



# MINUTES MATTER

SAVE TIME, SAVE LIVES

## FINAL REPORT

JUNE 19, 2024





## Introduction

Increasing emergency response times and a growing and shifting residential population led the Lemont Fire Protection District Board of Trustees to turn to the community for help reimagining the future of our fire protection district. Primarily, the Board wanted to understand the community's reaction to possibly relocating two fire stations to improve emergency response times and overall operational efficiency. Additionally, the Board wanted to understand the level of emergency services expected by the community.

Throughout the first half of 2024, Minutes Matter, a community-led public engagement process, brought together the entire community to provide valuable input through a series of open houses and public opinion surveys.

This comprehensive approach exemplifies the district's commitment to its current and future generations of residents. Detailed information on the process and results can be found at [www.lemontfire.com/minutes-matter](http://www.lemontfire.com/minutes-matter).

## OVERVIEW

In January 2024, community members and district staff embarked on the Minutes Matter planning process in response to a charge from the Board of Trustees.

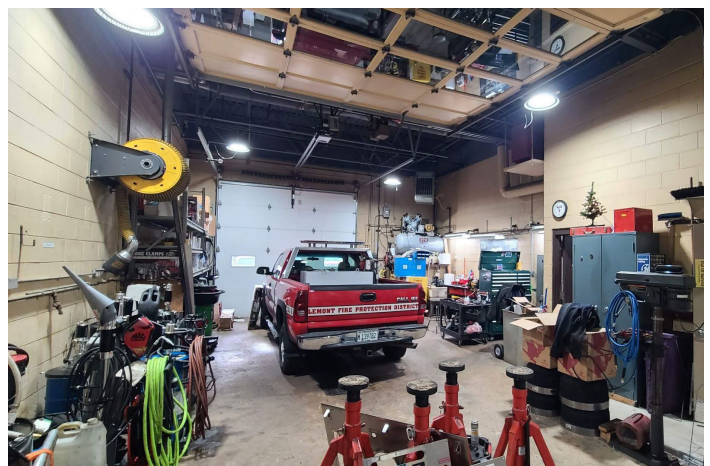
This six-month community engagement effort united those who live in the district to develop recommendations to improve and plan for the district's future.

At the beginning of the effort, the Minutes Matter team decided to focus on presenting these key topics to the community for input and feedback:

- Response times for emergency calls (fire and EMS)
- Shifting population of the district's population
- Location of the fire stations
- Living quarters space for the firefighter/paramedics
- Engine bays to house and maintain the district's equipment

Per the Board of Trustees' charge, community recommendations were developed based on the participant feedback from each open house and the survey results.

The following overview breaks the Minutes Matter program into four sections: purpose, participants, process, and product.



# PURPOSE

The purpose of the Minutes Matter process was to gain the community's input, which started when the Board of Trustees approved the following board charge at the December 12, 2023 regular meeting:

## Charge From Board of Trustees

### Lemont Fire Protection District Community Engagement Charge Statement

Serving the community since 1886, the mission of the Lemont Fire Protection District is to continue the tradition of providing professional service to all with integrity, honor and dedication.

The fire district strives to provide the highest-quality emergency services through prevention, preparedness, response and recovery programs and to promote community awareness and participation in fire prevention and disaster preparedness. To best continue its mission, the Lemont Fire Protection District Board of Trustees is seeking community assistance to help define the future of emergency services in our area.

The Board of Trustees hereby invites all district residents to participate in meaningful dialogue about the future of the Lemont Fire Protection District through a community engagement program. Community leaders of this program will be charged with actively involving as many district residents as possible in learning more about, evaluating and providing feedback on:

- The challenges and opportunities facing the Lemont Fire Protection District now and in the future, with a focus on assessing the potential relocation of fire stations to improve emergency response times and overall operation efficiency.
- The level of emergency services expected by the community.
- The additional facilities, equipment, financial and communications resources needed to provide the expected level of service.



The leadership of the community engagement program shall develop a final report for the Board of Trustees based on a wide range of community feedback, the fire district's strategic goals and ongoing financial responsibility. The report should include:

- Current and accurate community perceptions and priorities about the fire district, the level of service provided, additional resources needed and plans for the future, which may involve relocating fire stations to improve emergency response times and overall operation efficiency.
- A framework for continuous collaboration and communication between the district and the community.

Community leadership should present this report to the Board of Trustees by May 30, 2024.

