

# Fire Services Study

Antis Township and Bellwood Borough  
Blair County, PA

October 2025



Pennsylvania  
Department of Community  
& Economic Development  
Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Governor's Center for  
Local Government Services

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Antis Township is an incorporated Township of the Second-Class located in Blair County, Pennsylvania. Throughout this report, it may simply be referred to as the Township. The term “Antis Township” and “Township of Antis” may be used interchangeably throughout this report.

The Township has an estimated population of 6,282 based on information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Its land mass is 60.83 square miles. The population density is approximately 106.8 persons per square mile. The Township is a mix of suburban and rural areas, with approximately seventy-one percent of the Township being forest or State Game Land. The Township surrounds the Borough of Bellwood and there are several villages within the Township. Most commercial activity is in proximity to Interstate 99 or US 220, with both highways traveling through the Township in a north-south direction. The Township is adjacent to several municipalities, including the City of Altoona.

The Township is governed by a board of five supervisors; each elected for a six-year term. The Board has appointed a Township Manager to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Township.

Bellwood Borough is an incorporated Borough located in Blair County, Pennsylvania. Throughout this report, it may simply be referred to as the Borough. The term “Bellwood Borough” and “Borough of Bellwood” may be used interchangeably throughout this report. The Borough has an estimated population of 1,829 as of the 2020 census and an area of .48 square miles. The population density was 4,361.8 inhabitants per square mile. The Borough is a rural area situated in the Tuckahoe Valley, part of the Logan Valley area and is surrounded by Antis Township. The borough has a historical amusement park, DelGrosso's Amusement Park, founded in 1907.

Antis Township and Bellwood Borough currently collaborate on various projects and events. In addition, they have extraordinary pride in their hometown football team, The Bellwood-Antis Blue Devils; especially when they play their backyard neighbor, Tyrone.

### *Key Findings*

- **Staffing Crisis:** Only 47 of 86 registered members for both departments are active, answering 20% or more calls per year. Daytime response rates are critically low and - NFPA 1720 compliance is not met.
- **Training Gaps:** Although records are kept, there is inconsistency in documentation and a need for structured, standardized training aligned with new position descriptions.
- **Facilities:** The fire stations are well maintained by the membership and remain in good condition.
- **Apparatus and Maintenance:** Apparatus ownership is fragmented, and preventive maintenance lacks standardization. A long-term replacement plan is absent.
- **Financial Concerns:** Funding relies heavily on Township and Borough allocations and volunteer fundraising. However, comprehensive funding strategies remain undeveloped.
- **Governance:** Each department operates independently as a nonprofit. The current fire officer selection system is outdated and based on popularity rather than merit.

- Service Delivery: 575 calls were managed in 2024 between the two departments, but inconsistencies in response protocols and lack of automatic aid agreements hinder efficiency.
- ISO Rating: Currently, Bellwood's Public Protection Classification (PPC) is 5/5 and is the highest documented rating for the Antis/Bellwood area. The ISO report serves as a guide to fire officials and public officials on how to improve the rating to lower insurance premiums in the area.

### *Major Recommendations*

1. Unify Services: Form a single fire department under the leadership of an appointed Fire Chief.
2. Station Consolidation: Consider closing both fire stations and constructing a new, strategically located combined station in the near future.
3. Staffing Improvements: Develop a recruitment and retention program, including a volunteer incentive system and potential part-time paid staffing.
4. Training and SOPs: Create position-specific training programs and standardized operating procedures across all fire departments.
5. Maintenance & Equipment Planning: Implement NFPA-compliant maintenance practices and a capital apparatus replacement plan.
6. Community Risk Reduction (CRR): Adopt a formal fire code (e.g. International Fire Code), develop a CRR plan, and improve community education and prevention efforts.
7. Service Agreements: Establish formal mutual/automatic aid and service delivery agreements with surrounding municipalities.
8. ISO Improvement Plan: Address identified PPC deficiencies, focusing on documentation, training, and water supply coordination.
9. Funding: Explore new revenue streams including user fees, grants, and enhanced fire tax strategies.

### *Conclusion*

The study underscores the need for strategic transformation to ensure sustainable, effective fire protection in Antis Township and Bellwood Borough. The volunteer system has served the communities well, but modernization is essential to maintain acceptable service levels amid declining volunteerism and increasing demands. Data-driven decision-making, unified governance, and strong municipal leadership are critical for future success.

# Introduction: Objectives & Study Design

This report is prepared for the use of the elected officials and officers of Antis Township and Bellwood Borough, Blair County, Pennsylvania, and others designated by the contributing communities.

The project is funded through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Community and Economic Development, and Governor’s Center for Local Government Services. This project was initiated at the request of the elected officials of Bellwood Borough. The report serves as a tool for the elected and fire officials to improve fire service delivery to the citizens of Bellwood Borough.

The principal contacts are as follows:

Antis Township	Manager Douglas Brown
Bellwood Borough	Manager Hope Ray
Excelsior Volunteer Fire Department	Chief Jack McCloskey
Pinecroft Volunteer Fire Department	Chief Caleb Keller

The purpose of this Fire Service Delivery Study is to evaluate and provide strategic recommendations for improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of fire protection and emergency response services in Antis Township and Bellwood Borough. This comprehensive review will support informed decision-making by local officials, ensuring the community receives reliable and high-quality fire and emergency services now and in the future.

## *Objectives*

- Assess the current fire protection and emergency response service model, including staffing, equipment, response times, training, funding, and facilities.
- Evaluate the level of service provided relative to industry standards and community expectations.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) in the existing service delivery framework.
- Review compliance with applicable state and federal regulations, including NFPA standards and Pennsylvania-specific fire service requirements.
- Analyze mutual aid agreements and relationships with neighboring jurisdictions.
- Provide future planning recommendations based on population trends, risk assessment, and call volume projections.
- Explore alternative delivery models (e.g. regionalization, combination departments, shared services) to improve efficiency and sustainability.

## **Emphasis On Sustainability**

The sustainability of fire protection services in Bellwood Borough is a central concern addressed throughout the study. As the community faces shrinking volunteerism, aging infrastructure, and

limited financial resources, the path forward requires a deliberate focus on long-term viability—balancing operational effectiveness, fiscal responsibility, and resilience.

### **1. Staffing Sustainability**

Volunteer shortages are the most pressing threat to long-term sustainability. With only 47 active volunteers (less than 60% of the roster) and response rates falling below NFPA 1720 benchmarks, the current system cannot be sustained without strategic intervention.

Sustainability Recommendations:

- Incentive Programs: Implement structured volunteer incentives based on participation, training, and certification level to improve retention.
- Hybrid Staffing Model: Plan for phased integration of part-time or full-time paid staff to stabilize workforce during low-response periods.
- Professionalized Leadership: Appoint a Fire Chief based on qualifications to ensure continuity, leadership, and coordinated service delivery across all stations.

### **2. Infrastructure and Facility Planning**

Two aging fire stations are costly to maintain and are not located in terms of strategic response planning.

Sustainability Recommendations:

- Facility Consolidation: Construct a new, centralized fire station designed to modern standards. This would reduce long-term capital and operating costs.
- Data-Driven Site Selection: Use call volume and response data to determine an optimal, centralized location for a new facility.
- Future-Proof Design: Include dormitory space, training facilities, and capacity for future growth in new station planning.

### **3. Apparatus and Equipment Lifecycle**

Fire apparatus is inconsistently maintained and lacks a uniform replacement schedule. Sustainability in fire protection relies on ensuring dependable, modern, and multipurpose equipment.

Sustainability Recommendations:

- Capital Replacement Plan: Develop a multi-year capital plan guided by NFPA 1911 standards to replace aging apparatus before reliability becomes compromised.
- Preventive Maintenance Program: Standardize apparatus checks, maintenance logs, and contractor services to extend lifespan and ensure readiness.
- Dual-Purpose Vehicles: Minimize redundancy by investing in multifunction apparatus (e.g., Quint, Rescue/Engine, Pumper Tanker).

