



Council Agenda Item

Meeting Date: 03/18/2025

Agenda Item: Referendum Update

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BACKGROUND

(Enter the who, what when, where, why)

Police department and fire department staff have been working diligently to provide the community with information about the upcoming referendum question and the impacts. The underlying reason the referendum is being considered is that the 90% increase in call volume since 2010 coupled with no additions to staffing has impacted the police department in two ways: significantly increasing overtime, and changing our policing model to be reactive rather than proactive.

Public information sessions have been held and recorded for anyone who wants to review the entire referendum presentation. However, up to this point, we have not delved into the impact of a failed referendum, and what that would mean for the police department and the community. The purpose of this final update to the Common Council is to discuss what that impact will be and how we plan to address that.

The Whitewater Police Department is going to continue to serve the Whitewater community to the best of our ability regardless of the outcome of the referendum. However, we need to ensure community members recognize that if it does not pass, the way in which we provide that service will change. Our current lack of proactive policing, coupled with the strain on staff resources, will not allow for us to maintain the status quo if the referendum fails. The operational changes listed below and their associated outcomes will immediately be explored in order to more appropriately and efficiently serve the community.

Operational Changes (Associated outcome):

- 1) **Continue utilizing debt for capital purchase like squad cars** (loss of estimated \$772,000 (debt service) in the next 10 years as we will not be able to take advantage of purchasing these items outright)
- 2) **Federal COPS Hiring Grant will be declined** (loss of \$375,000 of federal funding due to the city budget not being able to absorb the City's share of the required funding)
- 3) **Begin charging for officer presence at local events** (events like parades, marathons, etc. will see additional cost if they need officers for traffic control, etc.)
- 4) **Implementation of an online reporting system** (minor traffic crashes, nuisance complaints, theft and vandalism less than \$2,500 would now be reported using an online self-report)

5) **Patrol allocation changes – Traffic/Proactive officer** (assigning one of the two or three officers on a shift to be off the call rotation to conduct traffic/proactive activity. This will ensure we maintain a degree of proactivity, but will result in further delays in response times for calls for service, and will create challenges for providing non-essential services for things like school crossings etc.)

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

N/A

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED

(If none, state N/A)

1. PowerPoint slide
