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# FIRE AND EMS PROTECTION STUDY

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Nether Providence Township, Swarthmore Borough, Garden City Fire Co., South  
Media Fire Co., and Swarthmore Fire and Protection Assoc.



OCTOBER 1, 2025

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## 1.0 Overview

In late 2024, Borough Manager William Webb, on behalf of Swarthmore Borough and Nether Providence Township, engaged my services to evaluate and recommend steps to correct under-performing service delivery for Fire, Rescue and EMS to the respective municipalities.

I met with Mr. Webb, Nether Providence Township Manager Maureen Feyas, and elected officials from both municipalities. The consensus of those conversations was multifaced:

- There are three fire companies that service the area
  - Swarthmore Fire and Protective Association.
  - Garden City Fire Company.
  - South Media Fire Company.
- The municipalities were concerned with but not limited to.
  - The lack of performance of South Media Fire Company and the associated funding being allocated.
  - Swarthmore Fire and Protection Association had a reoccurring reduction in available volunteers and was requesting additional funding for career personnel to supplement coverage.
  - There was no long-term planning on large capital apparatus purchasing and fire companies were requesting funds for new apparatus.
- The municipalities were interested in any suggestions on volunteer staffing, any recruitment and retention strategies that could improve service delivery and how to financially plan for staffing and apparatus.

It was recommended to conduct this study in two phases. Phase 1 would be partnered with Emergency Vehicle Response. This phase would review fire department apparatus, equipment and maintenance for each unit, review land development and structural conditions within each response area to identify target hazards and analyze current service delivery. This would allow the identification for the appropriate apparatus and equipment requirements needed to appropriately protect the community.

Phase 2 would cover current fire department structure, their operating standards, financial and budgeting information, emergency medical services delivery and recommendations on a new service model to be implemented moving forward.

The full study will provide a blueprint for the fire department to provide service to the communities for years to come. The final recommendations will be constructed so the fire department can build upon and expand should the community and/or service demand continue to grow.

This study encountered some obstacles throughout the process. Having to chase down documents with data that should otherwise be readily available was inefficient. The biggest obstacle was the closure of Crozer. While the study was halfway through the EMS service delivery analysis, Chester Crozer closed, leaving numerous municipalities scrambling to ensure their residents could receive prehospital care. This deeply affected the communities of Swarthmore and Nether

Providence. In short order, Swarthmore Fire and Protection, the Borough of Swarthmore and Nether Providence had to research, develop, fund and implement a new deployment plan. All three parties should be praised for their diligence to ensure their residents were protected. However, there are still some concerns with the new deployment plan including staffing and over utilization of mutual aid.

Rather than revisit each identified area from the past, this report provides the fire companies and the municipalities a clean slate and blueprint going forward on building a new, consolidated department that is capable of providing all hazard protection to their residents. This consolidated, regional department will yield improved staffing, a better utilization of apparatus and funding and significantly reduce understaffed and unqualified responses.

## 2.0 Executive Summary

It is well documented that the decline in volunteer firefighters has been ongoing in Pennsylvania since the 1970's. Pennsylvania Burning (1976), Senate Resolution 60 Report (2004), Emergency Medical Services in the Commonwealth of Pa (2013) Senate Resolution 6 Report (2018) have all identified the "crisis" of volunteer staffing. Unfortunately, many of the impactful changes in these reports never came to fruition and the rapid decline of volunteers coupled with the increase in call volume and services to be delivered have left many Commonwealth municipalities with no real direction on how to effectively protect their communities.

Through these reports, one thing has become clear which is that local municipalities cannot wait for the Commonwealth to step in and solve the problems. The managers and elected officials of Swarthmore Borough and Nether Providence Township deserve praise and recognition for taking the necessary steps to identify issues with their Fire and EMS protection and being committed to fixing the system so everyone, residents and visitors alike, are safe.

The current service delivery being deployed is 100% volunteer at Garden City F.C. and South Media F.C., and combination system with volunteers supplemented by career personnel at Swarthmore Fire and Protection. South Media's volunteer staffing is extremely critical and to date, does not appear to be providing protection within their primary and mutual aid response area. The staffing at Swarthmore is inadequate given the hazards associated with their urban setting, especially the life hazards present at Swarthmore College. This is only amplified by the current cross staffing model for Fire and EMS coverage. Garden City F.C. is the only department that properly staffs its apparatus to the current National Fire Protection Association standards. Furthermore, Garden City F.C. has increased its ability to staff apparatus over the last three years. This is outstanding and not the norm for 100% volunteer agencies in the Commonwealth.

Nether Providence Township and Swarthmore Borough have done a great job in attempting to provide financial support to all three companies. However, all three companies are underfunded and do not have the means to solely provide funding to protect their response areas. As stated in the Phase 1 report, 30% of Garden City's funding is being supplied by fundraising activities. It is unreasonable to expect a resident to volunteer dozens of hours a week doing one of the most dangerous jobs there is and then fundraise the means to do it. Time spent fundraising is all time that can be spent training and meeting the needs of the department to be prepared for emergency responses. Plainly said, people don't sign up to fundraise, they sign up to help their neighbor. No fire department can fundraise the cost of replacing apparatus in today's market. For example, to replace the tower at Swarthmore would require 56 chicken barbeque events within a 12-month period, selling over 800,000 halves of chicken. This would leave no additional time for any type of service activity.

Act 7, 8 and 9 of 2008 changed the requirements on municipalities with respect to emergency services. The statute mandates that Boroughs, 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> class townships provide fire, rescue and EMS services to their residents and they are mandate to provide the appropriate financial assistance. If the fire and EMS system completely fails, the municipalities will be forced to implement a 100% career replacement. This sudden switch of models will be financially unattainable.

The current model being deployed is no longer feasible, it is obsolete and in desperate need of updating and change. With median household incomes of Swarthmore at \$146,992 (2020 census) and Nether Providence at \$145,254 (2020 Census), residents do not have the time to donate dozens of hours of volunteer firefighting per week. This is a common obstacle in affluent areas seen throughout the Commonwealth. As stated in Phase 1 by Mike Wilbur, “A Day of reckoning is fast approaching, and only municipal leaders preparing for this inevitability will have good, reliable, long-term, and affordable fire and EMS services to offer to their citizens”.

#### Key Observations:

This final report has identified several issues that will require change, planning and implementation by the Fire Departments, the municipalities and their elected officials to ensure that the service delivery model is maintained and approved over the next few years. Phase 1 covered a large portion of the apparatus and equipment needs. Please refer to Phase 1 report for those specific key observations.

- The staffing at South Media is unable to produce a reliable and constant response. It was noted that many times, the apparatus fails to respond, fails to respond in a timely manner and/or fails to respond with a qualified minimum crew of 3 personnel.
- The cross-staffing model of Swarthmore provides a false confidence that an adequate response is reliable. The current model utilizes 3 career personnel during the daytime hours. When two of those personnel respond on the ambulance, there is only firefighter available for fire/rescue responses. There is not a large pool of volunteers for daytime response, which essentially is leaving the Swarthmore primary response area under-protected.
- The records management is problematic, for both incident reporting and financial documentation. Records were incomplete and did not portray an accurate depiction of maintenance conditions for the apparatus. This is essential for apparatus replacement planning. Incident reports provide a false positive at face value because they don't allow for easy recognition of under qualified responses.
- Annual 3<sup>rd</sup> party financial audits are not completed. Some companies have a limited review, which does not adequately ensure that best practices and appropriate internal controls are in place. This is an absolute necessity when receiving municipal tax dollars. Both South Media and Garden City have had prior theft incidents, this should be a priority on implementation.
- There is too much reliance on fundraising to support service delivery. This is an unrealistic expectation today. Fundraising activities should be reduced to annual letter drives and grant initiatives.
- Fireground Incident Command, strategies and tactics, communication and deployment should be aligned to ensure a successful outcome. It was noted that not all companies are using regionally accepted apparatus arrival assignments, communicating consistently on fire ground radio channels, and responding with the appropriate apparatus on a routine basis.
- The EMS deployment analysis caused several delays in the study. This wasn't the fault of Swarthmore Fire as the primary Advanced Life Support agency, Chester Crozer, filed for bankruptcy during the middle of the study. This caused the municipalities to quickly act

in a short period of time to provide ALS to their residents. Ultimately, the municipalities and Swarthmore conducted their own analysis on how to deploy emergency medical services to their communities. Due to the new, current change, I will only offer a few suggestions as there will not be enough data to properly determine the effectiveness of this deployment model.

- There is no standard of cover in place to evaluate the effectiveness of deployment model. Thus, this makes it difficult to determine the appropriate amount of funding needed for current and future responses. This also makes it difficult for elected officials to justify tax increases to their constituents.
- There is no standard for reporting annual budgets, monthly Fire and EMS activity, or regional service delivery. Each fire company provides service in their primary response area as they see fit. In Nether Providence, there are essentially two ideologies on how to do things, which means residents on the northern end of the township could have a vastly different experience and outcome from residents living in the southern end of the township.
- It appears neighboring municipalities may be taking advantage of mutual aid, both Fire and EMS, to overcome their lack of funding and support to their primary organizations.
- It is apparent that change in the service delivery model is required. The only way improvements are going to be made, in any effort to retain the remaining volunteers are left, is through regionalization. Currently, Garden City F.C. is the safety net for the communities of Nether Providence and Swarthmore. Statistically proven, they are the only fire company capable of routinely and consistently turning out staffed, qualified apparatus.

### 3.0 Apparatus Review

The Fire and EMS apparatus market is the most volatile it has ever been. The costs of apparatus have almost doubled in the last five years, and lead times could be anywhere from 18-23 months for an engine, up to 54 months for an aerial device, and 30 months for an ambulance. To make matters worse, some manufacturers have added mandatory price escalation clauses into their contracts that drive the costs of the apparatus up after the execution of the sales contract.

These factors have wreaked havoc on fire companies and municipalities alike. The ability to plan has been increasingly difficult. It is even more imperative that fire companies have a solid apparatus replacement plan to aid in the financial planning of apparatus replacement. Phase 1 of the report (pg. 72) provides a replacement schedule by apparatus by year. While year to year adjustments can be made, it is important not to skip a year or pushing purchasing back, leaving a gap in the plan. This would place a ripped effect through the financial planning for years, resulting in additional cost to purchase without any substantive changes in the apparatus design or mission.

With the volatility of the new vehicle market, the used fire apparatus market has suffered a similar fate. As departments cannot wait 4 or more years for replacement apparatus, they have turned to the used market, which at one time had plentiful and affordable inventory. This is no longer the case. A recent used fire engine that was constructed in 2008 was listed for approximately \$600,000. Those typical sale prices in 2020 were approximately \$150,000 for a similar aged engine.

With apparatus to be disposed of according to the replacement plan, I would suggest using a reputable fire apparatus broker, such as Brindlee Mountain or Command Fire Apparatus, to maximum any potential returns. Both organizations function as a broker for a percentage of the sale price. They will also wholesale apparatus if the rig conditions fit their business plan. This usually results in a lower return to the fire department, as they will need to maintain their profit margin.

Purchasing fire apparatus is the most expensive item, per square inch, that Fire Department will ever purchase. These vehicles need to be designed to fit the specific mission to be provided, the geographical area to be protected, the ability to staff consistently, and any projected growth over the life of the apparatus. During the review of the apparatus in the three departments, it is apparent that changes in apparatus design are necessary. Phase 1 covered this topic in depth.

I recommend moving forward with an apparatus architect be used to aid in the design, ordering and delivery of apparatus. This process allows for a technical specification to be developed and then submitted to prospective dealerships for quotes. The architect costs approximately 1% of the apparatus overall costs and could potentially save tens of thousands of dollars either through bid compliance or direct industry knowledge of price increases and equal alternative parts. In one vehicle purchase at my own department, we saved approximately \$80,000 on one vehicle. Another vehicle had approximately 30 non-compliance exceptions that were taken in the bid. In other words, the manufacturer quoted parts or items that were not in-compliance with bid



specifications and were specifically listed as mandatory. This would have resulted in more expensive parts that we did not request, therefore giving us a vehicle that we didn't specify.