*Note: this final date was adjusted to allow more time for community members to complete the second community survey.*



# PARTICIPANTS

Participation in the Minutes Matter process occurred in a variety of areas — Facilitating Team (FT), the Minutes Matter Open Houses and two online surveys.

## MINUTES MATTER FACILITATING TEAM (FT)

As its name suggests, this team was responsible for facilitating the Minutes Matter process. The 26-person team met seven times, five times before the first Minutes Matter open houses and two times after the open houses.

As is so essential in engagement programs, community members provided the leadership for the FT and the entire Minutes Matter process. The group helped with decisions regarding process, strategy, and communications. District administrators, staff members, and Board members also served on the FT team, providing valuable insights throughout the process.

## MINUTES MATTER OPEN HOUSES

Since the Minutes Matter open houses were the central component of the process, there was a tremendous effort before the first open house to invite the community to attend.

Attendance at the open houses varied, with the top attendance being 18 attendees and the average more than 12. Fifty individuals attended and participated in at least one Minutes Matter open house.

Date	Number of Participants
April 11	10
April 13	18
April 16	5
April 23	17

At each session, participants signed in and checked if they were a district resident. All in attendance were district residents.

### Participants\*

Clifford Miklos	Tyler Neyow	MaryIn Fischer	Theresa Palmer
Guenther Schmidt	Glenda Anderson	Alan Aguirre	Victoria Reynolds
Chris Delorne	Dave Myers	Cathy Aguirre	Gary Kumczak
Bob Long	Nick Szynal	Suellen	Tom Kilis
Jackie Raetzman	Carol Frigo	Victoria L. Cerinich	Sandy Vohard
John Goushas	Ken Bryla	Ralph Reid	Nicole Lara
Pattie Banas	Elyse Bryla	Marilyn Reid	Jen Gould
Gene Banas	Ken Bryla Jr.	Vicki Melonas	Kevin Phillips
Monica Conway	Sr. Virginia Gapsis	Beverly Raddle	Ron Hrad
Jerry Grzybek	Sr. Rita Marie Kerdock	Diane Kaye	Cathy Kuba
Lillian Wodynski	Frances Paylo	Howard Hoffman	Susan Malatt
Cas Wodynski	Dean Thompson	Don Mueggenborg	
Steve Basho		Pam Hussey	

\*One name was illegible on the sign-in sheet.

## FACILITATING TEAM PARTICIPANTS

### Leadership

- Chair - Ryan Raetzman
- Communications - Lisa Kross
- Canvassing - Tracey Papesh
- Community Outreach - Tom Drez

### Members

- Brendan Bandyk
- Tim Donatucci
- Todd Fischer
- Victor Fischer
- David Gubbins
- Rachel Gustafson
- Lily Montgomery
- Christine Aguirre
- Paul Butt
- Victoria Cobbett
- John Goushas
- Linas Gyls
- Guy Maniscalco
- Taylor Mitkus
- John Palcu
- Guenther Schmidt
- Mark Urban

### District Leadership

- Board President - Joe Falese
- Board Member - Dan Tholotowsky
- Fire Chief - Dan Tasso
- Deputy Chief Of Administration - John Truffa
- Deputy Chief Of Operations - Matt Peksa





## MINUTES MATTER ONLINE SURVEYS

More than 900 people participated in two online surveys about the community's thoughts and perceptions about the district, Minutes Matter and potential plans for the future of our fire district.



## PROCESS

### Step 1: Board Charge

The process began when the Board decided to move forward with the initiative and adopted the charge. This set the direction and parameters for the effort.

### Step 2: Building The Team

The next step was to build the Facilitating Team, which provided the leadership and guidance for the entire process. The first task in building this team was identifying and enlisting key community members to serve as chairpersons for the effort.

### Step 3: Process Identity

The process was given an official name — Minutes Matter: Save Time, Save Lives — and a project logo. This logo was used on all communication and meeting items.

### Step 4: Informing The Community

The next step in getting the process underway was building participation in the community-wide Minutes Matter effort through an extensive communications program, which is detailed later in this report.

### Step 5: The Schedule

After thoroughly inviting the public to participate, it was time to begin the open houses. The team developed a schedule to allow adequate time between sessions and to prepare informational display boards and handouts.



