

**VILLAGE BOARD MEETING – February 3rd, 2025, PAGE 1**

The Friendship Village Board meeting was called to order followed by the Pledge of Allegiance by all present. President Tony Sindelar called the meeting to order and roll call was taken. Present were Trustees Brad Oberbeck, Ernie Klicko, Jerry Sonnenberg, Melvin Waller, Bob Berry, Jason Pierce and President Sindelar. Also present were Attorney Joseph Hasler, Clerk/Treasurer Sandy Shawback, and Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Reuter.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** by Berry, second by Waller to approve the January 6th, 2025, Village Board minutes, motion carried. 6 - yay 1 - nay

**TREASURER REPORT IF AVAILABLE**

No report available

**PAYING OF BILLS**

**MOTION** by Klicko, second by Sonnenberg to approve January vouchers 27487-27532 in the amount of \$533,734.78, motion carried.

**CITIZEN INPUT**

No citizen input

**REPORT FROM COUNTY REPRESENTATIVE RICK PEASE**

Not in attendance

**DR. TOM FROM ADAMS-FRIENDSHIP AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT TO DISCUSS THE UPCOMING REFERENDUM**

Dr. Tom stated that tonight with him he has Nicki Ells who is the director of curriculum instruction. They cannot advocate for or against the referendum. They are here tonight to present some information and answer any questions. They don't want to take up a lot of our time. As most of you recall two years ago, we passed an operational referendum in the spring of 2024. We are in the second year of a four-year operational referendum. What they are asking for now is an opportunity to right size our district and vacate the existing middle school. The existing middle school is 106 years old. Many of the mechanical systems in the building, from the electrical, plumbing, heating and ventilation, and a lot of the structural systems in that building like windows, ceilings, and roofing are at the end of their life. In order to just maintain it for just the next five years the engineers they are working with are telling them it will cost us about a million dollars a year, just to maintain that building because so many systems are failing. We are at a point in time where if you had a car that was ex-number of years old and you were putting money into it, and it got to the point where you were putting more money into it you would have to make some decisions about whether it's still worth investing in that car. Two years ago, we passed an operational referendum. The only way school districts in the state of Wisconsin can generate additional revenue is to go to referendum and ask the citizens to go to referendum. What we are asking for now is a capital referendum, or a building referendum. What they're proposing is for over twenty years, an initial question of sixteen plus million dollars. And a second question of an additional almost six million dollars. So, twenty-two plus million dollars to vacate the middle school and move either 5th-8th grade or 4th-8th grade to an addition onto the East side on the fine arts center at the high school. The softball field that spends most of its time underwater will become the playground space for our younger learners. They believe there will be cost savings over time, certainly over a twenty-year period to build new instead of continuing to put money into a building that's 106 years old. With the middle school building they are working with the USDA to try to find a developer that might be interested in converting that building into housing. They don't know exactly what they would do with the existing middle school. They do know that it would cost us between 2.5 and 3 million dollars just to demolish that building. So, they don't want to invest in that either. They do have a website where you can get a lot more information.

Ells stated that our newest building is the high school building. So being able to utilize some of that space is part of the objective. It was originally built for over 700 students, and we are just over 400 now. Being able to capitalize on some of that potential by moving our students and offer those options to our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade learners so they can take advantage of some of the CTE classes. Currently they are transporting students from the middle school to the high school to be able to have those opportunities. So, some of those savings are transportation cost. We are trying to be more efficient with the resources we have. There is a lot of space in the middle school that is not being utilized because of conditions and not having the need for some structure like the boiler room and that kind of thing. Our new model, if you will, will be a more efficient learning space for our students. They will have access to the same type of learning environment just in a different setting just off the fine arts center. We do have extra space at the high school that isn't

being utilized, we will fill up that space. One of the questions being asked in the community is why we wouldn't move kids over to the elementary school instead of the high school? Our elementary school would have to have an updated sprinkler system if we add any additions on to that. It does not have a current sprinkler system, so we would have to add that and it's about 2 million dollars within itself. We don't have to do that at the high school because the fine arts center is there and has a burn wall with a sprinkler system in it already. So that additional funding can be put into additional leaning spaces. This last December we were faced with a nonrenewal for our insurance based on the conditions of the middle school and the district office. We had to really be creative as to what we were going to do. They went out to try to find any insurance companies that would insure us. We finally were able to talk our existing company to give us an at cost policy. With that for significantly less coverage was an additional thirty thousand dollars through July. That has bought us time through July when we might become uninsurable.