#### **4. Financial Stability**

The current funding model, a small annual allocation and fundraising, cannot alone support long-term sustainability.

Sustainability Recommendations:

- **Fire Tax Strategy:** Investigate the implementation of a fire tax. Index the fire tax to inflation or property value growth and adjust in small increments as service demands increase.
- **Grants and Shared Services:** Aggressively pursue state and federal grants and explore regional consolidation or service-sharing agreements with neighboring communities.
- **Fee-for-Service Structures:** Introduce user fees for apparatus use at community events and investigate the use of third-party billing for services rendered to insured properties for fires and vehicle accidents.

#### **5. Governance and Operational Continuity**

The current governance model relies heavily on individual nonprofit corporations, which leads to inefficiencies, duplication of efforts, and inconsistent practices.

Sustainability Recommendations:

- **Unified Command Structure:** Transition to a single fire department under a single leadership structure to ensure consistent policies, SOPs, and accountability.
- **Codified Service Agreements:** Establish formal agreements between the Borough, Township, and fire departments outlining performance expectations, fiscal responsibility, and service scope.
- **Long-Term Planning:** Incorporate fire service needs into Township and Borough-wide comprehensive and capital improvement planning.

#### **6. Risk Reduction and Community Engagement**

Sustainable fire service goes beyond response—it includes prevention, education, and community risk reduction (CRR).

Sustainability Recommendations:

- **Adopt Fire Code:** Implement the International Fire Code (IFC) to strengthen building safety standards and reduce long-term fire risks. Enforcement could be managed by existing code enforcement personnel, or—if the community chooses to employ a professional fire chief—fire code administration could be incorporated into the chief's responsibilities. This approach would not only enhance public safety but could also help offset the cost of a full-time fire chief by expanding the value of the role.
- **Develop a CRR Plan:** Engage stakeholders in initiative-taking risk identification, public education, and injury prevention.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Use call data, risk profiles, and ISO feedback to guide all sustainability initiatives.

## Conclusion

Sustainability in Bellwood Borough and Antis Township fire services is not just about maintaining the status quo, it is about reimagining service delivery in a way that meets today's challenges while preparing for future demands. Through a combination of professional leadership, strategic consolidation, reliable funding, and community-focused prevention efforts, Bellwood can ensure safe, responsive, and sustainable fire protection for decades to come.

## Scope

The selected consultant or agency will perform the following tasks:

1. Data Collection & Review
  - Review historical call data, incident types, and response times over the last 3–5 years.
  - Evaluate current fire department resources: staffing (career, volunteer, or combination), apparatus, facilities, and equipment.
  - Review organizational structure, training records, operational procedures, and funding sources.
  - Conduct interviews with stakeholders including borough officials, fire department leadership, firefighters, and community members.
2. Community Risk Assessment
  - Identify high-risk occupancies, vulnerable populations, and infrastructure vulnerabilities.
  - Analyze demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic data relevant to fire risk and service needs.
3. Benchmarking
  - Compare current service delivery and performance against national and regional best practices.
  - Use peer comparisons with similarly sized boroughs in Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic region.
4. Options Analysis
  - Assess viability and impact of alternative service delivery models.
  - Identify potential benefits and trade-offs of shared services, regional fire authorities, or expanded mutual aid.

## 5. Recommendations & Final Report

- Present short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations.
- Provide an implementation roadmap including cost estimates, funding strategies, and performance metrics.
- Deliver a comprehensive final report and a presentation to the Borough Council.

### **Deliverables**

- Interim progress updates (written or verbal, as requested)
- Draft report for stakeholder review and comment
- Final report (print and digital formats)
- Executive summary suitable for public distribution
- Formal presentation to Township and Borough Council or designated committee

### **Methodology**

Technical information and data for this report have been provided by various sources. These sources are deemed to be dependable, valid, and cited where appropriate. In some cases, information was requested but not provided. Additional information has been gathered from written documents, site visits, and interviews. Such information is taken at “face value” and is believed to be valid for the purpose presented. No part of this report constitutes an audit of financial statements or performance standards.

The purpose of this report is to provide information for Township and Borough officials to assist in making informed decisions regarding public fire protection for Bellwood Borough and Antis Township.

Opinions expressed herein are those of the Consultant based on the best practices of the modern fire service and should not be construed or interpreted as the opinion of any agency with which the Consultant is affiliated.

## Municipal Overview

The Bellwood Borough–Antis Township area is primarily a rural community located approximately 10 miles north of downtown Altoona, along the I-99 corridor. Together, they encompass a combined land area of **61.31 square miles** and a population of **8,311**, according to the 2020 U.S. Census.

**Antis Township** is a Second-Class Township in Blair County, Pennsylvania, governed by a Board of Supervisors and a Township Manager. For clarity, this report may refer to it simply as “the Township,” with the terms *Antis Township* and *Township* used interchangeably.

**Bellwood Borough** is an incorporated borough in Blair County, Pennsylvania, operating under a Mayor and Council form of government, with a Borough Manager overseeing day-to-day operations. For simplicity, this report may refer to it as “the Borough,” with the terms *Bellwood Borough* and *Borough* used interchangeably.

### Current Situation

Fire protection services are currently provided primarily by two volunteer fire departments, each operating from its own station. For clarity, this report may refer to the Excelsior Fire Department simply as Excelsior and the Pinecroft Fire Department simply as Pinecroft. Additionally, the terms Fire Departments and Department may be used interchangeably throughout this report.

The Fire Departments comprise an “all hazard” response agency providing emergency response to fires, hazardous conditions, vehicle collisions, and a host of other emergency and non-emergency events. The departments also provide emergency responses to selected medical emergencies.

The Fire Departments operate 13 apparatus:

Engines (4)

Trucks (1)

Tankers (2)

Rescue (1)

Brush Unit (2)

Squads (1)

Cascade Trailer (1)

Command Unit (1)

This report does not specifically include the delivery of emergency medical services, or the operation of Emergency Medical Services provided to the communities. The response of the fire departments to selected medical emergencies is acknowledged.

While independent, the two fire departments cooperate on an operational basis and form the fire protection service for Antis Township and Bellwood Borough.

The fire stations providing primary response to Antis Township and Bellwood Borough are as follows:

**Excelsior Fire Company (Company 22)**

**399 South First Street**

**Bellwood, PA 16617**



## **Pinecroft Volunteer Fire Company (Company 23)**

**2134 Old Sixth Avenue Road**

**Altoona, PA 16601**



### *Governance*

Based on the information provided, each fire department is organized as a Pennsylvania Nonprofit Corporation. Each fire department is recognized as a charitable or similar organization by the Internal Revenue Service. The fire departments each file their own IRS 990 Return. This information is believed to be correct but has not been verified for this report.

## **Staffing Analysis**

### *Personnel*

The fire departments are challenged with staffing issues. This varies from department to department. Time-of-day is also a consideration for staffing and response considerations.

As with many volunteer-based emergency service organizations throughout Pennsylvania and the nation, volunteer resources are dwindling. While these volunteers are not monetarily compensated, there is a cost associated with this type of service. These costs include training, personal protective equipment, and all other expenses associated with the administration of the volunteer system.

Dollar-for-dollar, these volunteers provide enormous cost savings to the Borough, Township, and its taxpayers.

Every effort should be made to recruit and retain competent personnel for these volunteer positions. It should be noted that not everyone is suitable to hold a position within this or any fire

or emergency service. Close and careful consideration should be given to each candidate to ensure that the appropriate people are selected for the specific positions.

There was some job descriptions provided for some positions. Some training and personnel records are more detailed than others. There is no formal recruitment and retention program in place.

The lack of sufficient volunteer personnel may require that staffing be supplemented by paid personnel, on a part-time or full-time basis, depending on the level of service desired.

**Staffing**

The department has a combined roster of 86 members at the time data was submitted, of which only 47 members are reported as active. Historically, volunteer fire service can only turn 25-35% of active firefighters to an incident. Accordingly, the department may only be able to respond with 12-17 firefighters. It is recognized that volunteer response during daylight hours is even lower due to many firefighters working during these hours.