The apparatus committee is still required to do the bulk of the work. The committee consists of no more than 7 members, and has representation from leadership, apparatus operators and firefighters who will work off the rig. The committee should complete the following tasks, in this order:

1. Determine the mission the apparatus is to accomplish.
  - a. Engine Company.
  - b. Ladder or Tower Company.
  - c. Rescue Company.
  - d. Ambulance.
  - e. Support.
2. Review the current apparatus (to be replaced) and equipment to determine if the design still fits the mission.
3. Review the current geographical area to be protected as well as any planned or potential growth in the area over the life expectancy of the new apparatus.
4. Determine the type and quantity of equipment to be carried and arrange to determine compartment dimensions.
  - a. This is to include weighing each piece of equipment and documenting totals per compartment.
  - b. For aerial apparatus, the length and quantity of portable ladders must be the #1 priority over other lessor priority equipment.
  - c. Refer to the Insurance Services Office evaluation report for minimum equipment requirements.
  - d. Refer to any other equipment requirements if warranted (ex. Dept of Health Rescue Recognition Program).
5. Determine the cab and chassis requirements.
  - a. Given the data presented in phase 1 and the seat date in NFPA 1900, cab should be designed equipped with no more than 6 seats, including the driver.
  - b. Care should be given to height and wheelbase due to the tight apparatus access in both municipalities.
  - c. Refer to the Insurance Services Office evaluation report of minimum pump requirements.
6. Review the firehouse apparatus bay dimensions to ensure the designed apparatus will fit inside the firehouse.
  - a. Note any restrictions in the specifications.
7. Develop the specifications for manufacturer quoting.
  - a. This is to include 100% performance bond.
    - i. This provides financial protection to the purchaser should the apparatus fail to meet the specification at delivery.
  - b. Include a pre-construction conference for the committee to be held at the manufacturer facility, not the firehouse or dealership.
  - c. Pre-paint inspection is generally a good idea, but not mandatory.

- d. Include final delivery for the entire committee.
8. Submit the firehouse specifications to the apparatus architect.

There are other portions of design, such as branding (graphics), emergency warning equipment, etc., that are necessary for the specification process. It is important to understand that every single item needs to be contained in the specification document. Any changes to the specification after the prints are signed at the pre-construction conference will most likely result in a change order and an additional cost to the fire department.

The specification should include a contingency amount, usually 5%-10% of the overcall cost to allow for changes. This routinely happens as new designs occur during the long build times.

The specification should also contain costs to mount the equipment if the equipment mounting is to be completed by the dealership. Should the fire department use a third party for equipment mounting, that cost needs to be included in the overall cost of the apparatus for capital financial planning.

The Fire Apparatus Manufacturer's Association is a great resource when designing fire apparatus. They have a resource guide that includes a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for general apparatus weights as well as a worksheet to document department owned equipment during the spec process.

Ambulances are a simpler design process as the missions are either a Basic Life Support unit or an Advanced Life Support unit. NFPA 1917 and the PA Department of Health standards should be the basis of specification. The difficulty in the past few years for ambulances has been the availability of chassis. Given that EMS units will use a higher volume than fire apparatus, the Phase 1 plan has built a refurbishment or remounting process into the plan. This allows the vehicles to have two chassis to one patient box, resulting in the potential cost of savings of at least \$100,000 per vehicle depending on the specification.

Ambulances should be designed and equipped with power load systems in the ambulance and power load stretchers. As back injuries are one of the leading causes of loss time injuries in emergency medical services, these systems reduce the possibilities of on duty injuries.

Final delivery of both types of apparatus should occur at the place of manufacture with the design committee present. The official specification should be reviewed line by line for compliance. This includes operating and weighing the vehicles. Any deficiencies should be documented and either rectified if a major deviation from the specification, or a financial discount to the purchaser.

Acceptance, which is the last step, should occur when the vehicle is outfitted with all the necessary equipment and weighed. If the vehicle fails the weight review, and a solution is not possible, the purchasers should consult with legal counsel to purchase the activation of the performance bond.

#### 4.0 Fire Department Restructure

The volunteer fire service was started in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin in 1736. Since then, a lot has changed in the fire service, and some things remain. There is no stronger heart than that of a volunteer firefighter.

For many years, firehouses were the social center of the community. It was where neighbors gathered to help neighbors, to provide social events such as bingo or auctions, where generations continued their call for service. Unfortunately, those days have passed. The sense of community is not what it once was, people are less inclined to volunteer their time as multiple income homes become more necessary to survive, and the endless options of activities that exist either in person, or virtually, have had negative effects on the number of volunteers. Coupled with increased service demands opposed to the general fire suppression activities of yesteryear, increased call volume, the increased training standards since 9/11 and the overall costs of providing these services – 100% volunteer fire companies are becoming a thing of the past.

It has been well documented through numerous Commonwealth of PA studies that the number of volunteers decreases each year. The PA State Fire Commissioner has stated that he believes there are less than 30,000 volunteer firefighters in today's ranks, compared with the 300,000 in the 1980's. While unfortunate, these facts don't alleviate the municipality's statutory obligation to ensure Fire, Rescue and EMS services are provided to their communities. Legendary Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini, known for his strong position on community service to "Mrs. Smith" stated that there are two things firemen hate "change and the way things are". If fire companies and their leadership do not adapt to their surroundings and changes to the community, they die. This is evident when fire companies fail to respond to calls, fail to enact and enforce training standards, and fail to plan. This is a common occurrence in not only Pennsylvania, but across the country. You can read daily of fire departments either shutting down voluntarily or being closed by municipalities because for far too long, "service" was being provided with a false sense of security.

Here, all three fire companies are no different. I truly believe that the volunteers are well-intentioned in protecting their community and doing what is the best for the residents. However, that doesn't mean that they are always meeting the needs of the community. In reviewing the supplied data, although some of it was fragmented, misleading, or incomplete, it is apparent that change is necessary. Swarthmore Fire virtually has no fire/rescue staffing outside their career staff, and their cross staffing is not an efficient model. South Media offers little to no actual protection to the area. They routinely respond understaffed or with under qualified members or do not respond at all. Garden City provides successful staffing and service, improving their staffing numbers year over year. They have quality leadership who plan for obstacles and future needs. To date, they provide a safety net to both communities and this needs to be protected by all means necessary.

To meet the current and future needs of the community, I am recommending that all three fire companies be consolidated into a new, single fire department and a single relief association. The three legacy fire companies would then be disposed of, with all funds and assets being turned over to the new fire department.

The new fire department should have primary coverage area of Nether Providence Township, Swarthmore Borough and Rose Valley Borough, although Rose Valley has not been an active participant in this process.

The new fire department should provide at a minimum, fire suppression, vehicle extrication services, advanced life support, basic life support, quick response EMS services, fire prevention education, external safety training initiatives, pre-incident and life safety inspections, and increased community relations.

The following chain of command structure should be implemented as follows:

- Chief of Department
  - This will most likely start out as a volunteer position. It is my strong recommendation that Chief Pat O'Rourke be installed as the first department chief. He has already proven, via the data evaluated, that he can foster change and a culture that puts the community first. His department is currently achieving volunteer growth that is a rarity in Pennsylvania.
  - I do believe that this should be a career position, with comparable compensation to local police and fire chiefs, for the long term. As the department builds out, especially with the addition of career staff, it will be too much for a volunteer position at volunteer hours.
  - The Chief of Department will oversee the daily administrative and operational activities of the Department, similar to a CEO of a corporation.
  - This position reports directly to the President of the Fire Co.
- Deputy Fire Chief of the Department - volunteer
  - This position will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> in Command, ensuring the department is in a state of constant readiness to deliver service.
  - This position functions as the Chief of Department in the absence of the Fire Chief, in accordance with the governing documents of the Department.
  - This position reports directly to the Fire Chief.
- Assistant Fire Chiefs - volunteer
  - Each station will be assigned a Station Chief. This position is to manage the activities of their assigned station, according to the vision and tasks assigned by the Fire Chief.
  - They are responsible for the direct supervision of the station officers.
  - This position reports directly to the Deputy Fire Chief.
- Station Officers - volunteer
  - Garden City Station should be assigned two Captains and two Lieutenants.
  - Swarthmore should be assigned one Captain and two Lieutenants.
  - South Media should be assigned one Captain and two Lieutenants.
  - These positions report directly to the Station Chief.

- Department Safety Officers – volunteer
  - There should be two Safety Officers assigned to the Department.
  - They should be responsible for observing the fireground during structure fires, under the Incident Command System.
  - This position reports directly to the Fire Chief.
- Assistant EMS Chief – career
  - This should be a career position responsible for overseeing the day-to-day activities of the Emergency Medical Services.
  - They should be the day-to-day direct report to all career personnel assigned to the EMS units.
  - This position reports directly to the Fire Chief.
- Chief Engineer – volunteer
  - This position will be responsible for overseeing the maintenance and care of all the apparatus assigned to the Department.
  - The Chief Engineer, with approval from the Fire Chief, will determine the number of assistant engineers necessary.
  - This position reports directly to the Deputy Fire Chief.
- Fire Police Captain – volunteer
  - This position will oversee the day-to-day operations of the fire police support unit.
  - This position will ensure compliance with Title 35 statutes that govern that activities of sworn fire police personnel.
  - This position, with approval from the Fire Chief, will determine the number of fire police lieutenants necessary to ensure adequate coverage and supervision.
  - This position reports to the Deputy Fire Chief.

The Board of Directors of the new Fire Department, for the first year, should consist of the President and Vice President of each station, one recording secretary to be elected, one financial secretary to be elected, one treasurer to be elected and the Fire Chief, who shall have voting rights. After the completion of the first fiscal year, an election should occur to vote on the following positions:

- President
- Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- Treasurer
- Director
- Director
- Director
- Fire Chief

The Board of Directors should act as an oversight body, ensuring compliance with local, state and federal laws and practices. They should also serve as the disciplinary board for the volunteer members, receiving appeals to discipline issued by the Fire Chief within guidelines to be established by the Department.

The Board of Directors should also provide a vision for the Fire Chief to carry out in terms of growth and expectations. The Board of Directors should not be involved in the day-to-day administration of the Department, nor involved in the decision-making process of operation service delivery – other than to provide support of the decisions made by the Fire Chief and his/her operation line officers.

The Board of Directors shall approve the budget submitted by the Fire Chief, control all Department financial investments and conducting monthly reviews of the financial transactions of the Department.

A full-time office manager should be hired within the first year of operation. This position should be responsible for the daily financial activities (accounts payable and accounts receivable), the reconciliation of EMS billing income, financial reporting for monthly Board of Directors meetings, maintaining accurate records in QuickBooks Online, and other general office activities. The office manager will report directly to the Fire Chief.

## 5.0 Consolidation Process

This study is providing recommendations based off the consultant's personal, first-hand experience. It should not be construed as legal advice. It is highly recommended that the Fire Department seek the advice of legal counsel to walk them through the legal process to properly dissolve three, separate corporations into a new, single non-profit corporation.

The first course of action should be for each station to meet and review this report in its entirety. An official vote from each station should be taken to approve the recommendations and begin the conversations to consolidate into a new department. If one station fails to cooperate or vote to consolidate into a new department, that department should be excluded from further conversations and the remaining two companies move forward without them. It should be clear from the beginning that Chief O'Rourke will be the Department Fire Chief, and any vote taken should acknowledge that the Department Fire Chief is already determined.

A steering committee should be formed to oversee the process. This should be the current Fire Chief and President from each station. This committee should develop a complete list of assets, any outstanding loans or debts, and seek participation for the following sub-committees:

- Governance
  - This committee will develop the initial Constitution and By-laws for the new department.
  - This committee will develop the membership levels for the department.
  - This committee should develop the policies and procedures for procurement of equipment and supplies.
- Finance
  - This committee will work to review the current liabilities, current cash balances and pulling the financial institutions' information together in one report.
  - This committee will provide a recommendation to the Steering Committee on the number and type of bank and investment accounts needed for the new committee.
  - This committee should develop policies and procedures for financial reporting, internal controls of the financial process and the establishment of an annual audit process through an external Certified Public Accountant.
- Relief Association
  - This should be represented by two current relief board of directors from each station, with the Steering Committee acting as a tie breaker should it be necessary.
  - This committee should work to follow the steps, in accordance with the Auditor General's recommendation, to consolidate all three, independent relief associations into one, new relief association.
    - It is important to review any open finding noted during the most recent relief audits and take measures to correct those findings before any official consolidation is taken.
- Branding
  - This committee should research and provide recommendations on the following:
    - The name and insignia of the new department.

- The color scheme of the Fire and EMS apparatus moving forward.