Berry asked if the referendum should pass what kind of timeline are we looking at before things would be complete?

Ells stated that they did meet with one construction firm that told them their timeline would be the fall of 2026. They are looking for an eleven-to-thirteen-month turnaround to be able to do that addition. The nice thing is that it doesn't disrupt any of our current learning systems. The addition would be able to continue while we are still in school. They would start building the shell if the referendum were to pass and then we have about nine months to do planning with the current middle school staff and high school staff to ensure a smooth transition between buildings.

Sonnenberg asked how that would relate to the insurance problem that they're having. What would we have to do for that year and a half?

Dr. Tom stated that they are hoping they can find some insurance. They still have their liability insurance in case someone gets hurt on the playground. But structural insurance would be a problem.

Ells stated that the individual that they work with felt like he would be able to talk with the current insurance agents to keep them on the replacement cost that following year through construction.

Dr. Tom stated that on the third floor there is only one outlet in each classroom at the middle school. The building was built in a different time. To update the electrical panels that were from 1950 they received a quote of \$60,000-\$70,000.

Sonnenberg asked if you do the moving around of the children in the classrooms would the class sizes change?

Ells stated that the new model they are showing we would keep the same class sizes that are averaging around 20. In the new wing you would have office staff, speech and language therapist, school socialist, classrooms and an additional gym.

Sonnenberg asked if there's any requirements from the state on what the max of a classroom size can be?

Dr. Tom stated that unfortunately no, there's recommendations. We have a school to the southwest of us and couldn't pass an operational referendum last year and eliminated 15 teaching positions. They are going to have a referendum again in February and are proposing eliminating another 15-17 teachers. And it's a district about our size. If we were to eliminate 30 teaching positions, we'd be insolvent, we wouldn't be able to serve our kids. Dr. Tom pointed out that some of the middle school teachers came tonight in case anyone had any questions for them.

Reuter asked if the new wing would have its own cafeteria, or how would it work taking the little kids into the high school?

Dr. Tom stated that they would be able to utilize the kitchen in the high school. It was built for 700 students, and there are only 440 in there today. Then they would probably cart food to the gym. It hasn't been completely figured out yet.

Ells stated that collectively from the staff that was a big concern was having those common times for passing. Based on information from the current food staff they are confident that they can serve those extra learners in that gym space and use it as a cafeteria.

Dr. Tom stated that its interesting people are very concerned that 4<sup>th</sup> graders might comingle with 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and the reality is that we put 4K kids on school buses with 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and there's a lot less supervision on our busses then in the traditional spaces.

Berry stated that he doesn't have any kids, what do projections show for enrollment in the upcoming years moving forward?

Dr. Tom stated we had significant enrollment loss. We'er serving about 750 less students over the last 20 years. It peaked in the 2001 school year with 2,150 students in our district, and the membership count this year was 1,400.

Ells stated that the projections are 85-90 students per grade level. Right now, our 4 largest classrooms are at the high school. Once those four classes graduate the average class should stay between 85-90 students for the rest of 4K-12 grade.

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Dr. Tom stated that the new high school is 27 years old, so they are starting to replace heaters, and they had to replace the commercial dishwasher in the kitchen that was \$80,000. Fortunately, they had someone from a construction company walk through last week and he couldn't believe that the building was open in 1998 because it was in such good condition. That's kudos to our maintenance and custodial staff.

Sonnenberg stated that he would like to thank all the teachers in the audience for all they do in the classroom and on the side. Without them we would not have the leadership coming through that we need to have to make our Village very proud of what we've got.

Sindelar asked if there was any consideration on the admin building itself?

Dr. Tom stated the Friendship school was built in 1903, that portion is used about an hour and a half a week by a community group. They try to really stay out of that space. It has an old steam boiler system in it and there is no one local that will work on it. They have to bring people in from Stevens Point, Wausau and Madison when they have issues with that boiler system. The issue is they don't have loading docks at the elementary school or the middle school. So, the old gym serves as central storage. We can't even get pallets into elementary school, they are carried in box by box. He thanked the Village Board for listening, and if anyone has any questions, they can reach out to him, or they can go on to the website that they have up.

### **DISCUSS CHAPTER 396 FROM THE COUNTY REGARDING NR 117**

Berry stated that he's about halfway through reading the packet, so if no one has any objections he would like to table it for the next meeting. He would like everyone to do the research on this before we jump in to do anything.

