



OFFICIAL NOTICE & AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING

MEETING: Committee of the Whole
DATE/TIME: Monday, November 3, 2025 at 5:15 PM
LOCATION: Wausau City Hall – Council Chambers
407 Grant Street, Wausau WI, 54403

MEMBERS:
Carol Lukens Lisa Rasmussen
Micheal Martens Sarah Watson
Terry Kilian Vicki Tierney
Tom Neal Lou Larson
Aaron Griner Chad Henke
Becky McElhaney Doug Diny

1 Call to order by the presiding officer.

2 Reading of the City of Wausau Public Comment Statement.

3 Comments and suggestions from preregistered citizens.

(Any person wishing to offer public comment on items unrelated to items appearing on the agenda must pre-register by providing a name and address in writing to the City Clerk's Office or chair of a standing committee. Public comments must be limited to items on the agenda if not pre-registered.)

4 Presentations

Fire Chief Jeremy Kopp on the Contributing Factors and Considerations on Maintaining Current Staffing within the Wausau Fire Department.

Staff from Mueller Communications on their Updated Referendum Education Proposal.

5 Discussion and possible action.

Approving Asking a Referendum Question on the April 7, 2026, Spring Election Ballot to Retain 12 Firefighters.

Approving the Retention of Mueller Communications for Referendum Services.

6 Adjournment

Lisa Rasmussen, Council President

**NOTICE POSTED AT CITY HALL (407 GRANT STREET) AND
TRANSMITTED TO THE OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED NEWSPAPER**

DATE: 10/28/2025
TIME: 10:15pm
POSTED BY: City Clerk



This meeting can be viewed on
YouTube and Channel 981 on Cable TV

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (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 ADA Coordinator at (715) 261-6622 or ADAServices@ci.wausau.wi.us to discuss your accessibility needs. We ask your request be provided a minimum of 72 hours before the scheduled event or meeting. If a request is made less than 72 hours before the event the City of Wausau will make a good faith effort to accommodate your request.



City of Wausau
(715) 261-6500 | clerk@wausauwi.gov
wausauwi.gov



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND CONSIDERATIONS

on Maintaining Current Staffing within the
Wausau Fire Department



WHY A REFERENDUM?

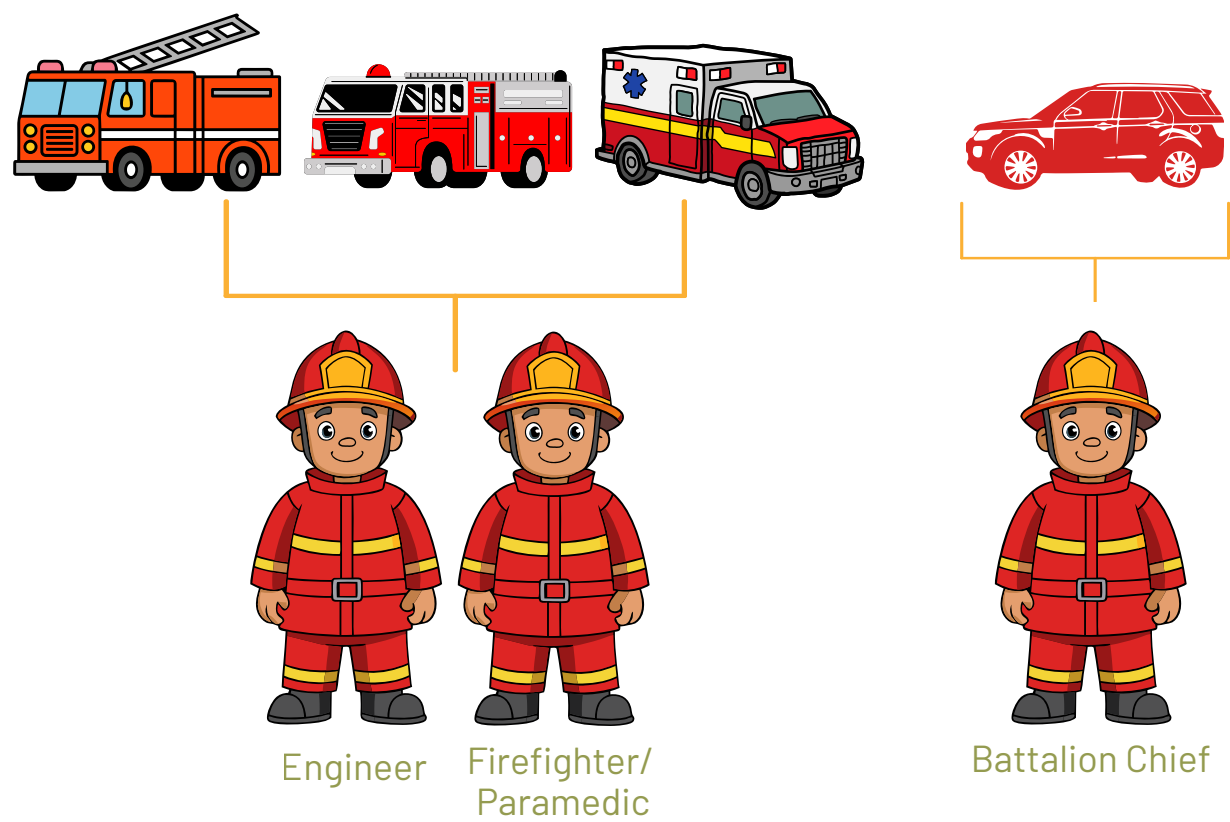
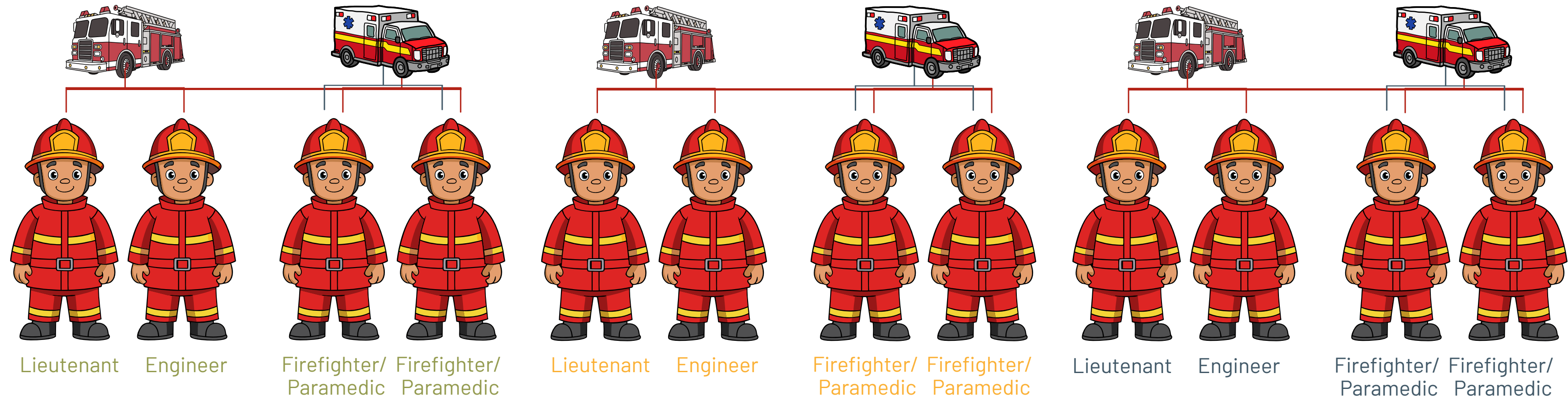


