

**VILLAGE OF EPHRAIM
COMMUNITY PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026 – 2:30 PM
VILLAGE HALL - 9996 WATER STREET**



ACTION ITEMS:

Cox moved, Dukehart seconded to approve the minutes of April 22, 2026, all ayes. Motion carried.

Dukehart moved, Cox seconded to recommend the 2027 Fire Department Budget for approval by the Ephraim Village Board, all ayes. Motion carried.

Dukehart moved, Cox seconded to refer the Responder Crash Proclamation to the Ephraim Village Board for approval, all ayes. Motion carried.

Cox moved, Dukehart seconded to adjourn at 3:56 PM, all ayes. Motion carried.

Present: John Cox, Tad Dukehart, and Carly Mulliken - Chair.

Absent: Laird Hart and Keith Krist.

Staff: Justin MacDonald – Fire Chief / Maintenance Manager, Brent Bristol – Village Administrator/Zoning Administrator, and Kim Roberts - Deputy Clerk.

Guests: BD and Mary Thorp.

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 2:30 PM. A quorum was present for this meeting.
2. **Changes to the agenda:** There were no changes.
3. **Approval of the previous minutes:**

Cox moved, Dukehart seconded to approve the minutes of April 22, 2026, all ayes. Motion carried.

4. **Visitors' Comments:** There were no visitors' comments.

5. **Discussion and recommendation of 2027 Budget:**

The Committee reviewed the proposed 2027 Fire Department budget. The discussion began with an overview of the fire equipment (AD) line item (100-50-52200-371), followed by a broader budget walkthrough highlighting budget line items with increases.

Equipment Purchases - The proposed equipment purchases were presented and included the following items:

- **Headset System (\$8,000):** A boat headset system from Setcom was proposed to improve communication during on-water operations, where wave and engine noise creates clarity issues. Cox inquired about the number of headsets included and whether installation costs were additional. MacDonald noted that the proposed system includes five (5) headsets and that installation is relatively straightforward. The cost of installation would be covered under the regular budget.
- **Turnout Gear (\$8,000 for 2 sets):** Two (2) sets of turnout gear were proposed for replacement on a standard staggered schedule, as gear must be retired after ten years of service
- **Rope Rescue Equipment (\$11,000):** A complete overhaul of the department's rope rescue inventory was proposed, as much of the existing equipment was found to be between fifteen (15) and twenty (20) years old. Retired equipment would be destroyed to prevent life-safety use, though some rope may be retained for training purposes such as knot-tying as well as being utilized for utility rope.
- **EV Plug (\$2,000):** A device that disables electric vehicles via their charging port was proposed for situations involving EV fires or accidents, providing a safety measure for responders. The technology has been commercially available for approximately two to three years.
- **Replacement Fire Hose (\$1,000):** A modest amount of replacement hose was included, though the need was noted to be minimal as hose testing that year had resulted in very few failures.

Budget Increases and Key Line Items

The overall budget was proposed to increase by 3.75%, bringing the total to one hundred ninety-six thousand nine hundred eighteen dollars and eighty-eight cents (\$196,918.88). Key increases were discussed as follows:

- **Salaries (100-50-52200-100):** The Assistant Fire Chief's salary was proposed to increase to six thousand five hundred dollars (\$6,500) (last raised in 2025), and the two Captains' salaries were proposed to increase from one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars (\$1,250) to two thousand dollars (\$2,000) each (last raised in 2023). A county-wide wage comparison was attached showing the department is generally in line with the average of approximately one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500). It was noted that officers perform a significant amount of administrative and maintenance work beyond logged hours, which is compensated through their salary.
- **Retirement (100-50-52200-102):** An increase of two hundred dollars (\$200) was recommended by Collak to align with the salary increases.
- **Vehicle Fuel (100-50-52200-310):** Increased by five hundred dollars (\$500) to five thousand five hundred dollars (\$5,500). The department ran over budget in the current year due to the boat's two hundred (200) gallon fuel tank being completely drained and cleaned during motor replacement, combined with heavier-than-usual boat usage. The Committee noted the importance of monitoring fuel price trends before drawing conclusions.
- **Cell Phone (100-50-52200-312):** Increased by seven hundred dollars (\$700), driven largely by exploration of adding a Starlink connectivity system to the boat at approximately fifty-five dollars (\$55) per month, in response to complete loss of cellular connectivity during operations in areas such as Death's Door. Cox questioned whether the cellular coverage issue could be resolved by switching carriers rather than adding Starlink, noting that several major carriers have significantly expanded coverage in the area. He pointed out that T-Mobile customers in Ephraim now roam to AT&T, and suggested that switching providers might resolve the connectivity problem and offset the cost of Starlink. MacDonald indicated he would meet with a vendor and explore alternatives before finalizing the decision.
- **Professional Dues (100-50-52200-335):** Increased by three hundred dollars (\$300) due to rising membership costs.
- **Equipment Repair and Maintenance (100-50-5220-353):** Increased to thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000). Dukehart noted that approximately ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) remains in the current year's budget. MacDonald cautioned that annual pump testing and DOT inspections expenses were still pending. Dukehart felt there may be an opportunity to purchase the boat headsets before year-end using existing funds, which could reduce the equipment line in the 2027 budget. Bristol clarified that such a purchase would be charged to the appropriate line item and could result in that category going over budget, but as long as the overall budget remains in the black it would not be a significant concern. Any formal reallocation of funds would need to occur by the budget public hearing in mid-November.
- **Mutual Aid Fire Calls (100-50-52200-374):** Increased by one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500), as the department had responded to a higher-than-average number of mutual aid calls during the year.
- **Ephraim Event Calls (100-50-52200-378)** Increased by one hundred and twenty five dollars (\$125) to account for truck presence at the new Ephraim Business Council's Sweet Summer Send-Off event.
 - **Night-Shift Premium Pay**
Cox raised the concept of a shift premium for calls responded to during overnight hours, noting it as both a reasonable incentive and a form of acknowledgment for members who respond in the middle of the night and must still report to work the following day.
MacDonald noted the department has not experienced significant attendance problems during