According to NFPA 1720 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Department, volunteer fire departments should have the capability to safely begin attacking the fire within two minutes once firefighters arrive at the scene with all the equipment that they need to fight it, at least 90% of the time. Incident records show that this criterion is not being achieved.

Personnel should be organized, so all crews have the apparatus and equipment needed for the fires or other emergencies they are responding to. These requirements vary based on the type of area the department must cover (also called the "demand zone") and the number of people per square mile within each area.

Demand Zone	Demographics	Minimum Staff to Respond	Response Time in Minutes
Urban area	More than 1,000 people per square mile	15	9
Suburban area	Between 500-1,000 people per square mile	10	10
Rural area	Less than 500 people per square mile	6	14
Remote area	Travel distance of 8 miles or more	4	Depends on travel distance
Special Risks	Determined by the AHJ	Determined by AHJ based on risk	Determined by the AHJ

*Figure 2. Minimum requirements for volunteer fire department response capabilities (modified from NFPA 1720 Table 4.3.2)*

The fire department is dealing with staffing issues. As with many volunteer-based emergency service organizations throughout Pennsylvania and the nation, volunteer resources are dwindling. While these volunteers are not monetarily compensated, there is a cost associated with this type of service. These costs include training, personal protective equipment, and all other expenses associated with the administration of the volunteer system. Dollar-for-dollar, these volunteers provide enormous cost savings to the Borough, Township, and its taxpayers.

## Workload Analysis

### *Training*

NFPA 1720 requires that volunteer fire departments have a training program and policy in place to ensure that all volunteer firefighters must complete a minimum of 110 hours of training. This ensures they have the skills needed to execute all operations that they may be asked to perform safely and successfully.

Training records for the fire departments were mostly complete and easy to follow and cross-reference. The fire departments maintain records of training hours per personnel but do not include training type or activity. In some cases, details might be insufficient; in other cases, records are incredibly detailed.

Currently, the fire departments report that there are currently 86 members. Of the 86 members, 47 are considered active members.

## Operational Analysis

The fire departments are "all hazards" response agencies providing emergency response to fires, vehicle collisions, hazardous materials incidents, environmental emergencies, and associated events. Non-emergency operations are varied and include some public service responses and public awareness activities. Mutual aid is provided by surrounding fire departments on a reciprocal basis.

The fire departments operate a variety of apparatus. These include engines, aerial devices, and specialty units, such as rescues, and squads.

Every community must determine the type and amount of fire apparatus for its community and where the apparatus should be located. These are tough questions and there are no answers that are correct or incorrect. It is a matter of local choice.

In 2024, the fire departments responded to the total number of 575 calls for service.

Fire departments have started to form written procedures for operational issues. These should be revised and expanded, as necessary. Ideally, these should be standardized for both fire departments.

### *Facilities*

The fire departments currently operate from two (2) fire stations. Fire stations are owned by the fire departments. The fire stations are fairly well maintained for their ages. Some need various repairs and improvements. Costs for maintaining the stations have increased exponentially over the years and will continue to increase as the stations continue to age. The current station locations are randomly located, i.e., their location was not a result of a strategic fire protection plan.

### *Apparatus*

Each fire department owns and maintains their own fire apparatus. Fire department personnel periodically check the apparatus, although there is limited documentation to support a comprehensive preventative maintenance program.

Minor repairs may be done in-house, depending on the skill level of the members. Most maintenance is done by a vehicle maintenance shop. Specialty work, such as pump repairs, is done by a specialty contractor. Documentation of vehicle maintenance is provided, but not in a standard format.

Hose, pump, and ladder testing is done by an independent contractor. Records are maintained to support the testing.

### *Financial*

Financial statements from some fire departments were more detailed than others. Legal filing requirements of documents such as the IRS 990 Return are believed to be filed in a timely manner.

Fire departments generate revenue from various sources. In some cases, such as donations, lack of financial documents made this unable to be verified.

The Township and Borough fund their fire departments through allocations in their annual budgets. While both municipalities support fire services through various funding mechanisms, neither has established a dedicated fire tax. Implementing such a tax could provide a more stable and predictable funding source for fire protection services in line with best practices observed in other Pennsylvania municipalities. Additionally, the Township and Borough cover the cost of workers' compensation insurance for personnel.

Antis Township and Bellwood Borough also distribute the Foreign Fire Insurance allocation from the State Auditor General to the Relief Association in accordance with the guidelines of the Auditor General.

In contrast, the projected cost for the Township and Borough to have a combined career department would be approximately \$4,500,000 for the first year. This figure is based on the premise that the Township and Borough would need to build a new centralized fire station, update fire apparatus, and hire a fire chief and at a minimum, 9 full-time firefighters.

A review of financial information for this report should be considered cursory, at best. Nothing related to this project should be considered an audit or comprehensive financial review.

### *Water Supply*

A reliable and sustainable water supply is critical to the suppression and extinguishment of fires. Bellwood Borough and Antis Township are provided with a public water supply and is protected by fire hydrants in populated areas. The hydrants are located throughout, although some areas may need to be reinforced. The condition of the water infrastructure is not evaluated in this report (see the ISO report for water supply information).

The public water system is owned and operated by Altoona Water Authority and Bellwood Borough Water Authority.

### *Reporting and Recordkeeping*

The fire departments are participating agencies in the Pennsylvania Fire Incident Reporting System. Some reports, training records, maintenance records, and other administrative documents are lacking. The collection, analysis, and interpretation of data is critical for future decision making. Future decisions should be objective and data driven.

### *Community Risk Reduction*

A primary consideration in public fire protection is the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive Community Risk Reduction (CRR) plan. The elements of community risk reduction include Education, Engineering, Enforcement Emergency Response, and Economic Impact (also referred to as economic incentives).

Vision 20/20, a leading source for information for strategic fire and injury risk reduction, provides a great resource for this information. Their website is [www.strategicfire.org](http://www.strategicfire.org).

Training in CRR is available through a variety of programs from the National Fire Academy. This training is offered free of charge.

Additional information is also available from the Publications Office of the United States Fire Administration. This material is also free of charge. Internet access is available at [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

Effective CRR involves a variety of stakeholders, including elected and appointed officials, fire department members, and the public.

Bellwood Borough and Antis Township have not officially adopted the fire code. The fire code provides for the safety of the residents and visitors to Bellwood Borough, as well as its firefighters.

The International Fire Code (IFC) is a model code that regulates minimum fire safety requirements for new and existing buildings, facilities, storage, and processes. The code addresses fire prevention, fire protection, life safety, and safe storage and use of hazardous materials in new and existing buildings, facilities, and processes. The IFC provides a total approach in controlling all buildings and sites, regardless of the hazard being indoors or outdoors.

A properly adopted and administered fire code is the foundation for fire and life safety in every jurisdiction. The intent of the fire code is to establish the minimum requirements consistent with nationally recognized best practices for providing a reasonable level of life safety and property protection from the hazards of fire, explosion, or dangerous conditions in new and existing buildings, structures, and premises, and to provide safety to firefighters and emergency responders during emergency operations. The International Code Council furnishes portions of the above references.

Township and Borough officials should note that the fire code is not a replacement for the building code. Both codes are designed to complement each other. In Pennsylvania, the building code is adopted as part of the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code (UCC). The fire code is not adopted at the state level. Only portions of the fire code are referenced by the UCC and only when it applies to construction.

Bellwood Borough and Antis Township should facilitate a meeting with fire officials, elected officials, and other interested parties to discuss the adoption of a comprehensive Community Risk Reduction program for the area. Key stakeholders include the school district and health care providers.

*Public Protection Classification*

The Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) collects and evaluates information from communities throughout the country regarding their structure fire suppression capabilities. This is referred to as the Public Protection Classification (PPC). The most recent report for the Bellwood Borough Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FPSA) became effective in September 2018. This area is currently classified as Class 5 with a total credit of 58.69 points awarded from a total of 105.50.

