Braidwood Fire Protection District

Planning for a Safer Future
Braidwood Fire Protection District

Final Report and Community Recommendations

July 2026

THANK YOU

To the Board of Trustees

For creating this process and inviting the community to help shape the future of emergency services.

To the Facilitating Team

For helping lead the process, support workshop planning and review community feedback.

To the Community

For attending workshops, asking questions and developing recommendations for the future.

This process was made possible by community members, volunteers and BFPD staff.

Planning for a Safer Future
Braidwood Fire Protection District

The Process

Community-led. Transparent. Focused on the future of emergency services.

Why this process?

Planning for a Safer Future was designed to bring the district and community together.

The purpose was to create a shared understanding of BFPD's current challenges and future needs.

- Provide accurate and transparent information about district operations and challenges.
- Build understanding of how growth and regional changes impact fire, rescue and EMS services.
- Engage residents in discussions about service expectations and needed resources.
- Explore sustainable funding options for staffing, facilities and equipment.
- Develop community-informed recommendations for the Board of Trustees.

Community Leadership

Community members helped guide the process from learning to recommendations.

Facilitating Team

- Ken Heberer
- LuAnn Bolatto
- Tammy Favero
- Debbie Rozak
- Wanda Alderson
- Dianne Schaal
- Mike Compton
- Cheryl Schott
- Ashley Gossman
- Carl Davies
- David Coronelli
- Joe Byers
- Heather Rozak
- Melissa Hughes
- Deacon Greg Cummins
- Andrew Hughes
- Scott Favero
- Heather Faletti

BFPD Resources

- Chief Chris Jude
- Deputy Chief Mike Pemble
- Executive Assistant Kristin Wexell

Community members provided leadership. BFPD staff provided information, context and answers.

Process Activities

Workshops moved participants from learning to discussion to recommendations.

Feb. 19

BFPD Today

Overview of the district and major challenges.

March 26

Fire, Rescue & Services

Deep dive into operations, coverage and response needs.

April 29

Staffing & Finances

Discussion of staffing, equipment and financial tradeoffs.

May 20

Options & Recommendations

Review of options and final community feedback.

Each workshop included an informational presentation, small-group discussion, work activity and public documentation.

**Attendance at the March 26 workshop was impacted by severe weather.*

Planning for a Safer Future

BY THE NUMBERS

Participation and documentation helped build a record of community feedback.

4

Community workshops

Open to all BFPD residents

18+

Facilitating Team members

Community volunteers and BFPD resources

25+

First workshop attendees

Workshop #1: BFPD Today

20+

Final workshop attendees

Options and recommendations

50+

Years since last voter-approved increase

A key context point from the final workshop

Workshop presentations, summaries and documentation were shared publicly to support transparency.

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Braidwood Fire Protection District

What We Learned

Staffing, equipment, facilities and finances are connected challenges.

Connected Challenges

Participants learned these issues cannot be viewed separately.

Staffing

Limited on-duty staffing makes it harder to respond when multiple calls happen or when larger incidents require more personnel.

Equipment

Several vehicles and pieces of apparatus are aging and will need replacement in the coming years.

Facilities

Stations must support emergency response, equipment storage, training, firefighter safety and future staffing.

Finances

Rising costs and limited revenue growth make long-term planning essential.

Emergency response depends on all **four** working together.

- People to respond
- Equipment to operate safely
- Facilities that support operations
- Funding to sustain service

A Complex Service Area

BFPD protects a large and varied district with a wide range of risks and response needs.

- Residential, commercial, industrial and recreational properties.
- Portions of Diamond, Godley and Custer Park.
- Braidwood Nuclear Plant and Cooling Lake.
- Kankakee River, recreational camping areas and Shadow Lakes.
- Portions of Interstate 55 and commercial freight rail lines.
- Large areas without a water supply.

Fire
EMS
Rescue
Water rescue
Technical rescue
Highway response

The role of a modern fire protection district extends far beyond fighting fires.

Staffing Is A Critical Need

Participants repeatedly emphasized that people are the foundation of emergency response.

Current challenge

On-duty staffing can be stretched quickly when multiple calls occur at the same time.

Future need

Meeting national staffing benchmarks would require additional firefighters.

Community priority

Participants connected staffing to safe, timely and effective emergency response.

"It does not matter if you have updated equipment if you do not have staffing to run the calls."

Equipment and Facilities

Vehicles, gear, technology and buildings all support emergency response.

Equipment

- Several vehicles and apparatus are beyond or nearing recommended replacement cycles.
- Replacement costs have increased significantly.
- Protective gear and technology require ongoing replacement.

Facilities

- Facilities must support personnel, apparatus and equipment storage.
- Stations should support training, firefighter safety and on-duty staffing.
- Planning should include Station 1 and Station 2.

A proactive schedule can help avoid emergency purchases, reduce repair costs and maintain reliable service.

Financial Stability Is Essential

Participants learned that long-term funding supports every other priority.

Rising costs

Insurance, equipment, staffing and operations continue to become more expensive.

Limited revenue growth

PTELL and TIF impacts make it difficult for revenue to keep pace with expenses.

Long-term needs

Stable funding is needed for staffing, equipment, facilities and reserves.

BFPD has not received a voter-approved tax increase in more than 50 years.

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What We Heard

The community values BFPD and supports long-term planning.

What Participants Consistently Said

Themes emerged across workshops and small-group discussions.

The community values BFPD

Participants described the district as dedicated, professional and committed.

Residents want planning

Participants want BFPD to plan for staffing, equipment, facilities, growth and finances.

Staffing is a top priority

People are essential to safe and timely emergency response.

Equipment replacement is critical

Reliable apparatus and gear support response capability and firefighter safety.

Stable funding matters

Funding was viewed as the foundation that supports every other priority.

