



Pre-Referendum Communications

Aaron Oppenheimer, City Administrator

Caitlin Stene, Director of Administrative Services



SUN PRAIRIE
revolves around you

Background

- Located in Dane County
 - Population: 39,419 (2024) - Growing at 700 to 1,000 residents annually
 - Median Home Value: \$360,200 (2024)
 - Equalized Value: \$6.1 Billion (2024)
 - Local Levy: \$6.77 (2024 taxes/2025 Budget)
 - 5-year net new construction average: 2.77%
- Full-service community
 - 326.9 FTE (2025)
 - \$43.6 Million General Fund (2025)
 - \$219 Million Total Budget (2025)



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Foundation



Planning Tools

Financial Management Plan



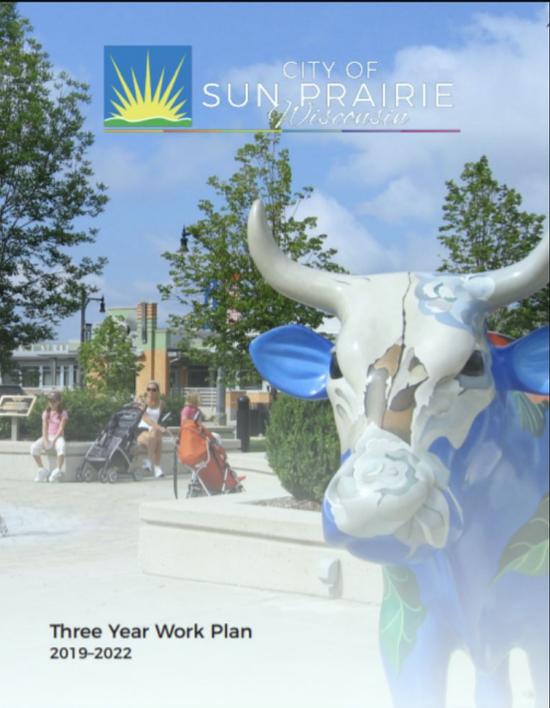
Forecast net change to Property Tax Levy

	Tax/Budget 2023/2024 (Actual)	Tax/Budget 2024/2025	Tax/Budget 2025/2026	Tax/Budget 2026/2027	Tax/Budget 2027/2028	Tax/Budget 2028/2029
Operating Levy	\$24,957,744	\$26,943,929	\$29,328,981	\$31,385,605	\$33,937,455	\$36,624,255
Debt Service Levy	\$7,275,747	\$7,853,014	\$8,428,908	\$9,007,118	\$9,585,988	\$10,160,454
Total Levy	\$32,233,491	\$34,796,942	\$37,757,889	\$40,392,723	\$43,523,443	\$46,784,709
Change in Levy (%)	14%	8%	9%	7%	8%	7%
Equalized Value (TID Q1)	\$5,084,169,000	\$5,378,941,730	\$5,655,841,833	\$6,188,054,950	\$6,506,607,026	\$6,899,277,999
Tax Rate	\$6.34	\$6.47	\$6.68	\$6.83	\$6.69	\$6.78
Change in Tax Rate	\$0.02	\$0.13	\$0.21	(\$0.15)	\$0.16	\$0.09
Typical Home Value	\$377,200	\$391,514	\$406,370	\$421,791	\$437,797	\$454,410
Taxes on Typical Home	\$2,391.44	\$2,532.74	\$2,712.89	\$2,753.25	\$2,928.41	\$3,081.40
Change in Taxes on Typical Home	-	\$141.31	\$180.15	\$40.36	\$175.22	\$152.93

10-year Capital Improvement Plan



Strategic Planning



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2024 Council Strategic Planning

Summer 2024 Work

- Using the FMP and Levy Limits as a starting point, City Council met over the course of three months to determine how to address the city's fiscal challenges.
- Supporting work:
 - External Facilitators Alison S. Lebwohl and Tom Wilson
 - Ehlers as our Senior Municipal Advisor
 - City Staff (City Administrator and Director of Administrative Services)



Night 1: Deeper Understanding



2024 Financial Management Plan Update

Program Evaluation Framework

	Mandate	Portion of the community served by program/service (utilization)	Reliance on city to provide the program/service	Program/Service Demand	Cost Recovery Level
Low - 0	No mandate.	Less than 25% of community benefiting from program/service	Multiple other private providers/other providers outside of city limits	Decreasing program/service demand	Program does not currently generate revenue
Medium - 2	Self-mandate by local ordinance Best Practice	26% to 50% of community benefiting from program/service	Program is offered by other outside agencies (i.e. county, state, local non-profits) or providers with contractors available (i.e. local businesses)	Flat program/service demand	Program recovers less than 50% of program expenses
High - 4	State or federal mandate	Majority of the community (51%+) benefiting from program/service	City is the sole provider, and program cannot be offered by another level of government or non-profit organization	Increasing program/service demand	Program recovers 51% or more of program expenses

Night 2: Proposals & Discussions

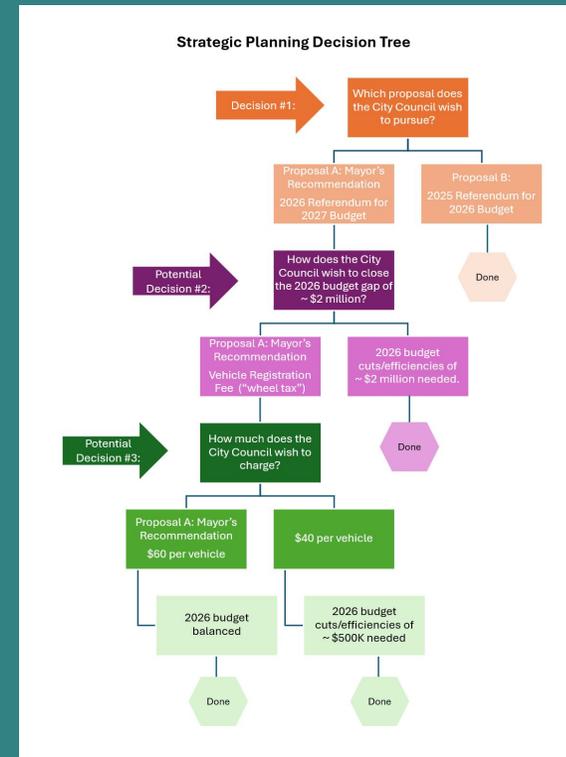


City Council Strategic Planning Summary of Proposals to Resolve Structural Deficit for 2026+

	Proposal A: Mayor's Recommendation	Proposal B: No Vehicle Registration Fee (wheel tax)
Summary of Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of a Vehicle Registration Fee in 2025 for 2026 budget; fee equal to the amount needed to cover the 2026 cost-to-continue deficit Referendum question asked in April 2026 to cover cost-to-continue deficit from 2027-2029 budgets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Vehicle Registration Fee (wheel tax) Referendum question asked in April 2025 to cover cost-to-continue deficit from 2026-2029 budgets.
Vehicle Registration Fee Amount <i>Note: fee can only be used for transportation purposes.</i>	\$60 - will generate \$1,915,000 in annual revenue Fee will cover the following line items in the Streets budget annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Street Maintenance Budget (\$900,000) Snow & Ice Removal Budget (\$610,000) Traffic Budget (\$110,000) Portion of Operations Budget (\$400,000 of \$1,300,000) Annual impact on the average home*: \$120 per year or \$10 per month Total Ask over 3 years: \$5,240,000	Not applicable.
Cost-to-Continue Referendum <i>Note: reflects TIDs remaining open for an additional year for the Affordable House Fund. 2027 budget includes the closure of TID 8.8 (downtown and westside commercial); and 2029 budget includes the closure of TID 13 (Park 15).</i>	Annual Tax Increase on Average Single-Family Home (city portion only): 2027: \$45 2028: \$176 2029: \$155 TOTAL: \$376	Total Ask over 4 years: \$6,870,000 Annual Tax Increase on Average Single-Family Home (city portion only): 2026: \$179 2027: \$39 2028: \$174 2029: \$152 TOTAL: \$504
Referendum Initiatives	To be determined.	To be determined.
Resolves Deficit Through	2029 (4 years)	2029 (4 years)
Budget Year	Next referendum needed 2029 for 2030 budget	Next referendum needed 2029 for 2030 budget

*According to the most recently released national data from the Federal Highway Administration, 97% of American households have one vehicle or more. For our purposes, we are assuming the average home has 2 vehicles.

Night 3: Decision Making Night



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**Result:
2025-2029 Fiscal
Roadmap**



2025 – 2029 Fiscal Roadmap



Direction by Budget Year

	2025	2026	2027 - 2029
<i>Cost Savings</i>	Continue cost savings policies	Continue cost savings policies	Continue cost savings policies Staff implements \$500K in additional cost savings
<i>Fund Balance (or Existing Savings)</i>	If needed, use up to \$500K in Fund Balance (consistent with policy)		
<i>Vehicle Registration Fee to support transportation-related costs</i>	\$30 annual vehicle registration fee	\$30 annual vehicle registration fee	\$30 annual vehicle registration fee
<i>Public Engagement and Referendum</i>	Public engagement	April 2026 referendum vote	Referendum-driven revenues & services in place (if approved)

Accepted by Council on September 17, 2024 – Press conference on September 20, 2024

Now...

2025 WCMA WINTER CONFERENCE

Marketing Your Referendum: Tips for Community Buy-in

FEB. 27, 2025



ALLOW US TO
**INTRODUCE
OURSELVES**

At Mueller Communications, we are a full-service team of seasoned, well-connected marketing, communications and creative experts.

We leverage decades of experience in communications and marketing to help organizations, leaders and influencers amplify their great work. With integrity at the heart of all we do, our team of strategic communicators and problem solvers **strives to do the right thing for our clients and our communities.**

Across industries and geographies, our comprehensive communications and marketing services consistently deliver measurable results to support the individuals and organizations who are making a difference.



OUR SERVICES

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The most valuable reputation builder is not what you say about yourself, but what others say about you. What are they saying? Are you listening? It's time to drive the narrative.

- Communications Audit
- Messaging & Content
- Crisis Communications & Reputation Management
- Media Relations
- Spokesperson Training
- Events
- Influencer Targeting
- Thought Leadership
- Public Affairs & Community Engagement
- Employee Engagement & Change Management

MARKETING

Cut through the noise with innovative tactics that effectively target and connect with your niche audience, taking them on a carefully crafted journey that drives action and return on investment.

- Marketing Strategy & Plan Creation
- Branding
- Message & Collateral Development
- Content Marketing
- Programmatic Display, CTV, Digital Video & Audio
- Search Engine Management (SEM)
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Social Media
- Email & Marketing Automation
- Influencer Marketing
- B2B Marketing
- Traditional Media

CREATIVE

You're only as good as you look until they meet you. Once you have a compelling story, let our in-house creative team help you tell it in a visually compelling way.

- Visual Branding
- Website Design
- Online Creative
- Print & Collateral Creative
- Experiential Creative
- Product/Package Design
- Video & Photography

WEBSITES

At Mueller, we work to build websites that meet your unique needs, whether you're seeking to generate leads for your business, sell a product, or familiarize an audience with your brand and story, your online presence is critical to the mission of your organization.

