

Small Group Work Activity

Executive Summary

CEW #4 • May 20, 2026



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On May 20, approximately 20 community members participated in Community Workshop #4 of the Braidwood Fire Protection District's *Planning for a Safer Future* community engagement process at Reed-Custer Elementary School. The workshop focused on reviewing options and recommendations for a long-term plan to address the district's equipment, staffing, and financial sustainability needs. Following the presentation, participants worked in four small groups to complete the following tasks:

Individual Activity

In your packet is a sheet with the three options (The options are included on the last page of this document.) that were reviewed during tonight's presentation. After learning about these options, we'd like you to help prioritize them. Choose the one option that you feel is the best option for BFPD to consider as it develops its plan for the future. Mark your choice for that option on the sheet. If you feel that there is an option that should be removed from consideration, please mark your choice for that option on the sheet

Task #1: Most Preferred Option

Groups discussed the option that received the strongest support during the individual exercise and responded to the following questions:

- Is there anything BFPD should do to improve this option?
- What, if any, roadblocks should the BFPD consider if they decide to ask the community to vote on a referendum to implement this option?

Task #2: Anything Else?

Groups discussed any additional considerations BFPD should keep in mind as it finalizes its plan for the future of emergency services in the community.

As the Planning for a Safer Future process concluded, participants demonstrated a strong preference for a long-term solution that addresses equipment, staffing, and financial stability together. In the individual exercise, 18 of 19 participants selected **Option C – Equipment and Staff** as their preferred option, while 18 participants also identified **Option A – Status Quo** as the option that should be removed from consideration. This represented an overwhelming level of support for taking action to address the district's challenges rather than maintaining current service levels.

Across all four groups, participants focused their discussion on how to effectively communicate the value of the proposed investment to the broader community. Rather than suggesting major changes to Option C itself, groups emphasized the importance of continuing public education efforts. Three of the four groups specifically highlighted the need to clearly explain what

residents would receive in return for the proposed investment, including improved staffing, updated equipment, financial stability, and potential improvements to the district's ISO rating.

Several participants expressed interest in learning more about the relationship between fire protection services and homeowners insurance costs. Two groups specifically recommended highlighting how a lower ISO rating could lead to savings for property owners. One group suggested communicating the message in simple terms: *"If you help us, we will help you with better service, lower ISO rating = lower insurance cost."* Another group encouraged BFPD to "spell it out" through Facebook and newspaper outreach so residents better understand the connection between service improvements and potential insurance savings.

Participants also showed a strong desire for continued transparency regarding the district's financial stewardship. Two groups recommended emphasizing the district's efforts to secure grants, invest responsibly, and carefully manage existing resources. Participants noted that demonstrating fiscal responsibility would help residents understand the need for additional funding and the value of the proposed investment. Several participants also felt it was important to remind the community that BFPD has not received a voter-approved tax increase in more than 50 years, a point highlighted during the presentation.

When discussing factors the district should consider if a referendum is pursued, participants focused primarily on the importance of public information and outreach. Three of the four groups noted that voter understanding would be critical to success. Participants encouraged BFPD to continue explaining the district's needs, the costs of providing emergency services, and the consequences of delaying investments. One group specifically noted the importance of showing that the district has conducted extensive public engagement and due diligence throughout the planning process.

In the final discussion, participants encouraged BFPD to continue planning for the future while also preparing for changing circumstances. Topics mentioned by multiple groups included planning for worst-case scenarios, maintaining communication with local elected officials and developers, and considering future funding opportunities if additional needs arise. Throughout the discussion, participants consistently emphasized the value of long-term planning, proactive investment, and continued community education.

Summary of Consensus

- Participants strongly favored a long-term solution that addresses equipment, staffing, and financial stability together.
- Community education and outreach were viewed as essential to building support for future investments.
- Residents want clear information about how additional funding will improve emergency services.
- Potential improvements to ISO ratings and homeowners insurance costs were viewed as important benefits to communicate.
- Participants value transparency, fiscal responsibility, and continued long-range planning for emergency services.