# PROCESS

## OPEN HOUSES

Four Minutes Matter open houses occurred from April 11 through April 23, 2024. The key topics covered at each open house included:

- Introducing the Facilitating Team
- Background on the Fire Protection District
- Our Growing Community
- What Happens in a Fire Station?
- What is Response Time?
- The Challenges:
  - » Increasing number of emergency calls
  - » Growing population
  - » Increasing travel times
  - » Longer response time
  - » Aging stations that cannot house the nationally recommended number of firefighter/paramedics and up-to-date equipment
- Possible Solutions
  - » Relocate two aging stations, stations #1 and #3 to improve response times for more residents.
  - » Update and maintain stations #2 and #4 to provide the ability to accommodate up-to-date equipment.
  - » Build additional bunk rooms at Station #2 to accommodate five firefighter/paramedics.
- Cost of the Possible Solutions →
- Feedback from the Community
- Photos of Current Bunk Rooms and Bathrooms
- Photos of Current Engine Bays

	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3
Relocate Station #1	Yes	Yes	Yes
Update Station #2	Yes	Yes	No
Relocate Station #3	Yes	Yes	Yes
Update Station #4	Yes	No	No
Anticipated Total Investment	\$46,195,000	\$40,788,000	\$34,683,000
<b>Anticipated Investment for owner of a \$400,000 home</b>			
<b>COOK COUNTY</b>			
Yearly	\$248.38	\$221.38	\$189.00
Weekly	\$4.78	\$4.26	\$3.63
<b>DUPAGE COUNTY</b>			
Yearly	\$291.08	\$259.43	\$221.49
Weekly	\$5.60	\$4.99	\$4.26

## MINUTES MATTER ONLINE SURVEYS

Two online surveys were conducted to learn more about the community's thoughts and perceptions about the district. The first was conducted February 22 through March 4, 2024, and 317 community members completed the survey. A follow-up survey was conducted May 9 through 28, 2024, and 595 community members completed this survey.



## COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

Several strategic communication tools were used to create awareness and encourage participation from district residents. A strong recruitment effort by FT members and district leadership was also conducted.

Communications tools included:

### Email

Multiple emails were sent to local organizations to encourage their members to attend an open house. The FT also had an email template they could customize and send to their friends and family members.

### Website

A section of the district's website ([www.lemontfire.com/minutes-matter](http://www.lemontfire.com/minutes-matter)) was developed to share information and documentation and to gather RSVPs throughout the process.

### Social Media

Information about the process, the online surveys and open houses was shared through Facebook posts. The FT was encouraged to share these posts, and were also given a sample post to customize and post on their own channels.

### Flyers and Posters

Flyers and posters inviting the community to the open houses and directing residents to the website to learn more about the effort were distributed to the community.

### Newsletters

The district's Spring 2024 newsletter was focused on the Minutes Matter effort and included information on the open houses. This was sent via postal mail to all district households.

### Media Outreach

A news release announcing the Minutes Matter open houses was sent to local media outlets.

### Door-to-Door Canvassing

The canvassing committee successfully recruited and brought together community volunteers and staff to reach out to households in the district.

On March 23 and April 6, volunteers gathered together at 9 a.m. to learn about door-to-door outreach, team up, and receive a list of houses to visit. From 9 a.m. until noon on each Saturday, their goal was to personally invite residents to the Minutes Matter open houses and leave a door hanger invite as a reminder or if the homeowner wasn't home. Altogether, Minutes Matter volunteers knocked on more than 2,000 doors.

### Station Marquees

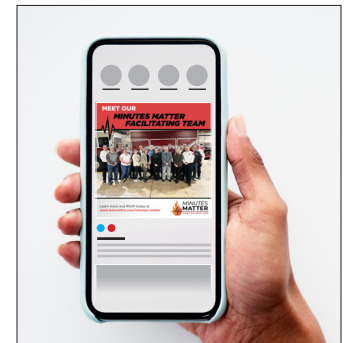
Information about the Minutes Matter open houses activities was displayed on station marquees.

### Yard Signs

Approximately 300 yard signs encouraging open house attendance and directing residents to the website to learn more about the effort were placed throughout the community.

### Text Message

A text message was sent to residents encouraging them to take the second survey on May 21, 2024.



## KEY INFORMATION LEARNED

At the Minutes Matter Open Houses, attendees were able to view 18 display boards that shared what the FT learned and wanted to share with the community. These display boards included information on the challenges the district faces, how emergency response times are affected and what possible solutions might look like, including the cost of those solutions. District leadership was also available to provide information and answer any attendee questions.

