



Planning Report

May 2021

## **Leadership Message**

Dear Residents, Friends, and Colleagues,

The intention of this report is for fact finding and information pertinent to the creation of a strategic plan for the Erhart York Fire Department. Fire & emergency services personnel all share two objectives: We are all dedicated to protecting the lives and property of those we serve, and we are equally dedicated to ensuring that at the end of the day everyone goes home. With these two ideas in mind, we believe that data driven decisions are best suited to drive the Fire Department and best prepare the Department for the future. We have done our best for each section of this report to provide a brief explanation of its purpose. The planning process is continual and at times difficult, but we look forward to creating this road map for the Erhart York Fire Department.

Sincerely,

Fire Chief Jason Creamer

## **Current Operations**

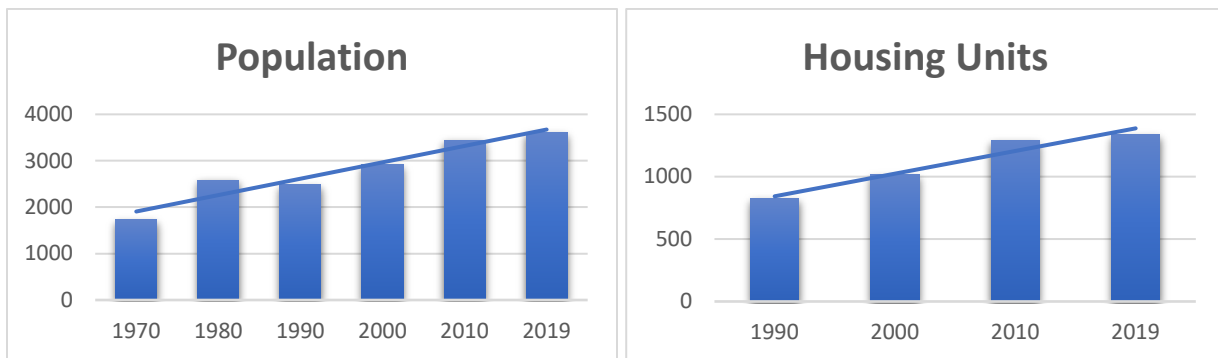
On July 29, 1952, a handful of residents gathered at a nearby establishment in the community of Erhart, Ohio to form a much-needed volunteer fire department. They originally served areas of York, Litchfield, Liverpool, and part of Grafton Township. In 1954 the fire department built their first station at the corner of state route 57 and Erhart Road. On August 13, 1955, the Erhart Volunteer Fire Department became incorporated and in 1959 entered the first contract with the York Township Trustees. In 1975 the department became the sole provider of fire protection in York Township. The Erhart Rescue Squad (EMS) started service in July 1974 with a used GMC ambulance, purchased during that year. In 1977, the York Township Trustees built the current station at the intersection of state routes 18 and 252 and it was expanded in 1991 to accommodate all current vehicles. In 2006, after more than a year of discernment, the present and active members of the Erhart Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. voted to disband this fire department and transfer all control of operations and assets of the organization to York Township. Erhart was the last private fire department in Medina County.

As we continue to evaluate our operation, we realize there are additional challenges that we need to address to meet the safety needs of our growing community. The challenges are both budgetary challenges and challenges brought forth by both natural and man-made hazards. We rely on property tax for our operating budget, and even though the incident types we respond to have continued to grow since 1952, we have not had an increase in taxes since. We passed a replacement levy in 2006 but have not had an additional levy. Our EMS Billing revenue has declined; even though we are billing close to the same amount over the past years. This is

due to negotiated rates and allowed expenses governed by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Our district includes the Buckeye School Campus with 2,300 students and 200 faculty while operating, and a group home that is staffed 24/7 that provide special care to clients with intellectual disabilities from 18 to 80 years old. The daily traffic that goes through our community includes commercial vehicles carrying quantities of chemicals that pose risks to our roadways. We have a Trans-Canada transmission pumping station in the township and the Sunoco Pipeline and NEXUS pipeline transmission lines of flammable liquids and gases. Other high hazard areas to note are one of the largest substations in Ohio, a branch of the Medina County Library System, a County and Township Park, and several light commercial occupancies. The CSX Railway and Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway both travel through our township both day and night.

