

Village of Fox Crossing
Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees – Budget Workshop
Municipal Complex – Arden Tews Assembly Room
Monday, November 27, 2023 - 5:00 pm

Minutes

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

President Dale Youngquist called the workshop to order at 5:03 p.m. Deputy Clerk Chantel Jaenke noted those present: President Dale Youngquist, Trustee Michael Van Dyke, Trustee Kris Koeppel, Trustee Gregory Ziegler, Trustee Jason Patzwald, Trustee Deborah Swiertz, Trustee Barbara Hanson, Village Manager Jeffrey Sturgell, Director of Finance Jeremy Searl, Director of Community Development George Dearborn, Fire Chief Todd Sweeney, Police Chief Scott Blashka, Director of Parks & Recreation Amanda Geiser, Utility Superintendent David Tracey, Director of Information Technology Tim Plagenz, and Attorney Andy Rossmessl. There were two attendees.

2. Introduction of Village Board Members and Village Staff

President Youngquist introduced the Village Board and Staff attending the meeting. He thanked the Department Heads, the Finance Director, and Village Manager for their long hours to put together this proposed budget.

3. Review of the Proposed 2024 Budget of the Village of Fox Crossing

President Youngquist went through the highlights of the proposed budget. He showed the current breakout for taxes that the Village receives between the Neenah and Menasha School District residences which come out to 26.97% and 20.83% respectively. The net new construction decreased to 0.6% and the proposed levy for 2024 has an increase of \$216,439, an overall increase of 2.25% over the previous year. This provided the Village with \$56,979 of levy limit availability. The increase also includes \$159,460 of levy limit exception which is due to a transfer of service from Winnebago County to the Village for the patrol of the Highways within the Village including the 41/441 interchange.

Additional highlights of the budget include adding Police Sergeants and restructuring the Police Department to provide greater supervisory abilities with the addition of patrolling the freeway. The Police Department is also adding squad and administrative vehicles with the possibility of needing additional vehicles next year. The Village is also adding a Stormwater Technician that will be split between Stormwater Utility (80%) and the Street Department (20%). The responsibility of this position will be to follow up on resident concerns, mandatory reporting, and assisting with code compliance. The Recreation Supervisor position is being increased to full-time to allow more time for improvements and potentially allow more programs to be added. The Firefighter pay plan was revamped last year and will carry over into 2024 with paid-on-call Firefighters receiving a dollar an hour increase on January 1, 2024 and an additional dollar an hour on July 1, 2024. Also included in the budget are the Act12 changes, which provided Fox Crossing approximately \$450,000 in additional state shared revenues. Lastly, the Village is using a little over \$850,000 in fund balance for other expenses.

There were several other considerations in the budget including the increase of election costs with 2024 being a Presidential election year and having four elections, as compared to two in 2023. Secondly, Moodys reaffirmed the Village's rating of Aa2 for the Village General Obligation debt and upgraded the Village to Aa3 Utility Revenue debt. Also mentioned, were the several contracts that were negotiated this year. This included a 3 year agreement for the School Resource Officer at the new high school, the Police union contract was settled for 4 years, a new garbage and recycling contact was entered into with Harter's for 5 years, and a 6 year agreement was reached with Accurate Appraisal for assessment services.

The assessed value in the Village increased 8.17% overall from the prior year, with 10.68% average being residential properties. President Youngquist went through the changes in the Village Tax Rate for different home values and noted that if the value in a residential property did not increase this year, that resident will likely have a reduction in taxes. Most residents did receive an increase in assessments and therefore will likely see an increase in taxes, even with the reduction in the Village's mill rate.

He presented charts showing the breakdown of how tax dollars are spent by department with the highest amounts being spent in the Police Department, Fire Department, Streets Department, and Parks and Recreation Department for labor costs, as well as a considerable percentage being spent in Debt Service. He noted the Village's equalized tax rate is among the lowest when compared to surrounding communities.

President Youngquist presented a chart showing the Village's current debt compared to our debt capacity as set by the State. The chart shows that our unused debt limit has been growing which means the Village's value as a community has grown. The general obligation debt has decreased from \$32 Million Dollars to approximately \$28 Million Dollars. The State allows borrowing up to 5% of the Village's equalized value and we have gone from approximately 30% to 28% to now less than 22% of the maximum general obligation debt allowed.

In the Stormwater Utility budget, our depreciation is being partially funded at \$445,000. The creation of Church Pond and Sand Point Pond incurred a lot of debt so the \$10.00 annual increase to the Stormwater rate was necessary. President Youngquist noted that we are needing to get the ponds in place before we can do many of the road projects, the biggest being the urbanization of Jacobsen Road. When comparing to other local municipalities, we do have one of the higher Stormwater rates, lower than only the City of Appleton. However, we do have the highest ERU per square foot and the 4th lowest in cost per square foot.

In Sewer budget highlights, there are cost increases from Neenah Menasha Sewerage Commission and Fox West Regional Sewerage Commission. The Village has decided to contract out for locating services and will be entering into this contract soon. There are a couple substantial capital projects coming up that include sewer such as Valley Road and Plank Road. The Village is implementing a 3% rate increase for sewer. He stated the Village's sewer rate as compared to other local municipalities is among the middle to lower half.

President Youngquist went through the Water budget highlights and noted that the PSC determines the rate increase. Prior to the February 2023 rate increase of 21% the Village had not had an increase since 2012. This new rate was designed to have a 6.25% rate of return. In 2023 the Village also benefitted from an added 1 million gallons of consumption by the new high school. This budget includes no funding for depreciation, new borrowing of \$1.4 Million Dollars, and a replacement of the Plants #2 and #4 Zeolite system for \$160,000. He compared our current water rates to other local municipalities in which we were in the middle.

The Board commended the Village Manager and all Department Heads on putting together a very fiscally responsible budget and for the amount of work put into its preparation. The Board discussed how the State came back with a better shared revenue of \$450,000. The increase helped the Village accomplish a lot with this year's budget and is guaranteed going forward which will be helpful in future budget planning.

4. **Close the Public Hearing**

MOTION: Trustee Ziegler, seconded by Trustee Hanson to close the Public Hearing. Motion carried.

At 5:44 p.m., President Youngquist adjourned the Public Hearing of the Proposed 2024 Budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Chantel M. Jaenke, Deputy Clerk

Note: *These minutes are not to be considered official until acted upon at an upcoming regular meeting, therefore, are subject to revision.*