It is important to remember that this classification is for Bellwood Borough, and while it includes the fire department, it also encompasses emergency communications and water supply.

Page 7 of the PPC report provides a review of the FSRs. The report shows credit for the items listed below.

<b>Fire Suppression Rating Schedule</b>	
Emergency Communications	9.91 of possible 10
Fire Department	22.69 of possible 50
Water Supply	32.24 of possible 40
Divergence	0.39 of possible 5.50

*Figure 3. Fire Suppression Rating Schedule*

Bellwood Borough might see significantly improved credit by addressing the following areas:

- 414 Credit for Emergency Reporting (County function)
- 432 Credit for Dispatch Circuits (County function)
- 561 Credit for Deployment Analysis
- 571 Credit for Department Personnel
- 580 Credit for Training
- 616 Credit for System Supply (Water Department)

The above-mentioned items might be improved by addressing certain administrative issues such as recordkeeping or operational issues. Examples of these items include fire department training issues and records relating to personnel and their availability. Other items may require a capital expense such as the relocation or existing fire stations and/or addition of new fire stations.

Another significant item is the capability of the water supply system and its ability to provide a reliable and sustained fire flow. This may require a detailed engineering study by the water purveyor and indicate possible needed improvements to the water distribution infrastructure.

It is important to remember that the PPC was determined when there were two (2) operating fire stations within Bellwood Borough and Antis Township. A change in the number and/or location of fire stations may affect future property protection classifications. Any changes may be either a positive or negative influence.

Questions and additional information regarding the ISO report and ways to improve the community's classification may be obtained by contacting their office at 800-444-4554.

Detailed documentation and records retention are critical to support the information needed for such reports.

## **Community Demographics & Resource Impacts**

Antis Township is an incorporated Township of the Second-Class located in Blair County, Pennsylvania.

The Township has an estimated population of 6,282 based on information provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Its land mass is 60.83 square miles. The population density is approximately 106.8 persons per square mile. The Township is a mix of suburban and rural areas. Approximately seventy-one percent of the Township is forest or State Game Land. The Township surrounds the Borough of Bellwood. There are several villages within the Township. Most commercial activity is in proximity to Interstate 99 or US 220. Both highways travel through the Township in a north-south direction. The Township is adjacent to several municipalities, including the City of Altoona.

The Township is governed by a board of five supervisors; each elected for a six-year term. The Board has appointed a Township Manager to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Township.

There were 2,530 households, out of which 30.6% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 63.2% were married couples living together, 7.7% had a female householder with no husband present, and 25.5% were non-families. 22.1% of all households were made up of individuals, and 11.5% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.50 and the average family size was 2.92.

In the township, the population was spread out, with 22.3% under the age of 18, 7.4% from 18 to 24, 27.9% from 25 to 44, 26.8% from 45 to 64, and 15.5% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 40 years. For every 100 females, there were 98.2 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 96.3 males.

	<b>Race And Origin</b>
White	99%
Black/African American	0.09%
Native American	0.17%
Asian	0.17%
Pacific Islander	0.02%
Hispanic Latino	0.28%
Other Races	0.27%
	<b>Income and Poverty</b>
Median Household Income	\$39,682
Below Poverty Line	11.2%
Per Capita Income	\$17,950

*Figure 4. Demographics of Antis Township*

Bellwood Borough is an incorporated Borough located in Blair County, Pennsylvania. The Borough has an estimated population of 1,829 as of the 2020 census and an area of .48 square miles. The population density was 4,361.8 inhabitants per square mile. The Borough is a rural area situated in the Tuckahoe Valley, part of the Logan Valley area and is surrounded by Antis Township. The borough has a historical amusement park, DelGrosso's Amusement Park, founded in 1907.

Antis Township and Bellwood Borough currently collaborate on various projects and events. In addition, they have extraordinary pride in their hometown football team, The Bellwood-Antis Blue Devils; especially when they play their backyard neighbor, Tyrone.

	<b>Race And Origin</b>
White	98.1%
Black/African American	0.10%
Native American	0.05%
Asian	0.20%
Pacific Islander	0.00%
Hispanic Latino	0.89%
Other Races	0.20%
	<b>Income and Poverty</b>
Median Household Income	\$34,595
Below Poverty Line	14.9%
Per Capita Income	\$14,323

*Figure 5. Demographics of Bellwood Borough*

There were 776 households, out of which 32.7% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 55.5% were married couples living together, 10.8% had a female householder with no

husband present, and 28.4% were non-families. 24.5% of all households were made up of individuals, and 12.0% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.54 and the average family size was 3.01.

In the Borough, the population was spread out, with 25.5% under the age of 18, 7.3% from 18 to 24, 28.6% from 25 to 44, 21.5% from 45 to 64, and 17.1% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 37 years. For every 100 females there were 89.8 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 84.7 males.

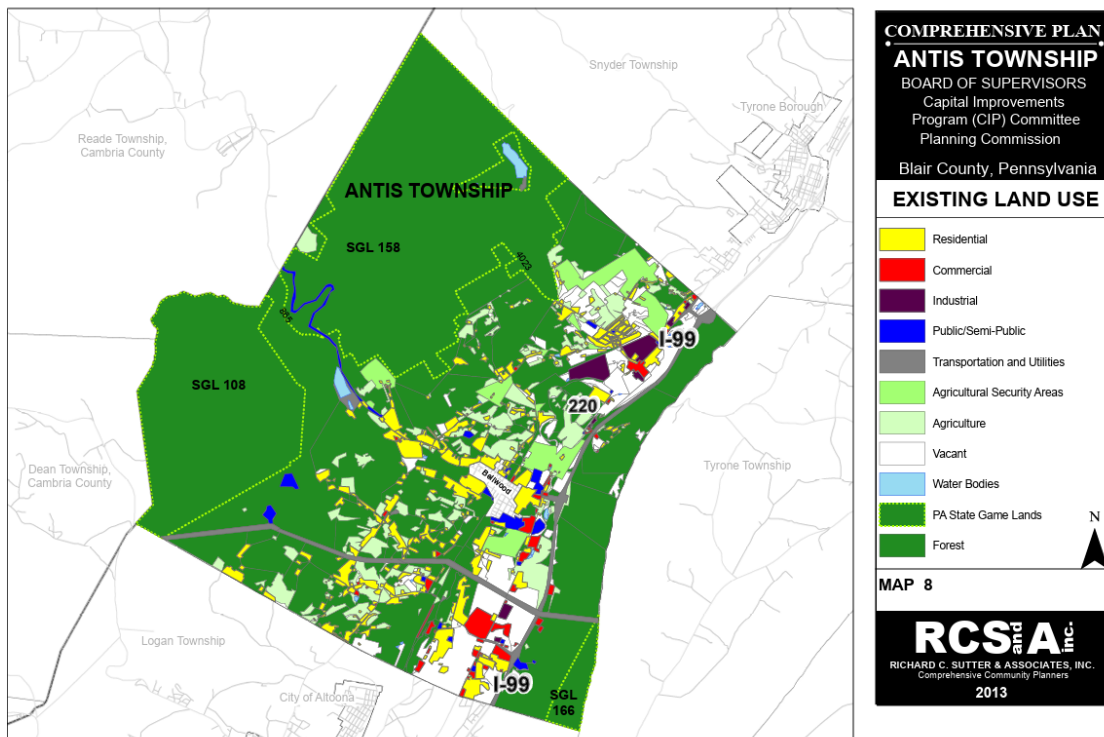


Figure 6. Antis Township Comprehensive Plan

## Service Sharing & Contracting Options

### Deployment Options

Fire apparatus is currently located at two (2) fire stations. Bellwood Borough and Antis Township officials must always consider the acceptable level or risk when assessing locations for the placement of fire apparatus. This study does recommend the closure of both stations and the opening of a new centralized combined station.