The Fire Chief should appoint the following committees:

- Training Standards
  - This committee will develop a recommended classification of firefighters (ex. 1<sup>st</sup> class, 2<sup>nd</sup> class, 3<sup>rd</sup> class or Technician firefighter, Senior Firefighter, Firefighter). This should be a progressive classification, where a firefighter will need to be a senior firefighter before promoting to Technician.
  - The committee should develop a recommended set of minimum training certifications for each classification. These are to be county or state fire academy classes. An example would be all firefighters need to successfully obtain PA State Firefighter 1, all Senior Firefighters need to obtain Pro-Board Firefighter 1, etc.
  - The Fire Chief should have final approval of this recommendation.
- Inventory
  - This committee should be tasked with taking a complete inventory of all equipment, to include purchase date, manufacturer life expectancy and status.
  - This committee should provide a written recommendation on the elimination of non-essential duplicated equipment, any needs and the expected cost to replace.
  - This is to include any station SCBA compressors or other fixed non-apparatus equipment within the stations.
- Infrastructure
  - This committee should evaluate all three fire stations and provide a written report on their condition, amenities or lack thereof, develop a maintenance plan with new contracts for a single point of repair or maintenance and recommendations on major repairs or replacements needed.

In my opinion, the Branding Committee will most likely have the hardest time to get consensus. The fire service is deep in pride and tradition. The names and colors of the companies are engrained in the identity of its personnel. Care should be given to not let emotions and resistance to change derail the primary mission – protecting those who can't protect themselves. It is recommended that some common ground be found to at least acknowledge and remember the legacy departments that chose to move forward as one. Therefore, I don't believe it would be appropriate for a consultant or anyone outside of those choosing to volunteer their time have any agency in these decisions.



## 6.0 Personnel Classification and Training Standards

Aside from an actual response, training should be the next priority of every fire department. With it being necessary to provide a wide variety of service, the skills required are perishable. You cannot realistically spend two hours a year in training and expect to perform adequately under pressure with almost no notice.

It is also the leadership's responsibility to provide a path for personnel, volunteer and career, to promote into a leadership position and progress throughout their career. The days of electing leadership positions based off popularity should be over. The Fire Chief should establish clear expectations and requirements to obtain and occupy a leadership position. The following recommendations should provide the initial foundation of qualifications for operational officers. This should be a fluid, stand-alone policy moving forward that keeps up with the trends and demands of protecting the community.

### Operational Line Qualifications:

1. Deputy Fire Chief/
  - a. Must meet all the requirements for the rank of Assistant Fire Chief/Battalion Fire Chief.
  - b. NFPA Fire Officer II.
  - c. NIMS 400.
  - d. Fleet Fire/Rescue Apparatus Driver.
  - e. This rank will wear a white helmet with a white helmet shield.
    - i. The helmet shield will either have 4 crossed bugles or "Deputy Fire Chief".
2. Assistant Fire Chief/Battalion Fire Chief – Station Chief
  - a. Member must be a minimum of 25 years of age.
  - b. Member must be a member of a regional company for a minimum of 5 consecutive years.
  - c. Member must have held the rank of a Company Captain or Lieutenant for a minimum of 2 years.
  - d. NFPA Fire Officer I.
  - e. NIMS 300.
  - f. Be qualified on one engine company and one special service (if applicable).
  - g. This rank will wear a white helmet with a white helmet shield.
    - i. Assistant Fire Chief helmet shield with either have three crossed bugles or "Assistant Fire Chief".
    - ii. Battalion Fire Chief helmet shield will either have two crossed bugles or "Battalion Fire Chief".
3. Fire/Rescue Captain
  - a. Must be a member of a regional company for a minimum of 3 consecutive years.
  - b. Member must hold the rank of Firefighter First Class.

- c. NFPA Fire Instructor I.
  - d. This rank will wear a black helmet with a white helmet shield.
    - i. Captain helmet shield with either have two bugles or “Fire Captain/Rescue Captain”.
4. Fire/Rescue Lieutenant
- a. Member must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
  - b. Must be a member of a regional company for a minimum of 2 consecutive years.
  - c. Member must hold the rank of Firefighter First Class.
  - d. Member must be qualified to drive/operate an engine company within the first year of service.
  - e. This rank will wear a black helmet with a white helmet shield.
    - i. Lieutenant helmet shield will have one bugle or “Fire Lieutenant” or “Rescue Lieutenant”.
5. Fire Sergeant (Reserved).

#### Firefighter Classifications:

All operational personnel will be classified based on their individual training levels. All new members, regardless of training and experience, will complete the appropriate rookie books and will complete a 1-year probationary period.

Once a member has completed all the training requirements for a specific classification, successfully completes the evaluation process and has received approval from the Company Chief Fire Officer, they will be promoted in rank and provided the appropriate corresponding color-coded station numbers to be worn on his/her helmet.

1. Firefighter First Class :
  - a. Member must meet all the requirements for the Firefighter Second Class.
  - b. Member must possess Pro-Board Firefighter II.
  - c. Member must possess a minimum 16-hour Officer development/Command level class as approved by the Fire Chief.
  - d. This rank will wear a black helmet and black helmet shield with red station numbers.
2. Firefighter Second Class:
  - a. Member must meet all the requirements for the Firefighter Third Class.
  - b. Member must possess the following certifications:
    - i. NFPA Firefighter I
    - ii. PA Vehicle Rescue Technician or equivalent.
    - iii. PSFA Rapid Intervention Teams.
    - iv. PSFA Firefighter Survival.
    - v. PSFA Engine Company Operations or equivalent.
    - vi. PSFA Truck Company Operations or equivalent.

- vii. PA Fish and Boat Water Rescue Awareness.
- c. This rank will wear a black helmet and black helmet shield with blue station numbers.
- 3. Firefighter Third Class:
  - a. Member must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
  - b. Member must meet all the requirements for Apprentice Firefighter.
  - c. Member must possess PSFA Interior Firefighter with a Live Burn Session.
  - d. Member must possess PSFA Hazardous Materials Operations.
  - e. This rank will wear a black helmet. A helmet shield with green station numbers will be awarded after a member's first interior fire attack as approved by the home station officer group.
- 4. Apprentice Firefighter (Exterior Firefighter):
  - a. Member must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
  - b. Member must obtain the following training within the first 12 months:
    - i. CPR/AED/First Aid.
    - ii. Hazardous Materials Awareness.
  - c. This rank will wear a red helmet with no station numbers.
- 5. Junior Firefighter:
  - a. Member is between the ages of 16 and 17 years old and still attending high school.
  - b. Must possess the following:
    - i. CPR/AED/First Aid.
  - c. Must attend a Junior Fire School/Camp at an accredited fire academy as soon as possible.
  - d. Must maintain a C average for all classes.
  - e. This classification will wear a Red Helmet.
- 6. Cadet Firefighter:
  - a. Member is between the ages of 14 and 15 years old.
  - b. Must possess CPR/AED/First Aid.
  - c. This classification will wear a Red Helmet.
- 7. Safety Officer:
  - a. This member must be a minimum of 25 years of age.
  - b. This member must meet the requirements of the rank of Captain.
  - c. This member must possess NFPA 1521 Incident Safety Officer.
- 8. Chief Engineer:
  - a. This member must meet all the requirements for the rank of Chauffer.
  - b. This member must be a Fire/Rescue fleet driver.
  - c. This member must possess a minimum of NPFA Pumper-Driver Operator.

9. Chauffeur:
  - a. This member must be a minimum 21 years of age.
  - b. Member is a qualified driver/operator of fire/rescue apparatus.
  - c. Member may be non-SCBA qualified.
  - d. Member must attend the prerequisites as defined in the driver's training program.
10. Fire Police Captain:
  - a. This member must have been a member of a regional company for at least 3 consecutive years.
  - b. Member must meet all the requirements for the rank of Fire Police Lieutenant.
  - c. Member must possess the following:
    - i. National Traffic Incident Management certificate.
    - ii. Roadway Incident Response Safety Leadership certificate.
11. Fire Police Lieutenant:
  - a. Member must meet all the requirements for the rank of Fire Police Officer.
  - b. Member must possess the following certifications:
    - i. PA Basic Fire Police Course
    - ii. CPR/AED/First Aid
    - iii. Hazardous Materials Awareness

Annual recertifications:

All personnel will be required to annual recertify the following certification classes:

- First Aid/AED/CPR
- Hazardous Materials Refresher
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Sexual Harassment/Hostile Work Environment

As previously stated, the skill set to provide Fire, Rescue and EMS are perishable skills. For all personnel to remain proficient and confident in their abilities, the Department must conduct weekly objective and subjective training sessions that cover all aspects of the services they intend to provide.

In the beginning of the new department, the Fire Chief and/or operational line officers should identify one evening during the week to conduct a 2–3-hour in-house training session. It is unrealistic to expect every member to attend 100% of the monthly drill sessions, but the expectation should be to attend at least 50% of the drill sessions.

The weekly sessions should initially start with training the consolidated operation on the operational policies and procedures, familiarization of apparatus and equipment and to begin mending everyone into one culture. This will be difficult but is obtainable if the leadership commits the time and effort necessary to be well-prepared for the drill sessions. Nothing will kill

enthusiasm and morale quicker than a volunteer dedicated 2-3 hours of their week to show up and stand around.

The career fire personnel, or cross-trained personnel who could be assigned to a fire shift, should be conducting daily training session of at least 1-2 hours on the week's curriculum. The on-duty supervisor should have the ability to alter the curriculum if he/she observes a topic that needs quicker attention.

The Fire Chief and Training Committee should establish a list of skills that each member needs to demonstrate proficiency in a calendar year. This should be a requirement to maintain their position of the Fire Chief's active list of authorized responders. The skill evaluations can take place during the weekly drill sessions or a dedicated weekend training event.

The Department should attend at least two live-fire burn sessions at an approved training site. Personnel should be required to attend at least one of these events to maintain their riding status.

Over time, as the duty crew program is established and grown, the department can transition from weekly drill sessions to a weekly curriculum that can be taught and completed on each duty shift. The Department will then hold one monthly department drill on a weekend day, culminating the month's curriculum into a subjective review of skill proficiency.

A comprehensive driver's training program should be established to define a set of skills, certifications and qualification for personnel who drive and operate the Department's apparatus. The foundation of the program should use NFPA 1002, Standard for Fire Department Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications for a guideline on skills objectives. The Department should also consult their vehicle insurance carrier for any requirements of driver/operators.

The driver's training program should include ground review of apparatus, written tests, an approved road course test and an annual recertification of all driver/operators. Driver's history checks should be conducted at least every other year, and in most cases can be accomplished through the insurance carrier.

## 7.0 Department Staffing

The most valuable asset a Fire Department needs to have is people. It does not matter how many apparatuses a department owns if there is no one to ride them. In today's fire service, this is the most critical topic being discussed as staffing, both career and volunteer, are not what they used to be. The expectation of do more with less has long won the funding battle, often discarding the negative effects it has on both the department and community. Communities once overlooked poor performance due to the status of the volunteer. Society no longer accepts that, they want adequately staffed units, in a moment's notice to solve their problem. This comes at a cost, whether those responders are career or volunteer.

The personnel currently protecting Swarthmore Borough and Nether Providence are not consistent, and in sufficient numbers to provide adequate protection. As Phase 1 noted, Swarthmore Fire staffing is in a critical state, South Media Fire is in an extremely critical state and Garden City Fire was noted to have exceptional staffing for a 100% volunteer organization.

The below table from Phase 1 outlines the current staffing per unit, per station. While Garden City has mostly increased their staffing over the last 3 years, both Swarthmore and South Media are declining annually. While the table shows Swarthmore's staffing at a slight increase year over year, this is attribute to their career fire staffing, which cross-staffs the ambulances. The major concern with this model is, two career personnel will leave their assigned fire apparatus to staff and respond the ambulance, leaving 1 career firefighter available for fire/rescue emergencies. The data provides a false narrative that Swarthmore has adequate coverage as one firefighter on an apparatus is not fire protection. Given the urban center and large life hazards associated with student housing, this needs to be addressed with the utmost priority. I personally observed a fire alarm response while visiting the Swarthmore station, in which an ambulance call was received a few minutes before the fire alarm at a local high school. The only reason the engine responded with two personnel was the coincidence that a part-time, off duty employee stopped into the station to drop of an item.