overnight hours, averaging six to eight responders per call around the clock, with the most challenging window being 4:00–8:00 PM due to family and sporting commitments. Dukehart suggested the idea should not be dismissed but noted it was likely to have minimal budget impact given the relatively small number of qualifying calls. The Committee agreed to defer the matter and requested that MacDonald review call data for overnight hours over the past year and return with a recommendation and cost estimate at a future meeting.

- **Training and Conferences (100-50-5220-320):** It was noted that the training line item remained at thirteen thousand dollars (\$13,000) despite only five thousand six hundred dollars (\$5,600) having been spent to date. Upcoming training expenditures were identified, including an EV class recently attended, a fire inspectors' conference in October for the department's two (2) inspectors, and a modern-day recruiting workshop.

Dukehart moved, Cox seconded to recommend the 2027 Fire Department Budget for approval by the Ephraim Village Board, all ayes. Motion carried.

6. Update on Emergency Operations Plan:

Mulliken provided a brief update on the Emergency Operations Plan. The plan has been reviewed by Jeb Saelens, the Door County Emergency Management Director, who offered positive feedback and effectively signed off on the document. The Emergency Operations Plan will be presented at the next Village Board meeting. Saelens has agreed to attend the Board meeting to provide additional context directly to Board members. No action was required of the Committee at this time.

7. Discussion and Recommendation on Responder Crash Proclamation:

MacDonald introduced a proclamation supporting Crash Responder Safety Week, occurring during the first week of November, which emphasizes motorist responsibilities such as the move-over and slow-down laws when passing emergency responders.

Dukehart moved, Cox seconded to refer the Responder Crash Proclamation to the Ephraim Village Board for approval, all ayes. Motion carried.

8. Discussion and Recommendation on installation of Solar Power Stop Sign at the corner of Moravia Street and CTH Q:

Dukehart opened the discussion by identifying the stop sign on the south side of the intersection of Moravia Street and CTH Q, across from the Lutheran Church, as the most pressing candidate for improvement. He also noted that any illuminated or blinking signage at the other two (2) nearby intersections could create significant nighttime disturbance for nearby residents.

MacDonald clarified that the sign most in need of enhancement, the southbound stop on County Q, is a county-owned sign, and therefore any modifications, including illuminated features, must go through the county's Highway Committee. He added that the County had agreed to allow the Village to reposition the sign closer to the guardrail to improve its visibility, with that work scheduled for the following morning.

BD Thorp and Mary Thorp, residents of 9976 Moravia Street who have a direct sightline to the intersection, addressed the Committee. Mary Thorp described observing that approximately 90% of southbound drivers do not come to a full stop, with some passing through completely without slowing. She noted the particular danger when pedestrians are using the staircase at that location, especially during Monday evening music events. She also referenced sending photos to Mulliken showing reflective or solar-powered sign options. BD Thorp referenced comparable solar-powered stop signs at CTH ZZ near the Appleport School, though it was noted those are located within the Town of Liberty Grove and were purchased by the Sister Bay department, not the County. BD Thorp also suggested that the orange pedestrian flags currently present may not be effective, and expressed interest in exploring whether a radar speed display sign could be installed on CTH Q.

Cox broadened the discussion, noting that the stop sign compliance issue is symptomatic of a wider speeding and traffic enforcement problem throughout the Village, extending along the full length of Moravia Street and other roads such as German Road. He stated that the fundamental issue is the

absence of consistent law enforcement presence, and recalled that in past years, contacting the Sheriff's Department and requesting targeted enforcement had produced temporary improvements. He called on the Committee to request that a formal, strong letter be drafted by the Administrator and the Village President to the Sheriff's Department requesting increased enforcement presence. He also emphasized the need to maintain sign visibility throughout the Village through regular vegetation trimming, and noted the absence of a northbound "Stop Ahead" warning sign approaching the intersection.

