, there would be no FSRC fire service meeting, and the committee was moving forward with other work.

The FSRC cannot speak to motives, but in our view it is concerning that WMVFD officials lacked basic comprehension of our simple meeting request.

FSRC Conclusions

1. The officers of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department (and the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association) chose not to have representation on the Fire Service Review Committee.
2. The officers of the WMVFD and WMVFRA demonstrated an unwillingness to cooperate with the Fire Service Review Committee.
3. The officers of the WMVFD have not been open and forthcoming with Council and the community regarding known public safety deficiencies and risk exposures within the borough's fire prevention and fire protection program. Note: A super majority of citizens (95%) think the borough's current fire prevention & fire protection program is insufficient and must be updated and modernized.
4. The officers of the WMVFD, who also serve on Council's Fire & Police Committee, have failed to provide Council and the community with regular, standardized, and meaningful reporting about incidents, resource utilization, competency and readiness, and other fire prevention and fire protection matters.
5. The officers of the WMVFD and the WMVFRA do not share financial information with Council or the community, especially regarding funding of fire prevention and fire protection services. Note: While a majority of citizens (58%) say they sometimes support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts, nearly a third surveyed stated that they do not or will not support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts.
6. Independent auditing of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association reveals profound organizational deficiencies and compliance issues regarding legal, operational, and administrative requirements; state aid to the WMVFRA is at risk of being withheld.
7. Between 2012-2022, the West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association reported spending a total of \$3,097 on training (6.7% of fire services expenditures). On average this amounts to only \$282 spent on training per year.
8. There is no information in the public record affirming the firefighting credentials (e.g., qualifications and certifications) of WMVFD leadership and staff. Note: A super majority of citizens surveyed (75%) think the WMVFD leadership team is not sufficiently qualified, competent, and/or able-bodied. A majority of citizens surveyed (68%) think the WMVFD firefighting staff is not sufficiently qualified, trained, and/or able-bodied.
9. Only 3 out of 13 members of WMVFD live within the borough.

10. The ISO PPC Audit recognizes 0 on-duty personnel and an average of 3 on-call personnel responding on first alarm structure fires.
11. Based on metrics found in independent auditing and other sources in the public record, the preparedness, job performance capabilities, and overall public safety readiness of the WMVFD is below average, and in many instances such as training, unacceptably poor. Note: A super majority of citizens (74%) think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD.
12. Regarding known acute and chronic problems with staffing, operations, equipment and materiel, and finances, there is no demonstrable evidence that the officers of the WMVFD have a strategic corrective or organizational improvement plan. Note: 58% of citizens think the WMVFD should have a fire service corrective action plan.
13. The officers of the WMVFD have disengaged from the community regarding fire safety and prevention public education. This finding is supported by the fire department's observable lack of public education programming, the ISO PPC audit's poor assessment of community risk reduction efforts, and community sentiment, noting that a majority of citizens (54%) think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community.
14. We underscore the finding that 73% of citizens surveyed think the community has lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD.



Recommendations to Council

At its March 7, 2024 “steering meeting,” the Fire Service Review Committee agreed that it would not put forth any recommendation to Council that did not have at least majority support from committee members. We also agreed that committee members should have the right to comment on the recommendations, and if desired, state any dissenting views.

On August 1, 2024, members of the Fire Service Review Committee met to review a list of proposed recommendations to Council. Each of the 36 recommendations was discussed, amended if necessary, and then voted on by the committee. This slate of recommendations has the unanimous approval of the committee.

The FSRC is aware that our recommendations fundamentally reform public safety in the borough by reshaping the practices of fire prevention and fire protection. This is a broad collection of action items; not all recommendations warrant immediate attention nor demand the same level of priority. However, some recommendations such as deciding the status of the borough’s current fire service do, in our opinion, demand immediate action. Fire protection—at any given moment—is a matter of life and death.

The FSRC also understands that it is now up to Council to act upon these recommendations with all its legal and legislative authority.

Call to Action

1. The FSRC recommends that Council takes these findings and recommendations seriously, as they relate directly to protecting life and property in the Borough of West Mayfield.
2. The FSRC encourages Council to prioritize and act upon these findings with urgency using all due legal and legislative authority.

Commentary: The FSRC feels strongly that the research, findings of fact, and evidence-based recommendations presented here will have been in vain if West Mayfield’s elected officials do not receive this report with serious regard for public safety and the protection of life and property. When it comes to improving public safety, Council has a legal, legislative, and moral duty to act.

Public Safety Strategic Plan

1. Council should commission a Public Safety Strategic Plan to analyze, evaluate, and integrate all areas of public safety: law enforcement, fire service, emergency management, code enforcement. This strategic plan should develop near and long-term goals and objectives related to public safety trends and funding challenges.
2. Council should appoint an ad hoc committee to develop a Public Safety Strategic Plan. This special committee should include citizen representation.

3. This topic should be codified in the FPDF Ordinance.

Commentary: Preparing and planning for public safety emergencies is an ongoing process, but the time to prepare and plan for emergencies is now, not when disasters strike. Public safety officials remind us that both natural and human-caused threats to public safety are rapidly evolving—and emergency responses need to evolve as well. Effective public safety planning for the community is not a static exercise. Instead, such planning takes active and ongoing integration and coordination of all available resources and established programs such as police, fire, EMS, emergency management, and local government leadership teams. Based on our observations, Council's lack of public safety strategic planning leaves our community unnecessarily vulnerable and at risk.

Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program

1. Council should develop a comprehensive Fire Prevention and Fire Protection Program
2. The FPDF program should be part of the Public Safety Strategic Plan and should form the blueprint for the Fire Prevention and Fire Protection Ordinance.
3. This topic should be codified in the FPDF Ordinance.

Commentary: Our current fire service provider is only part of our total municipal fire prevention and fire protection program. One way to understand and evaluate this program is through our community's ISO Public Protection Classification audit that examines our fire department, water supply and fire hydrant system, and community risk reduction efforts such as fire prevention education efforts. We can also examine our borough's fire-related ordinances for how current, complete, and responsive they are to the public safety demands of today. And because budgets reveal priorities, we can also examine our fire prevention and fire protection program by the amount of financial resources devoted to it. And finally, we can learn a lot about our fire prevention and fire protection program by assessing and evaluating Council's public safety leadership role, oversight practices, and accountability standards. It is our observation that for each of these areas mentioned, the borough's fire prevention and fire protection program is inadequate.

Ordinances

1. Update & Recodification Process - Council should prioritize and expedite the recodification of borough ordinances related to all fire prevention and fire protection.
2. Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Ordinance - The FPDF ordinance should be comprehensive, including sections and clauses such as oversight and accountability, public safety reporting, Escrow Ordinance, special fire police, adoption of International Fire Code, etc.
3. Council should task the Ordinance Committee to manage this project, establishing a project management framework to complete this task within six months, in consultation with the Public

Safety Committee, Budget & Finance Committee, code enforcement team, borough Secretary-Treasurer, Mayor, and representatives of the fire service.

4. The Ordinance Committee should consult with the Pa Dept. of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and fire service professionals with municipal experience and expertise.

Commentary: Borough ordinances are laws enacted by Council establishing, among other things, rules for how local government operates. Once enacted, local officials are required to abide by such laws, which makes public safety ordinances particularly impactful; they can't be ignored under penalty of law. But most important, public safety ordinances make explicit the expected duties and obligations of local officials. It is our observation that borough ordinances currently fail to adequately define our elected officials' duties and obligations regarding a wide range of fire prevention and fire protection matters, from conducting meaningful appropriations and budgeting processes, vetting and ratifying mutual aid agreements, exerting oversight authority, and setting accountability standards for public safety officials and agencies.

Public Safety Leadership

1. Public Safety Committee - Council should create a Public Safety Committee to oversee all fire prevention and fire protection (FPFP) matters. A citizen representative should serve on the Public Safety Committee.
2. Council should set a municipal standard of eligibility for fire service members receiving taxpayer-funded workers compensation insurance coverage. Coverage eligibility should be predicated on credentials, training, physical fitness qualifications, and other necessary attributes.
3. Council should require all designated special fire police officers of its fire service to be confirmed by the Mayor prior to entering service.
4. This topic should be codified in the FPFP Ordinance.

Commentary: Local government officials and public safety personnel are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring municipal emergency response capabilities and readiness. Our fire prevention and fire protection public safety program requires effective leadership that can routinely oversee and actively assess and evaluate all fire-related matters. We also need public safety leadership that sets public safety performance standards, insists on credentialing requirements, and requires rigorous training protocols. And finally, the borough needs public safety leaders who are accountable to Council, citizens, and taxpayers of the borough through regular, meaningful, and transparent readiness reporting.

Public Safety-Fire Readiness Reporting

1. Council should require a standardized Public Safety-Fire report that includes summaries of incidents, organizational operations, financial expenditures, and any other relevant topics of governmental and public interest.
2. The Public Safety-Fire report should be submitted in writing at each monthly Council meeting.
3. A Public Safety-Fire annual summary report should be submitted in writing to council during January of each year.
4. ISO PPC Audit - Council should receive a true and complete copy of the ISO PPC audits as they become available. These findings should be entered into the public record. The Public Safety Committee should be tasked to analyze the ISO PPC findings and to create a corrective action plan.
5. This topic should be codified in the FPPF Ordinance.

Commentary: Meaningful, open, and transparent public safety reporting is critical if elected leaders and citizens are to understand the borough's actual firefighting capabilities and readiness. Such reporting also provides awareness and accountability over how taxpayers' monies and other vital resources are spent on public safety needs, such as supporting the borough's fire service.

Fiscal Management and Budget

1. A Public Safety Committee should be responsible for creating the Public Safety-Fire budget.
2. The Public Safety-Fire appropriations process should start in September each year.
3. The Public Safety-Fire section of the budget should include all FPPF revenue and expenditures, such as the annual cost of fire hydrants and fire department workers compensation insurance premiums.
4. The Public Safety-Fire section of the annual financial audit should include the expenditure for fire department workers compensation insurance
5. Public Safety-Fire appropriations must be demonstrated as need-based and/or based on a pattern of actual past spending.
6. Public Safety-Fire budget submitted to Council's budget committee in writing.
7. This topic should be codified in the FPPF Ordinance.

Commentary: During our conversations with neighboring municipal fire services, the FSRC learned of the incredible rising costs fire departments are facing to modernize their apparatus and equipment, train firefighters appropriately, and to provide firefighting and other life-sustaining services consistent with national technical standards and codes of professionalism. Today, our municipality must rethink and reformulate how it can sufficiently fund not only these operational costs of our current fire service, but also how we can afford our community's overall fire prevention and fire protection program—which includes improving firefighting infrastructure, fire-safety public education, and our ISO PPC rating that affects citizens' fire insurance rates. Conversely, our municipality must consider cost cutting: evaluating all discretionary spending, eliminating expenditures not justified as need-based or yielding little to no return as a public safety investment.

Municipal Fire Service

1. Council should professionalize the relationship between the municipality and its fire service provider, requiring a legal agreement defining the terms and conditions of the relationship.
2. Council should move to decertify the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and outsource the borough's fire service.
3. Council should move to consider joining a fire district.
4. This topic should be codified in the FPPF Ordinance.

Commentary: The FSRC takes a pragmatic approach when considering our current fire service provider. Our guiding question: By contracting with the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, is Council providing citizens with the best possible fire prevention and fire protection service provider? As discussed in this report, the FSRC reviewed and documented a wider range of evidence gathered from the community, surrounding fire departments, local government, and the fire department. After careful contemplation of our findings—which includes serious consideration of future public safety needs of the borough—we conclude that Council has the legal and legislative authority, financial means, and the moral obligation to provide our citizens with more capable, competent, and effective fire protection. A preponderance of the evidence convinces us that the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department is—and has been for many years—incapable of providing sufficient fire protection services needed by our citizens. Moreover, based on history we reject as folly the hope that the WMVFD could meet the necessary expectations of a serious corrective action plan. As we have stated before, fire prevention and fire protection is about saving lives and property. Therefore, we strongly encourage Council to move forward with providing the citizens of West Mayfield with an alternative fire protection service.

Community

1. Public Education - Fire Safety & Prevention: Council should mandate a community focused fire prevention/fire safety education program.

2. Citizen Involvement - Public Safety Committee Representation: Council should create a seat on the Public Safety Committee for citizen representation.
3. Community Outreach & Advice: Council should seek the community's input regarding any future decision regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters.
4. This topic should be codified in the FPPF Ordinance.

Commentary: Public safety is everyone's concern, but we must provide the opportunities for everyone to get involved and have a voice in public safety matters. Mutual aid is more than just a practice among fire departments; it is also a communal mindset arising from the fundamental notion that we are all better off when we openly communicate, cooperate, and share resources with each other. The FSRC strongly recommends that Council reimagines the ways in which borough citizens, municipal neighbors, local government officials, and our fire service professionals work together to ensure that we all benefit from the best possible fire prevention and fire protection programs we deserve.



Conclusion

We recognize that not everyone may agree with the premise of the Fire Service Review Committee. For some, the committee has been unnecessary: *Sure the fire department has problems, but it just needs to be fixed, somehow . . . Everything is just fine in the borough . . . This trouble-making is just a vendetta against the fire department . . . This is nothing but a witch hunt.*

We also recognize that not everyone may agree with the committee's constitution, methodology, or its direct approach to conducting business. We did the best we could to overcome resistance and barriers to our work, including willful non-cooperation and obvious attempts by some to stonewall, discredit our findings, or impugn our motives.

We recognize that some may not agree with our conclusions and recommendations, finding them to be unsubstantiated, unnecessary, or unaffordable. However, the committee's findings prove otherwise; our recommendations are evidenced, warranted, and economically practicable.

Through our findings it is our hope that citizens have a more accurate and complete understanding of our borough's fire prevention and fire protection issues, ongoing problems that affect public safety and pose potential threats to life and property, as well as affecting property values and fire insurance costs.

However, our greatest hope is that our findings will inspire citizens to demand meaningful and transformative changes to our fire prevention and fire protection program. Council not only has the moral obligation to act, but also the legal, legislative, and financial ability to improve public safety in our community. This process begins when Council takes action.

But does Council have the will to act?

We strongly encourage the Mayor, members of Council, municipal officers, fire service officers, emergency management coordinators, and all citizens of the borough to read this report in its entirety and to give it serious consideration.

Meanwhile, the members of the Fire Service Review Committee thank Council for the opportunity to serve our community.



FSRC Committee Signatories & Comments

Hon. Licia Cogley, Mayor

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Kevin Farkas, Citizen Co-Chair

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report. Let me be the first to recognize a debt of gratitude we owe to the members of our volunteer fire department for their many years of public safety service to our community. In particular, Fire Chief Lou Little, Assistant Fire Chief Wendy Harker, and former Fire Chief and Life Member Bill Heaton deserve special recognition for their many years of dedication to the WMVFD. It is time to recognize that we live in a new era requiring us to do public safety differently. To achieve this, we must become forward thinking, remain hopeful, and work harder and smarter to create a fire prevention and fire protection program that better serves and protects our community.

Hon. Janet Helbig, Council Co-Chair

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Jan Johnston-Szopo, Citizen

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Janet Jurich Pico, Citizen

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Bob Kaib, Citizen

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report. I feel that during the eight months of this process, the WMVFD offered no opinions or input while they had the opportunity to discuss the matter with us. This shows their lack of professionalism and caring for

the citizens of West Mayfield Borough. After a thorough review of the Borough records, I feel it would be beneficial to the citizens of West Mayfield to look into another fire service and join a fire district. We would have much better service and protection. I feel it is now time for Council to look at this report and do what is best for the citizens.

Tracy Popovich, Citizen

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Hon. Jeffry Seybert, Council

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Hon. Bob Tate, President of Council, Ex-official Member

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report.

Sue Wood, Citizen

I agree with the findings of fact and recommendations of this report. This committee work has been a huge learning experience for me. I always took emergency management and fire safety management for granted and assumed safety to be a given in my community. Now I realize the immense undertaking that my personal safety in a fire or other disaster involves. The facts, figures, strengths, and weaknesses outlined in our 8 months of work makes it clear to me that we as a community need to take immediate steps to ensure our safety and the safety of neighbors, particularly the elderly and vulnerable. I fully support the conclusions this committee has arrived at and I am willing to continue to be involved in bringing West Mayfield into a position of providing a level of fire service protection it needs and deserves.



Acknowledgements

Because public safety is our community's top priority, the Fire Service Review Committee commends Council for recognizing the seriousness of citizens' concerns and for having the will to create the FSRC to review the borough's public safety fire prevention and fire protection program.

We are grateful to borough citizens, elected and appointed government officials, and representatives from our neighboring municipalities who participated in our surveys, listening events, direct interviews, public inquiry meetings, and data collection efforts. We also recognize Borough Secretary-Treasurer Pat Lansberry for promptly responding to the committee's RTKL requests. Tax-Collector Kathleen Brewer and citizen Nora Soos were also very helpful to the committee.

We especially thank the following fire service leaders, industry professionals, and advisors for their time and effort educating the committee about current trends, conditions, and needs of firefighting and our fire service ecosystem: Thomas Cook (Pa State Fire Commissioner); Daniel P. Wauthier (Fire Peer Consultant, Governor's Center for Local Government Services), Timothy L. DeFoor (Pa Auditor General), Fire Chief Adam Crepp (Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Department); Fire Chief Alan DeSanzo (Homewood Volunteer Fire Department); Fire Chief Mark Stowe, Captain Crawford (City of Beaver Falls Fire Department); Mayor Athena Pangikas-Miller (Koppel Borough), Mayor Mark Benes (New Galilee Borough); Fire Chief Paul Bock, President Eric Bock, Lt. David Barns (New Brighton Volunteer Fire Department); Fire Chief Jason Medlin and firefighters (Patterson Heights Volunteer Fire Department); Paul Farkas (former Fire Chief, WMVFD); Ryan Soisson (Firefighter-Chippewa Volunteer Fire Department, Fire Hydrant Technician-Beaver Falls Water Authority); and Cynthia Maahs-Knobbs (ISO Control Analyst, ISO National Processing Center).



Distribution List

The Fire Service Review Committee Final Report has been distributed to following:

Licia Cogley
Mayor of West Mayfield

Robert Tate
President of Council

Bill Heaton
Member of Council, Fire & Police Committee

Jason Heaton
Member of Council, Fire & Police Committee

Janet Helbig
Member of Council

Lou Little
Member of Council, Fire & Police Committee

Jeffrey Seybert
Member of Council

Jacob Tate
Member of Council

Pat Lasberry
Borough Secretary-Treasurer

Joseph Budicak, Esq.
Borough Solicitor

Lou Little
Fire Chief & President, West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department

Wendy Harker
President, West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association

This report is a matter of public record and it is available at [FSRC Online](https://www.westmayfieldborough.us/fire-service-review-committee-fsrc/)
(<https://www.westmayfieldborough.us/fire-service-review-committee-fsrc/>).

Questions about this report can be directed to Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair (email: farkas.kj@gmail.com).

Appendices

Appendix A: Fire Service Review Committee

FSRC Gazette

February 8, 2024: Council votes unanimously to create the Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC)

February 15, 2024: Council president Tate tasks Kevin Farkas to constitute a committee. Outreach begins. Informal invitation sent via social media to WMVFD Chief Lou Little, c/o WMVFD secretary Mike Caler, seeking fire dept. representation on the committee. Outreach and follow up on referrals re: interested citizens and Council members.

February 23, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* sent to committee members. Formal letter sent via social media to WMVFD Chief Lou Little, c/o WMVFD secretary Mike Caler, seeking fire dept. representation on the committee.

February 29, 2024: FSRC launches its committee webpage on the borough's website.

March 1, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

March 7, 2024: FSRC holds first in-person "steering" meeting.

[Letter](#) sent via first class mail to WMVFD Chief Lou Little, c/o WMVFD secretary Mike Caler, seeking fire dept. representation on the committee.

March 8, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

March 14, 2024: FSRC citizen-co chair Kevin Farkas delivers committee progress report to Council. Formal in-person request made to WMVFD Chief Lou Little seeking fire dept. representation on the committee by March 28, 2024. Also, a request was made to WMVFD Chief Lou Little seeking a complete and unabridged copy of the latest ISO fire rating audit by March 28, 2024.

March 15, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

March 16, 2024: WMVFD submits nominations for FSRC representation: Michael Caler, Wendy Harker, Jamie Hoskinson.

March 20, 2024: Committee sends [letter](#) via first class mail

to WMVFD Chief Lou Little, c/o WMVFD secretary Mike Caler, in response to the fire department's accommodation requests.

March 22, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

March 29, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

April 4, 2024: FSRC holds April in-person work meeting.

April 5, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

April 6, 2024: FSRC makes available Community Survey ([online](#) and [in print](#)), publishes [FSRC Flyer](#)

April 11, 2024: FSRC citizen-co chair Kevin Farkas delivers committee progress report to Council. Borough solicitor Joe Budicak presents Council with a memo clarifying the legal and statutory relationship between borough government and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department.

April 12, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

April 15, 2024: FSRC sends [letter](#) to Insurance Service Organization (ISO) Verisk seeking PPC report.

April 16, 2024: FSRC receives from Verisk West Mayfield's [Public Protection Classification Summary Report](#), commonly known as the ISO Fire Rating.

April 19, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

April 23, 2024: FSRC sets up a Community Survey table at the fire department on election day.

April 24, 2024: FSRC holds a Community Listening event.

April 26, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

April 27, 2024: FSRC holds a Community Listening event.

May 2, 2024: FSRC holds May in-person work meeting.

May 3, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

May 9, 2024: FSRC citizen-co chair Kevin Farkas delivers committee progress report to Council.

May 10, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

May 14, 2024: FSRC begins interview process with neighboring municipal fire services.

May 17, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

May 18, 2024: FSRC receives multi-year fire hydrant data from Beaver Falls Water Authority.

May 23, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

May 28, 2024: FSRC conducts interview with Chief Adam Crepp, Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Department.

May 31, 2024: FSRC conducts interview with Fire Chief Alan DeSanzo, Homewood Volunteer Fire Department. FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

June 4, 2024: FSRC attends Koppel Borough Council meeting to hear presentation regarding the developing local fire district.

June 5, 2024: FSRC conducts interviews with Fire Chief Mark Stowe, Beaver Falls Fire Department and Fire Chief Jason Medlin and FFs of Patterson Heights Volunteer Fire Department.

June 6, 2024: FSRC holds June in-person work meeting.

June 7, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

June 9, 2024: FSRC receives [WMVFD roster](#) (January 24, 2023) submitted to the borough's workers compensation insurance carrier.

June 10, 2024: FSRC sends borough officials [formal invitation](#) to FSRC Local Government fact-finding meeting to be held June 19, 2024. FSRC conducts interviews with Deputy Fire Chief Paul Bock, president & Asst. Chief Eric Bock of New Brighton Volunteer Fire Department.

June 13, 2024: FSRC citizen-co chair Kevin Farkas delivers committee progress report to Council.

June 14, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

June 17, 2024: FSRC sends borough officials [courtesy questions](#) for the FSRC Local Government fact-finding meeting to be held June 19, 2024.

June 19, 2024: FSRC holds a public meeting with local government officials. [See the FSRC findings.](#)

June 21, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

June 22, 2024: FSRC makes public records requests seeking a lease agreement, verification of special fire police, and records pertaining to fire department workers compensation insurance.

June 26, 2024: Borough Secretary-Treasurer requests a 30-day extension to complete FSRC's public records request.

June 28, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

July 8, 2024: FSRC holds July in-person work meeting.

July 9, 2024: Borough Secretary-Treasurer requests a 30-day extension to complete FSRC's July 5, 2024 public records request.

July 11, 2024: FSRC citizen-co chair Kevin Farkas delivers committee progress report to Council.

July 12, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

July 16, 2024: RSVP deadline for FSRC fact-finding meeting with WMVFD and WMFRA: No response from organizations.

July 19, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

July 24, 2024: FSRC submits RTKL request for 2023 Annual Municipal Audit.

July 26, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

July 29, 2024: FSRC submits RTKL request for municipal expenditures for WMVFD vehicle insurance for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024.

August 1, 2024: FSRC holds August in-person work meeting.

August 15, 2024: FSRC citizen-co chair Kevin Farkas delivers committee progress report to council. Status of committee: The FSRC is on track and on schedule.

August 16, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

August 23, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

August 30, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

September 4, 2024: FSRC sends [letter](#) to WMVFD requesting copy of its "fact sheet" distributed to the community on September 3, 2024.

September 5, 2024: FSRC holds September in-person work meeting.

September 6, 2024: FSRC sends *Friday Update* report to committee members.

September 7, 2024: FSRC publicly releases its Final Report, available on [FSRC Online-Final Report to Council & Citizens](#).

September 12, 2024: FSRC Citizen Co-Chair Kevin Farkas delivers final committee progress report to council.

Invitation Letter: To WMVFD Regarding Representation on FSRC

Janet Helbig, Council Co-Chair

Kevin Farkas, Citizen Co-Chair

West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee

4609 W. 8th Ave, Beaver Falls, PA 15010

[FSRS Online](#)

February 22, 2024

Lou Little, President and Fire Chief
West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department
706 37th St Ext., Beaver Falls, PA 15010

RE: Open Letter: WMVFD Participation and Representation, West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC)

Dear Fire Chief Little,

On February 8, 2024, West Mayfield council unanimously passed a general motion authorizing the creation of an ad hoc committee to review the borough's current fire service and to report to council within six months its findings of fact and recommendations. During deliberation over this motion, council president Bob Tate invited fire department representatives to sit on the committee so that the fire department's interests and expertise will be fairly and accurately accounted for in the review process.

It is a stated operational goal and serious ethical commitment of the FSRC to be open and transparent with our fact-finding, especially when it comes to information and data available through public records. On this we should all agree. However, we recognize that not all members of the committee may agree on how facts and data should be interpreted. Therefore, every FSRC member will have a chance to voice agreement with or opposition to the committee's final conclusions and recommendations.

In the end, we aim to provide a meaningful report to the citizens that is factual, evidence-based, rational, and obviously useful in their discussions over our present and future fire protection and fire service concerns. The West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department should have a voice in these discussions.

Although we have informally reached out to one of your administrative officers seeking WMVFD participation on the FSRC, we'd like to take this opportunity to formally invite you to nominate up to three representatives of your organization not currently serving on council to take seats on this working committee, one of which shall serve as the WMVFD Co-Chair.

We respectfully ask that you respond to this request by March 22, 2024.

Sincerely,



Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair

Response Letter: To WMVFD Regarding Participation Issues

Janet Helbig, Council Co-Chair | Kevin Farkas, Citizen Co-Chair
West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee
4609 W. 8th Ave, Beaver Falls, PA 15010
[FSRC Online](#)

NOTICE: Official correspondence of the Fire Service Review Committee may be regarded as part of the public record.

March 20, 2024

Lou Little, President and Fire Chief
c/o Michael Caler, WMVFD Secretary
West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department
706 37th St Ext., Beaver Falls, PA 15010

RE: Response to WMVFD accommodation requests regarding representation on FSRC, and other issues.

Dear Fire Chief Little,

On March 16, 2024, we received a communique from WMVFD secretary Mike Caler via the West Mayfield Fire Department Facebook group in response to FSRC's request for WMVFD representation on the committee. Here is the complete message chain:

Mike Caler: Hey Kevin, So talking to Lou yesterday, it looks like it will be me, Wendy and Jamie as the representatives for the committee. But the three of us were talking, if Lou and Billy are not allowed to be on the committee because of being on council and in fire dept. we feel that Bob shouldn't be on it because he's president of council. Kind of a conflict of interest in our eyes, besides he made the motion. Let's keep this as fair as possible and not a witch hunt to do damage to the people that protect the borough.