In addition to apparatus type and placement, fire department officers and Township and Borough officials should remember that the existing fire stations, while fairly maintained, need regular maintenance and improvements. Some have had more recent additions and renovations. A sizable portion of the fire department's funding is being used to maintain the stations. With the rising cost of materials, maintaining the current stations may become economically unsustainable.

Several options exist for Bellwood Borough. One is to keep the operation as it currently is with the two (2) existing fire stations, each operating as its own entity. While this remains an option, greater effectiveness could be gained by combining the existing fire departments into a single fire department operating from a single fire station. This concept has worked well in other areas.

For this report, the term fire department refers to an entity, in this case, nonprofit corporations. The term fire station refers to the location where fire apparatus is housed.

If this concept were adopted, Bellwood Borough and Antis Township would formally establish a Combined Fire Department and identify its member fire departments. This is typically done in the form of an ordinance.

Bellwood Borough and Antis Township would then be responsible for all service delivery issues, i.e., the business of responding to calls for service. Typical examples are fire control, rescue operations, response to hazardous conditions, and other public service calls.

Bellwood Borough and Antis Township would also be responsible for all administrative functions, including fiscal management, procurement of apparatus, equipment, and supplies, training, maintenance, and the management of all operational personnel.

The Combined Fire Department should be under the leadership of a qualified leader, identified as a Fire Chief. It would be logical to incorporate the responsibilities of Fire Inspections into the newly formed Fire Chief role. The Fire Chief should make a direct report to the Bellwood Borough Manager and the Antis Township Manager.

From an operational standpoint, the fire departments should easily be able to be transitioned under a single fire department, operating from the existing stations until a site can be selected for a new station.

This option, if properly executed, should provide certain positive features regarding the operations of the fire departments. Operational effectiveness could also be increased as a central command structure would be in place, therefore eliminating duplication of line officer positions and creating one "playbook" of Standard Operating Procedures.

Bellwood Borough and Antis Township, along with its fire departments, should consider multiple options.

There are several examples to model the unification of two or more fire departments into one. One example that combined two fire departments into one is in York County. The new organization is known as Alliance Fire and Rescue.

This model also has a proven history in Adams County. Ten years ago, two fire departments there combined to form the United Hook and Ladder Department. This organization has expanded and has combined two additional fire departments. The organization now operates four fire stations within the county and is poised for future growth.

Another example is that of the recently formed Hanover Area Fire/Rescue in York County. In this case, the fire departments from multiple Boroughs combined as one and operate with Borough direction within a combination career/volunteer system.

Another option would be to merge fire service capabilities with neighboring communities to create a regional fire department. This would reduce duplication of services and equipment and provide a more fiscal and efficient use of personnel, equipment, and funds.

### ***Service Delivery Comparison***

#### ***Borough/Township Operated Service***

If this concept were adopted, the Township and Borough would formally establish a Bellwood Borough/Antis Township Fire Department and identify its member fire departments. This is typically done in the form of an ordinance.

The Township and Borough would be responsible for all service delivery issues, i.e., the business of responding to calls for service. Typical examples are fire control, rescue operations, response to hazardous conditions, and other public service calls.

The Borough/Township would also be responsible for all administrative functions, including fiscal management, procurement of apparatus, equipment, supplies, training, maintenance, and the management of all operational personnel.

The Borough/Township Fire Department should be under the leadership of a qualified leader, identified as a Fire Chief. The Fire Chief should be a direct report to the Township and Borough Managers.

From an operational standpoint, the fire departments should easily be able to be transitioned into a single fire department, operating from the existing stations until the construction of a new single fire station.

If the Borough/Township becomes the direct provider of these services, it may become ineligible for certain funding opportunities that may only be afforded to nonprofit organizations that have IRS 501(c)3 status.

#### ***Borough/Township Supported Service***

The control of the service provided is shared by the Borough, Township, and the governing body of the nonprofit organization that directly provides the service. This control can be accomplished through establishing policies for the delivery of service, standards for the service delivered, and the appropriation of funds to support the services provided.

Expectations and desired outcomes should be expressed in the form of a written agreement.

Options for funding this model include the appropriation of Township and Borough funds, grant opportunities, and contributions from the public.

A key consideration is that if paid employees are used within the system, they are employees of the nonprofit organization, not the Borough or Township, and are subject to different laws and regulations when compared to Borough/Township employees. This may have certain financial advantages for the Township and Borough. Careful consideration must be given to the issue of employee/employer relationship, and the Borough/Township should consult with legal counsel to identify and clarify any issues regarding this matter.

### *Borough/Township Contracted Service*

With this option, the Township and Borough simply contract for the service to be provided. This option provides the Township and Borough with no involvement in the direct delivery of services.

The Township and Borough would simply select a service provider for fire/rescue services. This may be accomplished through a request for proposals or by a competitive bidding process.

Close and careful attention needs to be given to the specifications for the proposal and the contract that follows. The type and amount of service is specified by the contract.

While this option may provide the least expensive option for the Township and Borough, it may not be the best option. This option has the potential to be misunderstood and strain existing relationships with existing provider agencies.

### *Funding Options*

Typically, services of this type are funded through a system of general fund revenue and appropriations to a designated agency or by means of a line-item budget if the Township and Borough provide the services directly.

Close and careful consideration needs to be given to taxing options. Boroughs and Townships throughout the state are challenged with the lack of funding options. The Township and Borough officials may want to consider meeting with elected officials at the state level to discuss and advocate for a wider range of local options for funding emergency services.

User fees, such as those generated from the permitting and inspection process of a Fire Code, may provide additional sources of revenue. Currently, the fire departments provide fire apparatus for various community functions. This may be a fantastic opportunity for community interactions with the fire service. However, there is an associated cost with taking apparatus to these functions. A small fee schedule should be explored to offset the cost associated with using the apparatus.

As many emergency service organizations throughout the country are faced with funding challenges, the United States Fire Administration has produced a publication, *Funding Alternatives for Emergency Medical and Fire Services*, Publication FA-331. This publication is available as a free download from their website, [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

For a comprehensive understanding of funding alternatives, it is suggested that Borough, Township, and organization officials review the options contained in the publication, especially Chapter 4, *Local Revenue and Funding Alternatives*; and Chapter 7, *Foundations and Corporate Grants*.

These options should be investigated to determine what is right for the Township and Borough.

# Model Ordinance

## **Authority**

### *Antis Township*

The authority and responsibility to provide public fire protection is vested to the Township by the Commonwealth by virtue of the Second-Class Township Code.

This authority and responsibility for emergency services is established by state law and has been amended as recently as 2008.

Act 7 of the Session of 2008 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly amends the Second-Class Township Code as follows:

Section 1553. Emergency Services.—(a) The township shall be responsible for ensuring that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the township by the means and to the extent determined by the township, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services.

(b) The township shall consult with fire and emergency medical services providers to discuss the emergency services needs of the township.

(c) The township shall require any emergency services organizations receiving township funds to provide to the township an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before the township may consider budgeting additional funding to the organization.

The act was signed into law by Governor Edward G. Rendell on March 17, 2008 and became effective sixty days thereafter.

With respect to the legal requirements above, the elected officials of the Township must determine the “acceptable level of risk” regarding public fire protection.

As the Township is diverse, more than one acceptable level of risk may be appropriate. An example of this might include an extended response time to areas of the Township that have a lesser life safety risk, such as the forest and State Game Lands. The residential and industrial areas might have their own level of risk. Factors affecting this decision could include life safety issues and value of property protected.

### *Bellwood Borough*

The authority and responsibility to provide public fire protection is vested to Bellwood Borough by the Commonwealth by virtue of the Borough Code. This authority and responsibility for emergency services is established by state law and has been amended as recently as 2014.

Title 8 Chapter 12 Section 2 Borough Code as follows:

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

\* \* \*

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

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

## Summary & Recommendations

This report is intended to be a tool to help elected officials make informed decisions regarding public fire protection for the Township and Borough. It is important to remember that the Township and Borough, not the individual fire department, is responsible for public fire protection.