- Storytelling Website
- Lead Generation Website
- Ecommerce Website



MUELLER TEAM EXPERIENCE

Mueller Communications serves a diverse client roster representing a wide range of organizations, from Fortune 500 companies to professional service firms, nonprofit organizations, and educational and cultural institutions.

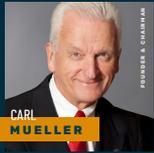




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CARL
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ELIZABETH
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CASS
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PHILL
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AARON
STERN



BEN
BORDEN



JENNIFER
MORTON



LAURA
KELLER



KAT
BEST



LURA
KOOLEY



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CARA
VONDERWELL



KATIE
DARRAGH



APRIL
GREIDER



MAKAYLA
HARROW



MARGARET
WEINER



EIBAR
ROBLEDO



HOWARD
LEWIS



HALLE
HATCH



VERONICA
POPE



AMELIA
VENEGAS



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CZARNECKI



KIRSTEN
MUELLER

MEET TEAM MUELLER

Our deep bench of big picture thinkers, detail-oriented doers and creative problem solvers are **the best in the business.**

STATEWIDE

FUNDING ISSUES



A RECORD YEAR FOR REFERENDA

Although school referenda are larger and draw more attention, voters are increasingly approving measures to raise taxes for other local governments such as cities and villages as well. Last week's election suggests the trend is growing, with notable implications for both local services and taxpayers.

This November, Wisconsin voters weighed in on more than 250 referendum questions, approving some types of them in record numbers and shifting the course for their local governments for years to come.

In all, 104 of the referenda asked voters to allow a school district, town, city, village, or county to exceed state limits on local property taxes (see Figure 1). In unofficial vote tallies, 82 of them, or 78.8%, passed. In approving them, voters authorized at least an additional \$11.4 million in municipal and county property taxes for services such as public safety, as well as up to \$299.6 million to operate K-12 schools and up to \$1.4 billion in new debt for school buildings and other projects.

The successful referenda to exceed state-imposed property tax and school revenue limits confirm the growing importance of these ballot measures and

suggest they could become a long-term feature of the state's political landscape. County and municipal referenda passed in record numbers in 2022, while voters also approved the largest number of referenda for school districts' operating budgets in more than two decades.

MUNICIPAL AND COUNTY REFERENDA

To report on these local measures, we draw on data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC), the League of Wisconsin Municipalities (LWM), the Department of Revenue, and the election websites of the 72 county clerks throughout the state. Though we attempted to include all referenda on November election ballots across Wisconsin, a handful may have escaped our notice.

Across Wisconsin, municipalities are faced with challenges raising the revenue necessary to fund local services.

With stagnant or decreasing state aid and few tools that enable communities to raise revenue, **more and more municipalities are turning to property tax levy increases approved via referendum.**

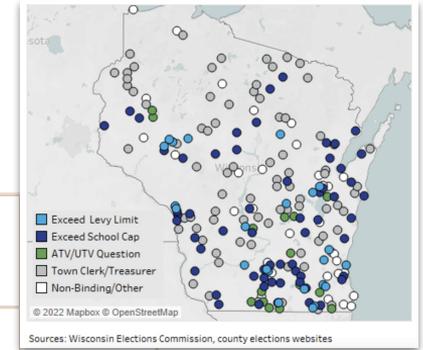


STATEWIDE

Data from [Wisconsin DOR](#), [Wisconsin Public Radio](#)

FUNDING ISSUES

Approved Municipal and County Referenda to Exceed Property Tax Levy Limits



3 STEP

PROCESS

PHASE I: OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

PHASE II: COMMUNITY SURVEY

PHASE III: PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE

APPROACH

The preferred approach to referenda includes a three-step process that takes place over the course of 9-12 months and provides opportunities for broad public engagement, education and dialogue.

Each community should customize an approach to fit their needs.



EDUCATE COMMUNITY about relevant services and the current funding challenge

IDENTIFY and evaluate all **OPTIONS**

SOLICIT COMMUNITY INPUT on potential solutions

MOVE FORWARD with solution
(usually funding via referendum)

OBJECTIVES





COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

ELECTED LEADERS

CIVIC, COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS

LOCAL REPORTERS AND MEDIA OUTLETS

AUDIENCES



PUBLIC EDUCATION

SAMPLE TIMELINE (NOV.)

PHASE I - Options Assessment

Public education about the **funding challenges** , **potential solutions**

- **Jan - March:** Develop an options assessment
- **April:** Present and publicize options assessment

PHASE II - Survey

Public education about the **opportunity for input** to guide decision-making, further discussion about **funding challenges**

- **May:** Develop survey
- **June:** Distribute survey and analyze responses
- **July:** Present survey findings

PHASE III - Referendum Education

Public education about the **referendum itself** - including discussion about **funding needs** and **impact of yes / no vote on services, property taxes**

- **August:** Referendum question is placed on the ballot
- **August - November:** Referendum-specific public education campaign

APPROACH

The preferred approach to referenda includes a three-step process that **takes place over the course of 9-12 months** and provides opportunities for broad public engagement, education and dialogue.

Each community should customize an approach to fit their needs.



PHASE I

OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

Do your homework. Show your work.



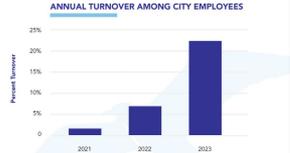
CITY OF MONONA

SPRING 2024
ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE AND STAFFING NEEDS, FUNDING OPTIONS

CITY OF MONONA OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

STAFF TURNOVER INCREASING, NEGATIVELY IMPACTING SERVICE DELIVERY
Historically, average staff turnover for City of Monona full-time employees has been 1-4%. In 2022, the City saw staff turnover of almost 7%. In 2023, that number increased to a turn more than 22% - including two retirements.

ANNUAL TURNOVER AMONG CITY EMPLOYEES



Year	Percent Turnover
2021	2%
2022	7%
2023	22%

With 72 full-time employees, some City of Monona departments turned over more than 10 full-time positions in the last 2 years, and the majority of these turnovers were employees for the same or similar positions in other communities which were offering higher wages cases, substantially higher than those employees were earning in Monona.

Between 2021 and 2023, the Monona Fire Department experienced a 54% turnover rate: the five staff left their positions to work in another community with higher pay - a trend continue as municipalities across the state seek to hire additional cross-trained, full-time or move away from staffing models heavily reliant on volunteers.

As wages fail to measure up to wages in peer communities and the demand on officers in Incir City also risks losing its experienced, knowledgeable police officers to better paying poistis burnout. Between 2021 and 2023, the Monona Police Department experienced a 14.3% rate - primarily due to retirements.

Turnover in non-public safety departments has also caused a loss of valuable institutional knowledge in Monona's library, public works, parks & recreation, and administration. The experienced, tenured public works employees impacts crucial maintenance of the City's water and stormwater infrastructure, as well as important services like snow plowing. When this

APPENDIX A
Alternative Funding Options Considered
The City of Monona has explored multiple other avenues to fund its revenue needs. However, these options were deemed not to be viable for a few reasons, including the limited allowable use of funds related to each and that none would generate sufficient revenue to meet the City's needs.

Municipal Wheel Tax
Wisconsin law allows municipalities to collect an annual municipal vehicle registration fee ("wheel tax"). The fee applies to vehicles kept in the municipality or county with automobile registration. Note that these fees would be in addition to the State of Wisconsin's \$85 annual fee to renew automobile plates, and Dane County's \$28 "wheel tax."

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation collects wheel tax fees for the municipality, retains an administrative fee of \$0.17 per vehicle application and sends the rest to the municipality. The wheel tax is collected at the time of first registration and at each registration renewal.

There are approximately 7,000 eligible vehicles (automobiles, trucks and motorcycles) registered in the City of Monona. The City can charge only up to \$40 for a wheel tax, generating just \$280,000. While the City has identified a municipal wheel tax as one potential avenue for additional revenue, it is not a sufficient or sustainable solution on its own.

Partner with Neighboring Communities
The City of Monona has done preliminary research into partnering with neighboring Dane County communities to provide services. However, establishing partnerships is a complex process that requires time, resources and compromise, and while there is some potential for partnership in the future, this solution does not solve the immediate needs of the City. The City of Monona is working to explore opportunities for partnership with neighboring communities to develop a sustainable, mutually beneficial option down the road.

¹ Wheel tax revenue can only be used to fund road and other transportation related improvements. With this funding, however, the City would be able to reallocate existing General Funds currently directed to transportation expenses.

18

STEPS

Background

Challenge

Potential Solutions

Funding Options

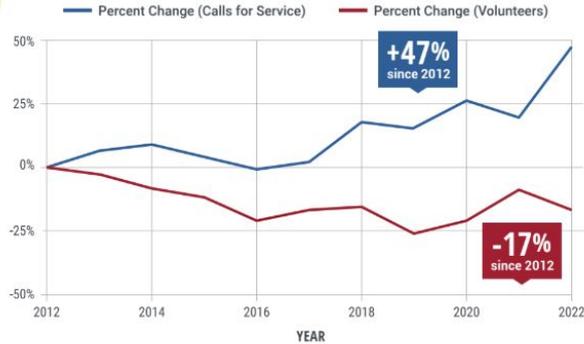


DEFINE THE CHALLENGE

CRITICAL NEED FOR FIREFIGHTER-PARAMEDICS

In 2022, CFD responded to 1,480 calls for service – averaging about four calls per day. Up from just 1,007 calls for service in 2012, **this represents a nearly 47% increase**. During that same period of time, **CFD saw a 17% decrease in volunteers**.

In 2022, **38% of calls came in simultaneously**. As subsequent calls are received, the Department's ability to respond decreases due to insufficient staffing.

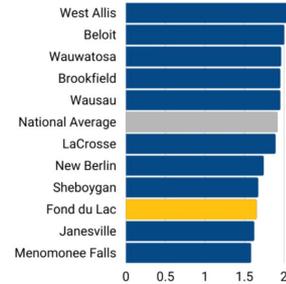


In some cases, when there are simultaneous emergencies, the Department is unable to respond to a call for service. When that happens, CFD must rely on mutual aid from neighboring departments around the area to provide service.

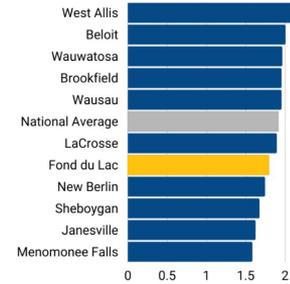
31x The Cedarburg Fire Department relied on mutual aid 31 times in 2022.

NEED FOR ADDITIONAL OFFICERS

OFFICERS PER THOUSAND POPULATION



WITH INCREASED STAFFING



du Lac Police Department to augment its shift staffing to meet peak demand.



DEFINE THE **OPTIONS**

- **OUTSOURCING SERVICES TO ANOTHER MUNICIPALITY**
- **BUDGET CUTS AND SERVICE REDUCTIONS**
- **ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF REVENUE, INCLUDING PROPERTY TAXES AND A WHEEL TAX**
- **PARTNERING WITH SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES**



PHASE II

COMMUNITY SURVEY



Dear Village of Pleasant Prairie Residents:

As leaders of public safety departments in the Village, it is our duty to prioritize your safety. Our commitment includes maintaining the high-quality fire, police, and emergency response services that you expect from Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue and the Pleasant Prairie Police Department.