Kevin Farkas: Thanks for the response Mike. I appreciate your thoughts on these matters. I will have a response from the committee in the near future. I have a question for those who would be on the committee: The FSRC has agreed to meet on the first Thursday of each month to prepare for the month and to consolidate our report to council the following week. How does this schedule work for your group?

Mike Caler: That won't work until after May 2 of us bowl on Thursdays[.] And I also think we should have some input into what citizens will be on this committee. It can't be the ones that are just against the fire department.

We are appreciative of the nominations you've put forward to represent the fire department. We look forward to working with Mike Caler, Wendy Harker, and Jamie Hoskinson. As for the other issues raised in your communication to us, here are our responses:

Fire Service Review Committee | Page 1

Limiting the number of council members on the FSRC

Having council representation on the Fire Service Review Committee is part of our mandate. Specifically, having no more than 3 council members on borough committees is standard practice in West Mayfield and in boroughs across the Commonwealth to avoid quorum issues. In most cases committees are working groups, not deliberative bodies empowered to make decisions. This holds true for the Fire Service Review Committee. We have achieved our objective of seating three councilmembers. Therefore, the committee's current council cohort will stand at three.

Request to remove Bob Tate from the FSRC

As duly elected president of council, Bob Tate is considered an ex-officio member of the FSRC. In that capacity, president Tate has a right to be seated on the committee and his council leadership position offers us necessary advice and counsel. Therefore, we find no professional conflict of interest and by authority of council president Tate will remain on the FSRC.

Assertion that president Bob Tate made the motion to form the FSRC

It is customary practice that the president of council does not make motions; however, it is also customary practice for presidents to suggest motions, which councilmembers may or may not consider at their discretion. Regarding the formation of the FSRC on February 8, 2024, president Tate did raise the issue and asked for a motion. Meeting minutes show that councilmember Seybert laid the motion on the table, duly seconded by councilmember J. Tate. More importantly, after sufficient deliberation the motion to create the Fire Service Review Committee was unanimously approved by council. It should be noted that councilmembers Heaton and Little (both members of the WMVFD) voted in favor of the motion. Therefore, we find the assertion that president Tate made the motion to form the FSRC to be factually incorrect, but also without relevance to the work of the committee.

Request to alter FSRC meeting dates to accommodate WMVFD

As per the February 8, 2024 motion (see meeting minutes), an effort to populate the FSRC with representation from council, citizens, and WMVFD began on February 15, one week after the committee was created. Within days the FSRC seated a sufficient number of councilmembers and citizens. In total, we extended invitations seeking representation to WMVFD on February 15, February 23, March 7, and March 14. On March 16, the WMVFD informed the committee of their chosen representatives.

While the FSRC waited to hear from the WMVFD, those councilmembers and citizens who had already joined the committee decided that it was in the best interest of the committee to begin their work. The members agreed to hold an "in-person" steering meeting on March 7 to discuss the FSRC mission, goals, objectives, and to prepare for the committee's obligatory

report to council on March 14.

It is our understanding from Mr. Caler's communique (see above) that two WMVFD representatives can not attend these meetings until after May because of previous recreational commitments. In this case, we encourage one WMVFD representative to attend the FSRC meeting. Also, you might consider appointing stand-ins from among the other WMVFD leadership, such as Line Officers 1st Lt. Imogene Harker or 2nd Lt. Scotty Maxwell, Fire Administration Treasurer Eli Kosanovich, or WM Firemen's Relief Association Administration Vice President Denise Sabella or Treasurer Ron Sano.

Therefore, the committee understands that from time to time not all members may be able to attend the monthly "in-person" meeting on the first Thursday of each month. However, it is the consensus among committee members that our regular "in-person" meeting dates will stand on the first Thursday of each month.

WMVFD "input into what citizens will be on this committee"

We want all FSRC citizen representatives to have a voice; however, we do not expect all members to agree on all issues. Dissent and disagreements with our methodology, findings, and conclusions will be duly noted as part of the public record. Regardless of personal experiences, opinions, or biases each citizen representative on the Fire Service Review Committee has resolved to stay true to the committee's mission, goals, and objectives. Each pledges to proceed fairly in our rigorous investigation and fact-finding regarding all aspects of the borough's fire prevention and fire protection situation. Each has resolved to make reasoned, evidenced-based recommendations to council. Therefore, the FSRC has full faith and confidence in the current citizen cohort seated on the committee.

Chief Little, we hope you understand our thinking on the matters above; you have every right to disagree. However, the FSRC is moving forward with its work and it is time for the WMVFD representatives to take their seats on the committee. The "Committee Membership" roster on the borough's website has been updated to include Michael Caler, Wendy Harker, and Jamie Hoskinson as WMVFD representatives. We look forward to welcoming these representatives (or their surrogates) at our next FSRC meeting in council chambers at 6pm, Thursday, April 4, 2024.

Sincerely,

Janet Helbig, FSRC Council Co-Chair

Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair

Request Letter: To Verisk for ISO PPC Audit

West Mayfield Borough

Beaver County



Pennsylvania

4609 WEST EIGHTH AVE., BEAVER FALLS, PA 15010

PATRICIA LANSBERRY

SECRETARY

Verisk
Cynthia Maahs-Knobbs, IAAI-CFI, CFPS
PPC Quality Control Analyst
ISO National Processing Center
Email: Cynthia.Maahs-Knobbs@verisk.com

Re: ISO Fire Rating report for the Borough of West Mayfield

Dear Ms. Maahs-Knobbs,

We are seeking a copy of our community's ISO Fire Rating report, as a request for this information is not forthcoming from our municipal fire service provider, the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department.

Please advise us as to the process of obtaining this report. If you require any further information from us, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Licia Cogley, Mayor
(724) 650-5464
licialicia5464@gmail.com
WestMayfieldBorough.us

Robert Tate, President of Council
(724) 494-1223
rtate3631@comcast.net
WestMayfieldBorough.us

Request Letter: To WMVFD Regarding Fact Sheet Distributed to Community

9/4/24, 9:31 AM

Gmail - Request Copy: WMVFD Community Letter



Kevin Farkas <farkas.kj@gmail.com>

Request Copy: WMVFD Community Letter

1 message

Kevin Farkas <farkas.kj@gmail.com>

Wed, Sep 4, 2024 at 9:27 AM

To: wmfvd99@gmail.com

Cc: Bob Kaib <imaseminole@comcast.net>, Kevin Farkas <farkas.kj@gmail.com>, Janet Helbig <jan3455@comcast.net>, Bob Tate <rtate3631@comcast.net>, Janet Jurich Pico <jkpico1@comcast.net>, Jeffrey Seybert <jeff.seybert@aol.com>, Jan Johnston-Szopo <jans8216@comcast.net>, Tracy Popovich <popovichcr@gmail.com>, Sue Wood <istvanwood@yahoo.com>, Licia Cogley <licialicia5464@gmail.com>

West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department,
Attention: Mike Caler, Secretary

Mike, it has come to the attention of the Fire Service Review Committee that on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, members of the fire department were canvassing the borough discussing the future of the fire department, as well as conveying information about the FSRC.

It is also our understanding that the fire department was distributing a "fact sheet" to citizens outlining a range of concerns and issues important to the fire department. The letter begins as follows:

A committee in the borough is trying to Dec-Certification the West Mayfield Vol. Fire Dept. In doing so they will go outside the borough to obtain fire coverage from another department. This will end up costing all borough citizens more money to get less services.

The FSRC respects the fire department's right to advocate on its own behalf. In fact, we encourage it. So, consistent with our policy of open and transparent communication with the community, we respectfully request a copy of your community letter so that we may enter it into FSRC's Final Report as a matter of public record. In doing so, we hope your point-of-view will be more widely known and understood by the community.

Because we are under deadline to complete our report, **we would like to have a copy of the letter provided no later than Friday, September 6, 2024.** If possible, we would prefer a clear and readable scan or pdf copy of the letter via email (or Facebook Messenger).

If you have any questions or concerns about our request to provide the WMVFD a chance to publish its community letter, please don't hesitate to contact me. More importantly, if you have no desire to provide us with a copy of your community letter to include in our reporting, please confirm this with us.

Sincerely,

Kevin Farkas
FSRC Citizen Co-Chair

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=9f6510ce7b&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-a:r6189667385042177250&simpl=msg-a:r534855305408780...> 1/1

FSRC Public Outreach & Communications

In-Person

- FSRC Monthly Work Sessions (7 meetings, public)
- FSRC Monthly Reports to Council (7 reports, public)
- Direct Community Contact
 - 2024-04-23: Survey Solicitation/Canvassing (public)
 - 2024-04-24: Community Listening Session (public)
 - 2024-04-27: Community Listening Session (public)
 - 2024-06-19: Local Government Meeting (public)
 - 2024-07: Fire Service Meeting (no response from WMVFD)

Website

- *FSRC Online* (Official committee page on Borough website)
 - FSRC Calendar (public)
 - FSRC Gazette (daily activities) (public)
 - Published Research & Findings (public)

Social Media

- West Mayfield Borough (Facebook page) (public)
 - 2024-04-06: Community Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-04-15: Community Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-04-23: Community Survey & FSRC Flyer (promotional)
 - 2024-04-24: Community Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-04-30: Citizens participating in Fire Service Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-09-07: Fire Service Review Committee Releases Final Report (informational)
- Concerned Citizens of West Mayfield (Facebook group) (public)
 - 2024-02-24: FSRC Leading By Example (informational)
 - 2024-03-08: Fire Service Review Committee Update (informational)
 - 2024-04-06: Community Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-04-07: FSRC Flyer (informational)
 - 2024-04-23: Community Survey & FSRC Flyer (promotional)
 - 2024-04-24: Community Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-04-25: Borough Residents Your Voice Matters (promotional)
 - 2024-04-30: Citizens participating in Fire Service Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-05-14: Community Survey (promotional)
 - 2024-06-01: Local Government Review: Fire Prevention & Fire Protection (informational)
 - 2024-06-23: Preliminary Findings - Local Government (informational)
 - 2024-06-25: FSRC Focuses on the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and the West Mayfield Fireman's Relief Association (informational)
 - 2024-07-10: FSRC Nears Completion (informational)
 - 2024-07-18: September 2024: FSRC Final Report (informational)
 - 2024-08-02: Leaning Into the Future (informational)
 - 2024-08-08: FSRC Response to post, "Is This True" (informational)
 - 2024-09-10: Challenging the WMVFD "Facts" (informational)
 - 2024-09-07: Fire Service Review Committee Releases Final Report (informational)

Fire Service Review Committee

Licia Cogley, mayor
Kevin Farkas, citizens co-chair
Janet Helbig, council co-chair
Jan Johnston-Szopo
Janet Jurich Pico
Bob Kaib
Tracy Popovich
Jeff Seybert, councilmember
Bob Tate, council president
Sue Wood

Visit Us Online
FSRC Committee
WestMayfieldBorough.us

Direct Committee Contacts

Janet Helbig
jan3455@comcast.net | 724-846-0881

Licia Cogley
licialicia5464@gmail.com | 724-650-5464

Kevin Farkas
farkas.kj@gmail.com | 412-423-8034

FSRC Flyer 1

Informational Flyer

Fire Service Review Committee

Ad Hoc Committee of Council
Est. February 2024

The mission of the Fire Service Review Committee is to analyze and evaluate West Mayfield's current fire service, and to report its findings of fact and evidence-based recommendations to council

What's Happening Now

FSRC Working Meetings
1st Thursday/Month, 6p-7p, Council Chambers

Community Survey
Online / Print
Get a Survey, Tuesday, April 23 at the WMVFD

Listening Sessions
Wednesday, April 24, 5p-8p, Council Chambers
Saturday, April 27, 5p-8p, Council Chambers

The Borough of



West Mayfield

FSRC CALENDAR

FEBRUARY
Council unanimously passes motion to create FSRC
Representatives invited from council, citizens, WMVFD
FSRC webpage created to inform citizens

MARCH - Focus on Goals & Objectives
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council

APRIL - Focus on Community
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council
Community Survey (online & print)
Survey Table at Election
Listening Sessions, Interviews

MAY - Focus on Fire Service Ecosystem
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council
Community Survey (online & print)
Listening Sessions, Interviews

JUNE - Focus on Local Government
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council
Listening Sessions, Interviews

JULY - Focus on WMVFD
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council
Listening Sessions, Interviews

AUGUST
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council
Preliminary Findings & Recommendations

SEPTEMBER
FSRC Working Session & Report to Council
Final Report

Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Topics Under Review

Borough Government | Current Fire Service
Fire Service Ecosystem | Community

Elected Leadership, Duties & Obligations, Oversight & Accountability, Ordinances & Regulations, Taxpayer Funding & Support, ISO Fire Ratings, Workers Compensation, Insurance & Bonding Payments, Foreign Fire Insurance Premiums, Fire Service Leadership & Staffing, Training & Qualifications, Equipment Readiness, Job Performance, Professionalism, Financial Sustainability, Fundraising Efforts, Grant Funding, Firemen's Relief Association, Inspector General Audits, Community Outreach & Public Education, Fire Police, Mutual Aid Agreements, Working Relationships with Other Fire Departments, Current & Future Fire Service Trends, Mergers & Regionalization, Community Faith & Trust, Corrective Action Plans, Decertification, Fire Service Outsourcing, Ballot Initiatives, and many other topics.

Your Voice Matters

Community Survey
Take the FSRC Community Survey online or download and print. Paper surveys available upon request.

Public Listening Sessions
Provide comments and share experiences at one of our public listening sessions.

Share Information
Share information about fire prevention & fire protection issues by contacting FSRC directly.

It is the policy of the FSRC: All comments will be preserved as part of the public record. However, when presenting our findings to the public we may use editorial discretion to curtail redundant, irrelevant, inappropriate, or legally concerning comments. We do not accept anonymous comments so that we might be able to follow up for clarification or additional information.

FSRC Final Report

Page 135 of 243

Invitation Letter: Fire Service Ecosystem Participants



Paul Bock, Chief
New Brighton Borough Volunteer Fire Department
610 3rd Ave., New Brighton, PA 15066

Dear Chief Bock:

Respectfully, the [West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee \(FSRC\)](#) is interested in learning from our neighboring municipal fire services about fire prevention & fire protection matters affecting your community.

In particular, we are interested in better understanding the following topics and your thoughts and practices around these important issues:

1. Effective leadership, training, qualifications/certifications
2. Standards of operations and job performance
3. Recruitment & retention of first responders
4. Community engagement (fire education, social/civic activities)
5. Financial support (fundraising, government grants, municipal contributions)
6. Relationship with your local government and mutual aid fire departments
7. Future of local volunteer fire departments (sustainability, regionalization, professionalization)

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN ASSIST US

At your convenience, we would like to meet informally in person with you and other representatives of your fire department to have a conversation about these important topics. We believe your practical experience can provide our committee with valuable information and critical insight regarding how your fire department, local government, and residents are engaging fire prevention and fire protection matters in your community.

To help us better organize the many conversations we are having with local fire departments and first responders, we have a short online contact form. Please let us know what date and time is convenient to meet with us, perhaps at your fire station.

Please contact us here: <https://forms.gle/vecbHT459g8yWeAQA>

If you have any questions or concerns about meeting with us, or about our Fire Service Review Committee, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair
farkas.kj@gmail.com
412-423-8034

ABOUT FSRC

In February 2024, the Borough of West Mayfield council unanimously passed a motion creating the Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC). The mission of the committee is to analyze and evaluate West Mayfield's current fire service within the context of the borough's fire prevention and fire protection program, and to report its findings of fact and evidence-based recommendations to council.

Invitation Letter: Local Government Officials

Borough of West Mayfield
Mayor
Members of Council
Secretary-Treasurer
Code Enforcement Officers
Solicitor
Tax-Collector

The Borough of West Mayfield



Fire Service Review Committee

Dear Borough of West Mayfield official:

The West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC) respectfully requests your attendance at a meeting for borough officials.

The purpose of this meeting is to further our fact-finding efforts and to better understand issues regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters pertaining to local government.

Our local government inquiry is focused on the following areas:

Leadership	Infrastructure
Legislative & Legal Authority	Special Fire Police
Duties & Obligations	Workers Compensation Insurance
Oversight & Accountability	Municipal Financial & In-Kind Support
Ordinances & Regulations	Emergency Management Integration
Fire Service & Mutual Aid Agreements	Civic Engagement & Public Education
ISO Public Protection Classification	

CURRENT FINDINGS - COMMUNITY SURVEY

The first phase of our work involved a robust gathering of community opinions that should be concerning to local government officials. Here's an overview of responses to our community survey:

Borough Ordinances: Fire Prevention & Fire Protection - A majority of citizens (59%) think the current ordinances are outdated and insufficient.

Council Authority: Oversight of the fire service - A majority of citizens (63%) think council does not have enough authority and oversight of the fire service.

Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD - 38% of citizens think taxpayers provide enough sustaining support to the WMVFD, while 18% feel that the borough should provide more support. A majority of respondents (48%) admit that they don't know what is an appropriate amount of taxpayer support to sustain the WMVFD.

Fire Prevention: Public education and community outreach efforts - A majority of citizens (54%) think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community.

Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability - A super majority of citizens (73%) think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD.

Community Support: Financial donations, participation in fundraising efforts - While a majority of citizens (58%) say they sometimes support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts, nearly a third surveyed stated that they do not or will not support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts.

Community Confidence: Community trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD to fulfill its mission - Another super majority of citizens (73%) think the community has lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD.

Future of the Fire Service - A super majority of citizens (90%) are evenly split over whether the borough and WMVFD should create a fire service corrective action plan or the borough should decertify WMVFD and outsource its fire service needs.

Future of Borough Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program - A super majority of citizens (95%) think the borough's current fire prevention & fire protection program is insufficient and must be updated and modernized.

Of particular note, across the survey on average 30% of citizens admitted to not knowing enough to answer the questions, suggesting a concerning lack of public education and civic knowledge regarding fire prevention and fire protection issues in our community.

CURRENT FINDINGS - FIRE SERVICE ECOSYSTEM

The second phase of our inquiry has been looking at our fire service ecosystem. To date we have held meaningful conversations with several local fire departments and attended municipal council meetings of other municipalities as they discussed fire service matters.

Most of our neighboring municipalities, in partnership with their designated fire services, have begun to lean into the future regarding the many serious challenges facing their communities' fire prevention and fire protection programs. They are welcoming, not resisting or obstructing, the adoption of higher standards of emergency response professionalism, best practices, rigorous training, and higher levels of materiel readiness guided by the National Fire Prevention Association and other industry-leading organizations, as well as standards set forth by the Office of State Fire Commissioner and the Department of Community and Economic Development.

Our findings show that in most neighboring municipalities, forward thinking local government officials and fire service leaders are working together to negotiate pathways forward to better

serve and protect their communities. And a growing number of municipalities are beginning to organize themselves into formal fire districts.

FSRC MEETING WITH BOROUGH OFFICIALS

As part of our third phase of inquiry, the FSRC is conducting this meeting with borough officials; consistent with our other forums, it will be open to the public. Your participation is voluntary, but attendance will be noted. The aim of this meeting is to further our fact-finding mission, so there will be no open discussions or debating apart from the scope of our program.

Please note, this is neither a regular nor special council meeting. For participating members of council, this meeting is not held for the purpose of deliberating agency business or taking official action (voting) on any issue.

Based on our research, the FSRC committee has developed a list of questions for elected officials and duly appointed officers of the borough. As a professional courtesy, we will reach out soon to select officials regarding specific inquiries to help prepare for our meeting.

Please mark your calendar. We look forward to meeting with you in council chambers from 6p-8p, June 19, 2024.

If you have any questions or concerns about this meeting, please feel free to contact me directly.

PS: Before our FSRC meeting with borough officials, you may find it helpful and informative to review our current research regarding local government and other areas of inquiry. We encourage your comments regarding the accuracy and completeness of any information presented.

You can find this information online by following [this link](https://www.westmayfieldborough.us/fire-service-review-committee-fsrc/fsrc-local-government/):
<https://www.westmayfieldborough.us/fire-service-review-committee-fsrc/fsrc-local-government/>

Sincerely,



Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair
farkas.kj@gmail.com
412-423-8034

###

Invitation Letter: Fire Service Officers

July 9, 2024

Lou Little, President and Fire Chief
c/o Michael Caler, WMVFD Secretary
West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department
706 37th St Ext., Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Wendy Harker, President
c/o Michael Caler, WMFRA Secretary
West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield
706 37th St Ext., Beaver Falls, PA 15010



Dear WMVFD & WMFRA officers:

The West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC) respectfully requests your attendance at a meeting to further our fact-finding efforts and to better understand issues regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters pertaining to the borough's current fire service provider.

The FSRC Fire Service inquiry is focused on the following areas:

- Borough Ordinances
- Fire Service Agreement
- Fire Service Charter
- WMFRA
- Fire Service Duties and Obligations
- Mutual Aid Agreements
- Real Estate
- Fire Prevention Code
- ISO Public Protection Classification
- Fire Service Leadership, Membership, Organizational Standing
- Job Performance
- Council's Fire & Police Committee
- Professional Reports & Confirmation of Public Safety Readiness
- Public Education & Communication
- Confirmation of West Mayfield Special Fire Police
- Municipal Fire Support for the Fire Service
- Fire Service Budgeting & Appropriations Process

FSRC FINDINGS - COMMUNITY SURVEY

As you may know, the first phase of our work involved a robust gathering of community opinions that should be concerning to your organizations. Here's an overview of some responses to our community survey:

WMVFD Leadership – Qualifications, managerial competence, job performance - A super majority of citizens surveyed (75%) think the WMVFD leadership team is not sufficiently qualified, competent, and/or able-bodied.

WMVFD Firefighting Staff – Qualifications, training, and job performance - A majority of citizens surveyed (68%) think the WMVFD firefighting staff is not sufficiently qualified, trained, and/or able-bodied.

Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability - A super majority of citizens (74%) think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD.

Community Confidence: Community trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD to fulfill its mission - Another super majority of citizens (71%) think the community has lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD.

Future of the Fire Service - A super majority of citizens (90%) are split over whether the borough and WMVFD should create a fire service corrective action plan or the borough should decertify WMVFD and outsource its fire service needs.

A summary of findings can be found on the [FSRC Community](#) page.

FSRC FINDINGS - FIRE SERVICE ECOSYSTEM

The second area of our inquiry has been looking at our fire service ecosystem. To date we have held meaningful conversations with several local fire departments. Most of our neighboring municipalities, in partnership with their designated fire services, have begun to lean into the future regarding the many serious challenges facing their communities' fire prevention and fire protection programs. They are welcoming the adoption of higher standards of emergency response professionalism, industry best practices, rigorous training programs, and higher levels of materiel readiness guided by the National Fire Prevention Association and other industry-leading organizations as well as standards set forth by the Office of State Fire Commissioner and the Department of Community and Economic Development.

Our findings show that in most neighboring municipalities, forward thinking local government officials and fire service leaders are working together to negotiate pathways forward to better serve and protect their communities. Most important, a growing number of municipalities surrounding West Mayfield are proactively organizing themselves into a formal fire district or merging their departments.

A summary of findings can be found on the [FSRC Fire Service Ecosystem](#) page.

FSRC FINDINGS - LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The third area of our inquiry has been looking at local government in relation to fire prevention and fire protection matters. FSRC held a special “Local Government” meeting on June 19, 2024. All elected and appointed borough officials were personally and individually invited to this meeting, which was also announced at council’s regular June meeting and promoted publicly on the borough’s website and social media platform.

We’ve noted that no one associated with the WMVFD or WMFRA was present at this meeting to help us understand important questions overlapping local government and the fire service; absent were Fire Chief Little (who currently chairs council’s Fire & Police Committee), WMFRA president Wendy Harker (who is also WMVFD’s Assistant Fire Chief and a former councilmember who had for many years served as chair of the Fire & Police Committee), WMVFD treasurer Eli Kosanovich (former councilmember who had previously served on Fire & Police Committee), and Emergency Management Coordinator and current member of the Fire & Police Committee Bill Heaton (also a long-time member of the WMVFD).

A summary of findings can be found on the [FSRC Local Government](#) page.

FSRC CURRENT INQUIRY - FIRE SERVICE

As part of our fourth and final area of inquiry, the FSRC seeks to better understand a wide range of fire prevention and fire protection issues related to the borough’s current fire service provider.

Based on our research, the FSRC has developed a list of relevant questions for WMVFD and WMFRA officials. As a professional courtesy, we’ve included these questions in the addendum to this letter and available online: <https://www.westmayfieldborough.us/fsrc-fire-service-provider/>

FSRC Fire Service Meeting

So that WMVFD and WMFRA officials have a fair and reasonable opportunity to address our questions and concerns about the fire service, we respectfully request a meeting with you and your representatives.

Please RSVP as to a specific date, time, and location that you would like to meet, but no later than Wednesday, July 31, 2024.

We look forward to hearing from you **by July 16th** regarding your chosen date, time, and location to meet with the FSRC. Please note, the information discussed during this meeting will be on the record.

Please note: FSRC members unanimously stipulated that if we do not receive your RSVP by July 16, 2024, we will assume this to mean that your organizations have decided not to cooperate with the Fire Service Review Committee. We will therefore conclude this phase of inquiry and continue on with our report and recommendations to council and the citizens of West Mayfield.

If you have any questions or concerns about our inquiry or this meeting, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin", with a stylized, cursive script.

Kevin Farkas, FSRC Citizen Co-Chair
farkas.kj@gmail.com
412-423-8034

Appendix B: Community

Open Letter: Hon. Paul Farkas, Mayor Emeritus

Hon. Paul Farkas, Mayor Emeritus
The Borough of West Mayfield
3706 W. 8th Ave
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

August 31, 2024

Fire Service Review Committee
Borough of West Mayfield
4609 W. 8th Ave.
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Dear Members of the Committee,

I thought this would be a hard letter to write, but it is not. I've lived in the borough since the late 1950s. I've devoted 58 years to public service as a member of the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, Council, and as Mayor. While on Council, I served as President and worked on every committee many times. This gave me a lot of knowledge and experience handling many of the borough's problems and needs, like making tough decisions about road paving, snow plowing, fixing sewers, creating a budget, and making sure that we provided good public safety for the citizens. As Borough Mayor, I did not have much of an active role in running the borough, like Council does, but for eleven years I attended every Council meeting, followed every issue, settled tie votes, and gave advice to younger Council members.

I've seen a lot of changes in West Mayfield over the years. Society has changed. As a municipality, I don't think we've done a great job of keeping up with the times and preparing for these challenges. I'll be the first to admit that I should have done more, but I'm proud of having been a part of our borough's transition to a full-time professional police force. That was a big transition for our Borough, but it was very necessary so we could provide the kind of public safety our residents needed and deserved. I feel the time has come for us to make a similar decision about our fire department.

I am familiar with the fire department. I joined the organization in 1966 and worked my way through the ranks to become Fire Chief. I also worked my way back down through the ranks to become a Life Member. Years ago, many of our community's friends and neighbors also served as volunteer firefighters. We did not have good equipment like they do today and we were not well trained, either. We did the best we could with what we had, doing a lot of fundraising with the help of the Ladies Auxiliary to keep us going.

But like I said, times have changed a lot. Everything about the fire department costs much more today. No amount of fundraisers can pay for the high cost of fire trucks or repairing them. Paying for needed boots, helmets, coats, and other gear is nearly impossible. The high cost of training and firefighter certifications is also out of our reach.

And then there is the shortage of volunteers to answer fire calls or run the fire department properly. I've heard many people complain, if only more people in the borough would volunteer for the fire department it would be in better shape. To that I say, if pigs had wings they could fly. If the fire department could have increased its membership it would have done so already. But it can't. We must face this hard reality.