Staffing Model Without Additional 12 Firefighters

Station 1

Station 2

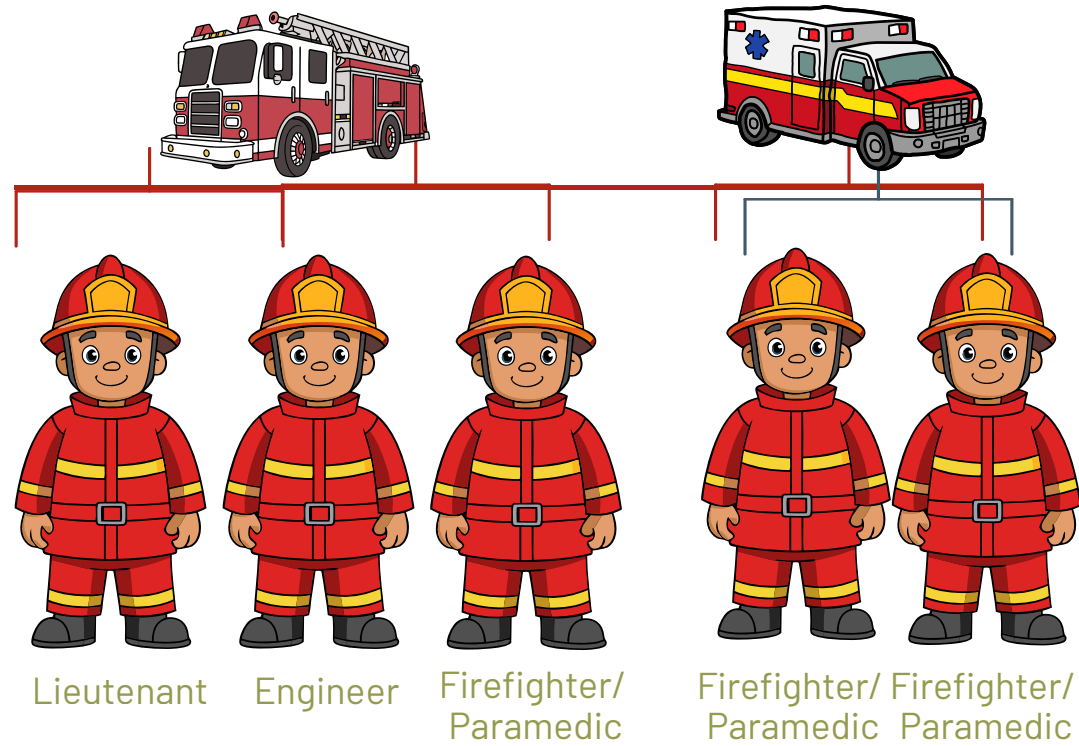
Station 3



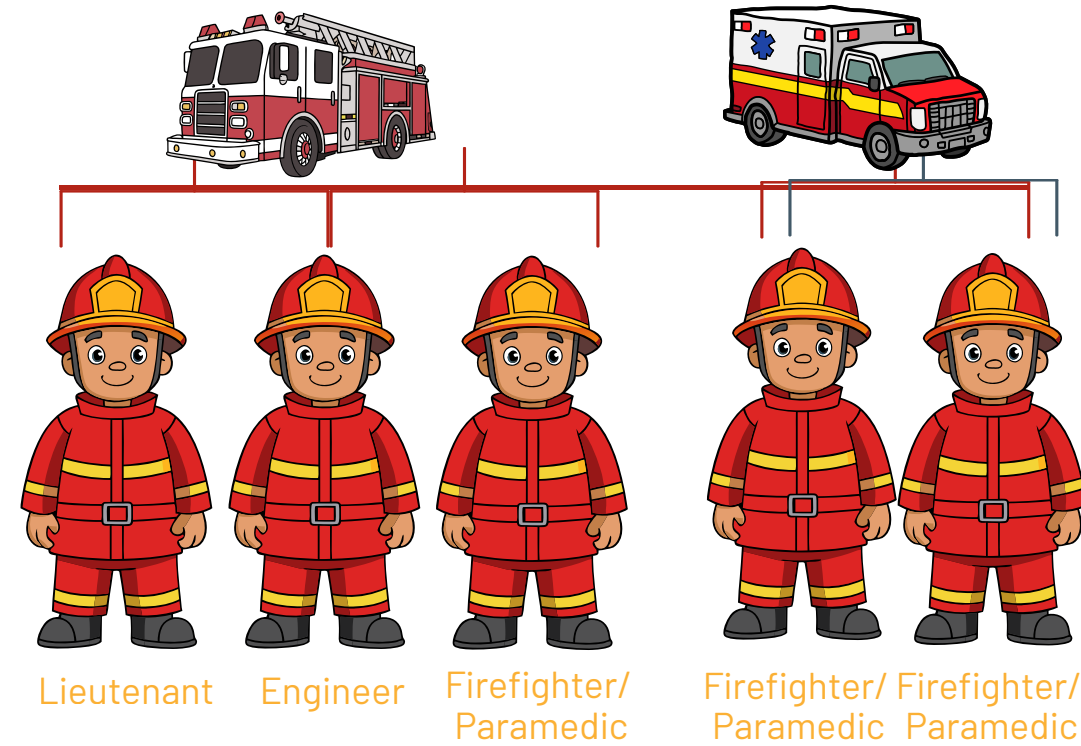
43% of the time, 1 or more ambulance was engaged in a medical call to date in 2025. This quickly overwhelms the department's capacity to respond appropriately.

Minimum Staffing Model With Additional 12 Firefighters

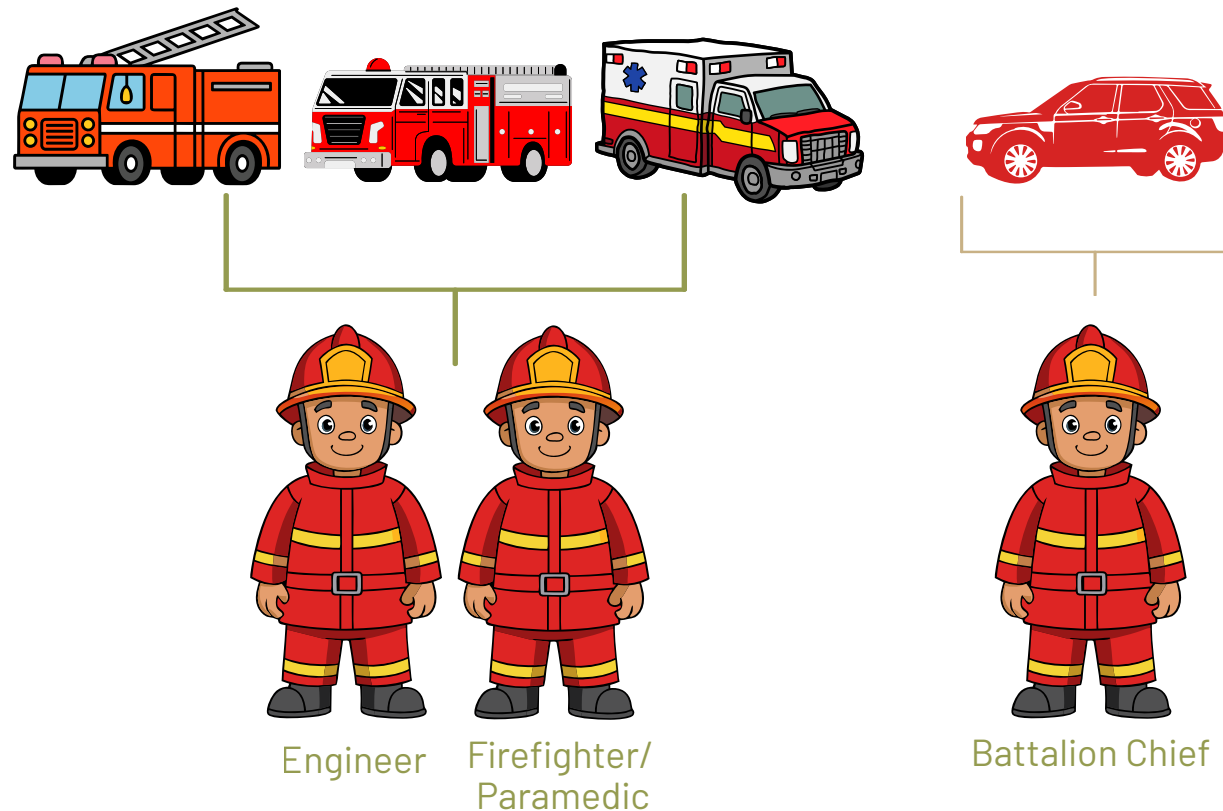
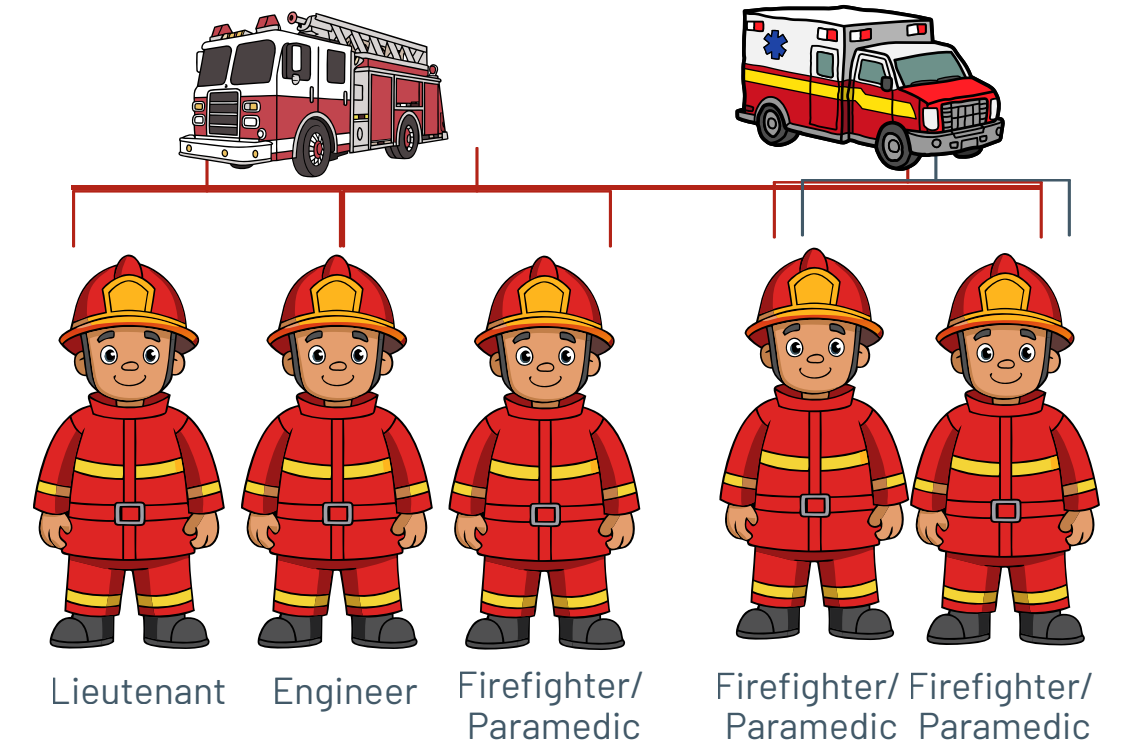
Station 1



