



Council Agenda Item

Meeting Date: January 7, 2025

Agenda Item: Updated Referendum Memo

Staff Contact (name, email, phone): Rachelle Blitch, rblitch@whitewater-wi.gov, 262-473-1380

BACKGROUND

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

In response to staffing concerns within Fire and EMS, we collaborated with McMahon to conduct a comprehensive staffing study. For your reference, the study is attached.

The study highlights the recommendation to add a fifth person to each shift, which would require the City to create three additional EMT/FF positions. We have incorporated one of these positions into the current budget by reallocating funds from a combination of the Paid-on-Premises allocation and the Sick/Backfill funds and have outlined options that include adding one additional position for each scenario.

The mill rate table has been updated to reflect the various options as well.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS – COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

(Dates, committees, action taken)

FINANCIAL IMPACT

(If none, state N/A)

Adding these positions could increase the referendum ask by up to \$220,000.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Creation of three FF/EMT positions with one position being incorporated with the current budget, and two being funded by referendum.

ATTACHMENT(S) INCLUDED

(If none, state N/A)

1. Staffing Report
2. Option B (three separate sheets) Worksheets
3. Mill Rate Table

Fire & EMS Department Staffing Analysis

FINAL REPORT

Prepared for

CITY OF WHITEWATER FIRE & EMS DEPARTMENT

WALWORTH & JEFFERSON COUNTIES, WISCONSIN



Draft

McMAHON ASSOCIATES, INC.

1445 McMAHON DRIVE NEENAH, WI 54956 Mailing: PO BOX 1025 NEENAH, WI 54957-1025 PH 920.751.4200 MCMGRP.COM

McM. No. W4003-6-04-24-00520

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Project Overview

McMahon Associates, Inc. (McMAHON) was retained by the City of Whitewater to conduct an analysis of fire and emergency medical services staffing to determine the most cost effective and efficient method of staffing the fire and emergency medical services department. Included in this analysis was a review of current organizational structure and operations in order to make effective recommendations for staffing the fire and emergency medical services department. Recommendations included in this study are designed for the current scope of services provided by the Department.

II. PROJECT WORK TASKS

In conducting this study, McMAHON consulting staff met with the City Administrator, Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief. The Department was also requested to provide a wide range of documentation to McMahon including budgets, call data, policies, procedures, etc.

The following presents an overview of the work tasks completed by McMAHON during the project.

1. Obtained and reviewed documentation provided by the Department pertaining to the project.
2. Conducted interviews to evaluate the current and future staffing needs for the Fire & EMS Department.

Interviews and observations primarily focused on the following:

- Current Fire & EMS operations, staffing and levels of service
- Fire & EMS personnel workload, call volume and activity
- Administrative organizational structure

3. Determined any public safety industry standards and trends related to the Department's operational requirements. During the development of all recommendations, McMAHON considered many factors and standards as a basis for recommendations, including:

- Center for Public Safety Excellence
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA)

- National Fire Administration (NFA)
 - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
 - Insurance Services Office (ISO) Rating Schedule
 - Local Fire Protection Ordinances
4. Developed a comprehensive Fire Department staffing analysis, utilizing the information provided by the documentation received, the interviews, and national standards. The projected growth and level of service needs were considered during the development of these recommendations. Recommendations included:
- Effectiveness, efficiency, and performance of current fire & EMS operations
 - Efficient utilization of station resources
 - Administrative growth and organizational structure
 - Analysis of personnel and staffing needs
5. Assembled the study report. Performed a detailed quality assurance review of the document to ensure that the document meets the expectations of the Project Team and conforms to McMAHON's standards.
6. Prepared and delivered the draft Report to the Project Team for review.
7. Received feedback from the Project Team regarding the content of the draft report. Made changes to the analysis based on the returned comments, as were deemed appropriate.
8. Presented the findings and recommendations of the analysis.

III. WHITEWATER FIRE & EMS DEPARTMENT STAFFING AND OPERATIONS

The Whitewater Fire & EMS provides fire and emergency medical services to the City of Whitewater, the Towns of Cold Spring and Whitewater and portions of the Towns of Koshkonong, Richmond and Lima.