### Response Numbers by Year and Average Personnel Per Response by Year

Unit				Average Personnel		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Engine 14-1	313	351	351	3.14	3.1	3.59
Engine 14-2	11	20	20	2.0	2.7	3.0
Engine 51	100	196	187	2.88	2.9	2.3
Squad 51-2	120	96	89	2.7	3.1	2.67
Engine 65-1	192	187	248	3.58	4.42	4.95
Squad 65-2	139	110	158	3.75	4.1	4.34
Tower 14	69	49	49	2.98	2.63	3.34
Ladder 65	179	188	177	4.12	4.7	5.19
Rescue 51	100	83	81	2.99	2.6	2.2

In speaking with both Chief Booth and Chief Hopkins, they acknowledge that they have difficulty with recruiting and retaining volunteer personnel. While both stations have active rosters of volunteer personnel, their participation is infrequent and un-predictable. This leads to an enormous amount of stress on a Fire Chief. Unfortunately, they are not alone. This problem

exists all over Pennsylvania. For far too long, little to no action has been taken to provide sufficient assistance. Even the SR 60 and SR 6 reports still have dozens of recommendations that have received no action to implement at a state and, in some cases, a local level.

Given that community don't seem to be getting smaller or less populated, a change in ideology must occur. Fire Chief's cannot continue to try legacy deliver models and expect different results.

The recommendation is for the consolidated department to transition from a primarily home response model to a staffed unit model. Home response occurs when the 911 center receives a call for assistance, identifies the appropriate fire company to dispatch and then "pages" the company members via audio pager or alphanumeric message that an emergency is occurring. Volunteers then drop what they are doing, whether is family time, work or sleeping, drive their personnel vehicle to the fire station, don their personal protective equipment, board the apparatus and drive to the scene. Depending on the traffic, weather conditions and other external obstacles, this increasing response times as valuable minutes are wasted just driving the fire house.

A staffed unit model permits the volunteer to sign up for a pre-determined shift. The volunteer can now schedule when the emergency occurs. They can work around family and work obligations, no longer be concerned with traffic and weather obstructions and greatly reduce turnout times for incidents and they are already on-station when notified of the emergency. This can have a negative effect on some volunteers as this is guaranteed time away from home, but in my opinion has many more positives than negatives on how the community receives service.

The consolidation department should begin the process to implement a duty crew program that covers from 1800hrs to 0600hrs on weeknights, and 24/7 on the weekends. The duty shifts can be split into 4-, 6-, 10- or 12-hours shifts – a decision that can be made after conversations between the Fire Chief and his/her personnel.

The duty shift should have daily tasks assigned to them, such as apparatus and equipment maintenance checks based off a weekly schedule, a training session and general staffing. This would greatly assist the department with their routine maintenance that is currently lacking according to the Phase 1 report.

An incentive program should also be implemented to retain the current volunteers and potentially recruit new members. The incentive program should be based off a points system, as that system is currently recognized as an appropriate documenting system for any potential Act 172 tax rebate programs. This would eliminate any redundant documentation should local municipalities, the County of Delaware and the area school districts implement a volunteer tax credit.

I have included a sample incentive policy used by my department (see appendix). This system was developed after reviewing several programs being used around the Commonwealth. By adopting this program, our department is now able to staff two engine companies and one ladder/rescue company around the clock. It provided us the buy-in to switch from home response to staffed units, which allowed us to reduce our turn out time by 5-6 minutes. It is my

recommendation that they cooperating municipalities fund this program, as it will greatly reduce the immediate need for career fire staffing.

Included in this incentive should be funding to provide dinner for the weeknight duty crews. It is a reasonable ask to provide a volunteer with dinner as you will be asking them to skip dinner with their family. It is a small and inexpensive token of appreciation for improving service to the community.

It is recommended that each cooperating municipality implement an Act 172, Incentives for municipal volunteers of fire companies and non-profit emergency medical services agencies, at 100% of the real estate tax and 100% of the earn income tax (if applicable). The financial burden to the municipality will be minimal, when considered the cost of a career replacement roster. It is also recommended that both the fire companies and the municipalities approach the area school district to implement an Act 172 program. When combining Act 172 credits with a funded incentive program, it becomes very appealing to the current and prospective volunteer do give up their free time and potential additional income to serve the community.

Any funds provided to the volunteer should have a defined policy that expressly states that this is a volunteer incentive program, and the recipients are not employees of the municipality or the fire department. All applicable tax laws should be followed and a 1099 shall be issued to each member that receives over \$599 in funds. Incentive program recipients should not receive more than 20% of the gross total salary paid to the highest paid firefighter in the department or a comparable department.

The Swarthmore station does not appear that it will be able to provide adequate fire protection without the support of career fire staffing. The immediate change that must occur is the elimination of the cross-staffing model. If a department needs personnel available to staff its fire apparatus, they cannot be committed to EMS calls and vice versa. With increasing EMS call volume becoming the norm, the times fire staffing is unavailable under a cross-staffing model will also increase.

I recommend that Swarthmore be staffed with three career firefighters from 0600-1800 hours, 7 days a week and 1 career firefighter from 1800-0600, 7 days a week. The remaining two firefighter positions on the nightshift should be filled with duty crew volunteers. After 6 months, a staffing analysis should be completed by the Fire Chief, and if unstaffed shifts or inadequate responses are occurring, the addition of career staff should be implemented in one firefighter intervals until a minimum crew of 3 exists.

I do not recommend that any career staff system be primarily staffed with parttime personnel. While it may be appealing due to perceived lower employee costs, you will always be someone's second or third choice to work. I have also observed in numerous departments, including my own, that it becomes difficult to have consistent parttime coverage over the weekends and during the warmer months. Parttime employees can and should be blended into a mostly full-time model.



Because Fire/EMS is a 24/7 operation, having one firefighter on duty does not mean you only need to hire one person. A full-time employee is a person who works a full-time schedule, typically 30-40 hours per week. A full-time equivalent (FTE) is a unit of measurement representing the total amount of full-time hours worked by all employees in a company, combining both full-time and part-time. Two part-time employees each working 20 hours per week would be the equivalent of one full-time employee.

The San Francisco Fire Department conducted a comprehensive analysis to determine that appropriate number of FTEs to meet their daily minimum staffing quota. Their white paper, 2.2 Methodologies for Determining Staffing Requirements, provides a great resource for this calculation. The following is an example how to properly utilize their formula to determine fire suppression and emergency medical services staffing numbers:

To staff 1 position continuously for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year would require 3.51 FTEs.

$96 \text{ (hours per pay period)} \times 26 \text{ (pay periods)} = 2,496 \text{ work hours per year.}$

$365 \text{ (days per year)} \times 24 \text{ (hours per day)} = 8,760 \text{ total hours per year.}$

$8,760 \text{ (total hours)} / 2,496 \text{ (work hours)} = 3.51$

A similar method:

$2,496 \text{ (work hours per year)} / 24 \text{ (hours per day)} = 104 \text{ workdays.}$

$365 \text{ (days per year)} / 104 \text{ (workdays)} = 3.51$

A relief factor of 25% is then factored in to cover vacation, work time injury, personal days, off-site training, etc.

If minimum staffing for one 24 hours shift is 3 fire suppression personnel per shift, the Department would have to employ the following:

$3.51\text{FTE} \times 3 = 10.53\text{FTE}$

$10.53\text{FTE} \times 1.25\% \text{ relief factor} = 13.1625 \text{ FTE}$

For the Swarthmore Fire staffing model, the following you be required for the 1 firefighter on duty 24/7/365 and 2 firefighters working 0600-1800, 7 days a week.

1 – 24/7 continuous coverage working 84 hours per pay period (84 hours per pay period)

2 – 12/7 continuous coverage working 84 hours per pay period. (84 hours per pay period each)

$84 \text{ (hours per pay period)} \times 26 \text{ (pay periods)} = 2,184 \text{ work hours per year.}$

$365 \text{ (day per year)} \times 24 \text{ (hours per day)} = 8,760 \text{ total hours per year.}$

$8,760 \text{ (total hours)} / 2,184 \text{ (work hours per year)} = 4.01 \text{ FTE}$

The 12/7 schedule has the same work hours per pay period as the 24 on 72 off schedule. Therefore, the total FTE for the proposed suppression schedule is 12 FTE. To ensure the minimum daily staffing quota is met, a relief factor of 1.25% is multiplied by 12 FTE to produce a total of 15FTEs to ensure adequate and continuous coverage for fire suppression units.

This formula can be used to determine the number of any staffing requirements, regardless of compensation. It would be a good resource to determine the total number of volunteers to administer a duty crew program by simply changing the hours worked variables.

I recommend that all career personnel of the department remain employees of the non-profit corporation opposed to becoming municipal employees. This allows for a more cost-effective approach to increasing staffing over time. This would avoid the immediate inclusion to a municipal pension system that municipalities may not be prepared to fund in addition to the significant funding the system needs to function.

Non-profit personnel are not exempt from overtime requirements on hours worked between 40 and 56 hours a week. In simple terms, any hours worked over 40 hours requires the employee to be paid overtime. There will be no way to avoid built-in overtime for a schedule. The industry accepted shift for full-time employees is usually the 24 on 72 off schedule. This is often where part-time employees pick up hours on their 3 days off.

The 24/72 schedule for the department will have an average of 4 hours of built-in overtime per pay period, outside of any additional shifts or details. In this schedule, some pays of the month will have more than 4 hours of built-in overtime while others will have less or no overtime at all. From a budgeting standpoint, an average of 4 hours overtime per pay should be utilized.

To start implementing more consistent suppression staffing at Swarthmore, I would recommend staffing shifts with 2 of the 3 employees (4 fulltime total) being full-time and filling in the remaining position with a part-time employee. Recommendations on pay and benefits will be provided under the financial planning section of this report.

The Emergency Medical Services deployment has already been developed during this study due to the short-notice shutdown of the Chester-Crozer Medical Center. I would suggest that the EMS model be consistent with the staffing of the fire suppression division and the staffing be primarily full-time employees with part-time employees used to fill gaps in schedules, special events and other non-regular assignments.

## 8.0 Standard of Cover

A Standard of Cover is a comprehensive document that outlines how a Fire Department will assess community risks and deploy its resources, including staffing and apparatus, to provide a safe and effective response for fire suppression, emergency medical services and special operations.

The National Fire Protection Association provides a guide 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) and 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). While this department, even with career employees, will be considered a volunteer fire department per these standards, NFPA 1710 provides useful guidance on staffing per apparatus as there is no difference on the number of resources needed due to their compensation to properly protect the community from fires and emergencies.

While NFPA 1720 offers numerous recommendations on deployment, it does not recommend staffing per rig. This leaves many fire departments confused on what the acceptable number of firefighters per rig should be. It is acceptable for volunteer fire department to use NFPA 1710 for minimum staffing guidance since fires do not discriminate based on compensation status.

The NFPA 1710 recommends, at a minimum 4 qualified personnel per fire/rescue apparatus. Those figures increase as the urban people per square mile numbers increase. This should be a goal established within the new department as they plan their future and growth, even though it may not be possible in the beginning.

To determine the number of firefighters, apparatus and response times (Effective Force calculations), NFPA 1720, Table 4.3.2 should be referenced:

**Table 4.3.2 Staffing and Response Time**

Demand Zone <sup>a</sup>	Demographics	Minimum Staff to Respond <sup>b</sup>	Response Time (minutes) <sup>c</sup>	Meets Objective (%)
Urban area	>1000 people/mi <sup>2</sup> (2.6 km <sup>2</sup> )	15	9	90
Suburban area	500–1000 people/mi <sup>2</sup> (2.6 km <sup>2</sup> )	10	10	80
Rural area	<500 people/mi <sup>2</sup> (2.6 km <sup>2</sup> )	6	14	80
Remote area	Travel distance ≥ 8 mi (12.87 km)	4	Directly dependent on travel distance	90
Special risks	Determined by AHJ	Determined by AHJ based on risk	Determined by AHJ	90

<sup>a</sup>A jurisdiction can have more than one demand zone.

<sup>b</sup>Minimum staffing includes members responding from the AHJ's department and automatic aid

<sup>c</sup>Response time begins upon completion of the dispatch notification and ends at the time interval shown in the table.

Nether Providence Township covers 4.64 square miles and has a population of 14,525 (U.S. Census 2020) for a population density of 3,310 people per square mile. Swarthmore Borough covers 1.40 square miles and has a population of 6,543 (U.S. Census 2020) for a population

density of 4,674 people per square mile. Rose Valley Borough covers .73 square miles and has a population of 1,017 (U.S. Census 2020) for a population of 1,390 people per square mile.

All three municipalities covered by the Department will fall in the Urban category of the table. During the data phase of the study, no single fire department had a documented Standard of Cover.