In recent years, we have seen the population and business community in Pleasant Prairie grow. While we are pleased more people are finding the Village of Pleasant Prairie to be a great place to live, work, and raise a family, this growth is increasing the demand for public safety services. As a result, it is becoming difficult to sustain the level of service our community has come to expect.

As we work to respond to this challenge, we are seeking your feedback. This is a brief survey asking for your input on the best way to manage our current financial situation, the public safety challenges we face, and how to move forward as a community.

Please take 5 to 10 minutes to respond to this survey.

PLEASE TAKE THE SURVEY IN ONE OF THE TWO FOLLOWING WAYS

OPTION 1: To reduce mailing expenses, please fill out the survey online –

- Go to the survey website: www.Survey2000.com
- Enter your survey code:

OPTION 2: **By paper** – If you do not have internet access, please return the survey to the Village of Pleasant Prairie or mail it to Community Perceptions: PO Box 607, Slinger, WI 53086.

Additional Surveys: The survey code included above can be used only once. To obtain access to additional surveys for other adults in your household, please call the Village of Pleasant Prairie at 262.694.1400.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BEFORE NOVEMBER 22, 2021

Final survey results will be reported at a Village Board meeting this fall and will also be available on the Village's website.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Sincerely,

David Smetana
Chief of Police

Craig Roepke
Chief of Fire & Rescue

PLEASANT PRAIRIE FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

The Pleasant Prairie Fire & Rescue Department (PPFR) provides:

- Basic and advanced life support (CPR, first aid, paramedic services, and invasive life-saving procedures).
- Fire services (fire emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, fire inspections, and public education).
- Hazardous materials response and specialized response (high-risk, technical rescues in the region).



Over the last decade, the Village population has grown by nearly eight percent, representing nearly 1,600 new residents. Additionally, the Village has experienced growth in both commercial and industrial properties, which have larger, more complex structures.

PPFR now serves 21,250 residents and 494 businesses within the nearly 34 square miles that make up the Village of Pleasant Prairie.

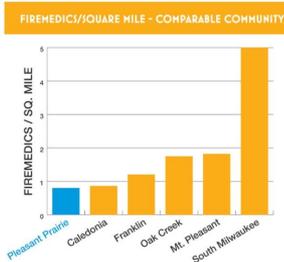
THE CHALLENGE

As population and commercial growth continue, the number of calls for fire and emergency medical services grows as well. PPFR received nearly 3,000 calls for service in 2019, a 60% increase in the last ten years. As a result, response times have increased, challenging our ability to provide lifesaving care to residents.

It is important to note that nearly 40% of our increasing number of calls for service overlap with other calls, meaning that PPFR must respond to several emergencies at once. This is especially challenging because incidents are spread throughout the more than 33-square-mile area we serve.

Compared to similar-sized communities, we have the lowest staffing-to-service-area ratio in the region. This is shown in the graph to the right.

Comments/suggestions/questions:



STEPS

Seek Community Input

Build Community Investment in the Solution



PHASE III

PUBLIC EDUCATION



ROLE OF

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES



V S .



✓ EDUCATION

✗ ADVOCACY



REFERENDUM

GUIDELINES & ADVOCACY

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES: INFORMATION SHARING	PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES: EXPRESS ADVOCACY
<p>Using municipal resources (paper, copiers, supplies) or data lists (phone, email, other) for informational purposes only.</p>	<p>Using municipal resources (paper, copiers, supplies) or data lists/resources (phone, email, other) for VOTE YES or VOTE NO efforts.</p>
<p>Using official municipal communication channels to provide information, information, information!</p>	<p>Using official municipal communication channels to recruit members or fundraising for a VOTE YES or VOTE NO political action committee (PAC) or referendum group.</p>
<p>Expressing personal opinion and support for the referendum IF you are not serving in “official capacity” at the time AND you specifically identify your statements as personal opinion. Municipal resident employees should remain neutral at all times.</p>	<p>Expressing your VOTE YES or VOTE NO opinions as representative in an official capacity.</p>



REFERENDUM

GUIDELINES & ADVOCACY

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES: INFORMATION SHARING	PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES: EXPRESS ADVOCACY
Providing factual information on the proposed referendum.	Distributing VOTE YES or VOTE NO materials in any form.
Holding informational meetings and unbiased voter registration and absentee ballot drives.	Holding VOTE YES or VOTE NO meetings or rallies.
Providing community members with factual information about the proposed referendum or voting as a civic responsibility/right.	Promoting a VOTE YES or VOTE NO message to students in an official class setting or district activity.
Serving on an independent political action committee (PAC) or referendum group “off the clock” and off municipal grounds if you are a contractual employee with defined start/end times.	Working on VOTE YES or VOTE NO efforts for an independent political action committee (PAC) or referendum group while on official work time if a contractual employee.



REFERENDUM

DRAFTING A QUESTION

 Exceeding Levy Limits by Referendum or Resolution		
ion (November 2023)	n (November 2023)	
<p>Wisconsin state law outlines the requirements for a municipality or county (political subdivision) to complete when it pursues exceeding its levy limit by referendum or resolution.</p> <p>Referendum Process</p> <p>A political subdivision may exceed its allowable levy limit if the following is completed, as provided in sec. 66.0602(4), Wis. Stats.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Governing body adopts a resolution proposing the amount of the levy increase and the percentage increase over the allowable levy, including the purpose of the increase and whether the increase is for the next fiscal year only, for a set number of years, or if it will apply on an ongoing basis Resolution is approved via referendum <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Odd-numbered years – may be held as a special referendum on the same election dates used by a school board under sec. 121.91(3), Wis. Stats. Otherwise – must be held during a spring primary/election, partisan primary, or general election Clerk must publish the proper notices under sec. 66.0602(4)(b), Wis. Stats. <p>Ballot language</p> <p>The language on the ballot must state the question verbatim as provided in sec. 66.0602(4)(c), Wis. Stats.</p> <p>"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the ... (name of political subdivision) for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, ... (year), is limited to ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$... Shall the ... (name of political subdivision) be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, ... (year), for ... (purpose for which the increase will be used), by a total of ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$...?"</p> <p>If the increase is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the next fiscal year only – question must include the percentage increase in the levy from the previous year's levy For a set number of years – question must include the amount of the increase for each fiscal year that the increase applies and include the percentage increase for the first year On an ongoing basis – question must include the amount of the increase for each fiscal year that the increase applies, and include the percentage increase for the first year <p>Calculating the correct amounts in ballot language above</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sum of your percentage increases for net new construction, terminated TID and subtracted TID. Note: Actual data certified by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) should be used in the fall; and best estimate in the spring. DOR recommends using the data from the previous year's submitted levy limit worksheet. Total levy prior to the increase, including all other adjustments (from Levy Limit Worksheet – Sec. D) and the personal property aid reduction Divide the proposed increase by the total levy in (2) Sum of the proposed increase and the total levy in (2) 	<p>the next fiscal year, 2021, is ... (name of political subdivision) ... (year), is limited to ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$580,632?"</p> <p>DOR within 14 days of</p> <p>the next fiscal year, 2021, is ... (name of political subdivision) ... (year), is limited to ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$580,632?"</p> <p>days of the electors'</p> <p>the next fiscal year, 2021, is ... (name of political subdivision) ... (year), is limited to ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$580,632?"</p> <p>levy limit if the</p> <p>in resolution a specific ... (name of political subdivision) ... (year), is limited to ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$580,632?"</p> <p>prior to the special town ... (name of political subdivision) ... (year), is limited to ...% (based on actual data or the political subdivision's best estimate), which results in a levy of \$580,632?"</p> <p>and resolution.</p> <p>approved by the town</p> <p>re items below.</p> <p>o, terminated TID and TID</p> <p>adjustments (from Levy</p> <p>y in (2)</p> <p>is.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p>
WI Dept of Revenue (R. 11-23)		

The Department of Revenue has resources that can help a community's attorney develop a referendum question that meets legal requirements.

Also consider how that question frames the issue and aligns with the education campaign.



OUTREACH

PLAN & STRATEGY

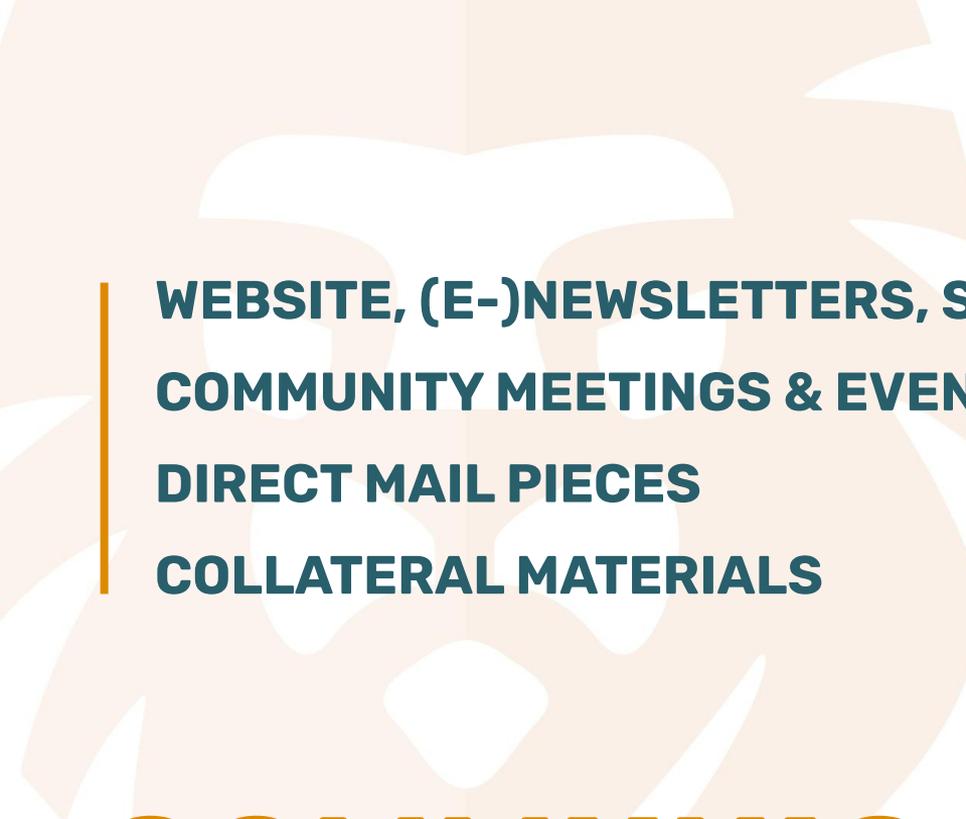
Evaluate results of Options Assessment and Community Survey.
Develop outreach plan to communicate with key audiences in the weeks leading up to a referendum vote.



