

MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

# City of Whitewater

Request for Proposals: Communication  
Consultant for Public Safety Referendum



ALLOW US TO

# INTRODUCE OURSELVES

Greetings!

We are honored and excited to be considered to once again work with the City of Whitewater, this time to educate community members about the need for public safety funding. We greatly enjoyed our partnership while working together on the Whitewater EMS referendum and would leverage our learnings to support the City in this latest ask.

At Mueller Communications, we've developed a tried and tested approach to referendum communication. We've worked on over 30 referendums in communities across the state, always achieving our goal of an informed and engaged electorate.

We are a full-service firm, with a variety of subject matter experts. Our team of 40+ full-time staff means we can craft a team unique to your project and your needs. With in house public relations, marketing, website and creative experts, we provide a 360-degree approach to communications.

As we hope you experienced with our previous working relationship, we go above and beyond to meet the needs of our clients - on time, and on budget.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to discussing this opportunity with you in more detail.

Sincerely,

James Madlom  
CEO

Elizabeth Hummitzsch  
Vice President



# RESUMES OF KEY TEAM MEMBERS





**JAMES  
MADLOM**

**WHAT DO YOU DO? — CEO**

**ABOUT JAMES**

I have the best job in Milwaukee: I feel so fortunate that I get to work alongside great colleagues who are not only the best at what they do, but are great people who care about each other and our community. They live out our Mueller Motto – “Do the Right Thing” – every day.

Lori and I are so honored to lead this great team that shares our love for Milwaukee; our sense of work as play; and the belief that there is nothing more rewarding professionally than the opportunity to do meaningful work with great people for great clients.

And meaningful work is something we get to do every day. As our founder and mentor, Carl Mueller often said, they don’t come to us for the easy ones. We love to tackle complex challenges to help organizations better serve their clients, community or employees.

Over the years, we’ve been able to help successfully secure public financing for major redevelopment projects, protected corporate reputations during high-profile litigation and other crisis situations, designed and implemented internal employee communications programs and supported the design and implementation of major neighborhood revitalization efforts, like Near West Side Partners.

I’m a proud graduate of Marquette University (both undergrad and Law School) and an active member of my community, serving as chair of Wellpoint Care Network’s board of directors, and as a director on the boards of the Alzheimer’s Association of Southeastern Wisconsin, Coalition for Children, Youth and Families, Jewish Community Center and St. Charles Youth & Family Services. I’m also an active member of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee. Previously, I served as President of the Shorewood Foundation and a past board member of the Volunteer Center of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Public Theatre, Everyday Philanthropists and Non-Profit Center of Milwaukee. I was honored to be named one of United Way’s Philanthropic 5.

I live in Whitefish Bay, Wis. with my wife and three children. We are members and active volunteers with St. Herman’s Orthodox Church in West Bend.

“What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.” – Pericles

**James has overseen Mueller Teams working on more than 30 referendums.**





**ELIZABETH  
HUMMITZSCH**

**WHAT DO YOU DO? — VICE PRESIDENT**

**ABOUT ELIZABETH**

Hi, I'm Elizabeth Hummitzsch (don't worry, I didn't know how to pronounce it at first either). I started at Mueller nearly 15 years ago as an intern (remind me to tell you the story about how I was accidentally offered the job). Fresh out of college at UW-Madison, I immediately knew I had found my career. Over the years, I've quite literally grown up at the firm. As I've transitioned into a leadership role, I've had exposure to and experience with all of our service areas and the diverse portfolio of clients we serve.

The most exciting part of working at Mueller is that you never know what kind of projects you'll have the opportunity to work on. Over the course of my career, I've helped save the Soldiers Home, generated support for a slew of development projects that now contribute to the Milwaukee skyline, helped to pass local and state legislation and ordinances, developed and executed complex, policy-based internal communications strategies for one of Milwaukee County's largest employers, and helped bring countless companies, organizations and individuals through some of the most challenging crisis situations... but you wouldn't know it. That's because it's not about me, or us, it's about our clients. Being the behind-the-scenes support and strategic counsel for the people and organizations who are moving our City forward is incredibly rewarding.

In addition to the client side of my work, my passion is the Mueller culture. We've got something special here and I am committed to investing time and resources into nurturing it as best I can.