I recommend the Department use the following Standard of Cover in the beginning:

Requests for Emergency assistance should be dispatched by the Public Safety Answering Point within 60 seconds of notification.

The Fire Department should respond within 3 minutes of the initial dispatch for assistance with a minimum qualified crew of 3 personnel in a fire engine, ladder/tower apparatus or rescue apparatus. The first arriving fire suppression or rescue apparatus should arrive within 7 minutes of turnout, 80 % of the time. A total of 15 qualified firefighters should assemble on location within 15 minutes of the initial dispatch 80% of the time.

The Fire Department shall respond to 100% of all dispatched incidents and any failed responses should be documented for reason and noted in the monthly activity report.

The Fire Department, should in two years, update their Standard of Cover to respond within 90 seconds of initial dispatch with a minimum qualified crew of 4 personnel in a fire engine, ladder/tower apparatus or rescue apparatus. The fire arriving fire suppression or rescue apparatus should arrive within 7 minutes of turn, 90% of the time. A total of 15 qualified firefighters should assemble within 9 minutes of the initial dispatch, 90% of the time.

The Fire Department will continue to respond to 100% of all dispatched emergencies.

The current location of the three firehouses will more than meet this Standard of Cover. I have provided drive time calculations based off a 7-minute travel time to show how the current stations will provide coverage.

Nether Providence Township could be covered by one central station, located in the vicinity of Strath Haven High/Middle School Complex. This location would allow a majority of the township to be covered under the Standard of Cover, except for a small portion of the northeast section of the Township. This is still acceptable given the 90% threshold of the Standard of Cover.

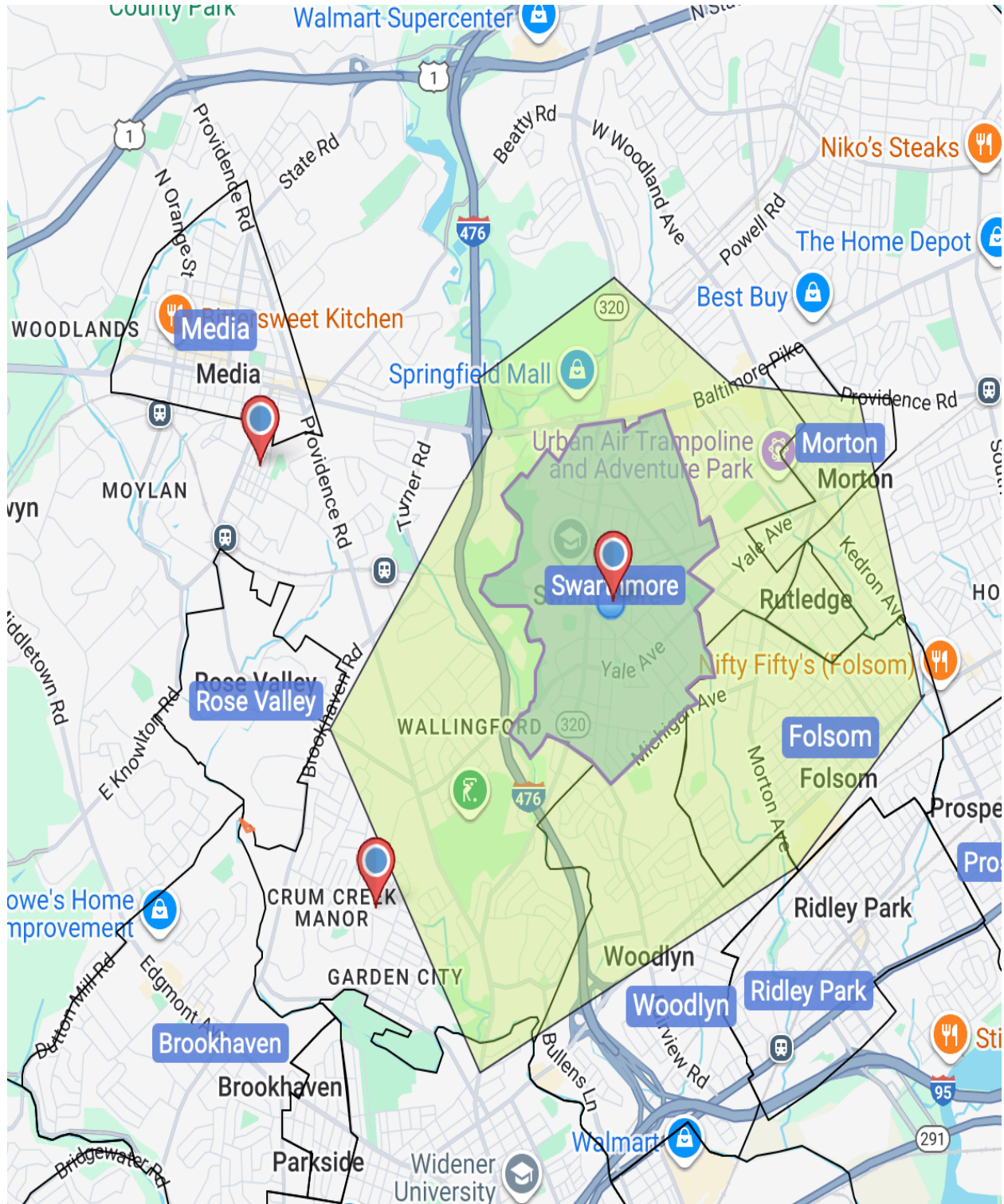
When considering consolidating into one central fire station, caution should be given to the effects on the staffing at the Garden City Fire Company. During the study, it was noted that much of the staffing at Garden City live within proximity to the firehouse. Moving the station could have a negative effect on turnout and response times, which would outweigh any positive benefits of moving to one station.

If the Fire Department decides to centralize into one location, the Department Chief should evaluate the Standard of Cover in the northeast portion of the township with a data set with at least six months of incidents. If it is determined there is enough call volume in that corner to reduce the compliance percentage, the use of automatic aid on higher priority incidents from Media Fire Company in Media Borough. This would maintain adequate coverage but may come at an additional proportionate cost being paid to the assisting fire company.

The next six pages are drive time polygon calculations that apply the Standard of Cover of a 9-minute response time (7-minute travel time). If a station takes longer than 2-minutes to respond, the coverage area on the polygon would be reduced. For a turnout time under 2-minutes, the coverage area would increase.

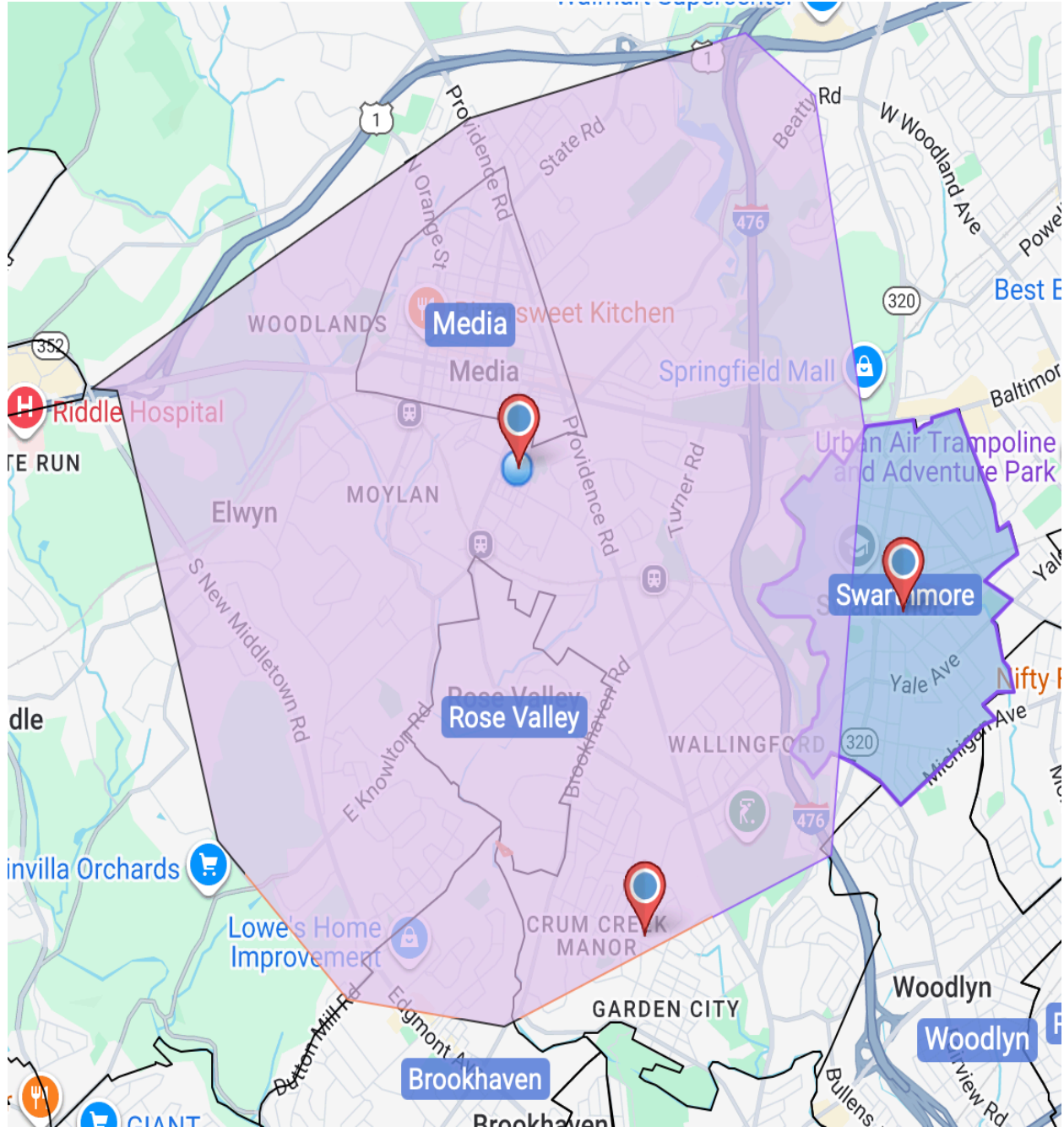
As you will see, the Nether Providence central station location would cover a considerable portion of Swarthmore Borough. I do not recommend eliminating a fire station from the urban center. Dense, urban population comes with an increased hazard due to limited width roadways, pedestrian traffic, etc., that can delay responses. Having a fire station contained within urban municipal boundaries provides a greater risk reduction benefit, in my opinion, than any cost savings by eliminating a station.