MAJOR ACTIVITY FOR WEEK OF:	STATUS
PREPARATORY PHASE	
Meet with City staff to develop, refine outreach plan and approach	Completed
Review existing materials, data points, presentations	Completed
Begin drafting key messages, FAQs, fact sheet	Completed
Referendum Outreach to Council & City Staff: Information vs. Advocacy	Completed
Meet with Envision Greater Fond du Lac, IAFF	Completed
Weekly Mueller/Fond du Lac meetings	In Process
MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT PHASE	
Email Distributions (via Envision FDL)	In Process
Finalize key messages	Completed
Finalize FAQs (living document with ongoing updates)	Completed
Develop Presentation deck for speaking opportunities, info sessions	Completed
Speaking opportunities (Lion's Club, HOAs, Rotaries, etc)	In Process
Social ad campaign	In Process
OUTREACH PHASE	
Media Outreach	In Process
Mailer One (details about need for referendum)	Completed
Mailer Two (absentee vote encouragement)	Not Started
Mailer Three (oversized postcard with voting information, "what's at stake")	Not Started

Develop a comprehensive plan to reach the right people, at the right time with the right message.





WEBSITE, (E-)NEWSLETTERS, SOCIAL MEDIA
COMMUNITY MEETINGS & EVENTS
DIRECT MAIL PIECES
COLLATERAL MATERIALS

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



A NOTE ON

KEY MESSAGES

- Provide a brief, compelling case that focuses on the core issue and how funding via referendum is a solution.
- Avoid diluting the issue with too many examples.
- Consider whether a focus on inflation may have pros and cons.



KEY MESSAGES
FAQ DOCUMENT
FACT SHEET
PRESENTATION DECK

COLLATERAL MATERIALS

WHY REFERENDUM? State law does not allow property tax levies to be adjusted based on inflation. Without approval by referendum, property tax levies can only change based on the "net new construction" percentage in each municipality. In Brookfield, these increases are not enough to meet the community's desired service levels.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"
If Brookfield voters approve the referendum, the City will be able to **increase its property tax levy by \$6 million**, beginning with property tax bills issued in December 2025.

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	PROPERTY TAX IMPACT \$6 MILLION TOTAL INCREASE	
	ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT PER YEAR	PER MONTH
\$100,000	\$65	\$5.42
\$460,000	\$300	\$25

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "NO"
If the referendum is rejected by a majority of voters, the City will have to **make difficult decisions about what service or staffing changes may be required across departments** to close projected budget gaps, or what alternative funding sources may be implemented. The City works hard to be efficient, effective, and trustworthy financial stewards. **Cuts to the budget would likely disrupt current levels of service.** As essential and expansive projects such as pavement maintenance become more urgent, without more funding, **the City may need to increase its borrowing, effectively creating a bigger financial burden in the long-term with interest payments.**

VOTE APRIL 1

EARLY VOTING
In-person early voting will take place on weekdays from **March 18 - 28** in the Clerk's Office at City Hall (2000 N. Calhoun Road) from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS
Deadline to request an absentee ballot is **Thursday, March 27.**

ELECTION DAY
Polling places will be open **7 a.m. - 8 p.m.** Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID to vote.

SCAN THE QR CODE!

For more information, please visit:
www.ci.brookfield.wi.us/referendum
or email questions to referendum@ci.brookfield.wi.us

For more information, please visit: www.ci.brookfield.wi.us/referendum



EXAMPLE FACT SHEETS

PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM



**VOTE
AUGUST 13
2024**

The Village of Richfield has identified a need to increase funding for public safety services to **avoid the loss of fire protection and emergency medical services and to improve police services** throughout the Village.

Voters will be asked to decide whether they support a \$1,250,000 increase in the Village's annual property tax levy to support the Village in establishing a municipal Richfield Fire Department, hiring staff from the soon-to-be dissolved nonprofit RVFC including hiring a new Fire Chief and funding an additional full-time Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) Deputy Sheriff to provide service to the Village.

WHY IS THE VILLAGE HOLDING A REFERENDUM?

In order to generate adequate funding for public safety services, the Village must either borrow or increase property taxes. While the Village Board has the ability to borrow funds for the public safety needs outlined, the cost to do so would include interest and would be higher than if the services were funded through the property tax levy. To exceed state-imposed levy limits, the Village needs voter approval through a referendum, which the Village Board opted to place on the August 13, 2024 ballot.

Richfield Must Have Fire Protection Services

Members of the nonprofit RVFC, which has provided emergency medical and fire services to the Village for the last 125 years, voted to officially dissolve the organization.

The Village of Richfield is obligated by State Statute to provide fire and police protection services. Without RVFC, the Village must identify another provider to deliver fire protection and emergency medical services and deemed a dedicated municipal department the most appropriate course of action.

Funding is now needed for that new, municipal Richfield Fire Department.



Demand for Public Safety Services Has Grown Since 2008

When the Richfield community incorporated in 2008, the municipality entered into an agreement with the WCSO to fund two (2) Deputy Sheriffs dedicated to policing in the Village. At that time, the WCSO communicated the inevitable need to increase staffing as the community and its service needs grew.

With calls for service growing more than 20%, and the Village remaining at the same staffing levels as the Town of Richfield had back in 2008, Richfield now requires one (1) additional Deputy Sheriff dedicated to the Village, and must fund that position.



AUGUST 13 ELECTION DAY



The Village of Richfield's polling location, Northbrook Church, will be open on August 13 at 7 a.m. and will close at 8 p.m. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID to vote.

ES"

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT

\$125 MILLION TOTAL INCREASE

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT	
	PER YEAR	PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$63.02	\$1.21
\$400,000	\$252.08	\$4.84

equates to a property tax increase of an estimated \$63.02 annually per \$100 of assessed value, starting with bills issued in December 2024. The cost to a Richfield home valued at \$400,000 would be \$252.08 annually.

TO"

will be unable to fund operations for the new, municipal and will borrow money to fund the Department, ultimately pay interest on the borrowed funds.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"

If the referendum is approved by a majority of voters, the City of Baraboo will be able to maintain its current level of support to the community. This includes staffing key positions to keep up with the current and anticipated operational needs of our growing community.

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT	
	PER YEAR	PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$206	\$3.96
\$200,000	\$412	\$7.92

Taxpayers will see an estimated property tax increase of \$206 annually, or \$396 a week, per \$100,000 of assessed value, starting with bills issued in December 2024.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "NO"

The City strives to provide residents with high-quality services and foster a vibrant community. However, if the referendum is rejected by a majority of voters, the City will have to make difficult decisions about how to address rising costs to provide services with the needs of a growing population. A "no" vote would require the City to cut operational costs, therefore reducing the services and community programs Baraboo residents have come to rely on and enjoy.

VOTE NOVEMBER 5

EARLY VOTING

In-person early voting will take place at City Hall on the following dates:

- October 22 – 25: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- October 28 – 31: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- November 1: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.



ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail:

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31 at 5 p.m.



ELECTION DAY

Your polling place, the Baraboo Civic Center, will be open 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID to vote.



For more information, please visit: baraboowi.gov/referendum or email questions to referendum@baraboowi.gov



REFERENDUM



Baraboo has identified a need for additional funding to meet the needs of the community. The City will seek approval of a \$2 increase in the property tax levy to maintain its current level of face of rising operational costs and to fund additional growing community needs.

Resources are insufficient to maintain existing levels of service and increased community needs. Due to state-imposed limitations, the only way to secure required funding is to raise the local property tax levy through a referendum. A \$2 increase in the property tax levy to maintain current services.



INFLATION PRESSURES:

The cost to provide the services City residents expect continues to rise, while the levy has been limited. For example, since 2016, inflation has increased by 34%, while the City's tax levy, because of state-imposed limits, only increased 12%.



For more information, please visit www.wisconsin.gov/318/Public_Safety_Referendum or email questions directly to Village Administrator Jim Kelly at administrator@richfieldwi.gov



EXAMPLE FAQS



Fire/EMS Referendum FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY ARE THE GRAFTON AND SAUKVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENTS CONSOLIDATING INTO ONE DEPARTMENT?

Consolidating the Grafton and Saukville Fire Departments will streamline operations, reduce duplicative administration costs, improve coordination across communities, and ensure reliable emergency response. A 2021 Wisconsin Policy Forum Report highlighted the benefits of joint fire and EMS services in Ozaukee County, noting potential improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

Additionally, since late 2020, the two departments have been led by Grafton Fire Chief Bill Rice, and are operating under an existing intergovernmental agreement to functionally consolidate some services – including dispatch.

HOW ARE THE GRAFTON AND SAUKVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENTS CURRENTLY WORKING TOGETHER?

Over the last few years, Grafton and Saukville have been collaborating more closely on Fire/EMS services. In 2018, the departments consolidated dispatch service, providing better coordination and more efficient emergency response. In 2019, GFD and SFD consolidated fire inspection efforts. Starting in 2020, Grafton Fire Chief Bill Rice, has been serving as chief of the Saukville Fire Department, through an intergovernmental agreement.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CONSOLIDATING? WILL CURRENT STAFF HAVE ROLES IN THE JOINT DEPARTMENT?

Since 2020, the Grafton and Saukville Departments have been functionally consolidated through an intergovernmental agreement between the two municipalities. Under the consolidation, current Grafton Fire Chief Bill Rice will be the chief for the Grafton-Saukville Fire Department. Additionally, current Grafton Assistant Fire Chief Matthew Karpinski and Administrative Assistant Diana Degnitz will continue to serve in their position for the new joint department.

The Grafton-Saukville Fire Department will operate out of the existing Grafton and Saukville stations. Existing staff will be retained and, if funding is approved via the referendum, the new Department will add staff at each station.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO CONSOLIDATING INTO ONE JOINT FIRE DEPARTMENT?

Through consolidation, the Grafton-Saukville Fire Department will be able to operate more efficiently and effectively through streamlined operations, improve coordination across communities, and provide reliable emergency response 24/7/365.

Additionally, through consolidation and the addition of full-time staff, the Grafton-Saukville Fire Department will improve response times and emergency response reliability. Furthermore, a joint department will result in significant cost savings for capital expenses (fire engines, ambulances, etc.)

For more information, please visit www.village.grafton.wi.us/946/Referendums

PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

to support an increase in annual property tax levies in the fees, beginning with bills issued in December 2024, to cover eight full-time positions, and the Saukville Department Grafton-Saukville Department will be able to add a deputy chief station.



ALSO FUNDING THIS JOINT THE VILLAGE OF SAUKVILLE

ated department.
levy would increase by \$38,766 to cover the cost of necessary n of the increased costs within their allowable levy limit.

GRAFTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

prehensive fire, rescue and EMS service to the Town and Village of Saukville to support situations including cardiac arrests, the department maintains several first response vehicles for

Assistant Chief, Captain, and 6 full-time staff and relies on a 11 whom are certified in firefighting, EMS, or both. Daily, the ding 24-hour shifts.

SAUKVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

rescue and EMS service to the Town and Village of Saukville. roster of 25 paid-on-call individuals. Daily, the station is our shift.

946/Referendums

2

PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM FAQS



Q What is the proposed public safety referendum that is on the ballot for Tuesday, April 2?

The referendum will ask voters to decide whether or not to support an increase in the Village's annual property tax levy, beginning with tax bills issued in December 2024, to cover the cost for ten additional firefighter-paramedics and four additional police officers. Additional information about this public safety referendum is available online at germantownwi.gov/Public-Safety-Referendum.

Q What will appear on the ballot?