Beyond the hours of 9-5 (or sometimes 6-2 - because...kids), I'm mom and wife. My husband and I live in our hometown of Waukesha with our three kids. You'll find us in the pews of Spring Creek Church on Sundays, it's one of our favorite places to be.

**Elizabeth was the team lead for Whitewater's successful EMS referendum.**





LAUREN  
GEORGE

WHAT DO YOU DO? — CLIENT MANAGER

ABOUT LAUREN

Hi, I'm Lauren! I am a twin mom, people person and Milwaukee enthusiast. Growing up just 30 minutes outside of the city and attending Marquette University, Milwaukee has always been home to me.

At Marquette, I majored in public relations with minors in history and political science. The summer after my junior year of college, I landed the internship of my dreams at Mueller Communications.

A few years later, I am still lucky to call Mueller Communications home. Here at Mueller, I get to share captivating stories about great people and businesses in Milwaukee and beyond - all while working with a team of the area's most talented communications professionals.

I've learned first hand that effective communication is clear, concise and honest. These three values guide the way I approach strategy, messaging and storytelling for each of my clients.

When I am not at work, you may find me searching for Milwaukee's best fish fry, attending a spin class, or spending lots of time outside at our family cabin in Rhinelander, Wisconsin.

Lauren has supported eight referendum projects.



# PROGRAM OF WORK



# PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

**Timeline: 12-16 weeks**

**Mueller will create and execute a public information and education campaign that clearly articulates for voters the need for additional resources and the impact to the community if the referendum passes or if it fails.**

**Outreach Plan & Strategy:** Mueller will develop and refine a communications strategy, likely to include the key elements listed below.

**Communications Materials:** We will work with you to develop one set of clear and concise materials that will effectively communicate key information about the referendum:

- Key messages for use in ensuring consistent communication across all outreach methods;
- A fact sheet / infographic that explains the situation and the need for the referendum; and
- FAQs to help disseminate facts and dispel any misconceptions about the need for the referendum, what the funding would be used for, and the process taken thus far.

## THE GOAL:

An informed and engaged electorate.

Municipalities and departments cannot advocate for a specific outcome in an election – or a referendum. Rather, they can educate and encourage community members to make an informed decision.





# PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

**Timeline: 12-16 weeks**

## OUTREACH APPROACHES

We will take key information from communications materials and leverage it to develop and distribute information to your community.

Examples of the outreach we might recommend include:

- **Direct Mail:** We will develop and distribute three (3) direct mail pieces to all residences in Whitewater. Each mailer would provide key information about the referendum, as well as links for more information.
- **Graphics / Posters:** If desired, we will develop informational graphics and / or posters that can be printed and displayed in City buildings and shared across social media channels.
- **Presentation Deck:** We will develop a presentation deck that can be used by officials and City spokespeople to explain the referendum at community meetings (in-person or online).
- **Information Sessions:** We will work with City officials to schedule a series of information sessions that will provide an opportunity for spokespeople to share details about the referendum and allow residents to ask questions. The sessions would be promoted in advance and could be recorded to be made available for later viewing, depending on available technology.
- **Community Presentations:** We will work with you to identify opportunities to speak to local community organizations about the referendum (e.g. local Rotaries, Chambers of Commerce, etc.)



# PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

**Timeline: 12-16 weeks**

## ONLINE PRESENCE

- **Website:** We will develop content for a landing page on the City of Whitewater's website that would serve as the hub for information on the referendum, including a fact sheet and an online FAQ document.
- **Social Media - Organic:** We will work with you to develop content that can be regularly posted on social media channels to inform the electorate about the need for the referendum. We will also provide a response guide that identifies likely questions and suggested answers that officials can use in responding to online engagement.
- **Social Media - Paid:** We will develop engaging content to leverage as an advertisement on Facebook, pushing content out to those of voting age in Whitewater.

## EARNED MEDIA

We will work with you and your team to develop and distribute news releases and media pitches designed to secure coverage in the local media about the referendum.



CASE STUDIES

# PAST PROJECTS



## 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.



# 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 service 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 pay 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 make it difficult for the Caledonia Fire Department to provide a consistent, high-quality response. Funding grant cutbacks the Department relies on to fund staffing will expire in March 2023, further straining response capabilities.

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

**IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"**

**+6 ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDICS** and **+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 require additional staff to sufficiently respond to calls for service from Caledonia residents and perform practice duties.