The boards used are linked here:

[Minutes Matter Open House Display Boards.](#)



# **PRODUCT:** **COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Lemont Fire Protection District is facing significant challenges that require our immediate attention and collective action.** With an increasing number of emergency calls driven by a growing population, our response times have stretched to eight minutes or more—some of the longest in our area, and longer than national standards. This issue is further compounded by community growth away from the locations of our current stations, resulting in longer travel times and exacerbating delays in emergency response.

Additionally, aging fire stations cannot accommodate the nationally recommended number of firefighter/paramedics or up-to-date equipment. Our facilities also lack adequate gear storage, which is crucial for reducing our first responders' exposure to carcinogens.

Addressing these issues is imperative to ensure the safety, quality and efficiency of our emergency services.

Based on the information and community input gathered and the charge given by the Board of Trustees, Minutes Matter participants recommend the following long-term goals and priorities to protect our emergency services in a fiscally responsible manner.

## **RESPONSE TIMES**

- Providing emergency response times that meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards of six minutes or less should be the district's top priority, as brain death can occur within six minutes during a heart attack, and a fire can fully engulf a home in the same timeframe. Additionally, survival rates drop 7% to 10% every minute a victim goes without EMS care.

## **FACILITIES**

- Locate fire stations in areas that allow emergency responders to arrive within the nationally recommended time of six minutes or less.
- Improve the layout of existing fire stations to decrease response time and increase firefighter/paramedic safety.

- Provide separate firefighter gear cleaning and storage areas to meet national safety recommendations at each fire station to reduce exposure to cancer-causing chemicals.
- Ensure fire stations are efficient and large enough to house up-to-date equipment and the nationally recommended number of firefighter/paramedics, as well as adequate living quarters for male and female firefighters.
- Continue to inform the community about the plans for the land of existing stations once they are relocated.
- Continue to monitor community growth and ensure that the location and number of fire stations best meet the needs of residents and businesses.



## **TRAINING**

- Provide comprehensive training opportunities for first responders to ensure they can deliver high-quality emergency services as our community grows and the nature of emergency response evolves.
- Ensure firefighter/paramedics have access to adequate training facilities and equipment.





## EQUIPMENT

- Update and replace aging firefighting and emergency medical equipment and technology to provide the most effective emergency response.
- Continue to properly maintain advanced firefighting equipment such as self-contained breathing apparatus and thermal imaging cameras, as well as provide proper space for equipment storage.
- Ensure first responders and residents have access to state-of-the-art firefighting and emergency medical equipment and supplies.

## COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- As the community grows, continue to actively involve residents in strategic, long-range, planning for the future of the Lemont Fire Protection District.
- Remain transparent and routinely invite the community to learn about and provide input on the operations, finances and state of the fire district.
- Clearly communicate the necessity of having four fully functioning fire stations strategically located throughout the district. Emphasize that two of these stations need to be relocated, not added, to achieve this goal.

## FINANCE

- Remain fiscally responsible and maintain a balanced budget while continuing to provide quality emergency services to the community.
- Implement the Minutes Matter recommendations over a financially responsible span of time.
- Ensure the community is well-informed about fire district funding and operations, including information about how funding compares to other taxing entities, how the district's budget has changed as the district has grown, and how a fire protection district is different from a city fire department.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In order to responsibly implement the Minutes Matter recommendations, the community recommends the Board of Trustees provide residents the opportunity to vote on a \$46,195,000 bond referendum on the November 2024 ballot.

If approved by voters, this would provide funding to:

- Improve response times for a majority of the district residents and work toward meeting national emergency response time standards by relocating stations #1 and #3 and updating existing stations.
- Ensure each Lemont Fire Protection District fire station can house the NFPA's nationally recommended five firefighter/paramedics per shift and adequately house male and female firefighters.
- Provide separate firefighter gear cleaning and storage areas at each fire station to reduce exposure to carcinogens to meet national standards.
- Provide maintenance and storage space for up-to-date emergency medical, firefighting and rescue equipment and vehicles.
- Replace and maintain aging firefighting and emergency medical equipment, update technology as needed, and ensure access to state-of-the-art emergency supplies for effective response.
- Enhance firefighter/paramedic training opportunities for first responders to ensure they can deliver high-quality emergency services as our community grows and the nature of emergency response evolves.

This initiative is anticipated to cost the owner of a \$400,000 home in Cook County approximately \$19/month or \$248/year. In Dupage County, this initiative would cost the owner of a home appraised at \$400,000 approximately \$22/month or \$291/year.

