

BUCKS COUNTY CONSORTIUM

Thursday, April 1, 2021

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order:

A meeting of the Bucks County Consortium was held at 9:00 a.m. at via GoToMeetings, on April 1, 2021, and called to order by Consortium President Kyle Seckinger.

Roll Call, Introductions and Community Updates:

The following Bucks County communities were represented at the meeting:

Dana Cozza, Buckingham Township
Shawn Curran, Chalfont Borough
Caroline Brinker, Doylestown Borough
Aaron Walizer, Doylestown Township
Mega Bhandary, Middletown Township
Stephanie Teoli Kuhls, Middletown Township
Devan Ambron, Milford Borough
Bill Wert, Northampton Township
Bob Pelligrino, Northampton Township
Charles Swartz, Newtown Borough
John Mack, Newtown Township
Marvin Cohen, Newtown Township
Andrea Dewhurst, New Britain Borough
Michael Walsh, New Britain Township
Christina Szabo, New Hope Borough
Sherry Masteller, Reiglesville Borough
Eileen Bradley, Sellersville Borough
Alex Nagy, Solesbury Township
Jason Wager, Springfield Township
Mark Fournier, Telford Borough
Pat Marks, Tullytown Borough
Don Williams, Upper Southampton Township
Herb Schoell, Upper Southampton Municipal Authority
John Ramey, Warminster Township
Katherine McGovern, Warminster Township
Daulton George, Warminster Municipal Authority
Tim Hagey, Warminster Municipal Authority
Barry Luber, Warrington Township
Ashley Casey, Warwick Township
Kyle Seckinger, Warwick Township
Skye Sorresso, Warwick Township
Paula Johnson, Yardley Borough

Sponsors:

Mike Italia, Barry Isett & Associates
Brian Jeter, Comcast
Sal Urbano, Civics Plus
Chris Englebert, Englebert Financial Advisers, LLC
Brian Lake, Equitable Advisors
Beth Kaufmann, Equitable Advisors
Aaron Nelson, Hough Associates
Kathy Thomas, High Swartz
Bryan Hughes, Total Technology Resources, LLC
Patty Barthel, Waste Management

Dan Fagan, Senator Steve Santarsiero's office
Shannon Sticker, Senator Steve Santarsiero's office

2. Presentation by Evan Sone, Bucks County Planning Commission; The Future of Bucks County's Fire Services
An update to the 1990 Bucks County Community Facilities: Emergency Services Report.

Mr. Stone noted that what hasn't changed in nearly 30 years is that the number of volunteer firefighters is steadily and precipitously declining, while remaining active firefighters, grow older. Additionally, departments across the county are responding to significantly more non-fire calls to render aid, further stretching volunteer staffing.

1970 - 300,000 Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighters 2018 SR6 Report
2018 - 38,000 Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighters 2018 SR6 Report

Demographics

- 628,195 People
- 248,873 Existing Housing Units with 4,000+ proposed units and climbing
- 605.5 Sq.Mi .
- 1,034.6 People/ Sq. Mi.

NFPA 1720 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments (NFPA 1720) defines Demand Zones for firefighting jurisdictions based on certain demographic/density thresholds
35 Urban Demand Zones 5 Suburban Demand Zones 14 Rural Demand Zones

Paid Departments

- Engine Municipality Coverage
- Engine 222 Bensalem Township 50 Hours/week, M-F
- Engine 225 Bristol Township 40 Hours/week, M-F
- Engine 244 Middletown Township 40 Hours/week, M-F
- Engine 55 Newtown Township 6AM - 6PM, M-F
- Engine 3-1 Northampton Township 40 Hours/week, M-F
- Rescue 78 Warrington Township 40 Hours/week, M-F

Inventory of Facilities & Equipment

- 62 stations, 23 substations
- 34 Stations in Lower Bucks 30 Stations in Central Bucks 21 Stations in Upper Bucks

Inventory of Facilities & Equipment

- Department Demographics & Statistics (Survey Administered by EMS Fall 2019)
- Inventory of Facilities & Equipment -- 439 Quantity

Survey Questions:

- Q1 How many active firefighters do you have in your department? (Please do not include; Fire Police, Auxiliary, or Administrative members)
- Q2 Please fill out the number of firefighters that meet each category: Q3 Please fill in a number for each group of Active Firefighters
- Q4 How many firefighters volunteer with another organization?
- Q5 Please fill out the appropriate number for each (wheeled apparatus only)
- Q6 Total number of seats provided by all apparatus
- Q7 Current ISO rating for your department
- Q8 What is the square mileage of your initial response district
- Q9 Are you considering regionalization, consolidation or expansion?
- Q10 Please specify your department

Staffing Guidelines & County Comparison

- Demand Zone Demographics
- Minimum Staff to Respond (MSTR) Urban Area >1,000 people/mi² 15 Suburban Area 500-1,000 people/mi² 10 Rural Area

Staffing Guidelines & County Comparison Based on Staffing Analysis

- Scenario One and the above demand zones the county should have a minimum of 659 firefighters available at all times, for any shift, as the first responders assuming each municipality had one fire department. Normal firefighting operations have the 24-hour period broken in to three eighthour shifts to provide 24-hour coverage. This suggests that based on the above, the actual number of firefighters needed is three times the minimum or a total of 1,977 firefighters. With at best approximately 1,600 active firefighters in the county presently, we can reasonably conclude under this scenario that the county is below the NFPA minimum required number of firefighters by approximately 377 firefighters or approximately 7 firefighters per municipality in this scenario.
- Based on Analysis Scenario Two and the above demand zones the county should have a minimum of 790 firefighters available at all times as the first responders, based on each station's location and NFPA Demand Zone rating. Normal firefighting operations have the 24-hour period broken in to three, eight-hour shifts to provide 24-hour coverage. This suggests that based on the above, the actual number of firefighters needed is three times the minimum or a total of 2,370 firefighters. With at best approximately 1,600 active firefighters in the county presently, we can reasonably conclude that the county is below the NFPA minimum required number of firefighters by approximately 770 firefighters or approximately 12 firefighters per existing department countywide.

Costs of Staffing: The funding of fire companies comes from several sources and varies in amount. A fire tax is levied by some municipalities and used in sum or in part to support fire companies. By law, a fire tax cannot exceed 3 mills unless a municipal referendum is passed and only up to 1 mil may be used for salary and benefits

3 of 54 charge full 3 mill fire tax	8 of 54 charge NO fire tax	12 of 54 charge more than 0 but less than 1 mill	26 of 54 charge between 1 mill and less than 3 mills
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Only Morrisville Borough charges 4 mills

Mr. Stone took various questions from the members. Mr. Stone thanked the membership for allowing him to present at today's meeting. Mr. Seckinger thanked Mr. Stone for their presentation and time today.

3. Treasurer's Report and Payment of Bills:

Upon motion by Eileen Bradley, seconded by Caroline Brinker, the Treasurer's Report for March 2021, was unanimously approved.

4. Approval of Minutes:

Upon motion by Caroline Brinker, seconded by Barry Lubert, the March 4, 2021 meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

5. Open discussion:

The membership had an open discussion on how individual municipalities intend on using their American Rescue Plan funds. Some suggestions were renovations to existing HVAC systems, internet/broadband, reimbursement of lost revenue during the pandemic such as swim club fees and parking tickets not being issued.

Shannon Sticker (Senator Steve Santarsiero's office) announced that their office will be hosting an informational session on the American Rescue Plan funds on April 16th and April 23rd. Ms. Sticker noted to look for more information and formal invitation to be released.

6. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Casey

Ashley Casey
Consortium Coordinator