The formal question will appear as follows on the April 2 ballot:

Under state law, the increase in the levy of the Village of Germantown for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2025, is limited to 2.97%, which results in a levy of \$16,212,166. Shall the Village of Germantown be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2025, and on an ongoing basis, for the purpose of hiring four (4) new police officers and ten (10) new firefighter-paramedics, to a total of 8.941%, which results in a levy of \$17,661,634?

Q When and where do I vote?

Election Day is Tuesday, April 2, 2024. All polling places will be open 7:00 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID in order to vote. Additional voting information, including polling places and information about requesting an absentee ballot, can be found at germantownwi.gov/1948/Registration-to-Vote.

Q Why do we need a referendum to raise the property tax levy limit?

State of Wisconsin statutes limit the amount of property taxes a municipality can collect each year to the percent increase in equalized value from net new construction. In order to exceed the levy limit, the municipality needs voter approval through a village-wide referendum.

Q What will it mean if a majority of voters vote "yes"?

If the referendum is approved by a majority of voters on April 2, the Village of Germantown will be able to add ten additional firefighter-paramedics and four additional police officers – ensuring there are adequate public safety staff to sufficiently respond to increasing calls for service and provide proactive public safety services throughout the community.

If approved, the annual property tax would increase by an estimated 5.51% annually, or about \$1 per week, per \$100,000 in assessed property value. The impact to an average Germantown home valued at \$350,000 would be \$178.13 annually, or about \$3.43 per week.

Q What does it mean if a majority vote "no" and the referendum fails?

If the referendum is rejected by a majority of voters, the Village will be faced with difficult decisions about how to address the growing need for public safety services. The Germantown Fire and Police Departments will be unable to increase staffing levels and existing public safety staff will continue to be limited in their ability to respond to calls or provide proactive services.

REFERENDUM FAQS

Q Where can I learn more about this referendum?

Additional information about this Public Safety referendum is available online at germantownwi.gov/Public-Safety-Referendum.

Q Who can I contact to get information about the referendum?

Send any questions or feedback to the Village of Germantown at referendum@germantownwi.gov.



REFERENDUM@GERMANTOWNWI.GOV | GERMANTOWNWI.GOV/PUBLIC-SAFETY-REFERENDUM

PAGE 1

REFERENDUM@GERMANTOWNWI.GOV | GERMANTOWNWI.GOV/PUBLIC-SAFETY-REFERENDUM

PAGE 3



INFORMATION SESSIONS

(IN PERSON, ONLINE)

SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

(E.G., ROTARIES, SENIOR CENTERS)

CHAMBERS

BLOCK PARTIES

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



City of
WHITEWATER
Live • Learn • Work • Play

**POLICE & FIRE/EMS
REFERENDUM**

INFORMATION SESSION

FEBRUARY 18

5 P.M. | MUNICIPAL BUILDING

312 W. WHITEWATER ST.



2 - 3 DESIGNED MAILERS

1 - 6 WEEKS BEFORE ELECTION

CONSIDER IMPACT OF EARLY & ABSENTEE VOTING

DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN



REFERENDUM

VOTE
TUESDAY, APRIL 1

The Village of Oregon has identified a need for additional funding to maintain the high quality of existing services necessary in the growing community. The funding will enable the Village to maintain its existing police, public works and parks, library and senior center services and programs, including making necessary investments in staffing.

The Oregon Village Board voted to place a referendum question on the April 1, 2025 ballot. Voters will be asked if they support a permanent, \$1.95 million increase in the Village's property tax levy. If passed, the Village could hire:

- 3 full-time equivalent (FTE) Police Officers;
- 3 FTE Public Works positions;
- Additional Public Works seasonal staff;
- 1 FTE Human Resources Manager;
- 2 FTE Library positions; and
- 0.4 FTE at the Senior Center.

Funding would also support maintenance and operations for Village parks, facilities and equipment, as well as wage adjustments for some employees, making salaries more competitive and helping with staff recruitment and retention.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND ADDITIONAL STAFF ARE KEY TO ENSURING CONTINUED, HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES

The Village of Oregon has kept costs low by keeping staffing levels low. Now, the Village is understaffed and increasing police, public works and parks, library, and senior center staffing will allow these Village services.

DID YOU KNOW?

REFERENDUM?

Community survey indicated support for a referendum to fund basic needs, including maintaining the Village's high quality police, public works and parks, library, and senior center services and programs at existing levels.

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT PER YEAR	PER MONTH
\$100,000	\$97.74	\$8.31
\$400,000 (MEDIAN VALUE HOME)	\$428.88	\$35.74

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "NO"

- Increased or additional fees, charges, and special assessments across all Village services.
- Reduced or eliminated public works services, such as brush pickup and snow plowing.

¿POR QUÉ UN REFERENDO? La Ciudad de Fitchburg ha identificado una necesidad de incrementar el personal e invertir en servicios para fortalecer los mejores recursos de una comunidad en crecimiento. El 5 de noviembre, se pidió a los votantes decidir si apoyan un aumento de \$3,593,000 en la recaudación anual del impuesto sobre bienes inmuebles de la Ciudad.

Fitchburg
REFERENDO 2024
fitchburg.gov/referendum

EL REFERENDO INCLuye

- 5 Oficiales de Policía**
 - 3 Oficiales, 1 Sargento, 1 Teniente
 - Permite a la Ciudad aceptar \$375,000 en subvenciones que financian a los tres oficiales
 - Aumenta los esfuerzos policíacos orientados a la comunidad a través de oficiales adicionales basados en los vecindarios
 - Mejora la cobertura de supervisión durante las horas de servicio pico
- 3 Puestos No Relacionados Con la Seguridad Pública**
 - Director de Comunicaciones, 1 Generalista de Recursos Humanos, 1 Gerente de Finanzas
 - Mejora las comunicaciones y las actividades de extensión de la ciudad con los residentes
 - Ayuda a reclutar y retener al personal y brinda capacidad para funciones de Recursos Humanos cotidianas
 - Permite a los ingenieros pasar más tiempo en proyectos de infraestructura en vez de en funciones relacionadas con finanzas
- 6 Bomberos**
 - Agrega bomberos que trabajan tiempo completo para reducir la dependencia en bomberos voluntarios (de tiempo parcial) y las horas extra
 - Aumenta la cobertura anual de coches de bombero por parte de personal de tiempo completo de aproximadamente 50% a 75%
 - Paga a los bomberos que trabajan tiempo parcial un salario de al menos \$15/hora
- Costos Operativos Continuos de las Instalaciones del Departamento de Policía**
 - Contrata un encargado de edificio
 - Financia los costos operativos del edificio (a.) servicios públicos y mantenimiento)
 - Crea una reserva para el reemplazo futuro de sistemas mecánicos y del edificio

Mejoras de los Sistemas de Transporte y Paratransporte
Mejora a su Rateo 60 y 75 de servicio en horas pico los días de semana a servicio los días de semana y los días de semana durante el día/noche

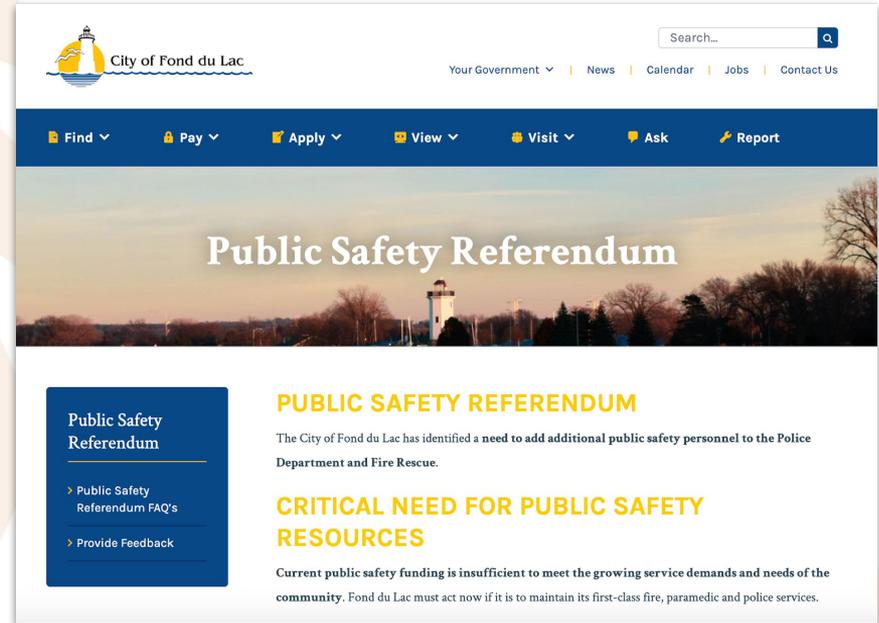
Otros Costos Operativos de la Ciudad
Reservado para futuros aumentos de costos del personal

Valor	Annual	Manual
\$100,000	\$65.20	\$5.43
\$457,800*	\$298.49	\$24.87

*Nota: de una vivienda mediana de Fitchburg



WEBSITE LANDING PAGE
DEDICATED EMAIL ADDRESS
SOCIAL MEDIA CALENDAR
E-NEWSLETTER CONTENT



ONLINE PRESENCE



INTERVIEW: Fond du Lac referendum seeks \$1.3M for public safety



By WBAY news staff

Published: Apr. 1, 2021 at 5:29 PM CDT



FOND DU LAC, Wis. (WBAY) - Fond du Lac Fire/Rescue is working with fewer officers than it had 10 years ago and hasn't added to

Western Lakes Fire District municipalities will go to referendum in August, asking residents to nearly double the fire district's budget

Drew Dawson Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 9:01 a.m. CT June 3, 2022

[View Comments](#)



Fire departments like the Western Lakes Fire District are facing a critical shortage of volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services staff. *Drew Dawson / Now News Group*

MEDIA COVERAGE



Instagram

Village of Richfield
Sponsored



Dan Neu The current public safety needs are two fold.

Learn more

♥ 🗨 📌

Paid for by Village of Richfield

Learn more about the August 13th Public Safety Referendum and the need to establish a municipal Richfield Fire Department.

City of Fitchburg, WI - Government

Sponsored · Paid for by City of Fitchburg

Learn more about the November 5 referendum and the need for increased staffing and investment in services to meet the needs of the growing community.

Confirmed organization

Fitchburg 2024 Referendum

ADDITIONAL funding to operate Police facility

Planned construction of a Police Services Facility will require additional operating funds in the future.

fitchburgwi.gov

Young 2024 Referendum

Fitchburg Referendum

Learn more

SOCIAL MEDIA & ADVERTISING



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?

Learn more at muellercommunications.com/referendum



APPENDIX



CASE STUDIES

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE



CASE STUDY

CITY OF MONONA

Despite running lean and being on solid financial footing, after years of growing demands and growing costs to provide services and without proportional increases in revenue, the City of Monona faced budget challenges just maintaining existing services.

To educate its community about the complex financial challenges it faced and work toward a solution, the City of Monona partnered with Mueller Communications to engage in a **three-phase, 11-month public education campaign** that began with a **comprehensive report presented to the Council**, continued with a **community-wide survey mailed to each household** in Monona to secure input from residents, and concluded with a **referendum-specific education campaign** once a referendum question was placed on Nov. 2024 ballots.