York Township has seen continuous growth over the past decades and shows no sign of slowing. Some projections even place York Township as a new area of Medina Growth as Medina and Montville Townships run out of development room and become “land-locked”. The 2020 decennial census results were presented to the President of the United States in April 2021 and not publicly available as of this research. 2019 projections show the York Township population at 3,600 with 1,337 housing units. This places the projected housing unit growth under the actual so we believe the population could be higher than 3,600.



To date, the Department has thirty-five (35) members. Thirty-one are active fire and EMS certified members. The additional four are retired Department members that provide many public education and relation opportunities. These members contributed 4,981 hours over the last year for training, incidents, and station duties. It should be noted that many of these hours were during the height of a global pandemic. This time is volunteered or compensated at a rate much lower than minimum wage. The attendance and training requirements for our firefighters has long passed the capacity of a volunteer department. Now we are at the point where the current operational model needs to change to provide an efficient and consistent level of service to the growing community. It is our responsibility as community leaders to keep pace with the growing demands by staying in front of our staffing, training and equipment needs.

## **Personnel and Training**

Of the thirty-one active members, six are certified to the Volunteer Firefighter Level. This is the basic firefighter training recognized in Ohio and consists of 36 hours of training. Four are Firefighters Level I this certification consists of 160 hours of training. The other twenty-one are Firefighters Level II, the highest firefighter certification in Ohio, and consists of 240 hours of training. On top of this, all have completed a 16-hour Hazardous Materials Certification and a 16-hour Emergency Vehicle Operator Course. All firefighters in Ohio are required to complete 54 hours of continuing education every three years. The department has ten Emergency Medical Technicians. These members have completed a minimum of 150-hour EMT course and must complete an additional 40 hours of continuing education, in addition to the firefighter time, every three years. The department has fifteen paramedics and one member in paramedic school. Paramedic school is an incredible commitment of not only time, but money. The men and women who commit to medic school invest over 1,000 hours and must pass a state exam to be certified. They provide the highest level of prehospital care that citizens will receive after dialing 911. The level of care provided in many growing communities today is the level of care that was only available in suburban areas not too many years ago. Paramedics must also complete 86 hours of continuing education every three years in addition to the firefighter time.

Listed above are simply initial certifications and do not include specialty certifications that some of our members have including rope rescue, hazardous materials technician, water rescue, confined space, fire and EMS instructors, fire officer, and national incident management.

The average length of service for our firefighters is over 13 years, which greatly surpasses the area average and national average of a volunteer firefighter of seven year. Twelve of our members are career firefighters/paramedics at other agencies, which as expected is a great advantage to the department when it comes to experience and training. However, like many other departments during this global pandemic, the stress on our personnel was stress our entire department experienced. These career members were regularly being called in for overtime and working up to 48-hour shifts. This challenged the Department even more with these members unable to contribute their normal hours.

Our department needs to be a place that our firefighters want to stay. Accruing, outfitting, and training members is very expensive. Some of our benefits and facilities are second when compared to other departments. This makes it harder to keep good firefighters and recruit new ones.

## Hazard Analysis

The department regularly conducts a hazard analysis to determine what type of incidents to prepare for. These events do not occur often but involve a great deal of risk. Our preparedness efforts reduce the risk to the community and our firefighters. Hazard analysis is an ongoing process since the hazards we face are constantly changing. We believe strongly in *'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure'* in managing a community crisis. 'High' probability events are likely to occur within one year of the Hazard Analysis completion; 'Medium' probability is likely to occur within five years of the Hazard Analysis completion. The fire department also works closely with surrounding departments and the county in all areas of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Participation includes reviews of the Medina County All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan, Hazardous Materials Response Plan, and countywide Mitigation Plan. Overall hazard analysis and community risk reduction planning in York Township is lacking. It is a very large time commitment, and we often rely on what the Medina County Emergency Management Agency provides. This planning and the grant writing to fulfill the needs is another prime example of how additional staffing of the fire department could assist with more than just incident response.