If approved, taxpayers will see a property tax increase of an estimated **\$92 annually**, or about **\$1.10 per week**, per **\$100,000** of assessed value in a home, starting with the bills issued in December 2023.

**PROPERTY TAX IMPACT**  
\$1,000,000 Home Value Increase

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	PER YEAR	PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$57	\$1.10
\$200,000	\$117	\$3.30

**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 six firefighter/paramedics through March 2023. While the Village has worked within its best interests to maintain three of the six positions, **without additional funding, the Village will lose three firefighter/paramedics.**

The Caledonia Police Department needs ten 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.

**IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING AT THE CLERK'S OFFICE:**  
Monday through Friday:  
March 21 - March 31, 2023  
from 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

**ABSENTEE BALLOT:**  
Deadline to submit application for mailed absentee ballot:  
March 30, 2023

**ELECTION DAY:**  
Polling places are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Wisconsin voters are required to show an acceptable photo ID in order to vote.

**APRIL 4**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT CALEDONIA.WI.GOV/REFERENDUM OR EMAIL REFERENDUM@CALLEDONIA.WI.GOV**



## 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

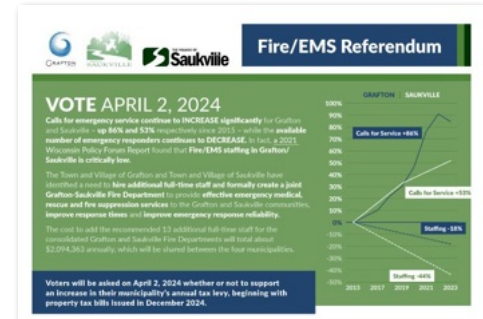
# GRAFTON/SAUKVILLE

**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.



**TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF GRAFTON AND SAUKVILLE**

## FIRE/EMS REFERENDUM

**PROPERTY TAX IMPACT**

Municipality	Additional	Annual Property Tax	Weekly
Village of Grafton			
Town of Grafton			
Town of Saukville			
Village of Saukville			

**WHY NOW?**

The Town and Village of Grafton and 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 our communities.

Current Fire/EMS funding levels and staffing levels are insufficient to meet the growing need for services. Grafton and Saukville need act now if they are to continue to adequately respond to our residents.

Because of state-imposed levies, the Towns and Villages of Grafton and Saukville need seek approval from taxpayers through a referendum to increase the tax levy to fund these services.

**IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"**

If the Town and Village of Grafton and Saukville vote "YES" on April 2, 2024 - and such approval is received - more than \$20,076 to cover the shared cost of **13 additional full-time staff**.

If the referendum passes, the joint Grafton-Saukville Fire Department will be able to add 13 highly trained personnel as well as the following additional positions in each station:

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

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

Questions? Visit [www.village.grafton.wi.us/666/Referendum](http://www.village.grafton.wi.us/666/Referendum) to learn more.



## CASE STUDY

# VILLAGE OF GERMANTOWN

The Villages of Germantown and Richfield commissioned studies from hydrogeologists 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 image displays two direct mail pieces for the Intergovernmental Agreement Referendum. The top piece is a flyer with a red header and a white body. It features the Village of Germantown logo and the title "INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT REFERENDUM". The main text reads: "VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022". Below this, it states: "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, Hony Hill Road, Highway 175 and Pleasant Hill Road." A red box contains the 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." Below this is a map of the Northeast Corridor and Germantown Light Industrial Park. The bottom piece is a smaller flyer with a red header and a white body. It features the title "RICHFIELD SEWER AND WATER AGREEMENT REFERENDUM". The main text reads: "AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THE VILLAGE OF RICHFIELD: BEARS ALL COSTS FOR THE EXPANSION OF SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS IN RICHFIELD. PAYS A 20% PREMIUM FOR SEWER SERVICE. REQUIRES RICHFIELD TO CONSTRUCT INFRASTRUCTURE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GERMANTOWN SPECIFICATIONS." The Village of Germantown logo is at the bottom.





# 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:

**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 may limit the City's ability to employ and retain quality staff to provide high-quality services to City residents.