Mueller worked with the City to leverage a variety of communications tactics that help **ensure Monona residents received information about the referendum wherever they get their news**, including through direct mail, information session presentations, posters at key locations, social media content and traditional news media. Throughout the fall, Mueller continued to work closely with the City to manage topical questions and concerns, including about how other Dane County communities are facing similar challenges and about how the Monona-Grove School District funding situation is separate from the City.

As a result of the campaign, electors in the City of Monona ultimately voted to approve the increase in the property tax levy on the November 2024 ballot and increase funding to maintain existing City services.



CASE STUDY

CITY OF FITCHBURG

In the face of rapid growth, the demand for City of Fitchburg services – including public safety and other core municipal services like infrastructure development and maintenance – increased. The City recognized **available staffing was insufficient to meet these increasing needs and determined additional funding was necessary for investments in staffing and services.**

The City of Fitchburg worked with Mueller Communications from August 2023 through November 2024 to **engage and educate the community on the need for additional funding** to increase staffing and invest in services for the growing community. This education was done in three phases: first through a **comprehensive report identifying the City's challenges and potential avenues for funding**, then through a **community survey designed to secure community input about service priorities and potential support for additional funding**. At each phase, Fitchburg conducted outreach and encouraged community dialogue through tactics like public meetings, traditional media relations, social media, and direct mail.

Survey results demonstrated majority support for a \$3 million property tax levy increase via referendum to fund priority services, with an emphasis on public safety staffing. Elected officials balanced this community input with projected needs and ultimately opted to move forward with a \$3.5 million ask.

During the third and final phase of public education, Mueller Communications developed and distributed fact sheets, key messages, posters and direct mail pieces, social media content, a video ad, a print newspaper ad and a presentation for community informational sessions to help make **voters in the City aware of funding needs and impacts of the proposed referendum before casting ballots.**

MAKING INFO ACCESSIBLE

The City of Fitchburg is home to a diverse community, including many who speak primarily Spanish.

To ensure information about the referendum could be accessible to all residents, **translated materials were developed and distributed** throughout the campaign and **interpreters were on hand during information sessions.**



CASE STUDY

VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

Due to insufficient public safety funding and growing current service demands, the Village of Caledonia identified a need to add additional full-time personnel to its police and fire departments.

Caledonia worked with Mueller Communications from December 2022 through April 2023 to educate the community **on the need for a public safety referendum** ahead of the April 4, 2023 vote.

Mueller worked closely with the Village of Caledonia to create comprehensive messaging and frequently asked questions to cascade through education materials, including key messages, fact sheets and infographics, and informational posters, and updates to the Caledonia website that clearly conveyed the situation. Mueller also created two direct mail pieces, drafted social media posts to share across Caledonia channels, and executed an on-site video shoot for a social media ad to reach Caledonia voters up until days before the election. Mueller Communications also designed informational presentations for the Village Administrator, Police Chief and Fire Chief to share with community groups and Village Board members

Electors in the Village of Caledonia ultimately voted to approve the increase in the property tax levy, allowing Caledonia to add eight new police officers, six new firefighters/paramedics and the equipment needs for each new staff member.

VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

VOTE APRIL 4 2023

The Village of Caledonia has identified a need to add additional public safety personnel to the Police and Fire Departments.

Voters will be asked whether or not to support an increase in the Village's annual tax levy, beginning with bills issued in December 2023, to cover the cost for six additional firefighter/paramedics, eight additional police officers and the personal protective equipment those staff members require.

WHY REFERENDUM?

Current public safety funding levels and staffing levels are insufficient to meet the current demands and needs of the community. Caledonia must act now if it is to continue to adequately respond to calls for service.

Because of state-imposed levy limits, Caledonia must gain approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund additional staffing.

Decreasing staffing levels and an increase in calls for service result in officers for the Caledonia Fire Department to provide a consistent, high quality response. Federal grant dollars the Department relies on to fund staffing will expire in March 2023, further straining response capabilities.

Staffing at the Caledonia Police Department is too low to enable officers to effectively patrol the large geographic area of the Village and respond to multiple complex and concurrent calls for service.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"

+6 ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDICS

+8 ADDITIONAL POLICE OFFICERS

If the referendum is approved by a majority of voters, the Village of Caledonia will be able to add critically necessary additional public safety staff, including six additional firefighter/paramedics and eight additional police officers. These increases will ensure adequate staff to sufficiently respond to calls for service from Caledonia residents and perform proactive duties.

If approved, taxpayers will see a property tax increase of an estimated \$57 annually, or about \$1.76 per week, per \$100,000 of assessed value in a home, starting with the bills issued in December 2023.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "NO"

A rejection of the referendum would not be the equivalent of maintaining the status quo of emergency services.

The Village of Caledonia received a three-year federal grant to fund its firefighter/paramedics through March 2023. While the Village has worked within its levy limit constraints to maintain three of its six positions, without additional funding, the Village will be down three firefighter/paramedics.

The Caledonia Police Department ranks last in officers per 1,000 population and officers per square mile when compared to peer communities. Without additional police officers, the Police Department would not be able to effectively patrol the entire geographic area of the Village or effectively handle more than a single call for service at a time that has moderate complexity and/or requires a moderate level of resources.

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT

\$1,761,000 TOTAL INCREASE

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	PER YEAR	PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$57	\$1.76
\$300,000	\$171	\$3.30

Monday through Friday, March 21 – March 31, 2023 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

For mailed absentee ballots: March 30, 2023

7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID in order to vote.

From www.villageofcaledonia.wi.gov/referendum or email referendum@villageofcaledonia.wi.gov

APRIL 4



CASE STUDY

VILLAGE OF

GERMANTOWN

The Village of Germantown and Richfield commissioned studies from two consultants that provided insight on the potential impacts and benefits of extending services from Germantown Water and Sewer Utilities to new paying customers in Richfield.

The Village of Germantown worked with Mueller Communications between August 2022 and November 2022 to **educate the community on the need for a referendum question to approve an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)** on November 8, 2022 that would determine whether the Village should provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee to customers in a portion of the Village of Richfield.

Mueller created and executed a campaign that included the development of educational materials, including key messages, fact sheets and infographics, and updates to the Village of Germantown website that clearly conveyed the situation. With materials developed, the team prepared two direct mail pieces, drafted posts to share across Germantown social media channels, and created an informational presentation to share with community groups and city council members.

Electors in the Village of Germantown voted to approve the IGA, allowing Germantown to provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee and on an ongoing basis to customers in the Northeast Corridor of the Village of Richfield, ultimately expanding Germantown's water and sewer services customer base and enhancing economic growth in the area.

The collage consists of three overlapping documents:

- Top Document: Village of Germantown INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT REFERENDUM**
 - Header: Village of Germantown logo and title.
 - Text: "VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022".
 - Text: "The Germantown Village Board has placed a referendum question on the ballot for the November 8, 2022 election. Germantown voters will be asked whether the Village should enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Village of Richfield to provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee to customers in a portion of Richfield located between Interstate 41, Holy Hill Road, Highway 175 and Pleasant Hill Road."
 - Text: "Trustees could not come to consensus on this issue and deemed it important enough for all residents to decide if the Village should provide water and sewer services for a fee, on an ongoing basis, to allow the Village of Richfield to add development along the Interstate corridor."
- Middle Document: INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT**
 - Text: "An IGA between the Villages would govern the sale and operation of services. The IGA ensures that the Village of Richfield bears all costs for the expansion of services to customers in Richfield, pays a 20% premium for sewer service and requires Richfield to construct infrastructure in accordance with Germantown specifications."
 - Text: "RICHLAND SEEKING TO ATTRACT DEVELOPMENT: The Village of Richfield is seeking to attract development to the Northeast Corridor, potentially including warehousing and light industrial. Future developments would require access to municipal water and sanitary sewer service."
 - Map: A map showing the Northeast Corridor and Germantown Light Industrial Park.
- Bottom Document: RICHLAND SEWER AND WATER AGREEMENT REFERENDUM**
 - Text: "QUESTION ON THE BALLOT: The formal resolution that will appear on the November 8 ballot reads as follows: Shall the Village of Germantown provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee on an ongoing basis to customers in a portion of the Village of Richfield pursuant to the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Village of Richfield and the Village of Germantown?"
 - Text: "IF A MAJORITY VOTE 'YES': A 'yes' vote would result in the execution of the negotiated Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) so that Germantown would provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee and on an ongoing basis to customers in the 'Northeast Corridor' of the Village of Richfield." (Accompanied by a thumbs up icon).
 - Text: "IF A MAJORITY VOTE 'NO': A 'no' vote would result in the continued negotiation of an Intergovernmental Agreement with effect and Germantown would not provide water and sanitary sewer service to Richfield." (Accompanied by a thumbs down icon).
 - Text: "AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THE VILLAGE OF RICHLAND:"
 - List of benefits:
 - BEARS ALL COSTS FOR THE EXPANSION OF SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS IN RICHLAND
 - PAYS A 20% PREMIUM FOR SEWER SERVICE
 - REQUIRES RICHLAND TO CONSTRUCT INFRASTRUCTURE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GERMANTOWN SPECIFICATIONS.
 - Footer: Village of Germantown logo.



CASE STUDY

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

The City and Town of Cedarburg's joint Cedarburg Fire Department was staffed, almost entirely, by volunteers until January 1, 2024 when the communities opted to shift to a paid-on-call model. This shift was one of several efforts undertaken to help address the Department's increasing demand for service and decreasing staffing.

CFD worked with Mueller Communications from August 2023 through April 2024 to educate the community **on the need for additional funding to support additional full-time firefighter-paramedic staff**. This education was done in three phases: first through a comprehensive report identifying potential funding options, then through an educational survey aimed to secure community input on referendum viability, and finally through a referendum education campaign targeting residents in both communities.

Following the 9-month effort – which included community information sessions, media outreach and news coverage, social media content, website content, direct mail, Town newsletters, and a video ad playing before each show at the Rivoli Theatre – **voters in both the City and Town of Cedarburg approved increases** in the property tax levies, allowing CFD to **add eight new firefighter-paramedics, maintain funding for two existing full-time staff members, and transition the Fire Chief to a full-time role**.

New public safety referendum hopes to give Cedarburg Fire necessary funds to improve staffing

Voters will be asked to approve nearly \$2 million addition in the wake of a surge in service calls amid a drop in available volunteers.

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT FACES CHALLENGES.
REVIEW THE REPORT!

AMERICA VOTES 2024
FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING REFERENDUM
CEDARBURG

Public safety referendum h...

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

+8

ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTER-PARAMEDICS

MAINTAIN 2 FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTER PARAMEDICS
CURRENTLY FUNDED USING ABPA DOLLARS

ADJUST THE FIRE CHIEF POSITION TO A FULL-TIME ROLE



CASE STUDY

GRAFTON/SAUKVILLE

Calls for emergency service were increasing significantly in Grafton and Saukville, while the number of emergency responders continued to decrease. Together, the Towns and Villages of Grafton and Saukville identified a need to hire **additional full-time staff** and **formally create a joint Grafton-Saukville Fire Department** to provide effective emergency medical, rescue and fire suppression services to its communities. The increased annual cost would be shared among the four municipalities.