In the survey I took for your committee, I mentioned other problems with the fire department that I don't think are fixable. As I said already, society has changed and so has firefighting. It is much more costly, dangerous and labor intensive. It requires much more technical training and knowledge than we had to deal with years ago. I do not believe our volunteer fire department is capable of providing us with the level of fire protection we need and deserve.

This is about life and death, so for this reason I think the Borough should do what we did years ago when choosing to outsource our police department. I am in favor of decertifying the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department and contracting with a more professionalized organization such as the City of Beaver Falls fire department.

And if we have to add a fire tax or special service fee to support this, so be it. I will gladly pay my fair share for the good of the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Farkas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "P" and "F".

Paul Farkas

Citizens' Comments in the Public Record

The following are extracts of fire service related concerns taken from the "Citizen Comments" section of Council meeting minutes. Some extraneous content has been removed.

May 13, 2021

President Bill Heaton called the meeting to order. Mrs. Sepp was excused. All other members were present including Mayor Farkas.

Mr. B.J. Giangiulio, president of HA Thomson company was present to review our insurance policies. He reviewed all buildings, equipment, tools etc. along with the liability coverage for all Council members. Our deductible will remain at \$250 but there will be a slight increase in the premium. We are satisfied with the coverage that we have and made no changes to our policy. He also reviewed our work comp policy and there will also be a slight raise in our premium. He requested that a fire department roster with names and birthdates of all members be forwarded to our representative.

Mr. Harris moved to hear the residents present at the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Little. The motion passed.

Mr. Dan Woodske, a supervisor with Chippewa Township was present to discuss a study that the township is looking into. It is a study with the state that will provide assistance to the service to residents provided by the fire departments. A letter of intent to join the study is necessary and a resolution would have to be passed to implement the program if it is adopted. Ms. Harker asked if it was a study to form a regional fire department.

This had been discussed previously regarding police protection and it is something that doesn't work well for us. Mr. Heaton asked about the cost to be involved. We would not be required to be a part of it once the study has been completed. His only request right now is for joining the study. No decision was made at this time but West Mayfield is not interested in participating.

August 12, 2021

In the absence of President Bill Heaton, Vice President Wendy Harker called the meeting to order. Mr. Heaton was excused. All other members were present including Mayor Farkas. Mr. Harris moved to hear the residents present at the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Little. The motion passed.

Mrs. Nora Soos, 102 37th Street Extension had a complaint about grass cutting at the ballfield. She asked if borough equipment was being used to cut the ballfields because Wendy Harker was seen cutting the grass there. Ms. Harker deferred the complaint to Mr. Little. He explained that he is contracted to cut the ball fields and he uses his own equipment to do so. Ms. Harker was cutting the grass at the park using borough equipment because the borough employees were off, one on vacation and the other one off with an injury when a belt broke on the zero turn mower. Mr. Little repaired the belt and had her take a couple of passes to make sure it was fixed. Mrs. Soos said that borough equipment should not be used for contracted work. Mr. Little assured that he was using his own

equipment to cut the ball fields. She also asked why shelter rentals at the park have to be paid for in cash, not by check. Sonya Arondalt, 113 Boyd Avenue wanted pay by check. She called about the rental 2 weeks before and the night before the rental, went to sign the contract and was told by Mr. Little that he couldn't accept a check, only cash. Is the money being properly used? Mr. Kosanovich, fire department treasurer said that he is given a copy of each contract with the cash payment. Mr. Little said the cash payment allows for a more timely return of the deposit. Arguments continued and it was finally stated that this is not borough business, and should be brought up at the fire department meetings, not borough Council meetings. At this point, Mrs. McNeely, Council member got up and exited the meeting. Mr. Bob Kaib, 3782 West 5th Avenue at this point asked why personal equipment is parked in the fire department parking lot when it is borough property. The department leases the property from the borough. Tempers continued to rise and the Mayor asked that everyone keep their tempers in check. Ms. Harker finally used the gavel to return order to the meeting.

September 9, 2021

President Bill Heaton called the meeting to order. All members were present including Mayor Farkas. Mr. Harris moved to hear the residents present at the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Little. The motion passed.

Mrs. Wanda Horvath, 3741 West 5th Avenue was extremely upset that borough residents were not warned of the spraying and tree trimming contracted by Duquesne Light. She was told that both the secretary and president of Council were called that this was being done. Mrs. Lansberry replied that she was told the company doing the trimming would notify residents. She was concerned because there are a number of cancer patients who definitely should have been told as this may affect their health. Regardless that the company said they would notify residents, she felt that the borough had an obligation to let them know for their safety. She also complained about the high vegetation and abandoned cars on the Sulli property (formerly the foundry) and demanded that something be done about it. The zoning officer needs to be involved and get this taken care of. Mr. Heaton responded that the box truck on the property is being used for storage and one car is gone. They will take care of this as soon as they can. She also asked why there was no newsletter. That is in the works and should be mailed out soon. Nora Soos, 102 37th Street had a complaint about being asked to leave the shelter at the park they had rented for a graduation party at 8 pm. The signs in the park say that it is open until 10 p.m. Mr. Little explained that the contract states rentals are until 8 pm so that they can be cleaned up and closed. She asked why the fire department was renting out the shelters since the park is owned by the borough. The borough turned it over to the fire department so they could earn some money. She also complained that people are being told they cannot use the ballfields for pickup games during a party. The only field that is not to be used is the first field (the pony league field). All other fields can be used. We will talk with the coaches to make sure that this is taken care of. Mr. Mark May, 118 Coolidge Street wanted to know what decision was made for Wilson Avenue. This will be taken care of during old business. Cheryl Sudano, 3782 West 5th Avenue thanked Council for all the work that was done by the street department employees on West 5th Ave. There was a question about what was going to be done with the drainage problem on Craig Alley (Craig Street). That issue will be discussed during old business. With no other residents present Mr. Harris moved to return to the regular order of business and was seconded by Mr. Little. The motion passed.

November 11, 2021

President Bill Heaton called the meeting to order. All members were present including Mayor Farkas. A motion to hear the citizens present at the meeting was made by Mr. Harris and seconded by Ms. Harker. The motion passed all in favor.

Mrs. Nora Soos, 207 37th Street Ext. was present to voice concern over the item on the agenda to create a 1 mill tax to borough property owners to generate funds for the volunteer fire department. She also asked why the citizens were called at the beginning of the meeting when it was discussed at the last meeting that we were going to discuss business first so that the comments could be given after. We hadn't made a decision and decided that we would just keep the order of business the same as it had always been. She feels that the department gave up on fundraising since there were no more breakfasts, no more bingo. Mr. Kosanovich explained that COVID cut down on their park rentals and hall rentals. There is a shortage of volunteers and there was not enough help to continue holding the breakfasts and bingo. She was also concerned about the number of fire department people on Council being a conflict of interest where any votes were concerned. The fire department personnel would have to abstain from any votes directly related to the fire department. The lack of members raised a question about the ability to answer fire calls. It was explained that we have mutual aid agreements with four different departments. When a call comes in to West Mayfield, the other departments are automatically notified so all calls are answered. West Mayfield gets between 50 and 60 calls a year. There was also a question asked about just contracting out service to another department like Beaver Falls and disbanding our department completely since there were so few members and they were having difficulty getting new members. It was explained that it would cost between 50 and 60 thousand dollars to contract Beaver Falls and when they respond to a fire, they automatically invoice the resident's home owners insurance for the call – this includes the use of the truck, the manpower, etc. Mrs. Wanda Horvath, 3741 West 5th Avenue asked if the 10 volunteer firefighters were certified and they are not. She would like to see a report of their expenditures from the fire department. Mr. Kosanovich, fire department treasurer said that they have lost most of their income. The borough donates \$5000 per year from the budget and this year the citizens donated \$7,000. The money that they receive goes toward utility bills and maintenance of the building. The fire relief organization receives \$4000 from the state but how it is spent is mandated by the state and can only be used to purchase equipment. He will provide a report for the past year and also check with Beaver Falls to see what they would charge to contract services to West Mayfield. Mr. Thomas DeLuca, 1125 Boden Street wanted to check on the status of his subdivision request. He has approached the water authority for tap-ins and has permission to do so. He will provide a copy of the letter. Mr. Budicak reviewed the plan and it is a standard subdivision. The borough just needs to sign off on it and submit it to the Beaver County Planning Department. Mr. DeLuca does not want to see taxes raised to help the fire department and said that we should put it out for bid. There are grants available to fire departments. Mr. Kosanovich said that they have applied but the grants are very restrictive for equipment. We have gotten grants and used them. Mr. DeLuca said that the fire department should provide a copy of their audit to the borough. Mr. DeLuca also lodged a complaint about property at 119 Boden Street. He has complained for years and nothing is being done with the trash, 2 junk cars on the property and they are in violation of borough ordinances. If something is not done, he will be forced to take legal action. Mr. Lemmon tagged the property today and gave them 10 days to respond to the request. Our police chief said that there is nothing they can do to help because

they are not permitted to go onto private property. Mr. Jim Bostek, 700 Rock Avenue also in in opposition of a tax increase. It should only be used as a last resort. Mr. Kosanovich said the one mill fire tax was only considered as an option. Mr. Bostek suggested that the department ask Council for more money as another option. Mr. Kosanovich stated that this is simply a desperate plea for more money and help for the department. It would be possible to cut money from another area in the budget and move it to the fire department. Mr. Bob Tate, 3631 Ann Street also voiced concern over the fire tax because he owns a lot of property in the borough. The tax can be rescinded if it is not needed. The fire department is required to have two trucks and mutual aid requires us to go to other departments' calls and they come to ours. Regional fire departments have been discussed and we have also discussed merging with other departments. Mr. Jake Tate, 335 Brook Street has more issues with the water flowing onto his property from White Township. White Township has now changed the path of their water flow and water is coming into his house through the walls. He has to run dehumidifiers 24 hours a day at 60% and now mold is accumulating inside his home. The apartment complex that is suspected of causing the drainage problem says it is not theirs but White Townships. He has called DEP and lodged numerous complaints but still nothing is being done. Mr. Heaton will go to a White Township Council meeting on his behalf and see if this can be rectified. Mr. Budicak noted that the base law states the adjacent property owner is liable unless it is the natural flow of the water. Unfortunately, there is nothing the borough can do to help because it is not their responsibility for the overflow. All the storm drains are connected to the buildings and the White Township storm drains. Carcaise/Modany created a 22 foot deep trench. Mr. Budicak also suggested that Mr. Tate consult with an attorney to try to get this rectified. Mrs. Licia Cogley, 604 37th Street Ext. asked if citizens were permitted to attend a fire department meeting to get information. They can. She also noted that she is the head of the committee organizing the Centennial Celebration for the borough and would like help from everyone. Jason Stoinoff, 904 Rock Avenue offered some suggestions for the fire department obtaining help – could they do robot calls or something? Everyone needs to be involved. He was not aware that the borough had a website. Mr. Kevin Farkas, webmaster not only updates the website regularly, but our Facebook social media page. Cheryl Sudano, 3782 West Fifth Avenue requested a list of fire department members. With no other citizens requesting to be heard, Mr. Little moved to return to the regular order of business; seconded by Mrs. McNeely and passed all in favor.

December 9, 2021

President Bill Heaton called the meeting to order. All members were present including Mayor Farkas. A motion to hear the citizens present at the meeting was made by Mr. Harris and seconded by Ms. Harker. The motion passed all in favor.

Mrs. Wanda Horvath, 3741 West 5th Avenue again asked how many volunteer firefighters there were and are they certified as fire fighter one. There are 10 active members and they are not certified as fire fighter one. They all have NFPA certificates and are qualified to fight a fire. She asked how many fire calls they answered in a year and the response was that they didn't have that information on hand. The calls are not only for fires but as mutual aid for other departments and those departments also respond to our fire calls. There may have been 2 or 3 actual fire calls. She is still waiting to see a report of their expenditures from the fire department. Our firefighters are covered under workmen's comp and liability insurance. She also asked how much gas the department uses that is provided by

the borough – they used 107 gallons of diesel fuel for the entire year. The 1 mill fire tax is completely off the table. It was also explained that the building and all of the equipment is owned by the fire department and if it is shut down, there are procedures that need to be followed that are mandated. All equipment must go to non-profit organizations so there would be no revenue generated for the borough. Mrs. Horvath feels that our department should close and contract services from Beaver Falls because we need to look out for the safety of our residents. Mrs. Nora Soos, 207 37th Street Ext. was present also to voice the same concerns as Mrs. Horvath – requesting the names of all members; the number of fire calls and a full expenditure account. She agrees that we should contract our services from Beaver Falls. Another concern for Mrs. Soos is the semi-trucks on 37th Street exceeding the 10 ton weight limit. Chippewa gets fines from the state for overweight vehicles. Why is West Mayfield not enforcing this? The police chief said that they have had details but it is actually a nightmare to enforce because of local delivery being permitted. 37th Street is a state maintained road and permission is given by the state. Mr. Thomas DeLuca, 1125 Boden Street again lodged a complaint about property at 119 Boden Street. He has complained for years and nothing is being done with the trash, 2 junk cars on the property and they are in violation of borough ordinances. Tagging the property is not enough. The owner of the property needs to be notified, not the renter. Mr. Buddy Knox is the owner. Mr. DeLuca said the only way there is going to be results is to fine the owner. Mrs. Sepp will work with Mr. Lemmon to try to resolve this issue. Mr. DeLuca also does not want to see a tax increase or the addition of a fire tax to keep the fire department going. Mr. Bob Tate, 3631 Ann Street wanted to know if the 1 mill fire tax was going to be voted on. It is completely off the table. Have other fire departments been approached to contract services? Chippewa won't quote because they are mostly a volunteer fire department also. Mr. Randy Hayward, 810 Lennox Avenue also voiced concern about the fire department. They are in dire need, why can't we come up with some way to help them. He said the fire department does a very good job and we should be able to take money from the General Fund to keep them going. Mr. Little said that we have 10 active members but have 4 applications of interested parties. Every fire department is hurting for members and funds. Mr. Hayward said to just give them the money they need. With no other citizens requesting to be heard, Mr. Harris moved to return to the regular order of business; seconded by Mrs. McNeely and passed all in favor.

Mr. Heaton discussed what the fire department talked about at their meeting. They do not want the fire tax to happen, and we could move a line item from another area in the budget into the fire department line. Because the citizens requested information about what Beaver Falls might charge for contracting their fire department, Mrs. Sepp obtained a quote from the Beaver Falls Fire Chief. The cost for 2022 would be \$19,164 with a 5% increase for 2023 and 2024. This would include unlimited fire response with a response time of approximately 5 minutes; unlimited rescue services, hazardous condition incidents such as downed wires, gas leaks, etc. and EMS services when requested by county dispatch. Questions that arose from our department were things like closing down 37th Street when icy conditions prevent safe travel, pumping out resident's basements, cutting down trees. Mr. Little talked to Chief Stowe and he wanted us to keep doing rehab and highway control but if our department is shut down, we can't use our building or any of its equipment. There was also some discussion regarding charges that Beaver Falls makes to homeowner insurance policies for services that they render. The West Mayfield Department does not charge anything for the services it provides. It was brought up also about the lack of volunteers and the fact that fundraising has ceased to exist. Part of the reason for the fundraising efforts stopping was the lack of help but also because COVID

basically shut everything down. The department wants to begin fundraising again – breakfasts and maybe even a carnival at the park. Kathy Brewer suggested that if the citizens knew what was being planned, they might be more willing to help with fund raisers. She feels that help would be available if the residents knew what was going on. Jake Tate noted that many of the volunteers have left West Mayfield and gone to Chippewa and other departments. That is because they want more action than we have. This is not just something that happens here in West Mayfield, it is ongoing in many other departments. It was also suggested that we should give the department a year to see if they are sincere in trying to make the department work for the residents of West Mayfield. Mrs. Horvath would like to have a representative from Beaver Falls available at the next meeting to ask questions. She also wants the information requested from our department available at that meeting. Mrs. Lansberry asked that because of the holiday season and the fact that our next meeting is for reorganization on January 3 that this item be tabled until the February meeting so that all of the requests can be taken care of. We will reopen the discussion at the February 2022 meeting.

February 10, 2022

President Lou Little called the meeting to order. All Council members were present except for Mr. Heaton who was running a little late. Ms. Harker moved to listen to citizen comments and was seconded by Mrs. McNeely. The motion passed all in favor.

Mr. Little was reminded that the Beaver Falls Fire Department Chief should be called first as written in the agenda. Mr. Mark Stowe, Chief of the Beaver Falls Fire Department was invited to speak on the proposal to contract West Mayfield's fire service from Beaver Falls. Chief Stowe also introduced his assistant chief, Dave Seidle who would explain other services that would be offered. Chief Stowe noted that borough officials would have the final decision as to whether to accept the contract or decline it and retain the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire department. Beaver Falls has a full time 24/7 365 days a year department combined of both paid and volunteer firefighters. There are 9 full time and 3 part-time paid fire fighters. They are all certified firefighter 1 or higher. All officers are officer 2 and have received over 5000 hours of training. There is continuing education for all members. Their equipment is state of the art and includes pumpers, heavy rescue, aerial ladder trucks, command vehicles. The response time would be approximately 5 minutes and would consist of 2-4 men at a time. They have EMT's and paramedics with ALS certification and provide mutual aid to other departments as well as other departments providing mutual aid to them. The first responders are not dispatched unless requested by ambulance. They are class 3 insurance services (ISO) with 1 being the best and 10 the worst. They answer unlimited calls, provide rescue service including water rescue, respond to gas leaks, wires down, lock outs, etc. They also offer fire prevention services and have an arson investigator. They have canine Patty whom they use to provide fire prevention to children. They would provide an officer at all Council meetings. The borough would no longer have to provide work comp coverage for the fire department. All firefighters from West Mayfield would be welcome to join with Beaver Falls. All maintenance replacement and repairs of equipment would be paid by Beaver Falls. Beaver Falls would like to have a pumper parked at our fire department station. Chief Stowe noted that the response from West Mayfield for rehab service was great. The cost for the first year of the three-year contract would be \$19,164 with an increase of 5% in each of the remaining two years. Mrs. Wanda Horvath, 3741 West 5th Avenue had questions for Chief Stowe regarding the services of

Beaver Falls. She questioned if residents were charged for responding to a call. Chief Stow said that Beaver Falls never bills a resident but if that resident submits a claim to their insurance company, Beaver Falls will invoice the insurance company. This is a common practice that has been going on for years and covers the cost of foam used in fighting the fire and other charges. She also asked about the grade certification for insurance. It is strictly for insurance and is only for fully paid departments such as Pittsburgh and other large urban cities. Beaver Falls does not have a training facility. FF1 and FF 2 are written skills tests for the Fire Fighting Program and is a 160 hour course. There is a one-month class which involves skills, reports and written tests. The City of Beaver Falls includes the cost for training in its budget. The station is always manned. 16 firefighters are within a 10 minute radius for a structural fire. John Larson, 1117 Boden Street asked if staff would need to be increased if Beaver Falls took over. No, there are 9 full-time now and they are getting ready to hire more part-time fire fighters. Mrs. Licia Cogley, 634 37th Street asked if the proposal included 24/7 availability. There are 7 full-time or part-time available and when a call is received, any off-duty officer can respond to the call. In order to become full time a civil service test is required and FF1 and EMT's must go through the training program. All volunteers are paid by the hour. Mr. Bill Heaton, 3412 Knappe Street had questions regarding the services that West Mayfield provides and if Beaver Falls would continue those services – pumping out flooded basements – yes. Cutting down trees – would have to call public works. Flushing out storm drains - would have to call if they were already on a call the station is always manned. They have a regional strike team – 1 crew manpower only. There are approximately 12-14 water rescues a year. There is no additional charge if an investigation of a fire is required. Mutual aid is county-wide. If there is an Emergency Management disaster, West Mayfield has its own emergency management team. What would happen? New Brighton, Pulaski, Daugherty Township, Rochester, etc. How would the equipment be dispersed? The call for help would be from wherever it is needed. What happens after the 3-year contract with an increase of 5% each year? They would never double the cost, only raise to cover their own increased cost. What about traffic control for shut-down of a road due to inclement weather or an accident? They would handle that. Beaver Falls covers Eastvale at 3% increase but it will raise to 5% increase the next contract. Bill noted that we would be paying over \$30,000 in ten years. Mr. Heaton wanted to make sure that Beaver Falls realizes that the fire station and all of the equipment in it is owned by the West Mayfield Fire Department, not the borough. If the fire department is disbanded, all of that is gone and Beaver Falls would not have access to any of equipment or the fire station itself. Other things that the volunteer fire department does for West Mayfield is cleaning out the park, holding the borough Christmas Party at the fire hall at no cost to the residents, Halloween patrol – helping across the streets and general patrol of the entire borough during the trick-or-treat hours. The fire station is also the voting poll – where would the residents vote if the station were to close? Santa goes around the borough in the fire truck every Christmas giving out over 200 bags of candy to borough children. Mrs. Horvath asked what the borough Council provided for the fire department. They pay for liability insurance in the amount of about \$5500, work comp insurance for about \$7000 and a donation of \$5000 yearly. She also asked about grants – they are for the purchase of equipment only and can't be used for any other purpose like paying utility bills and upkeep of equipment and the building. She asked why the department did not apply for a grant this year – they did but the application was late by only a brief period of time and it was not accepted. She asked also about the number of fire fighter ones that the volunteer department has (3). She feels that our volunteer department is not the same caliber as Beaver Falls and also reminded our members that if they went to Beaver Falls they would be paid. Mr. Heaton said

that Covid did a number not only on our department, but all around the county. We lost a lot of revenue because fund raisers were no longer able to be held. . The fire department has asked for an additional \$5000 this year to help get it back on its feet. Hall rentals have already begun to pick up this year and other fund raisers are being planned as well. As far as service to the borough, that did not change at all and is not going to change because we have mutual aid with Chippewa Township, White Township and Patterson. Assistant Chief Seidl asked why Beaver Falls had been removed from first alarm and it was because a resident complained to our chief that they had been billed for a call that Beaver Falls was the first to respond to. He did not want our residents to have to pay for a service from Beaver Falls that we provide for free. Ms. Harker noted that she had contacted County to place Beaver Falls back on our mutual aid call out. Mr. Seidl said that his paid staff would not be sent to West Mayfield. Most people have essentials and band together with bigger departments covering larger areas. Mrs. Janet Helbig, 3601 Orchard Street asked Council to consider giving the Fire Department the additional \$5000 it requested to tide them over for this year. Mr. Bill Sepp, 4307 West 4th Avenue asked Chief Stowe if Council decided to help the fire department this year, could we still come to you in the future. The answer was yes. The fire service is in big trouble. Something must be done so that we will have a sustainable service in the future. Mr. Budicak, borough solicitor reminded all present that a decision to change this can be made at any time. With no other citizens wishing to comment, Mr. Sepp moved to return to the regular order of business, seconded by Mrs. McNeely and approved unanimously.

Old Business - A discussion began on whether the fire department should be given the additional \$5000 to see if they can get back on their feet this year. Mr. Sepp moved to give an additional \$5000 to the fire department and was seconded by Mr. Seybert. A roll-call vote passed the motion as follows: Mr. Sepp – yes; Mr. Seybert – yes; Mrs. Sepp – yes; Ms. Harker – yes; Mr. Little – yes; Mrs. McNeely – no; Mr. Heaton – yes.

June 9, 2023

President Lou Little called the meeting to order. Mr. Lemmon was on vacation and excused and Ms. Harker will be arriving late. All other members were present.

Parks & Recreation- Mr. Tate – asked about the park shelter rentals and why they are cash only. It was explained that too many people were writing bad checks. The deposits are returned in cash to the renter if the shelter has been properly taken care of. He would like to see the contracts reviewed and a waiver needs to be signed by all park rentals. Mr. Budicak will write up a waiver. The cameras have been removed from the park and we really need to get some cameras reinstalled so that the vandalism can be controlled. Ms. Harker will bring that up at the fire department meeting.

July 13, 2023

President Lou Little called the meeting to order. Mr. Kosanovich and Mrs. Lansberry were excused and Mr. Seybert will be arriving late. All other members were present. Mr. Tate moved to listen to citizen comments and was seconded by Mrs. McNeely. The motion passed all in favor.

Bob Tate, 3631 Ann Street, offered to act as an interim code enforcement officer until someone was hired and the fact that he has spent many years in the construction industry, he is qualified to issue permits also. Following a brief discussion, Mr. Heaton moved to appoint Mr. Tate as interim code enforcement officer and was seconded by Mrs. McNeely. The motion passed all in favor. Nora Soos, 102 37th Street Extension was down at the park walking her son's dog between shelter 2 & shelter three. Both borough employees were on zero turns cutting the grass. Hayden was flying, not only cutting the grass but on the road as well while the younger guy was taking his time cutting the grass. Hayden also took both hands off the mower and was still flying. He hit a big rock with the mower. There was also another incident with Hayden when she was at the park on 37th Street. He was in the borough truck and flying up the hill at least doing 40 to 45 miles an hour. Mr. Little asked what days these incidents occurred and it was just two days ago. These are not the only complaints that have been received concerning Hayden's speeding along borough roads. He was also seen along with family members with the lawn mower in the creek. She has pictures of the berms of the roads that used to be taken care of by the borough but haven't been for a while. On Pine Street, heading up toward Beresford's house, you can't even see the stop sign. There is also a problem on West 4th Avenue where you can't even see the fence. Mr. Heaton brought up the fact that our boom mower needs repaired and this is why the berms of the roads have not been taken care of. Mrs. McNeely stated that the boom mower has been broken for over a year and her husband Brian has repaired the mower before and would be willing to repair it again. Mr. Heaton mentioned that Jeffrey asked for a certified mechanic be called to repair the mower and Council had agreed to look for one. Wendy checked into renting a boom mower and the cost is \$8,000.00 per month. She told Council that the fire department would be paying for the repair of the boom mower. Regarding employee complaints, Ms. Harker said there is a list of jobs daily that need to be done and if Hayden goes anywhere she is informed. Mr. Budicak reminded Council that there are steps to be followed regarding employee complaints in the handbook – verbal warning, written warning, and termination. Mr. Little said verbal warnings have been given. In that case, Hayden needs to be written up. Brian Covalt, 101 Boyd Avenue complained about his name being given to Hayden and also about seeing him at Orams donuts during work hours in borough truck. Chrissy Barkfelt, 1015 37th Street Ext. say both borough workers were painting slow on Rock avenue with no vests, cones or safety equipment. They were almost hit by a vehicle running a stop sign and speeding by. More discussion and complaints continued. Michelle said that the new worker needs to be taught and if he is taught properly he will be a good worker. Someone has to supervise these guys. She also said the Mr. Bathgate cut down all the bushes on Rock from the stop sign on 37th Street. Ray Evans – 2909 12th Avenue Rear Beaver Falls – explained safety courses from PennDot for workers. Jake Tate stated the need for signs and that they should be kept in the truck. They need to wear vests and have been provided with clothes. Bob Tate – 3631 Ann Street was able to find a bench in Florida to replace Mr. Wiltrout's broken one for \$200.00. Jake bought the bench back. Part of the cement slab that holds the bench will have to be repaired. He told Council that the trees that fell on 37th Street were not from his property but were on borough property. There are more that are ready to fall. Lou will call Steve's trees to take care of them. Bob's trash was not picked up on Monday and he called Aiken. She said that his bill wasn't paid and he never received any bills. He called on July 10 and got a letter the next day with the due date as July 20 crossed out with magic marker. Mr. Budicak said that he will check the contract and that there seems to be a problem with Aiken's billing and we should be able to get out of the contract. He

will report next month. He said to wait until August to do anything. Jake asked if we could just go back to Valley and see if they would honor their bid rather than us having to rebid again. Michelle spoke with Aiken on July 12th and was told that 111 residents had their pick up suspended due to non-payment of their accounts. She also offered to go to Valley to talk with them. With no other citizens wishing to comment, Mr. Heaton moved to return to the regular order of business, seconded by Mrs. McNeely and approved unanimously.

