

The Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order by the Village President at 6:00 p.m. at the Marshall Buehler Center.

Present: President Mancl, Trustees Flugaur, Hess, Hummel & Zurfluh

Absent: Trustee O'Connor (excused), Trustee Radtke (excused)

Also Present: B. Martinson, D. Tremmel

Citizens: Larry Isensee, Rebecca Isensee, Cary Smith, John Wasshausen, Matt Zacher (City of Wisconsin Rapids Mayor), Ben Goodreau (City of Wisconsin Rapids Fire Chief), Mike Beam (via TEAMS), Teresa Bousquet (via TEAMS), Scott Steen (via TEAMS)

Mayor Zacher and Fire Chief Goodreau gave a presentation regarding future contracts for ambulance service for the Village. They stated that call volume continues to increase not only in our area but throughout the entire State of Wisconsin. They are in need of more personnel and an additional ambulance. They are working with the surrounding communities to approve contracts at a rate of \$56 per capita for the year 2026. The rate will be adjusted each year using the same formula upon which the initial per capita fee is based. The Village has two years remaining on its current contract, which runs through December 31, 2027, with a 2026 rate of \$26 per capita. The City of Wisconsin Rapids is asking the Village to commit now to a new contract beginning in 2028 at the increased rates. The Village asked the City to advise when and if all the surrounding communities are in agreement. Trustee Zurfluh requested that the Village attorney review the contract.

Public Comments:

Larry Isensee presented a letter to the Board members stating that he feels there is a significant tax-to-service imbalance affecting residents east of the river. He asks that in preparing the budget, please represent all residents and taxpayers.

Teresa Bousquet stated she would like to echo everything Mr. Isensee said. She is frustrated because she feels the only service they receive is the yard waste pickup and feels like they are subsidizing other people in the Village. Their roads are in bad condition so she expressed concern that some of the money budgeted for roads should be used there.

Mike Beam stated that he would like to echo Mr. Isensee's and Ms. Bousquet's comments. He knew they would be paying higher taxes when returning to the Village. He feels the cost of living in the Village is high due to decreasing tax base and suggested possibly merging with another municipality. He asked what options there might be to reduce the taxes.

Scott Steen stated that his concern is that the Village has received 80% of the property taxes during the agreement. He feels they are subsidizing other Village residents. He also stated that his homeowner's insurance was cancelled because he lives too far from a fire station. He thought a fire station was going to be put up on the east side.

John Wasshausen stated that he looked at the value of some of the homes in the Village and what the taxes are. He feels the residents on the east side are paying more.

Ben Martinson presented the draft of the budget and reviewed the budget summary.

Trustee Hummel stated that the Village is not responsible for the maintenance of the roads, but he did reflect the same views regarding the other public comments and felt there was a tax-to-service imbalance also. He gave an example of the Village parks being 12 miles away from his residence. He also feels the Village is status quo with the budget and not looking toward the future. He also stated that the Village has no goals and the Village mission should be changed or eliminated.

President Mancl commented on a couple things Trustee Hummel brought up. She pointed out that the

budget is not just copied and pasted from year to year, and there are certain things that must be paid for every year. Everyone is given the opportunity to give their input throughout the year. She also pointed out that she does not get water and sewer where she lives either. There are several residents in the “Village proper” who do not have those services offered to them. In answer to the comment about the park being 12 miles away, she stated that she has taken her children to parks in other municipalities and believes families who want to use the parks will travel a distance to use them. She stated that a strategic meeting was not held this year because of lack of interest; perhaps in the coming year a meeting can be scheduled.

Trustee Hess stated that since he became a trustee he has learned a lot about tax levies and the tax process. He stated that himself and other members of the Board and previous Boards have tried to increase the tax base, especially with regard to the DMI (old mill) property. A significant amount of time and effort has been put into trying to get that property developed.

Ben Martinson stated that if anyone has any questions regarding the budget or would like to request data, please give him a call.

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Minutes taken by: Diane Tremmel, Clerk-Treasurer