The municipalities engaged Mueller Communications between December 2023 and April 2024 to **educate each community on the need for a Fire/EMS referendum** to create the joint Fire Department.

Mueller created and executed a campaign that included the development of educational materials, including key messages, fact sheets, fliers, news releases and website content that clearly conveyed the situation. With materials developed, the team prepared direct mail pieces that were sent to the municipalities' residents, drafted posts to share across social media channels, facilitated a video shoot and created informational presentations for local officials to present at public information sessions,

Electors in the Village & Town of Grafton and Town of Saukville ultimately voted to approve the increase in the property tax levy, covering the cost of adding 13 full-time staff and allowing the creation of a joint Grafton-Saukville Fire Department.

Fire/EMS Referendum

VOTE APRIL 2, 2024

Calls for emergency service continue to **INCREASE** significantly for Grafton and Saukville – by **86% and 53%** respectively since 2015 – while the **available number of emergency responders continues to DECREASE**. In fact, a 2021 Wisconsin Policy Forum Report found that **Fire/EMS staffing in Grafton/Saukville is critically low**.

The Town and Village of Grafton and Town and Village of Saukville have identified a need to **hire additional full-time staff and formally create a joint Grafton-Saukville Fire Department** to provide effective emergency medical, rescue and fire suppression services to the Grafton and Saukville communities, **improve response times** and **improve emergency response reliability**.

The need to add the recommended 13 additional full-time staff for the consolidated Grafton and Saukville Fire Departments will total about \$2,094,363 annually, which will be shared between the four municipalities.

Voters will be asked on April 2, 2024 whether or not to support an increase in their municipality's annual tax levy, beginning with property tax bills issued in December 2024.

WHY REFERENDUM?

Current Fire/EMS funding levels and staffing models are insufficient to meet the growing need for service. The Towns and Villages of Grafton and Saukville must act now if it is to continue to adequately respond to calls for service.

The Town and Village of Grafton and Town and Village of Saukville need to hire 13 additional full-time staff to meet the growing need for medical, rescue and fire services to the Grafton and Saukville communities.

Because of state increased levy limits, the Towns and Villages of Grafton and Saukville must seek approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund these services.

BENEFITS OF ADDITIONAL STAFF AND A JOINT FIRE/EMS DEPARTMENT

A consolidated department will enable more staffing flexibility, capital expenses (fire engines, ambulances, etc.)

If the referendum passes, the Grafton Station will be able to improve service, and the Saukville Station will be able to respond to 1 of proposed model. Grafton fire engines can leave immediately to less dependent on paid-on-call staff, improving response times.

For more information, please visit www.villageofgrafton.com

TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF GRAFTON AND SAUKVILLE FIRE/EMS REFERENDUM

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT

Municipality	Additional Funding Required	Annual Property Tax Increase per \$100k	Weekly Increase per \$100k
Village of Grafton	\$1,478,072	\$94.66	\$1.82
Town of Grafton	\$372,435	\$52.15	\$1.00
Town of Saukville	\$205,090	\$65.10	\$1.25
Village of Saukville*	\$38,766	\$6.64	\$0.13

*The Village of Saukville has capacity within its allowable levy limit to fund the increased costs without a referendum.

WHY NOW?

The Towns and Villages of Grafton and Saukville have identified a need to hire 13 additional full-time staff to meet the growing need for medical, rescue and fire services to the Grafton and Saukville communities.

Current Fire/EMS funding levels and staffing models are insufficient to meet the growing need for service. Grafton and Saukville must act now if they are to continue to adequately respond to calls for service.

Because of state increased levy limits, the Towns and Villages of Grafton and Saukville must seek approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund these services.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"

If the Towns of Saukville residents approve the referendum, the tax levy in 2025 – and each year **following forward** – would increase by \$205,090 to cover the Town's portion of the costs of necessary full-time staff.

If the referendum passes, the joint Grafton-Saukville Department will be able to add a deputy chief position as well as the following additional positions to each station:

GRAFTON STATION	SAUKVILLE STATION
+3	+3
+3	+3

If the referendum passes, the Grafton Station will be able to respond to 2 simultaneous calls for emergency service, and the Saukville Station will be able to respond to 1 call for emergency service 24/7/365.

Questions? Visit www.villageofgrafton.com/946/Referendums to learn more.



CASE STUDY

CITY OF PORTAGE

The City of Portage was faced with paying high fees for third-party EMS services that provided limited opportunities for local control. The City unexpectedly received significant invoices from Aspirus, its third-party provider, for ambulance service. Challenged by these unexpected costs, and a lack of control in optimizing service to residents, the Portage Fire Department considered alternate service models, while seeking to minimize the impact on taxpayers.

The City of Portage worked with Mueller Communications between August 2023 and February 2024 to **educate the community on the need for a referendum question to approve an increase in the City's annual tax levy** on February 20, 2024 that would determine whether the City could build a fire-based EMS service model.

Mueller created and executed a public education campaign that included the development of educational materials, including key messages, fact sheets and infographics, and updates to the City of Portage website to share the benefits of a fire-based EMS system with the community. In addition, the team created two direct mailer pieces to educate the community, drafted and designed posts to be shared on Portage social media pages, and created an informational presentation to share with community groups and city council members.

Electors in the City of Portage voted to approve the referendum, allowing the City of Portage to build the fire-based EMS service that will ensure full control over efficiencies and effectiveness, designing and implementing the best EMS services to meet the needs of the Portage community.

EMS Service Referendum
The City of Portage

VOTE FEBRUARY 20, 2024

The City of Portage faces a need to lower its EMS service either through a referendum to increase the property tax level or significant budget cuts from other City services. With this investment, the City recommends creating a locally controlled, fire-based EMS service as the most cost-effective model for services.

The City has an opportunity to build the EMS system it needs for the community. Voters will be asked on February 20, 2024 whether or not to support an increase in the City's annual tax levy, beginning with bills issued in December 2024, to cover the cost of EMS services. If approved, the City would create a fire-based EMS service model:

- 14 cross trained firefighter / EMT / paramedics
- Education and training for personnel who are not already cross-trained
- Three new ambulances
- Fire station remodel to serve increased staffing and new EMS capabilities.

WHY REFERENDUM?

- 1 Today, the City of Portage is faced with paying high fees for third party EMS services that provide limited opportunities for local control. The City unexpectedly received significant invoices from Aspirus, its third-party provider, for ambulance services. Challenged by these unexpected costs, and a lack of control in optimizing service to residents, the Portage Fire Department has considered alternate service models, while seeking to minimize the impact on taxpayers.
- 2 The City has an opportunity to build a fire-based EMS service that will ensure full control over efficiencies and effectiveness, designing and implementing the best EMS services to meet the needs of our community.
- 3 Because of state-imposed levy limits, Portage must gain approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund EMS services.

BENEFITS OF A FIRE-BASED EMS SERVICE

A feasibility study demonstrated that the City of Portage could establish a cost-effective fire-based EMS system to serve the City and neighboring communities by cross-training firefighter / EMT / paramedics and receiving and spending three ambulances.

City of Portage Fire/EMS Referendum

BECAUSE THE REFERENDUM IS APPROVED, THE CITY OF PORTAGE WILL BE ABLE TO COVER THE COST OF:

- 14 CROSS-TRAINED FIREFIGHTER / EMT / PARAMEDICS
- EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PERSONNEL WHO ARE NOT ALREADY CROSS-TRAINED
- THREE NEW AMBULANCES AND STATE-REQUIRED EQUIPMENT
- FIRE STATION REMODEL TO SERVE INCREASED STAFFING AND NEW EMS CAPABILITIES



CASE STUDY

PLEASANT PRAIRIE

The Village of Pleasant Prairie is home to 21,250 residents and 494 businesses. As the Village continued to grow, public safety staffing models remained outdated and call complexity increased, Pleasant Prairie identified a need for alternative funding sources to continue to service the community.

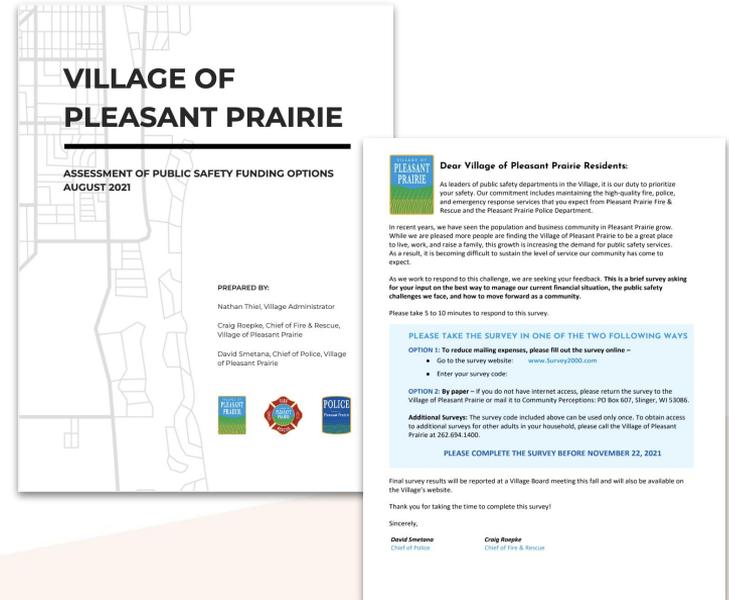
Once the need for additional public safety funding was identified, the Village of Pleasant Prairie engaged Mueller Communications as a strategic partner to develop a **comprehensive options assessment** and facilitate the creation, distribution and reporting of a **community survey** - with the understanding that comprehensive research, alternatives and community input lends itself to the success of a potential referendum.

Mueller Communication's Three-Phased Approach:

- Options Assessment
- Community Survey
- Public Education Campaign

In the summer of 2021, Mueller Communications was engaged by the Village of Pleasant Prairie to develop an Options Assessment to identify the potential solutions to the public safety funding challenges. Based on the findings of that assessment, Mueller worked with Community Perceptions to conduct a community survey to gather input on the community's preferred options.

Following the community survey, the Village Board voted to place a public safety referendum on the on Spring 2022 ballot. **On April 5, 2022, the Village of Pleasant Prairie ultimately voted to approve the increase in the property tax levy**, allowing the Village to add 12 firefighter/paramedics and four police officers.



CASE STUDY

CITY OF FOND DU LAC

Stagnant funding and increasing demand for public safety services **threatened the City of Fond du Lac's ability to provide local fire and paramedic services and to adequately staff its police department** to meet all responsive and preventative responsibilities.

Fond du Lac worked with Mueller Communications between December 2020 and April 2021 to **educate the community on the need for a public safety referendum** on April 6, 2021.

Mueller created and executed a campaign that included the development of educational materials, including key messages, fact sheets and infographics, and informational posters, and updates to the City of Fond du Lac website that clearly conveyed the situation. With materials developed, the team prepared three direct mail pieces, drafted posts to share across Fond du Lac social media channels, and created informational presentations for the City Administrator, Police Chief and Fire Chief to share with community groups and city council members.

Electors in the City of Fond du Lac ultimately voted two-to-one to approve the increase in the property tax levy, allowing Fond du Lac to add six new police officers, six new firefighters/paramedics and the equipment needs for each new staff member.

CITY OF FOND DU LAC 2021 PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

VOTE TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2021
The City of Fond du Lac has identified a need to add additional public safety personnel to the Police Department and Fire/Rescue.

