

**Village of Fox Crossing
Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees – Budget Workshop #1
Municipal Complex – Arden Tews Assembly Room
Monday, October 6, 2025 - 5:00 p.m.**

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Clerk Darla Salinas called the workshop to order at 5:02 p.m. and noted those present including: President Dale Youngquist, Trustee Kris Koeppe, Trustee Timothy Raddatz, Trustee Kate McQuillan, Trustee Deb Swiertz, Trustee Barbara Hanson, Village Manager Jeffrey Sturgell, Director of Community Development George Dearborn, Director of Finance Jeremy Searl, Director of Parks and Recreation Amanda Geiser, Fire Chief Todd Sweeney, Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Bordeaux, Police Chief Scott Blashka, Police Captain Tim Callan, Police Administrative Assistant Erin LeMahieu, Police Lieutenant Scott Farrell, Municipal Court Manager Mandy Bartelt, and Municipal Judge Hogan. Excused: Trustee Michael Van Dyke. There was one attendee.

2. Presentation of Departmental Budgets

Director Searl presented the overview of the 2026 proposed Budget, the scheduled departments for this evening, and the calendar schedule for budget workshops and the public hearing. He explained the full budget process, which began in July, as well as the format of the budget books that were provided to the Board the week prior. He stated this was a challenging budget year even though all departments were fiscally responsible in their requests. He explained the Village Manager cuts and increases sheet that was handed out to all Board Members at the start of this evening.

Director Searl advised that equalized value is provided by the state and measures market and data changes which is then sent out to all assessors to be applied to all properties statewide and is designed to apportion taxes equitably across municipalities. The equalized value for Fox Crossing shows an increase of 5.83% (not including TID values) and 6.47% (including TID values). School districts use the increase without including TID values to apportion our responsibility for taxes to the various school districts. The assessed value is determined through our assessor department. Assessed values in the Village had an overall increase of 5.8%, split out by type of property: Residential properties increased 8.1%, Commercial properties increased .3%, and Manufacturing properties increased 8.4%. There was large growth in TID #5 and continued growth in TID #2.

Director Searl advised the Tax Levy is the only portion of the tax bill the Village has direct control over. The Village has no control over County, Technical College, and School District levies. The proposed budget represents an increase of \$369,622.00 in Village spending (3.66% increase), and \$55,070.00 in TID increment (11.6% increase) for a total increase of \$424,692.00 (4.02% increase). With assessed values increasing, the proposed mil rate for the Village is set to drop to \$3.79/thousand dollars of value (2.05% decrease). He provided examples of how assessed values for a typical home will change the amount of tax paid to the Village on that home based on recent and current years' mil rates.

Director Searl stated the Village tax levy can only grow by Net New Construction (NNC) and debt service requirements. The Village's NNC was only .704% this year which generated \$67,520.00 of new levy revenue. Levy limits allow spending on debt to fluctuate as needed, however the Village has historically been protective and conservative with our debt and have chosen not to have the total amount of our debt on the levy. With such a low NNC this year, the Village has had to put more debt onto the levy to free up levy funds for operations. The proposed budget adds \$108,378.00 to the debt levy for debt service requirements and \$197,725.00 to balance the budget, for a total increase of \$302,103.00. He provided a history of the last few years as far as amounts added and

reasons for adding these amounts to the debt levy. In the past the Village has looked at adding debt to the levy as a last resort. Director Searl detailed this year's use of the Tax Stabilization Fund. Manager Sturgell advised this fund is healthy, however we don't want to use it often as you can become reliant on it which is something we don't want to do.

Director Searl stated there is a 4.9% increase in the General Transportation Aids which is a large increase for the Village this year. He reminded the Board about WI Act 12 which eliminated Personal Property Tax making that an aid which is paid from the state so we will no longer receive an increase in taxes from that. The amount received in 2024 is what we will receive going forward unless changed by the State. However, this Act also provides for an increase in funds from shared revenue from the state based on sales tax that was received by the state which came in higher than budgeted.

