



ANSWERING THE CALL

What We Built Together

Chief Tony Averbuch



FINAL REPORT • August 2026

MESSAGE FROM CHIEF AVERBUCH

Greetings,

To the residents, business owners, elected leaders, and members of the Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department,

For more than twenty-seven years, it has been my profound honor to serve as your Fire Chief. When I was entrusted with this responsibility, I inherited far more than a title. I was given the opportunity to help steward a department whose strength has always rested in the people who choose, day after day, to serve something larger than themselves.

This, my final report, is in many ways a story of that choice.

It honors the commitment of our firefighters, officers, volunteers, and support staff; the trust and support of our residents, business owners, and elected officials; and the partnership of neighboring departments and county agencies that have stood alongside us in moments of both routine and extraordinary need.

Together, we have built a department prepared for the emergencies of today and the evolving challenges of the years ahead.

As my tenure with the Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department concludes, I am humbled by how many others have embraced that same calling and how deeply it has shaped the character of this department.

The pages that follow highlight key milestones in our growth – new capabilities, critical partnerships, infrastructure and apparatus improvements, and the evolution of our training and readiness.

Behind every milestone are people: the men and women who responded to calls in the middle of the night, who showed up for drills after long days at work, who embraced new standards and new skills because our communities deserved nothing less.

This department's progress has never been the work of one person. It has been the shared achievement of those who laid its foundations, those who strengthened it along the way, and those who now prepare to carry it forward.

My sincere hope is that this report offers a record of what we have built together, but also an invitation – to continue investing in our people and partnerships, and to remain open to the changes required to meet the future with courage and compassion.



To our residents and business owners: thank you for the trust you have placed in us and for the support you have shown through times of crisis and calm alike. To our elected officials and partners across Oakland County: your advocacy, collaboration, and belief in our mission have made it possible for this department to grow stronger and more capable with each passing year.

To the members of the Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department – past, present, and future: you are the heart of this story. Your willingness to learn, adapt, stand shoulder to shoulder in difficult moments, and care for those we serve has defined my tenure and will continue to define this department long after my own service concludes.

And to my wife, Layne, and my daughter, Julia: your unwavering support, love, and sacrifice have made every step of this journey possible. Layne has supported me and the department both personally and professionally, offering prudent legal guidance and serving as my sounding board and trusted confidante. I am deeply grateful for your trust, encouragement, and shared commitment to serving others.

As you read the pages that follow, I invite you to see not only the accomplishments it records, but the people and relationships that made them possible. May it serve as both a record of where we have been and a foundation for what comes next.

With deep gratitude and respect,



Chief Tony Averbuch
Franklin-Bingham Farms
Fire Department



Reflections on a Shared Journey

Twenty-seven years ago, Paul Mullin, Robert Walter, and Richard Rubin entrusted me with the responsibility of serving as Fire Chief of the Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department, and offered their counsel as I came to understand its history, culture, and expectations.

In the years since, many others have joined me in shaping this department into what it is today, more than I could name individually here, and I remain grateful to each of them. We have been fortunate in the people who have come through our doors, supporting our mission, sharing our commitment to the communities we serve, and offering their time and talent.

As my tenure comes to a close, I am reflecting on my path to this fire department, its people and the residents I have been humbly honored to serve. At seven years old, riding with my mother near 12 Mile and Telegraph in Southfield, I watched the Southfield Fire Department conduct live fire training on a street of homes. I did not recognize it at the time, but that was the moment I resolved to become a firefighter.

Years later, in high school, I heard of another student in my class who volunteered with the Franklin Fire Department. When I returned home from college, having earned my degree and my EMT certification, I sought out the opportunity to volunteer here.

Having been mentored early in my career by then-Fire Chief Charles Tice, I committed considerable time to this department, and he, in turn, supported my pursuit of further training and certification as a Fire Instructor and Fire Officer, along with specialized instruction in hazardous materials and technical rescue response.

This foundation shaped my vision to provide exceptional service to our residents, business owners and partners and to continually enhance our training, capabilities and services.