Notes will be asked whether or not to support an increase in the City's annual tax levy, beginning in 2022, to cover the cost for six additional firefighter/paramedics, six additional police officers, and the equipment those staff members require.

WHY DO WE NEED A REFERENDUM NOW?

- Current public safety funding is insufficient to meet the growing service demands and needs of the community. Fond du Lac must act now if it is to maintain its first-class fire, paramedic and police services.
- The challenge is that while the need and program costs continue to rise, current funding sources are stagnant or decreasing.
- Because of state-imposed levy limits, Fond du Lac must ask approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund those services.

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"
If the referendum is approved by a majority of Lac will be able to add critically necessary add

+6 FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDICS **+6 POLICE OFFICERS**

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	ESTIMATED INCREASE PER YEAR
\$100,000	\$43
\$125,000	\$53

<https://www.fdlwi.gov/>

CRITICAL NEED FOR PUBLIC SAFETY RESOURCES

The City of Fond du Lac has identified a need to add additional public safety personnel to the Police Department and Fire/Rescue.

CURRENT PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING IS INSUFFICIENT TO MEET THE GROWING SERVICE DEMANDS AND NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY, and Fond du Lac must act now if it is to maintain its first-class fire, paramedic and police services.

The challenge is that while the **NEED CONTINUES TO RISE**, current funding and staffing levels are stagnant or decreasing.

CALLS FOR SERVICE +9%

POLICE STAFFING -3%

CALLS FOR SERVICE +44%

FIRE STAFFING +0%

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019



CASE STUDY

CITY OF FORT ATKINSON

The City of Fort Atkinson is home to more than 12,000 residents. As **demand for public safety services increased and calls became more complex**, it became clear that the city's **existing staffing models for both its police and fire departments were outdated**. The City had been contracting with a third-party provider to support EMS service, however, that approach was deemed to be unsustainable as Fort Atkinson sought to address the growing public safety needs of its community – which would be better served by hiring full-time, cross-trained employees who could provide both Fire and EMS services.

The City of Fort Atkinson engaged Mueller Communications to develop a **comprehensive public education campaign** utilizing a wide-range of communications channels to ensure that the City could connect with voters no matter where they get their news. Mueller helped create various educational materials including **three direct mail pieces** highlighting the upcoming referendum. Mueller also worked with the City to **identify opportunities to speak with local civic organizations**, as well as to **host information sessions** where the public could learn more about the referendum and ask questions of City officials.

Mueller also helped residents gain awareness of the referendum through various online tactics, including a **landing page** on the City of Fort Atkinson website and a **social media calendar** with designed corresponding graphics. We also engaged a local videographer to create a video featuring the City's police and fire chiefs and the city council president, which was promoted via a social media ad campaign. The video garnered 184,488 impressions with a 3.49% click through rate (CTR), which far exceeded average response for similar ads.

Ultimately, residents in the **City of Fort Atkinson voted to approve an increase in the tax levy** to fund two additional police officers, six full-time firefighter/paramedics and six full-time firefighter/EMTs.

The image displays three direct mail pieces for the City of Fort Atkinson Public Safety Referendum. The top piece is a flyer titled "City of Fort Atkinson Public Safety Referendum" with the Fort Atkinson logo. It includes the text: "VOTE TUESDAY APRIL 5 2022" and "The City of Fort Atkinson has identified a need to add additional public safety personnel to the Police Department and Fire Department. Voters will be asked whether or not to support an increase in the City's annual tax levy, beginning in 2022, to cover the cost for ten additional police officers, six full-time firefighter/paramedics and six full-time firefighter/EMTs." Below this, it asks "WHY DO WE NEED A REFERENDUM NOW?" and lists three reasons: 1. Current public safety funding levels are insufficient to meet the growing service demands of our needs of the community. Fort Atkinson must act now if it is to continue to adequately respond to calls for service. 2. The challenge is that while the need for our public safety efforts continues to rise, current funding sources are stagnant or decreasing, and our existing staffing levels inhibit our ability to adequately respond to calls for service. 3. Because of state imposed levy limits, Fort Atkinson must ask approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund these services. It also states: "IF A MAJORITY VOTE 'YES' If the referendum is approved by a majority of voters, the City of Fort Atkinson will be able to add critically necessary additional staff to public safety services. This will increase staffing levels to ensure that there are adequate staff to effectively respond to calls for service from Fort Atkinson residents." A table titled "PROPERTY TAX IMPACT" shows the estimated tax increase for assessed property values of \$100,000 and \$1,000,000. The bottom piece is a smaller flyer with the text: "VOTE APRIL 5 2022 PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM" and "POLING PLACE OPENS AT 7:00 a.m. and CLOSES AT 8:00 p.m. at The Municipal Building Gymnasium 101 N. Main Street". It also includes the website www.fortatkinsonwi.gov/referendum and the email referendum@fortatkinsonwi.gov.

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	ESTIMATED TAX INCREASE PER YEAR	ESTIMATED TAX INCREASE PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$87.32	\$1.58
\$1,000,000	\$1,311.55	\$23.92



CASE STUDY

CITY OF MIDDLETON

Having seen **significant population growth in a short period of time**, the City of Middleton recognized a **need to retain its existing staff and add more staff to key departments** to ensure it could meet the needs of its growing community in a way that aligned with the City's values and strategic plan.

The City worked with Mueller Communications to educate and engage its community on the need for a **November 8, 2022 referendum to increase Middleton's property tax levy and fund additional staffing costs**.

Mueller worked with the City to understand the need for both additional staff and wage increases for existing staff, working to develop an "ambassador toolkit" of messages and FAQs that elected officials and staff members could use to clearly communicate the need for additional funding. In addition, the Mueller team developed a calendar of social media content, a presentation to be used during information sessions, website content and two direct mail pieces to be delivered to all households in Middleton.

Electors in the City of Middleton voted to approve increased wages for existing City staff and fund new positions for two police officers, one parks crew member and one communications specialist, enabling the City to better attract and retain talent and deliver desired services to its community.

CITY OF MIDDLETON STAFFING REFERENDUM FAQs



Q What is the proposed referendum on the ballot Tuesday, November 8?

The referendum will ask voters to decide whether or not to support an increase in the City's annual tax levy, beginning with tax bills issued in December 2022, to cover the cost of adding two police officers, one communications specialist and one full-time parks maintenance crew member, and to enable an up to 4% cost-of-living wage increases for City staff.

Q What will appear on the ballot?

The formal resolution requesting permission to exceed the state revenue limit will appear as follows on the November 8 ballot:

"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the City of Middleton for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2023, is limited to 2.5%, which results in a levy of \$19,781,229. Shall the City of Middleton be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2023, for the purpose of additional police, parks, communications staffing and employment in cost increases to a total of 3.9%, which results in a levy of \$20,551,229, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$770,000 for each fiscal year going forward?"

Q Why do we need a referendum to raise the tax levy limit?

Currently, the City does not have funding to support additional staff or necessary wage increases. Middleton's property tax levy is the primary source of funding for services and expenses, but because of state-imposed limits, we need voter approval to exceed our annual levy limits.

Q What will it mean if a majority of voters vote "yes"?

If voters approve the referendum, the City will be able to fund additional staff at the Police Department and Parks Department, and will be able to improve public outreach by hiring a dedicated communications specialist. The City will also be able to improve recruitment and retention efforts by providing an up to 4% cost-of-living increases to City staff.

Q What will it mean if a majority of voters vote "no"?

If voters reject the referendum, the City will need to determine how to serve residents as our population and needs increase, but our revenues do not keep pace. A "no" vote would result in maintaining current funding for staffing and wages, which

IF A MAJORITY VOTE YES

WHY NOW?

Current funding is insufficient to meet the growing service demands and needs of the community.

While our needs and program costs continue to rise, current funding sources are stagnant or decreasing.

Middleton must ask approval from voters through a referendum in order to exceed levy limits and fund staffing needs.

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT OF REFERENDUM \$770,000 INCREASE STARTING WITH DEC. 2022 BILLS

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	REFERENDUM IMPACT	TOTAL CITY TAXES
\$100,000	\$19.79	\$32.35
\$400,000	\$79.16	\$129.40



CASE STUDY

SOUTH MILWAUKEE

A continuing decline in outside funding for paramedic services created a **significant, growing gap in the City of South Milwaukee's municipal budget that threatened its ability to provide local paramedic services and to adequately staff its police department** to meet all responsive and preventative responsibilities.

South Milwaukee worked with Mueller Communications to develop an Options Assessment to identify the potential solutions to the public safety funding challenges. Based on the findings of that assessment, Mueller worked with Community Perceptions to conduct a community survey to gather input on the community's preferred options. The Common Council voted to place a public safety referendum question on the Fall 2017 ballot and engaged engaged Mueller Communications to assist with **a public information campaign in advance of a referendum vote.**

Between July and November, Mueller created and executed a campaign that included the development of educational materials, including key messages, fact sheets and infographics, and informational posters, and a website landing page that clearly conveyed the situation. With materials developed, the team prepared two direct mail pieces, drafted posts to share across South Milwaukee social media channels, and created presentations for the Mayor and City Administrator to share with community groups.

SOUTH MILWAUKEE 2017 Public Safety Referendum



**WHAT IS ON THE BALLOT
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2017?**

The South Milwaukee Common Council has unanimously approved an operating funds referendum question asking taxpayers to increase the tax levy by \$86.641 to maintain current paramedic services and hire two additional police officers. The special election will be held on Tuesday, November 7, if approved by voters, homeowners would pay an additional \$52 per year for every \$300,000 of their home's value starting in 2018 and beyond.

The formal resolution requesting permission to exceed the state revenue limit will appear as follows on the November 7 ballot:

Under state law, the increase in the levy of the City of South Milwaukee for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year 2018, is limited to .09%, which results in a levy of \$137,746,142. Shall the City of South Milwaukee be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year 2018, by a total of 5.73%, which results in a levy of \$11,381,095?

**WHY ARE WE PROPOSING
THIS REFERENDUM NOW?**

As South Milwaukee seeks to maintain its strong public safety services it faces a growing budget gap – as the demand for these services continues to rise, funding from current sources is either stagnant or decreasing.

The City must take action if it is to preserve locally provided paramedic services into the future. The City has also identified a need for additional police officers to deliver on the department's mission and address growing public safety needs.

We are responding directly to community input. The City of South Milwaukee evaluated several funding options to maintain the first-class fire and police services residents have come to expect. As part of the decision-making process, the City solicited feedback via a community-wide survey. More than 1,350 residents responded, with the majority supporting an operational referendum.

VOTE NOVEMBER 7

 **City of South Milwaukee**
Prud'hoi... Preserving History

For additional background information, including the community survey results, visit the city website: www.smmwi.org

CONTINUED



CASE STUDY

SOUTH MILWAUKEE

Electors in the City of South Milwaukee ultimately **voted two-to-one to approve the increase** in the property tax levy, sustaining the city's paramedic program and allowing South Milwaukee to add two new police officers.

Additional information about this effort is highlighted in the League of Wisconsin Municipalities' The Municipality magazine, in an article entitled ["What We Learned in Our Public Safety Referendum."](#)