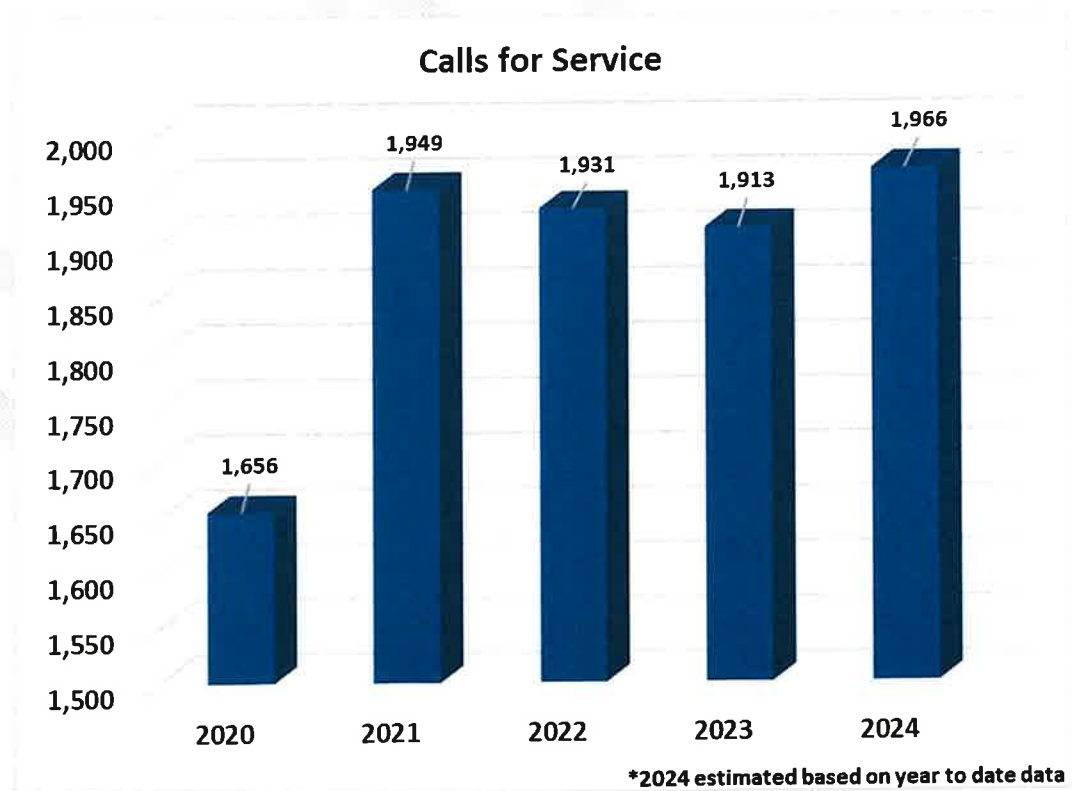
Department Organizational Structure: The Department currently operates from one station with a staff of 15 full-time personnel and 18 part-time and paid-on-call personnel. Three of the full-time personnel work a traditional Monday through Friday work schedule, while the remaining twelve work a 24-hour shift schedule. The organizational chart is detailed below:

- 1 Fire Chief
- 1 Assistant Chief
- 1 EMS Chief (part-time)
- 1 Fire Inspector
- 12 Firefighter/Paramedics and Firefighter/EMTs (full-time)
- 17 Firefighters, EMTs (part-time)