Shortly after September 11, 2001, I witnessed our department's personnel and our village residents come together to raise funds for the firefighters of New York City. I was given the honor of leading a task force to Ground Zero and personally deliver those donations to the New York City Fire Department (FDNY).

If I could ask one thing of those who read this, it would be to pause and truly see what surrounds you – the station, the apparatus, the firefighters – and to recognize that each is the product of real people’s commitment, effort, and care. To those who began with what they were given and made it stronger, more capable, and more compassionate, I hope you feel genuine pride. In doing so, you became part of something larger than yourselves.

Nothing we accomplished was mine alone; it was, and remains, the work of all of us together.

A Legacy of Service: **What We Built Together**

Throughout my tenure, I have worked toward one primary goal: building a department capable of continuous growth and longevity after my service concludes, ensuring that the people who serve here and the residents, business owners and partners who depend on us are supported by a department ready for what comes next.

Building Capability for the Long Term

Our progress rests on two foundations: our people and our capabilities.

We have built a culture in which personnel are expected, and supported, to keep learning throughout their careers. Working alongside neighboring Oakland County fire departments, we helped establish the MABAS 320I mutual aid division, a regional agreement that allows 29 fire departments to share personnel and equipment during major incidents, and the Oakland County Incident Management Team, extending our readiness well beyond what any single department could provide alone.

We led this department’s transition to become a Basic Life Support transporting EMS agency, giving our personnel the ability to transport patients directly rather than relying solely on outside providers.



We also built our hazardous materials response into a capability we can depend on, through our membership in the MABAS 3201 Hazmat Team, expanded internal training in managing highly contagious pathogens and biological threats, and enhanced technical rescue capabilities. Our fire apparatus has been deliberately designed to meet today's mission, not the mission of decades past.

Investing in Our Readiness

Our sustained, intentional investment in training, preparedness efforts, and critical equipment upgrades has established the foundation needed for this department to meet the current and future needs of the communities we serve.

Several initiatives are already underway, including:

- The department is currently updating its fire apparatus, specifically Pumper/Tenders 5 and 6, alongside needed station infrastructure improvements.
- The Fire Commission has determined a path forward on both, with individual commissioners assigned to each project.
- We are working with the Villages of Bingham Farms and Franklin on a five-year strategic plan to determine the department's future capabilities requirements to address evolving service needs and expectations.
- As we approach the tenth anniversary of our current turnout gear, the Fire Commission's continued support of the replacement program I initiated will help ensure our personnel remain properly equipped and safe.



Charting the Path Forward

Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department's most immediate need is clarity from the Villages regarding their desired level of service, which will directly inform staffing decisions, certification and training, and equipment acquisitions. Funding remains a central and ongoing

challenge, one that will require continued collaboration to meet our needs and expectations of the communities we serve responsibly.

What we have built has been accomplished through the dedication of the FBFD leadership, team members, volunteers, and our community and county partnerships. Over the years, we have come to rely, without question, on the strength of these partnerships that include:

- Oakland County Medical Control Authority
- Western Oakland Mutual Aid group, MABAS 3201
- Oakland County's special response teams
- South Oakland Fire Association
- North Oakland Training Group

These organizations have each played a role in strengthening the response community across Oakland County, elevating the capabilities of our own members, and extending training and support beyond our department's walls. These relationships are among the most valuable assets we carry into the future.

The greatest opportunity ahead of this department lies in continued partnership with the Villages we serve. A sustainable path to fund our operations, paired with a staffing plan that allows volunteers and full-time personnel to continue working side by side, will position the Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department to grow in both capability and efficiency, while remaining mindful of the financial pressures facing the communities and the fire service.

There will always be work left unfinished. Apparatus, infrastructure, training, and the development of our people will always remain priorities, and that is by design. A department committed to continuous improvement should never consider this work complete.

The following timeline highlights key milestones achieved during my tenure, offering a record of how this department has continually evolved through the ongoing collaboration of the communities we have served and the commitment and service of our leadership, team members, volunteers and partners.



Timeline

1999 Chief Averbuch begins his tenure

2000s Reorganized the fire department's organizational structure.