Finance & Litigation – Mrs. McNeely just wanted Council to know that Brian is certified to work on the boom mower. She also asked how many firefighter 1's the fire department has. They have 3. Over 200 hours is needed to be able to fight a fire. Lou works with five department as mutual aid so there is always availability of fireman to answer calls. She wanted to know if there was anyone who was trained in saving people. Mr. Kosanovich is a registered nurse and a registered CPR instructor. Michelle said that it would be good if the fire department could get out there and explain what they do because our residents don't really know how our fire department works.

October 12, 2023

President Lou Little called the meeting to order. Mrs. McNeely was excused. All other members were present. Mr. Tate moved to listen to citizen comments and was seconded by Mr. Heaton. The motion passed all in favor.

Mr. Mike Ceravola, 118 Jones Drive, Beaver and CEO of ERA Capital discussed the interest of his company in property located at 3716 West Second Avenue. The plans for the property is to create a sports training facility at the location,. The facility will be used to train participants in baseball, soccer, football and la cross. They plan to use 3000 square feet as a gym and 1700 square feet for baseball and football. They may expand the facility later. There will be space for 50 cars in the front. Training and team workouts will accommodate only 25 kids at a time and will be contained inside the building. They are in due diligence for sixty days to make sure that there is nothing in code enforcement and permits that would make it impossible to complete the purchase. One main concern is requiring a sprinkler system be installed which would cost more than they are willing to pay and would be a deal breaker. Marge Yoho, 4504 West 8th Avenue questioned if the stop sign that is missing on 45th Street and West 8th is going to be replaced. It was placed there years ago but no longer exists. Also the 45th Street sign is broken. Mr. Heaton will locate the list that we have listing all the stop signs in the borough to see if it is on the list. Mrs. Yoho also asked if the fire department was available on December 1 or 2 to have the borough Christmas Party as the president said those were the only dates available. She has called numerous times and has never had a response. Mr. Little said that this is not a borough issue, it is a fire department issue. He said that the fire department meeting is next Tuesday and they should attend. She also inquired about joining the fire department auxiliary. That has to be brought to the fire department also. Kathy Brewer, 3628 Matilda Street reported that our employee, Hayden Boniphant nearly ran into her son's truck. This isn't the first complaint about his driving. Mr. Heaton talked to him about it and he said that he swerved to avoid the truck. That isn't what happened. Nora Soos, 102 37th Street Extension asked if West 2nd Avenue could be paved. There is dust and dirt constantly. We will look into that. Margaret McCauley, 1020 High Street asked when Beaver Falls police patrolled the borough. They are on patrol daily. Linda Burns, 1010 High Street – again complained about the speeding on High Street and that she hasn't seen any police

presence there. There is a suspicious black car that she has taken pictures of and has the license plate number that is constantly on the street in the evening. Mr. Heaton called Bar Residential to complain to them about the issues going on in Mayfield Village. The chief noted that there has been over 72 documented complaints that they have received. He also asked if the pictures and license plate has been called in because if they don't receive a phone call, they can't do anything. The borough has no jurisdiction to handle any of these complaints because they are police issues. The chief said that they put the cart up with the speed limit and there is only so much that can be done. If we don't get a call we can't do anything. Our officers are always in the area so if a call is made they will respond. Jake mentioned speed bumps. They cost between five and six thousand dollars and we just can be putting them anywhere, a study has to be done. She is really concerned about the winter and said someone is going to have to be accountable if something happens. Brian Covalt, 101 Boyd Avenue asked the chief if someone calls about a car speeding can a stop be made if the car goes by a police car. Yes, it can be stopped. With no other citizens wishing to comment, Ms. Harker moved to return to the regular order of business, seconded by Mr. Tate and approved unanimously.

January 2, 2024

Mayor Licia Cogley called the meeting to order. Five newly elected officials were sworn in by Mayor Cogley – Jason Heaton, Janet Helbig, Louis Little, Jacob Tate, Robert Tate. Roll call – all members present, solicitor excused. Mr. Little moved to hear the citizens present at the meeting and was seconded by Mr. Jake Tate. The motion passed all in favor.

Mr. Kevin Farkas, webmaster will make any revisions to the website, and make any changes, information necessary to social media with the newly elected Council members. Mr. Jeremy Tate has still not had his garbage issue with Aiken resolved. Because of the contract, he is responsible for the bills. With no other citizens wishing to comment, Mr. Bill Heaton moved to return to the regular order of business, seconded by Mr. Little. The motion carried. Mr. Lou Little reported that the equipment is ready for winter. Mr. Jake Tate reported that the fencing for the pickle ball court should be installed by the end of January weather permitting. Mr. Bob Tate asked how the fire department spent money donated by Council. Mr. Little responded that they used the money for the purchase of gear, paying the bills and making repairs. The fire department squad was destroyed by chemicals when taken to the train derailment in East Palestine. Mr. Bill Heaton moved to pay any bills received for January and was seconded by Mr. Little. The motion passed all in favor. Mr. Little moved to ratify purchases made by committees and was seconded by Mr. Jason Heaton. The motion passed all in favor. Mr. Jeff Seybert moved to enter an executive session to discuss a personnel issue. Mr. Jake Tate seconded the motion that passed all in favor. Mr. Jake Tate moved to return to the regular order of business and was seconded by Mr. Jason Heaton.

FSRC Community Survey

Questions

The West Mayfield Fire Service Review Committee (FSRC) wants to hear directly from borough residents and taxpayers (past and present) regarding matters of fire prevention & fire protection. We welcome thoughtful comments, opinions, and accounts of experiences with local government, the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department, neighboring municipalities' fire services, and citizens' rights and obligations regarding fire prevention & fire protection matters. The FSRC will not censor responses. All comments will be preserved as part of the public record. However, when presenting our findings to the public we may use editorial discretion to curtail redundant, irrelevant, or inappropriate comments.

*We do not accept anonymous surveys so that we might be able to follow up with you if necessary for clarification or additional information regarding your comments. However, at your request we will not publicly identify you by name.

Your opinions matter. Here's how to return this survey to the Fire Service Review Committee:

1. You may hand deliver this survey to any FSRC member.
2. Mail survey to:
FSRC Community Survey
4609 W. 8th Ave, Beaver Falls, PA 15010
3. Drop your survey into the box outside of Council chambers or drop the survey off at the Mayor's residence, 604 37th St. Ext., Beaver Falls, PA 15010

For any questions or concerns about this form, please contact FSRC Citizen Co-Chair, Kevin Farkas. You may also complete this survey online by visiting the FSRC page on the West Mayfield Borough website:

<https://www.westmayfieldborough.us/fire-service-review-committee-fsrc/>

***Consent to Publish Name**

- ☐ Yes, the FSRC may reveal my name publicly in association with this survey
- ☐ No, please do not reveal my name publicly

Name _____ **Street Address** _____

Required

Phone _____ **Email** _____

Required

Residence

- ☐ I currently live in the borough
- ☐ I am a former resident of the borough

PART ONE

Emergency Response

- ☐ Within the last decade I have called for and received emergency help from the fire service
- ☐ I have never needed help from the fire service

Firefighting Experience

- ☐ I am a current or former firefighter with the WMVFD
- ☐ I am a current or former firefighter with another fire department
- ☐ I have never been a firefighter

Borough Ordinances: Fire Prevention & Fire Protection

- ☐ I think the current ordinances are outdated and insufficient
- ☐ I think the current ordinances are sufficient and do not need to be updated
- ☐ I don't know anything about the borough's fire prevention & fire protection ordinances

Council Authority: Oversight of the fire service provided by the WMVFD

- ☐ I think Council does not have enough authority and oversight of the fire service
- ☐ I think Council has adequate authority and oversight of the fire service
- ☐ I don't know anything about Council's authority and oversight duties and responsibilities

Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD

- ☐ I think tax-payers provide enough sustaining support to the WMVFD
- ☐ I think tax-payers should provide more sustaining support to the WMVFD
- ☐ I don't know what is an appropriate amount of tax-payer support to sustain the WMVFD

WMVFD Leadership – Qualifications, managerial competence, job performance

- ☐ I think the WMVFD leadership team is not sufficiently qualified, competent, or able-bodied
-

-
- ☐ I think the WMVFD leadership team is sufficiently qualified, competent, and able-bodied
 - ☐ I don't know how to evaluate the WMVFD leadership team
-

WMVFD Firefighting Staff – Qualifications, training, and job performance

- ☐ I think the WMVFD firefighting staff is not sufficiently qualified, trained, and able-bodied
- ☐ I think the WMVFD firefighting staff is sufficiently qualified, trained, and able-bodied
- ☐ I don't know how to evaluate the WMVFD firefighting staff

Fire Prevention: Public education and community outreach efforts

- ☐ I think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community
- ☐ I think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program adequately serves the needs of the community
- ☐ I don't know anything about the WMVFD's fire prevention education program

Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability

- ☐ I think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD
- ☐ I think the WMVFD provides fire services equal to our neighboring fire departments
- ☐ I don't know how to evaluate our neighboring fire service

Community Support: Financial donations, participation in fundraising efforts

- ☐ I always support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts
- ☐ I sometimes support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts
- ☐ I do not or will not support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts

Organizational Viability: Staffing, job performance, financial sustainability, community support

- ☐ I think the WMVFD will not be able to sustain itself over the next decade
 - ☐ I think the WMVFD will be able to sustain itself over the next decade
 - ☐ I don't know how to assess and evaluate the long-term sustainability of the fire service
-

Community Confidence: Community trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD to fulfill its mission

- ☐ I think the community has lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD
- ☐ I think the community still maintains trust, faith and confidence in the WMVFD
- ☐ I don't know what the community thinks about the WMVFD

Future of the Fire Service

- ☐ I think the borough and WMVFD should maintain their current relationship, no changes necessary
- ☐ I think borough and WMVFD should create a fire service corrective action plan
- ☐ I think the borough should decertify WMVFD and outsource its fire service needs

Future of Borough Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program

- ☐ I think the borough's current fire prevention & fire protection program is sufficient, no changes necessary
- ☐ I think the borough's current fire prevention & fire protection program is insufficient and must be updated and modernized

PART TWO

Borough Government: Open comments regarding our elected officials' duties, obligations, and past or present performance providing citizens with fire prevention & fire protection services

West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department: Open comments regarding the fire department's duties, obligations, and past or present performance providing citizens with fire prevention & fire protection services

Neighboring Fire Services: Open Comments regarding neighboring municipalities' fire prevention & fire protection services to their communities

Citizens: Open Comments regarding citizens' rights & responsibilities, duties & obligations, and past or present involvement in fire prevention & fire protection matters

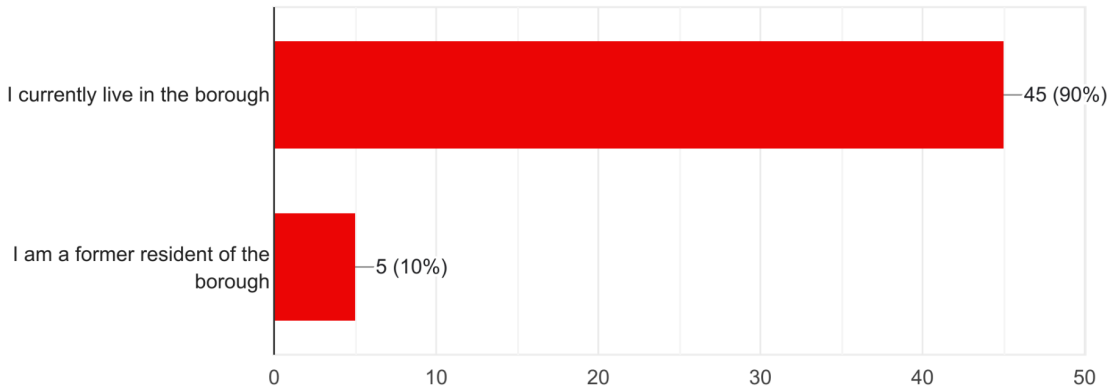
Additional Comments: Please provide any additional comments regarding any aspect of the borough's fire prevention & fire protection program, your personal experiences, thoughts for improving fire-related public safety in the borough, and/or feedback about this survey

End of Community Survey

Community Survey: Table, Graphs

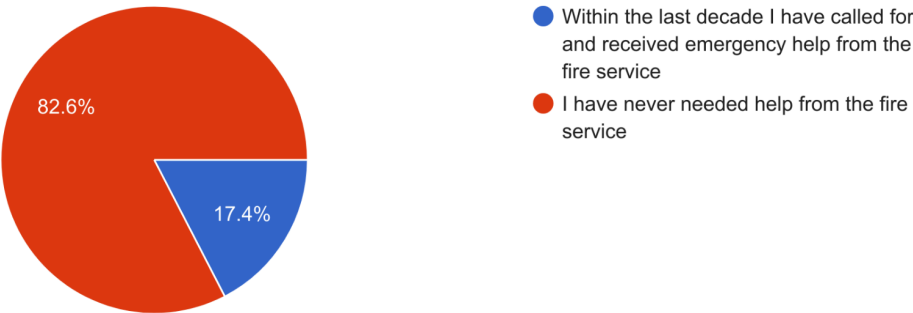
Residence

50 responses



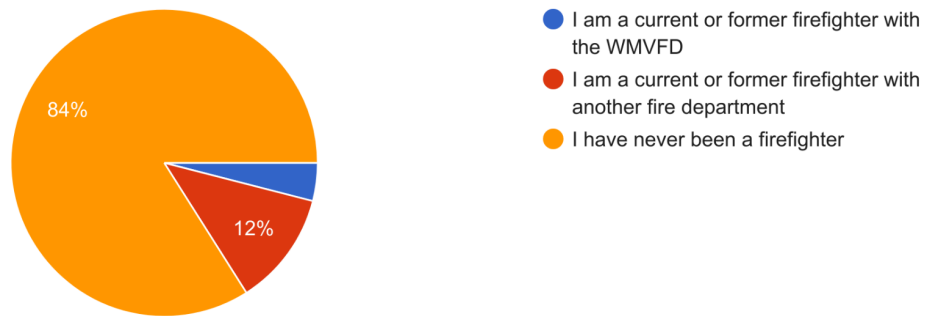
Emergency Response

46 responses



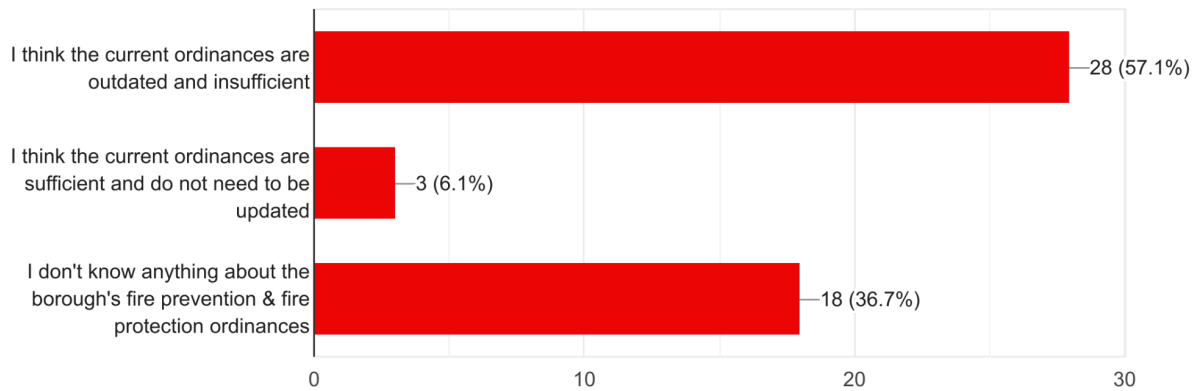
Firefighting Experience

50 responses



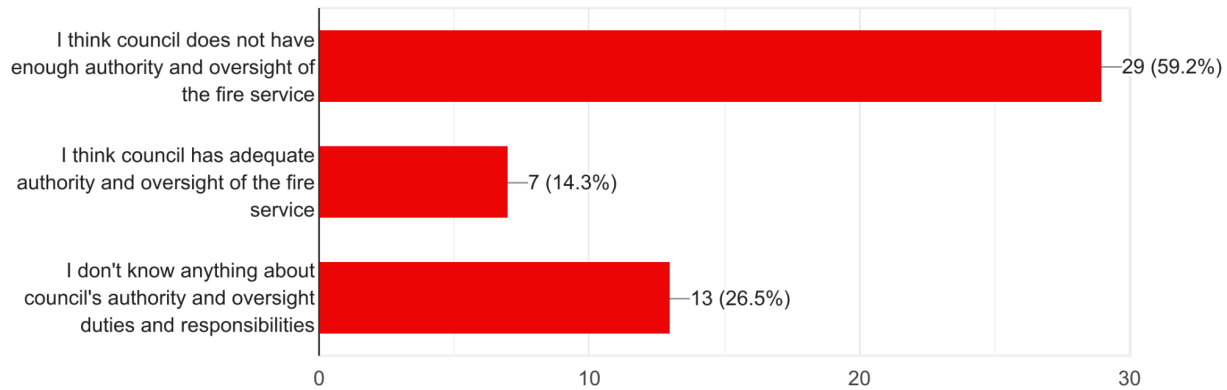
Borough Ordinances: Fire Prevention & Fire Protection

49 responses



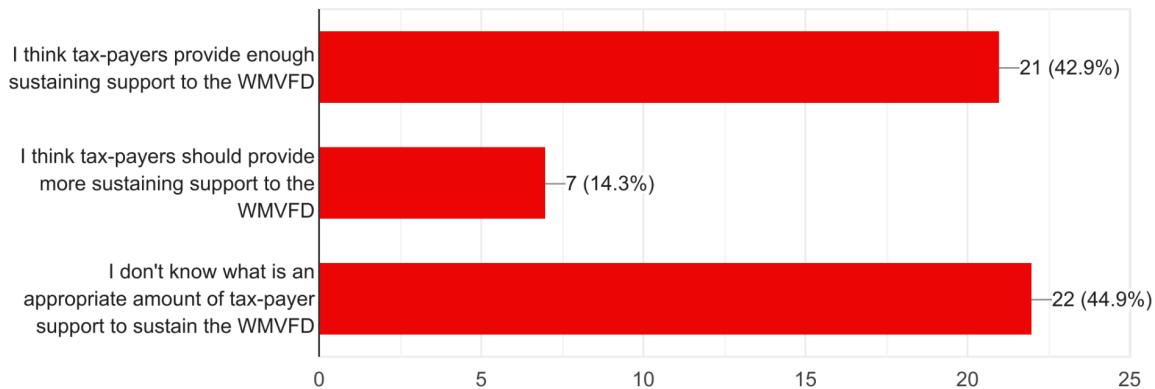
Council Authority: Oversight of the fire service provided by the WMVFD

49 responses



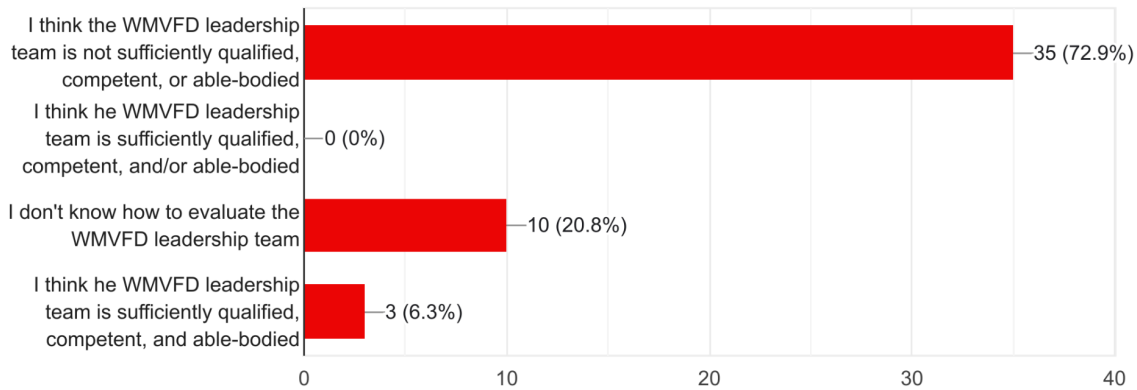
Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD

49 responses



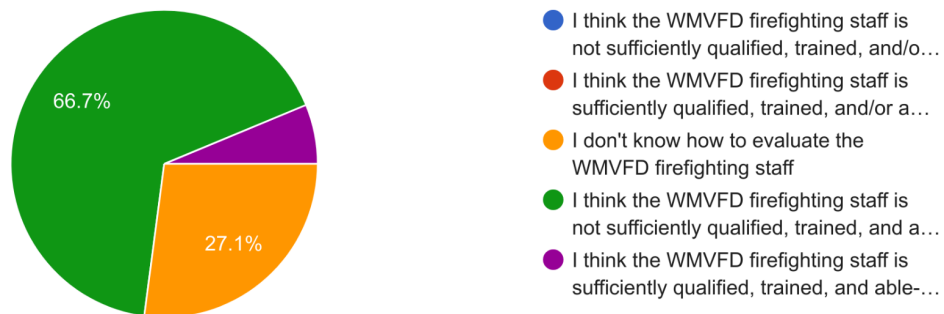
WMVFD Leadership – Qualifications, managerial competence, job performance

48 responses



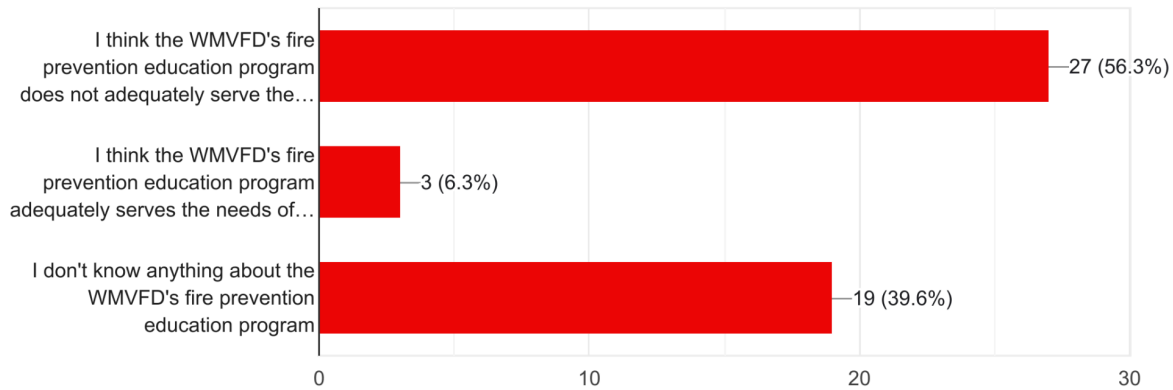
WMVFD Firefighting Staff – Qualifications, training, and job performance

48 responses



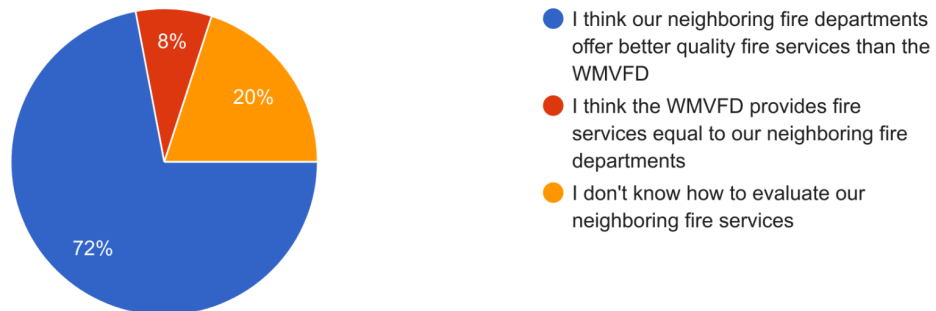
Fire Prevention: Public education and community outreach efforts

48 responses



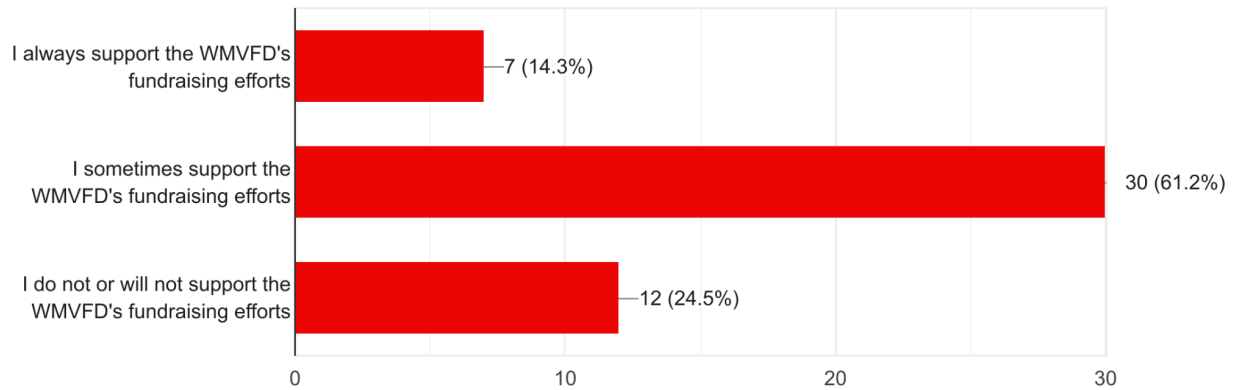
Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability

50 responses



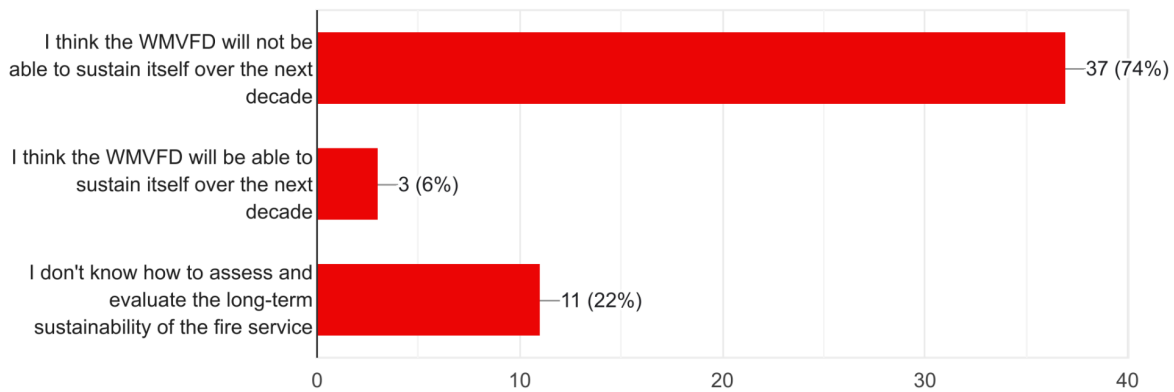
Community Support: Financial donations, participation in fundraising efforts