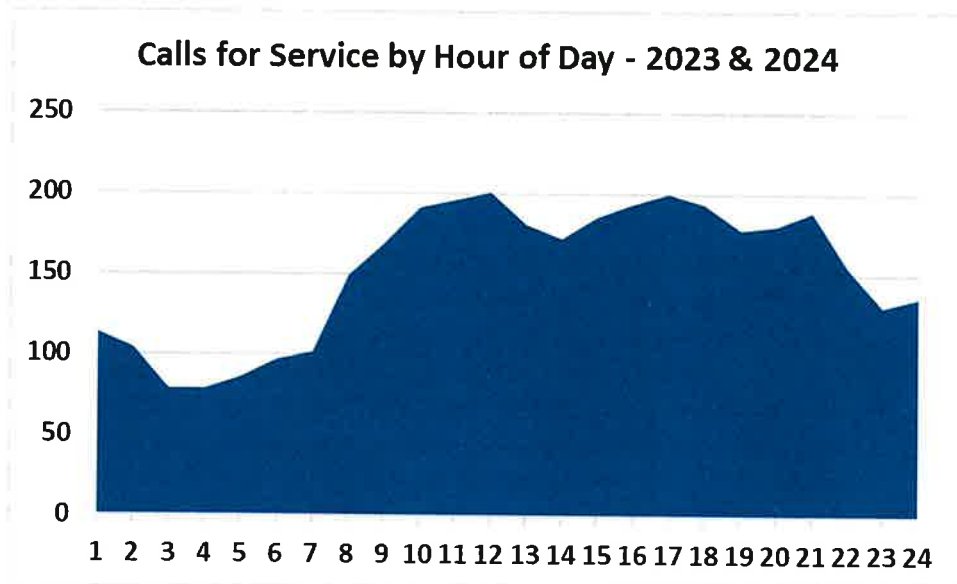
The Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief and EMS Chief are responsible for management of the agency. The Fire Chief and Assistant Chief are full-time positions. The EMS Chief is a part-time position.

The Fire Chief is the Department Head, reporting to the City Manager and the Police and Fire Commission. The Assistant Chief directs the operations and training for the Department. The EMS Chief serves as the EMS Service Director. All three chief officer positions are responsible for also responding to calls both during and after their normal work hours.

Call Volume Analysis: The primary purpose of a fire and emergency medical services (EMS) department is to protect persons and property in its service area. The number and type of calls along with other services provided often determines the type of fire and EMS department a municipality operates. In 2023, the Whitewater Fire and EMS Department responded to 1,913 calls for service. Based on year-to-date data reviewed in November of 2024, the Department is on track to respond to 1,966 calls for service. Approximately 80% of calls for service are for emergency medical services. The remaining 20% are for fire and other emergency services. This is a common division of types of calls for service in a fire and emergency medical services department.



Data demonstrates that the Department experiences a peak in calls for service between the hours of 8 AM and 10 PM. This again is consistent with most fire and EMS departments in the United States.



In order to be properly prepared to respond to calls for service, members of the Department must maintain training and certifications along with facilities, equipment and vehicles. This work is generally done when personnel are not responding to calls for service.

The Department operates a fleet of twenty vehicles. Each vehicle must be regularly inspected and maintained in a state of readiness. Responsibilities of the fire and emergency medical services department also include performing fire code enforcement inspections. State of Wisconsin Administrative Code requires fire departments to conduct fire inspections and fire prevention activities in order to be eligible for 2% Fire Dues Payments from the State. Department records indicate responsibility for inspections of 727 buildings annually. Inspections are primarily performed by a full-time fire inspector with the Department.

Response Time: Fire and EMS agencies are regularly graded on their response times to emergencies. While not every call for service a fire and EMS agency responds to is an emergency, the public expects a rapid response to calls for service. In 2023, the Department had an average response time in the City of Whitewater of 4 minutes and 43 seconds and 10 minutes and 7 seconds in areas outside of the City. The timeframe is from the time of dispatch of the call for service until the arrival of the first unit on scene. These response times are within acceptable standards in the industry. **MCMAHON does however recommend that the Department measure response times from the time of 911 call to the arrival of the first unit on scene. This provides an evaluation of the callers experience of the total time for a response to a call for service.**

Fire and EMS Department Staffing: Twelve full-time firefighter/EMS providers maintain a minimum of four personnel on-duty in the fire/EMS station at all times. Part-time members fill in vacancies caused by vacation, sick leave, etc. The twelve full-time Firefighter/EMTs & Paramedics are split into three shifts and work rotating twenty-four (24) hour shifts. At least one of the four personnel on-duty must be a paramedic and a certified driver/operator.