**Q Why is the city asking for this increase now?**

*"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 by a total of 3.9%, which results in a total of \$20,552,229, and an amount include the increase of \$771,000 each fiscal year going forward."*

**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 \$750,000 INCREASE STARTING WITH DEC. 2022 BILLS

ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	REFERENDUM IMPACT	TOTAL CITY TAXES
\$100,000	\$19.79	\$32.35
\$400,000	\$79.56	\$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 \$66/100 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 \$62 per year for every \$100,000 of their home's value starting in 2018 and beyond.

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

At 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**

For additional background information, including the community survey results, visit the city website: [www.smwi.org](http://www.smwi.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."](#)



# SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES



OPTIONAL

# COMMUNITY SURVEY

We understand the City of Whitewater's desire to survey the public relative to a potential referendum. Given that final referendum questions must be submitted by January 21, 2025, Mueller Communications does not believe a traditional mailed-out survey is plausible in time to provide valuable insight to inform the Council's decisions.

Mueller Communications will work with City leadership to determine if an alternate approach could be pursued such as an online-only survey and / or phone polling.



**We will work closely with you to understand the needs of your community and develop a detailed timeline to meet your needs. We have included the following high-level timeline targeting an April 2025 referendum vote:**

**INFORMATION GATHERING / MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT | NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2024:**

- Mueller Communications meets with City of Whitewater staff to begin developing the outreach plan and approach
- City provides all requested materials / data to Mueller Communications
- Mueller to develop, refine and finalize key messages that will serve as the foundation for all future collateral
- Mueller to draft, design (as appropriate) and finalize - with input from the City of Whitewater staff - initial collateral materials including FAQs, fact sheet, news release announcing the referendum in April and website landing page language

**PUBLIC EDUCATION | JANUARY - APRIL 2025:**

- **Deadline for City Council approve referendum question - January 21**
- Mueller to develop content for three (3) direct mail pieces, coordinating printing and mailing logistics
- Mueller and a videographer to script, record and produce a brief explainer video for use as a social media ad on the City of Whitewater's Facebook page, targeting all residents of voting age
- Mueller to conduct ongoing media outreach, as appropriate
- Mueller to develop and design a presentation deck and talking points for spokespeople to use in public meetings
- City to schedule and facilitate information sessions, presentations to community groups
- City to publish informational content on social media
- **Election Day - April 1**

Mueller Communications will develop agendas for and facilitate weekly meetings with Whitewater officials, providing updates on key tasks and timelines and providing a space for feedback, edits and strategy development

# TIMELINE



# REFERENCES



# CITY OF FORT ATKINSON

## Rebecca LeMire

City Administrator

920.563.7760

rlemire@fortatkinsonwi.net

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.

# OUR REFERENCES





# CITY OF PORTAGE

## Troy Haase

Fire Chief

608.742.2172

troy.haase@portagewi.gov

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.

# OUR REFERENCES



# CITY OF FOND DU LAC

## Joe Moore

City Manager

920.322.3407

jmoore@fdl.wi.gov

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.

# OUR REFERENCES



# COST



# BUDGET ESTIMATE

**Professional Fees, Mueller Communications:** **\$33,953.00**  
(Will be based on actual fees, not to exceed this amount based on current understanding of the scope of work)

**Administrative and Technical Fee:** **\$2,546.48**

**Social Media Video Production:** **\$2,300.00**

**Media Spend, Social Advertisements:** **\$800.00**

**Third-Party Costs Estimate\*:** **\$15,545.61**  
Estimate to print and mail three (3) full-color direct mailers to all households in the City of Whitewater (approx. 7,400)

**Public Education Campaign Budget:**  
**\$55,145.09**

**Optional Survey:** **\$34,000.00**

**Professional Fees, Mueller Communications:** **\$9,000.00**

*Will be based on actual fees, not to exceed this amount, based on current understanding of the scope of work.*

**Survey Fees & Expenses, Third-Party:** **Up to \$25,000.00**

*Actual cost will be dependent on the type of survey pursued.*

We will work with you to refine our scope of work and budget to best meet the needs of your community. This proposed budget is based on the scope of work outlined above.

\*Note: Printing estimates and third-party vendor costs are based on projections and may be subject to change. We have preferred vendors we frequently work with and who we know are efficient and affordable. We are happy to work with other vendors, but note that it may take additional time to coordinate and their pricing may be different than we have estimated here.



