Village of Fox Crossing Board of Trustees
Budget Workshop #4 Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 26, 2026 – 5:00 p.m.
Municipal Complex – Arden Tews Assembly Room
2000 Municipal Drive, Neenah WI 54956

1. Call to Order

The Budget Workshop was called to order by President Youngquist at 5:00 p.m.

Village Clerk Chantel Jaenke recorded the following Village Board members as present: President Dale Youngquist and Trustees Michael Van Dyke, Kris Koeppe, Tim Raddatz, Kate McQuillan, Deb Swiertz and Barb Hanson.

Also Present: Director of Finance Jeremy Searl, Village Manager Jeffrey Sturgell, Director of Community Development George Dearborn, Fire Chief Todd Sweeney, Police Chief Tim Callan, Director of Parks & Recreation Amanda Geiser, Director of Public Works Joe Hoechst, and Superintendent Brian Bauer.

Public Attendance: No public attendance.

2. Presentation of Departmental Budgets

Assessor

Director Searl revisited the Assessor budget and reported that staff recently met with representatives from Accurate Appraisal to review the 2026 assessment process and discuss the potential impacts of the tornado on 2027 property assessments. He explained that while tornado-damaged properties would be individually reassessed to reflect damage, concerns remain regarding how the tornado may affect equalized values and property tax distribution throughout the Village, School District, and surrounding taxing jurisdictions.

Director Searl reviewed a recommendation from Accurate Appraisal to designate 2027 as a maintenance year rather than proceeding with the previously planned interim market update. Under a maintenance year approach, property assessments would generally remain unchanged unless physical changes occurred to a property, such as new construction, improvements, or storm-related damage. He noted that the proposal would allow additional time for state equalization impacts related to tornado damage to become known before undertaking broader market adjustments.

A representative from Accurate Appraisal was present and discussed plans to work closely with Village staff to identify tornado-damaged properties and conduct individual reviews where necessary. They also discussed holding additional office hours for affected property owners and conducting field reviews to ensure assessments accurately reflect property conditions as of January 1, 2027.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to move forward with a maintenance year for 2027. Staff indicated that formal action would be brought forward at a future Village Board meeting.

Wastewater Utility

Director Searl reviewed the Wastewater Utility budget, including utility revenues, operating expenditures, debt obligations, capital funding, and reserve balances. He reported that a 2% wastewater rate increase is proposed for 2027, the first rate adjustment since 2024. Director Searl explained that the increase is intended to proactively address anticipated future cost increases associated with major capital improvements planned by the Neenah Menasha Sewerage Commission, increasing utility debt obligations, and other future infrastructure needs. He noted that annual debt service requirements are expected to remain between approximately $1.1 million and $1.2 million through 2033; however, future borrowing for planned capital projects will increase those obligations, making gradual rate adjustments preferable to larger increases in future years.

Director Searl reported that the Wastewater Utility remains financially healthy and discussed the proposed use of approximately $173,000 in fund balance to offset capital and infrastructure-related expenditures. He noted that unrestricted cash reserves are projected to remain near $3.8 million and that depreciation reserves are projected to total nearly $3 million at the end of 2026.

Director Searl also reviewed regional treatment costs associated with the Fox West Regional Sewerage Commission and the Neenah-Menasha Sewerage Commission. He reported that Fox West treatment costs are projected to increase while Neenah-Menasha treatment costs are expected to decline slightly.

Director Hoechst provided an update regarding wastewater flow metering associated with the Town of Clayton sewer connection. He explained that recently installed flow meters have not produced sufficiently reliable data and that alternative metering options are being evaluated. Director Hoechst noted that obtaining accurate flow information remains important for determining appropriate cost allocation and future participation levels within the Fox West Regional Sewerage Commission system.

Director Searl and Director Hoechst also reviewed Equipment Replacement Fund activities, including ongoing replacement of lift station generators and continued funding for future wastewater infrastructure and equipment replacement needs.