49 responses



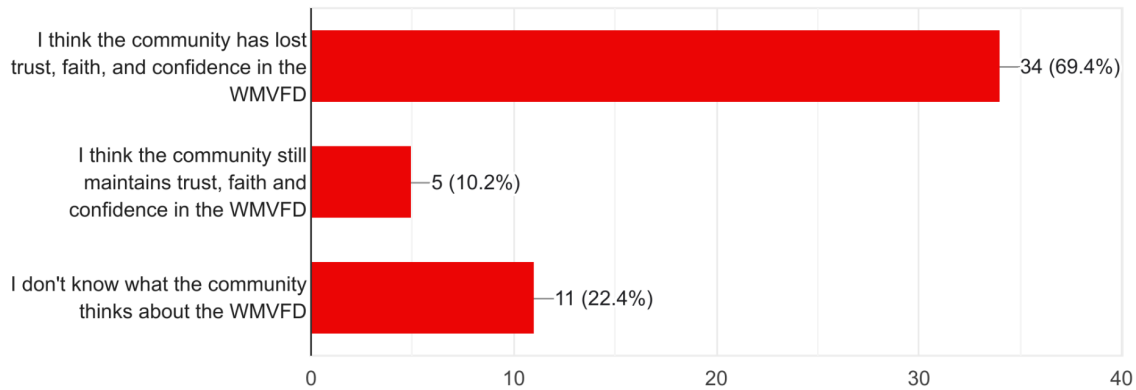
Organizational Viability: Staffing, job performance, financial sustainability, community support

50 responses



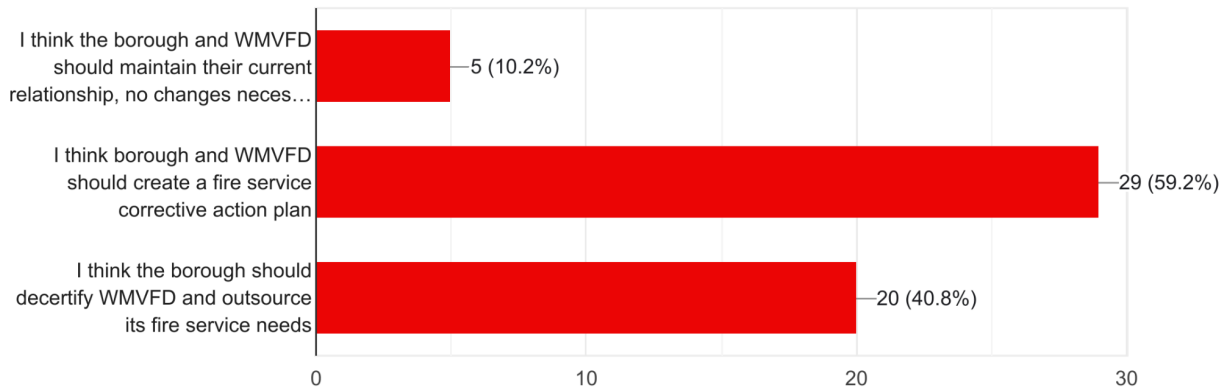
Community Confidence: Community trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD to fulfill its mission

49 responses



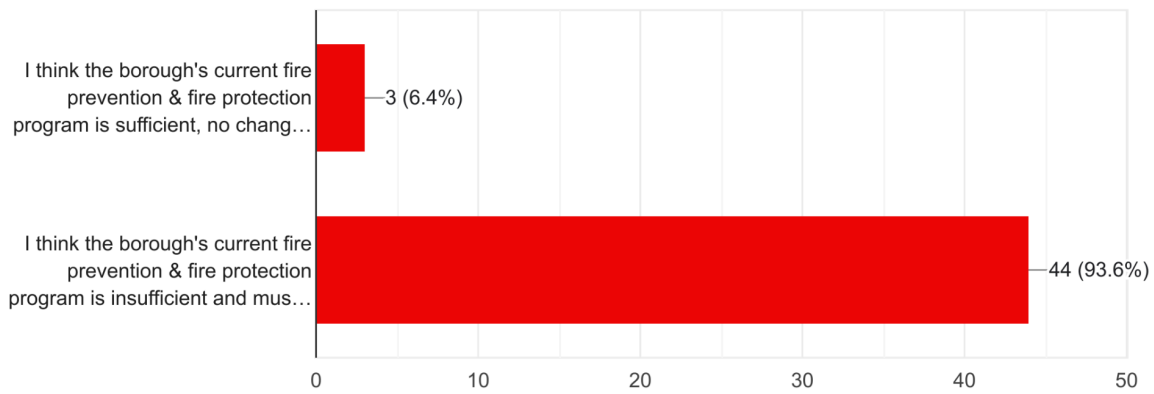
Future of the Fire Service

49 responses



Future of Borough Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program

47 responses



Appendix C: Fire Service Ecosystem

Profiles

Big Beaver Borough

[Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Participating

ISO PPC Rating: Big Beaver Borough = PPC Class 5

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Box Call List
 - Beaver Falls (automatic aid)

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$11,823

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$129,677
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$8,194
- cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$137,871

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2023 - Annual Fire Prevention at the Big Beaver Elementary School
- 2023 - Community Day
- 2023 - First Responders Event at Wright Field
- 2022 - Annual Fire Prevention at the Big Beaver Elementary School

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Company Fall Festival with Vendor Fair and Community Flea Market
- 2024 - Big Beaver Borough Volunteer Fire Company Cash Raffle
- 2024 - Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser
- 2023 - Big Beaver VFC Tent at Pittsburgh International Race Complex

- 2023 - Estate/Yard Sale at Big Beaver VFC (proceeds to fire service)
- 2023 - Chili Cook-Off Fundraiser
- 2023 - Election Day Soup and Bake Sale
- 2023 - Fall Festival
- 2022 - Homemade Soup Sale
- 2021 - Election Day Soup and Bake Sale
- 2021 - Big Beaver Community Flea Market Day (proceeds to fire service)
- 2021 - Big Beaver VFC Tent at Pittsburgh International Race Complex
- 2021 - Food Truck Event
- 2021 - Homemade Soup Sale
- 2020 - Election Day Soup and Bake Sale
- 2020 - Big Beaver Community Flea Market Day (proceeds to fire service)

Registered Nonprofit: Yes, [Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Department](#)

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Big Beaver VFD: Not participating or <10%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Big Beaver Borough Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2019](#)

Chippewa Township

[Website](#), [Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Fire service did not respond to multiple FSRC requests for an interview.

ISO PPC Rating: Chippewa Township = PPC Class 5

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Box Call List

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$51,044

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$48,476
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$117,729
- for "Debt Service" = \$11,923
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$178,128

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2021 - Fire Prevention Night (multi-dept. event)
- 2019 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2018 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2017 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2016 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2014 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - Tip Boards
- 2024 - Spring Golf Outing
- 2024 - Beaver Falls & Chippewa Fire Departments Sportsman's Night Out
- 2024 - Firemen's Friday, Boot Donations at Front Door Tavern
- 2023 - Beaver Falls & Chippewa Fire Departments Sportsman's Night Out
- 2023 - Firemen's Carnival
- 2022 - Firemen's Carnival
- 2022 - Glo-Ball Golf Outing
- 2020 - Glo-Ball Golf Outing
- 2020 - Red Cross Blood Drive
- 2019 - Firemen's Carnival
- 2018 - Fish Fry
- 2018 - Night At The Races
- 2018 - Firemen's Carnival
- 2018 - Glo-Ball Golf Outing
- 2018 - Chippewa Fire Dept New Merchandise Auction
- 2017 - Firemen's Carnival
- 2017 - Fish Fry

Registered Nonprofit: Yes, [Chippewa Fire Department](#)

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Chippewa Twp VFD: 75%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Chippewa Township Volunteer Firefighters Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021](#)

City of Beaver Falls

[Website](#), [Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Participating.

ISO PPC Rating: City of Beaver Falls = PPC Class 3

Ordinances: 2018 International Fire Code

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Box Call List:
 - Not on West Mayfield's first or second alarm list
- The secondary mission of the Beaver Falls Fire Department is to provide, when feasible, the same services to any community or agency when properly requested, as determined by existing and future mutual aid agreements (see [website](#)).

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$26,403

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$1,101,632
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$N/A
- cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$1,101,632

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2023 - Community CPR
- 2023 - Saint Monica Catholic fire station visit
- 2022 - Saint Monica Catholic fire station visit
- 2022 - City of Beaver Falls Fire Department Open House and Fire Prevention Day
- 2022 - People in Your Neighborhood Series - Meet your Firemen
- 2021 - Fire Prevention Week Open House
- 2021 - Fire Prevention Night (multi-dept. event)
- 2019 - BFFD Open House
- 2019 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2018 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2018 - Open House
- 2017 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - Beaver Falls & Chippewa Fire Departments Sportsman's Night Out
- 2024 - Tip Board Raffle
- 2024 - St. Patty's Day T-Shirt Sale
- 2024 - Purse Bingo
- 2023 - Beaver Falls & Chippewa Fire Departments Sportsmans Night Out

Registered Nonprofit: Yes, [Beaver Falls Volunteer Fire Department](#)

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Beaver Falls FD: 100%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [City of Beaver Falls Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022](#)
-

Darlington Township

[Website](#), [Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview” Fire service did not respond to multiple FSRC requests for an interview.

ISO PPC Rating: Darlington Township = PPC Class unknown

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Box Call List

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$11,303

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$18,230
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$
- for "Debt Service" = \$
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$18,230

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2019 - Public Safety Day at Chippewa Home Depot

Community Fundraising: unknown

Registered Nonprofit: No

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Darlington Twp VFD: 50%

August 9, 2024: Station 18 awarded \$74,761 through the FEMA AFG grant. Money will be used to install a diesel exhaust mitigation system in the station. The systems will be magnetically attached to the trucks' exhaust to pull harmful diesel exhaust fumes out of the station, creating a healthier work environment for firefighters, police, township workers and the general public at the township building.

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Darlington Township Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021](#)

Homewood Borough

[Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Participating.

ISO PPC Rating: Homewood Borough = PPC Class unknown

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Responds to Turnpike emergencies in coordination with North Sewickley Twp Volunteer Fire Dept.

Municipal Support (Source: 2018 Annual Audit [no reports 2019 - 2022])

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$451

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$451

- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$
- for "Debt Service" = \$
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$451

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- unknown

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - Lent Fish Fry
- 1990s - 2023 - Homewood Heritage Days

Registered Nonprofit: No

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Homewood VFD: Not participating or <10%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Homewood Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022](#)

Koppel Borough

[Website](#), [Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: FSRC did not conduct direct interview.

ISO PPC Rating: Koppel Borough = PPC Class unknown

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$3,617

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$26,285
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$
- for "Debt Service" = \$
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$26,285

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2021 - Fire Safety Day

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - 4th of July Picnic & Fireworks Show
- 2024 - Tip Board Raffle
- 2023 - January Soup Sale
- 2022 - Pork Chop Dinner
- 2020 - Pork Chop & Stuffing Dinner

Registered Nonprofit: No

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Koppel FVD: Not participating or <10%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Koppel Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021](#)
-

New Brighton Borough

[Website](#), [Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Participating.

ISO PPC Rating: New Brighton Borough = PPC Class 4

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Box Call List
- [The New Brighton Volunteer Fire Department](#) provides routine mutual aid to the neighboring townships of Daugherty, Rochester, and Pulaski, the Boroughs of Rochester and East Rochester, and the City of Beaver Falls. Since 1989, New Brighton has been a part of a county wide mutual aid agreement with all 56 county municipalities for shared resources among fire departments.

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$24,453

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$233,461
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$
- for "Debt Service" = \$
- for "Capital Projects" = \$18,687
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$252,148

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2021 - Fire Prevention Night (multi-dept. event)

Community Fundraising: unknown

Registered Nonprofit: No

OSFC Recognition Program

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- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

New Brighton VFD: 75%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [The Firemen's Relief Association of New Brighton, PA – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021](#)

Patterson Heights Borough

[Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Participating.

ISO PPC Ratings: Patterson Heights Borough = PPC Class 4

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Responds as automatic aid for West Mayfield, White Twp, and Patterson Twp. (newly formed mutual aid agreement among the 4 communities)
- Licensed EMS Agency through the Pennsylvania Department of Health, certified to provide Quick Response Service (QRS).

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$3,537

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$11,237
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$
- for "Debt Service" = \$

- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$11,237

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2019 - Public Safety Day at Chippewa Home Depot

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - Ladies Auxiliary
- 2024 - Night at the Races
- 2023 - Night at the Races

Registered Nonprofit: Yes

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Patterson Heights Borough VFD: 50%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Patterson Heights Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022](#)

Patterson Township

[Website](#), [Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Fire service did not respond to multiple FSRC requests for an interview.

ISO PPC Ratings: Patterson Township = PPC Class 5

Ordinances

Chapter 91: Fire Protection

§ 91-1 Contract authorized.

From and after the adoption of this article, the Township is authorized to contract with the Patterson Township Volunteer Company for the furnishing of fire protection to the Township, provided that the said fire company agrees to adhere to the following regulations.

§ 91-4 Monthly reports.

The Fire Chief shall make monthly reports of all fires to the Board of Township Commissioners in such form as required by the Board.

§ 91-5 Regulations.

In contracting with the fire company for fire protection, the Board of Township Commissioners may require such reasonable regulations as the Board of Township Commissioners may designate from time to time by resolution.

§ 91-6 Lease of rights.

[Amended 2-8-1996 by Ord. No. 348]

The Township of Patterson shall lease certain rights in the premises upon which the municipal building is erected and the land adjacent thereto owned by the Township to the said Patterson Township Volunteer Fire Company upon such terms and conditions as the Township Commissioners shall designate by resolution.

Chapter 91, Article III: Annual Fire Protection Assessment

§ 91-19 Amount of assessment.

[Amended 2-12-2009 by Ord. No. 424]

A. The assessment shall be levied annually against the real property owners within the Township in the amount of \$24 per residential dwelling or commercial establishment located at the real property, whether said dwelling or establishment is occupied or unoccupied.

B. The assessment shall be levied at \$24 per unit against property owners of apartment complexes. They will be charged per unit, occupied or unoccupied.

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Responds as automatic aid for West Mayfield, White Twp, and Patterson Twp. (newly formed mutual aid agreement among the 4 communities)

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$16,771

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$78,483
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$
- for "Debt Service" = \$
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$\$78,483

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2024 - Fire Prevention on Social Media
- 2023 - Open House
- 2019 - Public Safety Day at Chippewa Home Depot

Community Fundraising

- 2024 - Fish Fry
- 2024 - Rummage Sale
- 2023 - Spaghetti Dinner PTVFC
- 2022 - Spaghetti Dinner PTVFC
- 2021 - Fish Fry
- 2020 - Fish Fry
- 2019 - Fish Fry
- 2019 - Spaghetti Dinner PTVFC
- 2019 - Rummage Sale
- 2018 - Rummage Sale
- 2018 - Spaghetti Dinner PTVFC

Registered Nonprofit: No

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

Patterson Twp VFD: Not participating or <10%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [Patterson Township Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021](#)
-

White Township

[Facebook](#)

FSRC Interview: Fire service did not respond to multiple FSRC requests for an interview.

ISO PPC Rating: White Township = PPC Class unknown

Ordinances

- [Ordinance 102 Annual Fire Protection Assessment](#)
- [Ordinance 70 Hazardous Substances/Fire](#)

Mutual Aid

- Complies with State and Beaver County mutual aid agreements
- Responds as automatic aid for West Mayfield, White Twp, and Patterson Twp. (newly formed mutual aid agreement among the 4 communities)

Municipal Support (Source: 2022 Annual Audit)

Revenues

- from state: Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution = \$5,743

Expenditures

- from General Fund "Public Safety - Fire" = \$7,210
- from Special Revenue [accounts] (Including State Liquid Fuels) = \$13,195
- for "Debt Service" = \$
- for cost of fire hydrants = \$
- reported total spending "Public Safety - Fire" = \$20,405

Fire Safety & Prevention Public Education

- 2018 - Public Safety Day at Chippewa Home Depot
- 2016 - Public safety day at Chippewa Home Depot

Community Fundraising: unknown

Registered Nonprofit: No

OSFC Recognition Program

Participating Department Recognition Program - Participating Department is a program that 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. The purpose is to recognize those organizations that support, promote, and encourage their emergency response personnel to voluntarily certify within the Commonwealth's Certification Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

- [Participating Department Recognition Program](#)
- [Criteria for recognition](#)

White Twp VFD: Not participating or <10%

Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association

- [White Township Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022](#)

Fire Service Ecosystem Data

2020-2023 Incident Reporting

Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System (PennFIRS) - Monthly Participation Reports			
Year	FDID	Fire Department	Grand Total
2023	4014	Big Beaver VFC	140
	4011	Beaver Falls Fire Department	1490
	4022	Chippewa Vol. Fire Department	662
	4018	Darlington VFD	142
	4019	Homewood VFD	13
	4017	Koppel Vol Fire Company	46
	4084	New Brighton FD	419
	4033	Patterson Heights VFD	161
	4090	Patterson Township	316
	4099	West Mayfield VFD	51
	4044	White Township VFD	0

2022	4014	Big Beaver VFC	179
	4011	Beaver Falls Fire Department	1460
	4022	Chippewa Vol. Fire Department	802
	4018	Darlington VFD	97
	4019	Homewood VFD (not reporting)	0
	4017	Koppel Vol Fire Company	63
	4084	New Brighton FD	292
	4033	Patterson Heights VFD	166
	4090	Patterson Township	247
	4099	West Mayfield VFD	55
	4044	White Township VFD (not reporting)	0

2021	4014	Big Beaver VFC	183
	4011	Beaver Falls Fire Department	1496
	4022	Chippewa Vol. Fire Department	975
	4018	Darlington VFD	76
	4019	Homewood VFD	41
	4017	Koppel Vol Fire Company	48
	4084	New Brighton FD	303
	4033	Patterson Heights VFD	199
	4090	Patterson Township	285
	4099	West Mayfield VFD	44
	4044	White Township VFD (not reporting)	0

2020*	4014	Big Beaver VFC	239	
		<i>No Activity</i>	85	35.56%
		<i>Aid Given</i>	154	64.44%
	4011	Beaver Falls Fire Department	1468	
		<i>No Activity</i>	1267	86.31%
		<i>Aid Given</i>	204	13.90%
	4022	Chippewa Vol. Fire Department	259	
		<i>No Activity</i>	108	41.70%
		<i>Aid Given</i>	151	58.30%

4018	Darlington VFD	71	
	No Activity	56	78.87%
	Aid Given	15	21.13%
4019	Homewood VFD	36	
	No Activity	36	100.00%
	Aid Given	0	0.00%
4017	Koppel Vol Fire Company	55	
	No Activity	53	96.36%
	Aid Given	2	3.64%
4084	New Brighton FD	292	
	No Activity	112	38.36%
	Aid Given	180	61.64%
4033	Patterson Heights VFD	180	
	No Activity	1	0.56%
	Aid Given	179	99.44%
4090	Patterson Township	180	
	No Activity	162	90.00%
	Aid Given	18	10.00%
4099	West Mayfield VFD	65	
	No Activity	60	92.31%
	Aid Given	5	7.69%
4044	White Township VFD (not reporting)	0	
	No Activity	0	0.00%
	Aid Given	0	0.00%

* The 2020 PennFIRS report is the only year to provide additional detailed incident information.

2022 Municipal Spending on Fire Services

See FSRC Online for more detail.

2022 Municipal Fire Service	EXPENDITURES				REVENUE	
	Total Municipal Expenditure for Public Safety	Total Municipal Expenditure for Public Safety-Fire	Fire Service as Percentage of Total Public Safety Spending	Expenditure from General Fund for Public Safety-Fire	Revenue from Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution for Public Safety-Fire	Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution as percentage of Total Public Safety- Fire Spending
Beaver Falls	\$3,555,667	\$1,101,632	30.98%	\$1,101,632	\$26,403	2.40%
Big Beaver	\$371,576	\$137,871	37.10%	\$129,677	\$11,823	8.58%
Chippewa	\$1,138,253	\$178,128	15.65%	\$48,476	\$51,044	28.66%
Darlington Twp	\$248,842	\$18,230	7.33%	\$18,230	\$11,303	62.00%
Homewood*	\$451	\$451	100.00%	\$451	\$451	100.00%
Koppel	\$186,127	\$26,285	14.12%	\$26,285	\$3,617	13.76%
New Brighton	\$1,489,777	\$252,148	16.93%	\$233,461	\$24,453	9.70%
Patterson Heights	\$31,662	\$11,237	35.49%	\$11,237	\$3,537	31.48%
Patterson Twp	\$503,242	\$78,483	15.60%	\$78,483	\$16,771	21.37%
West Mayfield	\$96,630	\$23,089	23.89%	\$23,089	\$5,529	23.95%
White Twp	\$71,988	\$20,405	28.35%	\$7,210	\$5,743	28.15%

*Homewood 2018 Audit (latest available from Pa State Auditor).

State Fire Commissioner Support

August 2, 2024: Beaver Falls Fire Department, Big Beaver Borough Volunteer Fire Company and the Koppel Volunteer Fire Department awarded a 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant of \$196,800. This regional grant is to be used to purchase personal protective gear for firefighters. This grant was one of the first steps to provide matching turnout gear for the departments of what will become the Big Beaver Falls Area Fire District.

2021-2022 Fire Commissioner Grants

Fire Department	Awarded Amount	Approved Certification Points	Project Type
Beaver Falls FD	\$15,000.00	11	Thermal Imaging Camera / Knox Key Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof.
Beaver Falls VFD	\$15,000.00	20	Debt Reduction – Utility Truck Debt Reduction LENDER WesBanco
Big Beaver Borough VFD	\$15,000.00	8	debt reduction Debt Reduction LENDER First State Bank of livingston
Chippewa Township VFD	\$13,956.00	12	Traffic Control Equipment Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof. Emergency Lighting Replacement Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof.
Darlington Township VFD	\$15,000.00	13	Hydraulic Pump replacement Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof. Exhaust gas mitigation system Construction and renovation of facilities and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings, office equipment, and support services necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide fire, ambulance, or rescue services OR debt reduction associated with project type A.
Homewood VFD	\$15,000.00	0	Equipment Purchase Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof. EQUIPMENT REPAIRS Construction and renovation of facilities and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings, office equipment, and support services necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide fire, ambulance, or rescue services OR debt reduction associated with project type A.

Koppel VFD	\$15,000.00	3	Firefighter gear Debt Reduction LENDER Community Leasing Partners
New Brighton VFD	\$30,000.00	20	Battery Powered Rescue Equipment Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof.
Patterson Heights VFD	\$15,000.00	4	P25 Radios Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof.
Patterson Township VFD	\$14,278.00	4	Edraulic Combination Tool Repair of firefighting, ambulance, or rescue equipment OR purchase thereof.
West Mayfield VFD			
White Township VFD			

Local Registered Non Profit Fire Departments

- [Ambridge Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Beaver Falls Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Brighton Township Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [The Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Chippewa Fire Department](#)
- [Ellwood City Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Hanover Volunteer Fire Department Beaver County](#)
- [Independence Volunteer Fire Department 1](#)
- [North Sewickley Volunteer Fire Department \(See IRS database\)](#)
- [Pine Run Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Raccoon Township Independent Volunteer Fire Department No 1](#)
- [Rochester Township Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [South Beaver Township Volunteer Fire Company](#)
- [Borough of Ohioville Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Wayne Township Volunteer Fire Department](#)

See also:

[Bill eliminating nonprofit filing fees for volunteer fire departments passes Pa. House unanimously](#)

Beaver County Fire Departments

Source: Beaver County Emergency Management: Fire Services (as of September 1, 2024)

City of Aliquippa – Station 91
Chief David Foringer
1499 Kennedy Blvd
Aliquippa, PA 15001

Ambridge Borough – Station 71
Chief Don Larrick
600 11th Street
Ambridge, PA 15003

Baden Borough – Station 47
Chief Dennis Baker, Jr.
47 Firehouse Lane
Baden, PA 15005

Beaver Borough – Station 101
Chief Dave Meers
165 Market Street
Beaver, PA 15009

City of Beaver Falls – Station 11
Chief Mark Stowe
715 15th Street
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Big Beaver Borough – Station 14
Chief Adam Crepp
621 Friendship Road
Darlington, PA 16115

Big Knob – Station 26
Chief John Murtha
1229 Route 989
Rochester, PA 15074

Bridgewater Borough – Station 28
Chief Charles D. Bates
619 Market Street
Bridgewater, PA 15009

Brighton Township – Station 63
Chief Mitchell Curtaccio
Station 1
1120 Dutch Ridge Road
Beaver, PA 15009
Station 2
2295 Tuscarawas Road
Beaver, PA 15009
Station 3
84 Grange Road
Beaver, PA 15009

Center Township
Chief William Brucker
Station 36
3385 Brodhead Road
Aliquippa, PA 15001
Station 37
108 Grandview Ave
Monaca, PA 15061
Station 38
110 Van Kirk Road
Monaca, PA 15061

Chippewa Township – Station 22
Chief David Syka
2568 Darlington Road
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Conway Borough – Station 49
Chief Daniel Byrne
900 S Gross Street
Conway, PA 15027

Darlington Township – Station 18
Chief Chris Laderer
3590 Darlington Road
Darlington, PA 16115

Daugherty Township – Station 86
Chief Justin Stone
4198 Marion Hill Road
New Brighton, PA 15066

Economy Borough – Station 69
Chief Ted Brickner
Station 1
3304 Conway Wallrose Road
Sewickley, PA 15143
Station 2
2430 Ridge Road Ext
Ambridge, PA 15003
Station 3
1215 Conway Wallrose Road
Freedom, PA 15042

Ellwood City Borough – Station 2300
Chief Rick Myers
411 6th Street
Ellwood City, PA 16117

Franklin Township – Station 70
Chief Steven J. Bailey
Station 1
808 Old Zelienople Road
Ellwood City, PA 16117
Station 2
897 Zelienople Rd
Fombell, PA 16123

Freedom Borough – Station 27
Chief Harry Gilarno
901 3rd Avenue
Freedom, PA 15042

Hanover Township – Station 68
Chief DJ Miller
2697 State Route 18
Hookstown, PA 15050

Harmony Township – Station 48
Chief Patrick Shearer

2400 Beaver Road
Ambridge, PA 15003

Homewood Borough – Station 19
Chief Alan Desanzo
464 Main Street
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Hookstown Borough – Station 60
Chief Trevor Torrence
120 Sliver Slipper Road
Hookstown, PA 15050

Hopewell Township – Station 92
Chief Jon Cochran
Station 1
2260 Brodhead Road
Aliquippa, PA 15001
Station 2
1401 Gringo Road
Aliquippa, PA 15001

Independence Township – Station 80
Chief Jeri New
116 School Road
Aliquippa, PA 15001

Industry Borough – Station 97
Chief Jack Balser Sr.
1640 Midland Beaver Road
Industry, PA 15052

Koppel Borough – Station 17
Chief Devon Price
5525 5th Avenue
Koppel, PA 16136

Midland Borough – Station 95
Chief Joseph Ditri
936 Midland Avenue
Midland, PA 16136

Monaca Borough – Station 56
Chief Mike Siegel

928 Pennsylvania Ave
Monaca, PA 15061

New Brighton Borough – Station 84
Chief Paul Bock
610 3rd Ave
New Brighton, PA 15066

North Sewickley – Station 13
Chief Mark Sutherland
Station 1
887 Mercer Road
Beaver Falls, PA 15010
Station 2
2400 Brighton Road
Ellwood City, PA 16117

Ohioville Borough – Station 39
Chief Clarence Dawson
108 Salem Church Road
Midland, PA 15059

Patterson Heights Borough – Station 33
Chief Jason Medlin
603 7th Avenue
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Patterson Township – Station 90
Chief Philip Graeser
319 Darlington Road
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Pine Run – Station 59
Chief Mike Priolo
1395 Harvey Run Road
Freedom, PA 15042

Potter Township – Station 34
Chief Vicki Carlton
247 Mawry Road
Monaca, PA 15061

Pulaski Township – Station 89
Chief Alan Hickey

3401 Sunflower Road
New Brighton, PA 15066

Raccoon Township – Station 35
Chief Bert Failor
4061 Patterson Road
Aliquippa, PA 15001

Rochester Fire Department – Station 23
Chief Mike Mamone III
Station 1
632 California Avenue
Rochester, PA 15074
Station 2
414 Lacock Street
Rochester, PA 15074

Shippingport Borough – Station 96
Chief Bill Nelson
164 Route 3016
Shippingport, PA 15077

South Beaver Township – Station 61
Chief Keith Girting Jr.
740 State Route 168
Darlington, PA 16115

Vanport Township – Station 24
Chief Dave Diecks
435 Jefferson Avenue
Vanport, PA 15009

West Mayfield Borough – Station 99
Chief Lou Little
706 37th Street
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

White Township – Station 44
Chief Ray Evans
2512 13th Street
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Appendix D: Local Government

Solicitor Memo to Council, Re: Fire Department

MEMO

TO: WEST MAYFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
RE: FIRE DEPARTMENT
FROM: JOSEPH M. BUDICAK, ESQUIRE
DATE: APRIL 11, 2024

It has appeared to me that there is apparently a great deal of interest by Council and some members of the general public in regard to the relationship between the Borough and the Volunteer Fire Department.