During weekday business hours, the Fire Chief, Assistant Chief and Inspector provide additional staffing at the fire station to respond to calls. This is an effective practice based on increased demand for service during day-time hours.

Outside of their normal work hours, the three chief officer positions in the Department are responsible to respond to calls after normal business hours to provide additional supervision and to backfill the fire station when the on-duty crews are on calls for service.

Paid-on-call/part-time personnel are utilized to fill vacancies in the full-time schedule and also to respond to the fire station to support on-duty staff when major or multiple incidents occur. While the Department has seventeen (17) paid-on-call/part-time personnel, the Department has struggled to have a regular and consistent response from the paid-on-call/part-time personnel when they are called in for major or multiple incidents. The paid-on-call/part-time staff are most effective for filling scheduled shifts.

The City of Whitewater Fire and EMS Department is not alone in being challenged to maintain an effective number of part-time and paid-on-call staff members. Departments across the Country are facing the same problem as family and full-time employment responsibilities are prioritized and the number of people interested in positions as firefighters and emergency medical responders has dropped. The National Fire Protection Association reports the number of volunteer/paid-on-call firefighters has decreased from 897,750 in 1984 to 676,900 in 2020.

Response Capabilities: The four on-duty personnel are able to either staff two ambulances or a fire engine, depending on the call for service. Support from the chief officers and fire inspector provide additional personnel to staff responding vehicles when available.

The Department also staffs an additional position from Friday at 6 PM to Monday at 6 AM to provide additional staffing during weekend hours when paid-on-call availability has shown to be limited. Part-time/paid-on-call members regularly fill these shifts. The program has been successful to date in providing additional in-station staffing when paid-on-call availability has been limited.

At minimum, two people must respond with an ambulance. When an ambulance responds to a call for service, a minimum of two personnel are left in the station to respond to subsequent calls for service. If a second subsequent EMS call occurs, the second ambulance responds and paid-on-call/part-time personnel are called in. The paid-

on-call/part-time staff are also called in when responses require a fire engine to respond. The paid-on-call/part-time staff is used to backfill the station or support on scene efforts, depending on the need of the Department.

The Department's current staffing level allows for a rapid response to calls for emergency medical services, but the Department is challenged when simultaneous incidents occur.

Multiple, concurrent calls for service occur about 20% of the time and the trend for concurrent calls continues to increase. Concurrent calls for service require the Department to call in off-duty or paid-on-call members to backfill the station. It is projected that the need to backfill the station will occur approximately 225 times in 2024. Data provided by the fire and emergency medical services department indicates that in 58% instances in which off-duty personnel had to be called in to backfill the station, no personnel were available to respond, thus leaving the station unstaffed for subsequent calls for service. When the station is unable to be staffed and a subsequent call for service occurs, the Department relies on mutual aid to respond to the call for service.

Mutual aid for instances when Whitewater is unable to respond to a calls for service in its own response area commonly comes from either the Town of LaGrange, Cities of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson or Janesville or Lakeside Fire/Rescue which services Edgerton, Milton, and nine towns in northern Rock County. The estimated response times for those agencies to calls in Whitewater is between sixteen and thirty minutes depending on which department is called for assistance. To date in 2024, Whitewater Fire and EMS requested assistance from another agency to respond to an EMS call due to lack of staff sixteen times. Sixteen to thirty minutes is a significantly long time to wait for an ambulance or fire engine in an emergency.

The increase in service demand and decreasing availability of personnel to respond to emergency call-ins during times of multiple calls for EMS service or a fire incident requires an increase in staffing at the fire station to maintain service levels. Funding increases in full-time positions is challenging for most municipalities in the State of Wisconsin and Whitewater is no exception. This report provides a series of recommendations to increase staffing to meet the demands for service being placed on the Whitewater Fire and EMS Department.