# STAFF RATES

<b>Title</b>	<b>Standard Rate</b>	<b>Crisis Rate</b>
Founder & Chairman		
CEO	\$500	\$750
Vice President	\$285	\$427.50
Senior Director	\$265	\$397.50
Director	\$245	\$367.50
Senior Manager	\$225	\$337.50
Manager	\$205	\$307.50
Senior Associate 2	\$180	\$270
Senior Associate 1	\$155	\$232.50
Associate (Level 2)	\$130	\$195
Associate (Level 1)	\$105	\$157.50
Intern	\$85	\$127.50
Administrative	\$75	\$112.50
	\$65	\$97.50



# WORK SAMPLES




# WORK SAMPLES

# FACT SHEET

## EMS Service Referendum

The City of Portage



**VOTE FEBRUARY 20, 2024**

The City of Portage faces a need to invest in EMS services either through a referendum to increase the property tax levies for fire and public safety or through a referendum to increase the property tax levies for fire and public safety from other City services. With this referendum, the City is proposing a fire-based EMS service as the most cost-effective model for service.

- 14 cross-trained firefighter / EMT / paramedic
- Education and training for personnel who are not already cross-trained
- Three new ambulances
- The station would be a new dedicated staffing and new EMS capabilities.

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 levies, 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.

### 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 unfortunately cannot acquire services from Aspirus, its third-party provider, for ambulance service. Challenged by these unacceptably high costs, and a lack of control in optimizing service to incidents, the Portage Fire Department has considered alternative 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 fire-based 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 levies 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 / paramedic and serving and operating from ambulances.

The proposed fire-based EMS model, operating out of the centralized location of the City's fire department, would:

- Increase paramedic coverage and improve response times
- Increase the number of ambulances available each day
- Improve fire response times

Under the proposed model, 14 new personnel would join the department's existing staff of seven. All personnel would be cross-trained to handle a total of 21 firefighter / EMT / paramedic to serve the City.

Taking EMS service "in-house" as part of the fire department also gives the City complete control over the system and how best to serve residents. A fire-based EMS model will also utilize our fire response through the addition of new-trained staff that can serve both the EMS and fire-related needs of our community. This level of control and availability is rarely available through partnerships with third-party providers.

Questions? Visit [www.portagewi.gov/emsreferendum](http://www.portagewi.gov/emsreferendum) to learn more.

## PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

**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 levies, 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 village's demands and needs of the community. Caledonia must act now if it is to continue to respond to calls for service.

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

Increasing staffing levels and an increase in calls for service make it critical for the Caledonia Fire Department to provide a consistent, high-quality response. Funding gaps within the Department will result in reduced staffing and response capabilities.

Staffing in the Caledonia Police Department is too low to enable officers to effectively patrol the large geographic area of the Village and respond to emergency calls 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 Caledonia can effectively respond to calls for service from Caledonia residents and protect public safety.

If approved, taxpayers will see a property tax increase of an estimated \$37 annually, or about \$1.36 per month, per \$100,000 of assessed value in a home, starting with the bills issued in December 2023.

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT			
\$1,000,000 TOTAL INCREASE			
ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	PER YEAR	PER MONTH	PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$37	\$1.36	\$1.36
\$200,000	\$74	\$2.72	\$2.72
\$300,000	\$111	\$4.08	\$4.08

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

For mailed absentee ballot, March 30, 2023

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

For more information, please visit [www.caledoniawi.gov/pubsafetyreferendum](http://www.caledoniawi.gov/pubsafetyreferendum) or email [referendum@caledoniawi.gov](mailto:referendum@caledoniawi.gov)

## CITY OF FOND DU LAC 2021 PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

City of Fond du Lac

**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.

Voters will be asked whether or not to support an increase in the City's annual tax levies, 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 levies to fund these services.

### IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"

+6 ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDICS +6 ADDITIONAL POLICE OFFICERS

If the referendum is approved by a majority of voters, the City of Fond du Lac will be able to add critically necessary and essential additional public safety staff, including six additional firefighter/paramedics and six additional police officers. These increases will ensure the City can effectively respond to calls for service from Fond du Lac residents and protect public safety.

If approved, taxpayers will see a property tax increase of an estimated \$37 annually, or about \$1.36 per month, per \$100,000 of assessed value in a home, starting with the bills issued in December 2021.

