



MEMORADUM

TO: Franklin County Fire & EMS Organizations
Franklin County Municipal Leaders

FROM: Scott K. Ryno, Consultant

DATE: August 1, 2020

SUBJECT: Franklin County Fire/EMS Study UPDATE

On behalf of the Franklin County Emergency Services Alliance and the Study Committee I/we are presenting you with this document to provide information on the Findings and Opportunities that have been discussed at the Committee level. We ask that you take the opportunity to review the attached 16 items that have been compiled.

The Committee will be finalizing Recommendations and Improvements for all 16 Findings and Opportunities contained within this document. The intention is to schedule a county-wide meeting in the September time frame to release and discuss those Recommendations.

We appreciate all of your time and support in this process to date and we look forward to working with you in the coming months as we release and discuss the overall Recommendations.

Thank you for everything you continue to do each day for the citizens of Franklin County to provide Fire/EMS services.

Be Safe!



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #1:

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION OF VOLUNTEER FIRE & EMS PERSONNEL

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: Over the past few years the number of available volunteers for both Fire and EMS responses has continued to decrease. There have been a number of studies both formally and informally across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and all results indicate that volunteer numbers are decreasing at an alarming rate. As call volume or requests for service continues to increase, available providers continue to decrease and the cost burden to provide the service rises. This leads to the burn out of providers on the front lines as well as the volunteer leadership of the organization. Despite the various studies and recommendations that have been put forth to date the trend continues downward. For career Fire/EMS providers there is a significant challenge to compete with other healthcare and related emergency services professions in regard to wage and benefit packages. Historically, the wage scale in a rural area of the Commonwealth is considered to be below average, therefore making it increasingly difficult to attract staffing. In the best decade, the training requirements and total hours that must be committed to meeting training standards has significantly increased, thus creating another challenge to the recruitment and retention of volunteers. In Pennsylvania, in general, and certainly throughout Franklin County, many organizations heavily rely on fund raising activities to support the operation budget of the organization. In many cases, the same group of dedicated volunteers staff the emergency vehicles for incident responses and work the multitude of fundraising events in addition to serving in leadership roles to run the day to day operations of the business side of the organization and training to meet the rigid standards set by the state.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: This problem or challenge is certainly not unique to Franklin County Fire/EMS organizations, the same issues occur today all across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In many cases, organizations do not have a written or documented recruitment and retention plan as the time, funding and resources are not always readily available to commit to this effort. However, in order to successfully administer a volunteer recruitment and retention program or effort the following items must be taken into consideration:

- The development of a local plan that incorporates the current needs of the individual organizations and allows for future growth both within Fire/EMS entities both operationally and administratively.
 - The plan must be in writing and adopted by all stake holders to insure success.
- The development of a collaborative marketing plan for recruitment and retention programs to “sell” volunteerism to prospective members.
- The plan will require time, financial commitment, and leadership. The topic of recruitment and retention must be a priority and on the forefront of leadership and the organizations agenda at all times.



FINDING / OPPORTUNITY #2:

COUNTY-WIDE STANDARD OF COVER RESPONSE PLAN FOR BOTH FIRE & EMS

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: In the past, the number and type of Fire/EMS units was largely in part determined by the membership/leadership of the organization on behalf of the community and mutual/automatic aid communities they serve. In many cases, the decisions were not based on statistical data or new risks to a specific area such as the need to purchase an Aerial device or upgrade an EMS agency from Basic Life Support to Advanced Life Support services. As well, cost was not always a consideration as the majority if not all of the associated costs were supported through the local Emergency Services organization. In many cases the community simply understands and expects that when they call 911 for a Fire/EMS emergency that personnel and apparatus will show up quickly. However, the community has no real understanding of how quickly a unit will respond and arrive as well as the training and abilities of the arriving crew/units. There are many factors that drive response times, arrival times, crew standards for training and competency and the number of units that will be dispatched to any given emergency. Again, historically these decisions have been delegated to the Fire/EMS Chief or Emergency Services organization that services a respective community. As the manner in which emergency services are delivered continues to change and adapt it will be necessary to implement a plan that is driven by call volume statistics, financial data, personnel data and training standards to insure that the appropriate services are arriving in the allotted time frame with the appropriate number of trained providers 24/7/365 in all areas of Franklin County.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania there are very few requirements to respond to a fire emergency at the State level. An organization and/or municipality can elect to implement additional requirements, however in many cases that is not the course of action for a variety of reasons that include the lack of available volunteer staffing. For EMS organizations throughout the County they are required to complete and maintain licensure through the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of EMS. Through the licensure process the EMS agencies are required to meet equipment, personnel and training, record keeping and response time standards. Franklin County Fire/EMS units are currently operating as you would expect to see in a rural portion of Pennsylvania. There are many different training standards within the organizations and a number of different response models to include: 100% home responders volunteer system, live in volunteer firefighters, part-time career staffing and full-time career staffing. The response or box alarm system is not standardized and is handled and decided by the local Fire/EMS Chief and Emergency Services organization with a varying degree of approval from the municipality. In some cases, the municipality provides input and then assumes overall responsibility for the decisions the local Fire/EMS Chief has made. There is no identified and accepted response or standard of cover plan for each municipality or county in its entirety. This plan would detail the agreed upon standards and response plans between all affected parties: Emergency Services organization, municipal leaders, and the community.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #3:

CAPITAL EXPENSES PLAN (FACILITIES & APPARATUS) BETWEEN FIRE/EMS & MUNICIPALITIES

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: Historically, Fire and EMS organizations planned, purchased, and funded the facilities and apparatus that they deemed appropriate and needed to serve their community and mutual/automatic aid partners. The organizations would seek financial support from municipal leaders, engage the community through fund-raising efforts and proceed with implementation of the plan for facilities and apparatus. In some cases these plans follow guidelines such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for apparatus and in other cases organizational leadership would simply decide it was time to move forward with replacing a particular piece of apparatus, adding a piece of apparatus and upgrading or replacing a facility. Pennsylvania Fire/EMS organizations operate on an automatic/mutual aid basis and in most cases serve more than one community or municipality and then can service many communities for automatic and mutual aid depending on the specialty apparatus they deploy. The same holds true for EMS agencies and especially if they provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) services. These issues present additional challenges from a funding perspective, as an organization may need to look at apparatus replacement or upgrades that are not driven by their respective community, but a need by mutual and automatic aid partners. In many cases across the Commonwealth, a community is receiving specialized Fire Department services or upgraded (ALS) emergency medical services; however, they are providing no direct financial support for those services. This creates an additional financial burden on the emergency services organization and/or the home municipality and citizens they serve.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Throughout Franklin County some organizations have a long-range plan in place for apparatus replacement. In some cases, there are funds dedicated for future apparatus replacement. This is not the case in all organizations. In some cases, there is no plan in place and no dedicated funding toward apparatus replacement. At the municipal level, some entities are dedicating funds toward capital expenses such as apparatus replacement and facility upgrades, however this is certainly not the case in all areas of the County, nor is it consistent where it is taking place. The current arrangements that are in place are geared toward Fire and in many cases do not include a funding and replacement mechanism for EMS vehicles and facility upgrades.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #4:

COUNTY-WIDE GRANT WRITING APPROACH & SYSTEM

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: Today, across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania fire services are still provided primarily by volunteers. The volunteer system is faced with a magnitude of challenges that include an increasing call volume, additional fund-raising requirements and declining volunteers to complete the overall tasks of the organization. In most career staffed organizations staffing is at bare minimum levels and in many cases management level staff members are also assisting with staffing on either a part or full-time basis in addition to their management level duties. As funding becomes more important than ever with declining revenue streams, emergency services organizations have an immediate need to capitalize on any and all grant funding opportunities. There are a number of grant programs available to Fire/EMS organizations from Federal, State and Local government, as well as Foundation and private funding sources. However, in order to research and apply for the grant programs it takes time and resources. In many cases, emergency services organizations lack the manpower resources to complete grant writing services as well as the knowledge and skill that it takes to be successful in the grant writing field on an ongoing basis. In many grant programs there is value in submitting and addressing a challenge or deficiency on a regional basis or in this case potentially a county-wide approach. Currently, the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant (AFG) program recognizes this fact and awards high dollar (up to \$2 million dollars) for Regional grants that would encompass the current population of Franklin County based on the latest census data.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Fire/EMS units throughout Franklin County are applying for and being awarded the grant available through the Office of the Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner on an annual basis. There are both Fire and EMS organizations that have successfully applied for Federal grants for equipment, vehicles and recruitment and retention programs. However, not all organizations apply and not all organizations that have applied have been successful. There are organizations that apply to local and private funding sources for smaller grant projects with success. Recently, there was a county-wide effort to submit a Regional AFG application for the purchase of portable radios. Up until that point, there have been efforts to submit Regional AFG applications between a few organizations, however not as a complete county-wide effort. In addition, many grant programs (especially Federal) have on-going and intense reporting requirements that must be met. Therefore, the organizations must dedicate administrative resources to the grant procurement and reporting process. Currently, some organizations utilize internal volunteers or career staff members to author and manage grant writing services and other contract this service out to a professional grant writer or third-party company that provides this service.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #5:

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL FOR THE FIRE/EMS SYSTEM

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: For many years, Emergency Services organizations supported their funding requirements through their own efforts with minimal, or in some cases, no direct tax dollar support. For Fire Departments this meant and continues to mean many hours spent in fundraising activities planning and staffing bingo events, chicken bar-b-que's, dinners, carnivals, ticket sales and list goes on. EMS agencies bill for services provided, thus a significant source of income. However, for EMS agencies the collection rate and reimbursement rate has continued to decline each year and while expenses rise the reimbursement rate has not kept pace. In addition, many Fire and EMS organizations send out a mail solicitation fund drive, or while EMS agencies send out a membership/subscription drive. This revenue source also continues to decline with many reporting rates of return in the mid 20 percent range or now only 1 out of every 4 citizens contributing. In many volunteer systems the largest revenue source is fund-raising events. There are a number of on-going challenges with this funding source that include the lack of available manpower to staff the events, unknown income or the inability to budget for this revenue stream as well as declining attendance from the community; the result is a reduction in overall funding. There is currently no mandate that a municipality provide any level of sustainable funding to Fire/EMS organizations and they can choose to provide any level of funding they desire to support either the daily operation and/or capital equipment purchases. There are municipal government entities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that have a dedicated Emergency Services or Fire/EMS tax; however, the majority do not.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: There is no unified system in place in Franklin County to provide sustainable funding for Fire/EMS organizations moving forward. The current model relies heavily on fund-raising efforts of the volunteers, coupled with community support to attend the events, and send in their annual donation to the fund drive or subscription campaign. In some cases, municipal support is in place and is continuing to increase in an effort to support the rising cost of emergency services, however that is not the case in all areas of the County. There are areas where municipal leaders have implemented a per resident or per capita fee that is designated for Fire and EMS within the respective municipality. Again, this is on a case by case basis for each municipality. In limited situations, where the municipality is career staffed the Fire/EMS services are part and parcel of the municipal budget and funded through taxpayer dollars.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #6:

INTER-MUNICIPAL AGREEMENTS FOR MUTUAL AID SERVICES

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: Throughout Pennsylvania the majority of communities and Fire/EMS entities rely on automatic and mutual aid services. In the case of the Fire Service it is not possible and financially prudent to own and operate all the various special services (Rescue, Ladder, Brush, etc.) that may be needed at any point throughout the year, thus it requires assistance from neighboring communities and emergency services organizations. For EMS entities with higher call volume, it is customary to provide assistance regularly from one community to another. In the rural setting you normally find Advanced Life Support (ALS) services covering a larger geographic area to support the local or community based Basic Life Support (BLS) services. Thus, in the case of ALS services, they will be providing automatic and mutual aid on a daily basis to numerous municipalities.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County Fire/EMS units function in the role of automatic and/or mutual aid regularly depending on the organization. Depending on the location of the organization, there are many times that units actually leave the Commonwealth and cross over and provide assistance in Maryland. Thus, there is a need to clearly define expectations and responsibilities from a financial support component and worker's compensation insurance aspect. There should be a standard document that is utilized by the Emergency Services organizations and the municipal government entities to ensure that all parties are properly insured and covered, and that expectations are clear for all parties involved.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #7:

ENGAGE & PARTICIPATE IN FIRE/EMS LEGISLATION

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: As the delivery of Fire/EMS services across the country continues to change and the challenges mount surrounding staffing and funding, proposed legislative actions are on the rise. There are many current and proposed pieces of legislation that will have an immediate impact, be it positive or negative, on the delivery of emergency services immediately as well as into the future. The legislative process is looking at funding, staffing, training, recruitment and retention initiatives, as well as other topics. The legislative process can be long and time consuming. However, it has been proven that as an industry we must be actively involved and engaged to insure that the legislation contains the correct language and proposes to implement solutions that are in the best interest of Fire/EMS services delivery. Recently, there have been as many as 15-20 pieces of legislation in draft form and/or being considered at the House of Representatives and State Senate level. There are statewide advocacy groups such as the PA Fire and Emergency Services Institute working on behalf of the emergency services organizations daily in Harrisburg. However, we must maintain a local grass roots effort to realize success in the legislative efforts moving forward.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County is fortunate to have active representation at all levels of government that are working in support of the efforts to create solutions for Fire and EMS organizations across the County and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. At the organizational level, leaders are working as diligently as possible to provide information to the legislators and ensure the voice of their organization is heard. However, this is difficult in many cases due to limited resources, lack of daytime availability to meet and discuss, and in some cases the organization simply does not understand the legislative process and what impact it will have on the future. It is paramount to have the voice of each organization heard on the various topics. In many cases it makes sense to have a county-wide voice. At present, there are various groups that meet representing emergency services such as the County Fire Chief's Association, County EMS Council and the Franklin County Emergency Services Alliance, but there is no one point of contact to lead legislative efforts on behalf of emergency services within the county.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #8:

COUNTY-WIDE CAREER FIRE/EMS STAFFING SYSTEM

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: As volunteerism declines it has become necessary to employee staff to provide both Fire and EMS services in many communities across the county. This change began a number of years ago for many communities in order to staff EMS responses. Today, many communities are staffed entirely by career EMS providers or at minimum part-time staffing to supplement a volunteer system. While the fire service in many communities have remained volunteer, the transition to some form of career staffing (drivers, part-time, etc.) is a pendulum that has begun to swing over the past couple of years. Of course, some communities also employee a full-time career fire department. The initial focus turns to financial concerns when an organization or community determines it must implement some form of career staffing. However, there are many other items that must be considered and implemented such as: hiring process, employee manual, human resource functions and supervision. All of these items take time and resources to develop and then a financial commitment to maintain on an ongoing basis. For smaller organizations, these systems can be a financial burden to implement. As well, it can be challenging to recruit and retain staff for smaller organizations or systems due to the inability to offer competitive pay rates and/or adequate benefit packages.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Throughout the County there are larger organizations providing both Fire and EMS services with career staffing and have adequate systems in place. However, there are a number of entities that employee Basic Life Support personnel to work either full or part-time that are facing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff as well as adequate systems to manage the career staff. These issues are inherent in smaller organizations that only employee a limited number of staff members. As well, with Franklin County being rural in nature and the overall number of EMS providers on the decline, it is recognized that many career providers work at more than one service. As the fire service evolves and it becomes necessary to employee additional career firefighters to provide services, these same issues will arise for organizations that begin to employee career fire personnel.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #9:

COUNTY-WIDE EMS MEMBERSHIP / SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAM

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: In many areas across the county and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania it is common practice to offer a membership or subscription program to residents as it pertains to emergency medical services. In certain instances, the program will only pertain to Basic Life Support (BLS) services and in other circumstances the program also covers Advanced Life Support (ALS) services. There are times where the same organization provides both levels of service, therefore the BLS/ALS membership is one fee paid to one organization. At times, a BLS organization will partner with a respective ALS organization and provide a portion of the funds collected to the ALS partner for that portion of the services. In most cases, the respective organizations will reserve the right to still bill and collect from any applicable third-party insurance carriers for the services provided. The challenge that can arise is if a community member subscribes to Company A and then they are unavailable at the time of the call for whatever reason and Company B arrives and transports. In some cases, there will be a reciprocal membership agreement between Company A and Company B; however, that is not always the case. As well, depending on how ALS services are provided in a geographic area it may be necessary for a community member to join the BLS entity and then join a second time in order to be covered for ALS services. From an operational standpoint, some organizations perform all aspects of a membership or subscription program in-house and others utilize a third-party service to perform the task.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Throughout the County the organizations offer an annual membership or subscription program for EMS related services. There are some organizations that reciprocate with other organizations; however, there is no standard for this to occur currently and it is simply handled on a case by case basis. Depending on where a community member resides in the County (boundary lines) they may need to look at purchasing multiple memberships to insure they have the coverage they desire or to include ALS coverage. As well, many organizations report that the overall success rate of the membership or subscription program continues to decline each year. The overall management and cost of the program has become a burden and challenge for some of the smaller organizations to maintain and administer.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #10:

COMMUNICATION PLAN BETWEEN FIRE/EMS ORGANIZATIONS AND MUNICIPALITIES

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: In the ever-changing world of emergency services today, communication is paramount and key more than ever. It is critical that organizational leadership and municipal officials are on the same page and have a keen understanding of the needs of the community as it relates to emergency services and the ability of the Fire/EMS entities to meet those demands on a daily basis. This communication includes statistics regarding call volume or requests for service, financial needs both operationally and capital purchases, staffing needs and any new risks the community or organization may be facing. The manner and frequency the information should be made available and in what format must be determined and agreed upon. It is important to maximize the time of all involved, therefore a system must be in place to insure the information is thorough and timely; however not an over burden to either party or that the information being supplied is of no use to the end user.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: All organizations are reporting to their respective municipality in some capacity; however, the detail and frequency varies greatly. In some cases, municipalities reported they felt they were informed and aware of the monthly activities of the respective organization, financial condition as well as current and future needs. However, in other cases it was reported that there was a lack of information and communication and they did not feel there was an adequate communication path between the Fire/EMS entity and municipal government officials.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #11:

INCREASE CLASSES & USAGE OF THE COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING CENTER

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: The demand for training continues to increase for both Fire and EMS organizations for both new recruits, as well as on-going education for existing members. There are a number of factors that affect the ability of volunteer members to train that include: cost, location, time of day and availability of certain training classes. There is a movement across the Commonwealth to place various training components on-line in an effort to combat some of these issues that have been identified over the course of a number of years. In many organizations, the one key to success is the ability to host training sessions either at the emergency services organization or in very close proximity. For EMS organizations it is increasingly difficult to recruit and train members to the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) level when the class is in excess of 200 hours to complete. For both Fire and EMS entities the goal is to attract and retain the younger population and train them for a long-lasting career in Fire and/or EMS.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County is fortunate to have the availability of a county-wide training center. The center is able to host certain classes and also work collaboratively with the local Community College system to offer certain levels of Fire Department certifications. As well, the Center has worked with the local Vocational Technical School system to offer programs to school age children. The school has also hosted an annual Junior Firefighter Academy that has been very successful. The county-wide training center has been very successful to date with limited funding and resources and all volunteer staffing in regard to administration of the center.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #12:

ESTABLISH SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR THE COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING CENTER

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: The ability to meet the training needs of emergency services providers at the local level is key now more than ever. As the number of required hours continues to increase as well as the rising cost, it is paramount to offer flexible scheduling based on the needs of the local organizations and volunteers, as well as career staff. For the volunteer members it is necessary to work around work schedules and at times it may be necessary to offer non-traditional schedules to complete the classes. As well, on the career side there is a necessity to limit or reduce overtime to save budget funds related to training classes. It is also necessary to complete the training and the same class may need to be repeated over multiple days in order to accomplish the same materials for all shifts. Normally, a county-wide training facility has full-time administration on-site that in many cases doubles as instructional staff for certain daytime programs to increase availability and decrease expenses. There is also the ability to contract instructional staff through the local community college system, however that increases the per student registration fee as those costs must be built into the overall course costs.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County has an active Public Safety Training Center that is currently utilized within the allotted resources. However, the Center operates on a limited budget with no administrative staff – all volunteer management. In order to expand the Center, increase class and instructor availability and offer additional programs, it will be necessary to provide a dedicated funding mechanism for the Training Center. These funds must be secure in order that the volunteer board of directors can budget and plan for the future to meet the needs of the emergency services organizations. A dedicated funding stream would also allow for the board of directors to secure a full-time Administrator or Director that could also assist with instructional needs that may arise in the future with increase of activity at the Center.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #13:

ADMINISTRATION/INSTRUCTION AT THE COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING CENTER

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: A county-wide Public Safety Training Center can offer many local options for training and certification as it related to the required programs for volunteer and career Fire/EMS providers. As the training needs continue to increase across the industry, the value of a local Training Center is significant from a scheduling standpoint as well as limiting travel and costs. An active Public Safety Training Center is a business of its own and operates on a budget with facilities to manage, instructors to schedule and manage, and all other components that are part of managing the daily operations of a business. In many cases, a county-wide Public Safety Training Center reports to county government and receives county government funding. The make up or administration of the various facilities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania vary, however in most all cases there is some form of paid staff or administration to oversee and manage the facilities and operations.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County to date has done an excellent job related to the county-wide Public Safety Training Center in regard to scheduling classes, maintaining the facilities, and working to increase the opportunities and facilities available. However, these efforts are all completed on a volunteer basis; thus, it is difficult to commit the time necessary for day to day operations and on-going future planning for the facility. Currently, all of these services are provided with a limited budget each year.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #14:

NEW OVERSIGHT STRUCTURE FOR FIRE/EMS SYSTEM

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: For many years across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Fire and EMS entities have operated as stand-alone corporations with very little involvement from the municipalities in which they serve. As volunteers continue to decrease and the traditional fund-raising dollars continue to shrink, there is a need to change the service delivery model and subsequent funding model across the Emergency Services spectrum. In the last decade, there have been a growing number of mergers and consolidations, regionalization and in some cases the organizations have ceased to operate for a variety of reasons. As well, Fire Departments are seeing a growing need to employ part-time and in some cases full-time career personnel in order to meet their daily mission and respond to emergencies in a timely manner with trained personnel. In many cases, the choice to change the current model has come from within the entities involved, however, there are also numerous examples in which a municipality has stepped in and mandated change and initiated the new system or delivery model. As Fire and EMS entities seek and require additional municipal assistance in regard to funding, there will be a need for a new oversight model to allow for municipal involvement in regard to financial decisions. In some communities, these changes have been welcomed and implemented and in other communities this has been a real struggle between the Emergency Service entities and the municipal leaders. There are a number of factors that drive the feasibility of a merger, consolidation, or regionalization. In many cases there are organizations in place that have served the community for many decades and change can be difficult. In rural communities across Pennsylvania it can be especially challenging to reduce the current number of stations from a response footprint due to the massive geography that is currently covered by many rural Fire and EMS entities.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County currently operates on a traditional Pennsylvania-style system in that the organizations are largely independently owned and operated with a varying degree of cooperation and assistance from the local municipalities they serve. The potential to merge or consolidate entire organizations will be problematic in most cases due to the physical locations of the organizations and the territory they currently respond to. Thus, if an individual Fire/EMS organization were to cease to exist it could potentially significantly increase response times and negatively affect the overall outcome of an incident. Today, Franklin County Fire/EMS organizations are providing service and maintaining their overall mission; however the ability to continue that level of service is becoming more of a challenge from a financial aspect as well as the available volunteer staff both operationally as well as administratively. A number of organizations currently employ staff either part-time or full-time for the provision of providing EMS coverage. There are organizations that also employ career fire personnel either part-time or full-time as well.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #15:

EMERGENCY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: Today more than ever in Emergency Services, the administrative challenges and time commitment to meet the demands of an organization are insurmountable. In most cases, the majority, if not all, of these services and functions are handled by volunteers. In addition, those same volunteers are tasked with responding to incidents, training, and participating in fund-raising efforts. Through a regionalized approach, a form of Emergency Services Administration could assist with many of the day-to-day tasks that would allow the member organizations to focus on incident response and training as opposed to many of the other daily tasks. In many communities throughout Pennsylvania there are still volunteers responding to incidents, however the volunteer member only has so many hours to dedicate to the Fire/EMS organization. Therefore, utilizing these same members for all administrative tasks is burdensome and only takes away from their ability to dedicate their time to incident response and training. It is not feasible for all organizations to hire a career individual to perform tasks for the organization that would traditionally be performed by volunteers. However, at a county or regional level it is feasible to hire a position to support the overall Fire/EMS system moving forward.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Franklin County in general currently follows the above stated model. Across the County most organizations are performing all tasks with volunteer personnel. This includes administrative, operational, and fund-raising efforts. There are instances where some or all duties are handled by career personnel, but that is the minority. If certain tasks, responsibilities, and duties can be performed at a county or regional level this will assist the volunteer organizations and promote longevity of the volunteer system moving forward.



FINDING/OPPORTUNITY #16:

CONSOLIDATION OF CURRENT LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS INTO AN EMERGENCY SERVICES ADVISORY GROUP

COMMONWEALTH BACKGROUND: Now more than ever, communication between Fire/EMS and Municipal leaders is key. The challenge has always been balancing the need to meet and discuss items/issues versus the available time to do so considering that in many cases those in leadership positions are volunteer. Any time a volunteer is committed to a meeting that is time away from the ability to train or potentially be available for incident response. However, it is also vital to communicate openly and effectively to ensure that everyone involved understands what the organization is today and what the future plan looks like. Therefore, the key is to find the correct balance to meet and discuss while streamlining the time spent. There are certainly issues that only effect Fire or only effect EMS, however in many cases there is cross over of the disciplines. If you are a leader or organization that provides both Fire and EMS, you find yourself attending various meetings that end up crossing over disciplines and can be counterproductive from a time perspective.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OBSERVATION: Currently in Franklin County, the Fire Chief's Association holds a meeting, the EMS Council holds a meeting and the Franklin County Emergency Services Alliance holds a meeting. In addition, the Training Center meets and there are also various sub-committees and subject-specific meetings that occur throughout the month or quarter. Also, municipalities meet at least once per month if not more in public forum that Emergency Services leaders may or may not attend.