Swarthmore Fire and Protection: 9-minute Standard of Cover response time polygon

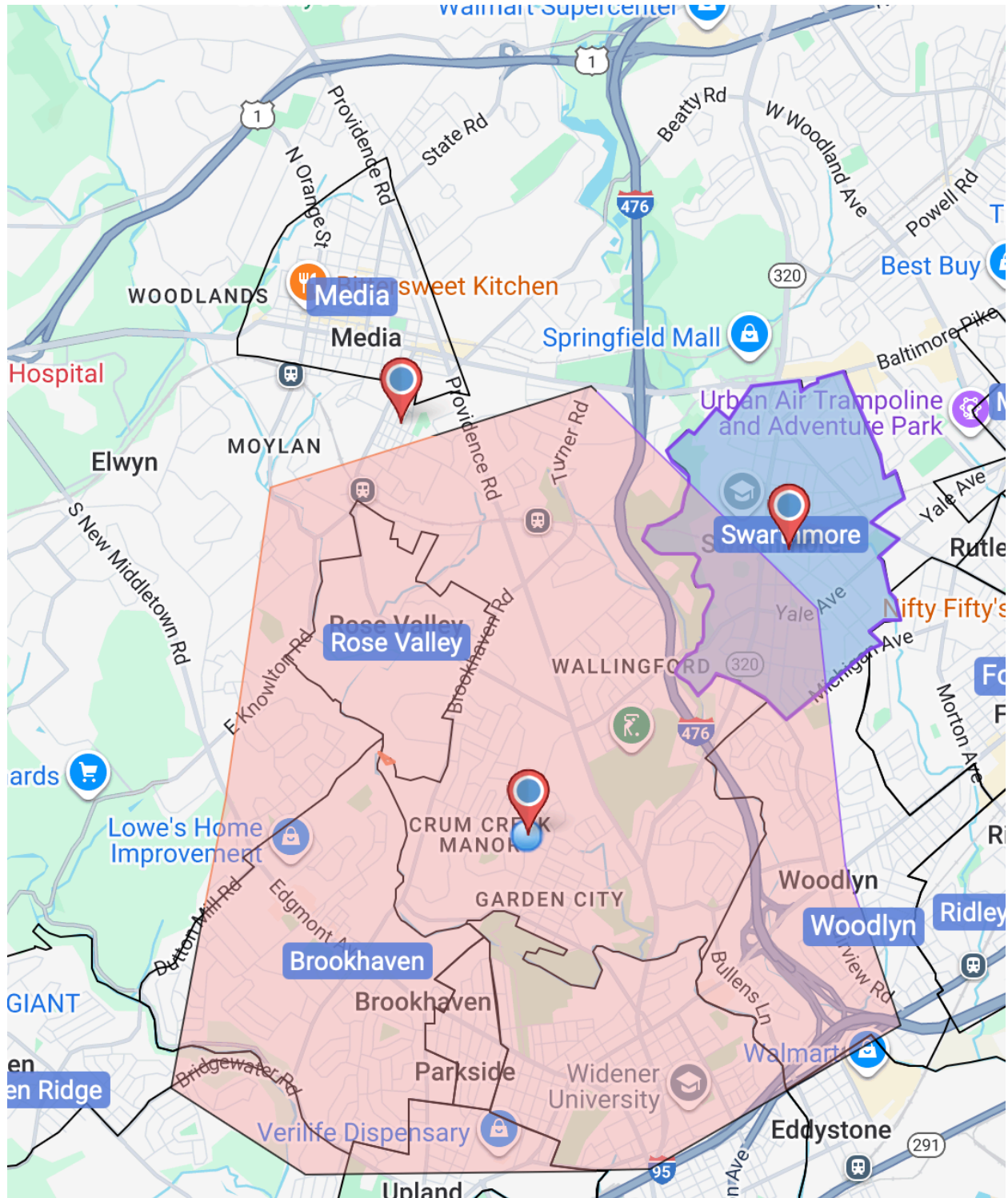




South Media Fire Company: 9-minute Standard of Cover polygon

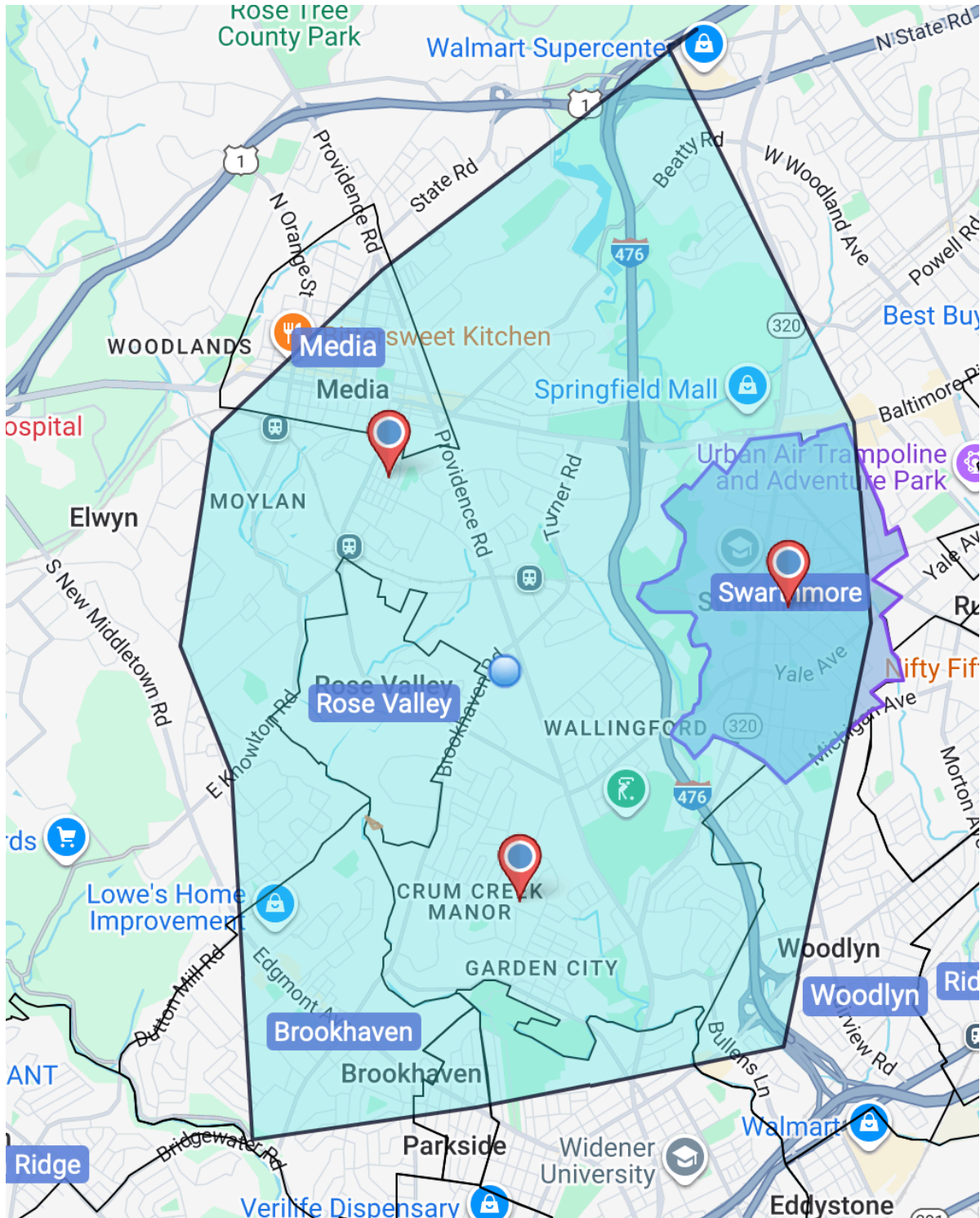


### Garden City Fire: 9-minute Standard of Cover polygon

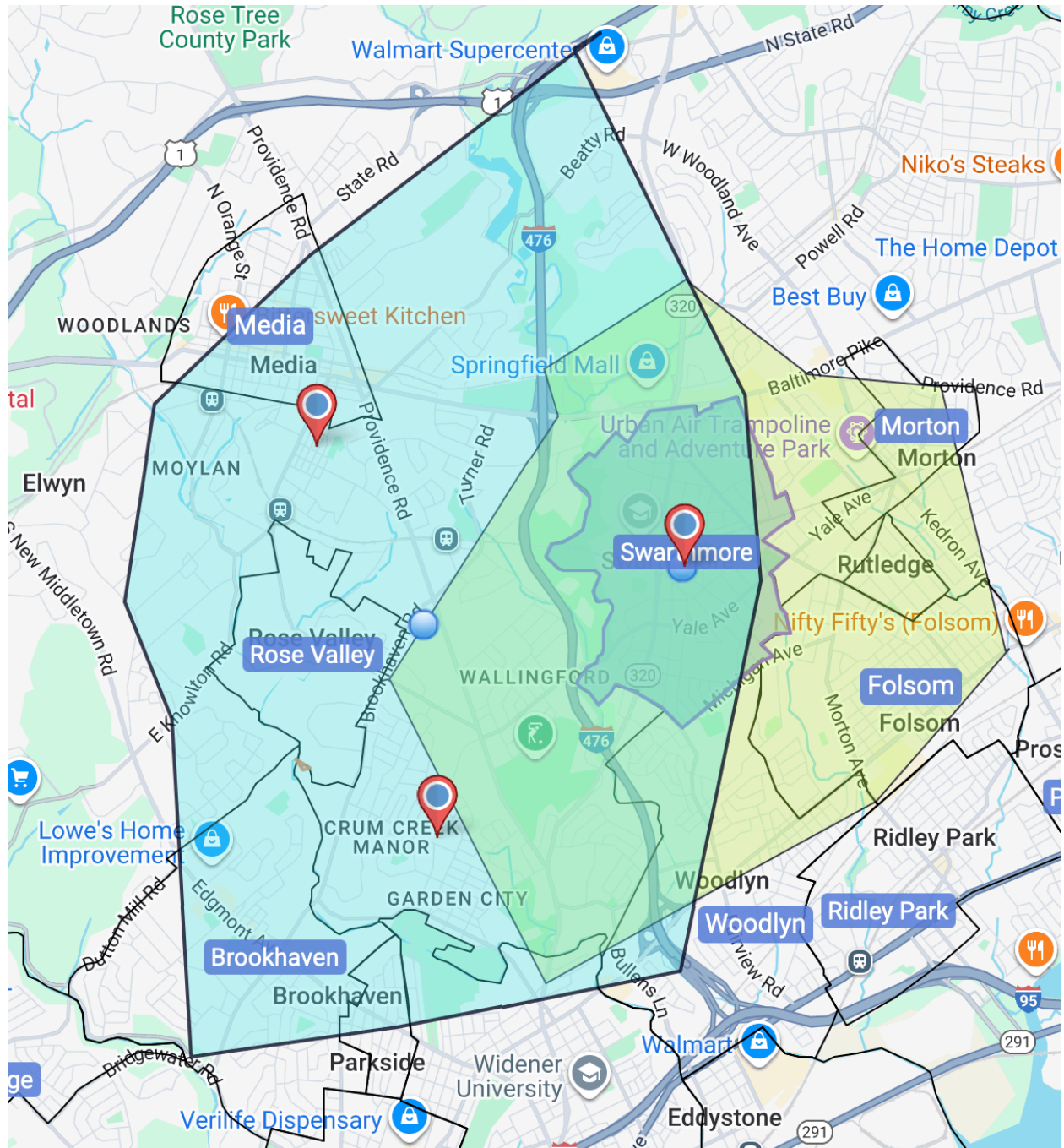




Nether Providence Township Central Station: 9-minute Standard of Cover polygon

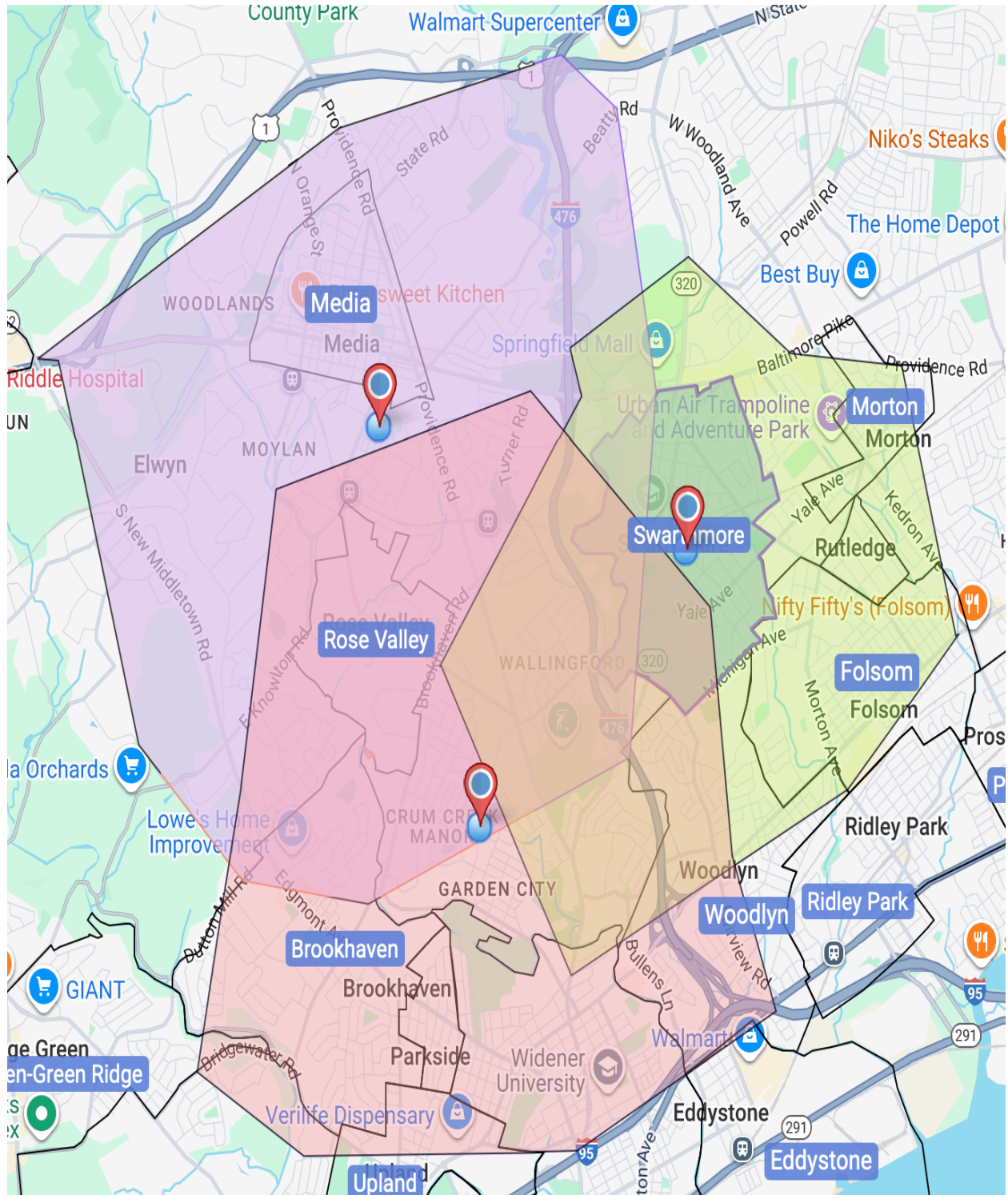


Nether Providence Central/Swarthmore Station: 9-minute Standard of Cover polygon





Current fire station location coverage: 9-minute Standard of Cover polygon



The Fire Department should establish an internal response order procedure that defines the type and quantity of apparatus that are due on a structure fire dispatch. At no time should a support apparatus (pickup truck, utility, SUV, etc.,) be the primary response, or first out piece, unless dispatched for a specific purpose. Support vehicles are just that, a vehicle designed to support the non-essential tasks for a company, additional manpower transport for pro-longed incidents, and in some cases, 4-wheel drive support (snowplow) during inclement weather for incident responses.