The Committee discussed a multi-step approach: The County sign will be repositioned immediately, vegetation in the area should be cleared to improve sign visibility, a formal request for increased law enforcement presence should be sent to the Sheriff's Department, and the feasibility of more reflective or larger signage options will be explored. The Committee noted that any changes to the county-owned sign itself must be routed through the County Highway Committee.

9. Discussion on Fire Truck Purchases:

Mulliken provided context, noting that an opportunity to purchase a used mini pumper arose quickly and was submitted to the Village Board without prior Committee review, due to the short turnaround time. The bid was ultimately unsuccessful, but the process generated useful discussion at the Board level regarding the department's fleet needs.

MacDonald noted the vehicle being considered for replacement is a two (2) person cab truck with a standard transmission, a configuration increasingly difficult to staff as newer firefighters are generally not trained to operate manual transmission vehicles. He expressed some general caution about used truck purchases, noting they can represent inherited problems, but acknowledged that with proper research and inspection, including a planned inspection by Red Power Diesel, the department's DOT and equipment specialist, a used vehicle could be viable. He noted the truck in question appeared to have seen very limited active use.

Bristol suggested the Board would benefit from a refreshed overview of the department's vehicle inventory, including each truck's function, age, and replacement timeline. He noted that while the capital reserve schedule exists, it was important to help Board members understand the distinction between vehicles that should be replaced new versus those for which a used purchase is appropriate. He also noted that the capital reserve category covers more than fire trucks, including items such as self-contained breathing apparatus, and that the current annual set-aside of seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000), while reasonable, falls far short of the cost of a new mainline engine.

Cox raised concerns about the compressed timeline of the previous bid process, stating that the Committee should have been formally convened, even on short notice, before the matter went to the Board, as valuable context was not fully conveyed. He emphasized that this Committee must be clearly involved in any future vehicle procurement process, even in urgent situations. He also noted that any used truck from a northern climate would carry corrosion risk, and pointed out that Engine 8 was purchased as a stainless steel unit specifically to address that concern. He suggested that any used replacement should ideally be sourced from a southern state to avoid salt-related deterioration.

On the topic of North Shore Road access, MacDonald acknowledged that certain driveways remain challenging for large apparatus, and that in some cases hose deployment from the road would be the only practical option. He noted the road itself has improved significantly following recent paving and vegetation clearing done in cooperation with property owners.

Dukehart proposed that the Committee formally direct MacDonald to actively monitor available used mini pumpers and return to the Committee promptly if a suitable candidate is identified, noting that the Committee now has a clearer sense of the department's parameters and budget constraints.

Regarding financing, Cox asked about the current state of the capital reserve and whether the village could again loan itself funds as it had done for Engine 8.

Bristol confirmed the possibility but noted it would be evaluated more carefully given current capital expenditure levels and cash-on-hand considerations. Bristol also explained that state levy limits create a

structural incentive to finance capital purchases through debt, as debt service falls outside those limits, making it difficult to simply increase the annual reserve contribution without cutting elsewhere.

Dukehart raised the possibility of directing a portion of room tax revenue toward future fire truck purchases.

Bristol indicated this concept is likely to be explored in the near future.

The Committee agreed to continue the discussion at a future meeting with additional information from MacDonald on available used vehicles.

10. Discussion of general safety issues in the Village:

Parking on Spruce Street

Mulliken reported that following complaints about unenforceable parking signs near the old post office on Spruce Street. The existing signage was replaced with "No Parking Anytime" signs on both sides of the road. The Committee agreed to review and potentially update the ordinance during the off-season. MacDonald noted that emergency vehicle access through that corridor remains difficult due to parking violations, and that in an emergency, apparatus would likely need to approach from the upper end of the street.

Fireworks Permitting

MacDonald described a recurring issue with residents seeking fireworks permits very close to the event date, in some cases only two (2) to three (3) days prior. He noted that during dry conditions, the ability to deny a permit is important, and that a minimum two (2) week advance notice requirement would allow appropriate review. He also described stopping an unpermitted fireworks display on Anderson Dock at 11:15 PM on the Fourth of July, where some of the fireworks had ignited on the dock. The individual complied after being informed they lacked a permit, using cooler beer to extinguish the fire before a garden hose was offered. The Committee agreed to consider updating the ordinance lead-time requirement as part of off-season work.

Speeding on Moravia Street and German Road

Cox reiterated ongoing concerns about speeding throughout the village, particularly on Moravia Street beginning at Anderson Lane and on German Road. He stated the problem is persistent and largely attributable to the absence of regular law enforcement presence. He indicated that even speaking with a longtime resident near the intersection confirmed how serious and continuous the problem has become. The Committee agreed that a formal request to the Sheriff's Department for increased enforcement remains the most viable near-term remedy.

11. New business for the next meeting:

The next CPC meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at 2:30 PM.

- Shift Premium Pay
- Research on a used Mini Pumper.

12. Adjournment:

Cox moved, Dukehart seconded to adjourn at 3:56 PM, all ayes. Motion carried.

Recorded by,
Kim Roberts – Deputy Clerk