Station 2

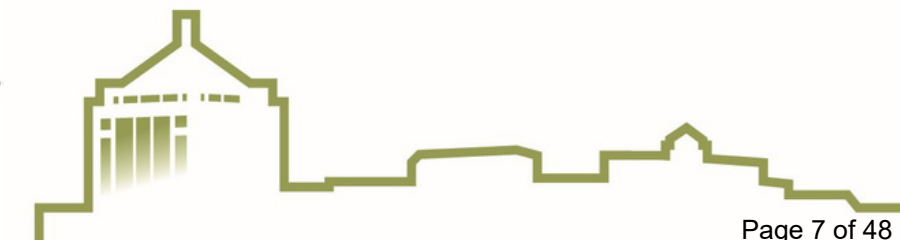
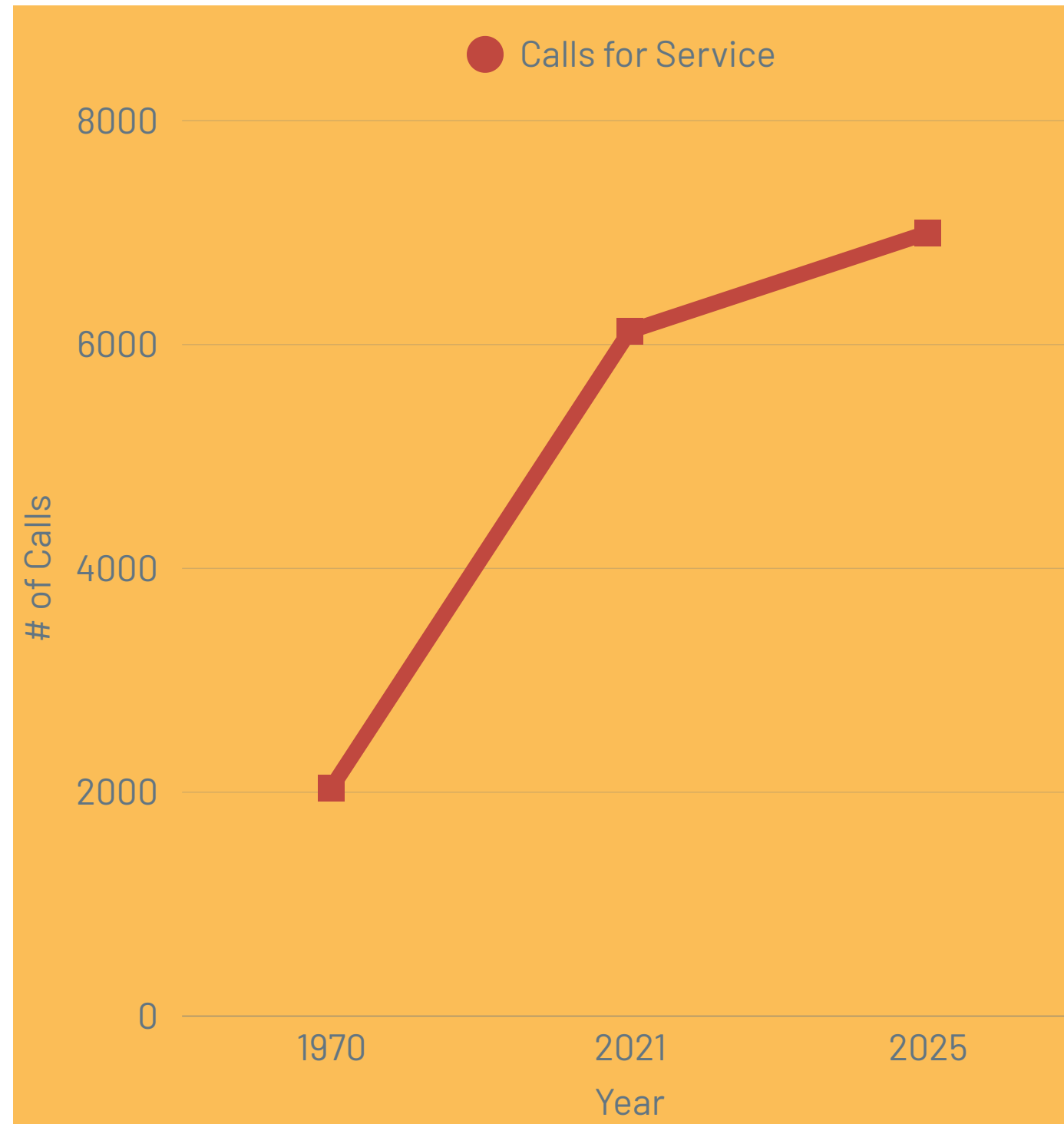
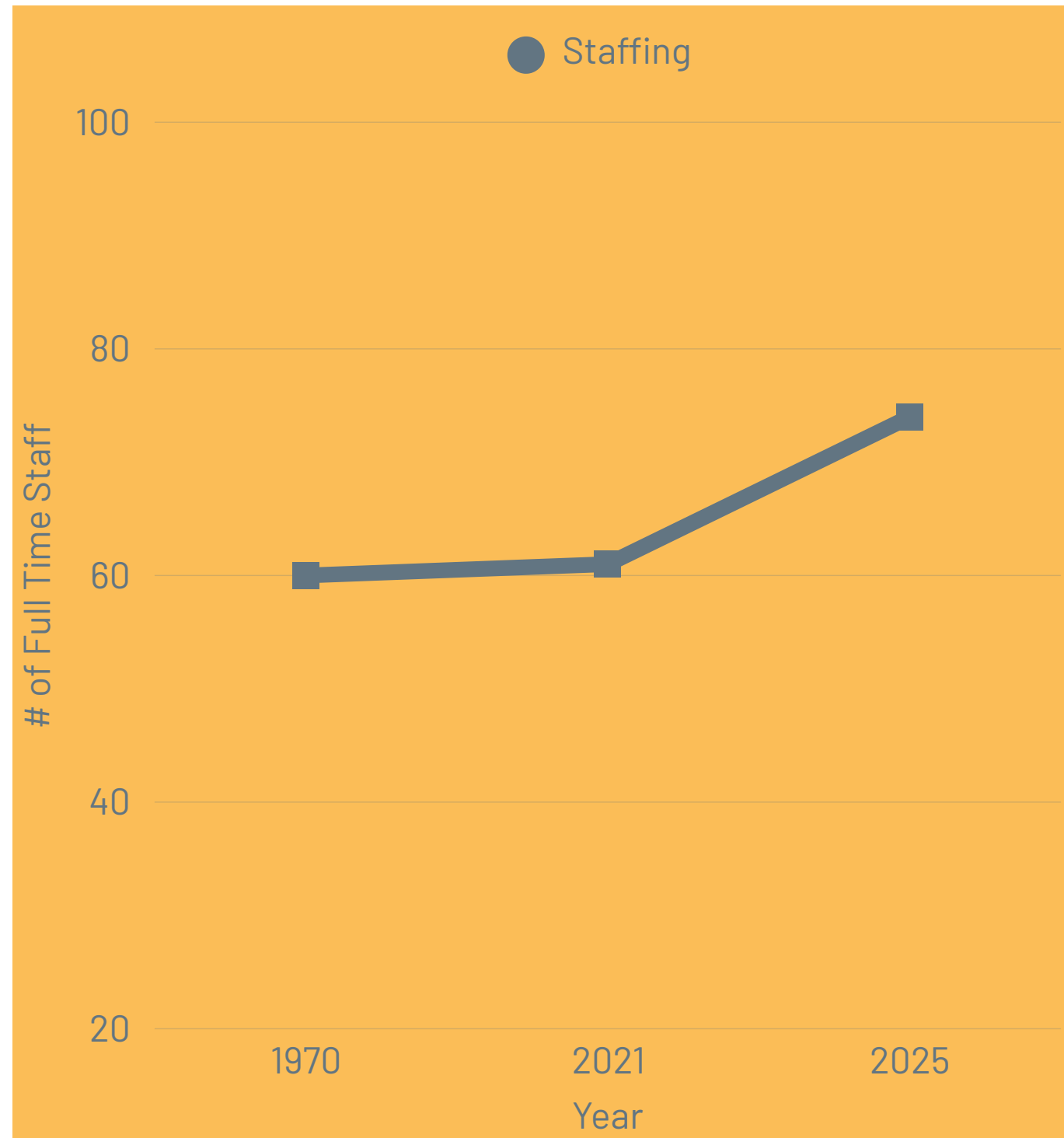


Station 3



An **engine with 3 personnel** allows the lieutenant and firefighter/ paramedic to initiate an immediate interior attack without waiting for another engine to arrive -- saving precious minutes.