Clear communication is needed

Residents want simple, factual information about needs, costs and benefits.

What We Heard at Workshop #1

Points of general agreement across the work activities include:

- BFPD is dedicated, professional, and committed to serving the community.
- How fire district funding works & how resources support emergency services.
- Clear understanding of staffing, training, and the growing role of emergency medical response.
- How the district plans for long-term sustainability and future service needs.
- Desire for clear information to thoughtfully consider the district’s future.

What We Heard at Workshop #3

Points of general agreement across the work activities include:

- Staffing and personnel capacity are the most important foundation for effective emergency response.
- Stable, reliable funding is essential to support all other priorities.
- Maintaining and replacing equipment is widely viewed as critical to service quality and safety.
- Competitive salaries play a key role in attracting and retaining skilled personnel.
- Participants recognize the importance of balancing resources across multiple priorities.

What We Heard at Workshop #4

- 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.

Options Presented at Workshop #4

- Maintain The Status Quo (Do Nothing)
- 10-Cent Rescue Tax Increase
- 32-cent Property Tax Increase

Option A - Status Quo

Increase Needed: N/A

Fund Balance: Stable

Reserves: 6 months

Passes with: N/A

Investment: No Increase in Property Taxes

Solves for: Equipment already on order *(Ambulance and Pumper)*

Still Need: Equipment, Staffing and Financial Stability

- ☒ **Equipment**
- ☒ **Staffing**
- ☒ **Financial Stability**

Option B - Equipment Only

Increase Needed: 10 cents

Fund Balance: Growing

Reserves: 12 months by 2031

Passes with: Simple Majority (50%+1)

Investment: $8/month on a $300,000 home

Solves for: Equipment needs and provides some financial stability

Still Need: Staffing and More Long-Term Financial Stability

- **Equipment**
- **Staffing**
- **Financial Stability**

Option C - Equipment And Staff

Increase Needed: 32 cents

Fund Balance: Growing

Reserves: 18 months by 2031

Passes with: Simple Majority (50%+1)

Investment: $27/month on a $300,000 home

Solves for: Equipment, Staffing and Financial Stability

Still Need: Nothing

- **Equipment**
- **Staffing**
- **Financial Stability**

The Community Supports Action

OVER THE STATUS QUO

The final workshop reviewed options for moving forward.

The Majority

of participants selected the Equipment and Staff option as their preferred approach.

All

participants identified the status quo as the option that should be removed from consideration.

Preferred direction

- Address equipment needs
- Add staffing capacity
- Improve financial stability
- Avoid delaying investments

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Community Recommendations

The recommendations reflect what participants learned and what the community said.

Recommendations At A Glance

Eight recommendations form a connected long-range direction for BFPD.

A Long-Term Plan

B Facilities Plan

C Critical Equipment

D Emergency Responders

E Growth & Public Safety

F Community Communication

G Financial Sustainability

H 32¢ Tax Increase

The recommendations are **not** separate ideas. **Together**, they create a framework for reliable emergency services now and in the future.

Develop a long-term operations plan.

Meet the future needs of the Braidwood Fire Protection District.

RECOMMENDATIO N

A

- Approve a long-term plan that addresses growing service demands, population changes and emergency response needs.
- Connect staffing, facilities, equipment, operations and finances into one clear path forward.
- Continue reviewing call volume, community growth, development trends and service expectations.

Develop a long-term facilities plan.

Make sure facilities support operations, safety and future growth.

RECOMMENDATIO N

B

- Address aging infrastructure, operational needs, firefighter safety, equipment storage and training requirements.
- Support increased on-duty staffing and reliable emergency response services.
- Continue reviewing Station 1 and Station 2 facility needs.

Maintain and replace critical equipment.

Keep vehicles, gear and technology reliable and up to date.

RECOMMENDATIO N

C

- Maintain a proactive replacement schedule that meets national standards.
- Plan for apparatus, ambulances, rescue equipment, protective gear, communications tools and technology.
- Use replacement schedule to avoid emergency purchases and reduce repair costs.

Recruit, retain and train emergency responders.

Support the workforce needed for safe and effective response.

RECOMMENDATIO N

D

- Prioritize competitive compensation and benefits to recruit, retain and train highly qualified firefighter/paramedics.
- Support workforce development, succession planning and training opportunities.
- Work toward staffing levels that support safe, timely and effective response across the district.

Ensure growth supports public safety.

Future development should account for emergency service impacts.

RECOMMENDATIO N

E

- Include public safety needs in discussions about new businesses, industrial developments and subdivisions.
- Consider how growth affects calls for service, response needs, equipment demands and staffing requirements.
- Continue communication with local elected officials, developers and community partners.

Continue community engagement and communication.

Keep residents informed and involved as planning moves forward.

RECOMMENDATIO N

F

- Provide clear information about facility needs, financial planning, service demands and future initiatives.
- Use public meetings, website updates, social media, local media, newsletters and direct outreach.
- Continue documenting feedback and sharing information with the community.

Plan for long-term financial sustainability.

Financial stability is the foundation for reliable emergency services.

RECOMMENDATIO N

G

- Maintain a financial strategy that supports high-quality emergency services and fiscal responsibility.
- Plan for staffing, equipment replacement, facility updates, training and changing community needs.
- Balance financial stewardship with the level of service expected by the community.

Ask the community to consider a 32¢ tax increase.

Provide residents the opportunity to consider a long-term funding solution.

RECOMMENDATIO N

H

- Address long-term facility, equipment, staffing and operational needs.
- Clearly communicate needs, costs, public safety benefits and long-term community value.
- Explain how funds would support staffing, equipment, facilities and financial stability.

BRAIDWOOD FIRE PROT. DIST. EST. 1877

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Thank You!