The focus of fire protection often reflects the ability of the fire departments to respond to and extinguish fires. Comprehensively, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the prevention of fire and injuries. A Community Risk Reduction program incorporates the elements of prevention, emergency response, and the economic impact to the community by determining the acceptable level of risk for the community.

Adoption and administration of a fire code is a critical component of a comprehensive community risk reduction program.

Modern fire organizations are often "all hazard" response agencies. Within its scope, this is true for the fire departments serving the Borough. These fire departments do much more than respond to fires, although there may be insufficient information to document this.

The biggest challenges for the fire departments appear to be staffing and funding. This is also the case for most fire service organizations across the country. The existing system of an all-volunteer staff offers an exceptional value to the Township and Borough. As volunteers continue to decrease in number, the fire departments and/or the Township and Borough should be prepared to supplement the existing volunteer staff with paid personnel once an adequate staffing plan is devised.

This should include the appointment of a Fire Chief as the head of a newly formed fire department.

While the existing volunteer system does provide exceptional value, it may at times provide a level of service that is less than desired due to workforce constraints at various times of the day.

Immediate action should be taken to establish a Single Fire Department to provide the necessary coordination for the fire operations within the Township and Borough. This would include a head of the organization, with the title of Fire Chief to support a comprehensive community risk reduction program and, as necessary, to support field operations in time of emergency. In addition, property locations should be surveyed for the construction of a new combined fire station that would serve the community.

The Township and Borough may want to explore shared service agreements with surrounding communities and fire departments. The possibility of forming a regional fire service organization should also be investigated.

Community officials and fire department members are encouraged to read the Final Report of the SR 6 Commission. This report was recently released by the state legislature and can be found at [www.osfc.pa.gov](http://www.osfc.pa.gov).

## Recommendation 1

The corporations should review their bylaws and remove all items relating to operations and establish them as a separate document. The bylaws should be written in a contemporary manner that is easy to understand. The duties of officers should be established in position descriptions, which can be revised as necessary without revising the bylaws. The corporations should consider membership in the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations, which can provide support in many areas of governing the corporation.

## Recommendation 2

Establishing new roles and responsibilities can play a critical role in recruitment and retention. Below is an example series of roles that can be implemented along with function and training requirements:

### 1. Support Services Volunteer

#### *The Role:*

The Support Services Volunteer (SSV) is in a non-compensated position. SSV are not normally expected to respond to calls for service. The SSV will render support at the level of his/her training and education. This position does not normally perform hazardous functions within any zones of danger. Individuals fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of this position will present themselves in a courteous, professional, and responsible manner.

#### *Essential Functions:*

- May assist Command Staff personnel as an aid with additional training in specific command function tasks.
- Provide emergency scene rehabilitation for crews operating on emergency scenes or extended training exercises.
- Provide logistical support for fire ground and emergency operations when requested.

#### *Minimum Training and Certification:*

- Valid driver's license with an acceptable MVR and must be insurable
- At least 18 years of age on application closing date
- Graduation from high school or equivalent GED
- Pass a thorough background investigation
- Basic First Aid and CPR certification, or the ability to obtain and maintain certification

### 2. Volunteer Firefighter

#### *The Role:*

The Volunteer Firefighter position is a non-compensated position that is constantly changing and evolving. Statistically speaking, most responses are medical related in nature, while fighting fire accounts for a small percentage of the calls for service. For this reason, it is preferred that personnel be licensed, at minimum, as an Emergency Medical Technician.

Due to the high demands placed upon Volunteer Firefighters, they must be physically fit to manage the sustained intense and physical effort required to perform various duties. Firefighters may carry upwards of 80-100 lbs. of equipment, including axes, hoses, ladders, fans, chain saws, and other equipment. This work may include climbing many flights of stairs and ascending and/or descending ground ladders and fire escapes. Firefighters also work at various heights and in confined spaces to fight fires and perform rescues. When not responding to alarms, firefighters spend a significant amount of time training, inspecting local occupancies, cleaning, and maintaining personal protective gear and other fire department equipment.

*Essential Functions:*

- Participate in and respond to emergent and non-emergent calls for service, including but not limited to, fires, emergency medical assistance, rescues, hazardous material incidents, and a variety of other calls. These activities may require personnel to ascend and descend ladders and stairs, as well as perform strenuous lifting and moving activities under routine and hazardous conditions such as bending, twisting, and/or carrying.
- Assist in the maintenance of apparatus, firefighting equipment, medical equipment, station grounds, and any other special projects as assigned.
- Participate in classroom and practical training, fire prevention inspections, fire investigation activities, public education, and assist in preparation of pre-fire plans.
- Drive and operate fire apparatus and other emergency vehicles when needed.
- Complete incident reports, training forms, and accident reports as required.
- Report deficiencies and unsafe conditions to supervisors.

*Minimum Training and Certification:*

- Valid driver's license with an acceptable MVR and must be insurable
- At least 18 years of age on application closing date
- Graduation from high school or equivalent GED
- Pass a thorough background investigation
- NFPA Firefighter I or equivalent
- PA Emergency Medical Technician
- NIMS IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, IS-701, and IS-704
- Weapons of Mass Destruction – Awareness Level

3. Driver Operator

*The Role:*

The Driver Operator is a non-compensated position. The individual drives, operates, and maintains fire apparatus during emergencies and routine situations, operates fire pumps, tenders, and other specialized tools and equipment, and performs station and apparatus maintenance. The Driver Operator must be familiar with the geography and streets of the district in which they serve, as well as various water systems such as above/below ground water storage systems and rivers, lakes, ponds, and streams within the district.

*Essential Functions:*

- Respond to emergency alarms including fires or other alarms requiring a mobile water supply.
- Drive and operate tender apparatus and other emergency vehicles; operate and monitor pump operations and use of specialized equipment.
- Assist in the maintenance of firefighting apparatus and equipment; check and assure vehicles and equipment are ready for emergency response and use; report maintenance and mechanical problems as identified.
- Attend both classroom and practical training; participate in simulated exercises and field activities.
- Perform strenuous lifting and moving activities under routine and hazardous conditions; climb ladders and stairs; perform bending, twisting, carrying, and/or other physically demanding activities.
- Conduct station and ground maintenance activities and other special projects assigned.
- Support and participate in all training programs and activities including providing any specialized training that may be required.
- Complete accident reports, incident reports, training records, inspection notices, and other required forms.
- Practice safe work habits and report any unsafe conditions to the appropriate supervisor.

*Minimum Training and Certification:*

- Valid driver's license with an acceptable MVR and must be insurable
- At least 18 years of age on application closing date
- Graduation from high school or equivalent GED
- Pass a thorough background investigation
- Minimum of three (3) years of experience operating fire-type apparatus
- Successfully complete a Driver Operator Course (min. 16 hours)
- Successfully complete a Pump Operator Course or Aerial Device Operator Course

*Desirable Training and Certification:*

- Certified NFPA Driver Operator

4. Department Fire Officer

*The Role:*

The Fire Officer is a non-compensated position. A Fire Officer performs the duties of providing supervision, direction, control, and guidance of assigned volunteer department personnel. Duties include responding to emergency incidents and assuming command, scheduling, providing, and participating in training for personnel, conducting fire inspections and public education activities, preparing reports and records, and conducting performance appraisals.

*Essential Functions:*

- Supervise and direct the routine and emergency scene activities of assigned personnel. Direct deployment of apparatus, equipment, and personnel at emergency scenes and direct initial strategy and tactics until the first arriving Chief Officer. May begin or conduct fire investigations as needed.
- Function as a first line supervisor of personnel in both routine and emergency situations. Enforce department rules, regulations, and procedures; maintain discipline and transmit orders.
- Coordinate, supervise, and/or direct maintenance activities, training activities, fire inspections, public education activities, administrative and operational support assignments, and other duties as assigned. May provide supervision, coordination, training, and liaison functions with mutual aid department personnel as needed.
- Responsible for practicing and promoting a safe working environment, reporting unsafe working conditions to the Chief, completing incident reports, training forms, accident reports, inspection notices, and other required forms. May write memos and other reports as needed.
- Participate in Firefighter task-level activities under routine and hazardous conditions.