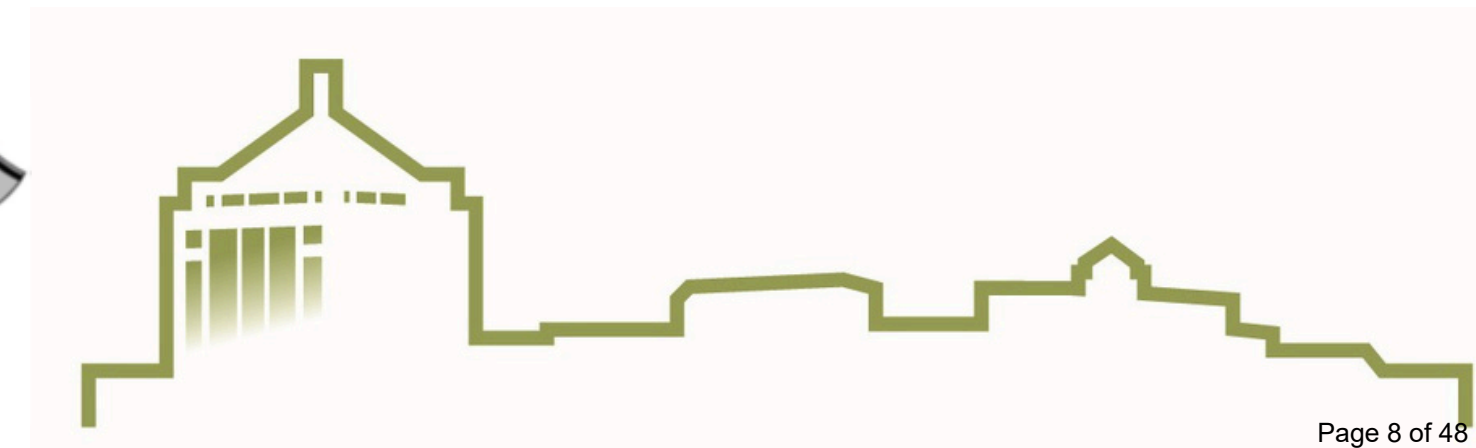
Wausau Fire Staffing & Calls for Service





City of Wausau Invested Over **\$177,000** since 2021 in the Additional Firefighter/ Paramedic Positions for

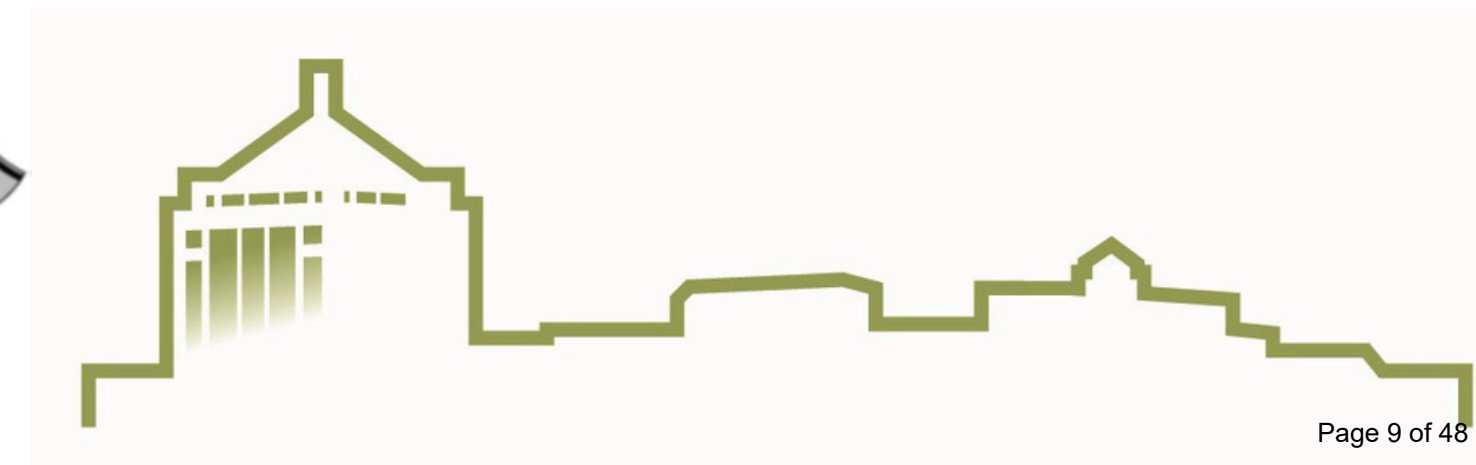
- Supplies (Radios, lockers, clothing)
- Tuition & Books



WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures

Caledonia, April 2023

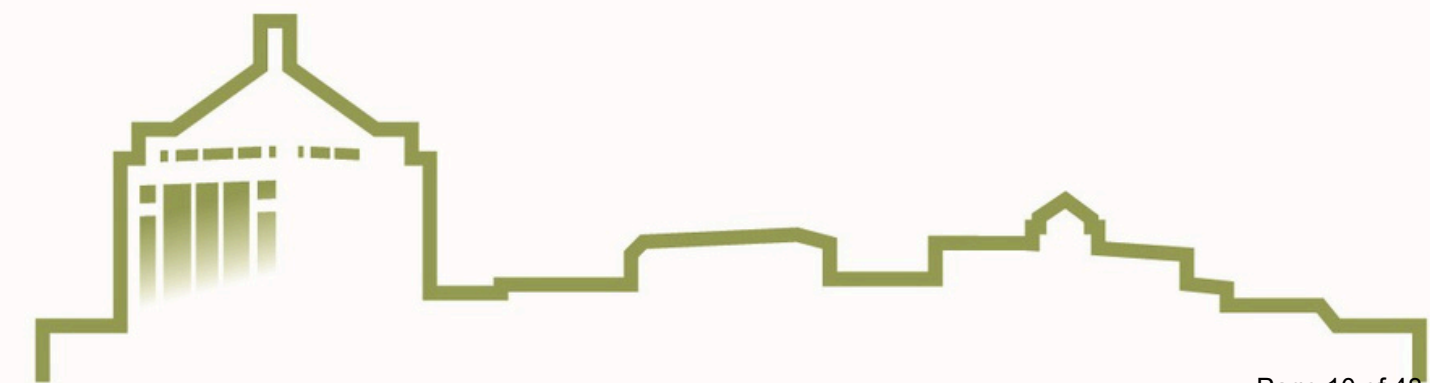
- Public Safety Referendum to exceed levy limit by \$1.7 million
- Added six firefighters and eight police officers
- Passed by 400 votes – 4,812 to 4412



WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures

Germantown, April 2024

- Shall the Village of Germantown be allowed to exceed this limit and increase the levy for the next fiscal year, 2025, and on an ongoing basis, for the purpose of hiring four (4) new police officers and ten (10) new firefighter-paramedics, by a total of 8.941%, which results in a levy of \$17,661,634?"
- Added 4 Police and 10 firefighters
- Passed 62% - 48%

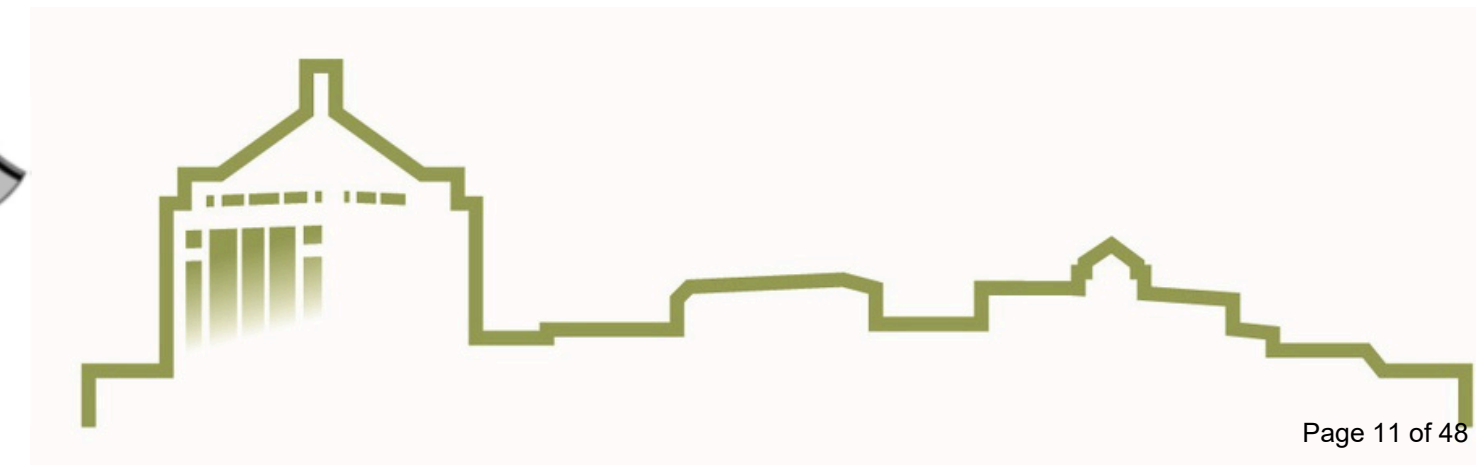


WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures



Portage, February 2024

- Referendum to start EMS service and add 14 firefighter/paramedics
- Increase levy limit by \$1.48 million
- **Passed 71% - 28%**

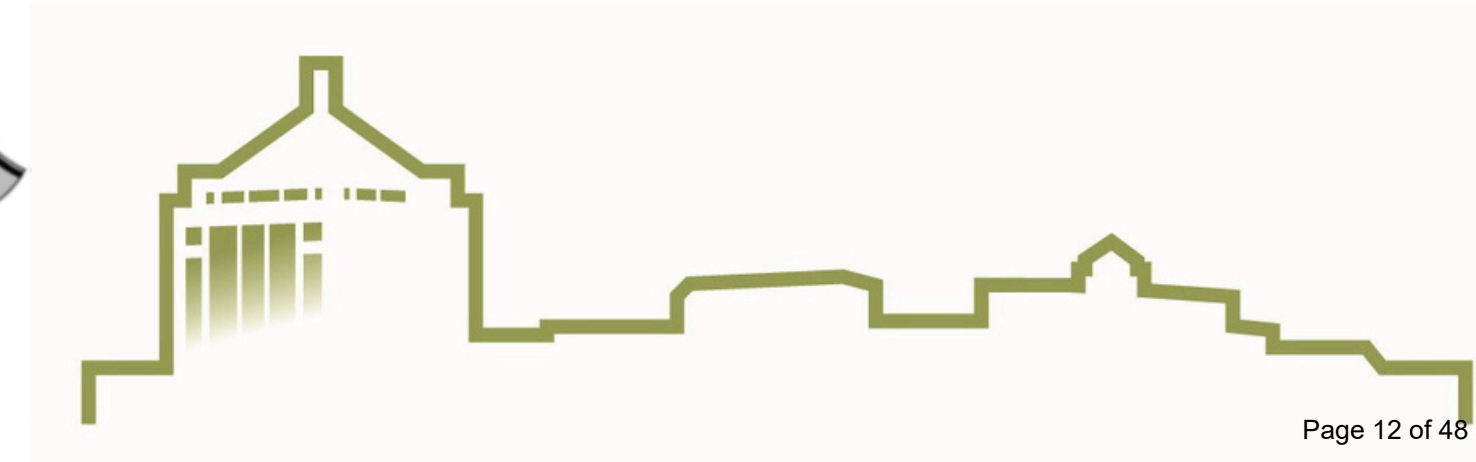


WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures



Stevens Point, November 2024

- Referendum to add 9 firefighters
- First staffing increase since 1982
- \$975,000 levy limit increase
- The projected levy amount per \$1,000 of assessed value was \$8.87, a 9.7% increase, meaning the owner of a \$250,000 home will pay \$2,217.50 in property taxes for city services in 2025.
- **Passed 56% - 43%**

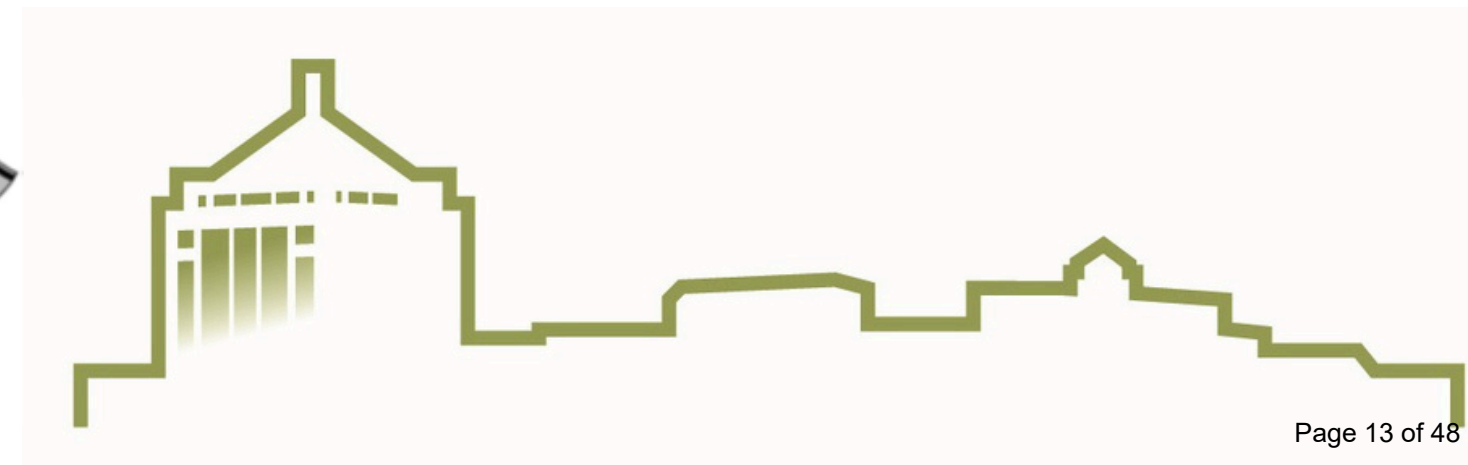


WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures



Monona, November 2024

- Increase levy limit by \$3 million, one time
- General operating budget increase to maintain services and provide wage increases
- Passed by 32 votes

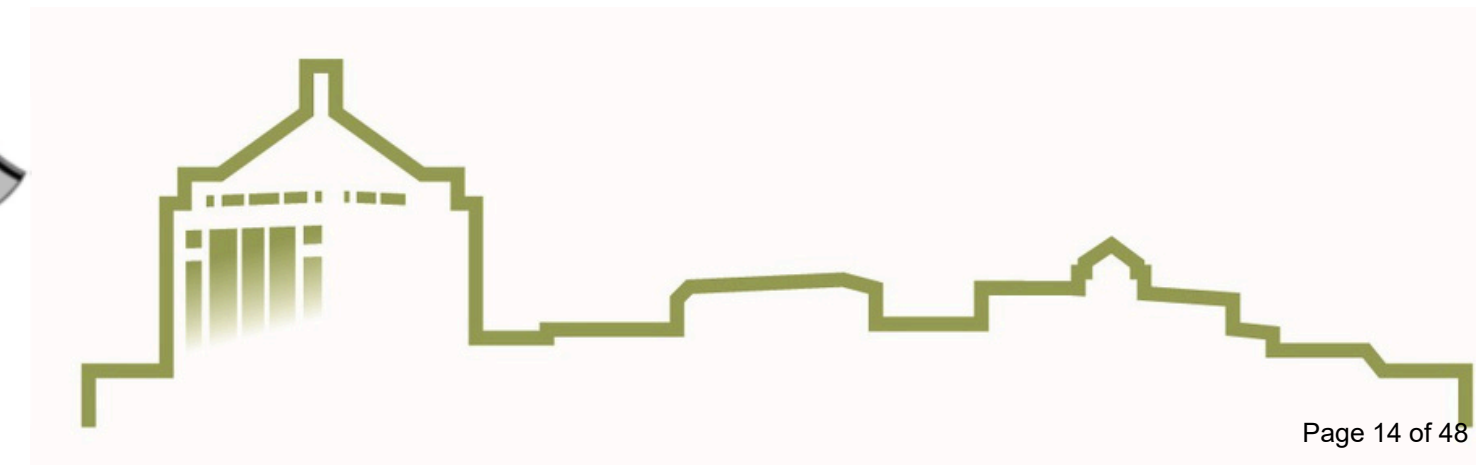


WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures



Fitchburg, November 2024

- General operating budget referendum to exceed levy limit by \$3.5 million
- Would have funded 5 police officers, 6 firefighters, as well as a communications specialist, HR generalist and a finance manager, and added funding to the transportation budget
- **Failed 47% - 53%**

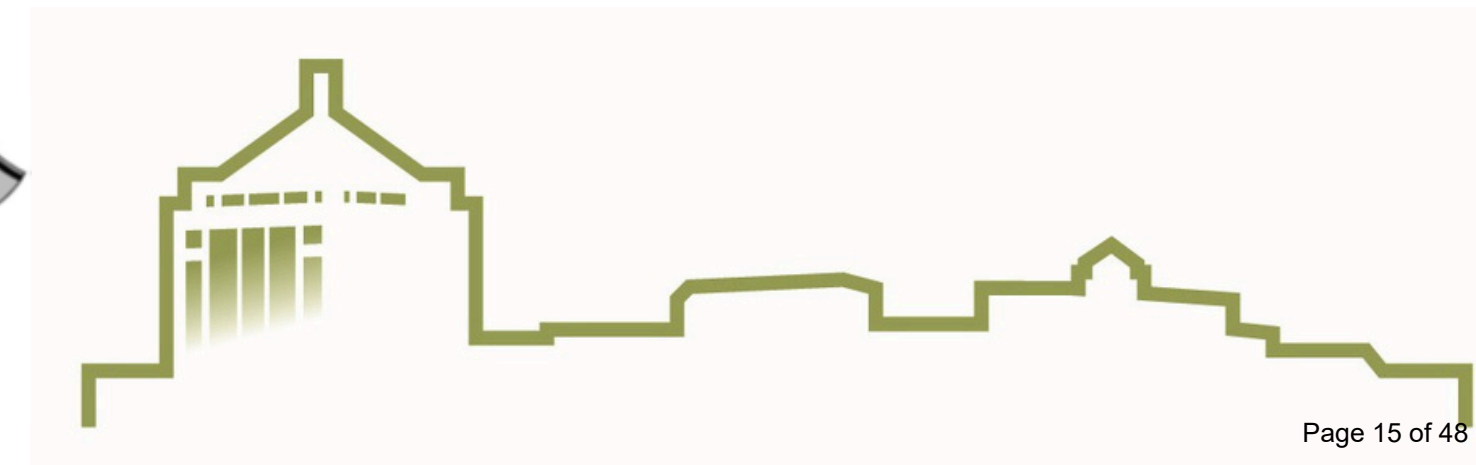


WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures

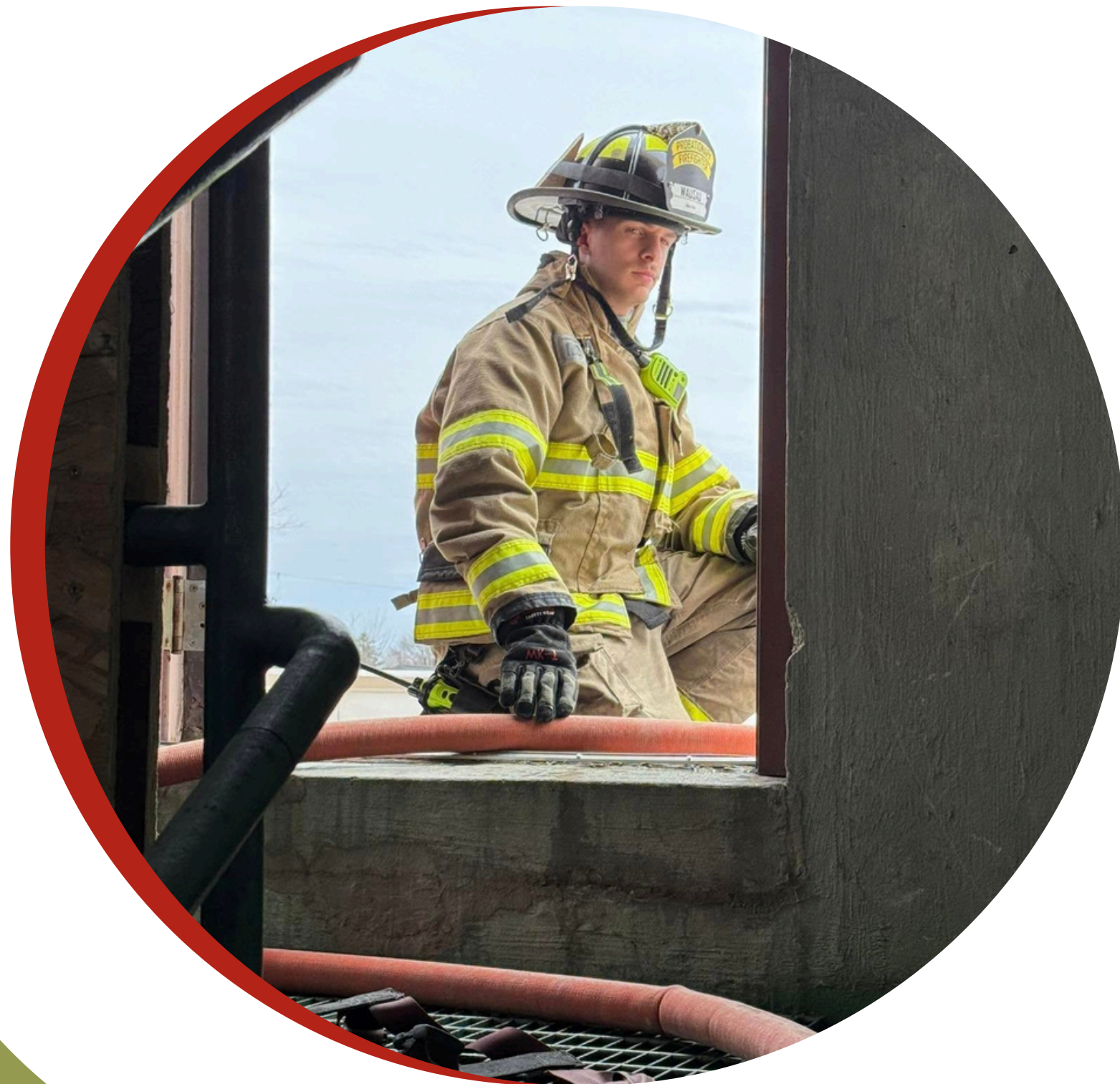


Racine, April 2025

- \$1.5 million levy increase
- Property tax increase of \$31 per \$100,000
- Provided funding to maintain staffing paid for by SAFER Grant
- Passed 59% - 41%

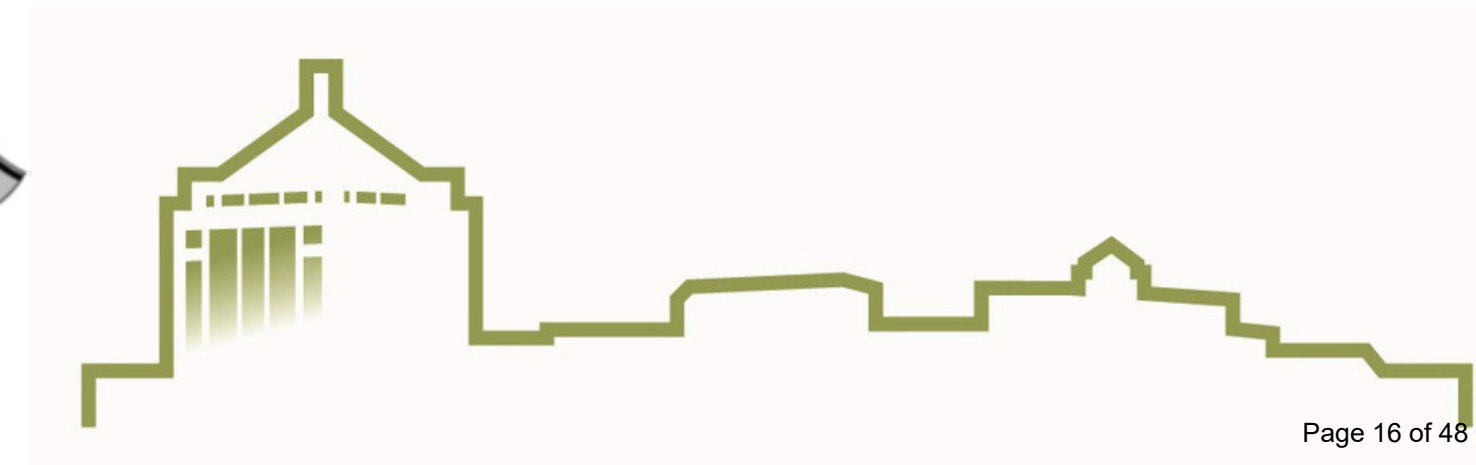


WI Municipal Referendum Successes & Failures



Whitewater, April 2025

- \$1.3 million levy increase
- Police and Fire
- Passed 54% - 46%



Thank You





Wausau Fire Department

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Doug Diny, Mayor

Jeremy Kopp, Fire Chief

Purpose:

To inform the Common Council of contributing factors and considerations causing critical staffing shortages within the Wausau Fire Department.

Facts and Considerations:

The Wausau Fire Department was established in 1869. Over the first 100 years of the Department's existence, the Department steadily grew in staffing, apparatus, and stations to meet the growing community's needs. Unfortunately, that steady growth ended in 1970, and the Department has stagnated in staffing, apparatus, and infrastructure while at the same time continuing to grow in responsibility, skill sets, and programs delivered to meet community needs.

In 1970 the Wausau Fire Department had 60 full-time firefighters. Today (2021), 51 years later, the Department has 61 full-time sworn firefighters/paramedics and one administrative assistant for a total of 62. As of 2025, with 3 long years of creative recruitment, we have finally reached our goal of 74 full-time employees with 6 apprentices who will be testing next month to receive their paramedic license. In 1970 the Department responded to 2038 calls for service. In 2020 the Department responded to 6120 calls for service, at the end of 2025 we are on pace to respond to just over 7000 calls. This represents a 2% growth in staffing levels despite a 200% growth in call volume over the 51 years. In addition, the Fire Department's responsibilities have drastically increased to encompass Paramedic Level EMS, Hazardous Materials Emergency Response, Water/Ice Rescue, a large variety of Technical Rescue disciplines, progressive Fire Prevention/Code Enforcement, and a community care paramedic. The Department is drastically different in size of responsibility and scope of work than it was in 1970.

Below is a chart detailing the small amount of staffing increase versus the large increase in call volume from 1970 to 2025.

To meet current call volume demands, the Department uses a hybrid cross-staffing system of response units. During low-volume periods, the cross-staffing system can meet the demand for a small number of low acuity calls. However, when the Department receives multiple concurrent requests or a single high acuity call, the cross-staffing system leaves the Department understaffed and ill-prepared to meet the community's needs. This forces the Department to either stack calls, leaving community members waiting for their emergency response, or lean on mutual aid from surrounding fire and EMS agencies.

Cross-staffing is a term used to describe when personnel are shared between multiple response units. The Department cross-staffs all three engines, ladder truck, rescue truck, and the fourth out ambulance. Paramedics staff the ambulances while simultaneously acting as the firefighters on the engine companies. Example: Station Two is staffed by four firefighters each shift. The lieutenant and



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engineer are assigned to Engine 2, and two firefighter/paramedics are assigned to Med 2. When a fire call comes in for Station Two's district, both Engine 2 and Med 2 respond to form a four-person company. The problem with cross-staffing occurs when the ambulance is engaged in a medical call leaving the engine with only two firefighters to mitigate the incident.

The drastic rise in medical calls leaves at least one or more of the City's ambulances, 43% of the day engaged in a call. We are finally prepared to respond with 3 people per engine January of 2026.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has also contributed and has stretched the Department's resources and further exacerbated staffing problems. For safety, Wausau Paramedics are now wearing more levels of PPE and must spend a longer time decontaminating ambulances between patients.

During high call volume times, this can delay responses.

Discussion:

Increasing call volume and stagnant staff levels directly correlate to the survivability of individuals in the community experiencing a fire or medical emergency. The problem has reached critical levels within the Wausau Fire Department and is a direct threat to public safety.

The U.S. Fire Service uses three ways to measure performance. 1) Resource Reliability, 2) Department Capacity, and 3) Operational Effectiveness.

- 1) Resource Reliability of the Wausau Fire Department has long exceeded benchmarks used for evaluating the availability of adequately staffed Engine Companies. For example, in 2025, greater than 43% of the time, one or more of the Department's ambulances were engaged in a medical call which leaves the correlating engine company without firefighters. This is due to the Department using a cross-staffed configuration that utilizes the two firefighter/paramedics from the City's three ambulances to serve as the Engine company firefighters. As a result, the Department frequently has engines arriving with only a Lieutenant and Engineer and no firefighters. This problem is exacerbated in the City's outer regions where Engine Two may have to wait for other fire station crews to arrive before gaining the number of firefighters needed to begin fire ground operations.
- 2) The Department's current staffing allows for effective management of low volumes of minor acuity incidents. However, when faced with multiple simultaneous calls or a single high-acuity emergency, our capacity is quickly overwhelmed. The addition of four firefighter/paramedics to each crew (A, B, and C) will drastically improve our ability to respond to concurrent incidents, strengthening both fire suppression and EMS operations. This also affords us the coverage needed to handle vacations without using overtime.



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The increased staffing enables engine companies to manage most incidents without immediately requiring additional resources, improving overall system efficiency and coverage. This enhanced capacity will ensure that when multiple emergencies occur, our crews can respond rapidly and effectively—without compromising safety or service quality.

Most critically, an engine company with three personnel allows the lieutenant and firefighter/paramedic to initiate an **immediate interior attack** upon the arrival of the second-due engine. This creates two teams of two firefighters, enabling life-saving interior operations to begin without delay. Under old staffing, crews must wait for additional engines to arrive before assembling a safe and compliant interior team precious minutes during which lives and property may be lost.

By increasing staffing levels, the Department not only enhances operational effectiveness but also safeguards our personnel and the community we serve. The ability to act decisively and immediately upon arrival can mean the difference between containing a fire or losing an entire structure and more importantly, between life and death.

The Operational Effectiveness of two firefighter engine companies has been thoroughly researched and proven to be less effective than three and four firefighter companies. In 2010 the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) conducted a research study on the effectiveness of firefighting operations as related to staffing.

“The fire modeling showed clearly that two-person crews cannot complete essential fireground tasks in time to rescue occupants without subjecting either firefighters or occupants to an increasingly hazardous atmosphere. Even for a slow-growth rate fire, the fractional effective dose (FED) was approaching the level at which sensitive populations, such as children and the elderly are threatened. For a medium-growth rate fire with two-person crews, the FED was far above that threshold and approached the level affecting the median sensitivity in general population. For a fast-growth rate fire, the FED was well above the median level at which 50 % of the general population would be incapacitated. Larger crews responding to slow-growth rate fires can rescue most occupants prior to incapacitation along with early-arriving larger crews responding to medium-growth rate fires. The result for late-arriving (two minutes later than early arriving) larger crews may result in a threat to sensitive populations for medium-growth rate fires.” The new sentence is consistent with our previous description for two-person crews where we identify a threat to sensitive populations” (NIST 2010 page 52)



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Outside a research study like NIST performs, it is challenging to quantify operational effectiveness into evidence-based data. We compared the WFD to the NIST 2010 studies as a practical benchmark and found mixed results based on concurrent call volume. With the WFD using cross-staffed firefighter/paramedics between the ambulance and the engine company, the response depends on if the ambulance crew is available when a fire call comes in. If the ambulance is in the station or district, they can meet the two firefighters assigned to the engine and form a four-person entry team.

Benchmark Analysis:

Community leaders and Fire Chiefs have many tools at their disposal for measuring their community's fire department against national standards and benchmarks to help them make decisions. Benchmarks used for comparison and analysis are National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) standards, the Insurance Service Office (ISO), and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

In a publication by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) that analyzed Fire Service Deployment:

“Interior firefighting operations cannot be conducted without an adequate number of qualified firefighters operating in companies under the supervision of company officers. It is recommended that the minimum acceptable fire company staffing level should be four members responding on or arriving with each engine and each ladder company responding to any type of fire. The minimum acceptable staffing level for companies responding to high-risk areas should be five members responding or arriving with each engine company and six members responding or arriving with each ladder company. These recommendations are based on experience derived from actual fires and in-depth fire simulations and are the result of critical and objective evaluation of fire company effectiveness. These studies indicate significant reductions in performance and safety where crews have fewer members than the above recommendations. Overall, five member crews were found to provide a more coordinated approach for search and rescue and fire-suppression tasks. During actual emergencies, the effectiveness of companies can become critical to the safety and health of firefighters.

Potentially fatal work environments can be created very rapidly in many fire situations. The training and skills of companies can make a difference in the need for additional personnel and in reducing the exposure to safety and health risks” (NFPA. 2013, p.48).



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NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments specifies the number of on-duty fire suppression personnel sufficient to carry out the necessary firefighting task operations given expected firefighting conditions in various hazard level occupancies. Though 1710 specifically addresses low hazard environments, it also mentions medium and high hazard levels as well. Relevant excerpts from the 1710 Standard:

5.2.2.2.1 The fire department shall identify minimum company staffing levels as necessary to meet the deployment criteria required in

5.2.4 To ensure that a sufficient number of members are assigned, on duty, and available to safely and effectively respond with each company.

5.2.3 Operating Units. Fire company staffing requirements shall be based on minimum levels necessary for safe, effective, and efficient emergency operations.

5.2.3.1 Fire companies whose primary functions are to pump and deliver water and perform basic firefighting at fires, including search and rescue, shall be known as engine companies.

5.2.3.1.1 These companies shall be staffed with a minimum of four on-duty personnel.

5.2.3.1.2 In jurisdictions with tactical hazards, high-hazard occupancies, high incident frequencies, geographical restrictions, or other pertinent factors identified by the AHJ, these companies shall be staffed with a minimum of five or six on-duty members.



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The chart below maps out the NFPA 1710 standard in comparison to the staffing levels of the Wausau Fire Department

Fire, EMS, and Rescue Apparatus	Wausau FD Minimum Staffing	Wausau FD Desired Staffing	NFPA 1710 Low-Risk Recommendation	NFPA 1710 High-Risk Recommendation
Station One				
Car Two - Battalion Chief	1	1	1	1
Engine One	2	3	4	5
Med One	2	2	2	2
Truck One	Cross Staffed with a crew of 2	Cross Staffed with a crew of 2	4	5
Rescue One			2	2
Med 5 (fourth out Med Unit)			No specific recommendation	No specific recommendation
Boat			No specific recommendation	No specific recommendation
Station Two				
Engine Two	2	3	4	5
Med Two	2	2	2	2
HazMat Unit	On-Call, no assigned staffing	On-Call, no assigned staffing	No specific recommendation	No specific recommendation
Station Three				
Engine Three	2	3	4	5
Med Three	2	2	2	2
TOTAL:	15	18	25	29

ISO

In 2015 the WFD was evaluated by the Insurance Services Office (ISO). ISO collects and evaluates information from communities in the United States on their structure fire suppression capabilities. The information derived from the evaluation is then compared to the ISO Fire Suppression Rating Schedule and then assigned the Department was given a Public Protection Classification (PPC) 2 rating. The PPC is then used by insurance companies for marketing and underwriting and to help establish fair premiums for homeowners and commercial fire insurance.