While maybe everyone is not aware, it needs to be remembered that the Volunteer Fire Department is a separate entity unto itself, it is, I believe, a nonprofit organization. It is not owned or administered by the Borough. Obviously though, there are connections and some requirements.

The Borough Code has a limited number of references. Section 1202 lists all of the Borough's specific powers and in Section 1202 it does provide and give the power and authority to Borough Council to make sure that fire and/or emergency medical services are provided within the Borough by whatever means and to whatever extent as determined by Borough Council, including the appropriate financial assistance to that particular fire company. This means that you can give them financial assistance to whatever degree you see fit. It also states that Council is required to consult with such fire or emergency medical service providers to discuss their needs.

As stated, you can provide financial assistance to a particular fire department, and, any such organization receiving your funds must provide to the Borough an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of those particular funds before the Borough may consider budgeting any additional funding or continued funding to that organization. Simply stated, that means they have to account to you for how they spent whatever money was provided to them by the Borough.

However, it needs to be remembered that if the Volunteer Fire Department receives funds by other means such as donations, fundraisers, etc., they are not required to account to Borough Council for that money.

Also, there is nothing in the Borough Code that would give counsel the power to become involved in the administration or management of a Volunteer Fire Department.

In another part of Section 1202, it also provides that Council could directly purchase or contribute to the purchase of fire engines, fire apparatus, and necessary equipment. In other words, you are not simply giving them an amount of money for which they have to account to you, but you are providing for a specific item.

Also, in another statute it states that the Borough will expend public money to secure insurance or compensation for volunteer fireman killed or injured while in the line of duty. This, of course, would be

Worker's Compensation. Council does have the power to assign territory to a Volunteer Fire Department or paid fire department. That has been litigated and determined.

Related to fire departments but not dealing with appropriations or equipment there is a statute in 35 Pa. C.S.A. 79 A 02 that provides and authorizes you to give a tax credit to a member of a Volunteer Fire Department in your community. This can be done by Ordinance or Resolution and the individual in question will be entitled to a credit on their Borough tax liability for their home residence. Just want to make sure you are aware of this.

FSRC Questions for Local Government

Borough Ordinances

1. Does Council have any comprehensive plan to update and recodify borough ordinances, especially those related to public safety? If so, what would be the timeline?
2. Would the Ordinance Committee manage a recodification project?
3. What recommended changes or amendments to the public safety ordinances would be favored by the Fire & Police Committee?
4. What recommended changes or amendments to the public safety ordinances would be favored by other Council members, other committees, and other borough officials such as the Emergency Management Coordinator, Code Enforcement team, Fire Chief?

Fire Service Agreement

1. Does any borough official or officer of the fire service know of and have access to a written service agreement between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department?
2. If currently no written fire service agreement exists defining the legal terms, conditions, operational duties, and financial obligations of the working relationship between the municipality and the WMVFD, would the Solicitor recommend the drafting of such a contract?

Mutual Aid Agreements

1. Has Council vetted (read, reviewed, and approved) any specific mutual aid agreements created by or entered into by WMVFD and other municipal fire services?
2. Are the Fire and Police and Finance & Litigation Committees aware of any such agreements?
3. Is the Solicitor aware of any such mutual aid agreements? If so, are these agreements legal and proper?

Real Estate

1. Regarding borough owned property plot #57 (PARID: 520020116000) currently used as WMVFD's rear parking lot, is there a lease agreement between the borough and the WMVFD?

Fire Prevention Code

1. Has Council taken any legislative action regarding the 2022 fire department and ISO insurance inspection recommendation to adopt an international fire code?
2. Does the Fire & Police Committee work with the fire service provider to regularly review and update if necessary the borough's Fire Prevention Code?
3. Currently, what fire prevention code is used by the borough's code enforcement team?

ISO Public Protection Classification

1. Does the borough require from the WMVFD or the insurance organization (Verisk) a current, complete, and unabridged copy of the ISO PPC report?
2. Has the Fire & Police Committee ever reviewed and evaluated the ISO PPC report, communicated these findings to Council, and offered corrective action plans to improve upon the report's shortcomings and weaknesses?

Municipal Leadership, Authority, Oversight Duties

Council's Fire & Police Committee

1. Is there a formal, written committee description that defines mission and scope, powers, duties, and obligations of the Fire & Police Committee?
2. What are the qualifications of Council members serving on the Fire & Police Committee, especially the chair?
3. What are the specific duties and responsibilities of the Fire & Police Committee chair?
4. Is it permissible for citizen representatives to serve on the Fire & Police Committee?

Professional Reports & Confirmation of Public Safety Readiness

1. Does Council have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for monthly Fire & Police Committee reports?
2. Beyond the ordinance requirement for a mandatory annual report of the Volunteer Fire Department to Council, does Council have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for the annual fire department report?
3. Does Council have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for monthly and annual Emergency Management reports?

Public Education & Communication

1. Is there any public record, such as motions, resolutions, or discussions in Council meeting minutes that demonstrate Council's commitment to fire safety public education?
2. Does the borough have a designated public safety spokesperson or communications coordinator for such purposes?

Confirmation of West Mayfield Special Fire Police

1. For those WMVFD members currently serving as special fire police, does the borough have a record of confirmation(s) by the current Mayor or past Mayors?

Budget & Finances

Budgeting Process - Appropriations

1. How does the borough assess, evaluate, and prioritize identified, need-based financial and in-kind support for our fire protection and fire service needs?
2. Does the Fire and Police Committee (or any other public safety representative in local government) work with other borough officials and/or the fire service to request a listing of needs based on documentary evidence (e.g., financial records, invoices, receipts, cost increase notices, inflationary projections) that help justify appropriations requests?
3. Does the borough budget section for “Public Safety-Fire” accurately categorize and account for (itemize) all fire prevention and fire protection needs?
4. The municipal budget does not itemize the cost of workers compensation insurance for volunteer fire department staff, which costs taxpayers about \$7,000 per year (as noted in Council meeting minutes, February 2022). Why is this specific support for the fire service not noted (itemized) in the Public Safety-Fire section of the budget?
5. Based on fire department reporting in the public record, the borough’s budgeted cash value of fuel provisioned in support of the fire department appears to be grossly and consistently miscalculated between 2020-2024. How can this be explained?

Budget Construction

1. When do borough officials begin the process of deliberating and drafting the annual municipal budget?
2. Is there a budget committee that directs the borough Secretary in drafting the annual municipal budget?
3. What role does the Finance & Litigation Committee play in formulating the budget?
4. What role does the Fire & Police Committee play in formulating the public safety budget?
5. How are budget figures calculated (e.g., based on multi-year actual spending trends, documented needs, invoicing, contract agreements)?
6. Where can actual spending data be found?
7. How can this fiscal data be made readily accessible to the public?

Budget Forecasting

1. With respect to near and long-term future support for fire prevention and fire protection needs and trends, who is responsible for calculating these figures and conveying this information to Council and the public?
2. Should the Fire & Police Committee be tasked with this duty?
3. What role would the Finance & Litigation Committee play in preparing for these future budgetary needs?

Tax Base

Fire Tax

1. Given the current tax base of the borough, what would be the estimated revenue generated by various millage rates?

2. What would be the estimated tax burden on residents and businesses for the above tax millages?

Tax Credit Incentives

1. Would there be any appreciable impact upon the borough's property tax base (revenue) if the borough were to implement a tax credit incentive program for members of the volunteer fire department?

End of Local Government Questions

Response by Councilmember Bill Heaton

Subject: Invitation: FSRC Local Government Meeting

Kevin Farkas <farkas.kj@gmail.com>

Tue, Jun 11, 2024 at 12:58 PM

To: wheaton724@comcast.net

Cc: Louis Little <loulittle1946@gmail.com>, Janet Helbig <jan3455@comcast.net>, lampus411 <lampus411@comcast.net>, Jacob Tate <jacobtate76@gmail.com>, Bob Tate <rtate3631@comcast.net>, Jeffrey Seybert <jeff.seybert@aol.com>, Pat Lansberry <patlansberry@comcast.net>, Jason Heaton <darthier79@gmail.com>, Licia Cogley <licialicia5464@gmail.com>, Kathleen Brewer <kathybrewer53@yahoo.com>, joe@allrealtytransfers.com

Bill, Thanks for your response. Your comments are appreciated and valuable.

The FSRC will be looking at some of the fire department related concerns next month when we focus on the WMVFD. This month, we are focusing on local government's role in fire prevention and fire protection matters. Because you are a long-time councilmember and fire department member, it would be helpful to us if you could help us better understand the role of West Mayfield government relevant to fire prevention and fire protection matters. We look forward to your appearance at the FSRC local government meeting on June 19 to share this information with us. Also, we hope you will join us next month when we ask to meet with the WMVFD to learn about fire service practices, activities, issues, concerns, etc.

As for some of your comments, I've added commentary below in blue text. Hope this is helpful.

Bill Heaton: First let me start off saying anything that can improve fire service response and quality, I'm in favor of. As a member of the FD I took my life membership because of personnel disagreements between the two members. If you want to change what's going on then join the dept. and change it to what you want.

Kevin Farkas: Citizens and local government officials in communities all around West Mayfield are effectively improving their fire prevention and fire protection programs without joining their fire departments. The fire service is just one aspect of our entire emergency response system. FSRC's findings and conversations with several communities in our fire service ecosystem contradicts the assertion that the only way to "change what's going on" is by becoming a member of the fire department. There can and should be a place for everyone to help make our communities safer and more secure.

Bill Heaton: Now, the percentages you have listed below. Are they percent of the WM population or percent of those that responded to your survey? If the latter how many responded?

Kevin Farkas: Since February 29, 2024 the FSRC has had a committee webpage available to government officials, fire service staff, and citizens. Here we park our on-going findings and research, including details of our community survey which include the number of respondents to each question in our survey (which is ongoing). In the invitation letter, it is stated, "Here's an overview of responses to our community survey."

To date, we have 41 surveys returned. Our committee is seeking at least 40 more surveys by the end of summer. Given the adult population of West Mayfield, this would give us about an 8% return (which is an average return for online surveys according to some marketing experts). Of course, we would like to get as many returns as possible, especially representation from every street in the borough. We currently have representation from 17 streets.

For our methodology we chose not to do random sampling. The N would have been 280 for results with 95% confidence and 5% margin of error. This would have been beyond the capacity of our committee. Instead, we wanted every eligible citizen to have an opportunity to complete the survey. Random sampling and open methodologies can't be mixed. The committee believes that a survey open to every resident, although the rate of return may be small, is practical for us and more democratic. Everyone has a chance to complete the survey--including every councilmember and fire department member who is a current or past resident.

And finally, this is an opinion survey. The results are subjective; they capture what people think and believe. Understanding "why" people have these opinions should be the next logical inquiry for council, the fire dept., and citizens themselves. It is not, however, within the scope of this project to explore those questions.

Bill Heaton: When doing a survey, one should remain unbiased. Words like "super %" and "in kind support" don't share an unbiased report. Everyone can read and understand numbers.

Kevin Farkas: The term "super majority" is often used in fields such as finance and political science to describe amounts typically in excess of 2/3 or 66%. The qualifier is quantitative, not qualitative. The term "in-kind" is a common reference to benefits or support that are best described as goods or services, as opposed to financial. The borough fuel provision is in-kind support; it is not financial although it has monetary value. The borough's workers compensation insurance is an in-kind contribution supporting the fire service; the borough provides this benefit for the fire department instead of giving cash for such purposes.

Council Authority: Oversight of the fire service - A majority of citizens (63%) think council does not have enough authority and oversight of the fire service.

Bill Heaton: As reported by the borough solicitor the council has no authority over the fire dept.

Kevin Farkas: There is a difference between "authority" and "control." The solicitor's letter, which we've documented on the FSRC webpage, mentions that "there is nothing in the Borough Code that would give council the power to become involved in the administration or management of the volunteer fire department." This is true in West Mayfield, historically and in practice. Other municipalities do things differently, sharing authority and control by agreement between local government and the fire service.

Ultimately, local government has the power to recognize and designate (authorize) its municipal fire service provider. Council has the duty and obligation to assess and evaluate its designated municipal fire service provider. Moreover, council holds the "power of the purse" with respect to providing taxpayer financial and in-kind support for its designated municipal fire service provider; local government has a legal and fiduciary obligation to taxpayers to ensure that monies spent for the provision of a fire service are utilized appropriately and as intended and directed by council.

Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD - 38% of citizens think taxpayers provide enough sustaining support to the WMVFD, while 18% feel that the borough should provide more support. A majority of respondents (48%) admit that they don't know what is an appropriate amount of taxpayer support to sustain the WMVFD.

Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD - 38% of citizens think taxpayers provide enough sustaining support to the WMVFD, while 18% feel that the borough should provide more support. A majority of respondents (48%) admit that they don't know what is an appropriate amount of taxpayer support to sustain the WMVFD.

Bill Heaton: Are they aware that the borough support is \$3,500 this year, far less than surrounding communities.

Kevin Farkas: The total municipal support package designated for the fire service is made up of several financial and in-kind elements. The annual cash contribution from the General Fund is only one. The General Fund (i.e., taxpayer monies) also provides for workers compensation insurance as well as other insurances and bonding. The fuel provision is paid for from the General Fund. Although monies from Foreign Fire Insurance program come from the state, they are specifically earmarked tax dollars intended to support our fire service provider.

The question for our local government isn't whether we are spending more or less than surrounding communities, but if we are sufficiently supporting (through cash or in-kind goods

and services) our own fire service needs. I see no evidence in the public record that our council has a true and accurate sense of what our fire service needs are. The process of funding for the fire service should be demonstrably need based. If the fire service needs \$10,000 or \$10 in cash to fulfill its mission, the need should be communicated and demonstrated to council. That is reasonable and responsible fiduciary action. However, for council to throw arbitrary amounts such \$3,500 or \$10,000 to the fire service just because that was last year's funding level and "just what we usually do" is irresponsible for a fiduciary body.

I don't think anyone would not want to support the fire service if its needs to fulfill its mission are meaningfully communicated to the community. Taxpayers understand the value proposition; they won't support a fire service that has lost their faith and trust.

Fire Prevention: Public education and community outreach efforts - A majority of citizens (54%) think the WMVFD's fire prevention education program does not adequately serve the needs of the community.

Bill Heaton: While I agree that public education could improve. Where is the FD to get the funds to support this education program?

Kevin Farkas: It's a fair question. But because we are focusing on local government right now, we will be asking if council has ever offered a grant to the WMVFD for the express purposes of fire safety public education? Perhaps I've missed something, but I don't see any evidence of this in the public record. Moreover, I see no evidence in the public record demonstrating that the WMVFD has ever asked council for such monies for this purpose--not \$1,000, not \$100, not \$10 to be spent on fire prevention safety.

When FSRC focuses on the WMVFD next month, there will be a chance for leadership to explain why they've never asked for such monies, but they have asked council for hundreds of dollars to buy candy that Santa hands out to children each December. We will also ask if WMVFD Santa has ever handed out some kids-oriented fire safety materials (e.g., inexpensive small coloring books, stickers, posters, booklets, etc.) along with their candy treat bags, courtesy of our local government.

Neighboring Fire Services: Mutual aid leadership, staffing, qualifications, training, equipment, availability - A super majority of citizens (73%) think our neighboring fire departments offer better quality fire services than the WMVFD.

Bill Heaton: Take another survey. The WM FD currently has only 5 or 6 member that are residents of WM. So, with a population of just over 1,100. That means that less than 1% (.45%) of the borough residents are participating in the FD.

Kevin Farkas: Again, our focus right now is on local government. So, we should ask if and how council has ever helped the fire service address this problem. You might recall that the end of solicitor's memo regarding the authority of council over the fire department, Mr. Budicak advises that council has the statutory authority to offer volunteer firefighters a municipal tax credit. The FSRC is interested in learning if local government has ever taken the initiative to

address fire service matters such as recruitment and retention in this way. Our findings thus far have been nil. Note, New Brighton council grants monies to its VFD to reward FFs for training, responding to emergency calls, and attending staff meetings.

Community Support: Financial donations, participation in fundraising efforts - While a majority of citizens (58%) say they sometimes support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts, nearly a third surveyed stated that they do not or will not support the WMVFD's fundraising efforts.

Bill Heaton: Sometimes support.

Kevin Farkas: I don't understand your response, but let me reiterate: Citizens understand the value proposition.

Community Confidence: Community trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD to fulfill its mission - Another super majority of citizens (73%) think the community has lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD.

Bill Heaton: I don't understand why? If you look at the record of incidents. The FD has handled every incident to resolve. The bigger incident require mutual aid. Name one FD that has a structure fire that doesn't call for mutual aid. Even paid depts call for mutual aid.

Kevin Farkas: Our focus right now is on local government. I can't speak to the technical questions regarding WMVFD's performance record; this will be our focus next month. But the FSRC is interested in understanding how council, mayor, and officers interpret this datapoint from the perspective of local government. In a recent conversation with New Brighton VFD, we learned that their municipality is actively interested and involved with reviewing and evaluating intergovernmental agreements so that neighboring communities are benefitting as equally as possible from each other.

Through our conversations with other municipalities, FSRC has learned that some fire departments have a growing resentment toward some other fire departments for exploiting their capabilities to compensate for their own deficits. As one fire chief said, some local departments are abusing the mutual aid system.

Future of the Fire Service - A super majority of citizens (90%) are evenly split over whether the borough and WMVFD should create a fire service corrective action plan or the borough should decertify WMVFD and outsource its fire service needs.

Bill Heaton: While I agree that WM FD is small town FD, it handles every call that comes in. Yes, they have help from mutual aid, but thats because of poor membership support from our borough residents. If more residents would join less mutual aid would be needed. As noted above in you survey 38% believe that the support { \$3,500 } is sufficient to cover the cost. However, if outsourced the cost will go over \$20,000 to start and go up each year. This will surely mean a 2 or 3 mill tax adjustment.

Kevin Farkas: Our community survey never asked citizens if they thought \$3,500 was sufficient to cover the cost of fire service. We asked:

Borough Support: Tax-payer financial and in-kind support for the WMVFD

- I think taxpayers provide enough sustaining support to the WMVFD (38%)
- I think taxpayers should provide more sustaining support to the WMVFD (18%)
- I don't know what is an appropriate amount of taxpayer support to sustain the WMVFD (48%)

It would not be consistent with other findings of the survey to assume that 38% of respondents think the WMFD is adequately sustained by local government. If we read this response in context of the entire survey, where the majority of citizens express having lost trust, faith, and confidence in the WMVFD, this response is more of a declaration by taxpayers: We've had enough. We are no longer willing to throw good money after bad. As one citizen stated in the open comments portion of our survey (to be included in our final FSRC report), What are we getting for our investment?

From a public education perspective (that local government should pay attention to), perhaps the most interesting revelation here is that most citizens who responded admit to not knowing what would be an appropriate amount of taxpayer support to sustain the WMVFD.

Future of Borough Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Program - A super majority of citizens (95%) think the borough's current fire prevention & fire protection program is insufficient and must be updated and modernized.

Bill Heaton: The only prevention would be education and I agree as was stated above. As for protection, response on incidents are handled as well as any other dept. The only issue here is the lack of borough resident membership.

Kevin Farkas: Our focus right now is on local government, which covers everything within the scope of the borough's fire prevention & fire protection program such as ordinances, budget, provision of fire service, intergovernmental agreements, emergency management readiness, infrastructure (fire hydrants), and public education. Our community survey shows that a majority of citizens who took the survey would not agree with your view that "response on incidents are handled as well as any other dept. The only issue here is the lack of borough resident membership."

It is fair to say that, as repeatedly expressed in the survey, a super-majority of citizens do not approve of our community's current fire prevention and fire protection. So what is council's plan to address this crisis? The FSRC is as eager as everyone else to learn the answers.

Public Safety Reporting

Fire & Police Committee Reports to Council

West Mayfield Council Meeting	Fire & Police Committee Reporting to Council (source: Council meeting minutes)
2024-12	TBA
2024-11	TBA
2024-10	TBA
2024-09	TBA
2024-08	TBA
2024-07	Fire & Police - Lou Little – Fire Calls – Accident on Steffin Hill with Station 44. DOA Lift assist with medic rescue. Our fire department was selected by 93.7 The Fan out of Pittsburgh. We are 1 of 50 Volunteer Fire Departments to receive funds from the 5 alarm marathon they held at Green tree VFD.
2024-06	Fire & Police - Lou Little – Fire Calls – Accident on Steffin Hill with Station 44. DOA Lift assist with medic rescue. Our fire department was selected by 93.7 The Fan out of Pittsburgh. We are 1 of 50 Volunteer Fire Departments to receive funds from the 5 alarm marathon they held at Green tree VFD.
2024-05	Lou – fire report handed in. Fire Calls answered: Report generated on 5/7/2024 Incident #2024-08, 3/1/2024, Patterson Ave. & W. 3rd St., Landing Zone Incident #2024-9, 3/15/2024, 1000 Patterson Ave, Trees, Wires, & Transformer down Incident #2024-10, 3/21/2024, Pulaski Two, Rehab assignment Incident #2024-11, 4/7/2024, Sylvan Ridge Apts, Washer on Fire Incident #2024-12, 4/7/2024, 24th Ave, CO Call Incident #2024-13, 4/13/2024, 113 Boyd, CO Call He [Mr. Little] would like barriers on top of creek to avoid a car accident from going into creek. [Note: The written report was not discussed, nor read into the record.]
2024-04	Fire & Police - Lou Little – None (not present at meeting)
2024-03	Fire & Police - Lou Little provided a report of the fire department activity [not read into the record] and it will be more detailed next month since this is something new and he's still trying to get everything set up. The fire department car cruise is scheduled for August 10th; a battle of the boroughs fire departments at the park in being planned.
2024-02	No Fire Dept. Report. [Note: West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department receives \$13,062 from the same grant, but it is not reported to Council.]

2024-01	Mr. Bob Tate asked how the fire department spent money donated by Council. Mr. Little responded that they used the money for the purchase of gear, paying the bills and making repairs. The fire department squad was destroyed by chemicals when taken to the train derailment in East Palestine. [Note: No annual fire department report, which is usually provided in January for the preceding year]
2023-12	Fire & Police- Ms. Harker-none
2023-11	Fire & Police- Ms. Harker-none
2023-10	Fire & Police- Ms. Harker-none
2023-09	Fire & Police – Halloween Trick or Treat will be on Tuesday, October 31 from six until seven thirty.
2023-08	Fire & Police – none
2023-07	Fire & Police – the fire department chain saw does not work and needs fixed. Lou said to have it sharpened.
2023-06	No Fire Report
2023-05	No Fire Report
2023-04	Fire & Police – the four firefighters who were there [at EP train derailment incident] have to have bloodwork, urine tests and physicals every month. There is a lot of paperwork involved.
2023-03	Fire & Police – the vehicles that were taken to the train derailment in East Palestine (squad truck and bus) have to be inspected and cleaned from top to bottom; all gear needs to be replaced. The four firefighters who were there have to have bloodwork and physicals. There is a lot of paperwork involved.
2023-02	Fire & Police – Little advised that the VFD Ladies Aux would NOT be doing a bake sale during the upcoming My primary election so the Centennial Cmte would be able to do so. He also said that the Beaver County Fire Police would be willing to assist with traffic control for the Centennial Celebration at the Park in August for a \$400 donation to the Beaver County Fire Police.
2023-01	Fire & Police – Year-end report – engine #1 481 gal. fuel, engine #2 66 gal. fuel; Squad – 219 gal. fuel; 128 gal. diesel. Five members are taking the fire fighter 1 exam.
2022-12	BLANK
2022-11	BLANK
2022-10	Fire & Police – Ms. Harker ISO insurance required all kinds of records and we were given a top rating after the records were reviewed. Halloween Trick-or-Treat will be October 31 from 6 until 7:30.
2022-09	Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – none
2022-08	She [Ms. Harker] requested a letter that she can give to Representative Marshall to obtain new flags for the Vets's Memorial, Playground, Borough Building & Fire Department.
2022-07	Fire & Police – none
2022-06	Fire & Police – none

2022-05	[No Council meeting held this month]
2022-04	Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – The ISO insurance inspection has been complete and the fire department received a rating of 6. In order to get a higher rating you must have paid fire fighters. The borough needs to adopt an international fire code and adopt an ordinance for it
2022-03	Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – everything is good at the fire department. She is getting information requested by ISO insurance. All fire calls are answered promptly.
2022-02	Fire & Police – Ms. Harker – open discussion fire department.
2022-01	Fire and Police – none [Note: No annual fire department report, which is usually provided in January for the preceding year]
2021-12	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker none
2021-11	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker reported that the fire police helped with the Veteran's Day Parade and a funeral.
2021-10	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-09	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-08	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-07	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-06	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-05	Police and Fire – [Ms. Harker] She gave Mrs. Lansberry the fire department roster requested by the insurance company. The fire department has been checking fire hydrants and some of them are too tight and can't be opened. A letter was received by the fire department from Todd Rebich. According to a Times article, there are plans to build a crematorium on Ingrich Road.
2021-04	BLANK
2021-03	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-02	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2021-01	Fire and Police Ms. Harker gave a year-end report on the fire department. There were 67 fire calls answered by the fire department. Engine 1 - 326 miles, Engine 3 - 49 miles and the Squad 168 miles. A total of 108 gallons of fuel were used.
2020-12	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2020-11	Fire and Police - Ms. Harker reported that due to the inclement weather there were very few trick-or-treaters out on Halloween . . . Ms. Harker reported the fire department decided at its meeting to schedule Santa passing out candy to borough children for December 19th beginning at noon. Because of the COVID pandemic there will be no borough Christmas party this year. After a discussion, it was decided to increase the treats that are put in the bags for Santa to deliver to make Christmas a little better for our borough children since there will be no Christmas party . . . There have also been reports of . . . kids in the fire department parking lot at 3 in the morning. Police have been notified.
2020-10	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none

2020-09	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-08	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-07	Ms. Harker discussed the problem with the dogs using the fire hall parking lot as a bathroom area and the owners are not cleaning it up.
2020-06	Ms. Harker reported that a number of people are burning brush and said they are allowed to. Any complaints received about burning will be directed to the fire department –they will put out the fire and the police will be called.
2020-05	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-04	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-03	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2020-02	Fire and police - Ms. harker reported that there were 78 fire calls answered in 2019. Engine 1 logged 412 miles, the squad vehicle 97 miles and Engine 320 miles. The fire department used 151 gallons of fuel.
2020-01	Police & Fire – Ms. Harker - none
2019-12	Ms. Harker reported that the fire department was called out at 1 a.m. for a flooding problem beginning at the Vets Club that continued down Patterson Avenue and flooded the tunnel. It seems that a beaver dam let loose. The tunnel had to be closed and the road patched and re-opened today. The manhole was also blown out.
2019-11	Fire & Police –Ms. Harker reported an accident on 37thStreet and that Halloween Trick or Treat was good.
2019-10	Fire and Police –Lou Little for Wendy Harker–Trick or Treat for West Mayfield will be on Thursday, October 31 from 6 until 7:30
2019-09	Ms. Harker reported that the fire department needed to purchase three batteries and a switch for the fire truck. The price is \$519.77.They used the borough's Auto Zone account and will reimburse them for \$519.77
2019-08	Ms. Harker reported that the fire department answered 54 fire calls. There was a tractor trailer that jackknifed on 43rdStreet with some damage to property. The driver was cited. The department also flushed out and unclogged sewers from Boyd Avenue to Patterson Avenue and also High Street Extension.
2019-07	BLANK

WMVFD Year-End Reports to Council

West Mayfield Council Meeting	WMVFD Annual Reports to Council (source: Council meeting minutes)
2024-01	[Note: No annual fire department report, which is usually provided in January for the preceding year]
2023-01	Fire & Police – Year-end report – engine #1 481 gal. fuel, engine #2 66 gal. fuel; Squad – 219 gal. fuel; 128 gal. diesel. Five members are taking the fire fighter 1 exam.
2022-01	[Note: No annual fire department report, which is usually provided in January for the preceding year]
2021-01	Fire and Police Ms. Harker gave a year-end report on the fire department. There were 67 fire calls answered by the fire department. Engine 1 - 326 miles, Engine 3 - 49 miles and the Squad 168 miles. A total of 108 gallons of fuel were used.
2020-02	Fire and police - Ms. harker reported that there were 78 fire calls answered in 2019. Engine 1 logged 412 miles, the squad vehicle 97 miles and Engine 320 miles. The fire department used 151 gallons of fuel.