First alarm structure fire assignments should, at a minimum, consist of 4 engine companies, 2 ladder/tower companies, and a rescue company (or 3<sup>rd</sup> aerial company). This allows companies to operate with 2 engines and 1 ladder company per operational area. The rescue company and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> ladder company functions as an initial Rapid Intervention Team that can be utilized once a dedicated Rapid Intervention Team is onscene. The higher the life/fire hazard for a response area, the number of apparatuses should be increased to cover the geographical operating areas. This is a process that should be determined by the Fire Chief and his/her operational line officers.

Apparatus assigned to a structure fire dispatch should follow a set of pre-arrival assignments. This allows companies responding to know their assignment once arriving based on their order of arrival. It is my understanding that the county district the three stations belong to have these assignments established, but they are not being consistently followed. This sets up the response for failure from the very beginning. The pre-arrival assignments allow everyone else responding and operating on the incident to know who is doing what, and where – while allowing the Incident Commander to focus on the actual fire instead of micromanaging the basic functions of apparatus. I would recommend that these pre-arrival assignments be reviewed and adjusted to cover the first 4 engines, 2 aerials and rescue/ladder company being dispatched.

The Incident Command System shall be established on incidents such as structure fires. All personnel on the fireground shall function within the areas assigned to them within the ICS structure. A fireground radio channel, preferably one monitored by the 911 dispatcher, shall be used and at no time should companies operate on a separate channel unless specifically assigned by the Incident Commander.

The Incident Command System is usually established when incidents will be longer than 20 minutes, require the response of additional resources outside the primary Fire Department, or are a multi-agency response from dispatch. Command should be established by the first arriving Chief Officer who arrives in a command vehicle. Apparatus officers may sometimes be required to establish command when there are no Chief Officers onscene. If that occurs, they should remain with their crew and transfer Command as soon as a qualified Chief Officer arrives on the fireground, regardless of that Chief's affiliation to the primary department. When possible, the Incident Commander should be assigned an aid to assist with the tracking of personnel (accountability) and logistical support with resources not on the fireground.

It is imperative that Incident Commanders be training and qualified to function as the Incident Commander. The recommended training standards provided in this report establish, at minimum, the training necessary for Chief Officers to function as an Incident Commander.

## 9.0 Deployment

Overtime, the Fire Department's mission to the community has changed from primarily protecting property from the threat of fire to an all-hazards response organization. Essentially, if people can't figure out how to handle the problem – they call the fire department.

Fire Departments are now tasked with handling utility emergencies, motor vehicle crashes, hazardous materials incidents, environmental emergencies, technical rescue incidents and any incidents a municipality may not be equipped to handle. Phase 1 of this report addressed the apparatus and equipment necessary to provide an all-hazards approach to protection the community.

The Fire Department, once finished with the consolidation process, should request a new evaluation from the Insurance Services Office to determine the current rating of the Department as is compares to the Fire Suppression Rating System. This will allow the Department to begin a new community risk reduction program to identify improvements necessary to continue providing service to the community. At the very least, the Department should the following services:

- Fire Suppression
- Advanced Vehicle Extrication (vehicle and heavy truck)
- Hazardous Material Operations level
- Quick Response Services (EMS)
- Advanced Life Support transport
- Basic Life Support transport

The Fire Department should develop a process to implement a Duty Officer program. The program allows for scheduling of a chief officer level position, either appointed as a Chief Officer or members who meet the qualifications of a Chief Officer and are authorized by the Fire Chief to function as such), to always be available to act as an Incident Commander as well as handle the duty shift's supervision for deployment. The Duty Officer would handle any notifications from the 911 center for Chief Officer responses, address the maintenance and equipment issues for the shift, and address any staffing issues that may arise during the shift. This gives a variety of personnel the means to gain experience as Incident Commanders as well as increase their experience managing department personnel.

The duty officer shift should begin to cover weekday nights from 1800-0600 and from Friday night 1800hrs to Monday morning at 0600hrs. These shifts can be 12- or 24-hour shifts and should volunteer officers should receive credit under the volunteer incentive program. The duty officer would to be required to be in-station for the entire shift but must be in the immediate first due area with a command car, ready to respond at a moment's notice.

I would also recommend that Chief Officers direct response to automatic fire alarms and nuisance incidents be limited to facilities with a high life/high fire hazard. Company officers (apparatus officers) should have enough knowledge and experience to handle these emergencies without the guidance of a Chief Officer. This would also help with retention; firefighters don't join fire companies to listen to the Chief Officer handle the bulk of the incidents by themselves.

Companies become complacent when the norm is for a Chief Officer to respond to every call, whether to overcome inadequate staffing or because they think this is what is necessary. This is especially true with home response organizations. Members may delay leaving their everyday lives when they feel the “Chief” will get it. Unfortunately, we don’t know what every emergency will end up being until we conduct a thorough investigation. Should an automatic fire alarm activation turn out to be an active fire, the response is already behind the eightball and will most likely result in an increased loss of property and potentially life.

The same can be said with canceled responses. Emergencies should not be canceled based off update reports from the premises. Many times, callers do not have a clear reason for activation and in some instances, they are afraid they will be in trouble or fined, so they provide a reason other than the actual reason for activation. It is the Fire Department’s responsibility to investigate the incident with Fire Department personnel. The only person who should be authorized to cancel a response is a fire officer on location. It is not worth the liability to do the job in a lackadaisical manner.

Community relations are also a large part of the Fire Department’s responsibilities. To be clear, this is not fundraising. Our community needs to know its Fire Department, and they need to have a relationship that isn’t centered around tragedy. There is nothing to suggest that this is not occurring. The Fire Department should investigate adding the following services to the community:

- Fire Prevention education is the backbone of the Fire Department/Community relationship. Fire Prevention in the school should be a priority for the Fire Department, and the Fire Chief should work to ensure fire prevention activities align with the annual priorities of the National Fire Protection Association.
- Car Seat Installations are a more recent venture for the fire service. This has been a very popular interaction with the community in many departments and was born out of the need to ensure infants are properly secured in a motor vehicle. Given the increasing population in the area, coupled with the heavily traveled roadways, this would be an easy win for the community.
- First Aid/CPR/AED certification training is often sought after from individuals and businesses. With changes in insurance carrier requirements, youth movement organization certifications and general interest, this training has become a forefront for non-emergency emergency medical services.
- Fire Extinguisher training is an appropriate outreach for the area’s businesses, youth movement organizations and social nonprofits. This builds a relationship with area businesses that can foster into better pre-incident planning activities, quicker resolutions to nuisance alarms and partnerships that can lead to joint fundraising initiatives.
- Pre-Incident Planning is vital to successful fire ground operations. The first time you enter a business should not be when it’s on fire. Aside from being an annual requirement for ISO evaluations, every coach needs a playbook. These plans also allow training sessions to be planned for evaluation, accomplishing two objectives – plan review and skills evaluation.

## 10. Emergency Medical Services

Emergency Medical Services is a mandated service to be in place per the municipal codes for the Commonwealth. As the population ages, it has also become busier than fire/rescue emergencies. It is a critical infrastructure that will most likely never pay for itself.

EMS has evolved from the days where it was a simple scoop and run system, to advanced pre-hospital medicine. During this study, the primary hospital/trauma center in the area, Chester-Crozer Medical Center, abruptly. CCMC also provided basic life support and advanced life support in many municipalities in the area, mostly at no costs. This aided in the collapse of the system but was not the main cause of it. Smaller, fire department organizations could not absorb the costs as CCMC did through its hospital system.

Because the community needed protection, and needed it quickly, a new EMS was developed with Swarthmore Fire and Protective Association taking over BLS and ALS services to 4 municipalities. I was not privy to those direct conversations, but will offer the following recommendations:

The projections in EMS billing revenue seem to be too generous for a start-up. Advanced Life Support billing is subjected to more scrutiny than BLS billing by insurance carriers, which often results in less than desirable ALS billing returns. The first five years will determine the survivability of an organization. It appears that averaging \$475 per EMS call assumes that every bill is paid and paid on time. This won't be the case. Many agencies have experienced issues with Independence Blue Cross issuing the reimbursement check directly to the patient, who often fails to forward the funds to the transporting agency. Careful quarterly analysis and projections in conjunction with the billing company should be completed. An initial goal of a 60% - 70% return on billing should be used as a metric of successful billing, with the goal to get returns greater than 70% in the first five years.

As the deployment plan is already implemented, I would recommend that any service delivery model be primarily delivered by Mobile Intensive Care Units (MICU) opposed to BLS ambulance and chase car. This allows for a more efficient use of operational funds as it requires only one EMT and one Paramedic opposed to two EMT's and one Paramedic. This also usually results in a lower bill to the end user (patient) rather than a two-tiered delivery system.

There will not be enough data on the plan to evaluate the unit hour utilization of the EMS system. Unit hour utilization is an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) metric that measures the percentage of time an ambulance unit is engaged in a response or transport out of the total time it is staffed and available. This allows the administration of the Fire Department to determine the capacity needed to adequately serve the area, while reviewing the system for potential burnout of personnel. A unit working a 24/72 schedule should have between a 30% to 40% UHU. As the UHU increases pass 40%, the chances of the unit be available for emergencies decreases and the risk of mistakes and fatigue also increase. The latter would result in a potential increase in malpractice liability, which has a direct consequence to insurance coverage and premium costs.

To calculate Unit Hour Utilization (UHU), you divide the number of transports (or incidents) by the total number of unit-hours available during a specific period, giving a percentage of how much time units were committed to calls versus how much time they were on shift and available. For example, 6 transports in a 12-hour shift would result in a UHU of 0.5 (or 50%). However, the precise method can vary, with some agencies focusing on the time spent on an incident or comparing units available to the demand for services. (EMS1 2012)

As the area continues to deal with the closure of CCMC, many municipalities have had to establish their own agencies, contract with agencies from outside the area or in a few cases – they're still trying to figure it out. It is widely accepted that an agency will never be able to staff their operation to handle 100% of their emergencies. When an agency has no on-duty capacity left, mutual aid is required to be dispatched from another jurisdiction. It is also accepted that an agency should not miss more than 10% of its incidents. If an agency has a missed call volume higher than 10%, additional units should be added. The same can be said if a considerable portion of your call volume is in another jurisdiction that does not currently purchase services from you. In reviewing one of the first activity reports from Swarthmore EMS, 40% of the call volume was in Springfield Township. In my opinion, this is not mutual aid. You are providing primary service to this municipality and not receiving the appropriate compensation for providing it. A six-month review must be completed to analyze if the assistance has decreased. If the call volume has not been decreased, Springfield Township should be contacted and issued an invoice for service and/or initiate the process to provide them a contract for primary ALS service.