The Wausau Fire Department received a PPC of 2 out of 10, with 1 being the highest rating achievable. The Department's goal is to reach an ISO 1 status, but with current staffing shortfalls and aging infra-structure, that rating is unachievable. The Department expects to have another site visit from ISO in the spring of 2024 in which we barely stayed at a 2 level.



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An ISO 1 rating would provide the highest cost savings to every homeowner, business owner, and industry in the form of reduced insurance costs. Below is the summary of the Department's last ISO review. Note line 571 Credit for Company Personnel.

2015 Insurance Service Office Review Wausau Fire Department Report

Internal Comparable:

In 1970 the Wausau Fire Department had grown to 60 members. Three crews with 19 staff members assigned two fire inspectors and the Fire Chief for 60 members. 2021, 52 years later, the WFD has only grown to 61 sworn members and one administrative assistant. This equals a 3.3% increase in staffing while call volume has increased by 200.3%. In addition, the responsibilities of the Department have drastically increased. Late in the year 2025 we reached a level of 74 members, finally giving us the option to respond more effectively and efficiently in 2026. This is also making our members much safer in the heat of an emergency.

In comparison, in 1970, the Wausau Police Department had a staff of 55. Over the last 50 years, the police department has grown by 43% and has a staff of 79 (2021).

Impact:

The estimated annual average 2027 payroll and benefit costs of the existing 12 firefighter/paramedics funded by the SAFER and ARPA grant is \$120,451. The total cost for 12 staff in 2027 is projected at \$1,445,412.

2027 Estimated Cost of Firefighter/Paramedic	
Item	Cost
Payroll & Benefits 1 FTE	\$120,451
Total for Twelve Firefighters (2027) =	\$1,445,412

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Fire Chief
Wausau Fire Department



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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-OPTION 1

BUDGET ESTIMATE

The following is the initial scope provided on Oct. 9 for supporting referendum education efforts, including three mailers and a comprehensive media spend.

Professional Fees, Mueller Communications:

\$37,416

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

Administrative and Technical Fee:

\$2,806

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.

Media Spend, Social Advertising

\$1,500

Third-party Cost Estimates (Printing, Mailing)

\$35,957

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

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.*



EDUCATION CAMPAIGN - OPTION 2

BUDGET ESTIMATE

The following budget is a second option for supporting referendum education efforts with two mailers and a reduced media spend. This was scoped following the Oct. 9 City Council meeting based on additional conversations with City staff regarding needed support based on internal capacity.

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

\$1,000

Third-party Cost Estimates (Printing, Mailing)

Estimate to mail and print two (2) separate direct mailers (one full-page, one half-page) to all households (approx. 18,774).

\$23,604

Budget:

\$64,826

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.*



VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

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CITY OF CEDARBURG

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CITY OF FOND DU LAC

Joe Moore

City Manager

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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 low due 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 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 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 firefighters/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	\$5.30

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.

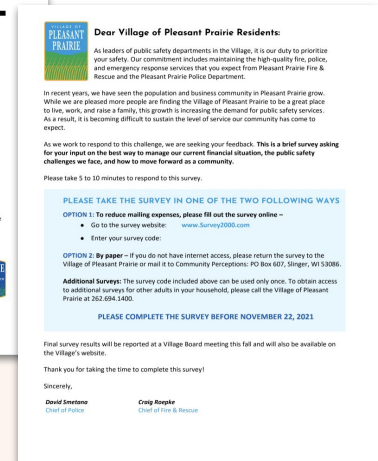
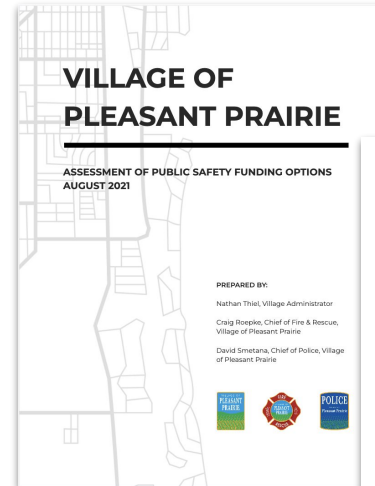
Once the need for additional public safety funding was identified, the Village of Pleasant Prairie engaged Mueller Communications as a strategic partner to develop a **comprehensive options assessment** and facilitate the creation, distribution and reporting of a **community survey** - with the understanding 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

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 faced budget challenges just maintaining existing services.

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

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

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



CASE STUDY

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

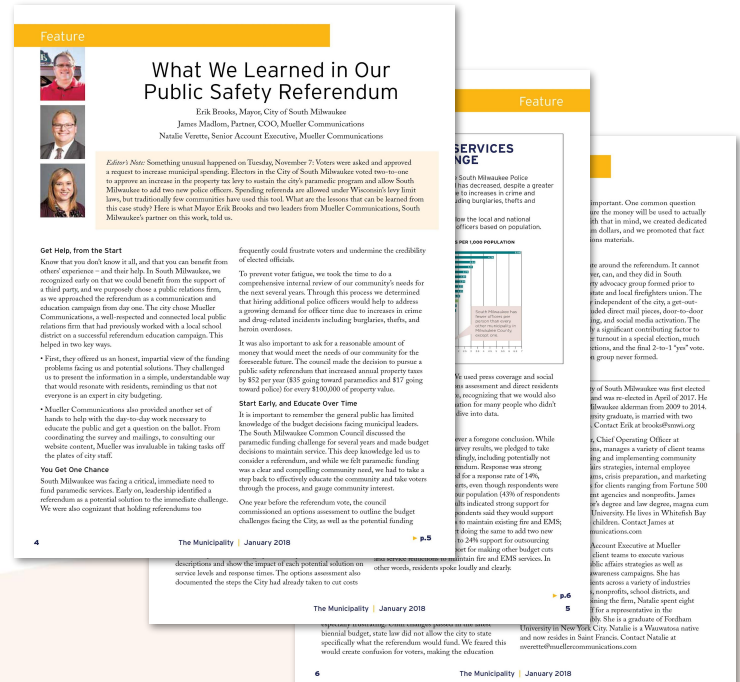


CASE STUDY

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, CONT.

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."](#)



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 from the Village of Germantown. The top piece is a red and white flyer titled "INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT REFERENDUM". It features the Village of Germantown logo and the text "VOTE TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022". The flyer explains that the Village Board has placed a referendum question on the ballot for the November 8, 2022 election, asking voters to 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. It also states that the IGA would govern the sale and operation of services, with Richfield bearing all costs for expansion and a 20% premium for sewer service. A map shows the Northeast Corridor and Germantown Light Industrial Park. The bottom piece is a red and white flyer titled "RICHFIELD SEWER AND WATER AGREEMENT REFERENDUM". It features a thumbs up icon and the text "IF A MAJORITY VOTE 'YES'". It explains that 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. It also lists three key points: "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". Both flyers include the Village of Germantown logo at the bottom.



CASE STUDY

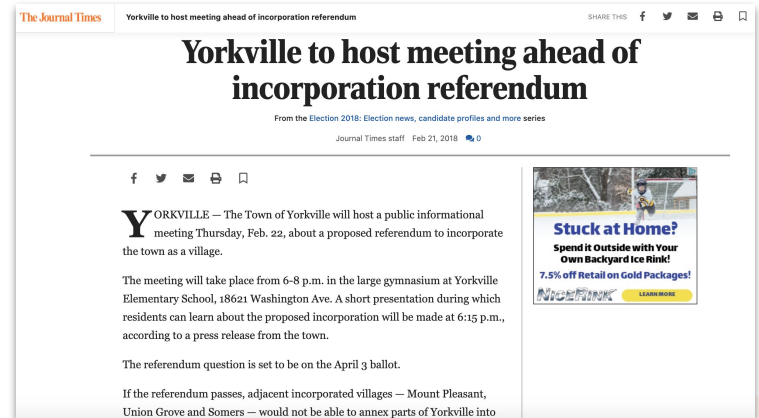
TOWN OF YORKVILLE

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.")



BALANCING THE BUDGET WITHOUT GOING TO REFERENDUM

Department	New Positions Funded with One-Time Grant Funds	Action Required in the 2026 Budget	Action Required in the 2027 Budget	Net Change in Positions	Cost Savings
Fire Department	12.00 FTE	Do Not Fill Position as Vacancies Occur	-8.00 FTE Starting January 1st	+4.00 FTE	\$963,608
Police Department	3.00 FTE	Prepare to Reduce Staffing by 1.00 FTE by December 31st	-1.00 FTE Starting January 1st	+2.00 FTE	\$103,600
Parks Department	0.00 FTE	Plan & Prepare to Separate from the County by December 31st	-3.00 FTE Managers & Administrative Support Staff (No Workers)	-3.00 FTE	\$339,200
					\$1,406,408

Reduce FD Request from 12 to 4: \$963,608 saving

Reduce PD Request from 3 to 2: \$103,600 saving

Place Parks under supervision of DPW effective 1/1/2027. Eliminate 1.5 FTE managers and 1.5 FTE administrative support staff

No reduction in front-line staff: \$339,200