### **REVIEW PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT**

Sindelar stated that in the last meeting we talked about the extension of the professional agreement. After talking to the former council, he had a good idea to make some changes to it where it's not an interim like it was, but to change it to a training assistant agreement with the hourly hours on there to be a little bit more adjustable for the board and the person. Along with at the end of the agreement when the board feels, or the worker feels time is done just a 30 day notice is given that the agreement is complete. The hours will be more flexible. The current hours are limited to about 70 hours a month to work, so it would roughly be about 15 hours a week.

Sonnenberg asked where that 70 hours came from?

Sindelar stated that those are the hours she's able to work in a month without jeopardizing her social security payments.

Sonnenberg just wanted to make sure, because as he read through the minutes of the last meeting, looking at item 3 of the agreement we had said 2 months. It almost looks like what you have done, is taken the position and made it part-time assistance for training. He'd like to see, and make sure we are getting as much education as we can within that 70 hours. That way we as a board can feel comfortable that we are getting the right amount of training for Sandy, but also that Sandy feels that she has gotten the right training. He just wants to make sure we don't cut ourselves short by putting in a specific hourly amount.

Sindelar stated that if the time comes to where the allotted time here is winding down, it can come back to the Village Board and the board can add more time to that if it needs to be extended.

**MOTION** by Sonnenberg, second by Berry to approve the Professional Services Agreement, motion carried.

### **UPDATE ONEAST LAKE STREET PROPERTY**

Sindelar stated that there was nothing new to update. He was waiting for the new council.

### **PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Nothing to report

### **FIRE DISTRICT REPORT**

Klicko stated that the Fire chief reported there were 8 calls in the proceeding month.

They have got 2 new certified pumper operators.

There was a budget surplus of \$15,400 that goes into the major equipment fund.

They changed their address to 399 East Ann Street instead of their P.O. Box. They need a physical address for grants.

There was an audit by the state attorney, nothing was found.

They bought a skid pumper unit for the UTV that the firefighters bought from their fundraising a year ago.

They've been deciding on what they want to do with the ladder truck. It has almost \$40,000 in repairs that it needs.

**AMBULANCE COMMITTEE REPORT**

Sindelar stated that they met January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Lifestar went over their yearly report. Most transports did end up here at our local hospital. One of the issues that was talked about was some of the frequent callers that really aren't emergency, the board questioned Lifestar about that. Lifestar is working with those certain individual callers about other ways to cope and if it's really an emergency or if there's something else that can help them along. So, they're in the process of working with these to help minimize those frequent callers that are technically not emergent. The next meeting is on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 P.M. One of the things on that agenda will be an election of the officers for the committee.

**FRIENDSHIP LAKE DISTRICT REPORT**

Sonnenberg stated that they haven't had a meeting and probably aren't going to until April. They do have a raffle fundraiser going on. They've sold tickets for the raffle that are put in for the whole year and you can have your number picked out multiple times. They are hoping to raise around \$9,000 net, after the proceeds are paid out to the winners.

Berry stated that they are planning on doing another golf outing sometime. They will also be doing food for the duck derby.

**DISCUSSION & ACTION ON SODA WATER BEVERAGE LICENSE**

**MOTION** by Berry, second by Sonnenberg to approve water soda beverage license for Adams County Chamber of Commerce , motion carried.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

No correspondence

**SET AGENDA ITEMS FOR MARCH 3rd MEETING**

Discuss chapter 396 from the county regarding NR 117

**THE VILLAGE BOARD MAY GO INTO CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO WIS. STAT. SECTION 19.85 (1)(c) CONSIDERING EMPLOYMENT, PROMOTION, COMPENSATION OR PERFORMANCE EVALUATION DATA OF ANY PUBLIC EMPLOYEE OVER WHICH THE GOVERNMENTAL BODY HAS JURISDICTION OR EXERCISES RESPONSIBILITY – PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR POSITION REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS**

**MOTION** by Berry, second by Sonnenberg. Rollcall vote was taken. Went into closed session at 6:42.

**THE VILLAGE BOARD RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ENTER INTO OPEN SESSION AUTHORIZED BY WIS. STAT. SECTION 19.85(2) TO POSSIBLY TAKE ACTION FROM THE CLOSED SESSION AND CONTINUE WITH THE AGENDA**

**MOTION** by Berry, second by Pierce to enter into open session.

Being no further business to come before the board, **MOTION** by Berry, second by Pierce to adjourn, motion carried. Meeting ended at 7:06

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Rebecca Reuter  
Deputy Clerk/Treasurer