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT			
\$1,000,000 TOTAL INCREASE STARTING			
ASSESSED PROPERTY VALUE	PER YEAR	PER MONTH	PER WEEK
\$100,000	\$37	\$1.36	\$1.36
\$200,000	\$74	\$2.72	\$2.72
\$300,000	\$111	\$4.08	\$4.08

https://www.fdlwi.gov/vote

## 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 and program costs continue to rise, current funding and staffing levels are stagnant or decreasing.




City of Fond du Lac



# WORK SAMPLES

# FAQs



## OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### WHAT IS THE PROPOSED OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM THAT IS ON THE BALLOT FOR TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5?

To maintain the quality services Monona residents know and deserve, the City of Monona must secure additional funding. Without additional funding, the City will need to cut programs or services.

The \$3 million increase in the property tax levy will enable the City of Monona to maintain current services and address its most pressing needs by: increasing compensation in line with neighboring communities to retain current employees and attract new staff to fill vacancies, and funding growing operating expenses like equipment, supplies, and contracts for garbage and recycling collection through 2029.

Additional information about this referendum is available online at: [mymonona.com/referendum](http://mymonona.com/referendum)

### WHAT WILL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT?

The formal resolution requesting permission to exceed the state revenue limit will appear as follows on the November 5 ballot:

*"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the City of Monona for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2025, is limited to 0.455% which results in a levy of \$9,962,823. Shall the City of Monona be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2025, for the purpose of maintaining current operations and services, by a total of 30.112%, which results in a levy of \$12,962,823, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$3,000,000 for each fiscal year going forward?"*

### WHEN AND WHERE DO I VOTE?

Election Day is Tuesday, November 5, 2024. Additional voting information, including hours for in-person absentee voting and information about how to request an absentee ballot, can be found on the City's website at [mymonona.com/133/Elections](http://mymonona.com/133/Elections).

### WHY DO WE NEED A REFERENDUM TO RAISE THE TAX LEVY LIMIT?

In Monona, as is true for all communities in Wisconsin, the City's revenue growth is restricted by state legislation limiting tax levy increases for operating expenses to the percent increase in equalized value from net new construction, or else requiring the City to seek permission from voters through a referendum to exceed levy limits. Tax levy increases based on net new construction alone are insufficient to meet the needs of the Monona community.

According to Wisconsin State statute, the City of Monona may only raise taxes for operating expenses by a percentage proportionate to net new construction in the City. However, despite exciting economic growth in Dane County and surrounding Madison, Wisconsin, the City of Monona is in a difficult position. The City could add \$0 to its 2024 General Fund for operating expenses due to a lack of net new construction; for the 2025 budget, the City will be able to add approximately \$25,000.

### SO, IS THE CITY GOING TO ADD \$3 MILLION TO THE TAX LEVY EACH YEAR?

No. If Monona voters approve the referendum, the City would be able to initiate a one-time, permanent \$3,000,000 increase to the property tax levy, beginning with property tax bills issued in December 2024.

### WHAT WILL IT MEAN IF A MAJORITY OF VOTERS VOTE "YES"?

If the referendum is approved by Monona voters, the City will be able to increase its property tax levy by \$3,000,000 and ensure the maintenance of the high-quality services and programs Monona residents know and deserve. More specifically, the funding will allow Monona to address growing operating expenses and maintain existing City services by increasing wages to avoid staff departures.

For more information please visit, [mymonona.com/referendum](http://mymonona.com/referendum)

## OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What will appear on the ballot?

The formal resolution requesting permission to exceed the state revenue limit will appear as follows on the November 5, 2024 ballot:

*"Under state law, the increase in the levy of the City of Baraboo for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2025, is limited to 3.18%, which results in a levy of \$9,579,603. Shall the City of Baraboo be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2025, for the purpose of funding the ongoing operations and services of the City, by a total of 20.878%, which results in a levy of \$11,579,603, and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of \$3,000,000 for each fiscal year going forward?"*

### Why is the City asking for this increase now?

Our current funding mechanisms are insufficient to maintain the existing quality of service while the community grows and operational costs increase for reasons beyond the City's control, such as inflation. While our departments have risen to meet the needs of our community by working smarter, creating efficiencies, and prioritizing types of service we can provide, it has become increasingly difficult to provide services as expected, and a new funding solution is needed. The referendum will help sustain and improve the quality of life here in the City for the next several years.