Emergency Management Coordinator Reports to Council

West Mayfield Council Meeting	Emergency Management Reporting to Council (Source: Council meeting minutes)
2024-12	TBA
2024-11	TBA [Note: Beaver County offering quarterly EMC training on November 21, 2024]
2024-10	TBA
2024-09	TBA [Note: Beaver County offering quarterly EMC training on September 10, 2024]
2024-08	TBA
2024-07	TBA
2024-06	From county emergency management – due the super high heat expected next week, reminder to stay hydrated and stay in air conditioning as much as possible.
2024-05	TBA
2024-04	Correspondence: safety suggestions and maintenance of emergency generators article given to Bill. Old Business: For Emergency Management he again reminded Council members that they need to complete 100 & 700. [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on April 9, 2024]
2024-03	OB: J. Tate - He should check with Bill Heaton to see if emergency management would be affected by dropping Comcast.
2024-02	OB: Papers passed out to all new Council members of Council for testing of Emergency management. [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on February 20, 2024]
2024-01	Mr. Jake Tate moved to reappoint Mr. Bill Heaton as emergency management coordinator, seconded by Mr. Lou Little and passed all in favor.
2023-12	NB: [Bill Heaton] reminded Council that all new members and those members who haven't yet completed IS 100 and IS 700 that it has to be done or emergency management will receive no money.
2023-11	BLANK [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on November 16, 2023]
2023-10	OB: Emergency management trailer has been damaged. It appears to have happened when the parts truck was pushed back. One of the tires hit it.
2023-09	BLANK [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on September 12, 2023]
2023-08	BLANK

2023-07	BLANK
2023-06	For Emergency Management- Regarding the oil leak at Standard Steel. All DEP requirements have been met and the issue is closed.
2023-05	NB: Emergency Management – there was an oil spill at Standard Steel. Thanks to the citizen who turned it in. Thanks to Eli and the fire department – they put a boom in the water on the Beaver Falls side to attract the oil. DEP will be contacting them for sure and I will continue to follow up.
2023-04	OB: The 100-700 Emergency Management still needs to be completed by Michelle and Jeff. Bill is still available to help them get logged in. NB: Emergency Management – the emergency management trailer was always locked and he found it unlocked. He found cords that were in the trailer in the parts truck, gas cans, cords and a ceramic heater missing from the trailer. He needed the cord to provide a generator to a lady needing oxygen during the power outage that the borough experienced. Directions need to be posted for the generator that supplies the building. [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on April 11, 2023]
2023-03	Website Admin: Kevin Farkas, 3706 West 8th Avenue – the Emergency Management communications page has been re-done. Smart 911 has asked residents to join emergency management. OB: The 100-700 Emergency Management still needs to be completed by Michelle and Jeff. Bill is still available to help them get logged in.
2023-02	Website Admin: Kevin Farkas - discussed the recent East Palestine train incident. He was surprised at the lack of "official" public notification and commentary on social media. He took additional steps to protect the borough website and Facebook page to insure security. He noted that many people had confusion about the current Beaver County Emergency Services notification program. Bill Heaton, our Borough Emergency Mgmt Coordinator, discussed Smart911 sign up. Kevin asked for a "back up" contact for the borough web presence in case he is unavailable or to allow "official" up to the minute control of public commentary. Boro EMA staff will work with him on that. OB: Bill also said that anyone who needs help taking the emergency management 100 and 700 test to contact him and he'll be happy to help. [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on February 21, 2023]
2023-01	BLANK
2022-12	BLANK
2022-11	BLANK [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on November 17, 2022]
2022-10	BLANK
2022-09	BLANK [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on September 13, 2022]

2022-08	NB: Ms. Harker discussed the generator in the borough building and who it belonged to. Mr. Kosanovich said that it was purchased by emergency management when Tom Orosz was the emergency management coordinator and brought to the borough building for use if a catastrophe occurred. The borough should have one for its use in case of a power outage, etc. Wendy moved to be permitted to purchase a generator for the borough building not to exceed \$500.00. Mr. Seybert seconded the motion which passed all in favor
2022-07	NB: Mr. Heaton informed Council that during one of the storms the circuit breakers were tripped. The battery back-up for emergency management was fried. Luckily all of the computers were plugged into six outlets and were not damaged. He asked permission to purchase a new battery back-up for about \$180. The money will be taken from the emergency management fund, not the borough general fund.
2022-06	BLANK
2022-05	NO Council MEETING
2022-04	BLANK [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on April 12, 2022]
2022-03	NB: Mrs. Sepp asked about Emergency Management's use of the borough building and how that came about. It is just something that has been done for quite a while. It started out as a place to meet only but now there are computers, radios, antennas, files and other items in Council chambers and the secretary's office. She feels that only Council members should have keys to the building. Mrs. McNeely asked if Emergency Management could use the fire department. Lou will talk to Mr. Heaton about these issues and see what can be done.
2022-02	BFFD Chief Stowe presentation: [Bill Heaton] If there is an Emergency Management disaster, West Mayfield has its own emergency management team. What would happen? New Brighton, Pulaski, Daugherty Township, Rochester, etc. How would the equipment be dispersed? The call for help would be from wherever it is needed. [Note: Beaver County offered quarterly EMC training held on February 22, 2022]
2022-01	OB: EMA- newly elected officials must complete FEMA IS-100c & IS-700b courses on line https://training.fema.gov/ (First create a FEMA SID as listed there; then enroll in courses) Takes about 2 hours for IS100c and 3.5 hours for IS700b. Print your certificates for EMC & Secretary. THIS IS MANDATORY FOR Council.
2021-12	BLANK
2021-11	BLANK
2021-10	BLANK
2021-09	NB: Mr. Heaton reported that it is National Preparedness month. There is information on our website for anyone who is interested.
2021-08	BLANK
2021-07	BLANK
2021-06	BLANK
2021-05	BLANK
2021-04	BLANK

2021-03	BLANK
2021-02	BLANK
2021-01	BLANK
2020-12	BLANK
2020-11	BLANK
2020-10	BLANK
2020-09	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-08	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-07	BLANK
2020-06	BLANK
2020-05	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-04	[No Council meeting held this month]
2020-03	BLANK
2020-02	NB: Bill Heaton - He Reported that emergency management is inviting neighboring communities to merge with our team. He will be meeting with Big Beaver, Homewood, Koppel, and New Galilee. There is a \$1000 fee to join and if they choose to not pay, they will not be permitted to use an of the equipment that we have.
2020-01	BLANK
2019-12	BLANK
2019-11	BLANK
2019-10	BLANK
2019-09	BLANK
2019-08	BLANK
2019-07	BLANK

ISO PPC Audit - Fire Department Review

Source: (PPC™) Summary Report,
West Mayfield, Pa, Prepared by
Insurance Services Office, Inc.,
Report Created April 16, 2024

Summary of PPC Review

for

West Mayfield

FSRS Item	Earned Credit	Credit Available
Emergency Communications		
414. Credit for Emergency Reporting	2.55	3
422. Credit for Telecommunicators	4.00	4
432. Credit for Dispatch Circuits	2.91	3
440. Credit for Emergency Communications	9.46	10
Fire Department		
513. Credit for Engine Companies	4.41	6
523. Credit for Reserve Pumpers	0.09	0.5
532. Credit for Pumper Capacity	3.00	3
549. Credit for Ladder Service	0.61	4
553. Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks	0.25	0.5
561. Credit for Deployment Analysis	5.62	10
571. Credit for Company Personnel	1.59	15
581. Credit for Training	1.08	9
730. Credit for Operational Considerations	1.00	2
590. Credit for Fire Department	17.65	50
Water Supply		
616. Credit for Supply System	23.44	30
621. Credit for Hydrants	3.00	3
631. Credit for Inspection and Flow Testing	4.00	7
640. Credit for Water Supply	30.44	40
Divergence	-8.16	—
1050. Community Risk Reduction	1.15	5.50
Total Credit	50.54	105.5

Final Community Classification = 05/5X

The current ISO PPC shows West Mayfield's PPC rating of class 5, scoring 50.54 out of 105.5 possible points, placing it near the below average classification. Read the [current ISO PPC Audit](#) (received by FSRC on April 16, 2024)

Because the fire department is 50% of the ISO PPC score, and perhaps the most critical section of the audit, we've included this section here:

Fire Department

Fifty percent of a community's overall score is based upon the fire department's structure fire suppression system. ISO's field representative evaluated:

- Engine and ladder/service vehicles including reserve apparatus
- Equipment carried
- Response to reported structure fires
- Deployment analysis of companies
- Available and/or responding firefighters
- Training

	Earned Credit	Credit Available
513. Credit for Engine Companies	4.41	6
523. Credit for Reserve Pumpers	0.09	0.5
532. Credit for Pumper Capacity	3.00	3
549. Credit for Ladder Service	0.61	4
553. Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks	0.25	0.5
561. Credit for Deployment Analysis	5.62	10
571. Credit for Company Personnel	1.59	15
581. Credit for Training	1.08	9
730. Credit for Operational Considerations	1.00	2
Item 590. Credit for Fire Department:	17.65	50

Basic Fire Flow

The Basic Fire Flow for the community is determined by the review of the Needed Fire Flows for selected buildings in the community. The fifth largest Needed Fire Flow is determined to be the Basic Fire Flow. The Basic Fire Flow has been determined to be 1750 gpm.

Item 513 - Credit for Engine Companies (6 points)

The first item reviewed is Item 513 "Credit for Engine Companies (CEC)". This item reviews the number of engine companies, their pump capacity, hose testing, pump testing and the equipment carried on the in-service pumpers. To be recognized, pumper apparatus must meet the general criteria of NFPA 1901, *Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus* which include a minimum 250 gpm pump, an emergency warning system, a 300 gallon water tank, and hose. At least 1 apparatus must have a permanently mounted pump rated at 750 gpm or more at 150 psi.

The review of the number of needed pumpers considers the response distance to built-upon areas; the Basic Fire Flow; and the method of operation. Multiple alarms, simultaneous incidents, and life safety are not considered.

The greatest value of A, B, or C below is needed in the fire district to suppress fires in structures with a Needed Fire Flow of 3,500 gpm or less: **2 engine companies**

- a) **1 engine companies** to provide fire suppression services to areas to meet NFPA 1710 criteria or within 1½ miles.
- b) **2 engine companies** to support a Basic Fire Flow of 1750 gpm.
- c) **2 engine companies** based upon the fire department's method of operation to provide a minimum two engine response to all first alarm structure fires.

The FSRS recognizes that there are **2 engine companies** in service.

The FSRS also reviews Automatic Aid. Automatic Aid is considered in the review as assistance dispatched automatically by contractual agreement between two communities or fire districts. That differs from mutual aid or assistance arranged case by case. ISO will recognize an Automatic Aid plan under the following conditions:

- It must be prearranged for first alarm response according to a definite plan. It is preferable to have a written agreement, but ISO may recognize demonstrated performance.
- The aid must be dispatched to all reported structure fires on the initial alarm.
- The aid must be provided 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

FSRS Item 512.D "Automatic Aid Engine Companies" responding on first alarm and meeting the needs of the city for basic fire flow and/or distribution of companies are factored based upon the value of the Automatic Aid plan (up to 1.00 can be used as the factor). The Automatic Aid factor is determined by a review of the Automatic Aid provider's communication facilities, how they receive alarms from the graded area, inter-department training between fire departments, and the fire ground communications capability between departments.

For each engine company, the credited Pump Capacity (PC), the Hose Carried (HC), the Equipment Carried (EC) all contribute to the calculation for the percent of credit the FSRS provides to that engine company.

Item 513 "Credit for Engine Companies (CEC)" = 4.41 points

Item 523 - Credit for Reserve Pumpers (0.50 points)

The item is Item 523 "Credit for Reserve Pumpers (CRP)". This item reviews the number and adequacy of the pumpers and their equipment. The number of needed reserve pumpers is 1 for each 8 needed engine companies determined in Item 513, or any fraction thereof.

Item 523 "Credit for Reserve Pumpers (CRP)" = 0.09 points

Item 532 – Credit for Pumper Capacity (3 points)

The next item reviewed is Item 532 "Credit for Pumper Capacity (CPC)". The total pump capacity available should be sufficient for the Basic Fire Flow of 1750 gpm. The maximum needed pump capacity credited is the Basic Fire Flow of the community.

Item 532 "Credit for Pumper Capacity (CPC)" = 3.00 points

Item 549 – Credit for Ladder Service (4 points)

The next item reviewed is Item 549 "Credit for Ladder Service (CLS)". This item reviews the number of response areas within the city with 5 buildings that are 3 or more stories or 35 feet or more in height, or with 5 buildings that have a Needed Fire Flow greater than 3,500 gpm, or any combination of these criteria. The height of all buildings in the city, including those protected by automatic sprinklers, is considered when determining the number of needed ladder companies. Response areas not needing a ladder company should have a service company. Ladders, tools and equipment normally carried on ladder trucks are needed not only for ladder operations but also for forcible entry, ventilation, salvage, overhaul, lighting and utility control.

The number of ladder or service companies, the height of the aerial ladder, aerial ladder testing and the equipment carried on the in-service ladder trucks and service trucks is compared with the number of needed ladder trucks and service trucks and an FSRs equipment list. Ladder trucks must meet the general criteria of NFPA 1901, *Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus* to be recognized.

The number of needed ladder-service trucks is dependent upon the number of buildings 3 stories or 35 feet or more in height, buildings with a Needed Fire Flow greater than 3,500 gpm, and the method of operation.

The FSRs recognizes that there are **0 ladder companies** in service. These companies are needed to provide fire suppression services to areas to meet NFPA 1710 criteria or within 2½ miles and the number of buildings with a Needed Fire Flow over 3,500 gpm or 3 stories or more in height, or the method of operation.

The FSRs recognizes that there are **1 service companies** in service.

Item 549 "Credit for Ladder Service (CLS)" = 0.61 points

Item 553 – Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks (0.50 points)

The next item reviewed is Item 553 “Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks (CRLS)”. This item considers the adequacy of ladder and service apparatus when one (or more in larger communities) of these apparatus are out of service. The number of needed reserve ladder and service trucks is 1 for each 8 needed ladder and service companies that were determined to be needed in Item 540, or any fraction thereof.

Item 553 “Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks (CRLS)” = 0.25 points**Item 561 – Deployment Analysis (10 points)**

Next, Item 561 “Deployment Analysis (DA)” is reviewed. This Item examines the number and adequacy of existing engine and ladder-service companies to cover built-upon areas of the city.

To determine the Credit for Distribution, first the Existing Engine Company (EC) points and the Existing Engine Companies (EE) determined in Item 513 are considered along with Ladder Company Equipment (LCE) points, Service Company Equipment (SCE) points, Engine-Ladder Company Equipment (ELCE) points, and Engine-Service Company Equipment (ESCE) points determined in Item 549.

Secondly, as an alternative to determining the number of needed engine and ladder/service companies through the road-mile analysis, a fire protection area may use the results of a systematic performance evaluation. This type of evaluation analyzes computer-aided dispatch (CAD) history to demonstrate that, with its current deployment of companies, the fire department meets the time constraints for initial arriving engine and initial full alarm assignment in accordance with the general criteria of in NFPA 1710, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*.

A determination is made of the percentage of built upon area within 1½ miles of a first-due engine company and within 2½ miles of a first-due ladder-service company.

Item 561 “Credit Deployment Analysis (DA)” = 5.62 points

Item 581 – Credit for Training (9 points)

Training	Earned Credit	Credit Available
A. Facilities, and Use For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 18 hours per year in structure fire related subjects as outlined in NFPA 1001.	0.00	35
B. Company Training For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 16 hours per month in structure fire related subjects as outlined in NFPA 1001.	1.61	25
C. Classes for Officers For maximum credit, each officer should be certified in accordance with the general criteria of NFPA 1021. Additionally, each officer should receive 12 hours of continuing education on or off site.	0.00	12
D. New Driver and Operator Training For maximum credit, each new driver and operator should receive 60 hours of driver/operator training per year in accordance with NFPA 1002 and NFPA 1451.	4.67	5
E. Existing Driver and Operator Training For maximum credit, each existing driver and operator should receive 12 hours of driver/operator training per year in accordance with NFPA 1002 and NFPA 1451.	2.50	5
F. Training on Hazardous Materials For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 6 hours of training for incidents involving hazardous materials in accordance with NFPA 472.	0.11	1
G. Recruit Training For maximum credit, each firefighter should receive 240 hours of structure fire related training in accordance with NFPA 1001 within the first year of employment or tenure.	3.09	5
H. Pre-Fire Planning Inspections For maximum credit, pre-fire planning inspections of each commercial, industrial, institutional, and other similar type building (all buildings except 1-4 family dwellings) should be made annually by company members. Records of inspections should include up-to date notes and sketches.	0.00	12

Item 580 “Credit for Training (CT)” = 1.08 points

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Item 730 – Operational Considerations (2 points)

Item 730 "Credit for Operational Considerations (COC)" evaluates fire department standard operating procedures and incident management systems for emergency operations involving structure fires.

Operational Considerations	Earned Credit	Credit Available
Standard Operating Procedures The department should have established SOPs for fire department general emergency operations	0	50
Incident Management Systems The department should use an established incident management system (IMS)	50	50
Operational Considerations total:	50	100

Item 730 "Credit for Operational Considerations (COC)" = 1.00 points

Water Supply

Forty percent of a community's overall score is based on the adequacy of the water supply system. The ISO field representative evaluated:

- the capability of the water distribution system to meet the Needed Fire Flows at selected locations up to 3,500 gpm.
- size, type and installation of fire hydrants.
- inspection and flow testing of fire hydrants.

	Earned Credit	Credit Available
616. Credit for Supply System	23.44	30
621. Credit for Hydrants	3.00	3
631. Credit for Inspection and Flow Testing	4.00	7
Item 640. Credit for Water Supply:	30.44	40

CITY OF BEAVER FALLS FIRE DEPARTMENT

**715 FIFTEENTH STREET
BEAVER FALLS, PA 15010
(724) 843-1135**

MARK D. STOWE, FIRE CHIEF

April 4, 2022

Mr. Lou Little
West Mayfield Borough Council President
4609 W. 8th Avenue
Beaver Falls, PA 15010

Dear Mr. Little,

As the fire chief of the Beaver Falls Fire Department (BFFD), I believe I have an obligation to address the outright negligence on the part of the West Mayfield Fire Department in relation to a fire that occurred at 3632 Knape Street in West Mayfield on April 1, 2022. At 02:16 the BFFD was dispatched to stand by for a working structural fire at this location. This request was made 25 minutes after the initial dispatch (01:51), and only after some prompting from the 911 dispatcher, as our department, located 2.4 miles from this address, with on-duty staffing 24 hours a day, is not on West Mayfield Fire Department's 1st or 2nd alarm assignments.

While on standby Chief 44-10 requested the 2nd alarm companies consisting of Big Beaver and Darlington to respond, in addition to BFFD Engine 11 and BFFD Squad 11, staffed with a total of nine certified firefighters. While responding, and approximately two minutes from arriving on scene, the incident commander, 99-11, advised fire dispatch that the fire was now under control and requested that BFFD units standby; however, to continue Big Beaver and Darlington FDs, even though neither of those departments had apparatus responding at the time of the request.

Approximately three minutes after cancelling BFFD units, crews on scene were now reporting fire extension into the second floor and roof area, indicating that this fire was actually not under control. The two departments on the 2nd alarm, Big Beaver and Darlington, had to respond from 7 and 5 miles away, while responding BFFD units were within 2 minutes of arriving on scene.

It was very apparent that the incident commander's decision to return BFFD units to standby was to purposely keep BFFD units from arriving at this scene. These actions by the incident commander are both negligent, showing no regard for the resident whose home was on fire or the firefighters that were operating at this incident, and incomprehensible. In addition, not calling the closest companies immediately, especially those that are staffed, also has the potential to be proven as negligence in a court of law should the resident seek legal action.

Additionally, as our department was dispatched, thirteen full-time and paid-on-call firefighters reported to the station for duty. These members are required to be compensated on a per-call or hourly basis by the City of Beaver Falls. While the City of Beaver Falls has historically not had any problem paying our members to assist your department, or any other department, we cannot, however, continue to assist your department when it is apparent that the incident commander reluctantly had our department dispatched, then cancelled our response, even though the fire was not actually under control.

Going forward, the BFFD will no longer respond to the Borough of West Mayfield without being reimbursed for our members' time. We will continue to respond to all calls for assistance from West Mayfield, however, due to the blatant negligence of the incident commander and the safety concerns expressed by other departments operating at this incident, an officer of the BFFD will remain with the incident commander to assure the safety of our firefighters. The term "mutual" in mutual aid implies that both organizations have something to offer the other. As the West Mayfield Fire Department is unable to provide the BFFD with trained and qualified firefighters when assistance is needed in Beaver Falls, there is no mutuality in our current agreement. Therefore, the BFFD will invoice the Borough of West Mayfield for our firefighting services from this date forward at a rate of \$400.00 per hour.

What was described to me from the police officers, fire chiefs and firefighters that were on this scene, this was very chaotic scene with lack of command, lack of manpower, a fire that was allowed to grow initially without intervention and a lack of safety. Our department would have had a five-minute response time and could have easily contained this fire to its area of origin. Instead, a resident watched and pleaded with police officers to get a fire department there to save her home, as the fire spread out of control and into the second floor and roof. The first engine arrived at 02:03, twelve minutes after dispatch and never stretched a hand line. The first line wasn't stretched until after the arrival of Chippewa FD at 02:05, fourteen minutes after dispatch. This line then wasn't charged due to the engine it was attached to drifted out of control and crashed into another apparatus, then began to drive forward on its own. While this is going on there is a crew of firefighters inside this dwelling and the fire continues to spread placing them in danger.

For the safety of those firefighters that were on scene to assist and the resident of West Mayfield, it is extremely concerning that your fire department would fail to immediately call a staffed fire department that is 2.4 miles from the incident location, and then wait until the BFFD is two minutes away from the scene to place them on standby and requests others that haven't even answered the alarm knowing those departments have a response time of over twelve minutes. This incident clearly proves that the West Mayfield Fire Department cannot provide adequate fire protection to your community and that the leaders of this department are grossly negligent and incompetent in their decision-making, leading to the potential for liability for both the department and the borough. Thankfully, and by the grace of God, neither a citizen or firefighter was seriously injured or killed at this incident.

Sincerely,

Mark Stowe

Mark Stowe
Fire Chief

cc: Mayor Licia Cogley
Councilman William Heaton
Councilwoman Wendy Harker
Councilwoman Michelle McNeely
Councilman Jeffery Seybert

Councilman Bill Sepp
Solicitor Joseph A. Budicak, Esq.
Beaver Falls City Manager Charles Jones
Beaver Falls Police Chief David Johnson

Sample BFWA Fire Hydrant Report

West Mayfield							
Location	Hydrant Type (M=Main, S=Sub, D=Dead End, K=Kitchen)	Pressure	Condition	Remarks	Date	Inspector	
Patterson Ave & Harding St	D <i>New Kennedy</i>	100	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T/SW	
Patterson Ave & Brook St	M	95	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T/SW	
Coolidge St & Ross Ave	D	85	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T/SW	
Ross Ave & 18th Ave (12th Ave)?	M	80	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T/SW	
18th Ave & Cottage St (12th Ave)?	D	50	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T/SW	
Rock Ave at STD Steel Specialty Co.	K	80	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
3rd Ave & Rock Ave	M	70	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
3rd Ave S. of 37th St Jamison St	M	60	Greased	ok	7/16/22	SK	
Harbison Rd & 37th St	M	50	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
3rd Ave Pine St N of 37th St	M	50	Greased or dry stripped	ok	7/16/22	SK	
2nd Ave & 37th St By Manor	D	60	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
4th Ave & 37th St	M	45	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
4th Ave & Walnut St	M	50	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
4th Ave & 43rd St	M	95	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
4th Ave & 47th St	D	40	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
4th Ave & 48th St	D	40	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
Mayfield Alley off Harbison	D	150	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
5th Ave & 37th St	M	25	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
5th Ave N of 37th St (Front of 3751)	D	30	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	SK	
5th Ave & 44th St	D	30	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
6th Ave & 38th St (3618 Mettids)	D	115	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
6th Ave & 37th St	D	125	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
6th Ave & 44th St	M	115	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
7th Ave & 45th St	M <i>oil Port screw stripped</i>	110	Greased	ok	7/16/22	T	
7th Ave & 37th St	M	115	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
W. M. 2022							
Short St & 38th St	D	105	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
6th Ave & 37th St	M	105	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
6th Ave & 43rd St	M	105	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
6th Ave & 46th St	K	110	Greased/oiled	ok	7/16/22	T	
37th St N of Jean St	M	90	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
37th St Entrance to Mayfield Village	M	75	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
Project Rd and High St	M	60	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
High St West of Project Rd	M	60	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
High St	D	60	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
37th St & High St	M	70	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
Bowden St W. of Rock Ave	D	cannot open, valves worked on					ok
Rock Ave S of 37th St Ext	M	105	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	
Rock Ave W of Hwy Inter	M	130	Greased/oiled	ok	8/1/22	T	

Appendix E: Fire Service

FSRC Questions for Fire Service

Note: References to the “fire service” or “fire department” are synonymous with the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department (WMVFD). We assumed that the line and administrative officers of the WMVFD are able to represent and speak for this organization. We also assume that the administrative officers of the West Mayfield Firemen’s Relief Association (WMFRA) are able to represent and speak for this organization.