Convert EMS Chief from part-time to full-time position: Currently this position is part-time, functioning as the EMS Service Director, performing administrative tasks and oversight of the Department's EMS services. It is recommended this position be moved to full-time. Consideration should be given to have the position work eight-hour day shifts, Thursday to Monday, which provides chief officer oversight on weekends when the current two full-time chiefs are not on-duty and also provides supplemental staffing on weekends when paid-on-call availability is limited. The blended weekday/weekend schedule also provides three weekdays to integrate with the other full-time chief officer and administrative staff that work traditional Monday through Friday schedules. Consideration should be given to ultimately having this position be certified/licensed as both an EMS provider and fire officer. Total budget impact of converting this position to full-time is estimated at \$58,116.

Hire three new Firefighter/EMT positions to bring total full-time staffing to fifteen personnel assigned to a twenty-four hour shift schedule. This provides five personnel per twenty-four hour shift. The fifth person per shift provides additional capacity for multiple, simultaneous EMS calls for service thus reducing the reliance on the small paid-on-call staff.

Current funding restrictions will most likely require hiring three new positions over the course of several years as opposed to all at once. The first position hired should be scheduled over periods of higher call demand with more focus on weekend hours when paid-on-call staff have been the least available. Data from the Department demonstrates higher call demand from approximately 8 AM to 10 PM.

A suggested schedule for this additional position is Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday from 9 AM to 8:20 PM (56-hour workweek matching other full-time Firefighter/EMTs). This position, combined with the EMS Chief working a similar schedule and weekend paid-on-premise shifts, provides staffing for an additional ambulance during periods of higher calls for service.

As additional funding is available to hire the second and third additional full-time positions, the three new Firefighter/EMT hires should be transitioned to twenty-four hour shifts, thus bringing twenty-four hour staffing up to the recommended five on each shift. Total budget impact for one Firefighter/EMT position is estimated at approximately \$110,000 per position (X3=\$330,000).

Staffing of a minimum of five personnel per shift with support from an on-call chief officer provides sufficient staff to handle up to three simultaneous emergency medical services calls and/or an initial response to a report of a structure fire.

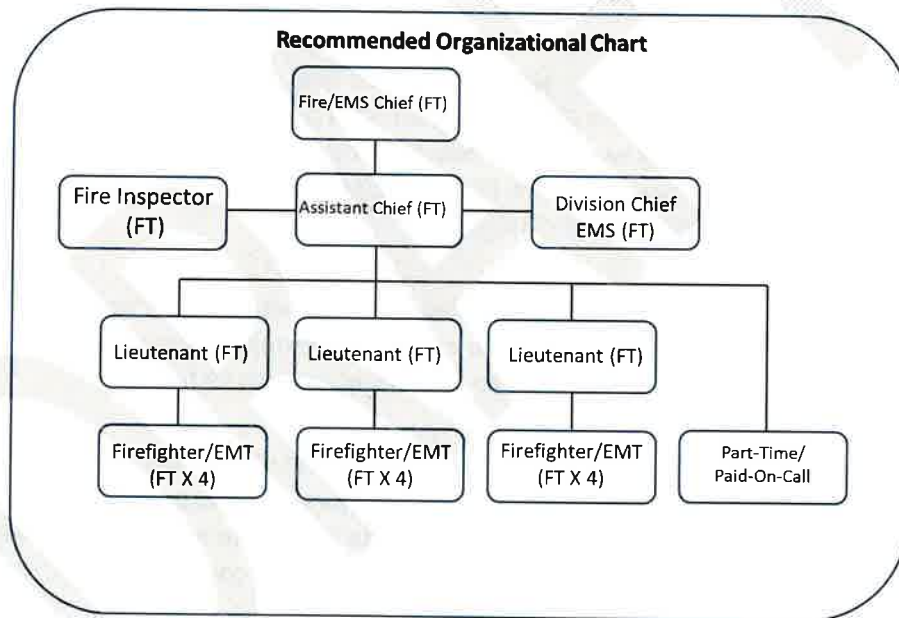
The six responders (five on-duty plus on-call chief officer) allows the Whitewater Fire and EMS Department to meet minimum requirements of Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Standards Administrative Code SPS 330 to initiate an interior fire attack at a structure fire. The six personnel required in SPS 330 consist of:

- Incident Commander (1)
- Initial Fire Suppression & Rescue
 - Company Officer (1)
 - Firefighter (1)
- Back-up Team (2)
- Pump Operator (1)

Additional assistance for structure fires will still be needed from paid-on-call and mutual aid agencies. Industry standards, including the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710, recommend a minimum of sixteen to seventeen firefighter responds to a structure fire.