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

The State of Wisconsin limits the amount of property taxes a city can collect each year. In order to exceed the levy limit, the city needs voter approval through a city-wide referendum.

### I've heard a lot about municipal referendums recently. Why is this a topic in the news?

The situation we are facing in Baraboo is not unique. Across the state, the needs of municipalities have grown, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to provide and maintain the level of service that the community has come to expect with the current funding available from the state. In 2023 alone, 19 Wisconsin counties had operational referendum questions on their ballots.

The City of Baraboo is one of a number of Madison-area communities going to referendum this November. The City of Madison, the City of Monona, the City of Middleton and the City of Fitchburg each have referenda on the ballot to fund operating expenses.

For more information, please visit [baraboo.wi.gov/referendum](http://baraboo.wi.gov/referendum) or email questions to [referendum@baraboo.wi.gov](mailto:referendum@baraboo.wi.gov)

## 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 2.8%, 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 by 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 may limit the City's ability to employ and retain quality staff to provide high-quality services to City residents.

### Q Why is the city asking for this increase now?

The City's current funding and staffing levels are insufficient to meet the growing needs of our community. While our departments have risen to meet the needs of our community by working smarter, creating efficiencies, collaborating with stakeholders and prioritizing what types of service we can provide, it has become increasingly difficult to provide the high-quality services our residents expect and deserve.





# WORK SAMPLES

# DIRECT MAIL



**FORT ATKINSON**

## VOTE APRIL 5

### 2022 PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

**POLLING PLACE**  
**OPENS AT 7:00 a.m.**  
**AND**  
**CLOSES AT 8:00 p.m.**  
**AT**  
 The Municipal Building  
 Gymnasium 101 N. Main Street

[www.fortatkinsonwi.net/referendum](http://www.fortatkinsonwi.net/referendum)    [referendum@fortatkinsonwi.net](mailto:referendum@fortatkinsonwi.net)

## MAJORITY VOTE YES


Approve the referendum, the City will be able to fund additional officers at the Police Department, one full-time court reporter, and will be able to improve public safety by hiring a dedicated communications specialist. We will be able to improve recruitment and retention efforts and to offset up to 4% cost-of-living increases to City staff.

### PROPERTY TAX IMPACT OF REFERENDUM

\$70,000 INCREASE STARTING WITH DEC. 2022 BILLS

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

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



## OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM

### VOTE

TUESDAY, NOV. 5

The City of Monona has run lean for a long time—keeping staffing low in an attempt to reduce costs to taxpayers. After years of growing demands and growing costs to provide services, and without proportional increases in revenue, the City of Monona is facing budget challenges.

To maintain the quality services Monona residents expect and deserve, the City of Monona must secure additional funding. Without additional funding, the City will need to cut programs or services.

On November 5, voters will be asked to decide whether they support a \$3 million increase in the City's annual property tax levy to maintain existing City services.

### MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION

The City will hold a public information session.

**Wednesday, October 23, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Municipal Room  
 Monona Public Library  
 1000 Nichols Road

If approved, the \$3 million increase to the City's budget would be allocated as follows:

- \$145,000 to fund employee retention efforts by implementing the City's 2024 Compensation Plan.
- \$134,000 to fund overtime pay and ensure staff are on duty to provide services, including during emergencies.
- \$500,000 to fund additional operating costs such as new employee training and additional maintenance.
- \$350,000 to fund the growing costs of contracted services such as garbage and recycling services, along with additional IT expenses.

The City's operating costs will continue to grow as inflationary and other pressures continue. Per state law, the remaining \$871,000 included in the referendum request will be set aside to ensure the City can sustain existing services and programs through 2029.

For more information, please visit <https://mymonona.com/referendum>



# WORK SAMPLES

# COMMUNITY SURVEY



#### Dear Cedarburg Residents:

Since 1866, the Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) has operated on a largely volunteer basis, only hiring our first full-time employee in 2017. In recent years, we have experienced an increase in calls for service. At the same time, we have lost a significant number of volunteers – straining the quality of service CFD can consistently provide.

Joint committees from the City and Town of Cedarburg have studied this challenge and developed potential solutions. Their goal is to ensure quality services for our community in emergency situations. Before we move any further, we need to understand the priorities of our taxpayers through this community-wide survey.

Your feedback is confidential and returned to Community Perceptions, an independent research firm. Survey results will be reported at a meeting in December.