## 11.0 Reporting

With the consolidation of three separate non-profit organizations, a change in reporting systems and requirements is necessary. These documents are the very foundation for analysis in delivering service. If records are incomplete or missing, the Fire Department will be making ill-informed decisions. These records should also be used for budget justification on operational and capital costs.

The National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) is a voluntary reporting standard that fire departments use to uniformly report on the full range of their activities, from fire to emergency medical services to severe weather and natural disasters. NFIRS was first implemented in 1975, with the most current version, 5.0., being implemented in June of 2006. This system was primarily developed to capture data from structure fires but does not portray an accurate depiction of the everyday emergencies the fire service faces.

Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026, NFIRS is being retired and NERIS is being rolled out. NERIS (National Emergency Response Information System) is a new, modern, cloud-based platform designed to replace the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) as the primary source for fire and all-hazards incident data collection and analysis in the U.S.

NERIS has taken feedback from agencies all over the country to determine the best possible way to help Fire Departments report and provide statistics for emergency response. This new process should greatly aid both the Fire Department and the municipalities in cost justification for operational and capital increases.

A records management software will be required for the new department. Currently, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner provides a free, basic NFIRS RMS to fire departments under the PENNFIRS program. I suggest the fire department purchase a single cloud-based RMS with the full package, which includes inventory management, event management, response status, hydrant management, training documentation, scheduling, personnel management and analytics. The new RMS, in the interim, should be established using Garden City as the parent fire company and both South Media and Swarthmore as the sub-parent companies. This will permit a single incident report to be compiled, capturing the apparatus and personnel from all three companies. Since each individual company is issued a NERIS identification number, most RMS vendors are already set up to accommodate this necessity. Once the new corporation is formed, NERIS will issue a new identification number, maintaining the single incident report standard. This should all be accomplished under one single RMS program with a single contract. The cost savings realized will be the reduction of three, separate RMS contracts.

It is recommended that all fire department activity be documented in the RMS. The officer in charge should be responsible for the completion of the incident report. Occasionally, additional supplemental narratives will need to be completed by apparatus officers, usually for incidents involving on-duty personnel or fatal injuries to the public.

A quality assurance process will need to be implemented to ensure 100% accuracy of the report. This should be a select group, who have received additional training in not only the RMS but have sufficient experience commanding incidents. Reports should be completed weekly, and the Q/A process completed within a few days of the prior week's entries.

The Fire Department should be providing a monthly activity report to the municipalities that totals each month year to date. I have provided an example of a report used at our regional Commission meetings. This is for both Fire and EMS services and should cover calls by municipality, call by incident type, response time analysis, training session and man-hour totals and summaries of the more severe incidents. It is also important that the Fire Department notify the municipalities of any failed incidents, whether failing to respond within the time frame established by the Standard of Cover or failing to respond at all.

## 12.0 Financial Planning

The Fire Department will be a separate, non-profit corporation as the current companies are. As such, it will be governed by a Board of Directors who will have the final authority on the Department budget. They will not have the same budgeting requirements that municipalities face and should be following the American Accounting Association recommendation and nonprofit statutes for Pennsylvania.

That does not excuse the Department from financial reporting and communication when it comes to determining the appropriate amount of municipal support. Therefore, it will be necessary for the Fire Department to compile an internal budget according to their chart of accounts. This will be a comprehensive document that accounts for all department activity for the fiscal year. From that document, the Department will compile and provide a budget summary to the council of governments for review. This document is to aid elected officials and managers in determining the appropriate amount of municipal support to provide as well as documents to provide to the public for potential tax increase justification. As Fire Departments are not subject to the PA Right to Know law, any document that they turn over to the municipality will be. This process will give the protection necessary to the non-profit department, so it does not disclose trade secrets or sensitive donor information.

As previously mentioned, none of the three companies currently get a full audit by a third party Certified Public Account. In FY2026, all three companies should retain a CPA and have a full audit completed. This guarantees that they proper internal controls are in place, that financial activity is following the generally accepted AAA principles and gives faith to elected officials that the fire companies are being good stewards of municipal tax funding. As two of the three companies have experienced internal theft incidents, it should be the utmost priority to implement this recommendation without delay.

The nonprofit Board of Directors should meet with the auditor for a presentation of the audit, to answer any questions on findings and to establish transparency throughout the organization. The council of governments should not receive the full audit, as they have no legal authority over the financial administration of the Department. They should receive the auditor's letter of findings/results to the Board of Directors. This would alert the elected officials and managers to any improper financial activity, allowing for further discussion on future funding.

The Fire Department should be providing quarterly financial reports during the fiscal year (fiscal year begins January 1<sup>st</sup> and ends December 31<sup>st</sup>). These reports should be submitted in the same document format as the budget summary provided to the council of governments. As the department ages, these reports will allow for financial projections and analysis to budget justification. I have provided a sample of this report as well.

Grant funding is essential to any nonprofit. Unfortunately, fire departments do not have a large cache of available grants like the usual nonprofit. Three main grants the Fire Department should be applying for annually are the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Medical Services Grant.

The AFG is one of the most competitive peer review grant programs in today's fire service. The dollars requested rarely match the project costs. Since its inception in 2002, it has helped fire departments across the US replace outdated equipment. The Fire Department should gather a project list based off the grant's priorities for the grant cycle and apply every year. This grant has a local cost share, usually 5% - 10% given the project section and scope. It is important to note, the AFG cannot supplant local funds. If your current fiscal year budget has funds allotted to equipment that will be the project of your grant application, you cannot apply for that equipment in the same cycle. I would recommend attempting to secure grant funding on select projects before budgeting outright. This should only be done after consultation with the Fire Chief on the priority of the equipment needed. For the first few years, you may not be able to wait on some equipment, and a local capital budget will be necessary.

The Commonwealth of Pa Fire and Emergency Medical Services grant programs is not very competitive at all. Essentially, it is an application and maximum funding amounts are already set for fire companies (\$20,000 and EMS companies (\$10,000). The program allows for increased funding to ensure maximizing the reward if your department has more than 10 Pro-Board-certified firefighters on the roster.

I highly recommend the Fire Department utilize a third-party grant writer with a specific Fire/EMS knowledge. The grant writer can assist with grant management and closeout reports as well. I viewed Garden City's FY2026 request for \$20,000 for a grant writer. This amount seems high to me when compared to other grant writer fees I am familiar with. I would highly recommend the Fire Department solicit quotes from a few fire service grant writers who have a success rate of 75% or higher. I would estimate a fee package of approximately \$10,000 for the above grants would be acceptable.

The Fire Department and the municipalities should also investigate submitting PA Local Share Account grants. The Fire Department will not be eligible applicant alone and will need a sponsoring municipality. This program could greatly assist with obtaining large capital purchases such as Fire and EMS apparatus or breathing apparatus.

With that said, the Fire Department cannot plan to survive on a capital plan that is only funded by grants. Grants are selective and not consistent nor reliable. An example would be the current federal and state political climate. With the federal government currently shut down, no grant applications would be received, reviewed and then awarded. Unfortunately, the same goes for the Commonwealth budget. While they are currently receiving applications, no actions will be taken until a budget can be funded. The Fire Department cannot provide reliable service if this will be the only means of funding. The grants should be an aid to the capital budget, allowing the plan to reduce the amount needed if an award is received.

### 13.0 Regionalization

The regionalization of governments is the process of decentralizing power and responsibilities from a central authority to regional bodies, often through the establishment, enlargement, or empowerment of regional governments and the transfer of competences and resources. Regionalization shifts decision-making authority and power from the central government to regions, allowing for more localized and context-specific governance.

Through regionalization, dividing larger areas into smaller, more manageable regions can improve the efficiency of public service delivery and resource allocation. It allows for tailored economic development strategies and resource management that better address the specific needs and opportunities of each region. In many cases, regionalization can be a response to financial challenges, as it allows for resource sharing and more coordinated spending, leading to cost savings.

Nationally, regionalization, such as regional partnerships and other forms of cooperative service agreements among fire companies, has proven to be an effective means of dealing with increasing service demands, rising costs and scarce resources. (PA Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, 2005).

The Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Law (Act 177 of 1996) provides the legal authority for municipalities to form cooperative governmental entities. Historically, these were usually regional planning commissions and water/sewer authorities. In the last 10-15 years, municipalities started to form intergovernmental entities to address the critical lack of volunteer firefighters and the rising costs of providing Fire and EMS to their communities.

It is my recommendation the municipalities of Nether Providence, Swarthmore and Rose Valley form a Regional Fire and EMS Commission with the consolidated fire department, to function in a cooperative manner for the future financial planning of service delivery to the commission member's municipalities.

This quasi-governmental entity would be designated by the municipalities to have the sole authority on the service delivery of Fire and EMS to community. The only authority that would remain with the municipality would be the designation of the primary service provider. This permits the Fire Department to have all responsible parties in the room at the same time to discuss the obstacles they face delivering service, the rising costs and limited financial resources to deliver service and future planning for growth, both in the community and within the Fire Department.

It is my opinion that each municipality, or a single municipality acting on behalf of all three, seek the legal advice from their solicitor on the final intermunicipal agreement and commission governing documents.

The Commission should have one Commissioner and one alternate Commissioner per municipality as the voting members of the Commission. The Fire Department, and an alternate of their choosing should be members of the Commission as non-voting members. The municipal

members of the Commission should include at least one elected official. The municipal manager may, at the discretion of the municipality, be appointed as the alternate commissioner. Regardless of their appointment, municipal managers must be an active participant in Commission activities and meetings.

The main scope of the Commission should be to determine the fair share each municipality pays, annually, for service to the Commission municipalities and to provide the necessary funding for the operational and capital expenses of the Fire Department. The Commission, with the involvement of the Fire Department, should establish a realistic Standard of Cover for service to be provided by the Fire Department. The Commission should not function as an operational oversight committee, other than to ensure the Standard of Cover is being met. This should truly be a partnership between public bodies of government and a non-profit corporation.

There are many formulas that can be utilized to determine the share portion of the service delivery budget. The most equitable formula I have found was a weighted formula that uses assessed property value, population, fire/rescue incidents and emergency medical service incidents. The weights assigned to each category should be mutually agreed upon by the member municipalities. In the beginning of the Commission's existence, 25% per category would be appropriate. Sample documents have been provided in the Appendix.

The Commission should meet once a month with the Fire Department at a mutually agreed upon day of the week, time and place. Since this Commission will be a municipal entity, it will be required to comply with the PA Sunshine Act and the PA Right to Know Law. Meeting notifications and agendas should be developed within the structure of those statutes.

The meeting agenda should have following standing agenda items:

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of the Minutes
4. Financial Report
5. Approval of Payments
6. Reports of the Fire Chief/Fire Department
7. Old Business
8. New Business
9. Adjournment

As with your municipal agendas, additions or adjustments can be made for specific items needing to be addressed. In the first few years, meetings will be most likely considerable in length as the Commissioners receive education on the operations and administration of the Fire Department.

Some of the first tasks the Commission should take are establishing the expectation on the type and format of information to be shared, operational and capital planning, and an annual budget process.

As stated earlier, the correspondence of the Commission will most likely be subject to the PA Right to Know Law. The Fire Department, on the other hand, is not subject to the Pa Right to Know Law and some of their correspondence will contain trade secrets or other confidential information that is usually not shared outside of their Board of Director's meetings. Both parties should work together to establish a means to provide financial data from the Fire Department to the Commission. I have provided a few examples of the mutually agreed upon documents the Kennett Fire and EMS Regional Commission uses. This information should provide enough context for municipal officials to explain and justify any potential tax increases to their constituents.

Phase 1 of this report provided a capital apparatus plan. The Fire Chief should work with the supplied plan to establish current market costs for apparatus purchasing and attempt to forecast future purchases. This will be a rough estimate at best, given the volatility of the apparatus cost market.

During the financial planning process, the Commission should investigate what threshold a capital equipment purchase should meet for it to be considered a capital purchase. I would recommend using the following criteria:

- A single purchase costing at least \$10,000 with a life expectancy of at least two years.
- Any equipment that requires annual NFPA testing and re-certification.
- Any piece of personal protective equipment.

This plan should utilize the same format as the capital apparatus plan to ensure consistency with the dissemination of information and financial planning calculations.

Regional Commissions focusing on the delivery of Fire and EMS have been proven to improve service delivery where reliable and consistent responses were lacking, a more affordable means to provide service and ensuring that a municipality is covering its fair share of the financial burden. This requires a lot of work, cooperation and trust. If both the municipalities and the Fire Department approach this as a partnership in protecting the community, this report will provide the framework for a successful relationship.