As funding allows, McMAHON also recommends the Department promote one supervisor per shift to the rank of Captain or Lieutenant to provide a consistent supervisor on each shift. Currently, the Department identifies a shift lead for each shift. A promoted supervisor should have additional training and certifications in personnel and incident management and would provide management support for the chief officers. Total budget impact of creating promoted supervisor positions for three twenty-four hour shifts and providing an additional “Acting Officer-In-Charge” hourly stipend in the absence of a promoted supervisor: \$30,000.

It is important that, as recommendations included in this report are implemented, the Department continue to actively engage the paid-on-call/part-time staff with training and available work shifts. The paid-on-call and part-time staff play a crucial role in flexibility of scheduling and staff during large incidents that on-duty staff cannot handle. It should be expected that the paid-on-call/part-time staff will likely primarily transition to an all part-time staff that work scheduled hours as paid-on-call firefighter and EMS staff become harder to recruit and retain due to training and time demands.



IV. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Whitewater Fire and EMS Department is not alone in experiencing increased demand for service and having challenges with recruiting and retaining paid-on-call/part-time firefighters and emergency medical services responders. Agencies across the country face similar challenges and are being forced to add additional full-time staff to meet the demands for service. Data reviewed for this study identifies a need to add, at minimum, three full-time staff to the Department to support current operations. Three specific recommendations included in this report are summarized below:

- 1) The Department should staff a minimum of five on-duty personnel per twenty-four hour shift plus an on-call chief officer. This requires three additional full-time staff members. This will likely only be able to be implemented over a period of several years as the City, like other municipalities in the State of Wisconsin, is restricted by property tax levy limits.
- 2) The EMS Chief should be transitioned to a full-time position with work hours to provide chief officer coverage on weekends and during peak call volume times. Transitioning this position to full-time, working similar hours recommended for the first additional full-time Firefighter/EMT position and the paid-on-premise weekend shifts provides additional staffing for EMS and fire responses.
- 3) The Department should promote one supervisor per shift to the rank of Captain or Lieutenant to provide a consistent supervisor on each shift.

Option B	Salary	OT/SD	Outfitting	Total	Notes
5 Patrol	584,420	52,880	103,500	740,800	Half single and half family insurance
1 Detective	131,386	9,440	20,700	-	Absorbed by city budget
Squads	2	125,000		340,359	Includes outfitting
			Subtotal	1,081,159	
1 Dispatch	85,076	9,906	-	94,982	Family insurance
			Total	1,176,141	

Mill Rate Calculations				
2025 Levy	6,460,302.00			
Add. Ask	<u>1,176,141.00</u>			
	7,636,443.00	% of levy	Assessed Value	Mill Rate
Walworth	0.88	6,715,329.30	880,882,950.00	7.62
Jefferson	0.12	921,113.70	133,155,700.00	6.92
				\$ Increase to Mill Rate
				1.05
				0.80

2025 Levy	6,460,302.00			
Add. Ask	<u>1,081,159.00</u>			
	7,541,461.00	% of levy	Assessed Value	Mill Rate
Walworth	0.88	6,631,804.10	880,882,950.00	7.53
Jefferson	0.12	909,656.90	133,155,700.00	6.83
				\$ Increase to Mill Rate
				0.96
				0.71

Option B + 1 EMT	Salary	OT/SD	Outfitting	Total	Notes
5 Patrol	584,420	52,880	103,500	740,800	Half single and half family insurance
1 Detective Squads	131,386	9,440	20,700	-	Absorbed by city budget
	2	125,000		250,000	Includes outfitting
			Subtotal	990,800	
1 Dispatch	85,076	9,906	-	94,982	Family insurance
			Total	1,085,782	
				110,000	1 EMT/FF Salary and Benefits
				1,195,782	