3. **Recess for Regular Village Board Meeting**

Motion: Trustee Swiertz, seconded by Trustee Van Dyke, to recess the Budget Workshop at 5:53 p.m. and reconvene upon completion of the regular Village Board meeting.
Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

4. Reconvene Upon Completion of Regular Board Meeting

The Budget Workshop reconvened at 6:40 p.m. following the adjournment of the regular Village Board meeting. All Board members were present.

Water Utility

Director Searl reviewed the Water Utility budget, including utility revenues, operating expenditures, debt obligations, capital funding, and reserve balances. He reported that a simplified 3% water rate increase is proposed for 2027 and explained that the increase is intended to address rising operational and infrastructure costs while the Village continues pursuing a future conventional rate case.

Director Searl discussed ongoing efforts related to water supply agreements and noted that potential future changes involving Menasha Utilities, the City of Neenah, and the proposed Appleton water connection could impact future water rates and operating costs. He explained that no revenue or expenditure adjustments associated with those discussions are included in the proposed budget at this time due to ongoing regulatory review and uncertainty regarding timing and outcomes.

Director Searl reported that the Water Utility remains financially stable and reviewed projected operating revenues, debt service obligations, and reserve balances. He noted that while operating income is expected to remain positive, future capital projects and infrastructure investments will continue to place pressure on utility finances. He also reviewed the utility's debt service coverage ratio and reported that the utility remains well above minimum borrowing requirements.

Director Searl reviewed several operational initiatives, including continued investment in utility security improvements, access control systems, facility monitoring, and infrastructure protection measures. He also discussed adjustments to water treatment and maintenance activities intended to help balance operating costs.

Director Hoechst provided an update regarding the proposed Winchester Road booster station project. He reported that the Town of Clayton declined to include its anticipated cost share in its 2027 budget and that staff are reviewing available options under existing utility agreements. Director Hoechst explained that the project is intended to improve water pressure in portions of the Town of Clayton and support future development in the area while also benefiting portions of the Village water system.

Director Searl reported that the proposed capital improvement budget continues to include the Winchester Road booster station project, estimated at approximately $500,000 and originally proposed to be funded 80% by the Town of Clayton and 20% by the Village. He stated that the project remains in the proposed budget while discussions with the Town of Clayton continue.

Director Searl and Director Hoechst also reviewed Equipment Replacement Fund activities and future utility infrastructure replacement planning, including adjustments to equipment replacement schedules and continued planning for major utility capital improvements.

Fund Balance

Director Searl reviewed the proposed use of General Fund balance, noting that the original budget included approximately $553,000 in fund balance usage. Following the proposed Information Technology budget amendment, the projected use of fund balance increased to approximately $963,000, largely attributable to the planned information technology infrastructure replacement project.

Director Searl reported that despite the increased use of fund balance, the Village is projected to remain within its adopted fund balance policy range. He noted that unassigned fund balance is projected to decrease from approximately $4.4 million at the end of 2025 to approximately $3.8 million at the end of 2026, resulting in an estimated fund balance level of approximately 24.3% of the 2027 budget, which remains within the Village's policy requirement of 20% to 30%.

Director Searl also reviewed the Village's committed stabilization fund and discussed the impact of tornado-related expenditures on that balance. He noted that the current ordinance requires the stabilization fund to equal 20% of the subsequent year's operating budget and explained that, without modification, the Village would be required to restore approximately $3 million to the stabilization fund at year-end.

Director Searl presented a concept for amending the stabilization fund ordinance to allow the Village Board to adopt a formal replenishment plan following significant expenditures from the fund. He explained that the proposed approach would allow future insurance proceeds, FEMA reimbursements, and other eligible revenues to be used to gradually restore the stabilization fund over multiple years rather than requiring immediate replenishment.

Budget Workshop Follow-up Items

Fire Department Staffing Proposal:

Director Searl reviewed the Fire Department staffing proposal that had been placed on the budget workshop follow-up list. He explained that the proposal would add approximately 1,274 paid-on-call firefighter hours at a net annual cost of approximately $27,000. The additional hours would provide daytime staffing coverage Monday through Friday to supplement the department's existing staffing model and improve emergency response capabilities.

Chief Sweeney reported that approximately 9.9% of Fire Department calls occur during periods affected by the proposed staffing gap. He noted that previous staffing adjustments had already reduced turnout times and explained that the proposal would further improve response times during peak call periods.

Following discussion regarding emergency response coverage and service levels, the Board reached consensus to retain the staffing proposal within the proposed budget.

Municipal Complex Custodian Position:
Director Searl reviewed the proposed permanent part-time custodian position, which was previously placed on the budget workshop follow-up list after being removed from the proposed budget due to funding constraints. He reported that the position would provide approximately 20 hours per week of custodial services at a net budget impact of approximately $11,600 after accounting for offsets from seasonal staffing reductions.

Director Hoechst and Superintendent Bauer discussed the operational benefits of the position, including improved cleanliness throughout Village facilities, increased restroom cleaning frequency, enhanced custodial coverage during employee absences, and allowing the full-time custodian to focus on facility maintenance responsibilities. Staff also noted that the position reduces the need for Streets Department personnel to perform custodial duties and may support future maintenance needs at additional Village facilities.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to retain the permanent part-time custodian position within the proposed budget.

Little Lake Butte des Morts Association Contribution:
Director Searl reviewed a proposed $5,000 contribution within the Stormwater Utility budget for the Little Lake Butte des Morts Association. He explained that a similar contribution was approved in the prior year and noted that the current budget proposal continued the funding.

The Board discussed the Association's activities, projects, and participation by neighboring communities. Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to retain the $5,000 contribution within the proposed budget.

Garbage and Recycling Rate Increase:
Director Searl reviewed the proposed garbage and recycling rate adjustment, which would increase the annual residential fee from $220 to $225. He explained that the proposed increase is intended to offset rising collection, disposal, and operational costs while maintaining positive fund balance levels within the Garbage and Recycling Fund.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to move forward with the proposed garbage and recycling rate increase.

Water and Sewer Utility Rate Adjustments:
Director Searl reviewed the proposed utility rate adjustments. He reported that the Water Utility budget includes a proposed 3% simplified rate increase while staff continue pursuing a future conventional rate case. He also reviewed the proposed 2% Wastewater Utility rate increase, explaining that the increase is intended to address anticipated operating, debt, and infrastructure costs. He noted that no rate increase is proposed for the Stormwater Utility.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to move forward with the proposed utility rate adjustments.

Fire Apparatus Replacement
Director Searl reviewed a proposed purchase of a used fire engine to provide temporary apparatus coverage while tornado-damaged Fire Department vehicles are being repaired and replaced.

Chief Sweeney reported that Engine 41 remains out of service for repairs and that two additional fire apparatus were declared total losses following the tornado. He explained that replacement vehicles are not expected to be delivered until mid-2027 and early 2028, creating a temporary reduction in available apparatus. Chief Sweeney reviewed an opportunity to purchase a used fire engine from the City of Kimberly for approximately $20,000 to

serve as a backup vehicle and help maintain operational readiness in the event of additional mechanical issues with the remaining fleet.

The Board expressed consensus support for proceeding with the purchase review process. Staff indicated that the proposed purchase would be placed on an upcoming Village Board agenda for consideration.

Stormwater Utility Reserve Planning
Director Searl discussed future planning for major stormwater pond maintenance activities and proposed establishing a separate reserve account dedicated to pond dredging and maintenance costs. He explained that future dredging activities are operational maintenance expenses and should be accounted for separately from depreciation reserves, which are intended for replacement of capital infrastructure such as pond liners, berms, and other structural components.

Director Searl stated that the proposed reserve account would provide a dedicated funding source for future pond maintenance projects and improve long-term financial planning within the Stormwater Utility. No Board action was requested at this time.

5. Adjourn
Motion: Trustee Swiertz, seconded by Trustee Van Dyke, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. the Budget Public Hearing will be on Monday, November 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.
Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Chantel M. Jaenke, CMC, WCMC
Village Clerk

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