*Minimum Training and Certification:*

- Non-probationary Volunteer Firefighter
- All Volunteer Firefighter training and certification levels:
  - Valid driver's license with an acceptable MVR and must be insurable
  - At least 18 years of age on application closing date
  - Graduation from high school or equivalent GED
  - Pass a thorough background investigation
  - NFPA Firefighter II or equivalent
  - NIMS IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, IS-701, and IS-704
  - Weapons of Mass Destruction – Awareness Level
- PA Emergency Medical Responder (First Responder)
- NFPA Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator (Driver)
- NFPA Fire Officer I or equivalent
- Three (3) years of experience in fire suppression for a fire department with primary responsibility for structural fire protection and emergency medical service delivery

*Desirable Training and Certification:*

- Certified NFPA Fire Officer II
- ICS 300 & 400

**5. Chief Officer**

*The Role:*

The Chief Officer is responsible for the management of operations. The Chief Officer provides the leadership and direction in the field that allows the department to accomplish its mission. The Chief Officer works highly independently in a wide variety of

complex duties and responsibilities that can have a significant impact on the department. The Chief Officer works as the representative of management to the line personnel and the representative of the line personnel to management.

*Essential Functions:*

- Provide leadership and supervision in emergency scene operations that develop and ensure safe and effective operations, teamwork, appropriate strategy, and tactics; respond to emergency incidents including all multi-department incidents, mutual aid incidents, and any other incident as appropriate.
- Provide leadership and supervision in non-emergency conditions which will enable the personnel to be successful in their assigned role through training, team building exercises, and personnel development. This may also be accomplished by mentoring, coaching, counseling, performance appraisals, and discipline.
- Provide the management of the department to ensure the business of the department is accomplished. This includes but is not limited to accident and injury investigation, reports, response area coverage, project/program oversight, and budget administration.
- Ensure that the Department Officers provide the training necessary for success at the individual and single department level. Assure effective multi-department operations. Also provide position and development opportunities for Department Officers.
- Participate in the leadership of the department as a member of the Management Team.
- Represent the department in media and public relation opportunities and investigate and resolve citizen complaints when possible.
- Conduct basic cause and origin investigations and determine the need to involve a fire investigator.

*Training, Education, and Certification:*

The following list has been developed to provide example guidance for aspiring and existing Chief Officers. This training and education will require a life-long commitment to learning and certification for Chief Officers to pursue.

*Minimum Training and Certification:*

- NFPA Fire Officer 3
- ICS 300 and ICS 400
- PA Emergency Medical Technician
- NIMS compliant

*Desirable Training and Certification:*

- Associate's Degree in Fire Science or Technology
- Bachelor's Degree in Fire Administration
- NFPA Fire Officer 4

- NFPA Fire Instructor 2
- Miscellaneous leadership and Incident Management workshops/conferences
- Public Information Officer
- NFA, Executive Fire Officer Program
- NFA, Command and Control of Fire Department Operations at Target Hazards
- NFA, Command and Control of Incident Operations
- NFA, Command and Control of Wild land/Urban Interface Fire Operations for the Structural Chief Officer
- Hazardous Materials Incident Commander

### Recommendation 3

*Develop an incentive program to encourage current personnel to stay active and to attract new personnel into the department. Below is an example of a cost-effective incentive program.*

#### *Incentive Program*

The incentive program is a point system based upon three (3) tiers with benchmarks for call participation, training, adequate staffing, and the individual volunteer's current certification level.

#### A. Certification category of disbursement yearly maximums

- Firefighter II -- \$1,400
- Firefighter I -- \$1,200
- Driver/Operator -- \$1,000
- Probationary Firefighter -- 600 (exempt from point system until completion of classes and 1-year probation)
- Intern Firefighter -- \$500 (exempt from point system until completion of classes)
- Rescuer -- \$5 per call with maximum of \$900 yearly
- Department Officer -- \$1,600 (exempt from point system based upon duties/responsibilities)

#### B. Point system

- Calls: 1 point per call for a monthly maximum of 20 points
- Standby: 5 points per 4-hour block of continuous standby
- Training: 1 point per training hour
- 16-hour training classes qualifies for 10 points
- 24-hour training classes qualify for 15 points
- 40-hour training classes qualify for 20 points
- No maximum points for staffing

### C. Tier system monthly disbursements

- Basic Incentive - Participant earns between 20 and 39 points during any calendar month \$25
- Mid Incentive - Participant earns between 40 and 50 points during any calendar month \$65
- Incentive – Participant earns 60 or more points during any calendar month \$120

The total cost for the volunteer incentive program is less than the cost of a first-year career firefighter with salary and benefits. This program is intended to encourage volunteer members to actively participate in training and incidents. This would also increase the workforce available at incidents to reduce firefighter risk and to enhance firefighter safety.

The Township, Borough, and the fire departments should jointly formulate position descriptions for all operational positions from entry level personnel through the department chief. The position descriptions should include detailed information regarding the job performance requirements and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for these positions. The process should be standardized throughout all the fire departments. The current process of selecting line officers by popular vote of fire department members is archaic and often produces less than desirable results (This is not to refer to the talent of any existing line officer; simply the process). Line officers should be selected based on merit and jointly approved by the fire department, Township, and Borough.

The Township and Borough should recognize the value of volunteer personnel and the cost-savings they provide to the taxpayers, and work with the fire departments to establish a recruitment and retention program and a length of service awards program. The Borough should provide sufficient funding for these programs. The National Volunteer Fire Council may provide additional information. Selected insurance departments specializing in emergency service organizations may also be helpful in establishing these programs.

The delivery of fire and emergency services should be closely and carefully reviewed by a fire service professional, and elected officials to ensure that an appropriate level of service delivery exists. Decisions relating to fire service delivery should be based upon the pre-determined level of risk.

## Recommendation 4

All stations should respond to reported fires and vehicle accidents within the Township/Borough boundaries. An all-call response could lead to more workforce arriving on scene, improved interoperability, improved relations between the two departments, and ensuring necessary equipment arrives to perform critical incident tasks. As an example, vehicle accidents should have a rescue to perform rescue operations and an engine to provide suppression operations with a charged handline in a standby posture.

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and the fire departments should formulate a service delivery agreement. This agreement should define the "acceptable level of risk" as well as service delivery expectations. Each department should provide a specialty to the area. An example is one provides Heavy Rescue Capabilities, and another provides water tender (Tanker) capabilities. In addition, both departments still provide Engine Operations Capabilities.

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and the Fire Chiefs should meet and discuss formalizing mutual aid agreements with surrounding communities and fire departments.

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and the Fire Chiefs should consider implementing formal automatic aid agreements with surrounding communities and fire departments on certain types of incidents. This should include consideration for use of proximity dispatching, if available from the County Emergency Communications Center. If proximity dispatching is not currently available, Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and the Fire Chiefs should encourage the County Commissioners to establish such a system.

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and the Fire Chiefs should closely and carefully review the most recent ISO report. The report projects a needed fire flow of 3500 GPM (see the ISO report). It is important that the capability of Antis Township and Bellwood Borough to maintain this fire flow be considered in the replacement of fire apparatus. The fire apparatus of the fire departments, especially those with pumping capabilities, are aging. A vehicle replacement plan should be devised as soon as possible.

NFPA 1720 requires a written plan for volunteer fire departments that includes standard response procedures (who will respond to what) that are predetermined based on the reported incident's location and nature. This plan must include any mutual aid agreements between the volunteer fire department and all the potential first responders in the community and surrounding areas, such as law enforcement, hospital ambulances, and private departments providing hazmat services.

## **Recommendation 5**

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, the water purveyor, and the Fire Chiefs should meet to discuss reinforcement and expansion of the public water system and adding additional hydrants as needed. This discussion should include the inspection and maintenance of existing hydrants and the consideration of future hydrants.