#### TAKE THE SURVEY IN ONE OF TWO WAYS

**Option 1:** To reduce mailing expenses –

Go to the survey website: [www.Survey2000.com](http://www.Survey2000.com)



Enter your survey code:

**Option 2:** If you do not have internet access, please mail the survey to Community Perceptions, PO Box 607,linger, WI 53066.

*Additional Surveys: The survey code can be used only once. To obtain additional surveys for other adults in your household, please call 262.375.7606.*

Please complete the survey before December 20, 2023.

To receive the survey in a different language or if you have a disability that makes it difficult to read, please email [info@communityperceptions.com](mailto:info@communityperceptions.com).

As your fire chief, it is my duty to provide you with the best emergency services possible. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Sincerely,

**Jeff Vahaboltz**  
Chief – Cedarburg Fire Department

#### Department Services

The Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) staffs and operates two fire stations, serving more than 18,000 within a 30-square-mile area covering the Town and City of Cedarburg. CFD provides:

Fire suppression  
 Fire inspection  
 Fire safety services

#### Cedarburg Fire Department's challenges?

Our current volunteer model is becoming unsustainable for three primary reasons:

#### Declining Volunteer Availability

Volunteers are not stationed on-site. They travel to a fire station before responding to emergencies. In the past, CFD saw a decline from more than 90 volunteers in 2002 to 64 in 2022. Compared to other Ozaukee County fire departments, CFD has a low level of full-time staffing.

#### OSHA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT: FULL-TIME STAFF / 1,000 POPULATION



#### What is the proposed solution?

To help address this issue of having more calls for service with fewer volunteers, CFD leaders and staff assessed the staffing levels needed to lower response times and improve emergency service. Recommendations include:

- Implementing additional volunteers for responding to calls for service
- Reassigning 12 additional full-time emergency response positions (such as firefighter-paramedics) to the fire chief role into a full-time position
- Reassigning to a paramedic-level service (which allows staff to administer a wider range of services and perform additional emergency procedures)

The City and Town require an additional \$2 million each year. The ad-hoc committee believes this is the best solution because it will allow CFD to recruit and retain members without requiring a full-time staffing model.

The City and Town would ensure four people are on duty in-station at any time, allowing immediate response to an emergency call comes in – reducing response times and improving the quality of service.

The cost would be shared between the Town and City of Cedarburg. The current shared service agreement:

	Share of the Increase
Town of Cedarburg	\$723,356
City of Cedarburg	\$1,292,302
Total	\$2,015,658

How would you rate the quality of emergency response services to date?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

#### Comments/suggestions:

#### How do you feel about the fire department's funding options?

The community supports high-quality emergency response services, we could pay for the staffing and other options.

#### 1: Budget cuts and other service reductions

Without raising new revenue, the City and Town could remove or reduce other budget line items. If you believe services that may need to be cut from the City of Cedarburg's budget could include any of the following:

- Increase in forestry operations (including tree pruning, dead tree removal, stump grinding, and discing)
- Removal of overtime pay for Department of Public Works staff (impacting snow emergency responses and requiring policy changes for snow removal)
- Reductions in annual street repair
- Increase in police services

If you believe any of the following services from the City of Cedarburg, this would mean eliminating all of the following:

- Recycling and recycling collection
- Plowing roads during snowstorms
- Plowing, drainage, ditch mowing, and equipment maintenance

How do you feel about support budget cuts and service reductions to pay for fire department staffing?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

#### 2: Wheel tax

The law allows the City and Town to collect an additional fee (the "wheel tax") on vehicle registration fees ("wheel tax") beyond the state's maximum. The fee would apply to vehicles registered in the City of Cedarburg.

The fee can only be used for transportation projects. However, revenue generated from this tax can be used for other areas in municipal budgets, which would help pay for staffing. The table below shows the amount of tax necessary to fund the proposed staffing levels. Note that, unlike property taxes, a wheel tax is deductible for residents.

	Registered Vehicles	Additional Wheel Tax Per Vehicle
Town of Cedarburg	5,190	\$139.55
City of Cedarburg	10,853	\$119.24

Note: Eligible vehicles include automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles.

How do you feel about support a wheel tax, which frees up other funding, to pay for fire department staffing?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided

#### Comments/suggestions:

