



OFFICIAL NOTICE AND AGENDA

Notice is hereby given that the Common Council of the City of Wausau, Wisconsin will hold a regular or special meeting on the date, time and location shown below.

Meeting of the:	COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Date/Time:	October 9, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Location:	City Hall, Council Chambers (407 Grant Street, Wausau WI 54403)
Members:	Carol Lukens, Michael Martens, Terry Kilian, Tom Neal, Becky McElhaney, Lisa Rasmussen, Sarah Watson, Vicki Tierney, Lou Larson, Chad Henke, Mayor Doug Diny

Call to Order

- 1 Public Comment
- 2 Discussion on proposed positions to be covered by referendum - nine SAFER firefighters, three ARPA firefighters, two police officers, one community outreach specialist, one community care paramedic
- 3 Review information regarding referendum rules and timing
- 4 Presentation from Mueller Communication regarding community survey and community education services
- 5 Discussion and possible action regarding retaining Mueller Communication for referendum services
- 6 Adjournment

Signed by Lisa Rasmussen, Council President

This Notice was posted at City Hall and sent to the Wausau Daily Herald on 10/08/2025 @ 4:15 PM. Questions regarding this agenda may be directed to the City Clerk.

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the City of Wausau will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs or activities. If you need assistance or reasonable accommodations in participating in this meeting or event due to a disability as defined under the ADA, please call the City's ADA Coordinator at (715) 261-6620 or email clerk@wausauwi.gov at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting or event to request an accommodation.

How Did We Get Here? Levy Limits



Enacted in 2006 to limit and reduce the property tax burden on Wisconsin resident



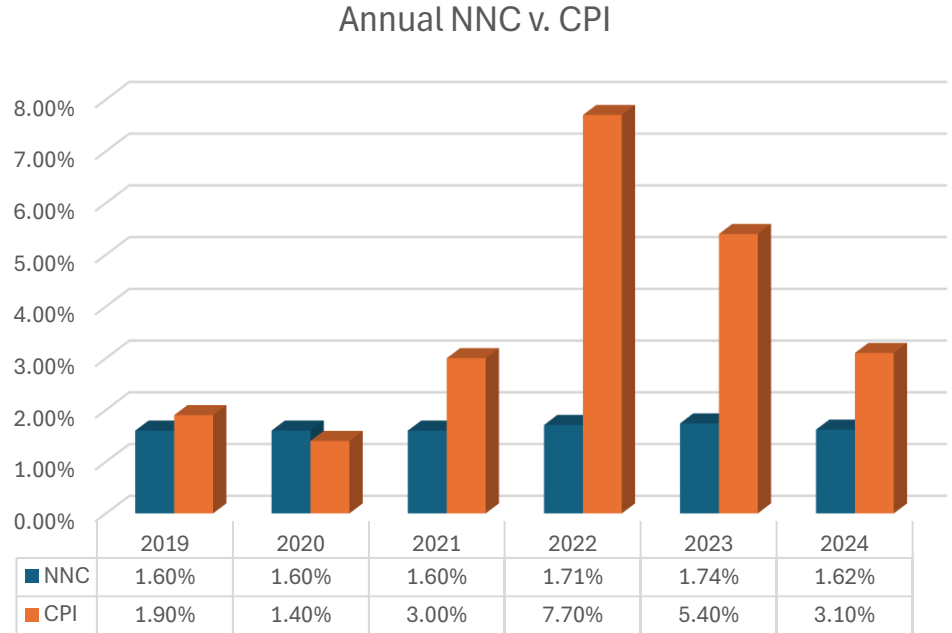
Prior year's actual levy may be increased by percentage = net new construction in previous year (or 0, if none)



Subject to various adjustments that may further reduce or increase allowable levy

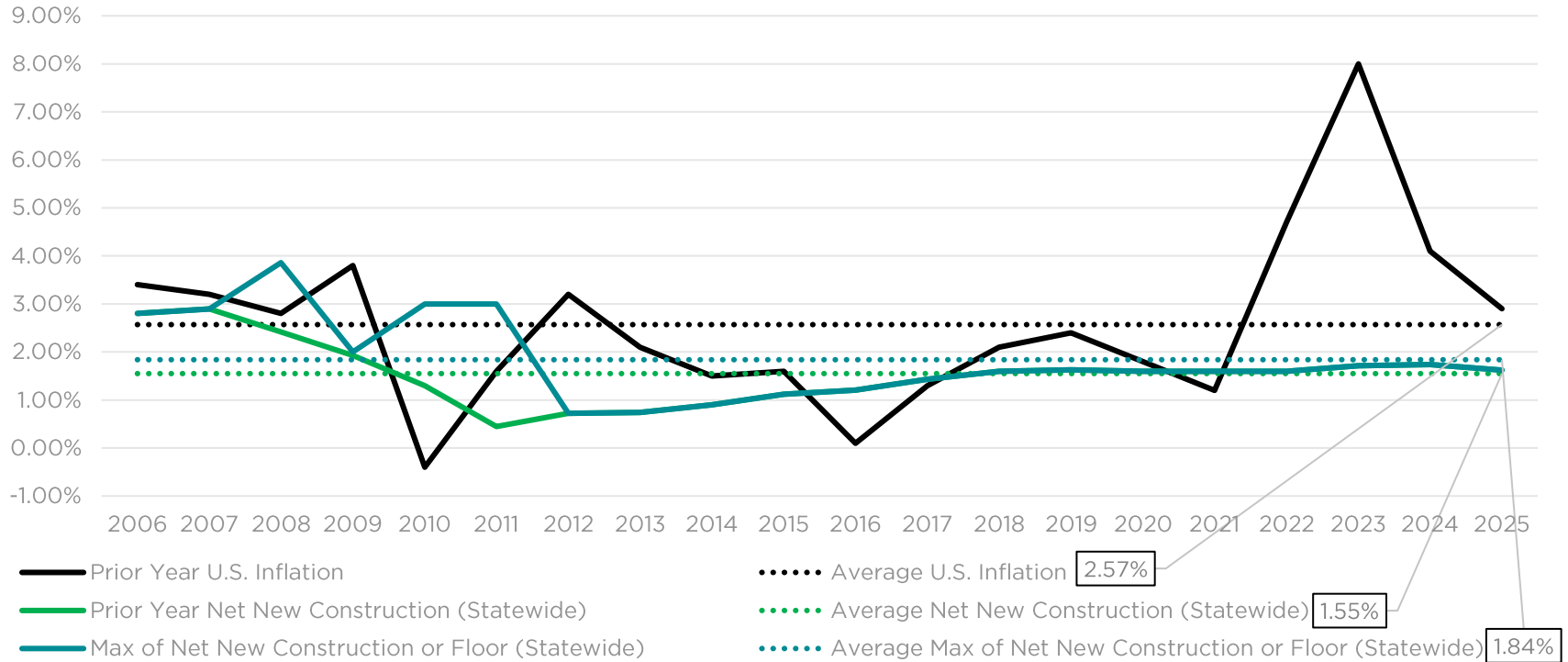
How Did We Get Here?

- Net new construction has not kept pace with inflation
 - ✓ 6-year average statewide NNC: 1.65%
 - ✓ 6-year average of CPI: 3.75%

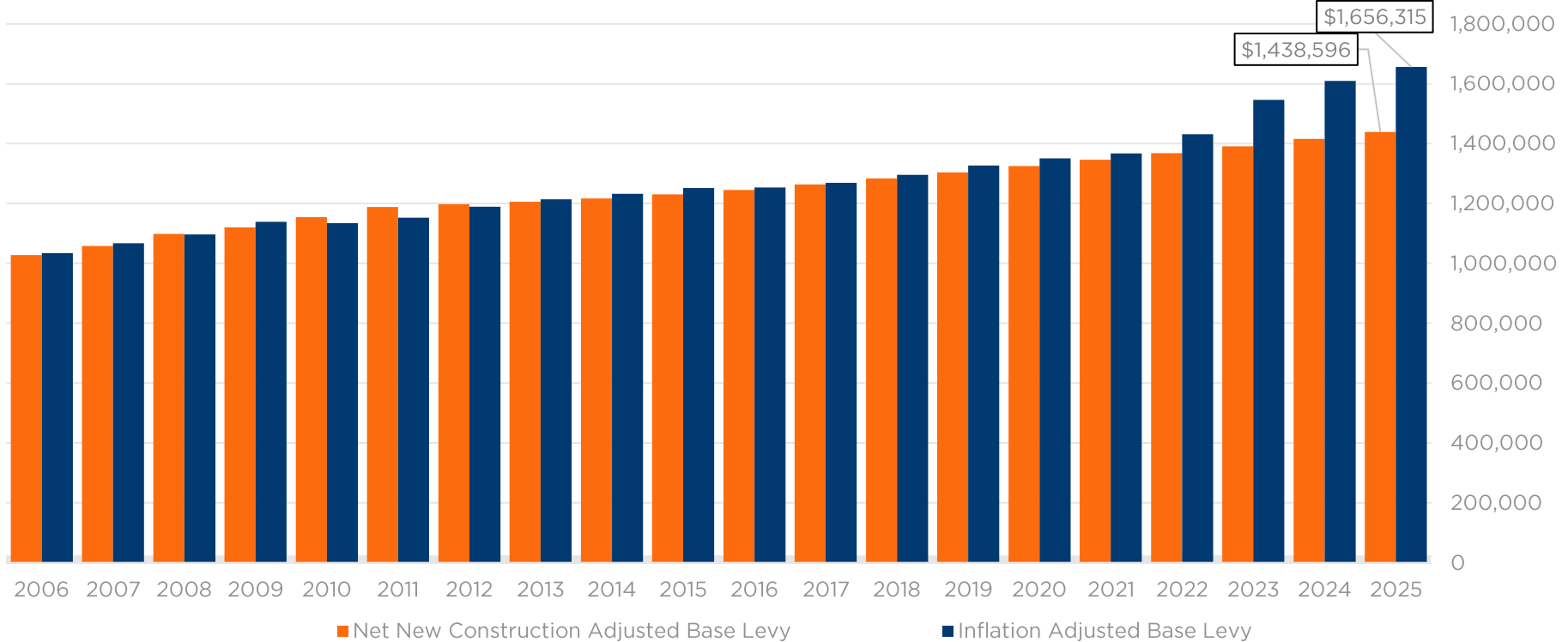


Source: WI Department of Revenue

State of Wisconsin History of Net New Construction vs. Inflation



Cumulative Growth in Levy - Net New Construction vs. Inflation (2005 Budget Year as Base Year)



Note: Levy projections based on a \$1,000,000 levy for the 2005 budget. The "Net New Construction Adjusted Base Levy" accounts for the maximum of "Net New Construction" or "Levy Limit Floor" for budget years 2006-2011

What Are My Options?

- After 20 years of levy limits many municipalities are at the end of the road on how to maintain essential services given legislative constraints
 - ✓ Act 12 provided a band-aid, but not a permanent solution
- One option before exploring a referendum is to move the Public Fire Protection from the General Fund to the Utility Bill

What Are My Options?

- Operations & Capital Funding
 - ✓ Evaluate capital budget and determine if any capital purchases/projects are being supported by property tax levy
 - ✓ Shift the funding source for capital projects to G.O. Debt and use they levy to stabilize the operational budget
 - Projects can be strategically amortized to match the life of the project/purchase
 - ✓ New G.O. Notes statutes provide greater flexibility to municipalities
- Levy Limit Referendum

Levy Limit Referendum

- Wis. Stats 66.0602(4) allows municipality to exceed its allowable levy limit by referendum
 - ✓ Governing body must adopt a resolution. Resolution must include
 - Amount of the levy increase
 - % increase over allowable levy
 - Whether the increase is for the next fiscal year only, for a set number of years, or ongoing
- The language of the ballot question is dictated by statute and must be contained in the resolution

Levy Limit Referendum: Timeline

- A municipal referendum can be held
 - ✓ In odd-numbered-years as a special election on the same dates used by a school board
 - ✓ Otherwise, must be held during the spring primary, spring election, partisan primary or general election

Levy Limit Referendum: Timeline

- Deadlines to make a 2025 ballot have already passed
 - ✓ Question must be submitted to the local filing officer at least 70 days prior to the election
 - ✓ Referendum election notices must be published

Levy Limit Milestones	Spring Primary	Spring Election	Partisan Primary	General Election*
Deadline to file question w/ Local Clerk	Dec. 9, 2025	Jan. 27, 2026	June 2, 2026	Aug. 24, 2026
Deadline to file question w/ County Clerk	Dec. 10, 2025	Jan. 28, 2026	June 3, 2026	Aug 25, 2026
Election Day	Feb. 17, 2026	April 7, 2026	Aug. 11, 2026	Nov. 2, 2026

Levy Limit Referendum: The Question

- Throughout the planning process, discuss level of detail will be included in the question to explain what increase will be used for
- Weigh need for transparency the length of the actual question, need for flexibility to redeploy parts of the increase if a position goes unfilled, etc., plus ‘voter fatigue’
- Community education is critical...voters should know what the referendum is for & impact on taxes before election day
- Share question content & calculations with DOR prior to adoption

Levy Limit Referendum: The Question

- Question language is dictated by statutes and is not necessarily reader friendly.
 - ✓ Municipality can add the financial figures, and determine the level of detail explaining the referendum, but the structure of the question must remain unchanged.

Under state law, the increase in the levy of the Village of Badger for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2026, is limited to **4.355%**, which results in a levy of **\$6,564,655**. Shall the Village of Badger be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2026, for the purpose of **funding the ongoing operations and services of the Village**, by a total of **19.803%**, which results in a levy of **\$7,864,655** and on an ongoing basis, include the increase of **\$1,300,000** for each fiscal year going forward?

MUELLER COMMUNICATIONS

CITY OF WAUSAU

PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM



ALLOW US TO

INTRODUCE OURSELVES

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

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

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



STRATEGY

AT THE CENTER OF ALL WE DO

Everyone has a story to tell and challenges to overcome. Whether you have good news to promote or a challenging situation to manage, we have the right team to be your strategic partners.

At Mueller Communications, there is no “one size fits all.” We tailor our approach to each individual client, circumstance and initiative, leveraging decades of experience in public relations, marketing, website development and creative design.

At Mueller Communications, we take a 360° approach to communications to ensure the **right message** is delivered to the **right audience** at the **right time**.





LORI RICHARDS



JAMES MADLOM



CARL MUELLER



ELIZABETH HUMMERTSCH



ANDY LEDUC



MIA TRUPI



MARY JESSEN



CASS BERGEMANN



CHRISTIE WOLFE



PHILL TREMYN



LAURA KELLER



CHRIS NELSON



AARON STERN



BEN BORDEN



TOYA WASHINGTON



JENNIFER MORTON



KAT BEST



LAUREN GEORGE



ANNA WILLKOMM



KEVIN COCCHI



KRISTA RUEHMER



TEA TETTING



JEREMY TREUDEN



JOSH ANDERSON



AUBURN GELLER



ANNA STORY



CHELSEA CROSS



ERIK BROOKS



ERIKA QUINONEZ



MADDIE KREBS



KAITLYN BROSS



NATASHA BIVINS



ERVIN KAPRI



EMILY LEDUC



MAYA FIDZIUKIEWICZ



CARA VONDERWELL



KATIE DARRAGH



APRIL GREIDER



MARGARET WEINER



MAKAYLA HARROW



AMARA ALEXANDER



EICAR ROBLEDO



HALLE HATCH



VERONICA POPE



AMELIA VENEGAS



GINNY CZARNECKI



KIRSTEN MUELLER



JORDAN WHITE

MEET TEAM MUELLER

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

RECOMMENDED APPROACH: EDUCATION CAMPAIGN



REFERENDUM EDUCATION

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 fails. Mueller will develop and refine a communications strategy, which would include the following elements:

FOUNDATIONAL MATERIALS

We will work to develop clear and concise materials that effectively communicate key information about the referendum:

- Key messages for use in ensuring consistent communication across all outreach methods;
- A fact sheet that explains the situation and the necessity 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.**



REFERENDUM EDUCATION

OUTREACH APPROACHES

We will leverage key messages and foundational materials to develop and distribute information to the community. Examples of the outreach we might recommend include:

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



REFERENDUM EDUCATION

ONLINE PRESENCE

- **Website:** We will develop content for a landing page on the City website that would serve as the hub for referendum information, including the mailers, an online FAQ and opportunities for residents to attend information sessions to learn more.
- **Social Media - Organic:** We will work with the City 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 a social media ads via Meta, pushing content out to those in the geographical boundaries of the City and ensuring that even residents who do not follow the City on social platforms see information about the referendum.
- **Email / eNewsletter / Newsletter:** We will develop content that can be used as part of regular email, eNewsletter or newsletter distributions, as appropriate.

EARNED MEDIA

To secure coverage in the local media about the referendum, we work with municipal teams to develop and distribute news releases and media pitches as appropriate. Mueller Communications will also assist with media interview coordination.

SCHEDULING AND REPORTING MILESTONES

To ensure that milestones are met throughout the process, we will create a shared timeline to track progress on deliverables and conduct weekly or bi-weekly meetings, providing email communications in between, as appropriate.



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 SAMPLE TIMELINE BASED ON AN **APRIL 2026 REFERENDUM**

QUESTION SUPPORT, PLANNING AND INFO GATHERING | OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2025

- Mueller Communications meets with City of Wausau 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 and finalize - with input from City staff - initial collateral materials including FAQs, fact sheet and drafts of news release announcing the referendum question
- **Key milestone: Deadline to approve referendum question - January 27, 2026**

COMMUNICATION EXECUTION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION | JANUARY - APRIL 2026:

- Mueller to develop content for three (3) direct mail pieces (2 full-page mailers, 1 postcard), coordinate printing and mailings
- Mueller and a videographer to script, record and produce a brief explainer video for use as a social media ad on the City of Wausau's Facebook page targeting all residents of voting age
- Mueller to conduct ongoing media outreach, as appropriate
- Mueller to develop ongoing social media content and post on channels, if 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
- **Election Day - April 7, 2026**

TIMELINE



EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ONLY

BUDGET ESTIMATE

The following is a ballpark scope for supporting referendum education efforts.

Professional Fees, Mueller Communications:

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

\$37,416

Administrative and Technical Fee:

Mueller Communications charges an administrative service & technology fee of seven and a half percent (7.5%) of the monthly professional fees to cover internal expenses incurred on client's behalf. Included in this fee is access to our full suite of media database and monitoring services, basic administrative support, in-county travel, routine printing, telecom and technology services.

\$2,806

Media Spend, Social Advertising

\$1,500

Third-party Cost Estimates (Printing, Mailing)

Estimate to mail and print three (3) separate, full-color direct mailers to all households (approx. 18,774).

\$35,957

Budget:

\$77,679

We will work with you to refine our scope of work and budget to best meet the needs of your community.

**These third-party costs are projections as of October 2025 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.*



ADDITIONAL APPROACH: SURVEY & EDUCATION CAMPAIGN



KEY PARTNERS

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

To support a successful survey effort that produces reliable insights into community preferences and likely election outcomes, Mueller Communications has partnered with [Community Perceptions](#) to conduct community surveys in numerous public education campaigns. The team at Community Perceptions is a key, trusted partner with significant experience.

Community Perceptions is a Wisconsin-based, independent research firm that works with municipalities, school districts, regional service agencies, as well as state and national organizations to help their leaders gather, organize and use data to make strategic decisions.

The process begins with the mailing of a paper survey to all households. A cover letter explains the nature of the survey and encourages the respondent to participate either online or on paper. Proprietary software generates a one-time-use access code, which ensures no one can take the survey more than once. The paper survey can be completed and mailed back for data entry. Once the survey process is completed, Community Perceptions will analyze and present the results.

OVERVIEW

As national leaders in survey research, Community Perceptions helps public and private schools and municipalities and state-level organizations **gather and analyze data to plan, improve and make strategic decisions.**



COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

KEY TEAM MEMBERS



BILL FOSTER

Bill Foster is the President of Community Perceptions. Bill graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville with dual degrees in engineering and business administration. Early in his career, he served the Kelch Corporation as Vice President and General Manager.



DR. ROB DEMEUSE

Vice President of Research Dr. Rob DeMeuse will work with you to develop and deploy your community survey. A proud product of rural Wisconsin, Rob earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, where he researched a combination of school finance, school referendums and statistics. Prior to graduate school, Rob was a high school social studies teacher in Evansville and a healthcare software trainer at Epic.



SCOTT GIRARD

Scott Girard is a Project Manager. He will work with you to develop and deploy your community survey. Scott graduated from the University of Wisconsin with degrees in journalism and political science before becoming a professional reporter in the Madison area, where he wrote about municipal governments and school districts.



BEV ZUKOWSKI

Beverly Zukowski is a Project Implementation Manager and works with you to coordinate survey administration. Beverly pursued a degree in early childhood education and earned an administrative credential. Beverly's most recent work experience was at the Slinger School District as an administrative assistant and open enrollment coordinator.



SURVEY APPROACH

To assist the City of Wausau in surveying its residents about preferred methods of funding the Wausau Public Library, including whether there is community support for an operational referendum, **Mueller Communications will partner with the trusted team at Community Perceptions** to engage all households in the City.

In any referendum or potential referendum process, robust public education and engagement is critical. For this reason, Mueller Communications and Community Perceptions **do not advocate random sampling** (a process that, by definition, excludes most members of the community). Instead, we recommend a **specialized process to educate residents about the needs and challenges and secure their input.**

As part of the initial **survey planning** process, Mueller and Community Perceptions will engage with City staff for a background discussion and to review information that can serve as the foundation for a successful survey, including by:

- Understanding the **project goals and community needs;**
- Analyzing financial data and reports and defining the **funding options that would be tested** through a community survey; and
- Identifying **likely questions or concerns residents may have** about the situation and each option.



SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

With clear goals and options defined, survey development begins. That survey will:

- Be **mailed to every household** in the City of Wausau;
- Include a **cover letter** explaining the challenge and need for a funding solution;
- **Provide context** explaining the impact of each funding solution;
- Encourage respondents to **participate online** by using a **unique survey access code** that ensures no one can take the survey more than once;
- Enable those who prefer to do so or who are without internet access to **complete the survey on paper** and return it by mail;
- Include questions that secure survey respondent feedback on **various funding solutions and/or funding levels**; and
- Determine what additional materials or information would **support the respondent in understanding or supporting the plan**.

Final results, including a comprehensive analysis, can guide the City's course of action and can shed light on community preference for various funding options.

TIMING

To inform the referendum question, Community Perceptions would recommend a survey being printed **in early November, so results could be analyzed by December.**



SURVEY COMMUNICATION

To increase awareness about the survey and its eventual results, Mueller Communications will:

- Develop a **standby statement and inquiry guide** for City elected officials and staff to use if asked about the survey prior to its distribution;
- Develop **key messages and FAQs** about the survey and survey process;
- Outline **website content**;
- Draft **media outreach materials** and engage local reporters; and
- Develop a **social media content calendar**, drafting copy, designing social media graphics and supporting with posting, as needed.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

While surveys will be mailed to each household in the City, it will be helpful to remind residents to complete the survey through various outreach approaches.



REFERENDUM EDUCATION

Timeline: 12-16 weeks

If officials decide to move forward with a referendum, 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 fails. Mueller will develop and refine a communications strategy, which would include the following elements:

FOUNDATIONAL MATERIALS

We will work to develop clear and concise materials that effectively communicate key information about the referendum:

- Key messages for use in ensuring consistent communication across all outreach methods;
- A fact sheet that explains the situation and the necessity 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.**



REFERENDUM EDUCATION

OUTREACH APPROACHES

We will leverage key messages and foundational materials to develop and distribute information to the community. Examples of the outreach we might recommend include:

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



REFERENDUM EDUCATION

ONLINE PRESENCE

- **Website:** We will develop content for a landing page on the City website that would serve as the hub for referendum information, including the mailers, an online FAQ and opportunities for residents to attend information sessions to learn more.
- **Social Media - Organic:** We will work with the City 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 a social media ads via Meta, pushing content out to those in the geographical boundaries of the City and ensuring that even residents who do not follow the City on social platforms see information about the referendum.
- **Email / eNewsletter / Newsletter:** We will develop content that can be used as part of regular email, eNewsletter or newsletter distributions, as appropriate.

EARNED MEDIA

To secure coverage in the local media about the referendum, we work with municipal teams to develop and distribute news releases and media pitches as appropriate. Mueller Communications will also assist with media interview coordination.

SCHEDULING AND REPORTING MILESTONES

To ensure that milestones are met throughout the process, we will create a shared timeline to track progress on deliverables and conduct weekly or bi-weekly meetings, providing email communications in between, as appropriate.



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 SAMPLE TIMELINE BASED ON AN **APRIL 2026 REFERENDUM**

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT | OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2025

- Initial planning meeting with City, Mueller and Community Perceptions to align on approach, project goals and community needs
- City provides all existing materials / data to Mueller and Community Perceptions
- Mueller and Community Perceptions review relevant studies and data, requesting additional information as necessary
- Survey draft is developed for review by City
- Survey copy and design developed and finalized
- Addresses for all households in the municipality provided to survey vendor
- Communications materials developed to promote survey, including news release, website copy, social media copy and graphics
- Survey distributed, responses collected and analyzed
- Survey results presented to the municipality, members of the public and the media

TIMELINE



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 SAMPLE TIMELINE BASED ON AN **APRIL 2026 REFERENDUM**

COMMUNICATION EXECUTION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION | DECEMBER - APRIL 2026:

- Mueller to finalize communications plan
- Mueller to develop, refine and finalize key messages that will serve as the foundation for all future collateral
- Mueller to draft, design and finalize - with input from City staff - initial collateral materials including FAQs, fact sheet and drafts of news release announcing the referendum question
 - **Key milestone: Deadline to approve referendum question - January 27, 2026**
- Mueller to develop content for three (3) direct mail pieces (2 full-page mailers, 1 postcard), coordinate printing and mailings
- Mueller (in partnership with City of Wausau videographer) to script a brief explainer video for use as a social media ad on the City of Wausau's Facebook page targeting all residents of voting age
- Mueller to conduct ongoing media outreach, as appropriate
- Mueller to develop ongoing social media content and post on channels, 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
- **Election Day - April 7, 2026**

TIMELINE



EDUCATION CAMPAIGN & COMMUNITY SURVEY BUDGET ESTIMATE

COMMUNITY SURVEY & COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

Professional Fees, Mueller Communications:

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

\$11,115

Administrative and Technical Fee:

Mueller Communications charges an administrative service and technology fee of seven and a half percent (7.5%) of the monthly professional fees to cover internal expenses incurred on client's behalf. Included in this fee is access to our full suite of media database and monitoring services, basic administrative support, in-county travel, routine printing, telecom and technology services.

\$834

Survey Fees & Expenses, Third-Party**:

Professional fees for third-party service provider, estimate to print and mail a four-page, full-color community survey to all households in the City of Wausau (approx. 18,774 households)

\$45,918

- Professional Fees Estimate (survey vendor):
- Printing/Mailing Estimate:
- Paper Survey Data Entry, Postage:

\$14,200

\$28,677

\$3,041

Surveys that are mailed in require manual entry. The survey company charges \$1.80 / survey. The estimate is based on 9% of households completing their survey in hard copy.

REFERENDUM EDUCATION*

Professional Fees, Mueller Communications:

\$32,156

Administrative and Technical Fee:

\$2,412

Third Party Cost Estimates, Printing & Mailing**

Estimate to print and mail three (3) full-color direct mailers to all households in the City of Wausau (approx. 18,774 households)

\$35,956

Media Spend:

\$1,500

TOTAL BUDGET:

\$129,891

We will work with you to refine our scope of work and budget to best meet the needs of your community.

**This estimated Referendum Education budget will be finalized based on specific needs if the City opts to place a referendum on the ballot.*

***These third-party costs are projections as of October 2025 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.*



VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

Christopher M. Botsch

Chief of Police

262.835.4423

cbotsch@caledonia-wi.gov

VILLAGE OF RICHFIELD

Jim Healy

Village Administrator

262.628.2260

administrator@richfieldwi.gov

CITY OF CEDARBURG

Mikko Hilvo

City Administrator

262.375.7917

mhilvo@cityofcedarburg.wi.gov

CITY OF FOND DU LAC

Joe Moore

City Manager

920.322.3407

jmoore@fdl.wi.gov

OUR REFERENCES



CASE STUDIES

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE



CASE STUDY

VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

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

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

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

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

VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

VOTE APRIL 4 2023

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

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

WHY REFERENDUM?

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

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

Decreasing staffing levels and an increase in calls for service would be difficult for the Caledonia Fire Department to provide a consistent, high quality response.

Federal grant dollars the Department relies on to fund staffing will expire in March 2023, further straining response capabilities.

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

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "YES"

+6 ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDICS

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

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

IF A MAJORITY VOTE "NO"

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

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

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

PROPERTY TAX IMPACT

\$1,761,000 TOTAL INCREASE

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

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

For mailed absentee ballots: March 30, 2023

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

For more information, please visit caledonia.wi.gov/referendum or email referendum@caledonia-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.

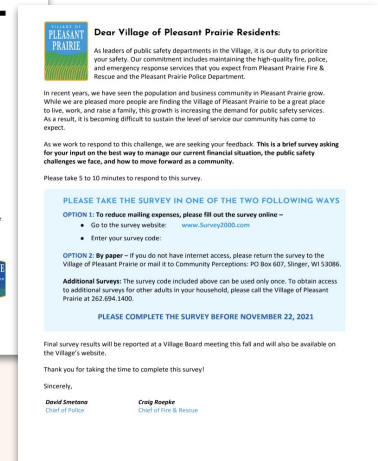
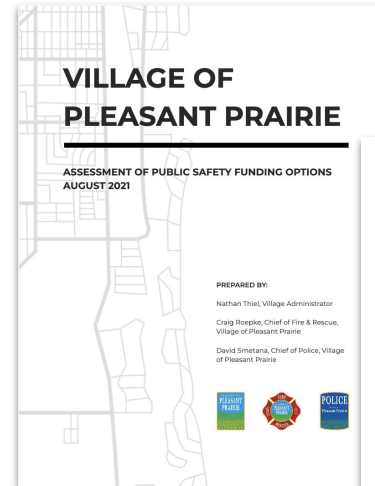
Once the need for additional public safety funding was identified, the Village of Pleasant Prairie engaged Mueller Communications as a strategic partner to develop a **comprehensive options assessment** and facilitate the creation, distribution and reporting of a **community survey** - with the understanding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

Mueller Communications' 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

VILLAGE OF RICHFIELD

For the past 125 years, members of the nonprofit Richfield Volunteer Fire Company (RVFC) provided emergency medical and fire services to the Village of Richfield. **In April 2024, they voted to officially dissolve the organization.** To avoid the loss of fire protection and emergency medical services and to improve police services throughout the community, the Village of Richfield sought to establish a municipal Fire Department, hire staff to replace the recently-dissolved nonprofit RVFC, and dedicate an additional full-time Deputy Sheriff to provide service to the Village.

Voters were asked via referendum whether or not they'd support an **increase in the property tax levy by \$1.25 million to fund those public safety investments.**

To educate voters about this need, Mueller led a strategic public education campaign and produced a range of collateral including **key messages, a fact sheet, FAQs, website content, social media content and direct mail pieces.** Collateral materials were shared with residents during farmers markets, evening sporting events at local recreation facilities, and even at the grocery store.

In partnership with Village staff, Mueller established a series of well-attended **public information meetings** that provided opportunities for residents to learn more and ask key questions. Mueller also facilitated an **informational video** featuring the Village Administrator and President of the RVFC explaining the need for a municipal Fire Department.

In August 2024, **Richfield residents voted to approve an increase in the property tax levy**, ensuring the Village can provide continued, high-quality fire protection and emergency medical services and reliable public safety services.



CASE STUDY

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

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

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

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

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

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

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT FACES CHALLENGES. REVIEW THE REPORT!

AMERICA VOTES 2024
FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNDING REFERENDUM
CEDARBURG

Public safety referendum h...

CEDARBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT PUBLIC SAFETY REFERENDUM

+8
ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTER-PARAMEDICS

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

ADJUST THE FIRE CHIEF POSITION TO A FULL-TIME ROLE



CASE STUDY

CITY OF MONONA

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

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

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

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



CASE STUDY

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 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 \$66,644 to maintain current paramedic services and hire two additional police officers. The special election will be held on Tuesday, November 7. If approved by voters, homeowners would pay an additional \$52 per year for every \$100,000 of their home's value starting in 2018 and beyond.

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

Under state law, the increase in the levy of the City of South Milwaukee for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year, 2018, is limited to .09%, which results in a levy of \$10,744,142. Shall the City of South Milwaukee be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2018, by a total of 5.73% which results in a levy of \$11,350,095?



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

WHY ARE WE PROPOSING THIS REFERENDUM NOW?

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

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

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

VOTE NOVEMBER 7



CONTINUED

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 Town of Buchanan.

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 Town of Buchanan, 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 Village of Germantown Intergovernmental Agreement Referendum. The top piece is a red and white flyer with the Village of Germantown logo and the title "INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT REFERENDUM". It features the text "VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022" and explains that the Village Board has placed a referendum question on the ballot for the November 8, 2022 election. It states that voters will decide if the Village should enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Village of Richfield to provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee to customers in a portion of Richfield located between Interstate 41, Holy Hill Road, Highway 175 and Pleasant Hill Road. The flyer also notes that 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.

The bottom piece is a red and white flyer with the title "RICHFIELD SEWER AND WATER AGREEMENT REFERENDUM". It features a map of the Northeast Corridor and Germantown Light Industrial Park. The text explains that an IGA between the Villages would govern the sale and operation of services. The IGA ensures that the Village of Richfield bears all costs for the expansion of services to customers in Richfield, pays a 20% premium for sewer service and requires Richfield to construct infrastructure in accordance with Germantown specifications. It also states that the Village of Richfield is seeking to attract development to the Northeast Corridor, potentially including warehousing and light industrial. Future developments would require access to municipal water and sanitary sewer service.

Both flyers include a "QUESTION ON THE BALLOT" section. The formal resolution that will appear on the November 8 ballot is: "Shall the Village of Germantown provide water and sanitary sewer service on an ongoing basis to customers in a portion of the Village of Richfield pursuant to an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Village of Richfield and the Village of Germantown?"

The bottom flyer also includes a "IF A MAJORITY VOTE 'YES'" section, which states: "A 'yes' vote would result in the execution of the negotiated Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) so that Germantown would provide water and sanitary sewer service for a fee and on an ongoing basis to customers in the 'Northeast Corridor' of the Village of Richfield."



CASE STUDY

TOWN OF YORKVILLE

With economic development projects changing the landscape in Racine County, the Town of Yorkville recognized its unique position and opportunity to attract additional development.

In anticipation of this possibility, **the Town sought to protect resident interests by incorporating and updating the Town's comprehensive plan. This measure required a referendum.**

To educate the community about these processes and the benefits Yorkville may see if they proceed, the Town hired Mueller Communications to **provide communications counsel and produce informational materials.** These efforts included drafting and designing materials, including a fact sheet outlining the incorporation process, the referendum, and its impact on municipal governance, creating a presentation and facilitating a public information meeting, and coordinating media interviews regarding the incorporation process.

Voters in Yorkville favored incorporating the Town by a wide margin, with 95% of the population voting in favor (1,060 voting “yes” and only 54 voting “no.”)



City of Wausau

Fall 2025 Community Survey Timeline

Date	Task
Week of October 6	Kickoff meeting/develop overall project strategy
October	Secure the printer and mailing list
Rest of October	Core team reviews the timeline and survey framework
October 28	City Council reviews survey <i>(if necessary)</i>
Early November	Finalize Survey and send to outside proofer
November 10	Send survey to printer
(Plan for three weeks)	Print/mail survey
Week of December 1	Survey lands in mailboxes* <i>(date approximate; see below)</i>
December 22	Survey deadline
(Plan for three weeks)	Community Perceptions creates reports
January 13, 2026	Survey results presentation for the City Council
January 2026	Council decision: go or no go
By January 27, 2026	Council approves resolution <i>(if needed)</i>
April 2026	Referendum <i>(if pursued)</i>

*Please note that we cannot control the printer's production schedule nor the delivery schedule of the U.S. Post Office, so we cannot guarantee delivery of the survey on a specific day.