

## **Eamon C. Brazunas**

### **Biography**

Eamon C. Brazunas began his volunteer service with the Berwyn Fire Company in Chester County, Pennsylvania in 1998. He has served in the capacity of Firefighter, Lieutenant, Captain, Engineer, Public Information Officer, Assistant Chief, Fire Chief, and Vice-President during his tenure. Brazunas is certified at the Pro Board Fire Officer II level and is a registered EMT –B with the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Brazunas received a B.A. in Advertising/Public Relations and Minor in Political Science from the Pennsylvania State University and holds a Masters of Public Administration degree from Anna Maria College. In addition, he is a graduate of the United States Fire Administration Executive Fire Officer Program and is designated by the Center for Public Safety Excellence – Commission on Professional Credentialing as a Chief Fire Officer.

He is a charter member of the Chester County Incident Support Team – FEMA Type IV and also has past fire/EMS experience with the Philipsburg Fire Department (Centre County, PA), Manheim Township Fire-Rescue – Eden Station (Lancaster County, PA) and Cumberland Valley Hose Company (Cumberland County, PA).

Brazunas has lived in the Commonwealth his whole life and resides in Chester County with his wife and two daughters. His father and two brothers have also served as volunteer fire/EMS providers. He has worked full-time as a fire service administrator with the Radnor Fire Company in Delaware County, Pennsylvania since 2008.

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### **Testimony**

My name is Eamon Brazunas and I have been a volunteer in the Commonwealth for 21 years. During that time I have served in various capacities with the Berwyn Fire Company in Chester County and currently hold the rank of Fire Chief. My full-time career has been with the Radnor Fire Company in Delaware County since 2008 as their Administrative Director.

The Berwyn Fire Company, founded in 1894, is a registered 501c3 non-profit combination organization that provides primary fire, EMS, and rescue services to 30,338 citizens between Tredyffrin Township and Easttown Township. This coverage area encompasses roughly 12.9 sq. miles. In 2018, we responded to 922 fire/rescue calls and 2,297 EMS calls.

Our response area includes the protection of various critical infrastructure. This includes, but not limited to, multiple waste water pumping stations, 1 category 3 DEP dam, 3 category 2 DEP dams, a hazardous liquid pipeline containing jet fuel, 5 miles of Amtrak/SEPTA and Norfolk

Southern railroad, and portions of Rt. 202, Rt. 422 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

In 2018, the majority of our operational income was generated from EMS billing (46.1%), contributions from Tredyffrin and Easttown Townships (30.6%), and fund drive mailings (9.3%). The remaining 14% of our income was produced by rental income from a cell tower and apartments, fundraising events, outreach events, etc. Our largest expense was paid personnel expenses that totaled \$1,411,116.52 with a budget of \$2,170,579.30.

The issue of paying for increased staffing is a challenge our community faces. Staffing is our #1 operational priority as an organization. We are laser focused on improving response times and deploying our personnel, both volunteer and paid, as best we can. You can build stations wherever you want and buy fire trucks, but without the people power and a good plan it means nothing.

We have employed a cadre of full-time and part-time staff for decades. When I started in 1998 we only had two paid personnel on duty from 6 a.m. – 6 p.m. during weekdays only. Today we have 5 paid personnel on duty during the weekdays and 2 at night. Over the weekends there are 4 on duty during the day and 2 at night. We rely on these personnel to respond to both fire and EMS calls around the clock. We have plans to increase over the next few years to keep pace with call volume, volunteer response trends, and the overall need to ensure we can deliver our services when the community needs us.

Another challenge we face, along with our fellow fire service colleagues is the ability to recruit and retain volunteers. We have been very fortunate to have forged a strong partnership with the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. This has become our de facto volunteer pipeline and has arguably slowed down the need to increase our paid staff even more at the present time. Nearly all of our current leadership our graduates of Conestoga High School who started out as high school junior members. Despite this, we need more tools from our state and local partners to keep volunteers coming through the door.

HB 759 is a resource that can assist fire service organizations in the Commonwealth by generating some income to pay for equipment and other associated costs with emergency response. While local government is responsible by law to provide for fire and EMS, all communities are not the same. This is especially true when it comes to their tax base. As the recent SR 6 pointed out, the State can assist local governments by updating laws and creating ones that create other sources of revenue, especially when it comes to paying for the essential services fire service organizations stand ready to provide every day.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak today.