<b>Event</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Preparedness</b>	<b>Needs</b>
<b>Pandemic</b>	High	Training, SOGs, PPE, Squad & Station Sanitizing equipment, vaccines	Staffing, PPE supplies, vaccines
<b>Flooding, Ice, Water</b>	High	Training, SOGs, Suits, PFDs, County Swiftwater Team	Additional Training w/ County Team
<b>Severe Thunderstorm/Tornado Damage</b>	High	Training, SOGs, Chain Saws, Lighting, cones, Mutual Aid, Station Generator	Service Department, Street Barricades
<b>Off-Road Rescue/Fire</b>	Medium	Training, SOGs, Mutual Aid	Quick-Attack Truck, UTV
<b>Snowfall, Ice, Blizzard</b>	Medium	Revisions to current apparatus, Mutual Aid	Service Department, Street Barricades
<b>Hazardous Materials Release; Gas station, CSX Railroad, Trucking, Industry</b>	Medium	Training, SOGs, meters, booms, absorbent pads, County Hazmat Team	Training, UTV, meters
<b>Mass Casualty Incident</b>	Medium	County MCI Plan, Training, SOGs, MCI kits, County MCI Trailers, Mutual Aid, County MCI Exercise	Continue MCI Training
<b>Active Shooter, Violence</b>	Medium	SOGs, tourniquets, 3 helmets & 3 body armor, Rescue Task Force training	Training w/Sheriff & FD/EMS
<b>Confined Space, Structural Collapse, Tower Rescue, Trench Collapse</b>	Medium	Training, SOGs, rope, meters, County Technical Rescue Team	Meters, training with County Teams

## Apparatus Inventory

Apparatus are the vehicles used to perform tasks and deliver service. These purchases are carefully researched and planned to serve our community. The condition below is calculated from a formula considering age, mileage, hours, condition, and repair expenses of the apparatus.

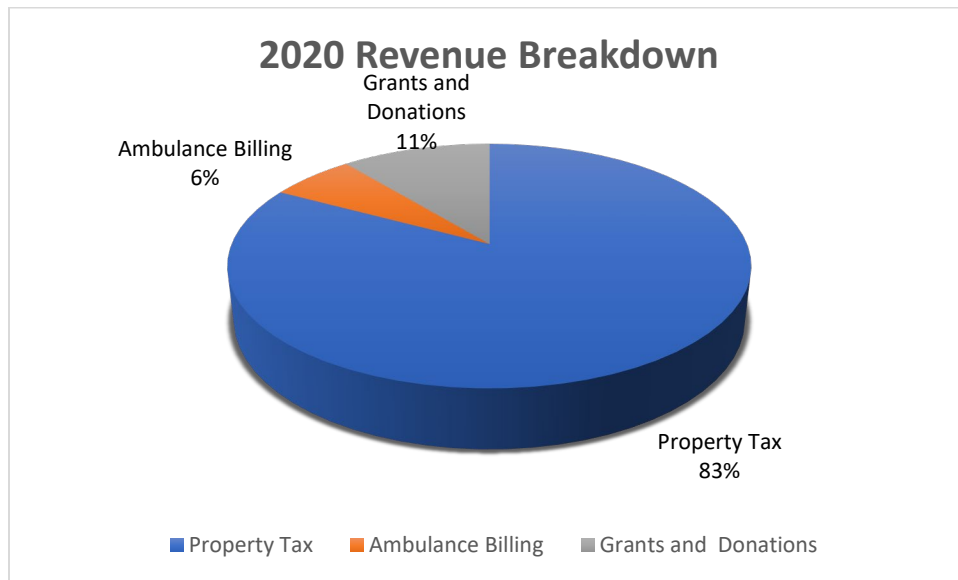
<b>Apparatus #, Year, Make, Type</b>	<b>Miles/ Engine Hrs.</b>	<b>Water Tank/ Pump Size</b>	<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Replacement Cost (Vehicle Only)</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Year to Replace</b>
<b>Engine 51-1, 2013 Sutphen Pumper</b>	8,433 miles/ 654 hours	750 gal. /1500 GPM	SCBA, 4 Gas Meter, Ventilation Fan, Chain Saw, EMS Equip. & AED	\$525,000.00	Excellent	2033
<b>Engine 52-1, 2017 Sutphen Tanker/ Pumper</b>	6,719 miles/ 319 hours	3000 gal./ 1500 GPM	SCBA, Portable Water Cistern, EMS Equip. & AED	\$425,000.00	Excellent	2037
<b>Ladder 56-1, 2001 Pierce Quint,</b>	16,314 miles/ 1802 hours	500 gal./ 1500 GPM	61' Aerial Ladder, Auto Extrication Tools, Chain saw, Cutoff saw, Rope, Ice & Water Rescue, EMS Equip. & AED	Replace 56 and 54 with Quick Attack Mini Pumper	Needs Immediate Consideration	N/A
<b>Brush 54-1, 1995 Ford F350</b>	11,384 miles	150 gal./70 GPM	Chain saw, Forestry fire equipment	\$280,000.00	Needs Immediate Consideration	2015
<b>Car 56-1, 2000 Chevy Suburban</b>	41,539 miles		Command Unit, EMS Equip. & AED	\$75,000.00	Satisfactory (Qualifies for Replacement)	2014
<b>Ambulance 57-1, 2017 Ford E450</b>	6191 miles/ 430 hours		Advanced Life Support, LUCAS CPR Device, Power Cot, Power Load	\$250,000.00	Excellent	2031
<b>Ambulance 57-2, 2010 Ford E450</b>	25,077 miles/ 2040 hours		Advanced Life Support, Power Cot, Power Load	\$250,000.00	Good	2024

## Department Benchmarking

Benchmarking is the process of measuring the performance of the department against a similar department in run volume, response time, services provided, etc. This can be used to determine gaps in the metrics measured and opportunities for improvement. The National Fire Protection Agency sets the standard for a rural volunteer fire department to respond to a structure fire with a minimum of six members in 14 minutes 80% of the time. Over the past four structure fires in two years in York Township we met the standard 0% of the time. The national standard for emergency medical services is an 8-minute response time 100% of the time. Over the past two years we met this standard 10% of the time. In 2020 the Department had insufficient staffing to cover 46 of 305 incidents, or 15% of our incidents (automatic aid plans are set up to ensure these residents do get service).

<b>Community</b>	<b>Erhart/York</b>	<b>Valley City</b>	<b>Litchfield</b>	<b>Lafayette</b>	<b>Chatham</b>
Population	3600	5740	3388	7814	2078
Square Miles	20	25	25	25	25
ISO Score	5/5Y	4/4Y		4/4X	4/4Y
<b>Volume</b>					
2020 Total Call Volume	305	610		714	
2020 EMS Calls	201	352		409	
2020 Building Fires	13	14		7	
<b>Staffing/Response</b>					
# of FF	31	35	17	29	24
# of EMTs	10	14	10	14	
# of Paramedics	15	21	5	14	
2020 Average response time from tone to on scene	16 m 45 s	9 m 31 s		7 m 55 s	12 m 15 s
# hours of station staffing	0	16	0	24	0
# of FF staffed on shift	0	2	0	3	0
# of fulltime FF	0	0	0	1	0
Is Chief fulltime?	no	no	no	yes	no

## Financials



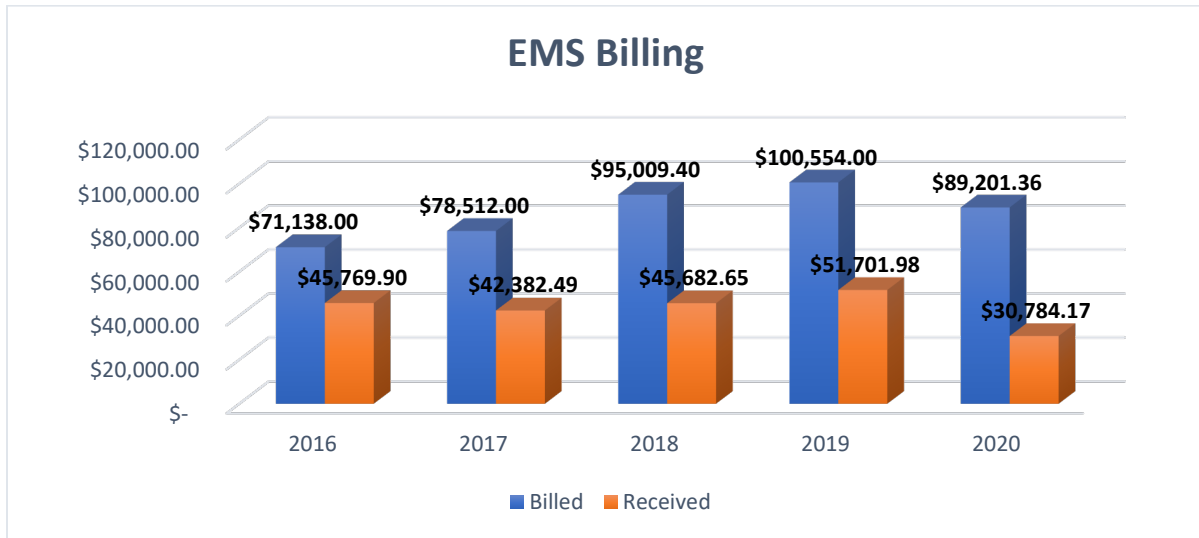
The Fire Department is mainly funded by a property tax. The current property tax levy is collected at a millage rate of three (3) mills. A mill is 1/1000 of the assessed property value. Written in a percent the fire departments levy collects 0.3% of every \$1,000 of value. The levy collects \$412,000 annually including homestead and rollback reimbursement from the State of Ohio. The current collection rate per \$100,000 is \$69.97. This means the effective collection rate of the 3-mill levy is 1.99 mills. The appraised value of the township is \$193,973,330.

The EYFD actively pursues grant opportunities to help cover or offset the prices of major capital purchases. We received over \$50,000 in grants in 2020 alone and have received other large amounts such as \$238,000 for Tanker/Pumper 52-1, \$90,000 for a complete breathing apparatus upgrade, \$90,000 for turnout gear for the department in 2012 and several grants around \$20,000 for auto extrication equipment, thermal imagers, turn-out gear washer and dryer for example.

The township contracts with Life Force Management to provide billing services for EMS calls. The charges are limited to only calls where a patient is transported to the Emergency Department. If the patient is assessed on scene, treated, and released, or only requires assistance standing up the person cannot be billed. Township residents, businesses, and their employees are 'soft billed'. In this process, the patient is notified that a bill is being sent to the patient's insurance company. The resident is not billed for the balance. Due to increased out of pocket deductibles this is affecting our collection rate. If the department provides mutual aid to a neighboring department, the patient is billed for like service, we bill the resident the same their home department would. When non-residents are transported, their insurance company is billed, and they are billed directly for the unpaid balance. If the department raises billing rates, the insurance companies will not pay more than the reasonable and customary amount



that other departments are billing. These rates are largely supplied by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.



We appropriate approximately \$500,000 each year for the budget of the department. Roughly 58% of this budget is used for operating costs. This covers personnel wages; maintenance and repairs of the vehicle fleet and building; purchased services such as record keeping system, dispatching applications, and ambulance billing fees; insurance; and operating supplies. We also pay annually for township dispatch fees to the Medina County Sheriff’s Office and fees for coverage by the Medina County All-Hazards Team who provides hazardous materials and special operations response such as rope, trench, and confined space rescue. These services are regionalized throughout the county for pooling of resources and cost savings. Most capital purchases are planned on a rotating schedule based on the service life of the equipment. Regularly made capital purchases are made to keep multiple items from reaching their end of life at the same time. For example, firefighter turn-out gear has a service life of 10 years. It is more responsible to purchase three or four sets per year for 10 years versus 35 sets every 10 years.

**SWOT Analysis**

We have gathered information on our situational strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats of the department. The below charts identify the area; explains why it is listed and how it could be changed. This process was completed to provide an increased awareness of the situation for review. The end goal is to identify our opportunities for success, clarify our program direction and prepare a strategic plan for future decision-making.

**STRENGTHS**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Why, How</b>
31 Members, avg experience over 13 years	Membership is not always easy to come by and a greater than 13-year service term is above national average.
Insurance Services Office (ISO) Score 5/5Y	ISO evaluates roughly 48,000 departments on fire services, water supply, and communications. Places EYFD in the top 40% of Ohio Fire Departments
Apparatus	Overall, very good condition
Turnout gear replacement program	After receiving a grant to purchase new turnout gear in 2012 we have been able to replace three to five sets a year to stay within the 10-year life of a set.
Community Support	Last levy passed with ease, good attendance at annual dinner & great support from survey results
Cleveland Clinic Medical Direction	Physician led program, physicians & EMS Coordinators provide on-site education, provide our Electronic Health Record at a cost of \$1800 annually
Grant purchased equipment	AFG Multiple Years totaling over \$500,000 including one grant for \$250,000 for 52-1, BWC Safety Grant \$50,000, Ohio Fire Marshall MARCS Radio \$50,000, Ohio EMS \$4,500 annually, Ohio Fire Marshall Training \$3000 annually
CARES Act purchased equipment	Salaries \$115,000, Disinfectant mister \$3,000, iPads \$3,600, Remote conferencing equipment \$3,300, thermometers \$500, pulse oximeter \$3,400
Association	Raises additional funding and makes equipment purchases that get donated to the department i.e., Battery Extrication Tool
Recruitment & Retention Program	Prospective FFs interviewed by FFs they will be working with, host events for FFs & family

**WEAKNESSES**

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Why, How</b>
Inconsistent Staffing	Reduction in number of volunteers nationwide, less people looking for fire/EMS jobs, less time to volunteer members have multiple jobs
Inconsistent Response	Short staffed or no staffing leads to longer response times, departments that have gone to staffing have seen a significant reduction in response times
Station not designed for 24/7/365	Separate bunkrooms, social distancing, no locker space, separate turnout gear from truck exhaust, day room, fitness area
Decrease in volunteer availability	Nationwide problem, people have less free time
Reduction in EMS Revenue	Insurance requirements, more self-pay, more not paying bills, make up difference is needed
Fire Inspection Program	Improve inspection frequency (getting better with D/C Barrett)
Continued reliance on Association funding	Weather and Global Pandemic demonstrated a lack of reliable revenue
Inconsistent retention efforts	Improve Retention program through National Volunteer Fire Council program and other best practices, Grant?
Inconsistent employee appraisals	Consistent feedback needed to address performance
Inexperienced Firefighters	Working together without guidance from officers or senior members due to others availability.
Lack of Strategic Plan	No plan to address the future, need to develop plan, what can be predicted, means poor performance can be prevented. In progress now

**OPPORTUNITIES**

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Why, How</b>	<b>Cost</b>
New Fire Station	Add offices, bunkrooms, exercise room, locker space, move turnout gear away from exhaust, apparatus space, Provide Service/Storage building for Township	Est. \$3.3 Million
Replace 56-1, 54-1, and Trailer with one vehicle	Improves the use of vehicles, in 2020 56-1 responded 23 times and 54-1 only 7. Fiscally responsible and decreases maintenance budget.	\$235,000 (waiting to hear on grant)
York Township Planning Committee	Community stakeholders prepared to help grow York Township	None
Staffing (Long-term)	Staff hours when other members maybe at full time careers or manpower is historically short. (7 days a week for 12 hours per day)	Est. \$325,000
Continue Stipends/Paid on call coverage (Short-term)	Increase weekend stipends to provide coverage during times of most missed calls	\$14,560
Community Outreach	Limited due to lack of staffing. Our goal is to be more involved in community, CPR, Smoke detectors, Car seat checks, get into schools and churches, neighborhood visits, block parties. Community involvement was a lower scoring section in the community survey	Minimum, often recouped from donations
Improve Retention Program	Keep people, reduce time training new FF	Save money by reducing training, uniform,
Auto-aid on responses; MVA, Serious EMS Calls	Get more help quicker to the scene, need to provide like services to Auto-aid departments	None
Increase use of technology in apparatus	Provide access to dispatch information and preplans in cab of apparatus. Allows firefighters to better prepare while responding. Can spot hydrants before arrival. Currently FFs use their phones for directions, hydrant location, this is against our policy and a safety issue.	\$8,400 annual fee (In Progress / half implemented)
Full Time Chief	Time to plan, be proactive, oversight of crews, especially less experienced	Est. \$100,000
Emergency Management	Develop township all hazards plan and contingencies	None

**THREATS**

<b>Threats</b>	<b>Why, How</b>
Needs are outgrowing resources	Levy renewal, not replacement has resulted in a flat budget while needs have increased
Decrease in volunteer availability	Nationwide problem, people have less free time
EMS Revenue	Revenue has decreased, despite similar billed amounts
Decreasing public confidence	Calls not covered by EYFD, not being there when they need us
Rapid change in technology	Communications, computers, Fire/EMS Programs are changing with increasing speed, new technology requires funding and hours to train FFs
Other FD with better benefits	Neighboring FDs staff (guaranteed scheduled hours) pay higher, have year-end bonuses, and performance incentives
New residents unaware of how service is provided	Many residents not aware station is not staffed, need to educate public
Decrease of Federal Grant Funds	Political changes unpredictable for consistent funding
Continued Twp. Growth	Higher population = higher call volume, educate public

References:

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*Fire Department Strategic Planning: Creating Fire Service Excellence*. 2006, Wallace, M, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, PennWell Books.

Valley City Fire Dept. (2021) *Community Stakeholders Report* (Report V5).