Borough Ordinances

1. Does the fire service recognize a need to update and recodify borough ordinances related to public safety, especially fire prevention and fire protection matters?
2. What recommended changes or amendments to the borough’s public safety ordinances would be favored by the fire service?

Fire Service Agreement

1. Does the fire service know of and have access to a written service agreement (i.e., contract) between the Borough of West Mayfield and the West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department?
2. If currently no written fire service agreement exists defining the legal terms, conditions, operational duties, and financial obligations of the working relationship between the municipality and the WMVFD, would the fire service recommend the drafting of such a contract?

Fire Service Charter

1. Does the WMVFD have a fire service charter, and can it produce this document?

Fire Service Duties and Obligations

1. Other than borough ordinances, what specifically defines the duties and obligations of the fire service?
2. Is there any written policy?

Mutual Aid Agreements

1. Has the fire service included borough Council and committees (e.g., Fire & Police Committee, Finance & Litigation Committee), solicitor, emergency management coordinator, or other borough officials in the planing, drafting, and approval process of any specific mutual aid agreements currently in effect and operationalized by WMVFD and other municipal fire services?

2. Other than the basic county-wide mutual aid agreement, is the fire service engaged in any other mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire departments? Are these mutual aid agreements in writing? What are their terms and conditions?
3. Does the fire service enlist any local fire departments as automatic aid?
4. What is the fire department's call box list?
5. Is the Beaver Falls Fire Department on the WMVFD box call list?

Real Estate

1. Does the fire service know of and have access to a written lease agreement between the fire service and the Borough of West Mayfield regarding the use of the borough owned property currently known as WMVFD's rear parking lot (plot #57, PARID: 520020116000)?

Fire Prevention Code

1. During 2022, the fire service informed Council that the ISO insurance auditors recommended the adoption, by ordinance, of an international fire code. Has the fire service acted in any way to assist Council in adopting this recommendation?
2. Does the fire service work with the Fire & Police Committee to regularly review and update if necessary the borough's Fire Prevention Code?

ISO Public Protection Classification

1. Does the fire service provide Council, other borough officials, or make public in any way a current, complete, and unabridged copy of the ISO PPC report?
2. Has the fire service ever worked with borough officials to review and evaluate the ISO PPC report.
3. Has the fire service ever created a corrective action plan to improve upon the report's shortcomings and weaknesses? Has this plan ever been shared with local government officials?

Fire Service Leadership, Membership, Organizational Standing

Leadership

1. What are the fire service's qualifications (competency & experience) for the ranks of Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, Captain, 1st Lieutenant, 2nd Lieutenant, Safety Officer, Fire Fighter?
2. What are the roles of these positions?
3. Does the fire service abide by a written set of job descriptions?
4. Can the fire service provide documentary evidence of the leadership's experience, qualifications, certifications, and training?

Membership

1. How does someone become a member (active emergency responder) of the fire service?
2. Does the fire service require any professional pre-conditions or job experience to become an active emergency responder?
3. Does the fire service require that all active emergency responders be able-bodied (i.e., pass a basic physical fitness exam consistent with the duties of firefighting)?
4. Does the fire service require active emergency responders to obtain any particular qualifications and certifications?
5. Does the fire service require emergency responders to complete a training and job performance curriculum?
6. Can the fire service provide documentary evidence of the membership's experience, qualifications, certifications, and training?

Organization

1. Does the fire service hold any special recognition or professional status as an emergency response organization, such as a ranking in the State Fire Commissioners' Certification Program? (Note: A good example would be Patterson Heights VFD's Bronze Level Status, signifying that at least 50% of their members are Pro-Board Firefighter I certified.)
2. Does the fire service have a good working relationship with other fire departments within the local fire service ecosystem?
3. How does the fire service compare itself to other local fire departments in terms of emergency response readiness and capability?

Job Performance

1. For the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 (YTD), how many incidents and of what type has the fire service responded to within the borough?
2. For the same years, how many out-of-borough incidents has the fire service responded to (i.e., mutual aid calls)? For these incidents, how did the fire service assist other municipalities?
3. What would be considered the fire service's average incident response time, both within the borough and for mutual aid calls?
4. Between 2020 and 2024 (YTD), has the fire service dropped any calls (i.e., not been able to show up to the incident scene)?

Council's Fire & Police Committee

1. How often and in what ways does Council's Fire & Police Committee formally meet with the fire service to discuss fire protection and fire prevention matters?

Professional Reports & Confirmation of Public Safety Readiness

1. Does the fire service have a written policy that sets forth requirements and expectations for monthly and annual reporting to Council?

2. Has the Fire & Police Committee ever established written requirements and expectations for monthly and annual reporting to Council?

Public Education & Communication

1. In what ways does the fire service provide public education regarding fire prevention and fire protection matters? Is there an established program with goals, objectives, timeline, budget?
2. Has the fire service ever asked Council for monies to create such a program or to perform specific public education activities?
3. Does the fire service have a designated public education officer?

Confirmation of West Mayfield Special Fire Police

1. For those WMVFD members currently serving as special fire police, are there any documentary records attesting to their having been duly confirmed by the Mayor (i.e., sworn into office), as required by state statute Title 35 §7434?

Budget & Finances

Fire Service Spending

1. What is the WMVFD's actual annual cost of providing fire service to the Borough of West Mayfield?
2. Has this pattern of spending kept up with inflation and the rising costs of providing fire prevention and fire protection?

Budgeting Process – Appropriations

1. How does the fire service communicate its financial needs to local government officials?
2. Does the fire service work with the Fire and Police Committee (or any other public safety representative in local government) to create a listing of financial or in-kind needs based on documentary evidence (e.g., financial records, invoices, receipts, cost increase notices, inflationary projections) that help justify appropriations requests?
3. Does the fire service agree that the borough's "Public Safety-Fire" budgets for 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 sufficiently satisfied the fire service's operational needs? If not, where does the fire service locate budget deficiencies? Does the fire service recognize any areas of over budgeting?
4. Does the fire service agree that the borough's 2024 Public Safety-Fire budget will sustain the fire service through this year? If not, where does the fire service locate budget deficiencies?
5. In January 2023, the fire service provided a roster of 20 names to the borough Secretary to submit to the borough's workers compensation carrier(s) the purpose of fire department workers compensation insurance coverage. Can the fire service identify and justify with supporting documentation each and every person on this list as to their active firefighter or

emergency responder status or their “participating member” status providing regular support to the fire service (as defined in the state’s Workers Compensation Act)?

6. Based on fire department reporting in the public record, the borough’s budgeted cash value of fuel provisioned in support of the fire department appears to be grossly and consistently miscalculated between 2020-2024. How can this be explained?
7. How are future Public Safety-Fire budget amounts calculated (e.g., based on multi-year actual spending trends, documented needs, invoicing, contract agreements)?
8. Actual spending data for Public Safety-Fire are missing or indeterminate in many public records, such as annual financial audits, Council meeting minutes, Fire & Police Reports, Annual Fire Dept. reports. Can the fire service provide actual spending data for at least the Public Safety-Fire budget line items, such as gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel used for the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024 YTD?

Budgeting Process – Forecasting

1. With respect to near and long-term needs of the fire service, who in the organization is responsible for analyzing these needs, calculating costs, and conveying this information to Council and the public?
2. Does the fire service work with neighboring fire services to help identify future issues, costs, trends, etc. within the firefighting ecosystem?

Municipal Fire Support Assessment

Fire Tax

1. What is the position of the fire service regarding the creation of a millage-based fire tax or a flat fire protection fee based on utility billing or count of taxable properties?

Tax Credit Incentives

1. What is the position of the fire service regarding the creation of a tax credit incentive program for members of the volunteer fire department?

End of Fire Service Questions

WMVFD "Fact Sheet" (September 3, 2024)

West Mayfield Vol. Fire Dept.

A committee in the borough is trying to Dec-Certification the West Mayfield Vol. Fire Dept. In doing so they will go outside the borough to obtain fire coverage from another department. This will end up costing all borough citizens more money to get less services.

From this you can expect this list of lost services and other issues:

- Lack of traffic control when the borough needs to shut down portions of roads for service such as road repair or for sewer work.
- Loss of scene protection and traffic control when wires are down for any reason
- Tree removal unless heavy equipment is needed. This would require our street dept. to be called out every time. This would be at a minimum of 2 hrs. At overtime rates.
- We have 37th St. hill that has been closed in the winter due to snow, This requires traffic control. Other departments have said traffic is a police issue.
- We also have 3 water pumps which we use to pump out flooded basements.
- Occasionally the borough has been asked us to flush out a sewer line.
- Other depts. charge you or your insurance company to respond to a false alarm.
- In the unfortunate event you should have an emergency call, other departments will again bill you or your insurance company for responding. How will they cover that charge? Higher premiums maybe?
- Outside the borough we provide mutual aid to other departments, we provided mutual aid more times than we received it.

Our dept is 1 of 2 depts. in the county that offer Fire Fighter Rehab. This service is designed to assist responders when they are called out. We have a large tent to control the temperature in inclement weather (hot or cold). We have spent over \$15,000 on Rehab equipment. We offer this service to Non-fire events to assist with their crowds. We offer this as a fund raiser.

Our borough does cover the cost of the West mayfield Vol. Fire Depts vehicle insurance and workmen's compensation. They also provide fuel for our vehicles. All municipalities do this. Municipalities also contribute funds to their fire dept. Our borough contributes \$3,500 a year. This is far less than neighboring municipalities.

- Facts -Our borough has over 500 homes with some 1,100 plus residents. Did you know that your fire dept. has only 6 borough residents as members. Not even 1%. Thankfully we have members that live outside in our neighboring communities.
- We average 70 to 80 calls a year.
- We have only 1 or 2 house fire calls a year. In over 40 years we have had only 1 fire related fatality. We haven't lost a home in 20 years. The insurance company deemed them not totaled but as re-buildable. This is due to the mutual aid guidelines our dept. has in place. All dept. call for mutual aid on a house fire.
- The borough doesn't own the fire dept. building, trucks or fire equipment.

Three or four years ago our borough asked Beaver Falls Fire Dept. for a bid to cover our borough for fire protection. Their bid then was \$20,000 the first year with a 5% increase each year after. Where will this money come from? We are citizens too and we don't want more taxes.

WMVFRA Uses of Funds 2012-2022

	West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association - Uses of Funds											Audit Totals	
	Audit: 2012 - 2015				Audit: 2016 - 2017		Audit: 2018 - 2019		Audit: 2020 - 2022			Total Amounts	Average/Year
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2012 - 2022	2012 - 2022
Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Distribution (Revenue)	\$5,720	\$6,383	\$6,049	\$5,775	\$5,749	\$5,185	\$4,723	\$5,067	\$5,138	\$4,646	\$5,529	\$59,964	\$5,451
Cash On Hand (at end of audit final year)				\$18,323		\$13,981		\$12,098			\$4,843	\$49,245	\$12,311
Benefit Services													
Insurance Premiums		\$11,496			\$3,921		\$3,811		\$5,810			\$25,038	\$2,276
Death Benefits													
Tokens of sympathy & goodwill													
Total Benefit Services		\$11,496			\$3,921		\$3,811		\$5,810			\$25,038	\$2,276
Fire Services													
Equipment purchased		\$9,571			\$4,910		\$2,235		\$13,766			\$30,482	\$2,771
Equipment maintenance					\$4,831		\$4,223		\$817			\$9,871	\$897
Training Expenses		\$882			\$1,750		\$60		\$405			\$3,097	\$282
Total Fire Services		\$13,908			\$11,491		\$6,518		\$14,988			\$48,905	\$4,264
Administrative Services													
Bond premiums		\$500					\$250		\$250			\$1,000	\$91
Other administrative expenses*		\$1,758			\$72		\$1,373		\$1,359			\$4,562	\$415
Miscellaneous administrative services													
Total Administrative Services		\$2,258			\$72		\$1,623		\$1,609			\$5,562	\$506
Other Expenditures													
Undocumented expenditure**									\$161			\$161	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES		\$27,662			\$15,484		\$11,959		\$22,568			\$77,673	\$7,061
									Notes: * \$1,200 spent in 2021 for rental fees. ** \$161 undocumented spending in 2020.			Notes: These four audits account for 11 years. The figures for "cash on hand" is for the amounts of cash on hand at the end of each audit cycle (i.e., the years 2015, 2017, 2019, 2022). The average presented here is the average cash balance on hand for the four audits between the years 2012-2022.	

Appendix F: Document Links & References

Municipal Fire Prevention & Fire Protection Codes

- [Beaver Borough](#)
- [Borough of Ambridge](#)
- [Crafton Borough](#)
- [Borough of Sharpsburg](#)
- [Bolivar Borough](#)
- [Media Borough](#)
- [Borough of West Reading](#)
- [Conway Borough](#)
- [Glassport Borough](#)
- [Hallam Borough](#)

Local Fire Departments (Fire Service Ecosystem)

- Big Beaver Borough ([Facebook](#))
- Chippewa Township ([Facebook](#))
- City of Beaver Falls ([Facebook](#))
- Darlington Township ([Facebook](#))
- Homewood Borough
- Koppel Borough ([Facebook](#))
- New Brighton Borough ([Facebook](#))
- Patterson Heights Borough ([Facebook](#))
- Patterson Township ([Facebook](#))
- West Mayfield ([Facebook](#))
- White Township ([Facebook](#))

Local Nonprofit Fire Departments

- [Ambridge Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Beaver Falls Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Big Beaver Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Brighton Township Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [The Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Chippewa Fire Department](#)
- [Ellwood City Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Hanover Volunteer Fire Department Beaver County](#)
- [Independence Volunteer Fire Department 1](#)
- [North Sewickley Volunteer Fire Department \(See IRS database\)](#)
- [Pine Run Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Raccoon Township Independent Volunteer Fire Department No 1](#)
- [Rochester Township Volunteer Fire Department](#)

- [South Beaver Township Volunteer Fire Company](#)
- [Borough Of Ohioville Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Wayne Township Volunteer Fire Department](#)

Borough of West Mayfield

- [Official website: Borough of West Mayfield](#)
- [Ordinances](#)
 - [Part 2 Administrative, Chapter 2, Chapter 248: Volunteer Fire Department](#)
 - [Part 16: Fire Prevention Code](#)
- [West Mayfield Council Meeting Minutes](#)
- [West Mayfield Monthly Financial Reports](#)
- [West Mayfield Municipal Budgets](#)
- [West Mayfield Municipal Annual Financial Reports \(2020-2023\)](#)
- [Volunteer Firemen Insurance Services \(VFIS\)](#)
- [H.A. Thompson Company](#)

West Mayfield Volunteer Fire Department

- [West Mayfield Fire Department \(Facebook\)](#)
- [ISO PPC Report \(as of April 16, 2024\)](#)
- [OFSC 2023-24 Grant Recipients](#)
- [PennFIRS Monthly Participation Report 2023](#)
- [PennFIRS Monthly Participation Report 2022](#)
- [PennFIRS Monthly Participation Report 2021](#)
- [PennFIRS Monthly Incident Count Report for 2020](#)

West Mayfield Firemen's Relief Association

- [Auditor General DeFoor Releases Audits for Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations in 25 Counties](#)
- [West Mayfield VFRA found non-compliant in four areas during state audit](#)
- [West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022](#)
- [West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019](#)
- [The West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield – Beaver County – Audit Period January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017](#)
- [The West Mayfield Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association of West Mayfield – Beaver County, Pennsylvania – 04/05/2016](#)
- [Fire Audits – West Mayfield VFRA – Beaver County – 08/05/13](#)
- [West Mayfield Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Association – Beaver County – Compliance Audit Report – 12/23/09](#)

State Government Related to FPDF

State Statutes & Borough Code

- [The Pennsylvania Code](#)
- [Pennsylvania Borough Code](#)
- [Pennsylvania Laws Relating to Emergency Services \(Feb 2010\)](#)

[Office of the State Fire Commissioner](#)

- [OSFC Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services Grant Program](#)
- [Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System \(PennFIRS\)](#)

[Department of Community and Economic Development](#)

- [DCED Municipal Annual Financial Reports \(2006-2022\)](#)
- [DCED: Local Government Services – Fire and Emergency Services](#)

[Department of the Auditor General](#)

- [Audit Search](#)
- [Management Guidelines for Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations – August 2023](#)

More Resources

- [Pa Dept. of State: Information for Pennsylvania volunteer fire companies, ambulance associations and rescue squad associations about fundraising](#)
- [Pennsylvania Senate Resolution 6 Commission \(2018, improving first responder system in Pa\)](#)
- [Governor's Center for Local Government Services: Providing Local-Level Solutions and Assistance](#)
- [PA Emergency Management Agency](#)

Federal Government Related to FPDF

- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [FEMA: National Fire Department Registry Summary \(Pa data included\)](#)
- [U.S. Fire Administration](#)
- [U.S. Fire Administration: Pennsylvania Fire Loss and Fire Department Profile](#)

Professional Organizations Related to FPDF

[Beaver County FireFighters Association](#)

Organizes various local training and certification opportunities for Beaver County first responders.

[Western PA Firemen's Association](#)

An organization consisting of approximately 10,000 firefighters, both volunteer and paid, from nearly 500 different fire companies throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. With offices in Arnold, Pennsylvania, we hold meetings monthly throughout the western part of the state to discuss issues which are affecting the fire service.

[The Firefighters' Association State of Pennsylvania](#)

The object of the Association shall be for the general improvement of the fire service throughout the state; to provide protection to disabled fire fighters and to those dependent upon, through legislation enactment; to open discussion upon the best manner and means for the fighting of fires and public fire safety education; to promote the organization of fire companies and fire departments in communities in need of such protection and encourage a fraternal friendship among fire fighters.

[Butler Community College: Public Safety Training](#)

BC3, in partnership with the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy and Pennsylvania Department of Health, is proud of its reputation for delivering quality education and training programs to Western Pennsylvania Fire Fighters, EMS, HazMat, and Police Professionals. Fire, Police, EMS, & Hazmat Training

[National Volunteer Fire Council](#)

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides invaluable tools, resources, and advocacy for first responders across the nation. In addition, the NVFC administers key programs including the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program, National Junior Firefighter Program, and Fire Corps.

[National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#)

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has been helping to solve some of the planet's toughest safety problems for more than 125 years. To remain relevant for over a century as a knowledge and information organization, we've continually evolved our scope of expertise—from fire prevention, wildfire preparedness, and electrical safety to hazardous materials, community risk reduction, and public safety.

[Fire Rescue 1](#)

Our mission at FireRescue1 is to provide firefighters with the information and resources they need to better protect their communities and come home safe. We do this by delivering a trusted and reliable online environment for the exchange of information between firefighters and departments across the US and from around the world. It's our focus on this mission that has made the FireRescue1 network the top online resource for the fire service.

[Volunteer Firefighter Alliance](#)

The Volunteer Firefighter Alliance, Inc. is a national organization and is not affiliated with any local Volunteer Fire Department.

[National Fallen Firefighters Foundation](#)

The U.S. Congress created the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to lead a nationwide effort to remember America's fallen firefighters. Since 1992, the tax-exempt, 501(c)3 nonprofit Foundation has developed and expanded programs to honor our fallen fire heroes and assist their families and co-workers.

Insurance Agencies

- [Volunteer Firemen's Insurance](#) - A leader in providing insurance solutions for Fire, EMS, and Rescue Organizations.
- [Provident Insurance](#) - Insuring America's Heroes Since 1928.

More Associations, Councils, Institutes, Foundations

- [National Volunteer Fire Council](#)
- [Congressional Fire Services Institute](#)
- [PA Emergency Health Services Council](#)
- [PA Fire & Emergency Services Institute](#)
- [National Fallen Firefighters Foundation](#)
- [Pennsylvania State Association of Fire Police](#)
- [Firemen's Association of the State of Pennsylvania](#)
- [National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#)

Fire Service Studies & Research

Studies from around the Commonwealth and Beyond

- [Ross Township Fire Service Study \(2023\)](#)
- [Regional Fire Study – Beaver Falls City, Big Beaver Borough, Chippewa Township, Darlington Township, and Patterson Township Beaver County, Pennsylvania \(March 2023\)](#)
- [DCED to help give suggestions to fire agencies in Beaver County](#)
- [New Sewickley Comprehensive Development Plan \(2013, contains references to fire service\)](#)
- [Middletown Township Bucks County – Pennsylvania Fire Services Study \(September 2021\)](#)
- [Fire Services Study Detailed Report – Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Services \(June 2018\)](#)
- [Salisbury Township \(Lehigh County\): Emergency Services Comprehensive Review \(2018-2019\)](#)
- [The Future of Bucks County's Fire Services – An update to the 1990 Bucks County Community Facilities: Emergency Services Report Issued February 26, 2021](#)
- [St. Thomas Fire Dept. Fire Service Strategic Review](#)
- [State of the Volunteer Fire Service Report \(2018\) – International Association of Fire Chiefs \(IAFC\)](#)
- [South Strabane seeks fire service study \(2020\)](#)
- [The Financial Fitness of Pennsylvania Volunteer Fire Companies \(2016\)](#)
- [Pennsylvania Fire Company Capacity, 2012 and 2019 \(2020\)](#)

Volunteer Firefighting Professionalism & Culture

- [Volunteer Fire Service Culture: Essential strategies for success \(NVFC, 2018\)](#)
- [Training Volunteer Firefighters to be Combat Ready \(NVFC, 2022\)](#)
- [Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services \(US Fire Administration, 2023\)](#)
- [Understanding & Implementing Standards – NFPA 1851 \(NVFC, 2016\)](#)
- [NVFC Communications YouTube Channel](#)

- [Video: Professional Volunteer Fire Department \[Greensburg, Pa\]](#)
- [Video \[WTAE Pgh\]: Ask Kelly: What does it take to become a volunteer fire fighter?](#)
- [Stop pretending you have a fire department – While there may be fire engines and a firehouse, sometimes we are just fooling the public – and ourselves](#)

Regionalization Studies

- [Regional Fire Study: Beaver Falls City, Big Beaver Borough, Chippewa Township, Darlington Township, and Patterson Township Beaver County, Pennsylvania March, 2023](#)
- [Study: The Feasibility of Regionalizing Pennsylvania's Volunteer Fire Companies – June 2005](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Regionalizing Volunteer Fire Departments](#)
- [Volunteer Fire Department Consolidation in Pennsylvania \(July 2014\)](#)
- [DCED to help give suggestions to fire agencies in Beaver County](#)
- [Fort Allen Volunteer Fire Department plans to join Hempfield Fire Department](#)
- [Are Volunteer Fire Departments Still Viable? – Faced with a lack of money and volunteers, some western Pennsylvania departments are turning to consolidation \(April 2019\)](#)
- [Volunteer firefighters left with more questions as Millcreek \[Twp., Pa\] looks to consolidate departments](#)
- [Video: Judge approves Sharpsburg, Aspinwall volunteer fire departments merger](#)
- [Video: Two Cambria Co. fire departments may merge](#)
- [Video: Cheswick Volunteer Fire Company Expected To Merge With Allegheny Valley Volunteer Fire Company](#)
- See also:
- [Municipalities take lead in fire-EMS study after proposed Albion-Cranesville merger fizzles](#)

Volunteerism

- [Beaver County Firefighters Association asking for help regarding manpower](#)
- [Pennsylvania takes steps to ease volunteer firefighter crisis](#)
- [Fire volunteerism sinking](#)
- [Pennsylvania fire departments facing volunteerism emergency](#)
- [Stipends help improve fire protection in Rostraver, Southwest Greensburg](#)
- [Allegheny Co. Council votes to create property tax credit for volunteer firefighters, nonprofit EMS workers](#)
- [With fire departments struggling for volunteers, states respond to the alarm: More than 80% of U.S. fire departments are composed mostly of volunteers](#)
- [Addressing The Need To Transition From Volunteer To Paid Career Firefighters](#)
- [‘America is still burning’: Fire departments are struggling to recruit as climate change and modern materials make the job deadlier than ever](#)
- [Video: Fire and EMS volunteer shortage becomes dire issue for Erie County \[Pa\]](#)
- [Video: Forum held to discuss firefighter shortage and how to fix it](#)
- [Video: \[Evansville, WI\] Local businesses let volunteer firefighters respond to calls during work day](#)

Decertification

- [Explainer: What happens after a fire department is decertified?](#)

- [High Park Volunteer Fire Department suspended of its duties \(2024\)](#)
- [Bellevue Borough Council votes to decertify volunteer fire department](#)
- [Pa. council decertifies volunteer fire company again, months after its reinstatement: The vote came as a shock to the Gill Hall Volunteer Fire Co., which was preparing to get back into the county's dispatch system last week](#)
- [McKees Rocks Volunteer Fire Department decertified after decision from borough](#)
- [Mill Hall Borough votes to begin process to decertify fire department](#)
- [Taylor Borough Council decertifies volunteer fire company](#)
- [Upper Moreland Township looking at whether to decertify Willow Grove Volunteer Fire Department](#)
- [Pa. volunteer fire company dodges attempt by AG to dissolve it](#)
- [Township permanently de-certifies Potts Grove Fire Company](#)
- [Arnold approves decertifying 117-year-old No. 1 fire department](#)
- [Eastvale Fire Department might soon disband \(Nov 2007\)](#)
- [Plymouth Twp. Fire Department Shut Down](#)
- [Nearly century-old Paxtang Fire Company shuts down due to lack of volunteers, council says](#)
- [Video: Volunteer fire dept. in Person County \[NC\] shuts down after failing inspection](#)
- [Video \(2020\): \[Vernon Twp.\] Volunteer firehouse is back at full service in Crawford County](#)
- [Video \(2023\): \[Vernon Twp.\] Crawford County volunteer fire department shut down, under investigation](#)
- [Video \(2019\): \[Plymouth Twp., Luzerne, Co. Pa\] Fire Department Shut Down](#)
- [Dauphin County borough sparks debate as it considers outsourcing fire service](#)
- [Paxtang Borough Fire Service – Petition](#)

Appendix G: Revisions

1. September 8, 2024: De minimis corrections to typographical and punctuation errors.
2. September 9, 2024: Added Fire & Police Report for July 2024 (pp. 42, 207). Added “WMVFRA Uses of Funds 2012-2022” to Appendix E (p. 230). De minimis corrections to typographical and punctuation errors.
3. September 12, 2024: Added “FSRC Public Outreach & Communications” to Appendix A: Fire Service Review Committee (p. 133). De minimis corrections to typographical and punctuation errors.
4. September 16, 2024: Corrected name regarding attendance at May 2021 Council meeting. Monica Sepp was on Council at this time, not Bill Sepp.
5. September 19, 2024: Section Public Education - Fire Safety & Fire Prevention, revised to read: “According to the audit, for Community Risk Reduction, West Mayfield scored just 1.15 out of a possible 5 points. For Public Safety Fire Education, West Mayfield scored 5 out of 40 possible points.” (p. 58). Information appended to WMVFD: Vehicle Fuel – Gasoline: “Note: As of YTD-August 2024: Actual Municipal diesel fuel reimbursement to WMVFD: \$480.77” (p. 64).
6. September 20, 2024: Updated WMVFRA Foreign Fire Insurance Disbursement for 2024, as per the Pennsylvania Department of the Auditor General’s [2024 Allocations for Beaver County](#) (Released September 20, 2024). De minimis corrections to typographical and punctuation errors.
7. September 22, 2024: Updated one respondent to Appendix B: Community: Community Survey: Table, Graphs.
8. October 16, 2024: Amended report to include section entitled, “Suppressing Public Safety Concerns Regarding WMVFD Competency” (p. 63) and “Letter of Concern from Fire Chief Mark Stowe” (Appendix, pp. 225-226).
9. November 9, 2024: Updated WMVFD annual self-reporting incidents (PENFIRS), p. 94. Updated list of OSFC grants awarded to WMVFD, p. 104.