Incorporated updated response equipment for firefighting, rescue, and EMS incident needs.

Established technical response capabilities for biological-type incidents.

Strengthened regional response coordination through the redeveloped Oakland County Fire Mutual Aid Association, the Oakland County Incident Management Team, and a ten-year role on the Oakland County Medical Control Authority's Medical Control Committee.

Expanded Fire station.

2010s Updated fire trucks and response equipment for firefighting, rescue, and EMS incident needs.

Replaced the fire station air cascade system.

Established technical rescue equipment capabilities with the acquisition of air shore and air cushion systems.

Coordinated and managed grants (FEMA, State of Michigan/MIOSHA, Birmingham Area Cable Board, and others) for safety equipment and PPE.

2020s Integrated report systems to improve response capabilities (Emergency Reporting to Health EMS/Stryker, and implementation of ESO).

Created a department reference information response guide, later transformed into an electronic "app" version.

Formalized employment structure for paid staff, including employment agreements, scheduling systems, and FLSA compliance.

In addition to the milestones marked by the decade, this department's growth has been sustained by ongoing initiatives. These priorities spanned Chief Averbuch's entire tenure and continue to define how the department operates today, including:

- Modernized fire station infrastructure, including water and waste systems (steel to copper water pipes, cast iron to PVC drain pipes), and directed ongoing station maintenance and repairs across department personnel and external contractors/service providers.
- Recognized and championed fire department personnel through family support and annual department-wide recognition initiatives.
- Acquired respiratory fit testing equipment and coordinated annual fit testing of all response personnel
- Strengthened the department's Hazardous Materials response readiness and overall operational capabilities by receiving and delivering advanced training across firefighting, hazmat, EVOC, terrorism, drug lab awareness, and incident command.
- Directed the integration of two county-based radio systems into FBFD communications to strengthen interoperability and incident coordination.
- Developed and implemented a commercial occupancy index for all Bingham Farms and Franklin buildings to enhance preincident planning and response communication.
- Directed the development, documentation, and continual refinement of incident action plans for highprofile mass gathering events (e.g., Franklin Labor Day Roundup) to ensure coordinated, safetyfocused operations.
- Developed the specifications, procurement, and deployment of Philips MRX and Zoll Zenix cardiac monitor/defibrillators to elevate the department's prehospital cardiac care capabilities.



The Next Chapter Begins

As I conclude this report, I find myself thinking less about what has been accomplished and more about what comes next, for the department, for the communities we serve, and for the people who will carry this work forward.

To those who haven't yet joined this department, and to those who will in the years ahead: step forward. Take the chance. This work will change you, and it will change what you're able to give to the people around you. There is real opportunity here, real reward, and a genuine ability to make a difference. All that is required of you is to choose a path in service to others.

I hope that twenty years from now, this department still values the willingness to change and move forward. Every effort will succeed, but a department that only looks to its past will never build its future, and I hope that lesson outlasts me.

To the residents and business owners of Franklin, Bingham Farms, and Southfield Township: thank you for the opportunity to serve you, to support you, and to stand behind the men and women of this department who have done that work on your behalf. We have been grateful for your support and the chance to make a difference when you needed us most, and grateful, too, for the chance to work alongside you toward a stronger future.

To the elected officials and partner organizations who have supported this department: your advocacy and partnership have mattered more than you may realize. I hope you will continue to ask questions, seek out what this department can do to support you, and share what you need from its members.

Building on this strong foundation, the Franklin-Bingham Farms Fire Department is well-positioned to continue its service and meet the future needs and expectations of the communities it serves.

To the staff and volunteers, past and present, who have walked through the doors of this department: there is no "I" in team. You cannot imagine the difference you have made to me, to each other, and to the people we have served. Collaboratively working together, in one direction, there is no limit to what this department can accomplish.

It has been my sincere honor to serve alongside you. I am grateful for your commitment and service, and extraordinarily humbled and proud of our accomplishments.

As I entrust this department to those who will lead it next, may you continue to build on this foundation, honor the trust placed in you, and carry forward a legacy of service that is stronger, more resilient, and ever focused on the people we are here to protect.