Mill Rate Calculations

2025 Levy	6,460,302.00				
Add. Ask	1,085,782.00				
	<u>7,546,084.00</u>	% of levy	Assessed Value	Mill Rate	\$ Increase to Mill Rate
Walworth	0.88	6,635,869.47	880,882,950.00	7.53	0.96
Jefferson	0.12	910,214.53	133,155,700.00	6.84	0.72

2025 Levy	6,460,302.00				
Add. Ask	1,195,782.00				
	<u>7,656,084.00</u>	% of levy	Assessed Value	Mill Rate	\$ Increase to Mill Rate
Walworth	0.88	6,732,601.18	880,882,950.00	7.64	1.07
Jefferson	0.12	923,482.82	133,155,700.00	6.94	0.82

Option B + 2 EMT/FF						
	Salary	OT/SD	Outfitting	Total	Notes	
5 Patrol	584,420	52,880	103,500	740,800	Half single and half family insurance	
1 Detective Squads	131,386	9,440	20,700	-	Absorbed by city budget	
	2	125,000		250,000	Includes outfitting	
1 Dispatch	85,076	9,906		990,800		
			Subtotal	94,982	Family insurance	
			Total	1,085,782		
				220,000	2 EMT/FF Salary and Benefits	
				1,305,782		

Mill Rate Calculations

2025 Levy	6,460,302.00					
Add. Ask	1,085,782.00					
	<u>7,546,084.00</u>	% of levy	Assessed Value	Mill Rate	\$ Increase to Mill Rate	
Walworth	0.88	6,635,869.47	880,882,950.00	7.53	0.96	
Jefferson	0.12	910,214.53	133,155,700.00	6.84	0.72	
2025 Levy	6,460,302.00					
Add. Ask	1,305,782.00					
	<u>7,766,084.00</u>	% of levy	Assessed Value	Mill Rate	\$ Increase to Mill Rate	
Walworth	0.88	6,829,332.90	880,882,950.00	7.75	1.18	
Jefferson	0.12	936,751.10	133,155,700.00	7.04	0.92	

	Police Only Option \$1.176M		Police & 1 EMT \$1.195M		Police & 2 EMT's \$1.305M	
	Walworth	Jefferson	Walworth	Jefferson	Walworth	Jefferson
2025 Mill Rate	6.57	6.12	6.57	6.12	6.57	6.12
With Increase	7.62	6.92	7.64	6.94	7.75	7.04
Per 1,000 Increase	1.05	0.80	1.07	0.82	1.18	0.92
	Increased Cost to Residents PY					
	Walworth	Jefferson	Walworth	Jefferson	Walworth	Jefferson
Assessed Value						
100,000	105.00	80.00	107.00	82.00	118.00	92.00
125,000	131.25	100.00	133.75	102.50	147.50	115.00
150,000	157.50	120.00	160.50	123.00	177.00	138.00
175,000	183.75	140.00	187.25	143.50	206.50	161.00
200,000	210.00	160.00	214.00	164.00	236.00	184.00
225,000	236.25	180.00	240.75	184.50	265.50	207.00
240,100	252.11	192.08	256.91	196.88	283.32	220.89
250,000	262.50	200.00	267.50	205.00	295.00	230.00
275,000	288.75	220.00	294.25	225.50	324.50	253.00
300,000	315.00	240.00	321.00	246.00	354.00	276.00
325,000	341.25	260.00	347.75	266.50	383.50	299.00
350,000	367.50	280.00	374.50	287.00	413.00	322.00
375,000	393.75	300.00	401.25	307.50	442.50	345.00
400,000	420.00	320.00	428.00	328.00	472.00	368.00
425,000	446.25	340.00	454.75	348.50	501.50	391.00
450,000	472.50	360.00	481.50	369.00	531.00	414.00
475,000	498.75	380.00	508.25	389.50	560.50	437.00
500,000	525.00	400.00	535.00	410.00	590.00	460.00

*Median Home Price
in Whitewater
240,100