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and Fire Chiefs should work jointly to pre-determine sites to establish drafting areas for local sources of water in the event of failure of the public water system. These sites should be identified and marked accordingly and included in the fire department's pre-planning information. Antis Township and Bellwood Borough should enter into formal agreements with landowners for operating at these sites. Dry hydrants should also be considered at these locations, if practical. While the catastrophic failure of the public water system may be remote, contingency plans should be established.

## **Recommendation 6**

The fire departments should thoroughly train all line officers who might serve as incident commanders in the incident reporting system. Information collected should be gathered in a standard and uniform manner. Prior to submission to the state, a fire department Quality Control Officer should review incident reports. There should be at least two people assigned for an incident report review; one primary and at least one alternate.

In addition to the incident reports, the fire departments should attempt to follow guidelines and standards of the National Fire Protection Association for applicable documentation and record retention. Additional resources for documentation should be available from resolute risk

managers such as specialty insurance departments and commercial firms that specialize in this area. Lexipol is an example of one of the commercial service providers.

### **Recommendation 7**

Antis Township and Bellwood Borough should meet with the fire officials and representatives of the water purveyors to discuss the findings of the ISO report and opportunities for improvement. Antis Township and Bellwood Borough should adopt the International Fire Code and develop a formal fire prevention program.

Training was a major weakness identified in the ISO report. If personnel are conducting any form of training, it must be documented to receive credit. A formal training record program must be established and maintained to increase the training credit in the ISO.

### **Recommendation 8**

Data driven decision making is critical for the success of any organization. It is recommended that no decisions regarding closing fire stations or the construction of a new station be made until sufficient data is analyzed to support such a decision. The same should apply to fire apparatus as well.

Decision makers should use data from the most recent three years of operations to support such a decision. Doing so should be able to identify trends and demands for service.

### **Recommendation 9**

The fire departments should conduct an inspection of the current fire stations. This inspection should be done for the following reasons:

1. Identify any items in need of immediate repair.
2. Identify any items that might need future attention, including items that would be capital expenses.
3. Assess current space utilization issues and needs for future consideration including dormitory and living space for firefighters and the potential to house new fire apparatus.

Antis Township and Bellwood Borough, with input from the fire departments, may want to consider conducting a needs assessment to explore the advantages of a new combined fire station at strategically selected locations. Consideration of this should be driven by data projecting the need for future services. Additional considerations should be given to roadway infrastructure and projections for future growth within the area.

### **Recommendation 10**

The fire departments, in conjunction with the Township and Borough, should implement a comprehensive preventive maintenance program for all apparatus.

Components of the program should include those described in National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1911, Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus.

NFPA standards for testing pumps, hoses, ladders, etc., are available and should also be considered for reference.

A capital apparatus replacement plan should be developed to assess current and future fire protection needs of the Borough. NFPA 1911 recommends the replacement of front-line engines every 20 years and front-line aerial devices every 25 years.

Consideration should be given to purchasing multi-purpose apparatus rather than single-purpose vehicles; for example, a Rescue/Engine instead of separate rescue and engine units, or a Quint instead of a separate engine and ladder truck. Emphasis should be placed on minimizing duplication of capital resources. Currently, Excelsior and Pinecroft maintain 13 apparatus. It is strongly recommended to transition to multi-role apparatus according to the plan outlined below.

### **Excelsior**

Engine Rescue w Cascade System

Engine Tanker

Quint

Utility

Command Unit

### **Pinecroft**

Engine Tanker

Engine Rescue w Cascade System

Brush Truck and UTV Trailer

Utility

The recommended equipment plan reduces the total number of apparatus by five units, which is expected to lower both maintenance and insurance costs. The option of not having an aerial device within the area was carefully evaluated. Based on the building profile in Antis Township and Bellwood Borough—which is predominantly residential, with small commercial structures and no buildings exceeding four stories—a 75-foot aerial ladder truck is considered optimal for the area.

This ladder provides sufficient reach to safely access rooftops and upper floors of the tallest local structures while maintaining operational flexibility in residential streets and rural settings. A 75-foot ladder ensures effective rescue, ventilation, and fire suppression capabilities, meeting community safety needs, and ISO requirements without incurring unnecessary costs or maneuverability challenges associated with longer ladders.

### **Benefits of Consolidation**

Reduced Maintenance & Staffing Needs – fewer vehicles to maintain, staff, and replace.

Cost Savings – lower capital expenditures for new apparatus.

Maintains Coverage – ladder, engine, water, and rescue capabilities preserved.

Flexibility for Low Call Volume – suitable for 575 annual calls; multi-function vehicles are rarely overtaxed.

ISO Compliance – ensures ladder and water supply capabilities without needing multiple single-purpose vehicles.

## **Recommendation 11**

Each fire department should implement a policy for fiscal management. This should include policies and procedures for the handling of cash, tracking of assets, and financial risk management. The management guidelines of the Pennsylvania Auditor General that are used for Volunteer Fire Relief Associations may be helpful in guiding this process for the fire departments as well as their relief associations. The fire department's insurance carrier may also be able to provide information regarding responsible fiscal management.

Antis Township, Bellwood Borough, and the Fire Chiefs should meet regularly to formulate a budget for operating and capital expenses. It is important for Township and Borough officials to understand the financial needs of the fire departments and to fund public fire protection as the Township and Borough deems appropriate for the level of service desired.

To ensure sustainable funding for fire protection services, Antis Township and Bellwood Borough should consider implementing a fire tax. This approach provides a reliable revenue stream that naturally grows with property values. By increasing the fire tax rate in small, manageable increments over time, the municipalities can keep pace with rising costs of fire service delivery without placing sudden financial burdens on residents, supporting both fiscal responsibility and community safety.

## **DCED/GCLGS Fire Peer Consultant Bio**

Dr. Charles J. Miller served as the Fire Peer Consultant for this project, providing subject matter expertise and facilitating overall project development.

Dr. Miller brings over 33 years of combined experience in public safety, including service as a volunteer technical rescue team chief and more than 22 years as a career firefighter, advancing through the ranks from recruit to Captain. He currently serves as the Chief Fire Marshal for the Municipality of Penn Hills, Pennsylvania, the second-largest community in Allegheny County.

Dr. Miller holds a Bachelor of Science in Fire Science from Columbia Southern University, a Master's in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Emergency Management from Waldorf University, and a Doctor of Education from Liberty University. He is a nationally and internationally certified Fire Officer IV and a court-recognized expert in fire suppression, fire investigation, and fire prevention.

In addition to his operational experience, Dr. Miller is an accomplished educator, serving as an instructor for multiple colleges and an adjunct professor for several universities. He is a nationally and internationally certified Fire Instructor III and has contributed as a subject matter expert for curriculum and program development.

Beyond teaching, Dr. Miller provides consulting services to emergency service organizations, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations across the United States, helping improve operational effectiveness, training programs, and emergency response systems.

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# Notes

# Appendix

## Consolidated Antis Township and Bellwood Borough Apparatus Schedule

Type	Pump Minimum	Tank Minimum	Specialty	Use Coverage
Pumper	2000gpm	1000 gallons		Primary Suppression
Pumper Tanker	2000gpm	2500 gallons		Suppression/Water Supply
Pumper/Tanker	2000gpm	2500 gallons		Suppression/Water Supply
Quint	2000gpm	500 gallon	75' Aerial Device	Aerial/ Suppression
Rescue	1250gpm	500 gallon	Cascade System	Rescue Services/ Mobile Cascade
MiniPumper	1500gpm	500 gallon	4X4 Offroad Capable	Suppression/ Wildland
Command			Mid-Size SUV	Chief Command Vehicle

There can be the consideration to purchase a utility vehicle that the fire department can use to do day-to-day errands and non-emergency functions. This vehicle can be a crew cab pickup truck.

Upon the appointment of qualified fire chief, the chief should be able to determine the best apparatus replacement plan since they will possess intimate knowledge of the current state of fire apparatus that was chosen to remain in service after the consolidation.