Director Searl reminded the Board that staff wage increases are done under Manager Sturgell's discretion and the dollar amount budgeted is the same as last year. The CPI increase from the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission will shift the Village pay schedule by 2.6%, which is a reprieve as these ranges have shifted 6-7% over the last couple of years due to inflation. Health Insurance is one of the Village's larger expenses and only has a 2.3% increase this year (approximately \$80,604.00). This amount does not include any changes for employees with no coverage going to having coverage, or single coverage to family coverage, or vice versa. There is no increase for Dental Insurance this year, and WRS rates for general employees increased 0.25% from 6.95% to 7.20%, and decreased 0.21% for protected employees from 15.01% to 14.80% (overall an approximate increase of \$22,073.00).

Director Searl advised that prior to this budget the fund balance was sitting at \$4,037,227.00, which equates to 26.76% of the total budgeted expenditures and falls within Village ordinance criteria. The proposed budget has an estimated fund balance of \$4,180,387.00 or 27.71% of next year's budgeted expenditures and remains in compliance.

Judicial Department

Director Searl stated revenues for this department are budgeted to increase based on trends from 2024. The proposed budget shows a small increase in salary which is the overflow affect from the salary change for Judge Hogan that was approved last year but is based on the appointment calendar so was only a partial increase last year. He stated that more citations were issued which account for higher revenues, however, there have been more not-guilty pleas which have resulted in increased legal service expenses. There is a small increase for interpreter services due to the variety of non-English languages that need to be translated.

Judge Hogan stated they have ironed out the wrinkles from year one of holding court at the high school, and they are seeing overwhelming success with this program. The first court session of this school year is later this month, but they are seeing a better number of students and parents showing up for these hearings, and they are getting more involvement from faculty members.

Fire Department

Director Searl stated there is an increase in Fire Dues revenue to be more in line with actual numbers. The Fire Chiefs have reworked the firefighter schedule and were able to "right-size" this budgeted account based on actual expenditures. There was a request for an increase of 195 hours, however Manager Sturgell cut 100 hours, leaving a net increase of 95 hours for an increased wage expense of \$1,855.00. This budget continues to increase wages for hourly and Paid-on-Call positions by \$0.25/hour (increase of \$17,547.00). There was also a requested increase to add five additional part-time firefighters eligible to be on WRS pension plan, however Manager Sturgell cut

this to one firefighter for a net increase of \$2,897.00. Last year's budget included an addition of a full-time Lieutenant (Fleet Maintenance Officer) and switched to a new schedule with lieutenants alternating days. The Chief requested and was approved to increase total hours for the lieutenant and captain positions by 229 hours for an increase of \$7,745.00. Of the Village's total \$311,000.00 wage and benefit increase, Fire represents 13.5% of this budget (approximately \$42,000.00).

Chief Sweeney advised the addition of the lieutenant position and change to 12-hour shifts has helped with turnout and response times and has really helped the morning and night gap times. He provided examples of decreased response and turnout times for all different shifts and stated their maintenance to-do list is completely empty and they are caught up on all regular maintenance as well. He advised with doing a lot of the maintenance in house, they have saved an estimated \$23,800.00 in labor maintenance costs. He stated he is asking for the extra hours to help cover vacations, more officer meeting time, training drills, etc.

The 0241 Building Maintenance Account includes several small projects offset with fund balance including rekeying old station doors, Station #40 and Community Center sprinkler alarm system backflow preventers, and a partial Station #40 roof replacement. There is also an increase for backflow preventer maintenance. This account remains flat as compared to last year from a levy standpoint. The 0310 Office Supplies Account shows a decrease as last year's budget included office set up for the new lieutenant. The 0330 and 0335 Training and Meals, Mileage, & Travel Accounts shows a reduction due to the removal of the Women's Weekend National Training based on federal budget cuts but does include out-of-state training for FDIC and National Fire Academy. The 0343 Accreditation and Awards Account includes an onsite review in 2026 which will be offset with fund balance. The 0346 Uniform Expenses Account shows an increase in allowance of \$25.00 for the part-time and paid-on-call firefighters from \$200.00 to \$225.00 and adds a \$225.00 allowance for the Fire Administrative Assistant. This account also includes replacement of 10 sets of firefighter turnout gear, however three of these are being financed out of fund balance to keep the levy flat. The 0353 Equipment Maintenance Account has an increase due to SCBA maintenance which occurs every five years and is offset with fund balance. The 0355 Vehicle Maintenance Account had a requested increase of \$10,000.00, however this was cut to a \$5,000.00 increase by Manager Sturgell. The 0361 Operational Equipment Supplies Account is equal to last year's budget and includes \$700.00 for two sets of ice rescue equipment, \$1,000.00 for Class B foam, and \$375.00 for a gas meter docking station for one of the fire trucks. The 0390 EOC (Emergency Operations Center) Operating Supplies Account includes a training exercise at Station #40 offset with fund balance.

Director Searl advised the 0854 Capital Outlay Other Account includes replacement and upgrade to the audit system in both fire houses for the antiquated paging system for a cost of \$45,000.00 offset with fund balance. They are also looking to purchase new washers and dryers at both fire stations for \$3,000.00 from fund balance. The Equipment Replacement Fund (ERF) would have included an increase in funding of approximately \$25,000.00 which is been cut to balance the budget. From the ERF, they are looking to replace the Station #41 Air Compressor (\$51,000.00) and Station #40 Washer Extractor (\$14,000.00). The next fire truck on the schedule to be replaced is Rescue 41 in 2028 which will likely need to be ordered early to receive in 2028.

Chief Sweeney stated the goals they set last year were met except for the accreditation which was pushed back to this year. The goal for this year is retention of employees, especially paid-on-call, and they intend on implementing some internal recognition programs. There is a new data collection program they are required to learn and use going forward as part of a national database which will start on January 1st when it goes live. They are also working on updating the strategic plan which will be presented to the Village Board after budget season. He stated they are looking forward to upgrading the station audio systems if approved in this budget, and stated they are also focusing on bringing back a training session for the EOC.

Police Department

Director Searl stated the intergovernmental revenue billing account to NJSD for the School Resource Officer (SRO) is based on the school year and not our budgeting year, and this calculation has been corrected going forward. The current SRO Agreement expires at the end of this school year, so this budget assumes we will maintain a similar formula going forward and estimated an increase of 4% based on expected wage/benefit changes. The Fines and Penalties revenue account is expected to increase based on current trends and parking violations are showing a significant increase due to the recent increase in the fee schedule which was approved by the Village Board.

In Payroll expenditures, the Department is asking to add .2 FTEs (1 day/week) for a communication technician position as the person in this role is a former police officer and provides a lot of help with the accreditation process and other projects. This is a short-term position, so this is being fully funded with fund balance. They are also requesting an increase in Crossing Guard pay from \$14.00/hour to \$17.00/hour (increase of \$3,326.00). This budget includes an increase in the pay range for the Community Service Officers (CSO) to allow interim raises for performance and longevity (increasing the range to \$15.00/hour - \$17.00/hour for a total increase of \$3,660.00). Finally, there is a request to increase overtime hours by 300 hours, however this was cut down to an increase of 100 hours by the Village Manager for a total expenditure increase of \$7,833.00.

Director Searl advised the Police Union contract is good through 2028, so the current year's rates are set to increase 2% in mid-March and 2% in mid-September, and this year's budget includes the start of providing an additional 1% for officers with 10+ years of service. This year's budget completes the elimination of the education incentive as it is now part of the base wage rate. He stated there was a calculation error, so this budget shows a large hit to fix a mistake from 2024 and 2025 where the SRO position was budgeted incorrectly (approximately \$65,000.00 error). Of the Village's total \$311,000.00 wage and benefit increase, Police represents 71.1% of this budget (approximately \$221,000.00).

The 0240 Repairs and Maintenance Account absorbs a large increase (approximately \$4,000.00) for the maintenance contract of the non-County CAD software which has been placed on the levy. The 0310 Office Supplies Account is equal to last year, with the largest portion being for the remodel of the police command center (front area for communication technicians) in the amount of \$15,600.00, however this is a rollover from the last few years that has been placed on hold until decisions have been made regarding a new Police Department building. The 0330 and 0335 Training and Miles/Meals/Lodging Accounts have a small increase of \$89.00, with no out-of-state training requested at this time. The 0340 Operating Supplies Account has an increase due to the purchase of portable radios and programming. The 0343 Accreditation and Awards Account shows a cut from Manager Sturgell, as there was a request to increase retirement awards to \$500.00/retiree to be more aligned with neighboring communities for a total requested increase of \$1,500.00, however this was cut to match the budgeted amount from prior years. Trustee McQuillan asked to keep this on the bubble list for future consideration. The 0345 Forms and Printing Account includes additional funding due to Winnebago County no longer printing forms for us. The 0346 Uniform Allowance Account shows a small decrease on the levy but includes \$2,000.00 for new uniforms for the new Chief and Captain or Lieutenant based on changes in management from retirements, \$6,000.00 to outfit a new police officer, if needed, including equipment and uniform, and \$1,400.00 for new CSO uniforms, if needed, all funded out of fund balance. The 0392 Investigative Expenses Account includes the addition of one portable FLOCK camera to the existing network (\$3,600.00 added to levy) and \$1,000.00 for set up and training, using fund balance.

The 0853 Capital Equipment Vehicle Account does not include a request to purchase any additional vehicles, however the Board could choose to add another vehicle to the fleet as was done in past years. In the Equipment Replacement Fund (ERF), the transfer to the ERF will remain the same

as last year to remain consistent with the Fire Department. The regular increase would have been approximately \$10,000.00 based on normal updates; however, this is being short funded to balance the budget. For 2026, two patrol vehicles (968 and 969) are scheduled for replacement with ancillary equipment, replacement of the CSO truck which may end up being a different type of vehicle as it doesn't need to be a pursuit vehicle, and some miscellaneous equipment such as a squad camera, AED, four ballistic shields, etc.

Trustee McQuillan asked about the amount included in the ERF for the police canine and if that includes training. Chief Blashka advised that cost is only for the canine and typically does not include any training. Director Searl advised that the canine program has yet to cost the Village any money operationally due to all of the donations previously received and continuing to be received for this program.

Trustee Koeppe asked if there have been any further SRO negotiation talks with NJSD. Captain Callan advised they will be starting negotiations soon and do not anticipate adding an additional officer at the high school, but possibly some additional hours. Trustee Koeppe asked if we are anticipating adding more FLOCK cameras throughout the Village. Chief Blashka stated the Village has the lowest number of FLOCK cameras in the Fox Valley region. These cameras are not cheap but very they are very effective, and the camera being purchased this year is a mobile unit that can change locations.

Trustee Raddatz asked about the cost for the interpreter mobile service and asked what they are currently using. Captain Callan stated the department currently either uses a telephone translator service or Google translate, which has not been very effective. He noted this portable translator could be used by other departments as well.

Community Development Department

Director Searl stated there is a small increase in the revenue account, however it's possible this account should decrease but it's very hard to predict. Inspection Professional Services is a contracted-out service and is offset by permit revenues. In the payroll account, there is a requested increase for the intern pay of 2.7% from \$17.00/hour to \$17.46/hour which is split with stormwater.

The 0210 Contracted Services Account includes \$72,000.00 for a zoning code re-write (offset with fund balance) of which \$22,000.00 has been carried forward for a few years, however the cost will be substantially higher than initially expected. The 0799 Economic Developers Incentive Account is a non-TID developer incentive for an apartment building complex on Golf Bridge Drive. Building Inspector Fischenich has advised it is very unlikely they will meet the requirements for this incentive to be paid out, however we need to budget for this just in case. Director Searl noted that the postage account was inadvertently reduced to \$0.00 which will be corrected to add \$500.00 into this account.

Trustee Hanson asked if we could complete the zoning code re-write in house. Director Dearborn stated it would take multiple years for the department to complete. He posted a Request for Proposal and only received one response. He stated that a portion of the Per Capita Funds could be used for a portion of this cost as this falls into Winnebago County's criteria for the funds. Director Searl noted these funds would otherwise be used to offset the expenses from the Community Development Department and are already accounted for.

Trustee Koeppe asked if there is enough funding to get a full-year intern, or back-to-back interns. Director Dearborn stated there is not enough funding and it is challenging to find local interns that can work outside of summer break hours, but they are advertising at the local technical schools and colleges.

3. **Motion to reconvene to the October 13, 2025 Budget Workshop which will begin at 5:00 p.m.**
At 8:36 p.m., **MOTION:** Trustee Hanson, seconded by Trustee Swiertz to reconvene to the October 13, 2025 Budget Workshop at 5:00 p.m. Motion carried via voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Darla M. Salinas, CMC, WCMC, Village Clerk

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